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BUMPS

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Being the story of how a literary man takes his knocks from the cold world as cheerfully as any commercial traveller.

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DO not mean those protuberances one has received from some remote ancestors, and which adorn the crown of one's anatomy. Neither are they the various enlargements caused by the reception in one day of ten rejection-slips from as many magazines. Oh, no. They are the bumps one gets after he has worn out several typewriters (I here refer to machines), untold scores of pens, and has materially increased the revenue of the Post Office Department in postage stamps. The bumps about which I wish to speak are those which come after one's first book has been published. Having already sent forth eight brain-children into the world, I can accordingly speak with a certain degree of authority.

Looking back now over the past years of my career as an author, I am reminded of the bumps one receives in riding over a country corduroy-road. You suddenly speed from the firm ground upon the government abnormality. The bumps come in such rapid succession that you have little or no time for thought. It is after you are over, with every bone in your body racked, that you begin to get mad, tear your hair, and say things. Of course it doesn't do one bit of good, for the corduroy-road stares at you as placidly as the reply to your letter of indignation from the Public Works Department. You have merely relieved your feelings, and that is worth something.

The initial bump you received on the literary corduroy was after your first book had been published. You were greatly exalted, and you imagined that all the people in your town, to say nothing of your friends, were ready to make a stampede upon the book store. You wondered if the supply would hold out, and if the publisher would be able to meet the demand.

The day after the arrival of your masterpiece, you sauntered casually, as it were, into the book-store, and it was then that you received your first bump. There you beheld several copies of your book gazing at you from the shelf where they had been placed. Not one had been touched, and though you hung around half the afternoon, every moment expecting the rush to begin, nothing happened, and the volumes remained undisturbed. You went back the next day,

HAVE we a national sense of humour? Nationally—perhaps not. But we have humorists. This species of contributor to the gayety of nations seems to spring up regardless of environment. If we were a race of humorizers we should not need the humorist. We are a serious people. We take ourselves seriously. So did the United States, and Mark Twain came up as a safety valve. If the United States, in Mark Twain's day, had not taken itself more seriously than any other people in the world, Mark Twain would have remained Samuel T. Clemens, found in any business directory. If we were not a serious-minded people we should have had no need of Sam Slick in his day, or in the present generation of such as Stephen Leacock, of Montreal, Peter McArthur, of Appin, Ont., and H. A. Cody, of St. John, N.B. The article herewith on Literary Bumps is real humour. It may not cause tears of laughter, but it contains a quiet snigger in every paragraph. The author is not usually advertised as a humorist. His books are not humorous. But he has had enough experience as a literary man to be able to express the humours of the business of writing books. All who read books should appreciate what he says. Those who intend to write books should—take notice.

counted the number and found that there was one less. Somebody had the temerity to make a purchase. You waited until the end of the week before venturing near again, and then you found the copies all there excepting three. Yes, three had actually been purchased out of the whole row!

SO sudden had been the bump, like the leap upon the corduroy road, that for a while you were dazed. Then you got mad, tore your hair, and said things. You were not a pleasant companion to live with, and for the sake of peace in the house you strolled down town. Here you were accosted by an acquaintance, a prominent dry goods merchant. He was glad to meet you, and congratulated you upon your literary success. "I have not read your book yet," he told you, "but I am anxiously waiting until it is in the Public Library. They are so slow in getting the new books there. I wish you would stir them up."

You felt like saying something in reply not recorded in Holy Writ. But you looked wise, seemed pleased, and passed on your way. It was the same with several other acquaintances you met. They were all successful business men, and they, too, were waiting for your book to be placed in the library. They hoped that there would be several copies, so that they would not have to wait too long.

THEN it was that you went home and did some hard thinking. You stayed awake all night working out your plan, and the next morning you visited your business acquaintances, and presented to them a definite proposition for the good of the community in general. Your plan was as simple as the working of a Public Library. Get the City Fathers to procure a large, suitable building, and make a liberal grant of money. Apply to the Government for another grant. Provide a staff of competent workers, whose duty it would be to keep on hand in boxes or on shelves most of the things needed in any household. The main cost would be in the first purchase. All articles of wearing apparel would be kept there, cooking utensils, furniture, and the many other things which are generally purchased. By this arrangement, when a man needed a pair of braces all he would have to do would be to go to the Commodity Centre, and secure the use of a pair for fourteen days. At the end of that time he could take the braces back, get a new pair different in style and colour, or a collar, neck-tie, or whatever he wanted. A woman could have the use of a skirt, hat, or anything else she desired for two weeks. For the kitchen a man could obtain anything from a knife to a cooking stove. By this plan no one would get tired of the things about his house, as there always would be a variety. It was a fine idea,

and all done for the benefit of the community. Why cause people to spend money upon such things when they could have the use of them for nothing?

As you outlined your plan, you became so enthusiastic that you did not notice the startled expression upon the faces of your acquaintances. They listened patiently until you were through, and then coolly asked you what effect such an arrangement would have upon the business houses in the town. You told them that it would be the same as upon publishing houses and authors in general. But they shook their heads and told you that it wouldn't work in their case. A book is a luxury and not a necessity, they informed you. When you reminded them that the main cost of living to-day comes through people purchasing luxuries, and not the real necessities of life, they replied that all the goods they handled were necessities, and that people could not possibly live without them, such as new Easter hats, automobiles, ice-cream, chocolates, and such like. That was their settled conviction, and though you reasoned with them, it made not the slightest difference. What applied to their goods was not at all applicable to your book. When you left, and the merchants met one another, they referred to your scheme, and sadly said, "Poor fellow, his new book has affected his brain."

You then went to the City Fathers and presented your plan for the improvement of the community. You were at once shown the door, and you were fortunate in not being kicked downstairs. You had already written to the Government, and after some delay you received a curt letter informing you that your plan had not met with approval, as it would be a fatal blow to the business firms in your town.

By the time you had partially recovered from these bumps, the book-reviews of your masterpiece, "The Golden Thread," had begun to arrive. You had sent five hard-earned dollars to a Press Clipping Concern, and you had expected great things. Even though the people of your own town did not appreciate your efforts, the critics would. They, at least, would give you complete justice, and would write long articles announcing to the world that a new literary luminary had suddenly swung into view. This idea had buoyed you up through all discouragements, and so with eager haste you examined your first bundle of reviews.

AND what did you find? Just?ce? A fair and impartial criticism of your book? An attempt to comprehend and appreciate the author's motive in writing the story? No, nothing of the kind. If they had been justly critical you would not have cared so much. But the first glance plainly showed that the reviewers had not taken the trouble to read the book, but had skipped through it like grasshoppers, picking out a passage here and there, tear-