

many a drowsy summer afternoon, and evening in the fall which would have been spent in useless sleep, had not the enterprising foreman, Mr. Thos. Knott, put together his subtle brains, and persuaded his two companions that nothing better could be done, than to while away their spare time in philosophical discussions. Old Jim was delighted, and Demas declared that it was the "best ting he never tink about," though truly he was oftner in dreamland when the discussion waxed heavy between the other two, than anywhere else. The trouble with Violet was that he could never "comprend bien" the terrifying mental abysses into which the foreman and old Jim threw themselves with ease. For they like true philosophers were afraid of nothing; they swallowed the most hair-splitting distinctions and objections as easily as a dish of baked beans; because we have their own words for it.

Tom Knott invariably opened the discussions with some antiquated axiom from a not less antiquated almanac which he had near him. In the early days of the Boom School old Jim made it a point to oppose Knott on all subjects, till his opposition became a mere matter of course. It was enough for the foreman to express such an opinion on such a subject, and old Jim invariably thought otherwise. In this particular he greatly resembled certain embryo-philosophers of high repute, whom we have the pleasure of knowing. If any man dared impeach their private judgments, he was sure to be visited with wrath; and strange to say, these very men, would on any slight pretext, shamefully apply the curb and bit to their judgments, by wilfully forcing them into a contradictory and ridiculous supposition, provided that it was diametrically opposed to what their professor taught. Well is it said: "What fools these mortals be." However, in the Boom School this unwarranted opposition on the part of old Jim brought on a crisis. Often the discussions became so fierce; such a prodigious amount of pounding on the deal table, stamping of feet, and billings-gate accompanied them, that poor Demas would be forcibly ejected out of dreamland, and made an unwilling participator in the hurly-burly.

On one occasion he awoke just in time to prevent what, beyond doubt would have terminated in the complete destruction of the Boom School. Tom Knott had had delivered the thesis: "The pen is mightier than the sword," fresh from his almanac. He began to defend it with rare eloquence, particularly emphasizing the fact that *absolute loquendo* the pen was not mightier than the sword; but it was true, nevertheless, that at present the pen ruled the destinies of whole empires, while often the sword only carried out what was begun with the pen. Old Jim according to custom vehemently opposed this thesis; maintaining that the two could not be compared literally or figuratively, because they were of a different *genus* and used for different purposes. The discussion went on gently with the pounding of fists on the table, and stamping of feet, but in the end it resembled a howling menagerie. Demas awoke, and found his two companions dashing out doors, loading each other with choice epithets. He arrived on the scene of battle, just in time to preserve the credit of the immortal Boom School. For there was foreman Thomas Knott, white with rage, making frantic dives with an old rusty crow-bar at his companion who was displaying no less agility with a hand-spike and cant-dog attacked,—a powerful weapon in the hands of an old riverman like Jim. A few eloquent and philosophical words from Demas Violet restored peace. "Me toujours tink dat a philosopher never fight; because he never do noting; he jus only tink; you are a crack sort of philosopher for fight like bulls." This speech coming from so ordinary an individual as Demas stifled the two pedants to such an extent, that dropping their arms like red hot pokers, they ran to their respective bunks, and gave themselves over to refreshing sleep. Thus was the credit of the Boom School saved. And the fact only illustrates a well known truth, that men of meagre genius have often saved philosophy from many pitfalls into which it would have undoubtedly been thrown, had it been left entirely to the greatest intellects. We might add that history is always repeating itself; for the Boom School is not the only one which has seen a grave philoso-