

"BIG TWISTIFICATION."

Life as They Live It in the Woods and Hills.

Santa Claus Is Coming in the Rocky Creek Settlement—A Preacher Troubled with a Bad Case of "Breakin' Out at the Mouth."

Right here lately I do reckon we have had some of the daddlamdest, all-overest and most gonebyest rucuses in the Rocky Creek settlement you ever saw or heard tell of, or read about since the day and hour when you was borned into this valley of dry bones.



tion we got into was all on account of a travelin preacher of some peccurious faith and order, and them that didn't get killed or crippled got skeered and moved their washin. But anyhow, truth is mighty and bound to win, and old Santa Claus is comin Christmas in his regular order.

Then the War "Bust Loose."

The preacher was holdin forth day and night in the schoolhouse over at the Cross Roads. As for me, I was too tremendus busy with first one thing and then another to turn out and tend the meetins to any serious extent.

It was on a Tuesday night—which the weather was clear and pleasant and the moon shinin bright like day—and the preacher had give it out that he would preach a sermon for the good of everybody, but the children in particular, and from that a pushin big crowd was out to hear the news.

But the preacher didn't much more than get the word out his mouth before old man Bunk Weatherford riz up right there in open meetin and give it the daddlam lie. Then old man Bunk and the preacher they had it in a red hot, rough-and-tumble argyfication—up and down and over and under.

But in the main time Andy Luens had left the meetin and rid off on his horse, and when he returned back to the schoolhouse me and Blev Scroggins we rid with him—three abreast and in a swingin gallop. Old man Bunk had held the fort whilst Andy went out after recruits.

Resolved, That the preacher who says there aint no such a man as Santa Claus is a box-ankled, slow-footed, double-breasted liar, and all sorts of a liar.

The resolution was unanimously adopted with a standin vote.

Then Andy he put the followin resolution in nomination:

Resolved, That it is the general opinion amongst the people around Rocky Creek that in regards to Christmas and Santa Claus the new preacher couldn't tell the truth with a dead rest. Passed.

After that they sung a song, the meetin broke up and we went out. Then presently a crowd of us boys chipped in together and we didn't do a blame, blessed thing but rub three quarts of cuckle burrs into that preacher's hair, and ride him on a three-cornered rail to little Wolf creek bridge, where we cut him a fast walkin stick and told him to burn the wind for parts unknown. And as he went a crotchkin off down the big road towards the Mississippi river with every foot up and coat tails flyin the boys bid him a long farewell and went on their way rejoicin.

It don't make a continental bit of difference with us, long-sufferin reader, what you think about the general circumference of the calamity. We think it was perfectly all right. Everybody in this country loves a good preacher, but any man that would stand up and tell a big crowd of children that there is no such thing as Santa Claus, will find no pleasant place to lay his head or rest his weary feet in the regions of old Rocky.

Next to the women folks we love the children, and when a man stands up and talks to them he must preach forth the unwashed truth and nothin but the truth.

No Baggage to Speak Of.

That makes me think of somethin rale funny which I saw come to pass once upon a time out there in Texas. Me and one of these travelin preachers hit the same town on the same Sunday and took out and fed at the same hotel. I didn't know anything for certain about the preacher except what he up and told me with his own mouth free gratis for nothin—that he use to go all the quaits and cover all the ground, but he quit and was now preachin forth the doctrines to a lost and ruin'd world.

Now it likewise come to pass in them

days that a drummer was stoppin at the same hotel. He run up to the preacher, he did, slapped him on the shoulder and wanted to know what line he represented on the road. The preacher drawed himself up about seven inches higher and responded back:

"Young man, I represent the Lord."

"That's all right, my friend," says the drummer, "you are playin in big luck. You don't have no baggage to tote."

Then the crowd laughed a little about in spots. The preacher went to his room, whilst the drummer waltzed over to the depot to see if his trunks had come.

The "Bill Billy" Was Ready.

Another time I was out in the mountain country of North Alabama takin a trip with Lou Travis—which you understand Lou he was then totin papers of compellment for the general government.

