

# PIKE COUNTY DOINGS

Colonel Harper Hears of a Good Thing From Abe Shorter

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**C**OLONEL HARPER had been down to the railroad depot to see about shipping some mules to St. Louis and was on his way back to the postoffice when Abe Shorter suddenly appeared before him and said:  
 "Upon my word, Colonel Harper, but I'm glad to see yo' this mornin'—powerful glad. Just thinking about yo' two minutes ago."  
 "Howdy, Abe?" replied the colonel as he extended his hand.  
 "I'm still alive, thank you. How's mornin', colonel?"  
 "Bout so so, Abe. No great flutter in the market."  
 "And co'n, colonel?"  
 "Co'n's a little stiffer, jest a little."  
 "I reckoned mornin' and co'n was all right, but I didn't know. Colonel



"THERE'S MY HAND, COLONEL HARPER, PUT IT THERE!"

Harper, I've known yo' a good many years."  
 "Yes, Abe."  
 "And in all those years I have never asked yo' to loan me any money."  
 "No."  
 "If I had yo'd have accommodated me, knowing that I'd have kept my word about paying it back. Now then, colonel."  
 "Sense me, Abe," interrupted the colonel, "but I'm powerful short this mornin'—powerful short. Reckon I won't have a cent to carry home with me."  
 "But yo'—yo'—"  
 "Consuln't do it, Abe—couldn't possibly do it."  
 "Colonel Harper," said Abe as he drew himself up with great dignity, "yo' would take my word as a gentleman, I reckon?"  
 "Yes; reckon I would."  
 "Then that's all right. That's what I was getting at. If I wanted to borrow any money of yo', which I don't, yo'd take my word, wouldn't yo'?"  
 "Oh, for shore—for shore," replied the colonel, evidently much relieved in mind. "Yes, if yo' wanted to borrow any money and I had any to lend I should have confidence in yo'. Yo' ain't looking any too peart this mornin', Abe. Pike county ain't been throwing yo' down ag'in, I hope?"  
 "Didn't yo' hear what happened last Tuesday night, colonel?"  
 "No, not a word. Was it mo' scandalizing?"  
 "Wuss than that, Colonel Harper. Pike county rose up ag'in me on masse and tried assassination for a change."  
 "Shoo, shoo! Did I ever! Somebody shot at yo', eh?"  
 "They attempted to assassinate my reputation, sah, which was wuss than shooting at my body from behind a stone wall. Yes, sah, tried to do me up for good and all, and they can't see how I possibly stayed on top of the ground. Yo' know about the Pike County Literary club, of co'se?"  
 "Yes; I reckon I've heard of it, though as yo' know I run mostly to co'n and m-wis."  
 "Well, I sent in my name to be balloted on for membership, and they throwed me down—throwed me with a crash. Out of forty members present thirty-nine blackballed me. How was that for giving a young man a show, colonel?"  
 "Shoo, I do declare."  
 "That was spite work and jealousy, colonel—just spite work and jealousy—sat right on top of that Malah Rogers read a paper to the meeting, a paper which he reckoned would bury my good body ten feet below the soil. I wasn't there, of co'se, but I heard all about it."  
 "Pitched right into yo', did he?" asked the colonel.  
 "Couldn't be wuss, Colonel Harper, yo' run to co'n and m-wis and have a box at the postoffice, but have yo' ever heard of Plotinus?"  
 "Seems like I had. Reckon I heard of him in Arkansas a few years ago. Used to make a power of hawgs, didn't he?"  
 "Kinsly, colonel—kinsly. Plotinus was he'n in Egypt in the year 300 and died in the year 270. That was about 1,200 years befo' Columbus discovered America. He didn't see to hawgs, but to philosophy and was a mighty smart chap. Colonel Harper, was I be'n in the year 300?"  
