Greatest Day in the History of New Bern

Written for The Morning Post

By A. E. STEVENS

The 29th of April, 1858, was the greatest day in the history of New Bern, although there have been other great days in the history of the town. The event of that day became known as the "New Bern Celebration" and it witnessed the great railroad festival given on account of the completion of the State railroad to the city. No one who celebrated that day has forgotten it and there are many who still can tell of it. Two of the foremost men of that day or jubilee were Col. John D. Whitford and William H. Oliver, Esq. They may well smile at latter day hospitality, for on that day they and their committeemen banquetted twelve thousand people. The guests sat at tables spread with white linen and chinaware for them, there was food and enough to spare and it is declared that there were "oceans" of wine and spirits. The number of plates set was 2,100, and there was a succession of banquets until all had dined.

Everything has changed since that time for it was three years before the first guns were heard at Sumter. For better or worse there is a new order of things. There was ready money to provide the goods and there were slaves to do the work. The town was a unit to give such a house warming as North Carolina had never seen. It was an entire success and a high water mrak of hospitality was made.

The dawn of the festival day was ushered in by the roar of artillery. Soon the trains began coming down the road and unloading their occupants, arriving in rapid succession. There were trains from the North Carolina road, the Raleigh and Gaston road, the Wilmington and Weldon road and the cars blocked all the switches and the main track from the river to the outskirts of the town. The Oak City Guards and the Wilmington Light Infantry brought their tents and went into camp. The committee of fifty bustled about to attend to the lodging of every visitor. On one of the Wilmington and Weldon trains there were 800 people.

The exercises opened on the Academy Green, where a stand had been erected for the orators and the clergy, and seats were provided for three thousand ladies. The speaking was over by 2 o'clock and the procession was formed which was to end at the dinner hall. The brilliancy of the parade was attested by the eleven military companies in line and the presence of six of the best bands that could be obtained in the Union. The New Bern Light Infantry, Capt. J. V. Jordan, was cheered to the echo for their precision in step and their fine uniforms of dark blue with red and yellow trimmings. A continuous line of people watched the parade, the windows filled with fair faces, the boys perched themselves in the trees in real boy fashion. The quick stepping lads who marched that day were soon to do more arduous marching, to charge on many battlefields and meet death in many forms. But there was no thought of such that afternoon. The procession was led by Rev. Mr. Hawks and Judge John R. Donnell.

The preparations for such a dinner were necessraily very great. William H. Oliver, then a young man, was selected as chairman of the entertainment committee. He tells now of the thousands of pounds of beef purchased, the thousand bushels of oysters, and how he bought a whole boat load of sweet potatoes and had them roasted in the bakery ovens, with such a result that afterwards numerous letters were received inquiring how those delicious yams were prepared. The provisions were collected on Tuesday, two days before the feast, and it turned very warm so that the committeemen were in a frenzy of apprehension lest the meat should spoil. It is related with glee by Mr. Oliver that when he went to bed that night it was with dire forebodings, only to awake Wednesday morning to find the ground covered with six inches of snow and the provisions saved. The snow disappeared soon, the next day was balmy with the bluest of skies and in air that was like a cordial.

The table ware for the great feast came from New York, enough to stock a crockery house, all bought outright and sold again for what it cost after it had served its purpose. There were plates and cups and saucers, knives, forks and spoons, goblets for water and wine glasses for what was not water. The native wine of the State, the delicious scuppernong, was in great kegs, and how many cases of champgane, "the real stuff," was served, it would not do to say. Strict temperance was not characteristic of those times.

The place where this great meal was spread and where the line of march terminated was at the railroad round house and machine shop. The tracks within had been boarded over and long lines of tables constructed. There was fish, flesh and fowl and the aforesaid oceans of wine and spirits. It was a "jolly good feed" and as the substantials were followed by the fruits nad pastry and the tables were filled again and again it was a sight to be long remembered. The ladies of New Bern presided at the spread. Much of the food had been prepared in their kitchens by their own servants, assisted no doubt by their own skillful fingers.

