

IN THE LAND OF PROMISE!

One of the Joe Miller Jokes With
Local Application

Now You Begin to See What This
Country is Good For,
Says Butler



JOE Miller, of course never wrote the jokes in his joke book. I will say that much to clear him of the charge, for although he has been dead close to two hundred years his jokes were still old when he was young.

¶ I reckon Joe's jokes came down to the English from the Romans, and to the Romans from the Greeks, and to the Greeks from the Persians, and Chaldeans and Chinese, and—but it is no use to go into the ancestry of the joke. ¶ All this explanation is simply to introduce one particular joke that I have met from the Caspian Sea to the Pacific Ocean.

Standing one day on the little point of the Apsheron Peninsular where it looks across the Caspian into the Turkestan Country a man who stood beside me shook his head and repeated the joke. "Yep, when creation was finished there was a lot of junk on hand, and it was just dumped down in this God-forsaken country to get rid of it." ¶ Down in the Mojave Desert of Arizona a miner pulled it on me "Stuff left over at Creation, just dumped down here to get rid of it." ¶ Up on the sand dunes of Lake Michigan the old skeleton came along, "Just dumped it down here," etc.

So I was not surprised when one of the Miller family in my early acquaintance with North Carolina took me by the arm one day and started to say that "After Creation was finished the stuff left over was just dumped down here, and—" ¶ I know the Miller family. One of them borrowed five dollars from me way back in 1873, when five dollars looked to me to be as big as a load of hay, and it is still borrowed. He was also a joker, but I love the whole bunch of them. ¶ Joe Miller, all of him, is, or are all right. He, or they, mean well, and a joke is a good thing, even if it is a little grizzled with age, and whiskers on the bottom of its trousers. ¶ And, possibly, when creation was finished the material left over was dumped down here in the sand hills, as well as in every other place I have ever heard that joke. ¶ But in knocking around among the places where things are made in this big world I have come to find out that the men who do things on a big scale do not throw away materials that are left over. Such things are simply stored, and in due season worked up into something. ¶ And as the Creator is as wise in the use of material as the rest of us, it has dawned on men that He did not overestimate the quantity required when He sent in the order for the material for creation, so I have figured it out that there is nothing left over, and that what was provided was provided for a purpose.

So one day when a Massachusetts visiting brother seeking information drew up in front of my wigwam and asked me how I could stay in this God-forsaken country, before I could answer his question I had to tell him that I did not believe God ever made anything and then forsook it. And that started the fuss, so I had no occasion to say why I stayed here. ¶ After nosing around in the Sandhills for some years and accepting the constantly offered information that this country is absolutely good for nothing except to play golf in I have finally veered over to the side of the Creator, and although He is probably not asking any justification for this particular bit of world building it interests me to show my friends and neighbors how easy it is to overlook things. ¶ It has gradually soaked into my thinkery that you will search the world and not find a more valuable bit of creation than right around Pinehurst. ¶ No, not time yet to laugh. ¶ What do you want in this world?

I should say that besides the wife and the kiddies and the stock market quotations in the morning, you want vittles and clothing, cylinder oil, fuel, and once in a while you are mighty anxious for a spare tire. ¶ Let us take them seriatim, if you know who he is. Wife and children I suppose you have. If not probably here is a good a place as any to look around, for within half a dozen miles of Pinehurst ought to be found a right fair collection of material from which to obtain a wife. ¶ But pass by that task. ¶ Then comes clothes, and clothes figure if you accumulate a family. With clothes provided you want corn bread and side meat with an occasional mess of collards. And when you have that or a suitable substitute you figure on gasoline, transmission grease and something to put on the rim when the other tire says "pank." ¶ Now you begin to see what this country is good for.

Here is one of the best cotton producing belts in the world, and after the cotton is produced the water of the streams turns wheels that make the cotton into clothes, and that is one want provided for. North Carolina makes more cotton to the acre than any other State in the Union, and the territory around Pinehurst surpasses the average of the State. This is a cotton section. It is not waste land, but in a way it is land that has been overlooked by men. ¶ Recently it has been discovered. That it can make cotton has been realized. That it can make fruit has been realized. But Joe Miller and his joke led lots of folks to think that the joke was a curious fact, and if you remember Lord Fermain Clancharlie in Victor Hugo's story, "L'Homme Qui Rit," you realize what a fatal effect laughter sometimes has on a serious matter. Lord Clancharlie would have moved the House of Lords to profound effort, but his face, on which the Comprachicos had graven a perpetual smile, aroused laughter, and when you laugh at a great effort you damn it. ¶ Luckily this case is not one to be determined before the House of Lords, but rather by the whole people.

