

BY SPECIAL DELIVERY

BY WOOD
LEVETTE
WILSON

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THE variation in the population of Onokis was so slight from one decennial census to another that the enumerators merely made their inquiries of the postmaster, who gave them, off hand, all the information the government required. Only once did the postmaster make a mistake. That was when the son and heir of a prominent family had been born during the early hours, and through the carelessness of some one—no doubt, resulting from the excitement attending the event—the postmaster had not been informed of the gratifying occurrence previous to the enumerators' arrival the same morning. But he it said to the postmaster's credit that he immediately wrote a full explanation of the error to the census bureau at Washington. No doubt the cause of the restricted growth and pastoral serenity of Onokis lay in the fact that no railroad connected it with the rest of the world. So it was not surprising that a rumor that the new interurban trolley line would pass directly through the town should have caused considerable excitement; for that when the stakes of a surveying party confirmed this rumor a meeting should be held at the town hall for the celebration and discussion of the event.

This was certainly Onokis' time to boom. A commercial club was organized, with headquarters over Finley's grocery and post office—pending the erection of an office building of its own—and attractive letter heads were printed for correspondence with industries seeking desirable sites. But for some reason the industries did not flock to Onokis and in the resultant depression the commercial club was almost disbanded.

Then Onokis had a bright idea. It would be a resident suburb, which, after all, was not only more cleanly and genteel, but carried the promise of satisfactory profits in the way of real estate transactions and the acquisition of a population which had money to spend—and did. Fifteen miles from the city, with trolley cars every half hour, making the trip in thirty or forty minutes; beautiful scenery, high land, pure air and beautiful surroundings; free from the noise and dirt of railroads—what was once a latent but not a dormant boast; excellent highways over which those who preferred could run into and out of the city in automobiles—really, when Onokis went over its list of attractions it became quite proud of itself.

And Onokis took on an air of self-gratification when a thoroughly businesslike real estate agent, a young man named Eli Higgins, for ten acres of rolling woods pasture which ran down to Beaver Creek, and it was announced that the Commercial Club would at once begin the erection of (according to the Commercial Club) a palatial summer residence, which would be ready for occupancy the following spring. If it had been the privilege of Onokis to select a man to give it a start on its new and—was still different about the adjective—fashionable career, there was none it would have preferred to the Colonel. The Cardigan family was sufficient in itself, both in the way of means and standing, to give tone to the place.

Nor was Onokis mistaken in its hopes. Colonel Cardigan's house was not the only one of pretentious proportions which took shape on the numerous residence vantage points that winter, and the Commercial Club was happy in its anticipations of the future.

II.

June was in its richest beauty when a trolley car from the city, at the behest of Colonel Cardigan, stopped at the cross road nearest the Cardigan residence and the Colonel and his daughter descended to the improvised platform. Mrs. Cardigan, who had been waiting their arrival in the ample, low ewing family carriage, sprang eagerly forward and took the girl in her arms, but the joy of her greeting was tempered with just a shade of doubt as she apprehensively contemplated a blonde and white Boston ball tennis with one pink rimmed and one black rimmed eye—looking for this reason as if they were of different sizes—which the young lady held in leash.

"But, Bessie, dear," she said, protesting, "that—that—" She paused and pointed at the animal.

"Isn't he a beauty?" exclaimed Miss Bessie, as she stooped and patted the dog.

Mrs. Cardigan suppressed a sigh. When one's child has been away at school for six months much which under other circumstances might be severely criticised is to be tolerated. Still, there are matters of taste which—

"I don't think he is exactly pretty," she replied, with a slight quiver of her shoulders that almost suggested a shudder. "He looks rather—rather fierce."

"Fierce!" exclaimed Miss Bessie, with a laugh. "Why, he's the best natured creature in the world. Aren't you, Beans?"

"Have you?" responded Beans, with a nerve-racking bark of affectionate agreement, as he jumped up against her with staggering force.

Mrs. Cardigan did not look convinced.

"Oh, he's all right," declared the Colonel, reassuringly, as he lifted Beans into the carriage by the nape of the neck.

"Good luck, too," he added, when the dog did not equal.

