

Doings at Dope Springs

By CHARLES DRYDEN

A Tale of Drunken Birds and a Town Where Carrie Nation Was Needed



to black birds, robins is the noisiest things when drunk, and the scrapping is fierce and bloody. All day long them birds set in the China trees to tank up, fight and fall out. From daylight till dark the air was full of feathers and bad bird language. Every house in town, nearly, has them berry trees. No family was too poor to send the children out to pick up a potpie for dinner. I used to lean on fences and watch them debauches by the hour and learn good lessons."

"How did the jag affect the robin?"

"Much the same as gents around a cocktail table," replied the ob-

servant Mr. Fligg. "Let us take a flock of proud and healthy birds from the North coming down here to spend a pleasant winter. In a evil moment they light on the China tree and the seeds of intemperance is sowed in their tender systems. The first berry is the one that counts. Beware of the first berry. The robin swallows it and feels good. He takes another, and a gay sensation shoots up and down his spine. After the third berry the robin cocks up his bill and tries to whistle some opery airs. Another bird with more berries in him doesn't care for no music in that tree. He pecks the opery singer in the eye

and all hands butts into the fight. By and by the birds gets too drunk to fight and they make it their regular business to fall out of the tree. That is where the scene grows pathetic and heart rendering."

At this point Mr. Fligg paused and swallowed his Adam's apple a couple of times.

"When a robin has his load of berries on, he sneaks to a quiet limb by himself, and holds on tight with both feet. It's a job at that. He tilts forward, and then aft, like a schooner in a gale, being heavy in the head. One foot gets paralyzed; the drunk robin topples off the limb, and dangles some by the other foot, meanwhile screeching plaintive. I've shed tears watching a robin feel around with his wabby toes for the perch, and never coming nowhere. When he does let go with the foot that's holding on, it's a case of a dead bird, if he lands on his tail."

"At last, when the earth is strewn with dead and numbing robins, twittering in their sleep, the folks goes out and gathers the potpies for the next meal. Hundreds of drunkards is left to sleep off the berries. They lay like corpses for hours; and then begin to come to, making sad and feeble motions. A stiff leg stretches out, and a aching head rolls from side to side. Pretty soon the robin reaches up a trembling foot and pulls one gummy eye open for a look at his prospects. Then he digs the other eye apart, if he hasn't lost it in a fight, and staggers to his feet, the sickest and dullest object I ever seen. If he finds a loose berry on the ground, knocked off in the tree fights, he takes in a bracer, and begins to feel better, but not too gay. He cheers up and hunts round for another berry; and when he finds it, the doomed bird gets cheery, and flies into the tree for a new jag. And so on to the cruel end. I seen one handsome young siped die of jim jama. He got full so many times, his wings petered out, and he couldn't fly into the tree

no more. For two days he reeled in a little circle on the ground, pecking at the air in front of him. The robin thought he was a \$40 mocking bird in a gilded cage, and died of thirst and hunger in that belief, due to a clouded intellect. That shore was a horrible scene."

"It certainly shows the awful depth of depravity into which the demon China berry will sink a well-bred robin," I said. "Why is the curse allowed to exist in our midst?"

"Blowed if I know," replied Mr. Fligg. "Mebby our citizens like to gaze upon the robin in his cups; leastwise they never chop the trees down. Carrie Nation would not do a thing in this town. But I knowed one noble old lady what never made a potpie and never let anybody hunt in her yard. She treated the robins handsome. You might call it humane and W. C. T. U. to the limit."

BESIDES the large strings of foolish fishes from prolific streams escorted daily into our best homes, the hills and dales and forest wilds of Dope Springs abound in game. Native and alien Nimrods, who know not what fear is, slay the duck, the red fox, and the fierce and treacherous flying squirrel that flits from branch to branch. Likewise the bibulous robin red breast gets in wrong. He comes down from the frapped North in thirsty flocks to winter here in a potpie with top crust only.

It fills me with sorrow, shame, and anguish to learn about the boozey conduct of the robin. At home he is a model of propriety and the responsible head of a large family—a real bird in every sense of the word. But on his travels the pilgrim robin cuts loose from all restraint and plunges into a series of debauches that ends in death, ignominy and pie. In some respects the robin is almost human. Just how reckless that bird can be on his travels was revealed to me by the erudite Mr. Tony Fligg, the Dope Springs oracle, philosopher and wharf repairer.