One day we swooped down all of a sudden on one of them hill Billies runnin of a wildcat still—caught him in the act, as it were. Lou pulled his weapons and his papers, and the moonshiner laid down his hand and surrendered.

"You will have to go to town with me and tend court," says Lou.

"Good enough," says the moonshiner. "I am ready."

"Aint you goin by home and git your baggage?"

"Baggage? Narry baggage so far as I know. I aint got a blame thing to do but spit on the fire and call my dog."

Doc Mulligan's Prayer.

Some of the boys went out after Doc Mulligan one night last week, and from all I can hear they run him through a night sweat and knocked him out of seven years' growth.

Doc was born and brung up right around here in the settlement, and he use to be one of the Rocky Creek boys. But he calls himself a doctor. In the main time it would seem like Doc has took up with the whole pessel of fool notions. He is smarter now than anybody in the settlement—smarter than his old mother and father and smarter than all the preachers put together.

To hear him tell it, he don't believe in the church, nor the Bible, nor religion, nor sperits, and as for prayin, he lowed that man was a natural born fool to pray for somethin he never saw and didn't know what he was after.

And so consequently the boys they went out after Doc that night. It might not be right for me to tell names, but I got the news from Handy Stribblin and I can give it to you as it was give unto me.

There was four of us in the crowd, and when we rid off every man had a clean sheet tied up in a bundle and tucked under his arm. When we got down there to old Ebenezer church on yonder side of Panther creek we all dismounted and dressed out in white.

You see, Doc Mulligan had went over the creek late that evenin to tend some of his sick, and we made our arrangements for him to fall in with four ghosts right there at the graveyard. We had a notion that Doc might change his mind and offer up a prayer in case of a pusehency, and we wanted to see N he had forgot how to approach the Throne of Grace.

Well, by and by, along in the dead hours of night, here comes Doc, ridin his big horse, Jim Brown, in a swingin fox walk and whistlin a steam caliope. Just as he rid by the graveyard we rid out of the woods and loped up behind him. When Doc looked back and saw what was comin he popped the spurs to Jim Brown and they went off through the swamp like a storm on wheels.

We give him a chost race for a mile or so, and if Doc didn't pray he tried his level blamdest to do somethin along that line. And as near as we could hear it this is what he said in a loud voice:

"Now I lay me down to sleep—

"Untie them legs, Jim Brown; goldarn your slabsided picture, and use 'em for all they are worth—

"Give us this day our daily bread—

"Burn the wind for home, Jim Brown, and daddlam it, this is a race for life and death—

"If I should die before I wake—

"Git out of the woods, Jim Brown, and make out like you can fly! Give the lightning and the gale some lessons in speed, by golly—

"Near the cross a tremblin soul—

"Runnin a race for blood, Jim Brown, and by gattins we must win or bust—"

With a few more long strides Jim Brown cleared the swamp and shot out on the ridge, and then as he turned into the lane with a straight quarter stretch ahead and the old Mulligan home loomin up through the moonlight, we caught the partin words from brave Doc Mulligan:

"Amazin grace, how sweet the sound which saved a wretch like me."

RUFUS SANDERS.

The Pines of Florida.

There are in Florida seven species of pine, which are most generally recognized by the names upland spruce, lowland spruce, pond, loblolly, shortleaf, longleaf and pitch. Of these, all but the last two are too worthless or too scarce to count for anything in the forest wealth of the state.

To save coal and also to avoid any killing draft, double doors should be put in the conservatory during winter.

ARP SHOWS HIS AGE.

His Grandchildren Remind Him That He Grows Old.

Doesn't Admire Football—Thinks Athletics Too Much Thought Of In Colleges—Brings in Col. Adair to Indorse His Sentiments.

I'm fond of children—good children, and I like snow, an occasional, mild-tempered snow, but when they both come together the racket is appalling. Here are three little grandchildren in the house, and one of them with a birthday to celebrate. Their grandpa wouldn't let them go outdoors, and so we turned them loose in the back room. For awhile they played very discreetly, but by and by began to take more liberties and go to jumping off the center-table and the bed and playing circus and riding round on the tricycle and screaming like wildcats, and the old dog joined in the procession and barked. Ever and anon the youngest one would get almost killed and my wife would hurry in to be at the funeral of the boy. Sometimes they would send a committee to beg me for snow, and I would have to go out and get a pan full. Then they played hide and seek, and it took both rooms for that, and my wife had to help them find new places. Will they never get tired and settle down? No, never!