The country was condemned because it was not known. I remember very well when the electric light was introduced in a printing office where I happened to be employed, and we concluded that it would

never be satisfactory, and we protested until it was taken out and the oil lamps restored. ¶ Men did not know a few years ago that here was a great possibility. They did not realize the excellence of the fruit that could be raised, nor the excellence of the cotton, nor the water power that is now coming into use, nor do they realize a lot of other things that are just now unfolding. ¶ I have mentioned clothing and food as the products of this neighborhood. Among the food products are quantities of oil, made at the oil mills from cotton seed. You may not care for artificial butter made from cotton oil, but the world buys many million pounds of it. You may not care for lard made from cotton oil, but the world uses enormous quantities of it. And I will tell you what you may not know, which is that synthetic rubber is coming to be a fact, and that this synthetic, or artificial rubber, is made of cotton seed oil. You may not want artificial rubber tires on your gas buggy but the world is apparently on the verge of using a lot of rubber that is grown in the cotton fields.

The man who thinks this country is a barren waste may live, if his habits are correct, to see it the seat of varied industries that will involve both agriculture and manufacturing on an interesting and varied scale. Here is one country where the materials for many lines of manufacturing can be produced, and where power to operate can be found on every side. Here is convenient transportation to all domestic markets, and convenient access to the coast for exportation. The textile trades can flourish in this section better than any where else in the world, for here are all the factors of operation. It is not only possible to provide the cotton and the power, but another factor, the starch used in woven goods can be made from material that can be produced in unlimited abundance. North Carolina sandy land is not surpassed in the production of sweet potatoes, and sweet potatoes are full of starch. The principal need of a starch factory is an abundance of soft, pure water, and there is no limit to the water supply here. The cotton mill can come nearer supplying its needs, at low cost and in a practical way in the territory around Pinehurst, than at any other place. ¶ The oil mill can find its raw material in the same section and the power to operate. Cattle feeding could be carried on in the shadow of the oil mill, and probably to as good advantage as any where in this country. With an abundance of oil cake made from cotton seed, from soja beans, from peanuts, this section has no superior for poultry raising and feeding, and someday the eggs and chickens of Central North Carolina will be a material contribution to the world's food supply.

Here also is a tobacco belt that is rapidly growing famous, as it is only in the sand that the popular bright leaf tobacco comes to its best. The demand for the bright leaf tobacco has out grown the supply, and much of the product goes to adulterate the darker tobaccos of other sections and make imitation bright leaf of them to meet the demands. ¶ As I have said I am not holding a brief for the Creator in this case vs. Joe Miller. But I can see that this is not a tag end of junk left over from the construction of the universe, for here are some of the

most valuable possibilities if men only come to realize what is at hand. ¶ To get back to the old gasoline buggy, I was told the other day of a man across in Hoke Country who ran out of gasoline down by a wayside swamp. Now these Hoke County hill billies are not so green as some folks think they are, and the historian who was telling of his experience said he simply pulled the cork out of a corn liquor jug, emptied the stuff into the gasoline tank, gave the crank a turn or two, and so came to town and up to the drug store and filled the tank again, and went away just like anybody else.

Presently, when the mineral oils have ceased to supply the gasoline for all the automobiles that are pestering the life out of the countryman along the North Carolina highways, old Agricola will get revenge, for the chug wagon is going to run some of these days with alcohol in the combustion chamber, and the alcohol can be made in North Carolina sand country probably cheaper than anywhere else in the United States. ¶ That gets us back again to the sweet potato, which is a mine of alcohol. A lot of other things can be made here in the sand that will yield alcohol. Alcohol is a great fuel, and when it comes to hunting for a substitute for gasoline alcohol will be the first aid to the injured.

The immediate big things will be cotton and tobacco. The cotton mill of the South is a wonder in its swift growth. Twenty years ago the Southern cotton mill was simply a prospect. Ten years ago the Southern cotton mill was spinning for the first time as much cotton as was shipped to the mills of the North. Now the cotton mills of the South have passed the mills of the North, and the rate of advancement at the South is no longer approximated by the mills of the North. The cotton spinning industry of the United States is established on a bigger scale South than North and the gap is increasing every day. North Carolina is the second cotton manufacturing State of the Union now. It will probably soon be the first. ¶ It is wise to get out of the notion that the sandy country around Pinehurst is merely the waste heap of creation. When we consider a minute how the Dutch have reclaimed the lands of the low countries of Europe from the sea, and made there intensely productive farms, how the arid States of the West are making farms where they successfully practice what they call dry farming, how in spite of obstacles men are profiting by all conditions of soil and climate everywhere, it is easy to see that here where are so many advantages the future is one of the most intense and successful combination of agriculture and manufacturing. With its many other advantages it is impossible that this section should be an exception. ¶ No, brethren, the Joe Miller joke does not apply to anything in this part of the United States. Still again disclaiming any responsibility or inspiration in my utterances I insist that the Creator knew what he was doing when he did his work in the upper Cape Fear country of North Carolina.

"Brewster's Millions"

"Brewster's Millions" is the week's star movie attraction. Wednesday's the night. ¶ Next week "Tess of the Storm Country."