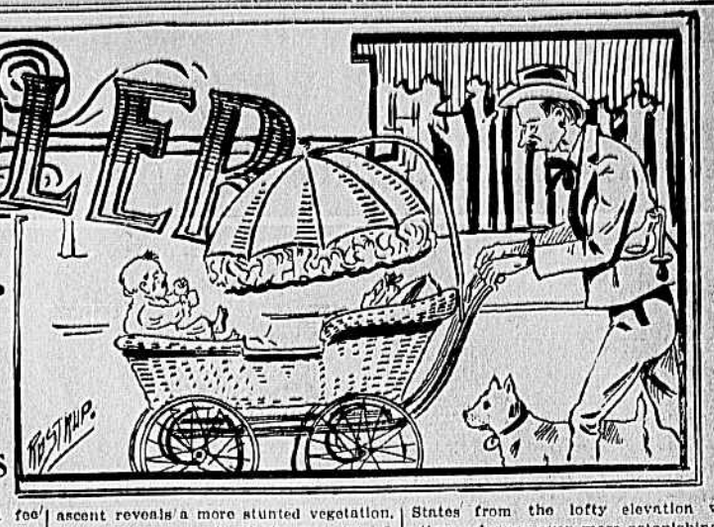
WHIMS OF THE IDLER



HE BURIED HIS HEAD IN CLOUDS.

The Idle Reporter Surveys the World from the Peaks of Otter and Criticises Some Who Go There.

THOUSANDS OF INITIALS HAVE BEEN CUT ON THE ROCKS

One-half has never been told of the valorous hosts who, in the last century, have ascended the Peaks of Otter. And that, too, despite the fact that these heroic pilgrims have exhibited a degree of bravery not even surpassed by the Old Guard of Napoleon, the legions of Caesar, or the weather-beaten warriors who led Pickett's charge at Gettysburg. Perhaps you who have climbed the rock-crested summit of this weird Virginia mountain will pause and modestly ask: "Why are we heroes? We can't remember that we expended anything but perspiration in making the ascent of this rugged, but interesting, monument to the grandeur of Nature's work." My explanation, though egotistical, will impress you with your valor. Did you not risk your life to carve your initials or your name on one of those beetling crags? Of the thirteen hundred tourists who have climbed the Peaks this summer—or rather the Peak, for the noun ought to be singular—I, ego, me, the same writer of this eccentric article, am the only mortal who didn't have sufficient self-respect to cut the letters of his imperishable name in one of those massive granite boulders. You don't believe me? Well, go up the mountain again and see for yourself. As you wade through the discarded chicken bones and bread crumbs of thousands of pilgrims dating back to time immemorial, you will see initials on every side of you—initials to the right of you and initials to the left of you; initials in front of you and initials behind you; initials above you and initials below you; names carved in lichens and names cut in trees; names hewn in stone and names imbedded in benches; names scrawled with pencils and names scratched in window panes with diamonds; names daubed on stones with whitewash and names smeared on precipices with paint—in short, names and initials in crags and crevices and holes and crannies and doors and windows and trees and benches and stones and boulders and crags and chairs and pails and fences and everywhere—yes, everywhere. History records the memory of but one frail mortal who ever made this fascinating trip without leaving behind some reminder of his patronymic. I am that frail mortal.

The tourist who visits the little house at Stratford-on-Avon, where Shakespeare was born, is first of all impressed by the dazzling sight of thousands of names and initials which visitors have written in and about the quaint old structure. But this aggregation of monograms, letters and appellatives sinks into hopeless, helpless puling insignificance when compared to the superb outlay spread before the eye on the Peaks of Otter. What is a houseful of initials compared to a half mountainful? For be it said that the myriad host of letters is frothing over the summit of the Peak itself and gradually pushing its way down the mountainside and into the orchard-tufted valley below. Some of the irrepressibles, who would fain perpetuate their memories with pocket-knife, chisel or brush, have risked their very lives to accomplish their ends. Mark those initials which stand out a foot high on yon awful ledge. Some poor dolt ventured his neck to put them there. Note that monogram now entwined in bearded lichens. Some giddy girl, supported by friends behind her, faced the danger of destruction to enshrine it in the everlasting mosses of that crag. Go farther on and read the story of the next name. It is the handmark of some prudent matron. She did not risk much—only the responsibility of a jolt—but, be the hazard what it might, she had to leave behind some souvenir of her visit for prospective pilgrims. Vanitas vanitatium! Is it any wonder Thackeray was iconoclastic and that Shakespeare said "What fools these mortals be?"

