

NYE, THE HUMORIST.

EDWARDS WRITES OF ONE WHO ENTERTAINS US.

...to the Law, the Most Charming of Modern Jokers Decided to Grow Up with the Country in Laramie, Wyo. His Literary Career—His Home.

Copyright, 1892, by American Press Association. (Continued) Mr. Nye telegraphs the editor from Asheville, N. C., that he is painfully, though not languorously ill, and will not therefore be able to furnish his usual letter this week.

About twelve years ago there began to appear in different newspapers extracts which were said to have been copied from a journal published at Laramie, Wyo., the name of which was alleged to be The Boomerang. The sketches were delicious, but for a long time many of those who enjoyed the humor of them were very doubtful about



EDGAR W. NYE.

The existence of a newspaper with such a seemingly absurd name. However, it began to be understood that a new humorist had arisen and was located on the rocky uplands of the northwest, and that his newspaper, The Boomerang, as well as his humor, was genuine.

Thus ten years earlier, through the medium of the exchange editor, the humor of the Dandery News man, which appeared in a little weekly which he edited, became of great repute, and the odd sketches and dry wit of Burdette in a similar way were brought to public view. The Laramie Boomerang man, Burdette, Bailey, Artemus Ward and the first of all that glorious race of humorists, John Phoenix, won the approval of that great class which is the strength of the country and which has but one thing for other reading than that which is furnished by the newspapers. These men became popular with the masses, and some of them won not only fame but fortune thereby.

Of course it was asked who this genius of humor of the Wyoming uplands was, and the papers began to circulate a rumor that his name was Bill Nye, and that he was a relative of a man who had won great repute, not only as a statesman, but as a fun lover and maker, the late United States senator, Jim Nye. Of course every one wondered whether the Bill Nye who was writing, with that spontaneity which is the basis of all genuine humor, The Boomerang sketches was also the Bill Nye whom Dr. Hartz had immortalized in his "Heathen Chinee." Hartz's celebrity had before this been supposed to be a myth, a creature of his fancy, but there were many persons in the east who felt sure that the Bill Nye of the poem and the Bill Nye of The Boomerang could be no other than one and the same person.

It was many months before the public knew that Bill Nye was a non de plume, and that this genius of humor was baptised Edgar Wilson Nye; that he was born near the pine forests of Maine, reared on the frontier of Wisconsin, was bred a lawyer and had ventured as far as Laramie while a young man that he might practice law or grow up with the territory in any way that offered. He had actually become an officeholder, having been elected a justice of the peace. His office brought him small honor and much misery, but it also gave him, though at the time he little suspected it, a rich fund of experience which is now serving him in drama and higher literature and is giving delight to his almost countless readers.



WILSON, EDGAR W. NYE.

When the public found that Bill Nye was a non de plume (which was really forced upon him) almost everybody still clung to the impression that Mr. Nye was a near relative of the distinguished senator who represented Nevada in the United States senate during Lincoln and Johnson's administrations, yet the only reason for such an impression was a similarity of surname and a reputation for the capacity to make humor. Those who saw senator Nye in his prime, and who have also been fortunate enough to take Bill Nye by the hand, must have felt, however, that the only kinship between these two men was their capacity to say those things which give people amusement.

which Cruikshank depicted to represent the countenance of the immortal Pickwick. He was one of those men whom it made one jolly even to look upon. Fun seemed bubbling over his lips even when he was quiet, and with constantly smiling from his eyes. Yet this Nye was what Bill Nye never was and probably never can be—a successful politician. His humor served him well, for he made use of it in such effective manner upon the stump that vast throngs flocked to hear him whenever he was announced to speak, and the fame which Tom Corwin had won as the wittiest speaker upon the hustings Nye maintained after Corwin passed over to the majority.

Bill Nye has been and is everything that Jim Nye was not, excepting that the two men possessed a common surname and a common gift of humor. The Nye of the newspapers stands six feet in his stockings, and could have looked down upon the parting of Jim Nye's curly hair. Bill Nye is of pale complexion; Jim Nye was ruddy. Bill Nye until recently was of such slender build as made his height all the more conspicuous; Jim Nye was rotund, unctuous and in his later days almost flabby in his fleshiness. He had a splendid crown of curly hair, and he was said to greatly resemble the famous actor, Fechter. Bill Nye has made humorous capital by reason of his baldness, and that peculiarity and his spectacles and beardless face have enabled the caricaturist to suggest a likeness to the original. Nye himself in countenance really does not closely resemble these caricatures. They merely suggest the man as he is.

Since Nye's popularity has become universal wherever the English language is read, he is no longer compared with any man, and no one tries to connect his peculiar and delightful ability with relationship to any distinguished man.

Very many documents of Nye's life have been written. Most of them are flippant and many of them are feeble imitations of the humorist's peculiar literary mannerisms. He really deserves more serious treatment. His popularity, which seems undimmed; his great pecuniary successes and his recognition of late by those who have been called the arbiters of literary fame in this country entitle him to something more than a history which is a mere jest.

In all the accounts of Nye nothing has been said of one qualification, which must have brought him success sooner or later, and that is his business capacity. It is remarkable. No other humorist excepting Mark Twain has revealed such a gift. Joan Phoenix was notably improvident. Had Artemus Ward possessed Nye's business instincts and his moral fiber he could have earned a fortune in a few years, and other humorists who have won some fame have done well if they have been able to make a bare living with their pen.

Nye, however, has the business instinct as a native gift, and he has cultivated it well. When he began to write his sketches for The Boomerang he had no idea that they would be of more than



THE STATEN ISLAND HOME.

local interest, nor in fact did he realize the humor that was in them or its market value. He simply reported things in Laramie as he saw them, not understanding that his mental vision and his capacity to reproduce it on paper was of such peculiar nature as would gain for him fame, would create in the popular mind a demand for a constant supply of it, and would therefore have pecuniary value.

