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KEEN WITS WIN.

BY ROBERT H. BABCOCK.

When Henderson heard of it, a thrill swept through him from head to foot, for he felt instinctively that the outcome of the absurd little contest that he saw impending would decide whether he or Dickson would marry Natalie Platt. I say Henderson felt this instinctively, because there really was no reason whatever why the prettiest girl that ever neglected her household duties for the sake of studying art should bestow her hand upon one of two rivals merely because he had succeeded in a painting of hers that had been put up at auction. And yet Henderson was sure that this was the crisis.

When Amy Burton had told him what was to happen, he was in the act of demanding of a girl in gipsy dress what had been the result of a certain raffle in which, at her behest, he had become possessed of a "chance" earlier in the day. The fair, for the benefit of the village church, which, since two in the afternoon, had been in progress on the church green, was now drawing to a close. To its complete success, the condition of the picturesque stalls, which were on every side, bore witness for the stock of each of them now consisted chiefly of "remnants," while it was noticeable that practically every member of the crowd which still gaily thronged about the stalls, carried one or more parcels.

Several hours before, it had been whispered about that toward the end of the day such knick-knacks from the stalls as had failed to find purchasers would be disposed of at auction, with the Mayor of the village in the role of auctioneer, and Henderson had heard it like everyone else, but with no special interest. And then Miss Burton had whispered in his ear that one of the early items in the sale would be a water-color painting by Natalie Platt, and a thrill had gone through him as he realized what the announcement meant.

For there was no doubt in Henderson's mind that from the moment the auctioneer called for bids upon Miss Platt's painting, it would be a question only whether he or Dickson got it. Their rivalry for the attractive girl who at this moment was presiding over a stall at the other end of the green had lasted for several months, but never yet had the two young men come into what could be called actual collision. Now, however, with nearly every second person at the fair a friend of the three parties concerned, it was obvious to Henderson that some one was about to sustain the ignominy of a public defeat.

A moment's thought told him how it had happened that neither he nor Dickinson had secured Miss Platt's painting already. It was simply because the work had not been on sale at her stall. There was a booth at which pictures, autographed books and photographs were displayed, and there the water-color must have been from the first. Natalie Platt, however, had elected to make the sweet-stall the scene of her activities, which indicates why the contents of the various other booths failed to be examined with any great attention by Messrs. Henderson and Dickson.

Henderson knew well that the girl whose labors with the brush had been at first the amusement but finally the pride of her well-to-do people was the last in the world to have wished that her painting should be the cause of a public contest between the two men whom she had good reason to know were in love with her. Probably Miss Platt had no idea even that her work was among the unsold articles.

And then there came to Henderson the feeling that he had had so many times during the last few weeks, that the bitterness of losing to his rival—did he lose—would be lessened had he felt surer that Dickson was worthy of Natalie Platt's love. On meeting Dickson, Henderson had felt a certain distrust that he knew did not spring from jealousy, and later a story had reached him which he preferred not to believe, but could not help remembering. That Dickson was a dangerous rival there was no doubt. Henderson, looking across the crowd, could see him chatting with Mrs. Arnold at the flower stall, and admitted that he was a handsome fellow, and one to attract even so proud a girl as Natalie Platt. As to himself, Henderson always had known that the girl who loved him would do so mainly for the manhood and some brains which he believed he possessed. What chance had he? Henderson's only answer to this was a flash of the eyes and the resolute drawing up of an under jaw, in the set of which those who knew him always had been able to read—the last ditch!

And then the young man glanced up and saw that it was beginning. The platform, which, until a few minutes before had been occupied by the village band, now had been cleared and upon it, behind a table piled high with odds and ends of all kinds, stood the popular Mayor himself, while, at the sight of him, the crowd was deserting the stalls and gathering about the new center of interest.

It was at this moment that Norton Willis, Henderson's chum, ran his arm through that of his friend with a "Hey, messmate, this way to the auction sale!" and then continued: "By the way, Henderson, old man, did you know that a painting of Miss Platt's is going up pretty soon?"

Henderson nodded.

"You're not going to let Dickson get it, are you?" Willis went on.

"Not if I can help it."

"Good boy!" approved his chum; "but, by George, he'll give you a fight for it. Beatrice Mills told him what was up, and all our crowd is waiting to see the fun."

While talking, Henderson and Willis had taken up their stand in the crowd within a few yards of the auctioneer's platform. Suddenly the latter demanded:

"How about the money?"

"Plenty, I think," said Henderson, tranquilly.

