

DANIEL, the gateman, was sitting on the pine bench before his little square gate-house, gazing gloomily up the empty stretch of South Fourteenth Street. He was an old man, and having outlived his days of usefulness as an active railroad man had been given the gates at the grade crossing in Fairview. It was not a lively job. During the middle of the day nothing used the track but an occasional bobtail freight, and South Fourteenth Street itself was not lively. Teams avoided the heavy road of loose sawdust, knee-deep over a bed of pine slabs. Morning and evening, to be sure, the sawmill hands passed the gate-house in a hurrying stream, and some time during the day S. Potts usually dropped over to have a word with Daniel. The days were as long for S. Potts as for Daniel. Except in the morning and evening customers seldom entered his corner saloon, and S. Potts could sit on Daniel's bench and keep an eye on his own door. For five years he had poured upon Daniel the vast stores of his knowledge, and he felt a sort of proprietorship in the old man.

"S. Potts," said Daniel, as his friend took his customary seat on the bench, "I wisht I had turned out to be an inventor, 'stead of a railroad man, I do." S. Potts settled his long legs comfortably, and shook his head. "Now, there you go, Daniel!" he said reproachfully. "Here I've been teachin' you philosophy for near six years—just chuckin' it into you free gratis by wholesale, as I might say—an' still you ain't satisfied."

"I am satisfied, S. Potts," said the old man. "I'm just too satisfied for any use."

"No, you ain't, Daniel," insisted S. Potts. "You're sore an' mad an' discontented, an' it pretty nigh discourages me. Here you are, sixty-four years old, goin' on sixty-five, an' you've got a good job as gateman to this railroad, an' yet you ain't satisfied."

"Yes, I am," insisted Daniel; "yes, I am, S. Potts."

"No, you ain't," S. Potts reasserted, "an' I don't take it as no compliment to me, neither. It ain't everybody that has a chance to associate with me an' hear me talk. You can't claim I've been stingy in giving you free information, Daniel. I've give you enough knowledge to make you equal to Solomon, an' I've learned you philosophy until you ought to be chuck-full of it. But the more I learn you the less you seem to know, an' you keep kickin' all the time."

"You hadn't ought to git mad at me, S. Potts," said Daniel. "You know—"

"I wouldn't blame you so much, Daniel," interrupted S. Potts, "if you didn't have me to talk to, but it does seem, associating with me like you do, an' hearin' me talk, you ought to have more sense. Sometimes I think I won't bother with you no more, only I'm so full of knowledge it sort of hurts my head. An' all of it, every drop of it, I pour on you, Daniel. You ought to be mighty thankful."

"I am thankful," began Daniel, but S. Potts interrupted him again.

"If you was you'd be singing and dancing like a nightingale," he said.

"If you knew what was best for you, you would be mighty glad to sit on this bench here and listen to me talk."

"I am," declared Daniel.

"No, you ain't," insisted S. Potts. "I've knowed you for five years, Daniel, and if I had thought it was best for you to be an inventor I'd have made you into one. But I seen you wasn't fitted to be made into an inventor, an' that is why I didn't make you into one. I seen you was fitted to be a gateman, an' I left you be one, didn't I?"

"You did, S. Potts," Daniel admitted.

"I might have made you into an inventor an' sent you off, an' then somebody with brains take this job so's I could talk to him an' git some comfort out of it," said S. Potts. "But the minute I seen you I knew that if I made you into an inventor you would go an' invent somethin' to ruin yourself, like Peter Guppy did."

"I'm perfectly satisfied, S. Potts," said Daniel.

"That's the kind of inventor you'd be, the kind that Peter Guppy was," continued S. Potts. "He was just sech

a discontented old kicker like you are, Daniel, but he was worse off—he didn't have no S. Potts to be a model for him. He had a nice, steady job sawin' wood, an' all he ever had to do was just rest one knee on the sawbuck an' push a saw up an' down all day; no brain work, like the kind that wears me out—just plain wood-sawing. He had everything to make a man happy, except he didn't have no friend to come across from the saloon an' give him good advice, like you have."