Yesterday while it was raining my wife found a three-cornered hole in a window pane in the upper sash and she began to shiver so I thought she was going to have a chill; so I took the stop-ladder and went outside to patch the glass. I found a three-cornered piece that covered it nicely, and while I was driving the tacks to fasten it the old ladder careened to one side and I fell a whole quadrant of a circle onto a pile of flower pots. But, like a cat, I lit on my feet and tried it again. Next I went out to feed the old cow, for my wife said she was lowing like she was hungry. I had to cross some planks that were covered with ice and before I was conscious of either age or infirmity I was down flat on my back with nervous prostration. Before I got up I looked towards the house to see if anybody was looking, but there was no one. The book of my coat told on me, and they said they wish they had seen me. I am too venerable to be bumped about in these ungraceful attitudes, but my female folks make sport of me just like the Philistines did of Samson. I walked downtown yesterday to the post office and the rude boys snowballed me with malice aforethought. "Look out, old man" was all the warning I got. I don't believe old age is respected like it used to be. I don't believe the boys have as much manners. The legislature is trying to fix up a reformatory for young criminals, and that is all right, but the parents of the rising generation should start a little one in each family and then the big one wouldn't be needed. The main thing now in raising a boy is to have him graduate as a good football kicker. So much importance is attached to the development of arms and legs that I think athletics should have a place in the curriculum of the colleges and when the report of the boy's standing is sent to his parents it should contain his jumping and running and pitching and kicking record, and this record should have weight in fixing the honors. While they are developing muscle it would be a good idea to have a rail-splitting and a cotton-picking attachment in which the farmers' sons could compete so as to be ready for business when the old man calls them home. The apprehension is that that great excellence in kicking a ball will not meet with proper rewards in after life. If we should have a war and the enemy should kek bally at us we ought by all means to be ready for them, but as Gen. Sanford remarked: "They won't come at us that way."

Samson was a very notable athlete and slew a lion and outran 300 foxes, but we have no lions and foxes are scarce. I've been wondering what we can do with these athletes when they graduate with all their muscular honors and settle down among their unpretending fellow citizens. Bob Fitzsimmons and Tom Sharkey and Peter Jackson and a few others have monopolized all the business in their line. I had a very strong dark one who could get out of a mudhole when the team stalled, but we have good roads now and don't need these strong men.

But maybe we old men are a little jealous over our fading laurels. I was talking to Commissioner Trammell about this half kicking business and he said, with some emphasis:

"It ought to be stopped; it is a non-sensical business, and is dangerous. The colleges have gone crazy."

But he brightened up when he began to tell of his own youthful sports, and how he could outrun and outwrestle any boy at school.

And George Adair is disgrusted, too, but delights to tell how he could knock the old-fashioned town ball and how he used to get his ankles bruised and blackened playing shilly and how many marbles he won at sweepstakes. "I played fair," he said, "and always toed the mark, but there was Jim Jenkins, who always fudged and cheated, and he is fudging and cheating yet. As the schoolboy is so is the man."

And I bragged some, too, for I was the boss at some things. So maybe we old men had better take a back seat and saw wood. Nevertheless, I'm bound to say the boys have run this thing in the ground.—Bill Arp, in Atlanta Constitution.

Its Redeeming Feature.

"Oh, the terrible pawshop!" said Ethel to George, who had just rescued her watch; "what tales of misery those places could unfold had they tongues!"

"Even a pawshop has its redeeming feature," responded George.

"What is it, I'd like to know?"

"The ticket."—Tit-Bits.

STRIKES FLOW OF HOT WATER.

Successful Result of Borings in the Butte (Mont.) District.

