A Pottersville Episode.

By Frank H. Meloon.

It was at the fall elections that the feud began in Pottersville. John Grant, the village blacksmith, a big, rawboned fellow of enormous muscle, whose family had hailed from Nova Scotia, had dared to oppose Judge Weaver, candidate for the legislature. From the judge's point of view the worst feature of this presumptuous antagonism was its success. Judge Weaver had been defeated by the narrow margin of one vote, and bitterness was ever thereafter to rankle in his heart.

Another source of vexation for the judge was the attachment which he could not fail to see existed between his daughter Nellie, a girl of pretty face, medium height, plump person

HE GENEROUSLY OFFERED TO FIGHT THEM.

and many suitors, on the one hand and Willis Wenham, son of the first selectman, who was in the midst of his course at one of the big eastern universities.

Selectman Wenham was another of Judge Weaver's political opponents; but, though the judge never forgave one who crossed his will, this was not the reason for his opposing the match between his daughter Nellie and the selectman's son Willis. The judge was a man of means, while Selectman Wenham, though possessed of a moderate competency, could leave but a small sum at his demise to each of his numerous family, of which Willis composed exactly one-thirteenth.

With young Wenham absent at college, the judge was able to give his undivided attention to the village blacksmith. He was willing to bide his time, for he knew John Grant to be one of those men who with unfailing regularity get themselves into a beastly state of intoxication just once every twelve months. For a full week it was the blacksmith's custom to wrestle with John Barleycorn, quite willing to be overcome.

The only article in the warrant for the last town meeting over which there had not been more or less contest was that which called for the erection of a town lockup. It was generally conceded that Pottersville had reached that stage in a town's progress where a jail is demanded for the preservation of peace and order. An outsider might have objected that there had been no arrest made in the little village excepting of boys on truancy charges since the convening of the last town meeting, but this would have been regarded as a Machiavellian attempt at impeding the wheels of progress. So the new structure had risen triumphantly, with not so much as a hint of graft, under the supervision of the selectmen, and, although the suggestion of building had come from the mouth of Judge Weaver, none sang the praise of conception and execution more loudly than the village blacksmith.

It was at the fall elections, as we have said, that the feud started between John Grant and Judge Weaver. It was not until the approach of the following spring that the latter found the sought for chance to "get back" at the smith. One morning in early February the blacksmith failed to show up at his place of business. A line of six or more impatient teamsters set out to look up the reason. At Henry Come's hostelry, known as the Come Inn, they found it. Red eyed and mandlin, mostly oblivious to the cares of this world, yet occasionally bursting into tears and hiccoughs as he expostulated against the hard fate that had carried an uncle of his away on the wrong side of a log drive thirty years before, was the village blacksmith, leaning for sympathy and support against the rose colored, reeking bar over which the liquors of the Come Inn were served.

John Grant refused to do the work the teamsters desired of him, but generously offered to fight them, either one at a time or all together. His insider was courteously refused.

This time, however, John Grant was not to enjoy his parting from the path of sobriety without paying the penalty therefor as provided and laid down in the statutes of the state. Judge Weaver forced the unwilling constables, after considerable goading, to action. The blacksmith, snoring in slumber, was dragged out of the woods and cast into the new lockup. On the following morning he had sobered sufficiently to appear before the court, which in Pottersville meant Judge Weaver.

Two of the constables swore to having seen John Grant very drunk and disorderly at the Come Inn. There was no defense. The blacksmith even pleaded guilty with a certain amount of elation. Apparently the one uncomfortable feature of the affair to him was the long and maliciously worded harangue which, behind the dignity of the law, Judge Weaver delivered to the prisoner, closing by sentencing him to sixty days in Pottersville jail and fining him $3.76 costs.

There was a beatific smile on the highly colored face of the prisoner as he was led off to the lockup, closely guarded by quite unnecessary constables, after offering to work out the fine by shoeing the yoke of oxen kept to aid the paupers in their work on the town farm. The proffer had been refused with a great show of dignity.

