

The Joker Club.

"The Pen is mightier than the Sword."



THE ASPIRING POET.

Peck's Sun.

'Would you be kind enough to direct me to the editor?' asked a brave and polite gentleman, with a kindly face and a pleasant smile.

'He is out,' responded the law reporter. 'Is there anything I can do?'

'I am Dr. Homes,' responded the gentleman.

'Where's your office, doctor? Come to see about the diphtheria? I can do as well as the editor. What is it?' and the law reporter braced himself.

'Dr. Oliver Wendell Homes,' replied the gentleman, his handsome face beaming with good nature. 'I have a little poem I should like to submit. Shall I leave it with you?'

The law reporter took it and read it aloud.

'You call it a 'Winter Day on the Prairie,' said he, 'h'm; yes.'

A blinding glare, a silver sky,
A sea of foam with frozen spray
The foaming billows swelling high,
Up dashed against the icy day.
White-laden northern whirlwinds blow
Across the pale seas heavy breast,
And fill the creamy ebb and flow
With stormy terror and unrest.

The stormbirds fly athwart the main,
Like rudderless, bewildered ships;
The stranded winds breathe sobs of pain,
And frosted froth from pallid lips.
The seething milky waves in swift,
Harsh struggles with the fate that binds,
Break into frozen rift, and drift
Against the wrecking, straining winds.

A sea of loneliness and death,
Whose waves are ghosts, whose vales are graves,
Whose perspiration is the breath
That lurks in northern winter caves;
A snowy gloom, whose icy shade
Lies white beneath the spray tipped crest
Whose silver somberness is laid
A glaring pall across his breast.

'Just so, just so,' continued the law reporter. 'Did you want this published as it is?'

'I had thought something of giving it publicity,' replied the doctor.

'You'll have to get the advertising clerk to register it, then,' returned the law reporter. 'I wouldn't take the responsibility of sending it in as it stands now.'

'What seems to be the matter with it?' inquired the doctor.

'I don't think it is natural. Now, here, you take a snow storm on the prairie and make it a sea. Then you freeze it all up and make it dash around. You've either got to thaw it out or quit dashing it. We may be able to alter it so it will do, if you leave it.'

'What alterations would you suggest?' asked the doctor.

'I'd fix that verse so as to be in accordance with the facts; make it 'sequential,' as we say in law. Instead of having the blinding and silver, and the foaming billows, and the white-laden winds, and the creamy ebb, and all that rot, I'll put it in this way:

In township thirty, range twenty-nine,
Described in the deed as prairie land,
It sometimes snows in the winter time—
As we are given to understand.
This alleged snows falls fast and loose,
It's said, several feet or more,
And when the wind blows like the deuce,
It drifts from where it was before.

'In that way,' continued the law reporter, 'you get the facts before the public without committing the paper to anything. Under your poem any man who would prove that you were talking about his land could bring a libel suit, and the measure of damages would be what he could have sold it for if you hadn't written it up as a sea.'

'Will the other verse do?' asked the doctor.

'I'm afraid not,' replied the law reporter.

'This business about the stormbird without a rudder, and stranded winds and milky waves don't prove anything. They wouldn't be admitted in evidence anywhere. I suppose you want to express desolation, but the testimony isn't good. Why don't you say:

In the place aforesaid, when the sad winds blow
The tenants thereof don't go about
And such birds as find they can stand the snow,
Look as though they'd had their tails pulled out,
And when the said snow and said winds are gone,
It's found the said land finds a ready taker,
For though you can't farm much when the winter's on,
The property don't fall a cent an acre.

'There you get your desolation, and your birds, like rudderless ships, and at the same time you throw in a clause which lets you out of the libel by showing that the snow don't affect the value of the ground. The way you had it you would have brought all the Western settlements down on us. Been a poet long?'

'I—I—that is, I begin to think not,' gasped the unhappy doctor. 'But can't you do something with the last verse?'