Jack Thornton, of Butte, Mont., has made the biggest strike of the year in the Butte district at Thornton's Springs, a few miles west of the city, and his friends about town have been wishing him all kinds of good luck in his venture. At a depth of 143 feet he encountered a flow of water hot enough to scald the bristles off a hog, and strongly impregnated with mineral substances.

Early last July Mr. Thornton conceived the idea that by boring in the earth a distance of say 2,000 feet a sufficient supply of hot water might be obtained to establish a natatorium and pleasure resort similar to the Broadwater near Helena. He secured a big derrick, such as is used in the oil wells of Pennsylvania, and began a search for the hot pots in nature's storehouse. The other day the drill reached a depth of 143 feet and up through the hollow tube came a rumbling, gurgling sound. It was water, and hot water at that. It bubbled up with the force of a miniature geyser and trickled down the sides of the huge derrick with a merry sound. It delighted the workmen, as well as the originator of the scheme, for it was ocular proof that down below was a body of warm water which could be converted to the uses of man. It was only 97 degrees Fahrenheit, a nice temperature for bathing purposes, but not sufficient for heating purposes.

The boring is being continued and it is believed at a greater depth water of a much increased temperature will be found. The experiment will be watched with interest by the people of this vicinity, for its success will mean a fortune to the owner.

NEW GUNS FOR GERMAN NAVY.

Fighting Power of the Cruisers to Be Greatly Increased.

Emperor William's orders to arm all the modern vessels of the German navy with 15, 21 and 24 centimeter Krupp quick-fire guns has given immense satisfaction to naval men. These guns are said by experts to place the German ships ahead in fighting power of those of any foreign navy. In fact, they are declared to be six times more powerful than other vessels of the same size.

Orders amounting to many millions of marks have already been placed with Herr Krupp, who hopes soon to be able to apply his latest invention to the 28 centimeter guns.

For the army artillery a similar armament will be made, and the cavalry will get a new Mauser self-loading revolver, which is said to be an ideal weapon at close quarters, while it is also carried up to 1,000 meters. The breech can be lengthened mechanically and adjusted to the shoulder for aiming.

The emperor hopes to effect these gigantic changes without serious opposition in the reichstag.

Another bill which will be presented provides for an increase in the pay of army officers from first lieutenant upward by 50 to 100 per cent. Colonels, if this measure becomes a law, will receive 9,000 marks, majors will get 6,000, captains will draw 3,000 and lieutenants will be paid 1,800 marks per year.

A royal decree just issued makes the provincial colors of Posen identical with those of Poland—white, black and white instead of white, red and white. This is intended to check Polish imitation.

WHOLE FAMILY IN JAIL.

Remarkable Criminal Record of the Stoop Living in Ohio.

The Stoop family certainly ought to come under the head of habitual criminals, and the sooner they are sentenced under the habitual criminal act the better it will be for the general public. Percival Stoop, senior and junior, are now behind the walls of the penitentiary, and another son, Henry, is an inmate of the Ohio reformatory at Mansfield. Henry robbed an old soldier, the father committed forgery, and the other son is serving time for shooting to kill from Miami county. He attempted to prove an alibi, and when the sheriff went to find witnesses in Dayton they were all in the workhouse serving terms for misdemeanors. The sheriff said that witnesses of that kind would only tend to make the sentence more severe, and he did not serve the subpoenas.

The father, Percival, Sr., is serving his second term in the penitentiary for forgery. His vocation was that of tobacco buyer, and at one time he was in good circumstances. One of his daughters was at one time an inmate of a reformatory. Later she and her lover met tragic deaths in a Cincinnati hotel by suicide, the lover first shooting his sweetheart and then firing a bullet into his own brain.

Momentous Forgery.

The most momentous forgery on record was that which Clive committed when he put Admiral Watson's name to the treaty between Meer Jaffer and the East India company, for the purpose of deceiving Omichund, the Hindoo banker, who acted as intermediary between Surajah Dowlah, nabob of Bengal, and the company. The direct result of the forgery was the battle of Plassey, and the foundation of the British empire in India.

Iron Ships.