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But far be it from me to humiliate the Peaks of Otter. It is the other folks who have done it. I have drunk mint juleps in the presence of preachers, and I have even told mothers that their babies were not pretty, but may the goblins get me if I ever say a word to belittle that noble pile that rubs its stony cheeks against the rising sun and catches the first falling tears of the skies above. Every inch of the sublime spectacle thrilled me, from the elfen hollows of the mountain's mystic base to the Brobdingnagian rocks that crown its cloud-veiled summit. Verily, the sublime spectacle awed me into keeping my mouth shut—a psychological state far more wonderful than that of refraining from carving my initials. On reaching the last colossal stone of the mighty pyramid which forms the apex of the Titanic heap, one feels that he has attained the utmost heights of the world—the ultima Thule of this planet—or what the Commander-in-Chief, who accompanied me on my pilgrimage, designated as the "jumpin' off place of creation."

As a cold-blooded, statistical proposition, the Peaks of Otter is not the highest point in Virginia. Even the Flat Top Mountain, across the valley, is loftier. The Peaks is only 3,875 feet above the sea level and 2,875 feet above the valley, while Flat Top is 4,001 feet above the sea level. For years past I have been meeting Virginians who almost foamed at the mouth with indignation when one ventured the assertion that other mountains in this State surpassed the Peaks in height, but even the most insistent have now thrown up the sponge. Elliott's Knob, on North Mountain, in Augusta county, leads the list with an altitude of 4,473 feet above the sea level, while Bald Knob (Mountain Lake), in Giles, lopes proudly behind with a record of 4,346 feet. But what are these mere bumps on the cheek of nature compared to the appalling wart which looms up above the green Bedford hills like some relic of mythological days. Other mountains may rise heavenward and may crumble with the mutations of centuries, but the Peaks will always be found at the old stand, and is guaranteed to come up to all the advertised specifications. What the summit lacks in height—and after all height makes but little difference except to those inquisitive friends who possess tape lines—the mountain makes up in precipitousness and picturesqueness. Its interesting features are innumerable. There is the Table Rock, where one, looking haughtily down on the turkey buzzards flying in the valley below, eats his fried chicken and sandwiches; the Balance Rock, which one may turn, but not uproot from its stony socket, and the Needle's Eye, which one crawls through with the delicious sensation that if he slips he may break his neck. Indeed, the whole summit affords one ample facilities for getting rid of a superfluous wife or kinsman, though I am reliably informed that there have been few, if any, serious accidents on the mountain. It is to be hoped, however, that no banana peels are thrown carelessly about the place. A misstep on one of these hereditary enemies of man would certainly justify the assertion that there was "something doing" in the valley below.

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As stated above, the Peaks has grown to be the designation of the most abrupt of the three great mountains in Bedford—the Peaks proper, Flat Top and Apple Orchard. The two last mentioned cut no figure in society. They are not grewsome enough. The trio of mountains are about twelve miles from the county seat, Bedford City, and the magnificent road leading to them takes the traveler through one of the most beautiful and prosperous sections of Virginia. All along the route one sees vast orchards, dappled with crimson apples, and if one is not abnormally pious he will steal some of this fruit.

