

Wagman's Joke.

IN Columbia street Washington, live two very dignified and solemn, elderly gentlemen, the one a clerk of the old school in the Treasury, and the other an examiner in the Patent Office. They are named respectively Colonel Belding and Major Plunk. Both are bachelors, and they live on opposite sides of the way. Until recently neither knew that there was such a being in existence as the other. Now, Wagman, who also lives in Columbia street, and who is a clerk of the period in the Post Office, enjoys the acquaintance of both these gentlemen, or rather did enjoy it up to the time of which we write; he is alien unto both of them at present. Wagman conceived the reprehensible idea of bringing the major and the colonel together under circumstances which, though impressive, we feel called upon to condemn in the most unqualified terms. In pursuance of his purpose Wagman mentioned Major Plunk's name to the colonel one evening in laudatory terms, and asked if he'd the pleasure of his acquaintance. The colonel regretted he had not the honor. On the following evening he spoke of Colonel Belding in the same strain to the major. Wagman dropped into their rooms frequently during the next two weeks; in fact he spent his evenings with one or the other, and he improved every opportunity to praise each of these gentlemen in turn. As a consequence the colonel became deeply interested in the major, and the major shared the sentiment in equal measure in respect to the colonel. Finally, a few evenings ago, the colonel stated to Wagman that he should feel honored and delighted with the major's acquaintance, and asked him if he could not arrange a meeting. Wagman said he'd try, though the major was rather reserved and exclusive, and to make his acquaintance was no easy matter; when he did unbend himself, however, he was simply delightful. On the following evening Wagman called on the major and stated Colonel Belding's wish. The major was highly pleased, and said he too had long desired to form the colonel's acquaintance; that he hailed this opportunity with anticipations of infinite delight. So, it was arranged that the meeting should take place last night in Wagman's room, if agreeable to the colonel. "I'll go over and see the colonel now, and if it is all right I'll come back and let you know," said Wagman, as he took his leave. And after he got out on the landing he thought of something and came back. "By the bye, Major, I forgot one thing. Though you'll find the colonel splendid, elegant, peerless, he is unfortunately very deaf, so you'll have to talk quite loud. I just thought I'd mention it. Good night." And he went across the way to the colonel's. "It's all arranged," said he with evident satisfaction, bounding into Colonel Belding's sitting-room. You're both to come to my room to-morrow night if you've no prior engagement. The colonel said he hadn't, and they took a rum punch in view of the satisfactory issue. When Wagman started to go home he thought of something on the landing, just as it had happened at the major's and went back. "I almost forgot to mention that the major has the misfortune to be quite hard of hearing—very, I may say. Aside from that you'll not be disappointed in him I'm sure." On his way home Wagman stopped at the major's and called through the keyhole that it was "all right; to-morrow evening at seven." Seven o'clock found Wagman seated in his parlor waiting to receive his friends. In Wagman's bed-room were two young bucks who would have been far better employed in attending the Young Men's Christian Association. The bed-room door was on the jar. Colonel Belding was prompt to a second. He and Wagman chatted over the events of Christmas for a few moments, when Major Plunk was ushered in, all smiles and dignity. He greeted Wagman cheerily and bowed in a stately way to the colonel. Wagman introduced them without ceremony, saying simply: "Major Plunk, Colonel Belding; Colonel Belding, Major Plunk," (in a rather elevated tone.) Each grasped the other warmly by the hand, and their eyes betrayed the solemn pleasure that this meeting gave them. Major Plunk was the first to speak: "Colonel Belding," he began in a voice of bass thunder, leaning over the colonel and clapping his mouth close to his left ear, "I'm indeed honored with the acquaintance of the distinguished friend of our mutual friend Wagman. How—do—you—do?" The colonel drew back amazed, looking very hard at the major and bowing stiffly. Then recovering himself, he leaned forward and with his lips close to Major Plunk's ear, he roared in a tone many times louder than an explosion of nitro-glycerine: "I protest, sir; I am the party honored by this meeting so kindly brought about by our mutual friend. May the acquaintance so auspiciously begun ripen into a lasting friendship!" If the colonel was amazed by the major's

