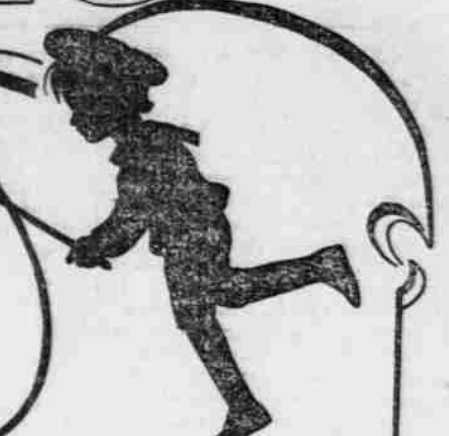


OUR YOUNG FOLKS



JOHN K. BANGS' ANDIRON TALES

THE POKER GIVES TOM A VIVID SKETCH OF ITS CAREER

CHAPTER IV.

"SUPPOSE," said the POKER, after the Androns had passed out of hearing distance, "I suppose you think it a very extraordinary thing that I, who am nothing but a POKER, should be satisfied with my lot. Eh?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Tom, snuggling down on the cloud, which he found to be deliciously soft and comfortable. "If you were a POKER who could only poke, it might seem queer. But you can talk and sing and travel about. You don't have to do any work in the Summer time, and in Winter you have a nice warm spot to stay in all the day long. I don't think it's very strange."

"But I'm no different from any other POKER," said Tom's companion. "They all do pretty much what I do except that most of them are always growling at their hard lot, while I do very little but sing and rejoice that I am what I am, and the story I was going to tell you was how I came to be so well satisfied to be a POKER. Would you like to have me do that, Dorny?"

"Yes," said Tom. "Very much. Were you always a POKER?"

"Not I," said the POKER, with a shake of his head. "I've been a POKER only two years. Before that I had been a little of everything. What do you suppose I began life as?"

"A railroad track," said Tom, bound to have a guess at the right answer, though he really hadn't the slightest notion that he was correct.

"You came pretty near it," said the POKER, with a smile. "I began life as a boy."

"I don't see how a boy is pretty near a railroad track," said Tom.

"The boy I began life as lived right next door to a railroad," explained the POKER. "See now?"

"Yes," said Tom. "But why didn't you stay a boy?"

"Because I wasn't contented," said the POKER, with a sigh. "I ought to have been, though. I had everything in the world that a boy could want. My parents were as good to me as they could possibly be. I had all the toys I wanted. All I could eat—plenty of pudding and other good things as often as they were to be had. I had two little sisters, who used to do everything in the world for me. Plenty of boy friends to play with, and, as I said before, a railroad right next door—and oh, the trains, and trains, and trains I used to see. It was great. I can see now that I look back on it, and yet I never was satisfied. I used to cry my eyes out sometimes because I hadn't wings like a bird, so that I could fly. At other times I'd get discontented that I couldn't run as fast as a dog—I never went to bed without feeling envious of somebody or something."

"Finally one night I'd gone to bed feeling particularly unhappy because a big eagle I had seen flying about in the sky could do things I couldn't. My nurse, thinking I had fallen asleep, went out of the night nursery and left me alone. Just as she went out of one door the other door opened and a very beautiful lady came in."

"Is that you, mamma?" I asked.

"No," said she, "I am not your mother. I am a fairy."

I had been crying pretty hard. I can tell you," said the POKER, with a shake of his head, "but as soon as I heard the lady say she was a fairy my tears dried up as quick as lightning."

"I am a fairy," she repeated, coming to the side of my little bed and stroking my forehead kindly. "My duty is to seek

out one discontented person each year and see if I can't do something to help them. I have come to help you if I can. Don't you like being a boy?"

"Not very much," said I. "It's awfully hard work. I have to go to school every day and learn lots of things I don't care to know about, and most of the time I'm kept in an hour or two just because I can't remember how much seven times two are, or whether cat's feet are dog or horse, and I don't like it."

"But you are strong and well. Your father and mother are very good to you and you have more good times than unhappy ones, don't you?"