Livery is very cheap in Bedford. Four or five dollars will procure an excellent vehicle and a competent driver, who will explain everything and thank you not to grumble over petty grievances along the route. One can ride to a spot within 700 yards of the summit, but after the tying place is reached, all hands—or rather all legs—are called upon to do some artistic walking. Mrs. E. D. Gregory, of Bedford, and her painstaking son have written a charming little book on the Peaks, but the cloven hoof of the compositor, or rather his fine Italian hand, has destroyed one of the neatest touches of the authors. In describing the climb the Gregorys attempted to say: "The teams are here left behind, and the ascent, ever excelsior, a distance of 700 yards, is made on foot over a narrow path, etc." The printer substituted the word "excessive" for "excelsior," and nothing but distance kept Mr. Gregory from going after him with a shotgun. For my part I think the typo had some sense of humor in him, for the ascent is both "excelsior" and "excessive."

The good, but hefty, woman who accompanied me, during the interval consumed in climbing the first 100 yards, gloried in the fact that she had discovered a fine anti-fat treatment, but before she had proceeded much farther she was wheezing and blowing and snorting and puffing like a locomotive. Ere she reached the top she was clamoring for the scalp of the man who "runs" the mountain.

* * *

The Peaks of Otter is owned by the Miller estate, of Baltimore, and as an admission—or rather elevation—a fee of fifty cents is charged. The property has not proved such a geological elephant as one might suppose. The land comprises 3,000 acres, and it is said that it pays well. It extends from the summit of the Peaks northeast to Flat Top and northwest to Hearkening Hill. During the boom days many ambitious schemes in connection with the mountain were entertained, but shadows deeper than those which purple the surrounding hills soon fell on these projects. A picturesque little hotel now nestles among the rocks of the summit. Here one can get excellent meals and a night's lodging.

It is quite the thing to stay overnight at the Peaks and see the sun rise; indeed, nearly all tourists do this. The folks of Bedford, as well as travelers who have enjoyed this experience, think it is worse than suicide to come away from the mountain without seeing the sun rise or set. I was one of those hurying-scurrying mortals who had to forego the pleasure. And, gracious, the way the more fortunate ones scoffed at me for having missed the sight! Tourists, you know, always do tear one another to pieces about missing this or that feature. In Rome there are 365 or more churches to be seen. When I was in the Eternal City I conscientiously inspected 364 of these churches. But, alas, I ignored one, and my whole pleasure was marred, for every traveler I met, eagerly seizing on to this frail thread, laughed at and ridiculed me for missing the 365th house of worship. They said I had gone to Rome for nothing—that I had deliberately let slip the finest opportunity of my visit. And so it is with the sunrise and sunset specialties of the Peaks of Otter. The very dogs in Bedford City will bark at you if you come back to town and confess that you left without seeing the solar orb do its famous upshoot and downshoot performances. While I am still deeply humiliated by the sense of my own negligence, I am, however, profoundly grateful that I saw the Peaks at all.

An exquisite essay, valuable alike to scientists and to lay readers, could be written about the flora of the Peaks. The vegetation from its base upwards is fascinatingly interesting. At the foot of the mountain one sees acres of magnificent chestnuts and oaks, but a gradual ascent reveals a more stunted vegetation. On the very summit of the mountain I saw golden rods, mountain laurel and dwarfed chestnuts, while 200 or 300 feet below the crowning rocks are dozens of species of wild flowers. The immense boulders which form the apex of the Peak are covered with a fungous growth which rapidly darkens with the absence of moisture and looks very much like dried leaves. A little lower down the mountain the granite takes on beautiful lichens and velvety mosses, while maiden-hair ferns adorn the Peaks almost to its topmost heights. Many of the ferns are taken away by visitors, while the mosses and lichens, as before intimated, are scraped away to make room for initials and names.

There is very little to be said of the fauna of the Peaks, though even the highest rock is not without its forms of animal life. Our party, while contemplating the beauties of the valley below and wondering if the sun would produce freckles, was driven away from its lofty perch by a swarm of winged aunts, which evidently mistook us for a free lunch counter. Two or three hundred feet from the top notch one frequently sees snails and also a repulsive brown worm about six inches long and blessed with a multitude of legs strongly suggestive of a fine tooth comb. If all the limbs of this worm get as weary in ascending the mountain as my two legs did, the poor critter must reach the limit of fatigue every time it takes a climb. H. C. Rosser, the manager of the aerial hotel among the crags, has an interesting beagle hound named Lynchburg, which spends its life among the rocks and lives luxuriantly on the pickings from discarded lunches. Lynchburg can climb the boulders like a Gibraltar monkey, and so can Mr. Rosser, for that matter. When things are dull the little hound goes out on the rocks and howls. His solo parts accord very well with the scenery. A plain, everyday hound dog that lives down in the valley below comes up to the Peaks every day for its lunch. This pup, like the acrobatic Lynchburg, knows that where travelers visit, crumbs and chicken bones may always be found.