We were resting one Saturday afternoon, Tony and I, in front of the postoffice, when a negro boy passed along carrying one rusty gun and three dozen red breasts dangling from a string threaded through the upper bills. The boy stopped and offered to sell me a mess of robins at 5 cents each. Nothing doing. I would as soon think of eating fried canary birds or parrots on the perch.

"Do you go gunning for robins in these parts?" I asked Mr. Fligg.

"If the bird is sober he shoots him, but most general he gets drunk, falls out of the tree and breaks his fool neck. Saves lots of ammunition, too," Mr. Fligg added, as an item of interest to hunters of easy game.

"But what makes the robin intoxicated? Where does he procure the cup that cheers and inebriates?"

"China berries puts the robin under the tree with his toes a-sticking up," said Mr. Fligg, "and it shore is a sad sight to them that loves the beauties of nature. A soused robin is a fearful scene. Look not upon the China berry when it is yellor and full of juice, for at the last it b'eth like a gin fizz and there ain't no bromo-seltzer."

"Could you show me some of those loaded berries?" I asked, beginning to absorb Mr. Fligg's gloomy train of thought.

"Easy enough. The robin can abate his thirst in this town to heat the hand. Jest you come along."

Mr. Fligg towed me around the corner and pointed to a clump of low, squat trees in a dooryard. The foliage had departed from the limbs, at the end of which hung great clusters of yellow, tight-skinned berries the size of small marbles. One beary robin, whose feathers were ruffled the wrong way, sat huddled in the fork of a tree, blinking dully at the winter landscape.

"There you are," said Mr. Fligg, in hollow accents. "Them berries lures the bright harfinger of spring to his doom, which doom is the drunkard's grave. Look at that feller in the crotch of the tree. Isn't he a bird? Reminds me of some city bum hanging round in the morning to sweep out the saloon for a eye opener. We don't have the robins like we used to. The demon berry has killed 'em all off."

"What is there that dulls the manly instinct in the bosom of the robin? Why should he put a berry into his mouth to steal away his dope?" I asked.

"Them berries is full of juice," Mr. Fligg explained. "They hang on the trees all winter and ferment. I reckon them berries fools a bird the same as hard offer does a man. The fermented juice makes the robin foolish and tipsy, and he gets just scandalous. After the first round the berryearer wakes up with a head on him and a fuzzy tongue like a Turkish rug, and he hits up the berries again to drown his grie and remorse, if any. The pace soon kills the bird, if the niggers don't knock him in the head for potpie. I've et robins in my time, but that time has passed. My motto is not to encourage no form of vice.

"When the big flocks used to come here the town sounded worse than Fourth of July, Christmas, and election day all rolled into one, with a couple of dog fights on the side, Next



"Offered to Sell Me a Mess for Five Cents Apiece."

Every morning while the robins was tooting it up in town the old lady set a large pan of bromo-seltzer under the China trees in her yard. It was wonderful the way the drunk robins took to that soft drink. They liked it special. A sip or two steadied their shaky toes and nerves, and the tunes they whistled for the kind old W. C. T. U. lady filled her immediate vicinity with fine music. Regular melody, it was. But somehow the robins don't come like they once did. Delirium tremens, exposure from sleeping on the cold ground and people hunting 'em with sticks has thinned out the robin redbreast to a frazzle. Their habits, being loose and dissolute, killed off millions of them birds along the gulf coast. I'm sorry about it, too."

"But isn't there some swell hunting here with guns for sober and industrious game?"



"All Day Long Them Birds Set in the China Trees to Tank Up, Fight and Fall Out."

"Swellest ever," said Mr. Fligg. "Some of it is too swell, but it goes just the same. We've got to stand for it. Now, there is the item of the \$150 shotgun. That was top notch Nimroding and no mistake. Gasolene Harry pulled off a hunting party last Thanksgiving Day in a boat down the beach."

"Is Gasolene Harry a member of the Oil trust?"

