

IN A JOKE FACTORY.

AN HOUR SPENT WITH MARSHALL P. WILDER.

How Fun Is Prepared For the Laughter-Loving Public. A Few of the Noted Humorist's Latest Jokes, The Repair Department.

The public is pretty well acquainted with Marshall P. Wilder as a humorist and entertainer; but people who have heard him run wild in an evening of miscellaneous funmaking are hardly prepared to be told that he is one of the most methodical and systematic of mortals.

The late William Davidge, the actor, was one of the most systematic men that ever lived. He was constantly keeping books with himself. If he invested five cents in carfare, bought a newspaper, had a shave, shampoo, or haircut, it all went down in his books. When he died it was disclosed that he had kept an itemized account of every penny earned and expended, and a record of every mile traveled during the twenty-five years and more that he was on the stage, up to the very day of his death on board a railroad train, en route to play in San Francisco. By examining this wonderful record one could see exactly where Davidge was on any given day during his long professional career, and how much it cost him.

Mr. Wilder's system does not include the petty outlays of everyday life, but he has a way of systematizing his business that is hardly less complete than that of Davidge. All the good jokes, stories, and anecdotes, for example, he labels and lays away, as a bugologist would a strange new specimen of beetle or butterfly. It can be said of Wilder that he can put his hand on any particular joke or story at any hour of the night without striking a match. He has jokes and jokelets, stories and anecdotes, labeled, indexed and cross-indexed, and can turn instantly to any given dog or cat story of any stated breed or color.

The little joker's business system includes an index of every person of prominence he meets, and turning to his books he can tell at a glance just how much he is indebted to any particular individual for contributions to his fund of jokes.

"Harrison—Harrison—Harrison," reiterated Wilder as he ran his twinkling eyes down the long list of H's; "It seems to me I have heard of that name somewhere. Ah, here it is. 'Harrison, Benjamin, President of the United States.' I was almost sure I had heard it somewhere."

Mr. Wilder grew reminiscent for a moment.

"First time I met Benjamin Harrison was in the White House. I carried a letter from his son. I didn't want an office, had no claim to an office, and of course I was a little out of my atmosphere. 'How do you do, Mr. President?' 'How do you do, Mr. Wilder?' That was all. Not a joke or a funny story. Not a word about the weather. Not a word about the crops. I waited long enough for the President to limber up; he didn't limber. I withdrew with great dignity, pausing only long enough in the waiting-room to request Private Secretary Halford to kick me with great severity."

Wilder had a later meeting with President Harrison, some of the particulars of which are best told by another. It occurred when W. J. Arkell entertained President Harrison at Mt. McGregor. Mr. Wilder was one of the guests. The party was on its way down to the village. "Mr. President," said the little humorist, with mock gravity, "I regret the fact exceedingly, but I feel sure there will be a large concourse of people down here to greet me. I understand they have a brass band and I fear they will raise a great hullabaloo. I sincerely trust the cheering and noise generally will not disturb your Excellency."

When the party reached the foot of the mountain there were carriages to receive them, and the inevitable crowd to cheer the President. The band, of course, struck up "Hail to the Chief." By some misunderstanding on the part of the cabby who drove Wilder—or was it by Wilder's own hocus pocus?—the crowd fell apart for him. Hats were swung, handkerchiefs fluttered, and the air was split with cheers. Wilder's quick wit enabled him to seize the situation by the horns. Hat in hand, he bowed to the right and left, and, as they say on the stage, "took the whole scene." The ovation was all his own.

Wilder's joke foundry is an interesting place. The walls of his library in the Alpine, on Broadway, are literally papered with photographs of celebrated men and women, most of which bear the autographs of the originals, with some pleasant greeting to the "prince of entertainers," as Mr. Cleveland dubbed him—the entertainer of Princes—as he dubbed himself.

