

PINEVILLE'S CIDER DAY

By M. QUAD

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For twenty years the village of Pineville had had a custom of its own. On the 15th of every September, if case the day did not fall on a Sunday a couple of barrels of new cider were placed on the public square and tapped, and everybody invited to drink their fill. It was a day of rejoicing and was known as cider day.

On a certain 14th of September a stranger arrived in the village by stage. It was not so uncommon for strangers to arrive, but this was an uncommon man. He had a clubfoot; he had but one eye; he had a voice like the bellow of a bull; he had but one eyebrow. His personal appearance was freely commented on, as is the way of the villagers, and there was great curiosity to know who he was and what had brought him there.

The stranger was limping around town next day when the cider was brought in and the rejoicings began, but he paid no attention until afternoon. Then the men had begun to warm up and grin and laugh and slap each other on the back. Firecrackers were thrown under the stranger's feet, and when he voiced his displeasure he was laughed and jeered at. Then he got a hand on his back and was challenged to a wrestling match and a trial of cuffing off hats. He was invited to drink prosperity to Pineville in a dipper of new cider, and when he refused to do so a quantity was poured on his hat.

The stranger was a good swearer, and he swore. He stood on the public square and swore, and he sat on the tavern veranda and swore, and he locked himself in his room and swore. All day the town made merry, as per custom, and next day some of the leading citizens called to make excuses. The stranger had hired a rig and departed after an early breakfast.

Pineville wanted a railroad. It had wanted one for years and at times had had strong hopes. The trouble was in the hills half surrounding it. There must be a costly tunnel. Engineers had come and estimated and reported, and the cost had been considered too high. A new and greater effort was now on foot, and three days after cider day a large and enthusiastic mass meeting was held. At this meeting a greater sum was pledged than ever before, and a delegate was sent to the headquarters of the P. and P. railroad to lay the matter before the proper officials. The line to Pineville, if built, would be a branch. The delegate was politely received and listened to and then told that a larger delegation had better come down. Indeed, the names of seven of his fellow townsmen were given him, and they would be received and the matter gone into.

When the delegation reached the city it was informed that if Pineville got its branch it would be through a certain capitalist, who would give them audience half an hour later. He did so. They fled into his office and up to his desk to find the man of the clubfoot. He had a smile on his face, but they did not like the smile. He spoke honeyed words, but at the same time he had the door locked and three stout men brought in.

"Glad to see you, gentlemen—very glad," he said to the delegation as a whole. "You may perhaps remember that I visited your pleasant little town the other day. Very nice town; very nice town. Very enterprising people. Very charming custom you have up there."

"Sir," replied Deacon Harrison, who had been appointed spokesman for the delegation, "if perchance our people made too merry."

"Oh, no, no, no! I love merry people."

"It was our cider day, you know."
"Certainly, certainly—plenty of cider and plenty of merriment. So you came to see about a branch line to your town? Well, after an exhibition of a little custom of my own we will proceed to talk. There's the pall and dipper. Help yourselves."

None of the seven ever knew what the nature of the contents of the pall were. Deacon Harrison drank first, and he looked weary as he turned away. The weariness went down through the line.

"Now for some merriment," said the clubfooted man as he nodded to his three stout retainers.

The trio moved. They cuffed off hats. They slapped the delegates on the back. They gave them the iron elbow. They hustled them up and down and across and laughed and jeered. After ten minutes the boss held up his hand and said:

"The gentlemen must be thirsty. Before there is further merriment give them more drink."

When the said "merriment" ceased there was no man of the seven who would stand on his legs. They had been hustled for fair. As they sat breathing hard and wondering what was coming next the capitalist chuckled and laughed and said:

"This is all, gentlemen. You don't need a railroad to Pineville. You have your cider day, and that's better. As you probably have important engagements elsewhere I will now excuse you."

There was fighting all over town next day. On the next after that there was a public meeting to abolish cider day, and if you are looking for trouble you enter the town some day and ask why it hasn't a railroad.

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VALUE \$400 Each

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OF
EXTRA VOTES
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