* * *

There are all sorts of tales as to how far one can see from the Peaks. Some say that the eye can look into four States from the lofty elevation while others advance even more astonishing assertions. This humble scribbler will venture no statement on the subject. He knows, however, that he would hesitate long before he did anything wicked in Richmond while his wife was on top the Peaks.

This account of the visit to the Bedford Mountains is submitted with tremulous diffidence, and the writer shivers in his boots lest some grim statistician shall menacingly stride forward and say that the figures given above are wrong. Perhaps they are. What's the good of figgurs anyhow, if folks can't get them wrong? It may be, too, that some who write poetry and frequently ejaculate, "Isn't that perfectly lovely," will say that my noble theme has been treated irreverently. And unconventional this effort surely is!

But believe me, when my party reached that lofty pinnacle and I gazed upon the exquisite panorama before me, a something welled up in my bosom which was more ennobling, more uplifting and more spiritual than any two hour sermon I have ever heard. In sooth I fancy I would yet be standing on that frightful elevation and dreaming dreams no mortal ever dreamt before, had not the Commander-in-Chief pulled at my cutaway coattails and reminded me that I had smashed a bottle of tomato catsup in the pocket of one of my sartorial caudal appendages.

HIS
The Idler Reporter
MARK

A TRAGEDY IN WHICH DUCHESS WAS NOT GUILTLESS

By CHIMMIE FADDEN (E. W. Townsend). Copyright, 1903.

Duchess is a good goil, and I have no kick due me on her temper; but when someting happens dat I has no more to do wit dan de bull pup has to do wid de state of de wedder, den I gets a specimen of de finest brand of French ragging dat de market affords.

I don't know what was it dat she missed connection wit a parasol she expected to get from Miss Fannie, or what 'ell, but one day Duchess gets me in a corner and she says: "Cheems, what is your position in dis house?"

"Second man," I says. "Did anybody ring?"

"Is it de second man's place to be groom for Miss Fannie?" Duchess says.

"I rides after her," says I, "because I was brought up to do it proper when I was a kid, and Whiskers could take a hitching strap to me if I ever took me eyes off Miss Fannie when she was riding. Dat job is special."

"You are valet for Mr. Paul," says Duchess.

"He has a Jap valet of his own," says I.

"But you order his boots," says Duchess. "You get him ready, if he's only going somewheres for a week-end."

"Dat's because de Jap orders riding boots for yachting; and if he gets him ready for a trip, he never knows where he'll land."

"Dose is poor excuses," says Duchess. "De odder solvants would tink more proper of you if you done only second man's woik."

"I'll tink about dat," I says, "when de odder solvants pays me wages. What's on your mind, woman?" I says "It's not me job dat's boddering you. Sing your song, and dance your dance, and let me see where you're at."

"You is de real director of de solcus and I have no part in it," says Duchess, and dat shows me where her little bootees was pinching.

We was getting up a solcus—a amateur solcus—for de benefit of yacht sailors 'orphans; what dere ain't any of 'em neared dan Scandehoovia, where de yacht sailors come from. But dat made no difference; dere had to be a benefit, and yacht sailors' orphans had a romantic sound, as Willy Widdy said, so dat went; and our folks said de solcus might be held on our lawn, cause we had de most conveniences for solving tea.

Dat put it up to Mr. Paul to be director, and he, being too strong to woik hard, puts it next to me.

