

# BOWSER'S ANNUAL.

Old Philosopher Goes Forth to Hunt the Festive Rabbit.

PHONES WIFEY OF PROGRESS

Tells Her He's Full of Enthusiasm and His Trip Is Bound to Be a Success; but, as Usual, the Unexpected Happens.

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From the time he came home to dinner until bedtime arrived Mrs. Bowser was puzzled over Mr. Bowser's attitude. He was good natured. He chuckled at intervals. She looked up to find him grinning. Now and then when he thought he wasn't observed he would lift up his arms like one sighting a gun. She puzzled and bothered over the matter all the evening, but asked no questions, nor did she learn of the little scheme he had on hand until next morning. Then at the breakfast table he smilingly asked:  
"Mrs. Bowser, have you any idea what day this is?"  
"It's no day in particular as far as I remember," she replied.  
"It's a great day, Mrs. Bowser, a great day. In fact, it may be said to be out of the great days in American his-



"I AM OUT HERE IN THE COUNTRY."

story. Didn't you observe anything peculiar about my attitude last night?"  
"Yes, I did. You acted like a boy that had found a cent on the street."  
"And I felt like one. I was full of anticipation. I was jubilant. I was enthusiastic. Today, Mrs. Bowser, is the anniversary of my annual rabbit hunt. Today I lie me forth to the annual slaughter, and at the same time I keep my eyes open for the first spring robin."  
"You mean you are going out into the country to plow your way through snowdrifts three feet deep all day and come home without having even seen a blue jay?"  
"I mean, my dear woman, that I am going out into the country to shoot a hundred or more rabbits and have heaps of sport. There is some snow, but that belongs with sport, and don't you worry about blue jays. The question is, How many rabbits can we make use of in the home larder? I want to see the butcher this morning as I go out and arrange with him for what's left over."  
"You are determined to go?" she asked.  
"Nothing can stop me."  
"Then you can send home about twenty-five rabbits by the farmer's team you hire, and the other hundred or so can be left at the butcher's. If we get tired of eating our share I can give the rest away to the poor. Please shoot them through the head as far as you can, so as not to mussy up the meat. You'll find telephones at almost every farmhouse. I wish you'd keep me posted as you go along."  
"By George, but that's the way to talk!" exclaimed Mr. Bowser as he brought his fist down on the table. "I thought you were going to be mean and sarcastic about it. Now I can go forth with a jubilant heart and knock over 100, 200, 500 of the plumpest, fattest rabbits in the land. Yes, I'll telephone you every hour. It will be almost as if you were with me. Say, now, but we'll make this the greatest annual hunt I ever had, and rabbit fur will be flying up and down this street like shistledown in a gale of wind."  
**Wife Encourages Him.**  
Mrs. Bowser had started out to be sarcastic, but had ended in encouraging him. The wife who sees that her husband is bound and determined should fall in line with his ideas. Half an hour after breakfast Mr. Bowser stood before her arrayed in his shooting suit, and he was in such good spirits that she was almost glad to see him go. He departed to take a suburban car and he landed among the snowdrifts five miles away, and he had been gone hardly more than an hour when he called her up by telephone to say:  
"I am out here in the country. Have just met a farmer who says that there are more'n a million rabbits a mile farther on. He says he never saw such plump, fat rabbits; says they just wait for you to shoot 'em. I arranged with the butcher to take seventy-five, but you can send word over that I'll make it 200. It's glorious out here. Goodby."  
Mr. Bowser had indeed met a farmer on the highway, and the farmer had

told him as above. He was a good hearted farmer and also a good liar. He hadn't seen a rabbit all winter, but he felt he ought to encourage a man that had come six miles on an annual hunt. An hour after the first telephone message came the second arrived. Mr. Bowser said:  
"The million rabbits had all gone by the time I got to the spot; but, oh, you ought to see the tracks left behind—such large tracks, such generous tracks, so many tracks! I am at a farmhouse where the farmer says that he has made a hundred dollars a week this season shooting rabbits. He isn't a bit jealous of me. He says for me to go ahead and shoot a thousand if I want to. It's only out in the country that you find such large hearted men. Tell the butcher to make arrangements to take at least 300, I am well and happy and am now bound for a spot where the rabbits for ten miles around congregate to be shot. The farmer will hire me his team after the slaughter."  
The reason Mr. Bowser wasn't heard of again for the next two hours was because he was looking for the spot of "congregation." In looking for this he had to plow through a piece of woods, skirt a marsh and cross three open fields where the snow lay two feet deep. Once in making this journey he thought he heard a blue jay cry out, and again he thought he caught the noise of a woodpecker on a dead tree, but he wasn't quite sure in either case. He reached the spot at last to find the rabbits gone. The convention had met and adjourned. He then walked to a farmhouse and telephoned:  
"I was just too late again, but I have lost one of my enthusiasms. Annual rabbit hunt is bound to be a success. The rabbit is a shy, coy cuss, but so is Bowser. Have just had a bite to eat at a farmhouse. The farmer's wife says that she counted more than 2,000,000 in one drove the other day. She says that the great thing in rabbit hunting is perseverance. I am now about to beat up a piece of woodland where a hunter from the city loaded four wagons in an hour the other day. I expect to load at least two. Tell the butcher to make the number 500."  
**Hears a Strange Voice.**  
Half an hour later there was another ring, but it was not from Mr. Bowser. It was a strange voice that said:  
"Hello! Am I speaking to Mrs. Bowser?"  
"Yes."  
"Wife of Samuel Bowser?"  
"Yes."  
"Short, baldheaded man?"  
"Yes."  
"Is he out on his annual rabbit hunt today?"  
"Yes. Is anything wrong?"  
"That's what I wanted to ask you. There is a man wandering around here who says his name is Samuel Bowser. He is talking about blue jays, woodpeckers and rabbits, and we thought he was loose in the top of his head. It's all right, however, if you say so."  
"Has he shot any rabbits yet?" asked Mrs. Bowser.  
"Lord bless you, ma'am, he don't know a rabbit from a red calf!"  
The next message was from Mr. Bowser himself. His voice had lost something of its jubilation, but he was still game.  
"No rabbits yet," he phoned, "but I am on the trail and expecting to come across them any moment; also to see a robin. Have just been talking with a farmer who says that the rabbits must have heard that I am out here, but he tells me not to give up. I shall stick to the trail. The rabbit is coy and cute, but Samuel Bowser is coyer and cuter. When I once get to work, the slaughter will go on for hours. I may not be home for two days. Tell the butcher—well, you needn't tell him anything this time. He said he would be prepared to take any number up to a thousand."  
There was one more message. It was not from Mr. Bowser, but from a farmer's wife, and she said:  
"If this is Mrs. Bowser, let me say that my husband and two sons are now chasing your husband across the fields. He shot our cat and fired at an old gander, and if overhauled they will tie him up and take him to the nearest insane asylum. If you knew he was loony, why did you let him come?"  
M. QUAD.