The dinner of twelve thousand over, the military bands paraded the town until nightfall and each organization had its special admirers. If the small boy failed to make himself a nuisance and mock the musicians, he failed to do his duty. Six of the best bands in the country on exhibition at once was no ordinary show.

Then there was the great ball. It was held in the passenger depot, which at that time was in the big building that had been the woollen factory of Stanly & Guion. It was a two story structure and very large but not enough so to hold the crowds of gay people that tried to go upon its floor. There was no dancing in the early hours, but when the crowd was somewhat thinned the dance began and continued until late. The hall was beautifully decorated and was lighted by many lanterns hung from the pillars and ceiling, railroad lanterns and ship lights of colored glass that gave a picturesque touch to the hall. This old building was long since torn down from its site, which was where the present station is now located. The supper tables were upstairs, and while called "light refreshments" the eatables were of every imaginable variety. Ladies and gentlemen from all parts of the State were on the floor that Thursday night, "and when music arose with its voluptuous swell, soft eyes looked love to eyes which spake again." The music for the dance was furnished by the band of the United States ship Pennsylvania.

Col. John D. Whitford headed the committee of arrangements for the ball and the names of that committee read like a roll call of the young people who now dance in Lowthrop Hall, only they are the children and mayhap grand-children of those who were upon the floor that night. Col. Whitford was president in later days of the road whose birth he so admirably helped to celebrate.

Those who slept at all that night were provided for as well as could be done, but a thousnad or more were bunked in the passenger coaches in some shape or other. Next morning a breakfast was given to all who came, served in the dining room of the day before, the morning meal being supplied from the previous feast with steaming hot coffee in addition. One by one the trains got under way, their departure being marked by cheering crowds of town people, while a battery of guns awoke the echoes with salutes. It was a fitting climax or finale.

The old town had done its duty. How high the spirit had risen is indicated by an incident of the affair. It is related that the barbers refused to take pay for services rendered to the guests of the city. It is soberly stated that the very servants did not wait for their accustomed fee; they were also in the conspiracy to make an unapproachable record of hospitality and good will.

The North Carolina "Standard" of May 5th, 1858, published at Raleigh, told of the successful event, giving a page to the story. Its editor was then the Holden, who afterwards as Governor was impeached for high crimes and misdemeanors. If the recalling of this great railroad festival, the "New Bern Celebration," brings pleasant memories to some who were present on the occasion it is well, and to the children of those at the ball it will serve to remind them that their parents too were young and gay. And perchance it will please them hereafter to have remembered these things.

New Bern, N. C., Nov. 29.

TOM'S TOPICS

Once again have I survived the day set apart by the President of the United States, and the Governors of the States respectively, on which we, the people, pause from our daily labors and thank Almighty God for the benefits received at His hands, and to ask those things continued which are requisite and necessary, both for the body and the soul; some by their lonely selves, and again in company assembled; in some instances I am persuaded to believe not with sincerity and truth, but rather in a mechanical sort of a way, born solely of the habit of observing the day as a holiday, and not as a holy day, each according to his own interpretation; some taking a jug of corn "licker" and a gun in the woods, and some snoring the day away beneath the folds of his lily-white. But I suppose either or both are thankful to be alive, and that's about the depth of the Thanksgiving.