"How are jokes made?" "Jokes are like poets," said Wilder, "they are born, not made. They develop. They evolve. There is a grub and then there is a butterfly. Julius Caesar compiled a book of puns, but he never made a joke, even though he was the victim of a few. Every great event has its jokes. The greater the event, no matter how serious, the more jokes. They drop around and spring up everywhere. The late war with Spain gave birth to more jokes than any event since the flood.

"Here are a few: 'The Madrid Government is trying hard to keep the Bible out of Spain.' 'Why?' 'So that the Spanish people will not know the exact strength of Sampson.' 'That's bad, of course; but it's a war joke, and we had to accept it.' 'Why is Courtlandt street, in New York, like Cuba?' 'Because it's between Liberty and Day.' 'Nothing could be worse than that,

but it went. There are about a million things like that, and the spirit of patriotism kept them afloat. Camara's feet couldn't sink one of them. There are others not so bad:

"Did you curry the horse this morning, John?" "Yes, sir." "Did you comb out his tail?" "Yes, sir." "Did you remember the Maine?" "Here's another on the same lay: 'Do you remember the great blizzard in New York?' 'Oh, yes.' 'Forgot it, and remember the Maine.' 'If we have another war,' said Wilder, 'I intend to propose a war tax on every joke, and make it pay its own way.'"

The humorist explained the repair department of his factory. "Sometimes a joke is a little lame. Maybe it has the heaves, mumps, bumps, thumps, grumps; or probably the blind staggers. I can generally coo-per it up so that it will pass muster.

"Very often one idea serves for a good many jokes. General Sherman once wrote me a seven-page letter about jokes and other solemn things. It was by way of acknowledging a copy of my book, 'People I Have Smiled With.' In that letter he told the story of the Irishman who was too much given to strong drink. 'You must sign the pledge and stop drinking,' said his priest, 'or you will be so saturated with the fumes of liquor that sometime when you try to blow out a candle your breath will take fire and you will burn up.'"

"Then give me the pledge," said Pat, and he wrote: 'I hereby solemnly promise never to blow out a candle again.'"

"That is General Sherman's story," continued Mr. Wilder, "and here is the way I fixed it so as to make it fit a particular occasion: 'You must stop drinking, Pat, or you'll soon be totally blind.' 'Well,' said Pat, 'I guess I've seen about everything.'"

"Here is one of the latest baseballisms: 'A foul, a foul,' howled a crank from the grand stand. 'Nonsense,' said his wife, 'I see no feathers.' 'Of course not. This is a picked nine.'"

"Speaking of Mr. Depew's latest dog story reminds me of another. 'Rory O'More, there,' said an Irishman, pointing to his canine asleep in the corner. 'Rory O'More is the most intelligent beast I ever saw. That dog understands every blessed word I say to him. Begorra, I'm studying German just to see if I can throw him off.'"

"Ever hear the story of the great statesman who resembled Daniel Webster? A politician settled himself in the chair of an old colored barber who had shaved the Massachusetts statesman and orator. 'They tell me, Uncle, that I resemble Daniel Webster. What do you think of it?' 'Well, boss, I tink myself dat you done resemble my ole fren'."

"Just in what particular do you see a resemblance between me and the great statesman?" "Well, I don't 'zactly see de resemblance, boss; hit's mostly in yo' brest." ROBERT W. CRISWELL.

Tackle Making. Save shooting, no sport, perhaps, has connected with it more steady-going business in the way of appliances than has angling, and it will rather surprise many to know that there are hundreds of patents—some of them bringing in thousands a year—dealing with fishing appliances.

The trade, too, is notable for the fact that, save in the making of rods and hooks in the rough, women are the chief workers, almost the whole of the dainty flies and well-secured hooks being tied by girls and women, some of whom can fabricate hundreds of trout-flies in a day. At least four-fifths of the fishing tackle-making employees are women, many of whom possibly never saw a man fishing in their lives.

Another notable fact in connection with the trade is that many of the manufacturing firms have been established for from fifty to one hundred years. England and America—but chiefly the former—supply the fishing tackle of the whole world, and all the principal manufacturers have special stocks for India, the Australian colonies, and the most remote waters of the globe.