When a man moves into the country if he takes any pride in his pastoral environment he is supposed to raise chickens, but after thinking the matter over carefully the Colonel concluded that the supposition was more attractive to the reality; and thus it happened that a commodious but unused chicken yard, which had been included as a matter of course in the Cardigan place rural conveniences, was ready for Beans' occupancy when he arrived. Here he could be comfortably penned at such times as it was not convenient to

watch him. During the quiet hours of the night he wore his restraint very contentedly, but when morning came and there were signs of life about the house, he vociferously demanded his release—and got it. And then he spent joyous days full of noisy barks exploring the ten acres of woods pasture with his mistress.

"But what shall we do with Beans?" asked the Colonel, when Mrs. Cardigan suggested that they all go to the city for a week.

"Why, surely he can stay in the chicken yard safely," replied Mrs. Cardigan.

"Yes," agreed Miss Bessie, hesitatingly, "but it will be awfully lonesome for him."

"John can take him out on a string, you know."

The Colonel smiled and Miss Bessie laughed, John, who combined in a not too active way the duties of coachman and gardener, was not fond of dogs, and showed a decided inclination to avoid Beans.

But there was nothing else for it.

"Because you know, I think," explained Mrs. Cardigan, "you wouldn't want to stay here alone, and for Bessie and me to go is absolutely necessary."

"Is, eh?"

"How can you ask, Phineas, when you know that Bessie has just got back from school with absolutely nothing to wear?"

To be sure, to be sure, agreed the Colonel, apologetically. "I should have understood that when I saw she brought home four trunks."

So Beans had to stand in his prison of poultry netting while he disconsolately watched the family drive off toward the trolley station.

And the next morning when the cook overslept herself as a result of not being roused as usual by Beans' early morning barking she thought that, perhaps, after all, he was a well behaved dog that only needed a little rest from too much petting to quiet his nerves. So she got breakfast in a leisurely way for herself and John, and when they had eaten it in the leisurely manner becoming to such household employees in the absence of the family she fastened up the screen from the table and made her way leisurely to the chicken yard to feed Beans, so commendably quiet and well behaved.

"John!" It was the cook's voice calling.

"Well?" answered John from the back porch, between puffs of his after breakfast pipe.

"There ain't no dog here!"

"What?" exclaimed John, starting up.

"I say, there ain't no dog here!"

John, with mixed feelings of relief at the dog's absence and apprehension as to what Miss Bessie would say, made his way to the poultry yard. The auditory of a dog's absence to a Sherlock Holmes was not necessary to solve the mystery.

An ample hole, still showing the marks of vigorous, busy forepaws, left a hole under the bottom of the poultry netting that told the whole story.

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III.

"Sir—er—Doctor," declared President Bowersmith, of the Onokis Commercial Club, as he removed a defunct cigar from the corner of his mouth and laid it carefully on the edge of his desk, "we'd be pleased to have you in our midst; we'd be pleased to lend you our moral support, and, sir—er—a Doctor, it will mitigate the terrors of illness, and—um—that is—that is, to know that we have a skillful practitioner in our—er—midst."

The success of Onokis has added considerably to the burden of President Bowersmith's dignity, and he carried it sometimes with a visible effort, but, nevertheless, he was even more far as to his importance was adequately sustained by his self-confidence as he folded his hands over his waistcoat, which had the appearance of a balloon inflated to its utmost tension. Lately, since the town had assumed its new tone, he had taken to wearing a black string tie, which, to be sure, was generally united, but, with his lavish wealth of sandy chin whiskers, this was a matter of small consequence. Not only was he a man to be reckoned with, but he was one who was always ready to give sage and disinterested advice where the affairs of Onokis were concerned. His whole manner proclaimed him as a yet, been no June morning, and, in a tone of cordial en-

couragement, discussed with Dr. Lambert Huston the advantages such a whirling and fashionable residence suburb as Onokis offered to a young physician ambitious to establish a practice and standing. The Doctor was tall, smooth faced, dark and healthy looking, with nose glasses that perched in their place with an attitude of permanence that scorned a guard.

"Of course," said the young man, "I haven't really much in fact, I haven't really anything to recommend myself except my diploma, but—"

"Sir," interrupted President Bowersmith, impressively, with a gesture meant to comprehend many things he felt it unnecessary to say, "Onokis is never blind to merit. Your—er—enviable record in the medical college from which you have just graduated is known to me and to my—er—colleagues, and I can say to you, with no fear of contradiction, that we shall be proud to have you—er—a dignification of the beautifully shaded streets of Onokis. In fact, sir, I have in mind, the very place where you should establish your office, and, sir—er—a Doctor, I shall be glad to show it to you if you care to step over with me and look at it."