* * *

So much for those who have something to be thankful for. Now let us look at the other side of life. I've been tending court during the week, and seen some sad sights, and I've seen more practical, common-sense justice than I've seen in a long while. When some people say that the Old North State don't take care of her people, strangers or home folks, then I say they don't know it all. The first case referred to was that of a young man, old enough sure to have known better, who was charged with the larceny of money and other things from a Syrian in a boarding house where both were rooming. Circumstantial evidence, to be sure, but he was found with the money in his shoe and the other articles in his possession. He had his poor old mother put on the stand to testify that she had sent him the money, something like fifty dollars, in a satchel with some clothes. What agony that poor woman underwent as the cross-examination of the prosecution proceeded to tear the testimony to pieces God alone knows. When the final jury returned the verdict of guilty, amid most profound silence in the court room, and the judge pronounced the sentence, three years in the penitentiary, the poor soul threw her arms about the son's neck and shriek after shriek rent the stillness of the crowded room. With tears streaming down his cheeks, and holding his poor mother in a close embrace, begging her to control herself, strong men turned away from the sight. If guilty, what a price to pay for the paltry amount! If not guilty, what tearful, agonizing days and nights between now and liberty! Who can fathom the depths of a mother's love? Who can measure the bounds of sacrifice? Better were it a thousand times had he cast himself, with a stone about his neck, into the sea, than to have asked her who bore him to go through such an ordeal. The only thing he has to be thankful for is that he wasn't hanged.

* * *

Following shortly after this case was the arraignment of a negro, for the stealing of a hog. Maybe the readers of The Post will recall, a while back, mention of an Atlantic Coast Line train being flagged at night, and a crowd of law dispensers, self-appointed, boarding the train and taking from the officer the negro, and, as was suggested at the time, doing away with him. Well, they took him, and, as he stated at the trial, hung him up by the feet and thumbs and neck, and beat him unmercifully; flayed him nigh to death, and he didn't engage in any active vocation for several months. The licking, under ordinary circumstances, might have been a timely application, but the culprit was in the hands of the majestic law, and should have been left to be dealt with accordingly. His Honor took the view that the punishment had geen quite enough, and the gentlemen present who had taken part in the train hold-up, etc., were uncomfortably shocked and surprised when the solicitor was instructed by the court to take the names of those who were in the party and later brought into court to be dealth with according to law.

* * *

And still another surprise was sprung. A white man stopped at a negro church and picked a quarrel with one of the attendants, winding up by cutting him with a knife. The jury said "guilty," and the defendant had to pay the fiddler for the dance.

* * *

I've got a great big kick against alleged barbers. 'Tain't bad enough to submit to experiments in the way of red-hot towels prodded into your eyeballs like you'd got pop-eyed over night and were having them replaced, or of mopping your face with wood alcohol that comes nigh pulling blisters out on the spot, but when you get a continuous performance like I was audience to, it's enough to make any man kick. My star performer began by letting me so low down in the chair that my bar checks, keys and the few coppers I had in my pockets rolled down the inclined plane thus made, into the cuspidore placed to receive such contributions. After plugging my nostrils and ears full of soap he got at me with an energy that threatened to put the razor through more cheek than I thought I possessed. By and by some one comes in, and while he opens up a conversation with him he keeps on scraping in one spot till that side looked like a full-blown consumptive. Having used up the soap on that side of my jaw, he borrows some from under my chin and plasters it on the clean-shaven side and goes at it again. Now it is a well-known fact that an ordinary barber makes 525 strokes of his knife in an ordinary shave, but if this butcher didn't make 1,525 then I'm liable to indictment for false pretenses. And as I can afford but one shave a week any way, I'm going to let 'em grow into good, long, effervescent, populistic whiskers that the cold, wintry winds may canter through rather than walk through the balance of my short life with an artificial shade of youth upon me that I can't wash off.

* * *

When I was a lad our locals used to read: "John Jones' father today apprenticed him to James Smith till he come of age, and he shall diligently serve him, avoiding bad habits and keeping such regulations and obeying such master faithfully during the term of his apprenticeship." His friends rejoiced with him in securing such a good master, etc. Nowadays you see it: "John Jones has, after consideration, accepted a position with So-and-so, and will hereafter be identified with such business." What a condescension John did make, to be sure, and how glad So-and-so should be to have John take the job, after due consideration! It makes one tired.