"I never counted," said I. "I don't believe I do, though. I'm strong and well, but so is that eagle I saw today, and he can fly, and I can't. Then there's my little dog—he's as well as he can be, and my father and mother are kind to him just as they are kind to me. He doesn't have to bother with school. He's allowed to go anywhere he wants to, and never gets scolded for it. Besides, he doesn't have to be dressed up all the time and live in a bathtub the way I do."

"Then you think you would be happier as Rollo than you are as yourself?" said she.

"Very much," said I.

"Then it shall be so," said she. "Good-bye!"

"She went out as quietly as she had come, and I turned over, and after thinking over what she had said I fell asleep. Then the queerest thing happened. I slept right through until the morning, dreaming the strangest dream you ever heard of. I dreamed that I had been changed into Rollo, and oh, the fun I had! Life was nothing but play and liberty, and then I waked. I tried to call my father and tell him I was ready for the morning story, but what do you suppose I did instead?"

"Give it up," said Tom. "What?"

"I barked," said the POKER, "and when I barked I looked down at my feet. Sure enough, I was Rollo, and Rollo was I. Lying asleep in my bed. I was on the floor at the foot of the bed. Then the nurse came in and slapped me for barking, and I had the pleasure of being sent downstairs to the cellar, while Rollo himself, who had been changed into me, went into my father's room and got the story."

"Mercy!" said Tom. "I guess you were sorry about that."

"I was—a little," said the POKER. "But after I had been down in the cellar an hour or two I saw a beautiful piece of steak in the icebox, and I ate it all up. It wasn't cooked at all, but being a little dog I liked it all the better for that. Then I drank up a panful of milk, and had a lovely time (tasting the cat, until the cook came down, when my trouble began. I never knew when I was a boy that Rollo had troubles, but I found out that day that he had. The cook gave me a terrible whipping because I had eaten the steak, and I had hardly recovered from that when Rollo, who was now what I had been, took me up into the nursery and played with me just as I had always played with him. He held me up by the tail; he flicked me with his handkerchief; he harnessed me up to a small cart and made me drag his sisters' doll babies about the room for one whole hour, and then, when lunch time came the waitress forgot me and I had to go hungry all the afternoon. Every time I'd try to go into the kitchen the cook would drive me out with a stick for fear I would eat the other things in the cellar. And, oh, hear, I had a miserable time of it!"

"The worst of it came two or three days later," continued the POKER. "It was Rollo's bath day, and as I was Rollo I had to take Rollo's bath, and,

my, wasn't it awful! I'd rather take a hundred such baths as I had when I was a boy than one like Rollo's. The soap got into my eyes and I couldn't say a word. Then it got into my mouth, and bab! how fearful it was! After that I was grabbed by all four of my legs and soused into the rubber until I thought I should drown, and rubbed until my fur nearly came off."

"I wished then that I had asked the Fairy to leave her address so that I could send for her and have her come back and let me be a boy again. All the fun of being Rollo was spoiled by the woes that were his to bear—woes I had never dreamed of his having until I took his place."

"I must have been Rollo a month when the Fairy came back one night to see how I was getting along. Rollo lay asleep in my crib, while I was curled up in the dog basket at the foot of it."

"Well," said the Fairy, as she entered the room, "how do you both do?"

"I like it first-rate," said Rollo. "Being a boy is ever so much nicer than being a dog."

"I think so, too," said I. "And if you don't mind I'd like to be a boy again."

"What do you want to be?" she asked.

"What boy?" said I. "Why, myself, of course—who else?"

"What has Rollo to say about that?" said the Fairy, turning to him—and I tell you, Dorny, it made my heart sick to hear that Rollo had anything to say about it, for there couldn't be much doubt as to how he would decide."

"Then you think you are as yourself?" said she.

"(To be continued.)"

QUEER SCHOOL VACATION.

In Italy the Children Are Dismissed to Gather Nuts.