"Your luckier than I am," his comrade went on. "I've been regularly cleaned out by these eternal raffles and what-do-you-call-em's. Those Clemens girls would have your last dollar for their blessed poor children's soup kitchen. I expect you'll have to give me a lift home!"

But Henderson only half-heard Willis, for he was taking stock of the situation. With a start he noticed that the auction had begun, but it was only a flowered sofa pillow which the Mayor was describing to the audience as "combining comfort with elegance," and the young man's attention wandered away. He was looking for Natalie Platt, and presently caught sight of her fair head and graceful figure. She was standing behind her graceful stall, now deserted, like the others, and trifling with the ribbon of a basket of candy, apparently unconscious of the auction; but Henderson was not deceived. Miss Platt knew what was coming. But where were her sympathies!

"There's Dickson!" whispered Willis, and Henderson looked in the direction in which he pointed. His rival was standing at quite the opposite side of the crowd. Owing to the position of Miss Platt's booth, Henderson doubted if Dickson could see the girl without leaving his position, and this he was inclined to consider an advantage.

Just at that moment, however, Henderson stopped thinking about the arrangement of things, for suddenly he felt Willis' hand on his arm, and turned just in time to hear the jocular Mayor begin: "And now it gives me peculiar satisfaction, ladies and gentlemen——" after which Henderson heard Natalie Platt's name, but lost the rest in taking in the painting which the Mayor was holding aloft. And he saw what it was, Henderson knew that there would be no truce in the contest for its possession. For the painting represented its author herself.

Responding to some little impulse of vainty, Miss Platt had chosen to portray herself in a character of whose attractiveness she had been assured times enough—that of skipper of the little dingy of which, when summering at her family's place in Maine, she was wont to be captain, mate and all hands. Of course, the girl artist had not given the picture's subject her own face—though evidently she had worked from a photograph—but the rest of the figure was life-like enough to be recognized by any one who knew Natalie Platt well, not to mention any one who happened to love her. There she was, just as Henderson had looked back at her so many times as they raced before the wind; her figure slightly bent forward as she held the sheet with one hand and the tiller with the other, her dark blue skirt drawn tightly about her limbs, while tendrils of her luxuriant hair blew out gloriously from beneath her crimson tam-o'-shanter. It was enough! Henderson wanted that picture as he had wanted few things before, and he doubted not that Dickson felt similarly.

The auctioneer still was praising the painting to his audience, so Henderson had time for another glance round the room. And he thrilled again as he saw that the girl of his heart—abandoning her little pose of unconsciousness—was now leaning upon the counter of her stall and watching the proceedings with an interest which she made no attempt to disguise. He felt his eyes feast upon her for one instant more, after which they sought Dickson. Through the dense crowd Henderson could just see his rival, standing beside one of his men friends, with excitement written upon his handsome face, and his eyes riveted upon the picture in the auctioneer's hand.

And then suddenly, the Mayor's demand for bids was replied to by a vigorous call of "One dollar!" from the center of the crowd, "Two dollars!" from Dickson, and the battle was on.

"Five dollars!" Henderson's voice rang out, and almost immediately the bidder in the crowd's center responded, "Ten dollars!"

"Fifteen!" came from Dickson.

"Twenty!" This offer was made by a smiling woman who stood near the platform.

"Make it twenty-five," whispered Willis to Henderson, and Henderson called out, "Twenty-five!"

"Thirty!" came from Dickson.

"Forty!" flung back his rival.

Perhaps the two young men's voices had betrayed their eagerness, at all events it was now patent to Henderson that even such of the spectators as did not know him and Dickson had realized what was going on, and that he and his rival were being regarded with looks of amusement, mingled with curiosity, as to which would prove the winner. All this the young man took in at a lightning glance while he waited for Dickson's next bid, but then they were interrupted.

Evidently the Mayor had decided that he personally was playing a less prominent part than was desirable in this particular episode of the sale, for he now interpolated a speech which apparently was designed to lend a further touch of humor to the proceedings.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, in dulcet tones, "a word, a word, I beg! I esteem highly the modest offers that have thus far been made, but evidently the attractions of this work of art which I am offering have not appealed to you with that force which might have been expected. A gem of purest ray serene, this picture, my friends; for which the lowest possible further bid should be, in my opinion, not less than twenty dollars in advance of what has been offered. In this way——"

"By George!" gasped Henderson's henchman, turning upon that young man, though the Mayor had not finished his harangue, "can you stand this pace?"