* * *

A good story is told of a Hebrew friend who dealt in "wet" goods. A purchaser from the rural district came in and got a pint and took it home. For reasons best known to himself he left it out doors over night, and a cold snap coming on, it froze and burst, so that the next morning when a little smack might have gone good he found nothing but a broken bottle and a few drops of the liquid left. As nothing had hit it he was wrathy and lost no time seeking an explanation in town from the aforesaid merchant. "Vat's dot you say, dot bottle busted, and you fell no down on him? Ikey, from where you took dot bottle you you sell to Mr. ——? Oh, so! Now didn't I told you many times dat you make not such mistakes? Dots all right Mr. ——. You see I haf both winter goods and summer goods, and dot boy he give you some from my summer goods. Dots too bad. You take a short nit me. Vell, here goes, Brosser!" (There was just a trifle too much aqua for the spirits to take care of, and straight distilled mountain dew don't never freeze.)

ADVICE FOR SMOKERS

If You Must Smoke Do It with Leisurely Puffs

(Chicago Tribune.)

There are many pipe smokers who do not know how to get the best there is out of their indulgence. The great point in pipe smoking is to smoke slowly. Nervous smokers smoke too rapidly and burn their tongues with hot smoke, besides failing entirely to get the fullest and best flavor out of the tobacco. It is all a matter of habit, which it is hard for some people to acquire. In some cases pipe smokers have tried for years to check their smoking speed without success. They begin too late, and the habit of rapid smoking is shaken off with difficulty when it is once acquired.

Rapid smoking is as bad as rapid eating or worse. It is also "bad form," whether it is cigar, pipe or cigarette. The smoking should be deliberate in order to get the fullest enjoyment. It is especially so with a pipe. Many persons have smoked all their lives and yet do not know how to smake. It is as painful to watch some people smoke as it is to sit at the table with a man who "gobbles" and "gorges" his food on the "fifteen-minutes-for-refreshments" plan.

The deliberate pipe smoker gets out of his pipe an enjoyment of which the rapid smoker has no inkling. A cigar which has once gone out has its flavor ruined forever, for nothing is more obnoxious to the sense of smell than a newly extinguished "butt." The beastly persons who take their beastly "butts," half-lighted or newly extinguished, into the elevated and surface cars should have some punishment devised for them —"something humorous with boiling oil."

But it makes no difference to the flavor of a pipe how many times it goes out. Fastidious pipe smokers always have at least two pipes at hand and never refill one until it is entirely cooled off. This is a help toward good smoking and a reasonable life in a pipe. A good way to tell if you are smoking too fast is to hold the bowl of the pipe in your hand. If it is too hot to be held with comfort, then you know that your smoking speed is too great. Good tobacco, a good pipe and deliberateness are the prime essentials in pipe smoking. Eat slowly; smoke slowly, drink seldom; so shall you live long in the land and enjoy the fulness thereof.

Cured of Chronic Diarrhœa After Thirty Years of Suffering

"I suffered for thirty years with diarrhœa and thought I was past being cured," says John S. Halloway, of French Camp, Miss. "I had spent so much time and money and suffered so much that I had given up all hopes of recovery. I was so feeble from the effects of the diarrhœa that I could do no kind of labor, could not even travel, but by accident I was permitted to find a bottle of Chamberlain's Colic, Cholera and Diarrhœa Remedy, and after taking several bottles I am entirely cured of that trouble. I am so pleased with the result that I am anxious that it be in reach of all who suffer as I have." For sale by Henry T. Hicks, Bobbitt-Wynne Drug Co., and North Side Drug Store.