The first attempt at the substitution of iron for wood in shipbuilding was made in 1821, but not until 1829 was the practical value of the substitution fully demonstrated. An English shipbuilding firm constructed iron lighters in 1829 and the few following years, and in 1855 the Cunard line constructed the great iron steamer Persia, which excelled in capacity 1,200 tons all other ships of that line.

Norman Letter Writing.

The Normans introduced their own style of writing letters into England and, according to an edict of William the Conqueror, all legal documents were written in the Norman hand.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

Sam Jones Thinks They Point to Decided Improvement.

But We Are Warned Not to Expect Prosperity to Come in Any Great Hurry—Debt Is the Curse of America Today.

I may not be a discerner of the signs of the times. There is something, however, in seeing and feeling. It seems that the times are improving. I feel better and more hopeful, and I find that I am not alone in this. I shall speak of some of the signs that appear to me.

First, I find expectancy in many quarters where I have found discontent and almost despair. Theologians tell us that in the moral world hope and expectancy are the two essentials of faith. There is hopefulness and there is expectancy in many quarters. Therefore many believe that the times are better and that they shall be better and better. The next sign I notice is more activity. Humanity seems to be going up and moving on. I never saw such activity in the newspaper work. It seems that the American newspapers are running a race with each other. The Sunday papers now are great magazines filled with pictures, the news, moral essays, historic, scientific, philosophic dissertations, and everything you can imagine, even down to the little "Yellow Kid." The merchants were never so active as they are now. They seem to be racing with each other. Their displays in the columns of the newspapers are something marvelous. The bargains they offer tempt the world to go and buy. Men are moving about with a more cheerful step.

In the last few days I have taken in Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, New York, Washington city, Atlanta, Ga., and so on. I never saw more people on the streets and in the stores than I witnessed on this round. Broadway, New York, is a seething mass of people. The hotels are full. Philadelphia is full. Atlanta, Ga., has a buzz and bustle on it. So has Pittsburgh. The bank and clearing house reports show marked signs of improvement. The New York banks are filling up with money. Three million dollars were loaned one day when I was in New York at two per cent. Time money can be had there, and plenty of it, at four per cent. Factories and machine shops are starting up whose machinery has been rusting for months or years. Railroad traffic seems to be picking up. The trains are all running full of passengers everywhere I have been lately. Freight trains are puffing and moving by at almost every station. The drummers seem to be more cheerful and active in their work. I did not meet on this round the long-faced drummers I have been meeting so many months. The drummers make a good thermometer and a good barometer. When the drummers are cast down business is stagnant. Their faces and steps tell the tale whether merchandise and manufacturing are going on or not. Drummers now look and talk more cheerfully.

Now these are some of the signs which I have seen. And last, but not least, the atmosphere seems to be clearing up. And there is a business atmosphere as well as a natural atmosphere. It is not cloudy and foggy like it has been—making a fellow get a long breath every few minutes and making him feel like he had lost the power of locomotion. Wheat at a dollar a bushel is a new phase of things and will make many a farmer wish he had all his land in wheat. Cotton at seven cents a pound is not bankrupting southern farmers, and I believe the farmers of the south are in better condition to-day than they have been since the war. The lessons of economy they have learned, together with the diversity of crops they have made in the last few years, with a 75 or 80 per cent. cotton crop in many of the southern states this year have made the south as well off to-day, if not better, than any of the other parts of the union.

As I have said in previous letters, I did not expect to see this country move off in prosperity like a boy moves off on his bicycle or like a passenger train moves off from a station. But there is a better outlook, a better feeling, and better conditions to-day than three months ago, than 12 months ago. Improvement begets expectancy and hopefulness and activity. It is like the good old brother in the experience meeting who said he thanked God that he was safe this far on his journey home, and that he was thankful that it was every way as well with him as it was. Another old brother said: "I thank God that I am what I am, and I thank God that I am no ammer than I am."