It would have required no great effort for the burly prisoner to tear down the bars which covered the windows of the jail and which were rather more for decoration than for anything else, but other thoughts were in his mind. He was, for the first time in his life, a prisoner. It was the duty of the town to which he had paid poll and property taxes for more years than he could really remember to provide him with bed and board. The experience was not only novel, but also distinctly pleasing, vesting him with a sense of new importance.

It was easier than working, this jail life, and after the first week in the well warmed lockup he began to look forward with regret to the time when he must leave it.

With the passing of the first fortnight of the sixty days' confinement this state of affairs, however, began to pall on him. He found that a vacation may be of too long duration. He began to pine for work. Furthermore, his pride was seriously affected. On two or three occasions Jailer Gibson on leaving the lockup after bringing in the blacksmith's supper had forgotten to lock the door after him. The prisoner remonstrated in forcible language at this inattention to duty.

"I'm goin' to be locked up nights hereafter, Jim Gibson," he said, knitting the red skin of his forehead into a mass of frowning wrinkles, "an' I want you to understan' it. Think of me stayin' in jail without bein' locked up! Ain't I got a right to be locked up?"

"I'll put a spring lock on the door tomorrow, John, an' then if I go away an' forget to lock the door you can close it an' lock it any time you want."

"Well, Jim, all I ask's to be locked up like I ought to be," answered the mollified prisoner. "That's all I ask."

"Yes, an' I'll do more than that," continued the constable. "I'll have that lock so's you can open it from the inside with a nail. Nobody but us need know, an' you can step outside any time you want to. I'm doin' this," he went on hastily, "'cause I don't want you to get sick while you're in my charge. Prisoners get all the exercise they want in ev'ry well regulated jail, an' I ain't goin' to have no one say the Pottersville jail's behin' the times."

"No, nor I nuther!" agreed the blacksmith heartily. "Have some tobacco, Jim?"

Jailer Gibson took a pipeful of the contents of the blue and tinsel package extended to him, and, rolling it in the palm of his hand, sat down to have a further chat with the prisoner.

"See here, John," he began, "the boys aroun' Pottersville are gettin' mighty hard up f'r a horseshoer. They don't want to go out of town f'r one thing. 'Sides, they couldn't get nobody bearer nor Spencer, an' that's most forty mile away. We've been a-talkin' it over at the grocery store, an' we decided to ask you if you wouldn't like to do a little work here. We could fix up a place where you could do shoein' real slick."

"I don't know's I'd object to it, Jim," deliberated the blacksmith, "providin' the boys didn't think 'twas lettin' me down on my sixty days."

"No one would think that, John," interpolated the constable. "Why, 'twould be just a favor to you, if you'd do it. It's mighty slippy'ry on the roads, an' it's hard on the horses' feet. There's more'n fifty on 'em need sharpenin'. 'Twould be just a stroke of common humanity on your part, John, if you'd do it."

"Well, you go ahead an' fix the things up," agreed the prisoner, "an' I reckon 'twill be all right."

The next day a portable forge was obtained, and a huge pair of bellows set up. The smith donned his apron and did a rattling business. On the day following he shod Judge Weaver's trotting horse Kelleck, 2:18, who had earned his record at the county fair the previous year. The blacksmith also shod the yoke of oxen from the town farm. For a week he was forced to turn away trade daily and even began to talk of hiring an assistant.

People who lived midway between Pottersville and Spencer who had been in the habit of going to Spencer now came to see the strange spectacle of a jail prisoner doing horseshoeing. John Grant had more business than ever before. He offered, if the town authorities would arrest and send to jail some tramp who knew something about the work, to hire him as assistant and even to pay the town for his keep. The constables, though enjoined to be on the alert, failed to find such a personage.