1:30 a. m.—Dimbleton—"I was detained at the office." Mrs. Dimbleton—"Was it worth seeing?"—Life.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Representative of the Too Strenuous Life

Written for the Morning Post

By B. BOISSEAU BOBBITT

The strenuous life is an ardent, earnest, intrepid, zealous one. We would, then, expect a representative of this life to be thoroughly and pre-eminently imbued with these qualities. To be thus is to possess commendable traits of character. However, it is with this as with other good things when carried to an excess. It is a well established fact that while sleep which "binds up the unraveled sleve of care," in moderation is one of the most beneficial physical phenomena which affects our bodies, yet when carried to an excess it becomes positively injurious. A little of a bad thing is a good thing, but too much of a good thing is a bad thing, is our deduction from the operation of natural laws. Mr. Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States, is undeniably one of the most prominent, as well as one of the most earnest, advocates of what he terms the "strenuous life." In his ardent adherence to its principles he has perhaps become somewhat too strenuous. This being so he is a good representative of the too strenuous life.

The superiority of independence of thought and action over servile obedience to the dictates of any one is plainly evident. It is a strange misconception that leads people to confuse independence and strength of character with a too strenuous life. There are two types of persons, politically speaking: One class has too little self-reliance, the other is too aggressive. To the latter class belongs Mr. Roosevelt. I shall introduce as evidence in order to prove the truth of this assertion the following: (1) He has recently violated precedent, and all antecedent custom in dining with a negro, so as to thereby show his contempt for some social usages now in force. (2) He, while Governor of New York, expressed himself in favor of woman suffrage. (3) He is now in favor of a too vigorous expansion policy.

It is easy for one to be too strenuous in his ideas of social reform. An illustration of the truth of this is readily found in the life and career of Dr. Mary Walker. Custom is ironclad. No one can violate its dictates with impunity. Many have tried to do so, but few have succeeded. When certain customs of which we do not wholly approve exist we cannot change them at once; the change, like the building of strata in a geological formation, must be gradual. "Rome was not built in a day;" neither are the observances of customs made, or changed, in a day. Time and peace are factors in the observance of any custom which cannot be eliminated without serious disturbance.

The best rules of conduct are, "When we are in Rome do as the Romans," and "When we are Presidents do as the Presidents." It happens that it has not heretofore been the custom for Presidents to dine with "gentlemen of color." But, in the glory and strength of his strenuous manhood, Mr. Roosevelt saw fit to bid defiance to the customs of a century. The act in itself while justifiable in Mr. Roosevelt, the plain citizen, for if in his opinion the negro was sufficiently good to eat with him, it concerned no one but Mr. Roosevelt; in Mr. Roosevelt, the President, the act was almost inexcusable. It is a duty incumbent upon the holder of an office to maintain dignity in keeping with his official position. In dining with a negro Mr. Roosevelt failed to maintain the dignity which appertains to and of a right ought to belong to a President in his official capacity. Plain Bill Jones has an undeniable, inherent and inalienable right to get drunk whenever he wishes to do so; and so long as he provides for his family and creates no disturbance by disorderly conduct, he cannot be legally interfered with. Judge Bill Jones has no right to get drunk so long as he remains a judge; in case he does, he is liable to impeachment for high crimes and misdemeanors; and in case of a conviction he is deprived of his office with the emoluments appertaining thereto, and is disqualified to ever again hold an office of trust or authority. Apropos of the recent dining episode the following, the revised version of a trite saying, might prove of inestimable benefit to the President: "If wisdom's ways you'd surely seek, five things observe with care, by whom you dine, with whom you dine, and, how, and when, and where."

As another evidence of his strenuousness and consequent radicalism, President Roosevelt is on record as being in favor of woman suffrage. It is a fact which had as well be immediately recognized that the inevitable tendency of the past quarter of a century has been toward the universal adoption of woman suffrage. It is, therefore, the duty of those who wish for the purity of our women to remain unsullied to do whatever lies in their power to obviate this pernicious tendency. The advocates of this measure tell us that it will work toward the purification of our politics. In making such a claim they prove themselves poor logicians. Nature's lessons bearing on this point are too reasonable to be lightly overlooked. When anything that is pure is brought into immediate contact with something that is impure, one of two things may take place; either the impure thing will become pure, or the pure thing will become impure. The usual and natural event which takes place is the contamination of the pure when it is associated with the impure. "Black absorbs no color." If we rub together black and white pieces of chalk, the white pieces will become black from the contact, while the black pieces will scarcely be affected. Woman suffrage is a radical departure from all of the established and time-honored principles of popular government, and we should neither tolerate or allow its further introduction. I would greatly prefer to find a little less strenuousness in our chief executive than is found in one who wishes to lower the dignity of our women in order to accomplish an impossibility, namely, the immediate purification of our politics.