"I'm satisfied," Daniel said, but S. Potts continued:

"No, you ain't, an' he wasn't. He

it is today—false teeth was already as good as they could be made. But Peter Guppy was like you, always complainin' an' unsatisfied, so he went an' had the few old teeth he had left in his head pulled out, an' had a good set of false ones made—double set, uppers an' lowers—an' he used to set on his saw-buck day after day with them false teeth in his hand studyin' 'em an' wonderin' how he could improve on 'em. An' at night he would sigh, an' go to bed, an' then he couldn't sleep for thinkin' of them false teeth. He was about three years thinkin' how to invent better false teeth."

Teeth is Teeth

By ELLIS PARKER BUTLER

go on champin' 'em. So one day he says: 'I declare to goodness, if it's goin' to take me forty years to invent somethin' new about these here teeth, I wisht there was some way the plaguy things could do their own champin'! My hands is 'most wore out champin' the plaguy things.' An' right there, Daniel, was where he got the idee."

"I can almost see it, S. Potts," said Daniel.

"Power!" said S. Potts. "Power! That's what he thought of. That's what he thought of. That's what a lazy man always thinks of first off—gittin' power to do his work for him. First off Peter Guppy thought he'd hire a boy to champ his teeth for him, whilst all he had to do would be to lay back an' look on; but he didn't have no money to hire a boy. Then he thought what a fine thing it would be to have self-workin' teeth that would champ by machinery whilst he looked on, an' then he stood up an' yelled. He'd thought what he could invent about false teeth. He could invent self-operatin' teeth. Nobody had ever invented self-operatin' teeth, so far as he knew."



Santa Takes His Reindeer in Case of An Emergency

was like you, Daniel. He wanted to invent, an' he looked around to see somethin' to invent that hadn't been invented already, an' what he saw was false teeth. False teeth looked to him like a good thing to invent, because nobody had invented anything very new in false teeth since he could remember."

"Say," exclaimed Daniel, enviously, "I wisht I had thought of false teeth! False teeth would be a mighty good thing to invent, wouldn't it, S. Potts?"

"I told you you hadn't no more sense than Peter Guppy had," said S. Potts pitilessly, "but Peter Guppy had more brains than what you have, Daniel. How would you go about inventing false teeth? Just tell me how?"

Daniel gazed at the sawdusty level of South Fourteenth Street, and creased his tanned forehead into thoughtful wrinkles. He shifted uneasily on his bench, and frowned hard. "Well, of course, I can't say right off like this," he said at length, "but if I had time—"

"The reason nobody had been gittin' new inventions in false teeth," interrupted S. Potts, "was the same then as

"It was worth it, it was worth it!" said Daniel enthusiastically.

"Three years," said S. Potts, "that was the time that Peter Guppy put in settin' around holdin' his uppers an' lowers in his hand. Sometimes he would hold the uppers in one hand an' the lowers in the other, an' sometimes he would hold them all in one hand an' scratch his head with the other, an' all the while he was gittin' more an' more discouraged. They ain't nothin' more disheartenin' than to set day after day studyin' false teeth. The more you look at 'em the more they look just like what they always looked like. But Peter Guppy was just sech a fool as you are, Daniel. He hadn't no sense."

"Well, S. Potts, we can't all be—" began Daniel.

"He was lazy, that's what he was," said S. Potts. "He wanted to git rich quick, like you do. He'd set by the day with them uppers an' lowers in his hand, openin' an' shuttin' his hand so them teeth would champ open an' shut before his eyes, an' when he got tired in his right hand he would shift them teeth over into his left hand an'

"I wisht I had thought of that invention," said Daniel greedily.

"I bet you do," said S. Potts. "That's about what sense you've got. But it wasn't much to invent. I could have thought of it long before Peter Guppy did, but I seen it was a foolish thing to invent, so I didn't think of it. Anybody could have seen that the only way to improve a perfect thing like false teeth was to put power into them, but I wouldn't do it. No, sir! But Peter Guppy went right ahead an' done it. He set right to work an' invented Guppy's Auxiliary Motor Teeth, an, was as proud as pie. Soon as I seen 'em I shook my head. I hated to discourage him, but I hadn't no faith in self-actin' teeth, so I just hiked up my head an' shook it. But it didn't do no good."

"I guess he made a lot o' money, didn't he?" asked Daniel wistfully.

"Out of an invention I had shook my head at?" questioned S. Potts scornfully. "Peter Guppy thought he would make a lot of money. That's what he thought. Them teeth looked all right, an' they would have fooled you, Daniel,