'We might leave that out altogether, or we might substitute something for it. The last verse is a contradiction of terms. It is a *non sequitur*, as we say in law, and could have no status in court in the event of an action. You can't say snowy gloom or white shade, and as for a glaring pall, I presume you mean the white velvet ones they use for infants. I couldn't pass that in, but I might change it for you. How would this do?'



It is rumored that when the snow
Is on the land before described,
It looks as though one couldn't sow
Seed to advantage, though this is denied.
Some people hold that it empties the pouch
To buy land in the winter in the North;
For this unsupported statement we cannot vouch,
But give the story for what it's worth.

'This, you see, gives all sides to the question, without making the paper responsible for anything. I call that a superior piece of poetry,' continued the law reporter, reading the three stanzas over in an admiring tone of voice.

'But there isn't any poetry in it,' stammered the doctor.

'What is the reason there isn't?' demanded the law reporter indignantly. 'Don't it tell everything you did, and don't it rhyme in some places? Don't it get out all the facts, and don't it let the people know what's going on?'

'Of course it does,' chimed the police reporter. 'That's what I call a good item of poetry. I think you might add—startling developments may be expected, and that the police have got a clue to the perpetrator.'

'That isn't necessary,' replied the law reporter, loftily. 'We poets always leave something to the reader's imagination.'

'I believe I'll go,' murmured the doctor.

'All right, sir. Come round any time when you've got some poetry you want fixed up,' and the law reporter bowed the visitor out.

Bridget, who has charge of the stockings, says that the remark, "It is never too late to mend," is impertinent. "Sure an' I'll not put in a stitch after 9 o'clock in the evenin'!"—*Philadelphia Sun*.

It was a wealthy Philadelphian who being asked on his return from Europe how he liked the Bosphorus, replied that he didn't eat any, and preferred the ordinary home-made sausages.—*Andrew's Queen*.

The young man of the period rejoiceth that the time for swinging on the front gate approaches when the good night kiss will no more be impregnated with the odor of coal oil.—*Mauch Chunk Dem*.

The infrequency of eggs at this season suggests a possibility of a seldomness of spring chickens at the seaside hotels next summer. Guests with feeble jaws will appreciate the prospect.—*New Haven Register*.

It is remarkable how much good can be found to say of a man after he is dead. A skin flint died in this state not long ago, and numerous virtues were squeezed out of his memory by the power of the printing press.—*Danbury News*.

"Sing on, sweet sylph-like zephyrs, sing," was the heading of a poem handed in to a Colorado editor. He printed it, and the next day an avenging Providence sent a blizzard that sang and sang and soughed and sifted, and the back end out of that shop lifted.—*Gate City*.

Pythagorus says,—"It is better to live lying on the grass, confiding in divinity and yourself, than to lie on a golden bed with perturbation." That may be good philosophy, but it is doubtless unhealthy, besides most people can lie anywhere and on any object without the least perturbation.

A minister commenced his sermon by observing: "What shadows we are!" and then paused as if to let the thought sink deeply into the minds of the congregation, whereupon two lean spinsters in a front seat guessed they didn't come there to be insulted and got up and strode indignantly out.—*Brooklyn Eagle*.

The wife of a Congressman having been abroad said to a gentleman: "I'm splendid on pictures; I'm a regular common sewer of art. More and over, when I play whist I play third and hand high. In France they have lots of francs and sardines for money. But I've traveled, and feel a little blase. That's French. It's a regular language, is French. They don't speak nothing else in Spain and Italy and pot-tage countries."—*Jay Charlton*.

Help the children. When they gather round the table at evening with their books and slates take right hold and show them how to do it. Never mind if you don't remember whether the Ural mountains empty into the Straits of Magellan or slide around the Cape of Good Hope. Stuff their little heads full of information of some kind, and the next day when they recite the school teacher will learn how smart the parents of the district really are.—*New Haven Register*.