President Roosevelt is in favor of expansion, ad infinitum. He evidently believes with some who say, "We must expand or perish." Bryan says, "If we expand we shall perish." Between these "devil and deep sea" opinions, where are we at? Both are radical—in different directions. Bryan thinks that we ought to go back too much. Roosevelt thinks that we should go forward too fast. He would take every country, and annex them to the United States. I believe in expansion, but not in too much, or too fast expansion. We should take it gradually.

Some one has compared our nation to an organism which must grow or die, saying, that in nature there is no such thing as standing still. The analogy will not bear close inspection. The growth of cells and change of cells in the previously existing parts of an organism are more important and essential features than the continual addition of new parts. There is such a thing as a nation just as an individual getting too large, so large as to make it unwieldy and difficult to manage. Historians tell us that the vital fault in Roman institutions, which caused their fall, was the extension of a constitution originally devised for a city to make it serve as a constitution for half of the then known world, and the inability of the constitution to stand such an extension. Our constitution was formed for a Republic composed of sef-governing States; no provision was made in it for the government of colonies. We had not then reached a stage in our natural progress when a necessity for such a provision existed. Now, changed conditions, of which the founders of our constitution had no cognizance, have counselled us to hold colonies. I have no doubt that we can do so without in any way diminishing the stability of our government. But, it would be best for us to go slow. Boswell would say to the nation as did Kipling to England, "Go take up the white man's burden." We as a nation have an enormous appetite, but our powers of "benevolent assimilation" have not as yet been thoroughly fested: so, we had better go slow.

Mr. Roosevelt is a good man. All good men have faults. These faults are always more apparent to disinterested observers than they are to the men themselves. The principal faults which Mr. Roosevelt has are the result of his being too strenuous. These arise from the fact that a man of his type of strenuousness is necessarily too indifferent to public opinion. A certain amount of this indifference to the opinions of a constantly changing public is a good thing. Absolute indifference is, to a public officer, suicidal. This feeling of indifference to the opinions of the people comes from that self-reliance and independence which says, "I will do what I think right (viz., what I wish) though the Heavens fall." A man who does not care to have the good opinion of his fellows, subordinates though they may be, is a rare species of the genus homo. A man is naturally a social animal," and as such he longs for the approbation of his acts by his fellows which by no means always follows along with the consciousness of duty well done.

It is evident that our President is a man of radical tendencies. I hope that he will become more conservative and less strenuous. I do not think that he will prove inadequate to the burdens which have been placed upon him; my only fear is that he will prove too adequate to them. According to the poet's saying that "an honest man is the noblest work of God" he is all right, but the poet did not tell us that such a man was always the wisest work of God. Concerning such a man as Roosevelt, Shakespeare says:

It is held,
That valour is the chiefest virtue, and
Most dignifies the bearer. If it be,
The man I speak of cannot in the world
Be singly counter poised—
But still the fact remains that "Discretion is the better part of valour."

Danville, Va., Nov. 29.

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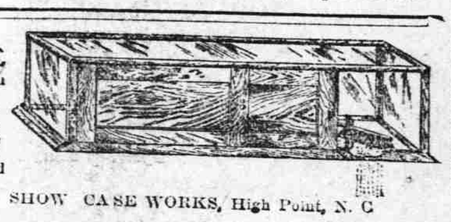

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