In the meantime Willis Wenham came home from the university for a fortnight's vacation. His attentions to Nellie Weaver once more became a source of annoyance to the judge. Sympathy in Pottersville, as it is apt to be in any town, was with the younger people. In some way it got rumored around the town that Nellie's life at home was made none of the pleasantest by her father. Further comment was aroused when the postmaster gave out that Miss Nellie had returned one of Wrangle's (the wealthy summer visitor's) letters unopened. The incident showed a further progress in the stand taken by the energetic young lady against the plan of her father to marry her to the aforesaid Wrangle instead of to young Wenham.

The crisis was reached early in April. There had been an ice storm during the night, making the roads as slippery as glass. Unfortunate indeed was the horse that with unsharpened shoes had to venture on them. Trade was brisk at the improvised blacksmith shop, and John Grant had all the work he could handle. Judge Weaver's trotter Kelleck was late in getting into line, so that it was nearly nightfall, with a bitter wind blowing from the northeast, when the prisoner blacksmith at last stripped Kelleck of his shoes and commenced with his usual expedition the task of reshoeing. Three shoes had been nailed to Kelleck's prancing hoofs when an exclamation from the judge drew the attention of the waiters and loafers to a couple dashing by at high speed in a familiar sleigh. They were Willis Wenham and Judge Weaver's daughter Nellie. As they turned up the road where, two and a half miles distant, the house of the minister was situated, it dawned on the company that they were witnesses of an elopement.

There was ample time for the angry judge to overtake the couple, provided John Grant drove the nails of the fourth shoe with his customary quickness. The judge commanded him to hurry. Instead of doing so he laid the shoe down and said that, as he was a prisoner, working only to oblige folks, he'd be hanged if he'd do another tap of work for a man so low down as to swear at him. The judge pleaded and apologized in vain. It was only when the young couple returned and rendered Judge Weaver speechless with rage by the announcement of their marriage that John Grant would consent to put on the other shoe.

The very next day came an April thaw. The traveling was so bad that the prisoner's only visitor was Jailer Gibson, who brought him his meals. In the night when the blacksmith retired the rain was pouring outside in a monotonous drizzle. The Pottersville jail was situated on the bank of a small but deep river, and the waters of this stream were yellowed and swollen by the freshet.

In the early hours of the morning there was a slide and a fall and a splash. Over into the river went a section of banking, the Pottersville jail and the prisoner therein. The structure did not float far, but grounded on the shelving shore opposite the blacksmith shop where John Grant had practiced his trade prior to his latest departure from the narrow path of sobriety. As John Grant forced

A COUPLE DASHED BY AT HIGH SPEED IN A FAMILIAR SLEIGH.

open the conveniently arranged door it occurred to him that at midnight the sixtieth day of his imprisonment had been completed. His face wore a satisfied smile.

His equanimity was undisturbed the next morning when Judge Weaver drove over, furiously accusing him of stealing the jail and demanding that he return it to the place he had taken it from. The easy grin on the features of the blacksmith grew to broader dimensions.

"I whipped you at 'lection, judge," he drawled slowly, "an' you sent me to that place," indicating the floating jail, "when you had your turn. Then I wouldn't put the shoe on your horse so's you could stop your daughter's marryin' young Wenham. Now you say I stole the jail. Judge, it's this way. I've got a chance to sue the town of Pottersville f'r false imprisonment. I ought to have been let out o' jail at 12 o'clock last night. More's that, the jail's mine!"

The judge's face grew blank and purple with amazement.

"Yes, sir-ee! The jail's mine. I didn't go to see f'r nothin' when I was young. Pottersville jail is flotsam—F-L-O-T-S-A-M—an' if the town wants it back it'll get it by payin' good money. An', judge, if you should want Kelleck shod in a hurry don't f'rget I'm doin' business at the same ol' stand!"

The Black Hole of Calcutta.