"Not yet. He's a Chicago man what's going to put in a line of automobiles, but he has only got the gasoline so far. That's why we call him Gasolene Harry. Well, on Thanksgiving Day a couple of Harry's pals came down from Chicago to kill ducks. They set out in a catboat with one roast turkey, some bottles and a colored man to serve the victuals proper. It was a swell layout—velvet hunting coats and caps, wading boots and guns that cost fortunes in cash money. After sailing down the coast a piece, Gasolene Harry, Mr. Bobb, our lawyer, one of the Chicago duck-killers and the colored feller got out to slay game on land. Mr. Mills, the fattest Chicago shooter, and his \$150 gun stuck to the boat to pop whatever rose up out of the sea and attacked him.

"The land party sloped along half a dozen miles. The catboat got stuck in the mud and hung a couple of hours and there wasn't a thing for the \$150 gun to bang at. Mr. Mills shivered some in his velvet coat and waited for the tide to rise. On shore the big hunting party got tired, built a fire and set in a row on a log waiting for the boat and the turkey.

"At last the boat got afloat and sailed down to the party. The fat Mr. Mills sighted a duck ahead. He crawled out on the bow and lay on his stomach a peering at the duck from under the boom.

"Say, Mister," said the boatman, "you just crawl to the other side of the boom and I'll luff her over so you all can get a clear shot."

"So the fat hunter laid his \$150 hammerless gun on deck and started to crawl under the boom. While he was doing it he stirred the gun with his toe or something. Anyhow, she went off, kicked herself the full length of the boat, hit the boatman on the leg and hopped over the stern into three feet of cold water. The load went the other way. A handful of duck shot just missed the fat feller's ear and cut the halyards close to the mast. Down came the sail and trailed over the side, all of which free show paralyzed the hunting party setting on the log thirty yards away. As soon as he thought of it the boatman stuck a pole in the mud to mark the spot and then tossed out an anchor. The fat hunter was shore sick about the \$150 gun. He offered the boatman \$10 to get out and wade some, so the boatman took off his pants and prowled around in the mud with his toes. It didn't take him long—only about five minutes—to wade \$10 worth in the cold water. He never touched the gun. Then the main party waded out, fixed up the halyards and sailed away to a more cheerful spot to eat the turkey. When the hunters come home that night all the game they bring was half of the same turkey."

"What became of the \$150 high-kicking gun?" I asked.

"That's what I'm coming to now," said Mr. Fligg. "Next day the fat hunter put up a reward of \$50 and four fishermen went to the marked spot with a shrimp seine half a mile long. Their idea was to surround the gun with the seine and have the lead line cut the weapon out of the mud. It was a fine idea, but the swell gun was a swell kicker, too. The fisherman got her surrounded all right and was hauling 'n when a oyster shell touched the trigger and the other barrel went off. That farewell shot tore a big gap in the seine, the \$150 hammerless gun jumped through the hole and escaped again, and buried so deep in the mud the seine couldn't pick it up no more. The gun is there yet if rust hasn't et her up."

Note.—Certain makers of ammunition immersed a loaded shell in water forty-eight hours, placed the shell in a gun and exploded the charge in the presence of witnesses. This statement is made on behalf of Mr. Fligg, who likes the glamour of truth spread over his narratives.

You've Been Thinking

By CHARLES BATTALL LOOMIS

"CYNTHIA, CYNTHIA, I'VE BEEN THINKING"

THE "GUSHER"

A Somewhat Cynical Discourse on a Product of Afternoon Teas



Of course an afternoon tea is not to be taken seriously, and I hold that any kind of conversation goes, as long as it is properly vacuous and irrelevant.

One meets many kinds at afternoon teas—the bored, the bashful, the intense, and once in a while the interesting, but for pure delight there is nothing quite equals the gusher. She is generally very pretty. Nature insists upon compensations.

When you meet a real gusher—one born to gush—you can just throw all bounds of probability aside and say the first thing that comes into your head, sure that it will meet with an appreciative burst of enthusiasm, for your true gusher is nothing if she is not enthusiastic. There are those who listen to everything you say and punctuate it with "Yes-s-s, yes-s-s yes-s-s," until the sibilance gets on your nerves; but the attention of the Simon-pure gusher is purely subconscious. She could not repeat a thing of what you have told her a half minute after hearing it. Her real attention is on something else all the while—perhaps on the gowns of her neighbors, perhaps on the reflection of her pretty face—but never on the conversation. And why should it be? Is a tea a place for the exercise of concentration? Perish the thought.