It is said that the chestnut was discovered by the old Romans at a place called Castanea, in Thessaly. They called it the Castanea nut, whence comes our name of chestnut. Strange to say, they did not eat them, and the patriarchs would not eat it, leaving it to the common people. And the common people soon found out how good and nutritious it was, and it became a regular article of food with them.

In Italy today the nutting time is one of the important seasons of the year, for many of the people almost depend on the chestnuts for their food. So important is it that the schools are required by law to have a vacation at that time, so that the children may go out and help the older people gather the nuts. It is by no means a pleasure excursion, but a regular industry.

Whole families go out into the hills and camp there for a month. During this time they scour the woods every day, men, women and children, each person having a canvas bag suspended from the waist, into which are put the nuts as they are picked up from the ground. They do not throw sticks and stones into the trees to knock the nuts down, as the boys in this country do, but gather only those that have fallen out of the burrs. The nuts ripen under the combined action of the sun and the frost, and the burrs then open, and the nuts drop to the ground. The crop is so abundant that the gatherers always find enough to keep them busy.

Some of the nuts are saved to be eaten as nuts, but most of them are dried and ground into flour, from which a kind of porridge, called polenta, is made. Little cakes, called nocci, are also made out of it.

The drying is done in huts built out on the hills specially for that purpose. The nuts are spread out on the floor, and a low fire is kept in the hut to give a certain degree of heat, which soon dries them. The drying is merely the evaporation of some of the water from the nut by means of the warmth.

Why Cannibals Eat Men.

All children who are now going to school have read about how Mr. Stanley went into the jungles of Africa to hunt Mr. Livingstone. Now that Mr. Stanley no longer travels in the dark wilds of

Africa, there are other men who do go, and sometimes meet just as strange things as did Mr. Stanley.

The party under the command of Mr. Wilell, which recently went into the same country, the dense forests back of Ivory Coast, in West Africa, found a number of cannibals of different tribes. They live only about 125 miles back from the coast, and are quite near a French post, and it is strange, too, that they are so near, for cannibals have seldom been found in Africa so near the coast. As a rule, they do not live within 500 miles of the ocean, and most of them stay still further away.

When the white men, who were with Mr. Wilell, found these strange black men, and asked them why they ate human flesh instead of beast flesh, they replied that "men usually wash themselves three times a day, and, therefore, are much cleaner than beasts, which never wash."

These natives have guns and can get powder from Liberia, but as lead is most always hard to get, they often use stones and gravel in place of bullets.

When Mr. Stanley sent Captain Coquilhat to garrison the station he had established, he found the people always ready to defend their practice of eating men.

"This is horrible," said Mr. Coquilhat, "one day to a chief who was at dinner."

On the contrary, it is delicious with salt," was the quick reply.

TARDY TOM.

A Warning for Lazy Boys.

Tom Brown, the naughty chap, at school was always late; He couldn't find his cap, His mittens or his slate. And, hurry as he would, When he went out the door The clock hands always stood At half-past nine or more.



A fairy came one day, And said: "'Tis very strange, That things go on this way, And we must have a change!"

And then, oh, 'twas a shock! This fairy, grave and grim, Put Tom's face on the clock, And the clock's face on him!



"And now," the fairy said, "You'll never more be late; The alarm in your head Goes off at half-past eight."

But when Tom went to school, He felt in much disgrace, He sat up on his stool, His hands before his face.

—Carolyn Wells.

DROP LETTER: A RECESS GAME.

Sport That Teaches the Players How to Form Words.

This is one of the best and most instructive games, for it teaches the players not only how to form words, but also how to fit them to their definitions. It may be played at recess, in school or by a company of boys and girls who wish evening amusement, and it has the advantage of requiring no special preparation, except the writing of several lists of definitions, one list for each of the players. These lists, of course, must be written in advance, and the writer of them should act as the leader in the game.

Here is a specimen list; you can use it, you choose, but it would be good practice for you to make up a list yourself:

1. First in every home—Ma.
2. Could not live without it—L-e.
3. The more you take from it, the larger it gets—H-l.
4. All over the house—oo.
5. Found in the suburbs—Lo.
6. Gives a cold, cures a cold, and pays the doctor—D-i.
7. What some girls think too much about—D--s.
8. Near to everybody's heart—L-n-s.