# A CONFIDENCE GAME.

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THE VICTIM BADLY CAUGHT.

A Daring and Brazen Smallpox Swindle by Which Two Clever Schemers Fleeced a Helpless Hotel Keeper Out of \$5,000.

"I dare say you never heard of the great smallpox swindle," said the hotel manager. "The facts of that remarkable affair were withheld at the time for the most urgent reasons of policy, and even now I prefer to tell the story without names or localities. It happened in the fall of 1880, when a certain hotel in a large western city was crowded with tourists. One day at the height of the season two gentlemanly looking strangers put up at the house and were assigned to what we call a 'double room.' About a week later one of them appeared at the office and requested a private interview with the manager. 'I regret to inform you,' he said after the door was closed, 'that my friend is down with a severe attack of smallpox.'  
"The proprietor nearly fell out of his chair. There was known to be smallpox in the city, and the bare suggestion that the disease had appeared in the hotel was enough to empty it in a twinkling. To let the news get out meant the loss of thousands upon thousands of dollars. It meant the ruin of the season's business. 'He must be quietly removed at once,' said the proprietor, trying to control his agitation.  
" 'Removed!' exclaimed the other. 'Taken through the cold air to a lazarretto! Why, man, that would be murder! I'll not permit it!'  
"The hotel keeper was thunderstruck. 'Do you mean to say he must stay here?' he gasped.  
" 'Certainly,' said the stranger.  
"It was a ticklish situation. The hotel keeper dare not enforce his suggestion, while to let the case remain was like storing gunpowder in a furnace room. He pleaded, protested, begged, threatened and blustered, but all in vain. The man was firm as a rock. 'If you attempt to eject my friend,' he declared, 'I'll publish your inhumanity to the entire community.'  
"Finally it occurred to the distracted proprietor to see first whether it was really a case of smallpox, so he sent for a physician, swore him to secrecy and hustled him up to the room. The doctor took one look at the disfigured face on the pillow and reported that the malady was there in a malignant type. He advised the man's immediate removal at any cost. 'If you keep him concealed,' he said, 'the disease may spread, and it would ruin you for life. You owe something to your guests.' Again the proprietor interviewed the friend, and again the latter refused to budge from his position.  
" 'Where can I take him?' he demanded. 'You know very well I can't get comfortable quarters for such a purpose, and I won't have him butchered in a pesthouse to please any landlord on earth.' The hotel man felt his hair stand on end, but concluded to let things stand as they were until morning.  
"Next day he sent for the sick man's friend and asked him whether he had any suggestions to make.  
" 'Yes,' he replied. 'I thought up a plan overnight, which you may adopt or not, as you like. As I said before,' he continued, 'it is useless to try to rent quarters for such a case. We might, however, buy a small cottage and take him there. I have figured the thing up, and the total expense would be about \$5,000. If you are willing to hand over that amount I will take him away and assume all further responsibility. I make the offer entirely out of sympathy for your guests.'  
"The landlord looked him in the eye. 'I, too, have thought the situation over,' he said, 'and I'm convinced it's a confidence game pure and simple. I'm convinced there's nothing the matter with your dear friend upstairs, but I am also convinced that the slightest breath of the affair would greatly damage the reputation of the house. As a business proposition I consider it worth \$5,000 to get rid of you.'  
"The other man smiled ironically. 'Call a cab and get out your money,' he said, and inside an hour the incubus had been spirited through a side door swathed in blankets and driven away.  
"As the landlord shrewdly surmised, the whole thing was a confidence game, and he learned the particulars later on through a sport he had once befriended. There was nothing the matter with the rascal upstairs except that his face had been pricked a little with a quill dipped in croton oil, something that makes a horrible looking pustule, which disappears in a few days and leaves no mark. I always thought the hotel man showed good sense in taking the course he did. He was caught in a trap and took the cheapest way out. The bare rumor of even a suspected case would probably have involved a loss of \$50,000 or \$60,000. It was far better to pay the \$5,000 and charge it to education."—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

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