style of address, the major was positively shocked by the colonel's. But he was too well bred to betray his feelings, though he had felt sure his tympanum had been cracked with the shock. They sat down together on a lounge and Wagman brought out a decanter and glasses. "Brandy?" inquired the major. Wagman nodded an affirmative. All filled their glasses and the two visitors rose to their feet. "Our mutual friend," the colonel exploded with a report that made the chandeliers waver and the furniture dance, directing his battery on the major's other ear and waving his hand sweetly toward the wicked Wagman. With one hand on his ringing organ of hearing, and with an effort that brought the blood coursing in a torrent to his face, the major let off in the colonel's right ear this volley: "May he live long and prosper!" They drained their glasses, and a look of outraged dignity settled upon their sanguinary faces. A sound came from the bed-room like suppressed levity, and Wagman excused himself a moment, saying that pointer pup was more trouble than a triplet, going inside to quiet the brute. He was absent some minutes, an extremely embarrassing interval to the two guests. Each felt more than anxious to exchange social amenities with the other. At last, having recovered his breath somewhat, the colonel opened again. "A remarkably open winter, this major. It seems providential, does it not? in view of the hard ti—" "God bless me! yes," shrieked the major, without waiting to hear the remainder of the sentence. "But—that is—damme if this ain't the most extraordinary person I ever saw!" to himself in an ordinary tone of voice. "Sir!" What do you mean, sir?" exclaimed and demanded the colonel with feeling, elevating his voice an octave higher than he had previously ventured. "Who is a person?" "Yes, sir, person, sir. I said PERSON, sir. What do you mean, sir, I in turn demand, sir, by thundering in my ears as if I were as deaf as you yourself, sir?" This remark was to all previous observations the roaring of the cyclone to a gentle autumn zephyr. "Deaf indeed!" retorted the colonel, rising and menacing the major with doubled fists. "I've nearly ruptured my wind-pipe in trying to be civil to you, out of consideration for your misfortune, and now you want to know what I mean. What do you mean by such outrageous bellowing?"—tell me, sir!" As to racket, this was the grand finale, so to speak. "You are a person!" yelled the major. "You deserve to be arrested for disorderly conduct." "You're another—you're drunk!" responded the colonel in a hoarse outburst of cholera. "I can lick any man that says I'm drunk," gasped the major, trying with all his might to shout the challenge at a sufficiently high pitch to make it audible to the colonel. He could not rise above an asthmatic whisper. He squared himself, however, and began to work his fists and elbows to lamber them up. But he was brought to with a response from the colonel in an equally labored though subdued effort. "You can't lick one side of me." Both gentlemen instantly assumed a peaceful attitude, for each had understood the remark of the other, uttered in a whisper. Thoughts were working in their minds. Their knotted brows relaxed. A transfiguration ensued. "Ain't you deaf?" the major broke silence, sinking into a chair and speaking in a soft tone of voice. "No. Ain't you?" rejoined the colonel quite as softly. "No. Who said I was?" "Wagman. Who said I was?" "Wagman." Just then Wagman came in: "You're no gentleman, sir," exclaimed the major, loftily, to the host. "You're a trifling, ill-bred person, sir," added the colonel. "Never speak to me again," said the major with a withering look. "Dare but to look at me and I'll horse-whip you," warned the colonel. "Colonel, do me the honor to step over to my room," said the major, courteously addressing the colonel, "and I'll apologize." And in dignified silence they stole away together. Wagman followed them to the landing, protesting it was a cruel mistake, but they wouldn't listen to a word. "Rascal," muttered one. "Scoundrel!" the other. "Vulgar!" both. We appeal to a sedate and dignified public to know if such an outrage to the feelings of two continent citizens ought not to be avenged? The perpetrator, we blush to say, is still at large, for lack of a law to punish him, liable to further prey upon the helpless denizens of Columbia street. We have not told how the two young bucks and Wagman made merry that night over the scandalous affair, for we've no patience with it. It's a consolation to know they'll come to some bad end.