"Oh, I think so," replied Henderson easily, as he slipped his hand into his pocket. But then Willis, watching his friend, felt a cold hand get him by the throat, for suddenly there had appeared on Henderson's face a look of puzzled horror. And this look was reflected on Willis' face as Henderson withdrew his hand from his pocket and, without speaking, held out on his palm—a single ten dollar bill.

But in an instant Willis realized that they were not "done" yet, for Henderson's face had grown calm again, and his jaw was set in a way that his chum knew of old.

"You think you can get the money?" he whispered. "Not from me! I told you that I was cleaned out, you know. Who do you expect to get it from?"

"I am going to try," said Henderson, "to get it from Natalie Platt."

"You are!" was all Willis could gasp.

Now to describe this little development of affairs has taken some words, but it happened very quickly, and the auctioneer, encouraged by appreciative smiles from his hearers, still was urging them to extravagant deeds.

"You will bid for me," he whispered to Willis, "when it begins again. It may prove wise to withdraw gracefully.

With a start of surprise, and an involuntary blush, Natalie Platt found Henderson standing in front of her and she could only look at him with a puzzled expression. Henderson believed that he had not been observed as he crossed the room but he did not waste words.

"If I am to get that picture," he said, simply, "it will be necessary for you to lend me some money. Can you do it?"

The girl was as quick to grasp the situation as Willis had been, but she hesitated. She had made up her accounts half an hour before, and it would have been easy to say that her takings had been handed in—a fib that struck her as excusable. But a look into Henderson's eyes decided her.

"How much do you need?" she asked, softly.

"I think fifty dollars will be enough," he said.

Miss Platt took from her pocket a small key, which she inserted into the lock of a black enamelled money-box which stood on a shelf just beneath the counter of her stall, opened the box and took from within it five ten-dollar notes, which she silently handed to Henderson. The young man gave her one look which said everything, and then turning, started back with long strides for the corner where he had left Willis.

Even, as he had stood with Miss Platt, the sound of renewed bidding had reached his ears—a contest that had begun with an offer of forty-five dollars from Dickson upon whom the auctioneer's gibes evidently had not been lost.

"Forty-six dollars!" came from the obedient Willis.

"Forty-seven," snapped Dickson.

But Henderson's rival had been struck by the fact that he no longer had to do with that young man, and as the possible significance of this came home to him, Dickson gave a startled glance around and caught sight of Henderson in the act of returning to his place. Perhaps instinct told Dickson where he had been. Perhaps he saw the look that was on Henderson's face. At any rate, the young man needed no one to tell him that he had lost—not even the next bid that came from Henderson.

"Fifty dollars!"

"Fifty-one!" cried Dickson.

"Sixty!" (Clearly Henderson had taken leave of his senses.)

But it was enough. The auctioneer, looking to Dickson, saw him shake his head.

"And sold!" he announced, "to the gentleman—ah, Mr. Henderson," as some one prompted him, "for sixty dollars."

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As might, perhaps, have been expected, there was no contest on this occasion for the privilege of escorting Miss Platt home. But it happened that, as the girl swept toward the gate with Henderson at her side, a child in Hans Andersen fairy costume, with a tray bearing bunches of flowers, pounced upon them. "You must buy," she said to Henderson; "they are the last from the flower stall. And only fifty cents a bunch!"

"A sacrifice sale!" laughed the exultant young man. He took a bunch of the flowers for Miss Plat, and handed the child some money.

And Natalie Platt, glancing at the hand which Henderson had drawn from his pocket, was amazed to behold a goodly number of bills therein.

"You wretch!" she cried, her cheeks burning. "You had plenty of money."

"I had," confessed Henderson, "but I was somewhat curious to find out which one of us you wanted to win."
—The American Queen.

A MAN WITH A MEMORY.

The Way He Saved an Accused Friend From the Gallows.

A man was charged at Sydney with murder and by way of defense called evidence to prove an alibi. At the time the crime was committed he was, he said, in his own home listening to a friend who was reciting a novel to him. The expression caught the ear of the prosecuting counsel, and when a witness went into the box to say that he was the man by whom the prisoner was being entertained he tackled him on this word. The witness repeated that he was "reciting" Horace Walpole's "Old English Baron," not reading it, but reciting from memory, and it had taken him two and a half hours to get through the whole book. Well, if he could remember it while in a hut in the bush he ought to be able to remember it now in court, and counsel demanded a demonstration.

