

was kneeling behind a rock, his fists doubled and pressed against his capacious stomach, tears streaming down both cheeks, and these are the words he uttered: "O, Lord, O, Lord. I must have relief—and that *immediately!*" Just then the disorder seemed to take him in a new place, for he suddenly doubled up with the ejaculation: "O, Lord! — *I'll be damned if I ain't a goner!*"

## A FAT TAKE.

In 1872-3, during the sittings of the Mixed Commission on British and American Claims, it was my good fortune to be employed as maker-up in the office executing the proofs of loss and arguments of counsel.

The principal claims were for cotton seized or destroyed by the U. S. government, and ownership was sought to be established, in conjunction with other evidence, by bills of lading and warehouse receipts. Sometimes the marks on a lot of cotton would cover several pages of legal cap, and being of every conceivable design and written in pencil, troublesome to decipher and tedious in execution, were charged double price.

At this time the Signal Service furnished weather prognostications on manifold paper, and which, at a casual glance, resembled cotton marks. Through some unknown means one of these synopses came into my hands, and the spirit of mischief suggested a "sell." Selecting a victim and watching the opportunity, it was carefully placed in the copy drawer and fell to the lot of the venerable ———, an original, contradictory, perverse, sarcastic, and naturally eccentric character.

Several were in the secret, and a suppressed snicker was audible as the old gentleman swiftly glided to his case and placed the copy in position, meanwhile humming a tune of exultant satisfaction. One glance at the hieroglyphics startled him and brought forth an emphatic grunt. This manifestation was silently marked by ten or twelve heads gently appearing above the tops of their respective cases to watch further developments. They had not long to wait. The old gentleman deftly polished his spectacles with his handanna and carefully adjusting them gave another glance at his copy. His tune was hushed and a look of black amazement quickly followed one of profound astonishment. A quick motion of his hand to push back his skull-cap, a pinch of snuff—"umph!"—another glance—consternation! He muttered something sounding like "The white-livered s—n of a b——h!" and

then to his partner in a jerky, irritable tone: "By G—d, I can't make heads or tails of it, and I'll be ———." A puff of wind took it up and, despite his frantic efforts, carried it out of the window. He watched it ascend and go over the roof of a house on the opposite side of the street, and when it disappeared from sight savagely exclaimed: "I'm damn glad of it, and I hope you can't be duplicated!" He reported the mishap to headquarters as the loss of "a damn fat take, a foot and a half long," and that while a duplicate was being made he would "go to Egypt and make a study of the inscriptions on ancient monuments." It then became necessary for me to enlighten him. *Tableau!*

## EXEMPT FROM THE DRAFT.

In 1864 an employé of the U. S. government printing office was drafted. Though ordinarily free from embarrassment, yet, while laboring under the most trivial excitement, Rhody was afflicted with an over-powering difficulty in speech, and when apprized of his "election" to the army he did not attempt to conceal his gratification at the opportunity for escaping military duty on the ground of "impediment in speech."

On presenting himself before the medical officer (a physician employed for the purpose, and who was an unconscionable stutterer), he was subjected to a rigid physical examination and speedily accepted. In his confidence of rejection he had forgotten to claim exemption on the only legitimate plea he could proffer, and which, not having manifested itself, was unknown to the officer. The announcement fell like a thunderbolt and rendered him speechless for a few moments, and he only found his tongue when the call was made for the "next."

"I-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-int fit for a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a SOLDIER!" broke from his lips.

"Wher-wher-wher-wher-wher what do you mean by re-re-re-re-re-ridiculing me?" angrily responded the officer.

"Tai-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-int 'ridicule'; do-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-n't you see I've got a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a difficulty in my-y-y-y-y-y-y-y-y SPEECH!" frantically exclaimed Rhody.

"If-if-if-if-if you don't cease your im-im-im-im-impertinence I'll put you ur-ur-ur-ur-under guard," was the excited rejoinder.

Rhody then grasped him by the arms and shrieked: "I-I-I-I-I-I-I-I-I-I can't help it to-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o save my LIFE! If sent to the-e-e-e-e-e-e front I can't cry qu-u-u-u-u-u-u-u-ARter!"

The officer tried to escape his grasp, but could not. "Un-un-un-un-unhand me, scoundrel!" Then, at the top of his voice: "Officer of the guard!" The guard appearing, "Take ch-ch-ch-charge of this ma-ma-ma-man!"

As soon as he reached the guard-house Rhody opened communication with the printing office, and in a few hours the necessary evidence was produced to establish his innocence of intentional insult and the fact of his exemption under the law.