Two days later a modest black and gilt sign made it plain to passersby that

DOCTOR LAMBERT HUSTON,
Physician and Surgeon.

occupied the building at the corner of Main and Chestnut streets. It was an unpretentious frame building, formerly used as a residence, as might be seen from the pink of children's dirty fingers on the walls; in 'L' shape, with three rooms, and a small porch in the angle, where, in his mind's eye, the doctor saw himself smoking many a long pipe, while he waited with what patience he had for such patients as might come to him.

"I can wait," he said to himself, after he had made some careful and complicated calculations at the desk, where he hoped to write many a prescription. "I can wait at least two years for them if I don't make a cent, and surely by that time things will be—"

"Honk! Honk!" sounded the hoarse hoot of an automobile horn, softening enough by distance to show that while it was undoubtedly headed for Main street it was still on the part of the highway known as the State road.

"By that time," continued the doctor to himself, "I ought to be riding around to see patients in a noisy wagon like that."

And as he slowly filled his pipe his thoughts pleasantly pictured his chauffeur, in plain but dignified livery, as became the profession, stopping his car in front of an imposing mansion where there was a patient confident of his ability and ready and willing to yield fees in proportion to his value.

"Honk! Honk! Honk!" Loud and fiercely raucous was the horn now, almost in front of the very office.

"Honk! Honk! Honk—Wow—ow—ceap—"

It was the cry of a dog in sudden and violent pain. The doctor dropped his pipe and dashed out of the front door. Far from being a gradually subsiding trail, it was a gradually subsiding trail, lay a Boston bull terrier—white, with a broad splash of black down his back, and one black rimmed and one pink rimmed eye.

The doctor looked up and down the street for the dog's owner. Strange to say not a soul was in sight; but the noon was hot, and the people of Onokis were not energetic except when there was a prospect of real estate profits. He picked up his pipe and smoking a cob pipe, while he artistically whittled a pair of pinners out of a piece of soft pine, sat the president of the Commercial Club with both his coat and his dignity laid aside.

"Doctor," said Mr. Bowersmith, resuming the presidential mantle, but, by force of circumstances, leaving off know what which was not within such easy reach. "I'm glad to see you. Won't you be seated?"

And President Bowersmith cordially waved his hand towards an empty cracker box in a convenient position for its occupancy.

"Ah, there it is, eh? Fracture of the lower bone of the hind leg—caught you just as you were getting away, didn't he? Another second, and you'd have been all right. Well, old fellow, it's pretty tough on you, I know, but it's an ill wind that doesn't blow on somebody's back—and it gives me a patient the first day in my new shop, which, not saying anything to a scoffing world about it, we'll call a good omen."

"You've got a mighty business like pair of jaws that I don't much fancy the looks of, but your eyes say you're not a bad natured pup, and—anyway, I'll have to chance it. So you just lie still, and try your darndest to be a good, patient dog, and a good dog patient, while I see if I can't fix this leg up so you won't be lame for the rest of your life."

An hour later the terror's sufferings were sufficiently relieved for him to relish a liberal allowance of bread and milk. Once he even went far as to try the wrappings with his teeth.

"Wop!" exclaimed the Doctor, shortly and sharply. "Let it alone! Mustn't do that, you chump, or it never will knit!"

The dog looked up at him with wondering eyes and wagged his stump of a tail apologetically.

"Now," went on the Doctor, "I'd like to know who you belong to; for that collar says right out loud that you belong to somebody. Nobody's dog doesn't run around wearing a nickel studded collar with a big name plate, and—by Jove, I wonder what's on the name plate! Um—um—"

And now that I know who you are, I'm

going to find out whose you are. You lie right still on that couch while I'm away, and don't dare to get down. If you do I'll lick you; if you don't—well, maybe I'll bring you a bone to show that while it was undoubtedly headed for Main street it was still on the part of the highway known as the State road.

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And as he slowly filled his pipe his thoughts pleasantly pictured his chauffeur, in plain but dignified livery, as became the profession, stopping his car in front of an imposing mansion where there was a patient confident of his ability and ready and willing to yield fees in proportion to his value.

"Honk! Honk! Honk!" Loud and fiercely raucous was the horn now, almost in front of the very office.

"Honk! Honk! Honk—Wow—ow—ceap—"

It was