SUNDAY READING.

Reading the Bible.

Henry Ward Beecher in his lecture to the Theological Students says: I suppose no person ever did or ever will read the whole Bible in his life. I know there are persons who read it by letter; I hear people say that they make it a rule to read the whole Bible once a year; and I have no doubt that they skate over it once a year; but I do not think they do more than that, because it is not all for them. Take, for instance, a great square-built, good, honest-minded, practical Yankee, who knows the quality of matter, and who knows how to put thing and thing together, and make money out of them—take such a man and put him into Solomon's Songs, and see what he will make out of these. Take an Oriental; take a man who was born under different skies; who is of different associations from generation to generation; whose mind-methods are different; whose growth is more by the imagination and less by the practical reason—take such a man and he will say of the Songs of Solomon, "That is the buckle of the Bible. It is that which clasps and holds together all the other books." And so, all the way through the Bible, there are things which men who are proud, or men who are constitutionally without wisdom, cannot understand, they are mysteries to them. There are deep things for mystics in the Bible which people who have no mysticism are unable to see. They do not see them when they look at them. In the Bible there are things for the twilight, things for the moonlight, things for the midnight, things for the day-dawn, and things for the noontide. The Bible is filled with ineffable riches for men; and it belongs to every man to select according to his need.

Little Things.

From the highest point of view—that is from God's point of view—to him, nothing is great, nothing is small, as we measure it. The worth and quality of action depend not on its prominence, or on any other accidents which we are always apt to adopt as the tests of the greatness of our deeds. The largeness of the consequences of anything we do is no measure of the true greatness or true value of it. So it is with regard to God himself and his doings. To him, for his loftiness, there is nothing high; to him for his gentleness, there is nothing low. He as gladly stands by the sick bed, and binds up the broken-hearted, as he telleth the number of stars.

In regard to profanity, I could never allow the powers of speech which my Creator had bestowed upon me, to be used for such a base purpose as to profane His name, and while some of my companions thought it mainly, I ever regarded it as lowering one to the company of the vile and degraded, all of whom are profane. In the words of the poet. "To swear is neither brave, polite, nor wise." "What does Satan pay for swearing?" said a pious man to a profane youth. "He don't pay me anything," was the reply. "Well," added the good man, "you work cheap! To lay aside the character of a gentleman; to inflict so much pain on your friends and civil people; and to risk losing your soul, and all for nothing! You certainly do work cheap, very cheap indeed.

Here are the ten commandments of Buddha: First—Thou shalt not kill. Second—Thou shalt not take to thyself what belongs to another. Third—Thou shalt not break the laws of chastity. Fourth—thou shalt not lie. Fifth—Thou shalt not slander. Sixth—Thou shalt not speak of injuries. Seventh—Thou shalt not excite quarrels. Eighth—Thou shalt not hate. Ninth—Have faith in holy writings. Tenth—Believe in immortality. If all christians should live up to these requirements the world would be vastly improved.

So long as God holds you up by the will and determination to serve Him with which He inspires you, go on boldly and do not be frightened at your little cheeks and falls, so long as you can throw yourself into His arms and trusting love. Go there with an open, joyful heart as often as possible; if not always joyful, at least go with a brave and faithful heart.

"Look up!" thundered the captain of a vessel, as his boy grew dizzy, while gazing from the top-mast. "Look up." The boy looked up and returned in safety. Young man, look up, and you will succeed. Never look down and despair. Leave dangers uncarved for and push on. If you falter, you lose. Look up. Do right and trust in God!

An ignorant old lady was asked by a minister visiting her if she had religion. She replied I have slight touches occasionally. How many persons there are who have it in the same way, and in some, the touches are very slight indeed.

Human life is a gloomy chamber, in which the images of the other world shine the brighter, the deeper it is darkened.

ENIGMA DEPARTMENT.