"Give us a page or two,' he said, never dreaming that his request would be complied with. The witness cleared his throat and without hesitation commenced, "In the time of King Henry, when the good Duke Humphrey returned from the wars in the Holy Land, where he had been sojourning for a number of years," and so on, without hesitation, for several pages, all letter perfect so far as those in court could tell. Counsel for the prosecution, quite staggered by the display, confessed himself satisfied. But the witness was not, and the prisoner's counsel, piqued that doubt should be cast upon his phenomenal witness asked that the latter might be given time to recite the whole novel and his time in doing it compared with the two and a half hours alleged to have been occupied on the night of the murder. "Good heavens!" said the judge. "But do you expect me to take it all down?" They compromised, the man with the memory reciting the closing scenes of the novel. And on this the man in the dock was liberated.—St. James Gazette.

What do Examinations Prove?

Few repositories of funny and witty sayings are richer than would be an extensive collection of the remarkable dicta of school children upon every subject under the sun. What could be more delightful than this:

Etc. is a sign used to make believe you know more than you do.

The youngster who wrote that required no stimulus from any pedagogue to put wit into his noddle. On the other hand, take this piece of historical characterization:

Henry VIII. was brave, corpulent and cruel, he was frequently married to a widow, had an ulcer on his leg, and great decision of character.

This gives the poor teacher a chance to cry quits. If he is to have no credit for the brilliancy of the definer of "etc." it is quite as certainly just that the hopelessness of the essayist on Henry VIII. should be ascribed solely to the original sin of the child capable of such an exhibition. Finally, it should be noted that there are examination answers which may be used to determine the quality of the critic of them rather than the quality either of the pupil or of the teacher. Of such is this definition of a vacuum:

A vacuum is nothing shut up in a box.

What mark should have been given to the child who gave this answer? Very high, or very low, or something between? The critic who answers this question ranks himself more certainly than he ranks the youngster.—Baltimore News.

SOUTHERN FARM NOTES.

TOPICS OF INTEREST TO THE PLANTER STOCKMAN AND TRUCK GROWER.

Berries and Peaches.

Berry shipping time is here, and I think of no subject of greater importance to the berry grower than that of packing and grading fruit. We cannot cover the whole ground, but shall touch on some things that have come under their own observation.

First, we have noticed that the markets are demanding better fruits and that it must be better packed and graded. Berry growers are learning that it pays, and that it pays well, to grade the berries, and that nothing brings a greater ratio than by making a reputation on a certain grade of berries. Commission men tell us that when a customer gets a good crate of berries that he will take particular notice as to how it is marked, and the next day he will look through the stack of crates to find that same mark. No doubt if a customer gets a bad crate he watches in order that he may not get another of the same pack.

Do you know, brother grower, we are making a record on our pack, and we are known much better to commission men by our pack than we even suppose? We are aware that there are many difficulties all along the pathway, and we are also aware that the growers must be educated up to it, and that it can't be done in one year. Have some kind of a model in your mind and keep constantly working toward it. Every individual should try to make some progress in his packing each and every year, and co-operations should keep this in view at all times. Inspection at the shed always creates an effort on the part of the growers to be more careful in grading and packing.

Some seem to think that inspection is a failure, but we have always found by careful consideration that every effort along the line has had a tendency to make the grade better. It is a great educator. Every packer has more or less pride. It's perfectly natural for us to try to excel in all things. This crops out early in life, when we notice the boy at play does not want to be beaten at any game, and he does not like to stand foot of his class, and he will not if he has proper encouragement and the necessary amount of grit.

Honesty in packing and grading should be the very foundation stone upon which to build. Facing a poor grade of berries with large, well colored specimens will put any grower's shipment away down below par. Not filling the boxes is another way to ruin the sale of fruits. A customer purchases a box, and he wants what he pays for. Poor fruit, poorly packed, is instrumental in ruining the market, while good fruit, well packed, has an opposite influence on the market. It takes quite a while to get familiar with all the best methods of packing, only those who make a success of it are those who are willing to make a study of it, and are willing to be careful. Most all the methods that bring success in packing and grading berries can be used successfully in packing peaches. The time will come when none but the very best grades of berries, peaches or apples will go, and the sooner we prepare for it the better.

Nothing looks worse to us than to see a basket of peaches, all faced up with large, fine, well colored specimens, and when on inspection you find the lower part of the basket full of knotty fruit of small size.

Nothing spoils a grower's reputation quicker than a poor pack. Then again it takes a man of experience to know just when to pick fruit. Some will pick too green, while others will make the mistake in allowing the fruit to get soft. If you will keep your eyes open and watch you will soon catch on when the berry or peach is ready. You must bear in mind that the fruit grower has something to study. Also, remember that the fellow that studies the market and tries so to pack his fruit is soon going to create a demand for his brand. Isn't it right that every grower should be proud of his fruit. He will be if it's good fruit and nicely packed.