In all these words, you see, the dropped letters are represented by short dashes; what the player has to do is to write the proper word in each case. It is necessary, therefore, for each player to have a list, and if you are going to play the game at recess the lists should be prepared the day beforehand.

In the list here given there are several possible answers to some of the words, which makes the game all the more interesting.

The real answers, however, are as follows:

1. Mat. 2. Life. 3. Hole. 4. Roof. 5. Lots. 6. Draft. 7. Dress. 8. Lung.

The leader of the game has a list containing all the answers, and as the play-

ers hand in their lists to him he checks them off awarding the victory to the one that has the fewest errors.

If the game is played by a company in the evening, a prize should be offered for the best answer, and a time limit, say 15 or 20 minutes, fixed within which the work must be done.

The Game of Warning.

This game may be played by any number of persons. It requires neither preparation nor material, and may, therefore, be introduced anywhere at any time.

Send one person from the room, and then agree upon what he is to do when you call him back. This should be some simple act, and yet one that he would not be likely to think of, say, for example, to look at himself in the mirror; to bow to a certain player; to take a player by the hand and lead her or him to the middle of the room; or to take a sofa pillow and put it behind a certain player's back.

Having settled what he is to do, you summon him back into the room by music arranged for the occasion. The music is to be made by tapping some metal object with a key. The best thing to use is a poker, from which low or loud notes may be brought at will.

As the player is to be guided by the music in the performance of his task, the musician must keep close watch on him and give him warning. When he begins to do anything like what has been appointed, the music should be low; when he does what he ought not to do, it should be loud.

Let us suppose, for example, that he is to take a sofa pillow and put it behind a certain player's back. As he enters the room the music is making a great clatter, and this tends to keep him from collecting his thoughts, as it is intended to do. Presently, he walks toward the sofa where the pillow is lying, and the music becomes soft. This tells him that he is on the right track. He touches a chair and the music becomes loud, which tells him that a chair has no part in his task. He touches the sofa and the music grows soft, and when he touches the pillow it ceases for a moment and then begins again, very low.

He now knows that he is to do something with the pillow, but what? He stands and holds it—wrong! He puts it on the floor and sits on it—very loud music! Then he throws it down before some player, but the music is still loud. Then it occurs to him that a sofa pillow makes a good rest for one's back and he puts it behind a player, possibly the one selected, and the music ceases.

The Same, But Changed.

Indianapolis Sun.

Lady—Aren't you the man to whom I gave a piece of cake recently?

Tramp—Yes, ma'am.

Lady—Have you been waiting since?

"No, ma'am. I have been in the hospital ever since."

Comparisons Are "Odorous."

"Well, I don't see much difference between 'notoriety' and 'fame.'"

"You don't? Then you wouldn't be able to distinguish between the perfume of Limburger cheese and that of the rose."

SIR WALTER A TRUE STORY

HOW A COLLIE FORSOOK THOSE WHO FORSOOK HIM

SIR Walter Beant lives at Kingston-on-the-Hudson, and though he is a Scotch collie and is often called Wattle for short, he is such a favorite that whenever he goes out for a little stroll he is greeted by so many people, old and young, as to make it a great mercy that collies are not expected to wear hats. If they did, Sir Walter would be taking his off at nearly every step of the way.

But you know that a well-bred collie is only expected to give a gentle wave or two of his plummy tail, which is very easy to do and a pleasure besides.

Sir Walter lived very happily in a gray-stone house overlooking the Hudson. Sometimes the family belonging to him went down to New York for the Winter, but the house was usually kept open by a couple of servants, and Sir Walter was fairly content.

Once the house was quite closed. But the master took the collie to the house of a friend and bade him an affectionate good-bye before he went away.

Sir Walter was very lonely, but his master had explained matters to him. The people were very fond of him, and he was wise enough to know that one can't have everything as one wishes. So he became cheerful and took such care of the house, hold that it was very hard for members to let him go when his own family came up again in the Spring.