As to patents, one man has made a fortune out of an artificial spinning bait, and another who invented so apparently simple an appliance as a novel kind of rod ring for the line to run through sold the patent for \$50,000.

Where Noah Kept His Bees. Dr. James K. Hosmer, while recently visiting Boston, had occasion to visit the new public library. As he went up the steps he met Edward Everett Hale, who asked the Doctor his errand.

"To consult the archives," was the reply.

"By the way, Hosmer," said Dr. Hale, "do you know where Noah kept his bees?"

"No," answered Hosmer.

"In the ark hives," said the venerable preacher, as he passed out of earshot.—Ladies' Home Journal.

A TALE OF GOLD.

Dawson City Miners Are Remarkable For Their Honesty.

Much has been written of the wonders of the Klondike goldfields, a correspondent writes, but practically nothing has been said of the almost phenomenal honesty of the miners. What amazed me most during my first few days in Dawson City was the reckless way in which miners left thousands of pounds' worth of gold exposed in empty cabins and tents, as if inviting the first comer to help himself. There were millions lying about without anyone looking after them, and so far as one could see, they belonged to nobody.

I explored many of these cabins during their owners' absence, and in the very first cabin I entered I saw a dirty, tattered blanket carelessly thrown over two mackerel kits. I lifted the blanket and found that the kits were almost full to the brim with gold dust and nuggets to the value of at least £5,000. The miner was out prospecting on Bear Creek, and had no more anxiety about his pile than if it were safely housed in the Bank of England.

It was the same in nearly every cabin I entered. Gold greeted me everywhere. There were shelves full of oil-cans, meat-tins, fruit-jars, and buckskin and walrus bags packed with the precious metal, all as unprotected as if they were full of potatoes.

One Norwegian miner on Hunker Creek had made a strong-box of a pair of canvas overalls, the legs of which he had sewn up. I lifted the uncanny "safe" and found that it weighed a good 100lb., every ounce of which was virgin gold; and the least value I could place on those dirty overalls was £5,000.

There were five gallon oil-cans full of gold carelessly pushed under the miners' bunks, every one of which held a fortune, for which most men strove a lifetime.

Out on Eldorado Creek there is a settlement of miners who have no fewer than fourteen rich claims, and are washing out gold at the rate of many thousands of pounds a week. Their strong room is a common galvanized washing-tub, and when I was there it was three-quarters full of gold, and much too heavy for two strong men to lift. Had I been inclined I might have pinched thousands of pounds' worth. Gold abounded on every side which seemed to belong to nobody.

Even if a miner leaves his cabin for a week or more, he simply leaves a notice to this effect attached to the walls. He never thinks of putting a guard over his pile.

Of course there have been attempts at theft, but the perpetrators have been invariably detected. In one recent case the thief managed to carry his booty a distance of ten miles, when cold and exhaustion compelled him to take shelter at the cabin of one of the miners. His host's suspicion was aroused by the man's conduct and by the bags of gold, for which he could not satisfactorily account.

The miner detained his guest, communicated with some of his fellows; and fifteen of them assembled in the hut and sat in judgment on the thief. He was found guilty, and half-a-dozen bullets put a sudden end to his career. Such cases, however, are very rare; and it speaks volumes for the honesty of the 40,000 men who are now gathered in Dawson City that they can see hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth of gold lying about, without even thinking of laying hands on it.

To my mind by far the luckiest man in the Klondike is a man you have probably never heard of—Halsey Putnam. Before coming to the Klondike, Halsey had tried and failed in almost every calling a man can follow, from blacksmith to laborer in the Brooklyn parks, and from printer to barman. When he reached Dawson he had not the necessary 50 cents for a shave; and 1/2 lb. of meat at 70 cents a pound would have put him in the "Bankruptcy Court."

Within a few months Halsey had mined and sold £14,000 worth of gold; and to-day, after little more than a year at his last lucky venture, he could write you a cheque for £50,000, and yet retire on a fortune.

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