A young fruit grower in Eastern Georgia has asked me for a few points on how to succeed in the peach industry. Well, a man must be a worker and be in earnest. He must bear in mind that "the weakest must go to the wall," and that in peach growing, as in other things, a man must "fish, cut bait or jump ashore." Plant the proper varieties in the right soil and in the right manner. He must care for each tree as the shepherd cares for the sheep of his flock. Work hard against the assaults of the enemy.

All orchard work must be well done; done to a finish. In fruit growing it is a race between negligence and ignorance as to which is the greater curse. The peach grower must unite with fellow growers for educational and business purposes. No waste is to be allowed. By-products must be considered. The grower must be in love with his work. "No profit grows where there is no pleasure taken," and "the labor we delight in physics pain." With such growers the forecast for the future would be most inspiring.—A. M. Latham in Home and Farm.

How to Make Corn.

As I made a good crop of corn last year, I will try to give you some of my experience, for I realize the necessity of the Southern farmer growing more corn; in fact, all the corn used on the farm should be grown at home, for more corn means more hogs and cattle, if the stalks are shredded, and that is the proper way to manage a corn crop. Why burn the stalks when they will make such valuable feed? Stock will eat the most of it, and the waste makes the best of bedding, as it absorbs the moisture, but the crop must be grown first, so we will talk about that now.

We always turn the land in the fall with a No. 30 steel beam plow, as deep as three mules can pull, and do not object to plowing up the clay either, for it will freeze and pulverize during the winter, and can be harrowed and mixed with the soil in the spring. We usually cover with a thin coat of manure before we start the harrows.

After harrowing over several times—more the better—plant on or a little below the level, using from 150 to 200 pounds of high-grade fertilizer to the acre and then run over the field with a weeder just before it comes up, leaving the field level, and when the corn has two or three leaves it can be harrowed with the weeder without covering the little stalks. In a few days after this we start the riding cultivator and keep it going after every rain or every ten or twelve days, always on a level until the corn gets too tall to plow with the cultivator, and finish with twenty-four-inch sweeps, with a two-inch scooter in front, being careful to plow very shallow, and we have never failed to make a crop, provided it was planted early enough, and I think that one of the greatest mistakes a farmer can make on upland is trying to get all the cotton planted before the corn land is touched, for it seems as though we are making too much cotton anyhow.—Young Farmer, in Southern Cultivator.

The Peach Grower's Creed.

Under this title we find the following in the Peach Grower:

We believe in budding on vigorous, known good qualities.

We believe in pruning, thinning, spraying, cover crops, and that the peach trees should have entire possession of the land.

We believe that an orchard must be fed as well as its owner.

We believe in high tillage. No soil is so rich that it does not need working.

We believe in "War to the knife, and the knife to the hilt" against San Jose scale, yellows, leaf-curl and borers.

We believe that pests are grindstones and whetstones to sharpen the peach grower's wits. Without them any fool could grow peaches.

We believe in "A merry life and a short one" for the peach tree. Better that a tree should "wear out than rust out."

We believe that quality and not bulk measures the fitness of a peach to eat, and therefore the value of a variety.

We believe in good fruit, good grading and good packages. There is only a change of one letter between cheap and cheat.

We believe in advertising our wares. "He that bloweth not his own horn, for him shall no horn be blown."

We believe in smaller orchards and better care. Large orcharding is not always the best orcharding, and small orcharding is often the largest.

Lastly, we believe in every man proving all things for himself, and in his holding fast to that which he finds.

Opposes Mixing Them.

A. J. U., Arkansas: I do not favor planting peach trees and apple trees at the same time, mixing them in the orchard, for the following reasons: First, they need different care and cultivation after they are old enough to bear well, according to the best authority. A peach orchard needs yearly cultivation, while an apple orchard can profitably be kept in grass when mowed and left as a mulch and fertilizer. They need pruning at different seasons of the year and limbs cut off would have to be cleaned up twice. They need spraying at different times, and would take more time if planted mixed; also more time to gather fruit. The peach trees in this section last about as long as apple trees. They live to be thirty or more years old, so it would be no object to alternate them with apple trees to take up the space until the apple trees need all the space, at which time the peach here would be only in their prime and be a pity to cut them down, and I think the dying and rotting peach roots would not be a benefit to the apple trees.

High prices continue to be paid in Paris for snuff-boxes of the eighteenth century.