The great trouble with us is we are in debt. Oh, debt! It is the curse of America to-day. It is to a man in business what rent is to the poor widow who earns her living with the needle. "Oh, the rent, the rent," she says, "must be paid, even if it takes the bread and meat from our mouths." Debts must be paid, creditors must be satisfied, debtors must dance to the music; and debt and the devil both go to worry the saints and the sinners alike. How I wish we could liquidate. How I wish we could all just go into the hands of a receiver and turn over what we have to our creditors and take an even start. I suppose the most of humanity have about as much owing to them as they owe. Some of them are like old big John Underwood—they are even with the world; they owe about as many as they don't owe, and have nothing to pay it with. I never met half a dozen men in my life who told me that they didn't owe a dollar in the world. If the devil should get all the people who are in debt he will get his quota from this country out of this generation unless he is a tremendously greedy old devil. I know what it is to meet bank notes, security debts, merchants' bills, laborers' hire and so on, and I have wound up every year of my

ELIZABETHAN PLAYERS.

Treated as Vagabonds in the Native Town of Shakespeare.

About a mile beyond Stratford, Westcombe wood creeps down along the left. Just beyond, the Dingles wind irregularly from the foot-path below to the crest of Welcombe hill, through straggling clumps and briery hollows, sweet with nodding bluebells, ash and hawthorn.

Nick and the master-player paused a moment at the top to catch their breath and to look back.

Stratford and the valley of the Avon lay spread before them like a picture of peace, studded with blossoming orchards and girdled with spring. Northward the forest of Arden clad the rising hills. Southward the fields of Perslow stretched away to the blue knolls beyond which lay Oxford and Northamptonshire. The ragged stretches of Snitterfield downs scrambled away to the left; and on the right, beyond Thewley, were the wooded uplands where Guy, of Warwick, and Herand, of Arden, slew the wild ox and the boar.

And down through the mist ran the Avon southward, like a silver ribbon slipped through Kendal green, to where the Stour comes down, past Luddington, to Bedford, and away to the misty hills.

"Why," exclaimed the master-player—"why, upon my word, it is a fair town—as fair a town as the heart of man could wish. Wish? I wish 'twere spoken, in the sea, with all its pack of fools!"

"Why," said he, turning wrathfully upon Nick, "that old Sir Thingumbob" of thine, down there, called me a caterpillar on the kingdom of England, a vagabond, and a common player of interludes! Called me vagabond! Me! Why, I have more good licenses than he has wits. And as to Master Balliff Stubbes, I have permits to play from more justices of the peace than he can shake a stick at in a month of Sundays!"

He shook his fist wrathfully at the distant town, and gnawed his mustache until one side pointed up and the other down.

"But, hark 'e, boy, I'll have my vengeance on them all—ay, that will I, upon my word, and on the remnant of mine honor—or else my name's not Gaston Carew!"

"Is it true, sir," asked Nick, hesitatingly, "that they despitfully handled you?"

"With their tongues, ay," said Carew bitterly; "but not otherwise." He clapped his hand upon his poniard, and threw back his head defiantly. "They dared not come to blows—they knew my kind! Yet John Shakspeare is no bad sort—he knoweth what is what. But Master Balliff Stubbes, I wot, is a long-soured thing that brays for thistles. I'll thistle him! He called Will Shakspeare a rogue—has ever looked through a red glass?"

"Nay," said Nick.

"Well, it turns the whole world red. And so it is with Master Stubbes. He looks through a pair of rogue's eyes and sees the whole world rouge. Why, boy," cried the master-player vehemently, "he thought to buy my tongue! Marry, if tongues were troubles he has bought himself a peck! What! Buy my silence? Nay, he'll see a deadly flash of silence when I come to my lord and admiral again!"—John Bennett, in St. Nicholas.

Why They Are Called Hackneys.

Hackney was the first place where coaches were let on the hire, either by the day or for a passage to London, and although in 1625 there were only 20 such vehicles, in 1734 there had throughout the kingdom accumulated to 900, all which were still denominated Hackney coaches. The horses that drew them, as well as all other hired horses, from the same origin, were termed hackneys.—Chicago Chronicle.

Cinerrias that are most advanced

should have plenty of light and a little more heat; this will fetch them in for Christmas. Liquid manure given twice a week will be found very beneficial.