Dere was a sweel comes over to take charge of de riding turns, and I gets up some comics for de laugh side of de show, and takes charge of de woikmen getting up de tents and seats; and looks after de places where refreshments was to be set up; and gets de band, teaches de clown how to do a comic fall, practices up a few tumbling tricks of me own, learns our kiddie—Little Duke—to do a ring-master turn for Little Miss Fannie, and almost had something to do.

Soon as she heard dat dere was to be a solcus Duchess was croisy to be part of de show. Dere's a whole bunch of tricks she can do, but none of 'em is in de solcus line, and I had to pretend dat I wasn't on to what she wanted. If dat goil didn't have to woik for a living she be a actress. Sure! I never did see a woman who liked to be in de lime light more dan Duchess. And she's all right when she's dere, for she ain't a little bit shy as a good looker; but she belongs to de modern school, and tinks dat to be a good-looker is all dere is in de game, and won't study no part. I've tried her in de

"CHEEMS, WHAT IS YOUR POSITION IN DIS HOUSE?"

teatricals we has ev'ry winter in de solvants' hall.

But dat dug no subway wit her: she was bound to be in de solcus, and when I couldn't see it, de way she found places where I was a mile off from being. It was a wonder.

Of course, a man dat wants to, can beat a woman wit a hammer; but if a hammer isn't in de game, de easiest way to do, if you've got to beat her, is not to. So I hustled to find a job in de solcus dat Duchess could hold down, and I got it. I had to.

I had a turn I, was rehosing Little Miss Fannie, and our kiddie and de bull pup trough his tricks, while Kiddie was ring-master. De pup done noble in all his tricks, except dat he was no dead sure proposition on going trough de hoop every time. Mostly when de Little One held de hoop, after we'd covered it wid paper, de pup would balk, till he'd run around behind it to make sure dat Little One had de piece of meat he was to get. If de hoop wasn't covered he'd see de meat, and go trough like a shot.

I doubles de size of de chunk of meat, but it was no sure ting dat he'd butt de paper till he'd took a peep behind to see for fair dat his wages was dere. You see, he didn't like de paper end of his trick, anyway; and I was up against how to make de turn a sure shot, till, one day, de folks from our house come down on de lawn to see us rehoise. Willy Widdy was along, and she held a pint measure poodle in her arms. She was wise. Dat poodle was always in her arms if she was strolling within a mile of de bull pup. I had sometimes tought dat de pup had made up his mind dat to die a hor'ble deat would be a bargain counter price to pay for de joy of one chance to bite dat poodle in two. I never did see anyting dat wanted anyting else so bad as de pup wanted to get a hammer-lock wit his jaw on dat poodle! What made him feel it so hard was dat de poodle knew it, and used to give de pup de ha ha from where he'd laugh at him in de Widdy's arms. Dogs do a lot of tinking about tings like dose. Of course, any good pup would like to bite a poodle; de poodle knew dat; he knew he was safe in Widdy's arms, and so he made life more to de bad for de pup by making faces at him, and, as I was telling you, giving him de ha ha.

Well, pup had balked de hoop wit paper a few times, and I had de kiddies in a fit because I was going to give pup a bit of a welting, when all of a sudden pup sees poodle, as Widdy was just going to walk behind de banner, and de way pup takes de jump trough de paper, hoping to get Widdy off guard, was lovely to see. But Widdy was leary, as she always is when she has fetched poodle into de same acre of ground as pup; and master bull dog had anodder hard luck story to worry about.

Dat set me tinking. When de folks had went back to de house I tell Duchess to borrow poodle, and fetch him down to where we rehoising, but not to put Widdy on to what part we wanted de poodle to play. Duchess seen her chance to butt into de show, and she soon had poodle dere in her arms, and I tried de trick. It was lovely. All I had to do was to hold poodle on de opposite side of de hoop, and pup went trough 'em as fast as de coachman's kid could paste on new paper. He never renigs once. He'd a jumped till he wore his feet off on de lousand-to-one chance dat I'd be off guard and let him get a mouthful of poodle. And poodle was having de time of his life, too. When he seen how hard pup was woiking, and dat notting was doing except de puppy, poodle near barked his head off laughing.