Sir Walter was loyal to his own, and fell at once into his old way of living and of loving those belonging to him.

Early the next Autumn trunks and boxes were brought out, and clothing, books, pictures and silver began to disappear. The place, with its furniture, had been sold, and though he did not know it, Sir Walter was included in the sale, for the gentleman who was coming had taken a great fancy to him.

The new family were expected very soon, and the master of Sir Walter was so hurried that he did not take time to explain matters to the collie nor even to arrange a place where he could be comfortable until the new people were come.

So the house was closed and Sir Walter's beloved family went away. He was very unhappy, because he did not understand matters. He sat on the porch all day, waiting and thinking. Passers-by called cheerfully out to him, and he dutifully thumped a return greeting upon the floor with his furry tail, but he did not run to meet anyone.

All night long he looked at the stars and thought. At first it seemed easy to give himself to death, because he had been so cruelly treated. The next day he waited. Nobody came to him. He had

been taken to nobody. He was unhappy and he went hungry. He remembered the family where he had stayed the Winter before, and as the sun went down and the night came on he went down the path without once looking back, and on over to them.

A little bark at the door made it fly open like magic. Sir Walter found as good a welcome as any member of the peerage could wish.

When the owner of Sir Walter's old home came on and sought him out he refused to go. When led over by some member of his adopted family he always slipped his chain and ran back again at the first opportunity.

The new owner was so disappointed that Sir Walter's old master ran up to Kingston-on-the-Hudson in order to set matters right. But, to his utter amazement, Sir Walter refused to recognize him. In fact, the collie, who had been so devoted, cut his careless master dead, and turned his head away when spoken to by him.

A little later the other members of his once beloved family came to the little city to visit friends, but to not one of them would Sir Walter give the faintest wag of his long tail. It was as if he did not see them. They were not even as strangers to him, for he was always ready to make new acquaintances.

He had loved them and been true through many absences, but when they failed to treat him with common courtesy he wiped them off from his long list of acquaintances and went on with his life as if they had never been the most important part of it.

Who Makes It Snow?

Dear little Hansel, with laughing blue eyes, Looked from her window in joyful surprise. Over the landscape, all covered with snow—"Who sends it down?" she said; "I want to know."

"Who makes it snow, papa; who makes it snow?"

Tell me, dear papa, for I want to know; Who sends the pretty flakes down from on high, Floating, like bright fairies, down from the sky?

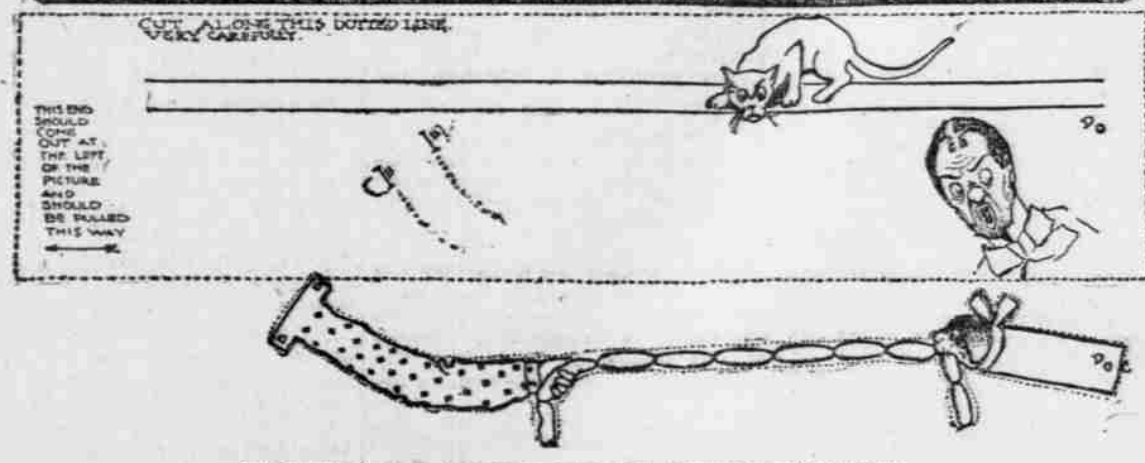
"See the flakes falling so gracefully down, Hiding the woodland and covering the town With a pure, colorless mantle of snow. Who makes it fall? Papa, I want to know."

