

therefrom my innocent album, which some foreboding told me would cause me trouble ere I again saw the light of another day. But that was not all—for, ah, I had placed a shining Smith & Wesson among the contents of the bag, to meet just such emergencies as this! I remember now that I grasped the weapon with almost fiendish glee. My naturally excitable and nervous temperament had wrought a fervor of intense passion and anxiety, and in the excitement of the moment I kissed the trusty weapon, which once before had seen faithful service. At that moment the gun, with its shining barrel, seemed to me the only friend I had in the world, and I resolved to make a good account of its friendship, should anyone venture to invade the solitude of my room during the night. I was sleepy—fearfully sleepy—and I stretched myself upon the bed, to doze, but not to sleep.

I thought of the words of the "orator"—"You had better keep your album in the office." Indeed! And again, I wondered where in the name of mystery he had discovered that I had an album with me. Browne couldn't have told him, I reasoned, for he was with me all the while. I revolved the mooted question over and over again, and finally determined to drop the subject and think no more about it.

I removed my watch from under the pillow, and found it to indicate ten minutes to eleven. How slowly the time passed! I had solemnly resolved to quit the "Eagle Hotel" and visit it no more when the gray dawn of morning would at last appear through the dingy curtains of my room, to—but hark, what was that?

Again I heard it—a sound of several pairs of heavy boots ascending the rickety staircase, and the voices of the "orator" and his friends, engaged in an excited conversation as they approached the room.

"Evidently formulating a plan of action," I thought to myself. "Pity they had not attended to that before." I arose from the bed, placed the album under my pillow, thrust the pistol into my pocket, and I was then ready for the intruders.

I had not long to wait. A heavy rap-rap-rap at the door announced their arrival.

"What do you want?" I asked, anxiously.

"We want to get in," came from the "orator," fiercely.

"Well, you won't get in."

"We will get in!" and I heard the rattle of a key at the door, and sooner than it takes to write it, it opened, revealing to me the "orator" and the selfsame crew who had taken such an unusual interest in me during the afternoon.

"And now that you are in," I began, "what are you going to do about it?"

"Where's your album—where's that book with the stamps in it?" asked the "orator," glaring greedily about the room.

"Yonder, in the bed," I answered. "Times must be rather hard when the landlord is forced to rob his guests. But before you lay your hands on that book you and your gang must interview this," and, by way of experiment, I suddenly pointed the pistol at the brain of my friend, the "orator."

"Don't shoot," he almost shrieked, as he recoiled from the shining barrel. "For heaven's sake, don't shoot! We're only joking."

"Naw, don't shoot; curse the luck. Can't you see that we have no guns, and that it's all a

joke?" added his companions, as they began to back toward the door.

"It is a poor joke that won't work both ways," I responded, still pointing the weapon at the "orator's" cranium. "A joke! And who can prove it?"

"I." Browne had answered, as he suddenly darted into the room. "Put down that gun, Frank. We don't want an innocent, practical joke to cause a coroner's inquest here. I am the cause of all this; it's a joke; don't you understand?"

"If that is the case," I replied, as I obediently lowered the weapon, "I can only say that it is a very dangerous kind of a joke; one that can be carried too far, especially when a collection of stamps is involved. And now, since you are here, and claim to be the cause of this little incident, please explain yourself."

Browne did so. It appeared he hadn't gone out of town at all, but for the sake of devilry he had entrusted me to the tender mercies of the "orator" and his friends for a whole afternoon (and night), having, of course, confided to them the plan before my arrival in Caldwell. The "orator," as I afterwards learned, is an honest, whole-souled fellow, as are also his companions, even though they are cowboys, and they all enjoy a joke.

I remained in Caldwell a whole week after my little experience, and I never found a more faithful friend than the "orator," proprietor of the "Eagle Hotel," postmaster, and high pooh bah of Caldwell, Kansas.

I've vowed to get even with Browne, however, and I might add, too, in closing, that hereafter, joke or no joke, my album remains at home.

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NOTES AND NEWS.

BY NAUTILUS.

A few philatelic editors have a pet fashion of downing everything in the poetic line. This does not prevent others from liking such matter. Suppose that one of these editors were to go into a hotel and saw something on the table that he did not like, would he order the proprietor to take it away and let it appear there never again? The matter of likes and dislikes is a broad one and not governed by individual tastes. There are a great many of us in the world, and when we see things that we do not like we should not be too sure that there is no one who likes them.

I do not think that postal cards will be much of a rival to stamps, not for some time at least. That they will be very popular cannot be denied, but stamps have too big a hold on the public to be easily shaken off. Cards are, however, a good investment, the early issues being within easy reach.

Statistics are kept of all British and foreign mails despatched from Canada.

Even stamp collecting is a fleeting fancy. How many of those who were collectors four or five years ago are so to-day? Few you say, very few. Take your own case for instance, where are all your collecting acquaintances of a few years ago.