A scientist, writing of the black hole of Calcutta and its atmosphere, says:

"On the 20th of June, 1756, about 8 o'clock in the evening, 146 men were forced at the point of the bayonet into a dungeon eighteen feet square. They had been but a few minutes confined in this infernal prison before every one fell into a perspiration so profuse that no idea can be formed of it. This brought on a raging thirst, the most difficult respiration and an outrageous delirium. Such was the horror of their situation that every insult that could be devised against the guard without and all the opprobrious names the viceroy and his officers could be loaded with were repeated to provoke the guard to fire upon them and terminate their sufferings. Before 11 o'clock the same evening one-third of the men were dead, and before 6 next morning only twenty-three came out alive, but most of them in a high putrid fever. All these dreadful effects were occasioned by the want of atmospheric air and by their breathing a superabundant quantity of nitrogen emitted from their lungs."

Sealed Orders.

The custom of having warships sail under sealed orders arose from the desire of maritime powers to prevent the plans from becoming known to the enemy. In the American navy such orders come from the president and are delivered to a commander of a ship or squadron by a confidential messenger who knows nothing of their contents. Sometimes they are in cipher, but they are always sealed with the official seal of the navy department and the package cannot be opened until the time marked on it, which is usually several hours after the hour of leaving port. By this precaution the newspapers are prevented from disclosing prematurely the movements which may be of the greatest importance, and the spies of the enemy are rendered useless so far as their ability to discover the secret of such movements is concerned. Sailing under sealed orders is now the common naval practice in time of war. These instructions are found in the packet of sealed orders, which is opened when well out at sea.

A Runaway River.

The problem and the peril of the Colorado river are not difficult to understand. A great river running slowly on a ridge of its own creating, running in a broad and tortuous channel, choked with islands of mud and bars of sediment, running with a fall of only one foot to the mile, while to the north and west lay a vast depression below sea level and inviting the sluggish river to a swifter flow; between this sunken area and the uncertain course of the river a great garden of Eden in promise and potency, needing only to be watered and kept, then a canal tapping the river, a flood gathering at the far away sources, a breach in the unprotected bank and the whole volume of the river, forsaking its ancient and outgrown bed and rushing into that pit in the desert, sweeping in its course through miles of fertile farms and cutting canyons where canals had been—this is an outline of the situation and a hint of the peril.—A. J. Wells in Sunset Magazine.

The Dean's Raiment.

Dean Stanley was once driving with a friend from Monreale to Palermo. Both men were reading. Stanley suddenly discovered that he was shivering with a cold. He mentioned the matter to his friend.

"Well, hadn't you better put something on?" said the latter, pointing to the dean's bag, which was close at hand.

Stanley thought it rather a good idea, and the friend went on reading. As they entered Palermo there were shouts of astonishment. Stanley was placidly reading. His friend found that the distinguished churchman had absentmindedly drawn out a nightshirt from his bag and put it on over his other clothing and thus arrayed was riding triumphantly into the city.—London Sketch.

The Earth's Shadow.

The earth has a shadow, but very few ever see it, except in eclipses of the moon, or else few recognize it when they see it. Nevertheless, many of us have noticed on fine, cloudless evenings in summer shortly before sunset a rosy pink are on the horizon opposite the sun, with a bluish gray segment under it. As the sun sinks the arc rises until it attains the zenith and even passes it. This is the shadow of the earth.

Knew His Capacity.

Stranger (to waiter)—Isn't that man named Meier who is paying his bill over there?

Waiter—I don't know. I haven't been long here.

S.—What has he had?

W.—Ten glasses of beer and a bottle of wine.

S.—Oh, yes; it is he then.—Paris Rire.

Two Failures.

"I married for beauty alone," said a presumably happy benedict to an old chum. "And yet you remind me of a friend of mine who married for money," was the rejoinder. "How's that?" "He didn't get it," said the chum sarcastically.

Sarcastic.

His Wife—You have been drinking again. Haven't you, now? Her Husband—M'dear, I cannot tell a lie—His Wife—You can't! Then you are further gone than I thought!—Illustrated Bits.

A pessimist is a man who won't take the one remaining seat in the car for fear a woman will get on at the next corner.—Dallas News.