Gleefully catching the flakes as they fell, Quickly returned her pleasure to tell, Still she persisted, her voice ringing low: "Who makes it fall? Papa, I want to know."

Glady I told of the Father above, Watching his children in pity and love; He will protect you, my darling, I know. Father in heaven, who sends us the snow.

Roseburg, Or. IAN BUCHANAN.

BUTCHER BOY CUT-OUT TOY



DIRECTIONS FOR CUTTING OUT AND PUTTING TOGETHER.

The first and most important step is to mount the picture here shown, on stiff but not thick or brittle cardboard. Cut along the five dotted lines marked A in the main picture.

The strip containing the cat and the man's face should fit in these slots.

The strip containing the boy's arm, the sausage and the dog's head and neck, should also be cut out very carefully along the dotted lines. The two little tabs marked BB, at the end of the boy's arm, should fit in the slots marked CC on the long strip. The arm should slide through the slit in front of the boy; and the little dog's neck should go in the slit marked C.

Now put a piece of rubber band—ordinary elastic will do—through the holes marked DD in the principal picture. The elastic can be made to retain its position by tying a knot in each end. Also have the elastic sufficiently taut so that when you slide the strips well over to the left the elastic will pull them instantly back.

If you properly adjust the strips—the cat and the man's head should appear where the boards are missing from the fence when you pull the strip to the left—both disappearing as you allow the elastic to pull the strip back in position again.

When you have pasted the picture on cardboard, and before starting in to cut out, color the picture carefully with good strong colors. Let the paint dry well before proceeding farther.

Older readers will find some fun in putting this toy together for some youngster, who will in turn get a lot of pleasure out of it.

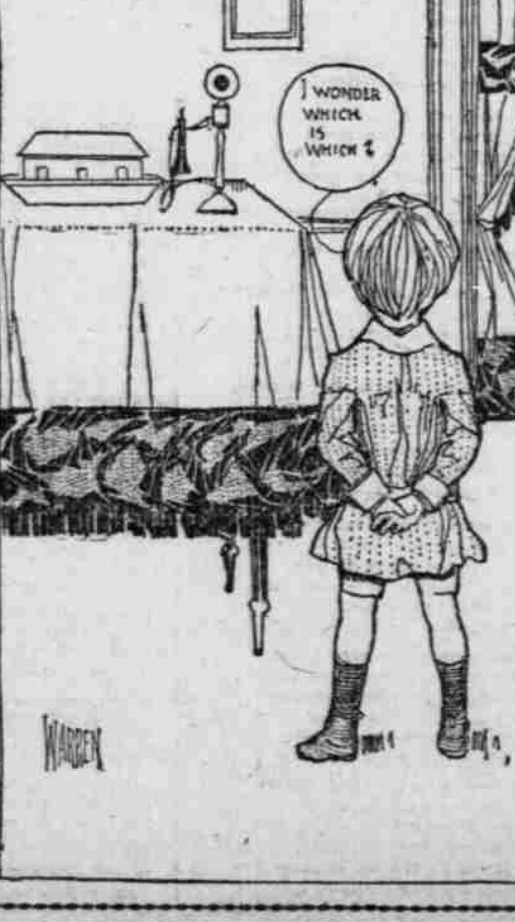
NONSENSE VERSE

SUPPOSE AS YOU WENT OUT TO PLAY,
THE KITCHEN DOOR SHOULD WALK AWAY
AND STEP ALONG BESIDE YOU, QUITE
AS IF IT WERE A COMMON SIGHT!
I THINK YOU WOULD BE MUCH
AMUSED—
AND YET DOOR STEPS ARE
ALWAYS USED.



An Illustrated Riddle

What impossible action is this
boy trying to perform?



I WONDER WHICH IS WHICH?

—Carolyn Wells.