"Take poodle back to Widdy," I says to Duchess, "and say notting about dat we is going to make a actor of him. I've got a place for you in de show where you'll only have to put on your swell rags and stroll on in a haughty manner."

Well, well, dere's a heap of trouble in dis life dat comes when we tinks we has only to push a button to get a good ting

"I TRIED DE TRICK—IT WAS LOVELY."

we has all laid out for ourselves. De solcus comes off and was going like a hurry-call ambulance. Nottin to stop it. De loidies and gents had done deir riding turns, some college lads had done some straight tumbling, and it was fine. Mr. Paul had made good as a straight ring master, and den he introduces me as de only 'riginal Bowery song and dance artist left on top of eart, and I'd obliged wit de old favrite, "On de Banks of de Bronks, Where me Summer Goil Hangs Out."

Next Mr. Paul introduces "Little Miss Fannie and her Wonderful Trick Bull Pup." Little One come wit pup, and our kid, and I follows along, as clown, to see dat de pup done all right. De kids makes a great hit, and say, I was proud of Little Duke. Most of the folks there was friends of our folks, and dey knows me and Duchess by sight, and when dey hears dat Little Duke was our kid dey gives him a great jolly, and kiddie says his lines beautiful, all his th's being in place and doing duty. When de kiddies had put de pup trough all his tricks but de hoop, Duchess stroll in from de dressing room, like she was a swell out for a walk around de block; and she has Widdy's poodle in her arms, and de style of her gets a great reception. She hears de folks saying dat she was Hortense, Fannie's maid, and she pipes me off wit a wink, like she was saying: "I told you I'd be de star of de show!"

She was! My, my, she was for a fact! Little Miss Fannie held pup's head away from de hoop until just as Duchess was passing behind, and den she lets the pup see what was doing, and turns him loose. Pup gives a little cry of joy, makes a running jump of it trough de hoop, wit his mouth wide open, like he wanted to be ready for dat bite he'd hoped for so long. I nearly had a fit when I seen him land like a flying machine against Duchess, and dat French hussy drops poodle and lets out a yell dat was heard on de odder side of de sound.

Pup had caught a mouthful of paper as he flew trough de hoop, and dat saved all of our lives, for he was part blinded, and didn't get a fair hold at foist. But he got hold enough to nail poodle's hind leg, and poodle gives a squeal dat brought Widdy down from her seat flying. Whiskers seen dat dere was trouble, and he flies after Widdy; I jumps for de dogs; Kiddies gets into de rally; Mr. Paul jumps into de ring to grab de kids, and de audience applaus to beat de band—what was playing shiver music. Dere was tings doing all over de lot.

I gets into de center foist, and de pup lets go his holt to shift to a better one; I grabs him by bote hind legs and chases, him moaning most sorrowful, but licking his chops, for he had drawn foist blood, anyway.

I makes a quick pass of de pup to de coachman's kid, and tells him on his life not to stop running till he's locked de pup up in de stables; and den I goes back to de dressing tent, and meets Widdy calling for smelling salts, a doctor, bandages, lin'ment, de police and a amb'lance.

"What have you done wit dat horrible devil dog dat has murdered my beautiful darling pet?" she says, like a tragedy actress on top of de stoige.

"Madam," I says, "de bull pup was shot and drowned, and de coachman has gone for to get a pound of poison to give him, and de gardner is fixing a rope to hang de villain, for sure," I says.

"He should be boined alive!" Widdy says.

"He will be, ma'am," I says, just as soon as we can light a fire."

"And your cat-wife should be boined alive and sent to prison for dis murder," says Widdy.

"No need, Ma'm," I says. "Duchess has took a pound of carbonic acid, and cut her throat; and I'm just going to get me gun for her," I says. "Let me see your beautiful dog's leg, Ma'am," I says. "Is he much hoit?"

"Never you mind poor Fido's leg," she

"DAT WAS BEAUTIFUL DONE, CHAMES," SHE SAYS.

says, "You go and telephone for de vet."