All contributions to this department must be accompanied by the correct answer. Enigma. I am composed of twenty-two letters. My 4, 2, 16 and 15, is a good fruit. My 8, 10, 6 and 22, is a boy's name. My 1, 3, 4 and 10, is a county in Illinois. My 13, 20, 18 and 23, is a precious metal. My 7, 21, 5 and 14, is a substance of much value. My 13, 11, 18 and 14, is part of a weapon. My 8, 17, 9 and 10, is a good servant but a poor master. My whole is a great work lately begun.

A Ten Dollar Wife.

Parson Allen, of D., was quite a wag as well as a peculiarly interesting preacher.—He was often called upon to perform the marriage ceremony, and his peculiarities on such occasions often furnished a supply of merriment long after the parties had retired from the parsonage.

On one occasion, after the marriage knot had been tied, the bridegroom, supposing that the parson was entitled by law to a certain fee, and would therefore return the change, handed the minister a ten dollar bill, which was carefully folded and placed in his pocket. The old parson having noticed the X in the corner of the old State bank note, kept up his lively conversation, commenting on the ups and downs of life, till the groom became somewhat nervous over the delay in relation to his change, and he ventured to say:

"Parson Allen that was a ten-dollar bill I gave you."

"Yes, so I perceive. You are very generous. It is not often that I receive so large a fee. A comfortable thing it is to have a bank note in one's pocket," and then he gave some amusing illustrations of selfishness, and another ten minutes of precious time was consumed.

Again the groom ventured to remind the parson that he had not returned the change he expected, and he hesitatingly suggested:

"Perhaps you did not think that the bill that I handed you for your services was a ten, did you, Parson Allen?"

"Oh, yes, I noticed that it was. I assure you that I have not been so agreeably surprised for a long time. I always think on such occasions that the husband has an appreciative regard for his worthy partner, and I presume that you regard your wife, that now is, worth at least ten dollars, and I doubt if you would have the knot untied for twice that sum, would you, Mr. N.?"

"Not I," said the nonplussed bridegroom. "But is there not a regular fee which the minister is allowed to take for marrying folks?"

"Not that I am aware of," said the parson. "We always leave the fee to be fixed by the parties who get married."

And so the bridegroom, evaded at all points, gave up the effort to get back any change.

Exposed.

Lord X—determined a short time ago to unmask a certain well known spiritual professor and his medium at a seance advertised to be held at some hall situated on Oxford street, London. Accordingly X—had constructed at Bryant & May's a match of huge proportions and instantaneous brilliancy, and, armed with this, he proceeded with two friends to pay his respects to the "denizens of another world." After the usual preliminaries the room was suddenly darkened, and whilst the company held each other by the hands, violins and tambourines were heard to play in company with less musical sounds, the professor and his medium having been securely fastened with ropes by one of the audience. At a given moment X—let go his companion's hand and lit his match, or, more properly, torch, on a striker skillfully fixed to the sole of his boot. A great flare! and there stood the professor hard at work on the violin, whilst the happy medium assisted the performance by alternate accompaniments on the tambourine with her hand, and on the floor with a broomstick. The finale may be better imagined than described; suffice it to say that his lordship, on presenting himself at the door of a similar entertainment a week after, was refused admission.

How John Brougham Cried Quarter.

A good story is told of John Brougham, who was once at the first rehearsal of a new piece, where the actors were reading their parts from a somewhat ill-written manuscript. John, when his part came around, somewhat surprised his brother actors by shouting at the "wrongful heir" in the piece, "And thou bad quarter!" "What's that?" interrupted the stage manager.

"So set down in my part," replied the comedian, referring to his manuscript. "No such thing—I never wrote that," said the irate author, who was present. "It makes arrant nonsense of the speech. Bad quarter, indeed."

"See for yourself," said the actor, handing the manuscript to the author.

"This, why," said the literary man, adjusting his eye-glasses, "this reads, 'thou base counterfeit!'"

"Ah! is that it?" said the comedian, with a sly twinkle of the eye. "Well, the terms are synonymous. A 'bad quarter' is a 'base counterfeit!'"

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