He, however, realized this when, to his intense surprise, he found that his sketches were appearing in every newspaper in the land. He had an indistinct idea at once that if these things were worth reprinting they were worth paying for. They brought him nothing but fame in Laramie, and there he received far less appreciation than anywhere else. Fame in that town was not money, and The Boomerang gave up the ghost.

Nye had determined that it was his duty to cultivate this talent, because he saw in it an opportunity to gain, at least, a fair support, but while he was turning over in his mind the course best to pursue, he was brought to death's door by an attack of meningitis, and when he was recovering from that he was the victim of a cyclone which had its way with him, blowing him hither and thither, and finally depositing him on the sod with a broken leg and some fractured ribs. This of course brought him to a halt for awhile. While convalescing in the south he wrote an exquisite sketch, accompanying it with a picture which he drew, and sent it to the New York World rather timidly. That paper instantly printed it, and forwarded to Mr. Nye a proposition to join its staff.

His business instinct served him well on this occasion. Nine men out of ten would have been only too glad if they were situated as he was to form a staff connected with The World upon terms proposed by that paper, but Nye was wise. He felt that it would be a dangerous thing for a humorist to go to New York city. He doubted whether such a person could maintain himself there, and he believed that the chances were that in the whirl of newspaper life, and especially of a newspaper conducted at such high pressure as is The World, the humorist would be stunned, his work would become forced and artificial, his identity would be lost and he would sink to the dead level of the average.

prise it was. He was engaged to write what he chose, as he chose, over his non de plume, to be subject to none of the restrictions or discipline of the office, and it was common report that he was to receive \$5,000 a year for this undertaking. This shrewdness of management unquestionably saved Nye from being buried in that mighty wave of literary endeavor which produces anonymously the best in our daily newspapers. It revealed that Nye was as strong in business as he was great in humor, and from that time on his pathway has been one of ever increasing prosperity.

His fame being established, he was able to make other newspaper connections, so that in the course of a year or two he was in receipt of an income of over \$10,000 a year. There were times when Mr. Nye felt some sadness that his reputation should be merely that of a literary jester, but he consoled himself with the thought that he was giving innocent delight to thousands, was providing well for his family and also with the hope that in the future he would be able to win a more critical reputation in higher literary endeavor.

His business instincts served him well also when he entered the lecture field. The work is hard and dreary and entails prolonged absences from a most charming family, but it pays well. His profits are commonly reported to have been as high as from \$25,000 to \$30,000 a year, so that in the past four or five years Mr. Nye's income has equaled that of the greater lawyers, has been as large as the individual profits which many bankers and merchants have received from their business, and has been equaled among literary men probably only by the income of the Rev. Dr. Talmage. He has ventured into the drama, although he is not a dramatist and must ever rely upon those who have dramatic instinct and experience to make his plays fit for stage representation. He has also conquered the literary set, and is now furnishing a series of articles for one of the leading magazines.

Mr. Nye's life, however, is in his domestic circle, and it is no wonder. His wife, a charming woman, is just the helpmeet for such a man, and with his four children he is as much a child as any of them. He lives in luxury in a beautiful place on Staten Island, and has also a residence at Asheville, N. C., where he is now convalescing from the effects of the recent accident from which he suffered in Jackson, Miss.

Mr. Nye has barely entered the prime of life, being in his fortieth year, and if his present prosperity attends him he seems likely to become the wealthiest of our literary men.

E. J. EDWARDS.

What a Chance!

A clever teacher who has the power of calling out originality in her pupils says that she should certainly have no time for the use of text books if she attempted to answer all the startling questions asked her in the class. One day the attraction of gravitation was under discussion, and Charley Beale volunteered the opinion that he "didn't see any need of it anyway."

"It seems to me," said Charley, "there's no particular use in having the earth attract things. Now when the apple fell, and made Newton think out the reason, why that apple might just as well have staid where it was till somebody gathered it."

"You play ball, don't you?" asked the teacher.

"Yes, sir."

"Suppose you hit the ball very high; what happens?"

"It falls."

"But if there were no attraction toward the earth it wouldn't fall. Don't you think that might prove inconvenient?"

Charley did not answer immediately. His eyes were bright with the light of a new idea.

"My!" he broke forth involuntarily. "What a chance for a home run!"

Discouraging.

Mrs. A.—What did Charley have to say about the theater last night?

Mr. A.—Not much of anything, except that the house was papered.

Mrs. A.—Mercy! Paper the house while the performance was going on? I should think it must have been very discouraging.

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Edward Shepherd, Harrisburg, Ill., had a running sore on his leg of eight years' standing. Used three bottles of Electric Bitters and seven boxes of Bucklen's Arnica Salve, and his leg is sound and well. John Speaker, Catawba, Ohio, had five large fever sores on his leg, doctors said he was incurable. One bottle Electric Bitters and one box Bucklen's Arnica Salve cured him entirely. Sold by Hartz & Bahnsen, drug store.

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An auctioneer told us the other day that one of the hardest things he had to do was to cry farm sales out in the open air in the wind. The effort to make himself heard by a course of people was sufficient generally to bring on an attack of hoarseness that, if he did not guard against carefully, would give him severe bronchial trouble, and unfit him for work for several days. He said that lately he had begun using Reid's German Cough and Kidney Cure and had found that it worked like a charm. This is not a fictitious statement but the absolute truth. For coughs, colds and bronchial troubles, it has no equal. It contains no opiate or other poison, but is mild and safe, while it acts at once, and will relieve the most severe case of throat or lung trouble. For sale by all dealers.

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LANE'S MEDICINE.

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