 "Reckon not, Abe."  
 "Was I be'n in Egypt?"  
 "Couldn't be."  
 "Have I any more show down a mass like was he a little years befo' I was?"  
 "Yes, Abe. All you have to do is to let me see how you do it."  
 "At the breakfast."  
 "I suppose that's the only thing that's left for this kind of music."  
 "Not at all. All you have to do is to let me see how you do it."  
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per—yo' foller me," continued Abe as he waved his hands in the air. "Malah Rogers wouldn't allow these things, but went on to say that a certain young man in this town, meaning me, could have been a second Plotinus if he had had energy, ambition and application."  
 "He went farther, colonel—a heap farther. He wanted to know why I didn't take off my coat and go to work; why I didn't pay back borrowed money; why I didn't seek to climb up instead of hanging about saloons to get drinks. He just raked me from top to bottom and from right to left in a way yo' never did see, and the crowd applauded him and looked to see me drop dead or skip the town. What do yo' think of that, colonel?"  
 "Shoo, shoo!" replied the colonel in tones of mingled astonishment and pity.  
 "But I'm not dead, colonel, and I haven't skipped. I'm still right here, and it won't be ten days befo' I'll be on top the whole crowd of 'em. Yere's my hand, Colonel Harper. Put it thar."  
 "What is it, Abe?" queried the colonel as he extended his hand.  
 "I've got 'em, colonel—got the Pike county scandalizers right under my thumb, and befo' they are a week older they'll hear something drop with a smash. That's what I want—want 'em to pitch into me. The mo' they pitch the quicker I'll get to the top."  
 "What yo' got up yo'r sleeve, Abe?"  
 "Colonel Harper, how long did yo' co't yo'r wife befo' being married, if I may ask?"  
 "Bout two years, I reckon."  
 "That's about the average. Yo' put in, say, ten hours a week. That's a low estimate, but call it ten. That's over a thousand hours to the average co'tship. What's the value of yo'r time per hour?"  
 "We might say 50 cents, I reckon."  
 "We'll call it only half that, colonel, and still we find yo' used up \$200 worth of time co'ting yo'r wife. Same with eighteen million other men in this country. That figures up hundreds of millions of dollars, enough to pay all the taxes and buy every widow woman a diamond ring to boot. Do yo' foller me, colonel?"  
 "Kinsly, Abe. Would yo' do away with the co'ting?"  
 "I'd do away with a heap of it, colonel, and it would be just as well for both sexes. Make a law ag'in co'ting over two hours or half a day at most. Might be half a day in case of a very young gal. Time saved is money saved. Instead of co'ting around yo' can be plowing the land, hoeing co'n or working at something else, and the gal can be churning or washing or making her clothes. Makes a saving both ways, yo' see. I've thought it all out by myself, and I'm going to copyright the plan. How does it strike yo' for an idea, colonel?"  
 "Better let 'em co't for at least four or five Sunday nights," suggested the colonel as a flood of pleasant recollections rushed across his mind.  
 "All right, all right. Make it even ten Sunday nights, and then yo' save \$100,000,000 a year to buy sealskin sacks for the widows of America. Yes; ten Sunday nights, and—"  
 "And what, Abe?"  
 "Did yo' say we'd stop over to Tom's and wet our whistles? Well, being it's yo', colonel, and being a little plain whisky never did hurt nobody. I don't mind if I do—don't mind in the least."  
 M. QUAD.