You are presented to her as "Mr. Mmmm," and she is "delighted," and smiles so ravishingly that you wish you were twenty years younger. You do not yet know that she is a gusher. But her first remark labels her. Just to test her, for there is something in the animation of her face and the farawayness of the eye that makes you suspect her sincerity, you say:

"I happen to have six children—"

"Oh, how perfectly dee-ar! How old are they?"

She scans the gown of a woman who has just entered the room and, being quite sure that she is engaged in a mental valuation of it, you say:

"They're all of them six."

"Oh, how lovely!" Her unseeing eyes look you in the face. "Just the right age to be companions."

"Yes, all but one."

The eye has wandered to another gown, but the sympathetic voice says:

"Oh, what a pi-l-ty!"

"Yes, isn't it? But he's quite healthy."

It's a game now fair game—and you're glad you came to the tea!

"Healthy, you say? How nice it's perfectly lovely to be healthy. Do you live in the country?"

"Not exactly the country. We live in Madison Square, under the trees."

"Oh, how perfectly idyllic!"

"Yes; we have all the advantages of the city and the delights of the

country. I got a permit from the Board of Education to put up a little bungalow alongside the Worth monument, and the children bathe in the fountain every morning when the weather is cold enough."

"Oh, how charming! How many children have you?"

"Only seven. The oldest is five and the youngest is six."

"Just the interesting age. Don't you think children fascinating?"

Again the roaming eye and the vivacious smile.

"Yes, indeed. My oldest—he's fourteen and quite original. He says that when he grows up he doesn't know what he'll be."

"Really? How cute!"

"Yes, he says it every morning, a half hour before breakfast."

"Fancy! How old did you say he was?"

"Just seventeen, but perfectly girl-like and masculine."

She nods her head, bows to an acquaintance in a distant part of the

room, and murmurs in musical, sympathetic tones—

"That's an adorable age."

"What, thirteen?"

"Yes. Did you say it was a girl?"

"Yes, his name's Ethel. He's a great help to her mother."

"Little darling!"

"Yes; I tell them there may be city advantages; but I think they're much better off where they are."

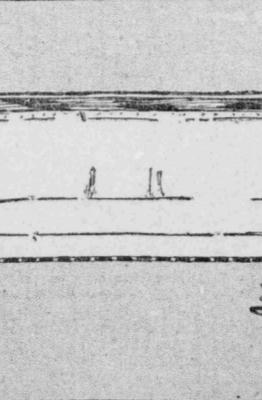
"Where did you say you were?"

"On the Connecticut shore. You see, having only the one child, Mrs. Smith is very anxious that it should 'row up healthy' (absent-minded nods indicative of full attention), and so little Ronald never comes to the city at all. He plays with the fishermen's child and gets great drafts of fresh air."

"Oh, how perfectly entrancing! You're quite a poet."

"No; I'm a painter."

Now she is really attentive. She thought you were just an ordinary beast, and she finds that you may



be a Hon. Smith? Perhaps you're Hopkinson Smith.

"Oh, do you paint? How perfectly adorable! What do you paint—landscapes or portraits?"

Again the eye wanders and she inventories a dress, and you say:

"Oils."

"Do you ever allow visitors to come to your studio?"

"Why, I never prevent them, but I'm so afraid it will bore them that I never ask them."

"Oh, how could anybody be bored at anything?"

"But every one hasn't your enthusiasm. My studio is in the top of the Madison square tower, and I never see a soul from week's end to week's end."

"Oh, then you're not married."

"Dear, no; a man who is wedded to his art mustn't commit bigamy."

"Oh, how clever. So you're a bachelor?"

"Yes, but I have my wife for a chaperon, and I'd be delighted to have you come and take tea with us some Saturday from six until three."

"Perfectly delighted!" Her eye now catches sight of an acquaintance just coming in, and as you prepare to leave her you say:

"Hope you don't mind a little artistic unconventionality. We always have beer at our teas served with sugar and lemons, the Russian fashion."

"Oh, I think it's much better than cream. I adore unconventionality."

"You're very glad you met me, I'm sure."

"Awfully good of you to say so."

Anything goes at an afternoon tea. But it's better not to go.

"Anything goes at an afternoon tea. But it's better not to go."

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