

TRIALS OF A CENSUS TAKER.

He Is Frequently Mistaken for a Book Agent and Ordered Away.

How One Man Found an Old Sweetheart and Later "Took" the Slater Family.

"Guess you'll have to let me in," remarked the genial census man. "I'm something like the smallpox, you know. Hardly ever get here at right time, but folks just have to take me when I come."

His darts of wit fell back, blunted by the Swedish armor of the maid who stood inside the vestibule and kept the chain on the door. She had been too well trained in her domestic duties to let anything past that door, especially if it came in human guise, until the master or the mistress of the house had so ordered, and to her a United States census taker was no exception to the rule. She understood just what he wanted and was quite willing to accommodate him with all the necessary facts.

"I know," she told him, solemnly. "You ask me. I can tell you."

"No, you can't—not for this kind of census. I've got to see somebody besides you. Heavens, girl—I'm no book agent, and it's hot out here in the sun!"

He drew his wadded handkerchief across his brow and tried to fan himself with the flat black book he carried. The girl hesitated a moment longer and then flew upstairs to the library, where Mr. Slater was dozing in his armchair. "There's a sassy man down there," she announced. "I don't believe he's a census man—he's too sassy."

Mr. Slater, who had staid at home from business that day because he was slightly under the June weather, chuckled to himself as he reached for his cane. "That's all right, my girl, he told Thekla. They generally do get sassy about once in ten years. I'll tend to it." And he buttoned his alpaca coat about him in a self-sufficient way and started for downstairs. The bathroom door opened as he passed it; a hand, clutching a cake of soap, and a Medusa-like head, with many, dripping locks, emerged.

"Did she say 'twas the census man, father?" inquired Louise. "I'm just washing my hair, or I'd come down and help you. Be sure you get the ages right."

"Humph!" said Mr. Slater. Another door opened, and Mrs. Slater intercepted him. She was at the full-dress stage of her afternoon toilet. "Who's down there?" she whispered, in the kind of a hiss that penetrates from third story to basement. "Census man? I can't come down, you see. Do you think you can answer his questions?"

"Well, I don't know why I can't," replied Mr. Slater, with some feeling. "I haven't lost my senses. Guess we don't need any petticoats in this."

"Come in, my friend, come in," he said, cordially, as he reached the front door and threw back the chain. "Here, walk into the parlor. Take this chair." The 200-pound census man felt the democratic spirit in Mr. Slater's welcome and settled into the gilt-backed chair with a heartiness that made it creak. Three dirty-faced, denure scions of the house of Slater, who had been studying this chained-out man from the front lawn, trooped in after him and continued to stare with the calm abandon of youth.

"Say, but I'm glad to get in!" began the census man. "Didn't know's I ever would. Beats all, the queer experiences we get in this line of business. Mr.—ah—Slater, is it? Yes, Mr. Slater. What do you suppose I struck in a house across the road? Well, sir, there was a woman I didn't know from a piece of sole leather, so to speak. Didn't s'pose I'd ever laid eyes on her. And after a few questions about her father and mother it turns out she's an old sweetheart of mine. Hadn't seen her for 25 years. What do you say to that, now? And she's got a bunch of letters that I wrote her once laid away yet, an' her husband never saw 'em! How's that?"

Mr. Slater always tries to be civil to people not related to him by marriage or otherwise, so he smiled and expressed his interest; but his face did not quite reflect the sentimental glow of the census man, and the other felt it.

"Let me have your surname, Christian name and initial," he began, with a change of tone. Mr. Slater sailed into the answers bravely and kept afloat past the questions as to residence, street, number of

house, and so forth. Then he ran around.

"Ma!" he called, stepping out into the front hall.

A suspiciously prompt voice from the head of the stairs answered: "What do you want?"

"Come down here!" commanded Mr. Slater, moving to where he could get sight of her. Then he added: "Oh, well, tell me what day, month and year you was born."

"Thought you didn't need any petticoats," was the reply, to which Mr. Slater returned silence. "Well, let me see," said the voice then. "Joe was 39 the 10th of last May. That makes him born in 18—"

"Just like a woman!" grumbled Mr. Slater, under his breath. "Always have to count back every time."

"You put me all out with your impatience, John," protested the voice.

"Count it up yourself. Joe's 39." So Slater and the census man worried that through.

"Louise!" called Mr. Slater, darting into the hall again a moment later. Another surprisingly close-at-hand voice answered: "Yes, father?"

"How old were you last birthday?"

"Why, it was only day before yesterday; but I suppose it has to go as 27 just the same, doesn't it?"

Mr. Slater mumbled something about women as he went back to the parlor. "You've got a land office job in this house, did you know it?" he told the census man. "We've got the three generations here."

"Yes?" assented the census man. "You didn't mention that your mother lived here."

"My mother? She's been in her grave these 20 years."

"I beg your pardon! I thought she was talking to you from the stairs."

A scornful sniff sounded down the stairway. "That's my wife," Mr. Slater explained. About this time real business began. It was evident that the voice had been re-enforced by the family Bible or records of some sort, for the flapping of the pages was distinctly audible down the stairway. Louise, presumably in her bathrobe, with her hair hanging over her shoulders, acted as assistant teller. Mr. Slater's "Ma!" sounded every 30 seconds with the regularity of a foghorn now, and every time he had to humble himself to appeal for information his veneering of urbanity grew thinner.