Well, Whiskers comes chasing, and orders me to go back and finish me clown act, dat was included in de dog turn, and me and Mr. Paul soon had do show running again; but de audience was all laughing about de turn dat was not down on de bill. When Widdy hears 'em she was foist near croisy wit rage; but she is no farmer, and pretty soon she shifts to make a good face of it; for dames like her can stand most any kind of a game except to be made a game of deirselves, and so she pretended to take it as a joke, and got out of being part of de joke.

De show was a winner, boodle-wise, and if ever we finds any yacht sailors' orphans, dey'll have ice cream and candy de rest of deir lives; but I was feeling like I wished I had a home as far off as Scandehoovia to go to, all de time I was helping to solve refreshments after de ball was over. I knowed dat I could square meself wit Mr. Paul, all right, but I had me opinion dat Miss Fannie would be dead sore on me for not telling Widdy dat I was going to borrow her poodle.

But when de folks had went, and Whiskers had drove off wit Widdy to de vet's, Miss Fannie calls me to de hall, and she looks around to see dot no one was rubbering, and den she shakes hands wit me. "Dat was beautiful done, Chames," she says.

"Tanks, Miss Fannie," I says. "What was beautiful done?"

"Laming Mrs. Harding's poodle, so dat de vet will have to put it out of de would wit clorform. You did it on poipose, of course?"

Say, I was in what dey calls a problem play, den. I hadn't done de poodle on poipose, but if it made me stand to de good with Miss Fannie to have her tink dat I did, I was willing to stand for dat, or anything else. So, I just looks wise, and says, "Tank you Miss Fannie," and goes on me way.

But when I sees Duchess I tells her to put me wise on de game.

"It is so simple," says Duchess. "Ma'mzelle Fannie admire Madam Harding very well, but she despises dat Madam make so much of dat poodle. Also Whiskaire, he do not like de poodle. What will you?"

"Anyting dat's coming to me," says I.

"Very well. Ma'mzelle Fannie, she know very true dat Madam Harding will never more be seen wit de poodle, because a woman like her would radder be seen wit a pair of soiled boots, or gloves—and she'd die before dat—dan to be seen wit a ting dat has made her of de redic'lous. So she will now be more agreeable to Ma'mzelle, and, perhaps, to Whiskaire."

If Duchess hadn't doped de game to me right, I'd been paralyzed when Widdy comes to me in a few days, smiling like she was a six time winner, and says dat de poodle was not much hoit; and did I know of some kind people dat would 'preciate and tenderly care for Fido, because she didn't tink de olimate of Westchester county was good for de little dear's healt.

I tells her sure; dat me own modder was all her life trying for just such a beautiful dog as Fido; and her old age would be like a continuous performance picnic if she had a poodle like Fido to board wit her.

What do you tink? Widdy tells me to take Fido to me modder, and pays a case—a whole, long, one-spot—for de board of de dog every week. Modder is getting chesty wit de income, and, as she feeds it propper, and don't coddle it, it's getting some manners and spirit; and de old lady has more fun wit it dan a box of monkies.

I was satisfied to get out of de proposition on dat lay, but what bodders me is, dat Duchess never got no roast nor nothing; and has a smile like she is stuck on herself, whenever I speaks of de job; and she has de parasol of Miss Fannie's she's longed for. Do you spose dat French goil had de wit and nolve to feed de poodle to de pup on poipose? What?

TALE OF THE GEEZER WHO FINALLY STRUCK THE RIGHT KEY.

By BILLY BURGUNDY.
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Once upon a time in the bustling city of Squashport, which is where the accommodations and freights sometimes quench their thirst, there lived a geezer named James Medders.

Jim was a self-made man and the pride of the metropolis.

After hiding his fact behind the arithmetic and geography until he was too long for short pants, Jim declared all bets off and got a job as clerk in Hiram Bender's general store.

He made good. And at the end of his third year with Bender's he found himself six hundred and fifty ahead of the game, so he handed in the conventional thirty days' notice.

When Caleb Hedges's son came in from the farm to take his place, Jim put him wise to the combination of the safe and the cost mark, and gave him the keys. Then he got into his Sunday suit and went over to the drug store to hear Doc Fletcher argue politics with old Judge dent.