**A Labor Question.**  
 "What are you feeding to those hogs, my friend?" the professor asked.  
 "Corn, professor," the grizzled old farmer, who knew the learned gentleman by sight, replied.  
 "Are you feeding it wet or dry?"  
 "Dry."  
 "Don't you know if you feed it wet the hogs can digest it in one-half the time?"  
 The farmer gave him a quizzical look. "Now, see here, professor," he said, "how much do you calculate a hog's time is worth?—Lippincott's."  
**Ample Revenge.**  
 When young Spoonamore called on the society favorite, the lovely Miss Welpho, she sent down word that she was "indisposed."  
 Thereupon, when young Spoonamore went away he planned a card on the outer frame of the front door on which he had hastily written this inscription: "Belle out of order."—Chicago Tribune.

**Fatal Brevity.**  
 "What got Gopher Jim into trouble," remarked Three Finger Sam, "was hearin' somebody say that brevity is the soul of wit."  
 "Did his humor fall to pieces?"  
 "It was the death of him. He boiled the word mendacity down to one syllable."—Washington Star.

**One Thing Lacking.**



# WHEN SHORTY'S CHANCE CAME

[Copyright, 1902, by C. B. Lewis.]  
 Around Fulton market and all along Front street they knew Shorty O'Higgins. His given name was John, but as he was a trifle less than five feet high he was always called Shorty.  
 There was only one thing to console Shorty in his struggles to keep a dingy suit of clothes on his back and prevent hunger from gnawing at his vitals. He couldn't sing, play the fiddle or dance a hornpipe, but he could sneeze. The fans of Shorty's sneeze extended clear down to the Battery and up to the Brooklyn bridge. It had been heard up Wall street as far as Exchange place. It was a sneeze peculiarly his own, and no one could rob him of it or produce a successful imitation. That sneeze didn't come under the head of "promptness and dispatch." It was all of ten minutes from the time his nose began to tickle until the explosion came. Explosion was the term for it. When the sneeze finally came it lifted Shorty's cap off his head, rent new holes in his shoes and started the cobblestones in the street from their sandy foundations.  
 One day Shorty picked up a bit of news and was at once interested. No one could remember when he had been interested in anything before. The Cubans had suddenly braeed up and sailed into the Spaniards with new vigor, and the junta had raised a large sum of money in the States to send over a cargo of war material. Shorty learned what craft would take the cargo and her date of sailing, and it came about that he was included in the crew, though the mate bestowed a kick upon him as an "N. G." almost before the ropes were clear of the snubbing post. The craft went south to make a start from a Florida port, and in due time the munitions were on the rolling deep. History is silent as to why the mate got down on Shorty, and worked up his old iron on him. Perhaps it was on account of the size of his feet or the squint of his eyes. Steamship mates are rather eccentric in their likes and dislikes. No matter what the basis, Shorty was selected as the man to be bounced about, and bounced he was. The filibuster craft was delayed at sea by accident, and again she was chased off the Cuban coast by a Spanish gunboat, and the mate had five or six days in which to make it plain to Shorty that he was not beloved.  
 The steamer at length headed in for the appointed rendezvous, but when ten miles off the shore two things happened. A gunboat was sighted bearing down on her, and darkness had scarcely come when a thick fog settled down with it. Shorty wasn't to blame for either the gunboat or the fog, but the mate swore that he was and gave him some more of the same old tonic.  
 No living man had ever heard Shorty O'Higgins utter threats of vengeance; no one had ever known of his striking back. Had the fish dealers of Fulton market been told that he thirsted for revenge after that last bouncing about they would have stood amazed. Nevertheless, such was the case. Yes, the worm had turned, at last, and if the mate had been a mind reader he would have hastened to take off his cap and apologize.  
 The filibuster had reefs to look out for and an intricate channel to thread. As the fog came down she had to grope. A little later she came to a standstill. The Spaniard came up to within half a mile of her and began to play her search light. No good. Then she crept forward, fathom by fathom, with her crew at the guns.  
 The order had been "lights out" and no talking aboard the filibuster. Everything that could creak and groan was lashed fast, and such men as were forced to move about removed their shoes. The ball was so thick that a man standing amidships could not see stem or stern. The bars crouched in her form while the bound hunted to and fro. Presently, as the ocean was as quiet as a graveyard, Shorty found himself beside the mate. The mate wasn't thinking of bouncing anybody just then, but Shorty was reviewing the past. He reviewed for five minutes and then whispered in the mate's ear:  
 "Mr. Davis, I'm goin' to sneeze."  
 "If you do, I'll throttle you!" replied the mate as he turned on him.  
 "Mr. Davis, I'm goin' to sneeze, and you can get ready to go to the bottom of the sea and be banged to you."  
 The mate had heard of "the Shorty sneeze," and even as he reached out to grasp the originator and sole proprietor by the throat and choke him into a state of limppness he turned pale and his heart pounded his ribs. He failed to get to Shorty's neck in time. The sneeze came, and it was a sneeze that would have set 500 pedestrians along Front street wondering what the ball exploded her boilers. They could have heard it aboard the gunboat had she been four times as far away. There was a prompt hail in reply, and then, as the filibuster captain ripped out an oath and the mate drew his leg back for a kick, the Spaniard let go with his port battery and three big shells crashed into the steamer. A minute later she was a sinking wreck and taking half of her thirty-six men to the bottom of the sea with her.  
 Next day at noon, George O'Higgins was swept ashore on a bit of wreckage. He crawled up on the beach and fell down and slept the sleep of exhaustion. Ten hours later he woke up to find a downy lion-haired wild-eyed man gazing about him.  
 "The steamer and the cargo—where are they?" was asked.  
 "Under way, y' know, of the blue," he answered.  
 "But why not? How was it?"  
 "Oh, you see, and now you know."

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