"Suppose I go right out there and talk to the ladies first hand?" said the census man, finally, with a touch of nervous prostration in his voice, but as he stepped into the hall there was a scurry that made him retreat. The youngsters giggled and Mr. Slater sent them upstairs. Meanwhile he continued to vibrate between the rooms, with a wonderful external amiability. The last thing he did was to canter down to the laundry and discover the cook's name and age and all the rest of it. Then he bowed the census man out with perspiring politeness. —Chicago Record.

Credit She Didn't Seek.

A lady who keeps a summer boarding house at the seashore near Boston went down the other day to look the house over and find out what must be renewed. She found numerous umbrellas left by former boarders, says the Boston Transcript, and tying them together, she took the bundle to Boston to have them repaired. She stopped in at Hovey's and laid the bundle on the floor at her feet at the counter. When she had made her purchase, she forgot her umbrellas, and absent-mindedly picked up an umbrella lying on the counter, thinking it was hers, or not thinking at all, and started off.

Then the owner of the umbrella, a woman standing next her, seized her and said very sharply: "You have taken my umbrella!" Of course she apologized, feeling much cut up about it, and went on forgetting in her fluster her own bundle of umbrellas. The next day, on her way to Cambridge, she went to Hovey's and readily recovered her lost package of umbrellas, which had been kept for her. On the car for Cambridge she noticed a lady eyeing her very closely. Presently this lady leaned forward and said to her, with elegant emphasis:

"You seem to have been more fortunate today!"

It was the lady whose umbrella she had taken the day before. —Ex.

Choate and the Baby.

Lately, at the opening of a free library at Acton, England, Hon. Joseph H. Choate, the American ambassador to Great Britain, delivered an address, and caused much laughter by his impromptu references to a baby who persisted in distracting the attention of the audience by making its voice heard at the most inconvenient moments, says the San Francisco Argonaut. The first interruption occurred early in the speech. Mr. Choate was saying: "There is a special provision for chil-

dren in your library, and I think when men come to make a choice of a residence in Acton they will not forget that fact." Here the baby screamed in such a manner as to drown the words of the speaker. There was some disturbance, but Mr. Choate said: "Don't be disturbed by the baby. Nobody knows better than my Lord Bishop that out of the mouths of babes and sucklings cometh wisdom." Things went fairly well after this, the baby appearing to be flattered by the reference, until Mr. Choate was saying: "There is a book with which all of you—" Here the baby wailed loudly. "Except, possibly, the baby—are familiar," the ambassador went on; "it is Ecclesiastics, and it says that of the making of books there is no end."

BETTER GET A SAFE.

Last year the pesky kissing bug, caused widespread trepidation, and it was said to be the worst. That ever struck the nation, for when it started out to bite it never discriminated. And white and black, and young and old, were sadly mutilated.

And strange and fearful were the tales that men were often telling about the bug that on them swooped and caused such painful swelling. And if an eye could not be seen because a big lip hid it the victim solemnly would say the kissing insect did it.

And many were the pretty girls lamenting swollen faces. Because they'd been subjected to the kissing bug's embraces. And many were the loving swains in similar condition. While some were so disfigured that they baffled recognition.

But sore as these afflictions were, still greater woes are coming. For we are told a fiercer bug. This way is swiftly humming. And if the scientific chaps have not made grievous error this biter from New Mexico must be a holy terror.

It has two score or more of legs. Its face is badly freckled; it's bigger than a bumblebee. And all its wings are speckled; it wears a triple jointed beak. With which it does its biting. And when it once gets hold it stays 'til it's killed by fighting.

The victim then will feel his face rise like an elevator, and really will not know himself 'til a fortnight later. At least, some scientists so say. And, if the truth they're telling. Before the summer goes we may in bugproof safes be dwelling. —Pittsburg Chronicle-Telegraph.

Gruesome Reminder Gone.

The western span of the old Point Ellice bridge was removed by the potent force of dynamite, and it will not be long before the structure which for the last four years has been a standing reminder of the darkest day in the history of Victoria will be a thing of the past. Where once the rather imposing bridge stood, but two sections now remain, the disaster of 1896 and the exertions of yesterday causing the removal of the two central sections. It was at first feared that the destruction of this section of the bridge by dynamite would break the telephone company's cable alongside, but everything passed off satisfactorily and the debris, in the shape of twisted iron and wood fragments, afford ample evidence of the efficacy of dynamite in destroying structures that have outlived their usefulness and which it is impossible to remove by ordinary means. Sticks of dynamite were placed in each end of the frame work of the truss on the northern side of the bridge and the explosion effectually did the required business, the entire section being thrown broadside into the water. The operations were under the direction of Engineer Todd.

The Point Ellice bridge was constructed for the provincial government by the San Francisco Bridge Company about 15 years ago. It was 630 feet in length, the two middle spans being each 150 feet in length. It became the property of the city in 1892. The details of the terrible tragedy are still fresh in the memories of Victorians, and this wreck would have been removed years ago but for the lawsuit cases against the city in consequence of the disaster, which have but recently been settled. The two remaining sections are in good condition and will be lowered on false supports and the iron stored for future purposes. —Victoria Times.

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