Before he went home for supper Jim bought a round of cigars.

The next day he rented the store on the corner and put the carpenter to work.

Two weeks later he opened a Department store. The sign read:

JAMES MEDDERS,
Dealer in
Dry Goods, Groceries, Boots, Shoes, Notions, Hardware, Provisions and Supplies.
Cash Paid For
Butter, Eggs, Wool and Hides.

The opening of Jim's store created a sensation. There was hardly standing room in it when the mill whistle blew for 12. Every lady in the town was there bright and early.

Mrs. Smithers declared right out that she was just that anxious to see the store that she didn't take time to wash the dishes. Mrs. Prosser announced that she was in such a hurry to get there before the rush that she had forgot to put the soup bone on the fire. Every other lady told a similar hot-foot story.

After a careful scrutiny of the stock, the dames got together near the barrel of dried apples to talk it over.

Mrs. Stubbins vowed that she had never seen anything to equal it in all her born days. She proved by a bunch of samples which she held in her hand that Jim Medders carried the very identical piece of goods she had read about in the "Delineator."

Mrs. Hickman confessed that she had not seen all of the prints, but she had priced the sardines and some were actually as high as two bits a box. Further than that she had seen with her own eyes three different kinds of cheese.

Mrs. Appleby 'lowed that Medders was sure to take a heap of trade away from Montgomery Ward & Co., and Mrs. Plunkett calculated that Jim Medders was a perfect John Wanamaker.

Deacon Eben Weatherby was so carried away with the plows and cultivators that he up and asked Jim to come over and eat dinner Sunday after church at his house.

To get right down to cases, Jim had proved himself to be the merchant prince of Squashport. There was absolutely no doubt about it.

If you wanted a pair of shoes you could walk right into Medders's and get it—if your feet happened to be the right size. If you wanted a can-opener, Jim could reach right down into the show-case and hand it to you—if he hadn't already sold it. His stock was simply enormous. Why, he even carried a full line of solid gold-plated jewelry and was agent for the Bon Ton Tailoring Co., of Chicago, Illinois.

Well, in time, Jim began to put on some. He subscribed for two magazines, took the New York Sunday papers wore a red vest and carried a cane. The young ladies of the very best families asked him up but Jim didn't wear any grass off of their paths.

He had seen pictures of city girls and he came to the conclusion that they just about came up to his plans and specifications. No girl living in a city too small to support a trolley line and a Carnegie library could preside over the aft end of his table. No siree! Such a thing as a Squashport pullet winning him out was just too ridiculous for anything. He was going to marry one who had been raised in a house with hot and cold running water and a gas meter in it.

By-em-by one came his way.

Mrs. Hickman was visited by her niece from Philadelphia Pennsylvania. Niece was a classy little blonde with a figure full of infatuating inflections and a profile that would stop a headache.

Jim was invited up to see her the night she arrived. He read the etiquette rules in the back of his pocket dictionary, bought a package of Sen-Sen and was on the spot before the fire was out in the kitchen stove. When he reached the front gate he leaned over and whispered to himself to go in and get the decision in a rush.

As soon as Mrs. Hickman called niece and Jim to come to the center and grasp the hand of acquaintanceship, niece pulled herself together and began to emit the smartest kind of smart talk. It went right over Jim's head. When she lowered her guard Jim was too weak to take advantage of the opening. Every time he braced himself to speak his tongue ran into a blockade or he got choked on something that wasn't. He was outclassed and he knew it. So he ducked.

Two months later he married Melinda Crabtree, of Squashport.

Moral: Every jewel has its proper setting.

Offending Nature.

There is an excellent old lady, who lives in Germantown and is a strong advocate of the enforcement of the blue laws. But she is very fond of the good things of the table, and for this reason she delights in doing her own marketing. The other Monday morning found her, bright and early, selecting some fine pears from her marketman.

"Are you sure," she asked, "that these pears were not picked Sunday?"

"I don't know about that," said the man, with a grin. "but I know they growed Sunday."—Philadelphia Ledger.