

# The Hotel Clerk and The Weaker Sex.

BY IRVING S COBB.

THERE was a growing impression around the Hotel St. Reckless that the house detective had contracted a sentimental attachment somewhere. This suspicion clarified into absolute belief in the hotel clerk's mind when the house detective raised his highball glass the other evening as the two sat together in the gentlemen's grill and gave the following toast:

"Well, here's to the weaker sex, Mr. McBean."

"Meanin' by that, I suppose the ladies—Heaven bless them, and help us," said the hotel clerk.

"Sure I meant 'em," explained the house detective, slightly puzzled. "I said the weaker sex."

"Well, don't you ever do it again," said the hotel clerk severely. "Next time you have kindly thoughts for the weaker sex and want to do anything for them go and buy yourself a good cigar. But don't fall into the error of calling woman the weaker sex. She's the strongest sex we've got."

"Well, ain't we allus called 'em that?" demanded the house detective.

"Maybe we have," said the hotel clerk, "but did you ever know a suddenly retired heavyweight champion that didn't think 'twas an accidental punch that did for him, and say, if he got another chance he could win both hands tied behind his back and all his teeth pulled out? I make no doubt, Larry, that our mutual father—I refer to Adam—went right on his blind and foolish way referring to Eve as the weaker sex after she'd been responsible for getting him fired out of his old job and was teaching him how to make a decent living for the family in the new one. No, sir, we fell into the habit of calling them the weaker sex several thousand years before the lady animals showed the gentlemen animals how to march up Noah's gangplank and we've kept it ever since for the same reason that Jim Corbett refused to concede that Fitz hit him a fair wallop that time out at Carson City."

"I had an uncle once, Larry, a large, fine, strong man that belonged to all the secret orders that are named after beasts and birds and ran a coal office when he wasn't looking after business at the lodge. He had a very impressive way about him. When he said it was a fine day it sounded like somebody starting to read the Declaration of Independence and when he unbelted his vest it made you think of opening the doors of an engine-house. Well, one wet night he came home from a lodge social suffering from a severe attack of alcoholic ebriety and carrying a heavy supply of the kind of dignity that such a cargo so often generates in the bosom of man. His wife met him at the door. She was waiting for him. 'Out of my way, pore weaker vessel,' he says to her, letting down his umbrella and trying to put it in his inside coat pocket. 'A weaker vessel I may be,' she says, 'but thank Heavens I'm no demijohn,' and then she laid her hand upon his neck in an affectionate strange hold and they went inside the house together. She only weighed about 50 pounds when she had all her hair switches on and much of the time she enjoyed poor health, but next morning at the breakfast table he had a face like a cross-barr'd cranberry pie. Under his eye was the place marked (X) showing where the fatal blow was struck, as the newspapers say."

"Larry, you were around to the Horse show one night last week, wasn't you? Did you notice how the society ladies and the almost society ladies sat there hour after hour patiently enduring the remarks of what they'd brought with them and wearing their official smiles so that all the common people walking around the ring might have a real treat for once in their lives? Maybe you heard of quite a few gentlemen being removed in a state of exhaustion, overcome by the close air, the crush and the agony of hearing a band playing all the songs that George Cohen and Cole and Johnson ever wrote, over and over again. You may have heard of some of the horses weakening under the intense strain. But did you hear of any of the fair ladies who ornamented the garden during our week of combination horse and financial depression fainting or weakening? You did not and never will."

"And now if you've still got any doubt as to which is the weaker sex I invite your attention to our grand opera which is about the only real solace our depleted millionaires have left except wishing a certain party at Washington would choke. No thank you, I won't go myself—any time a nice local that looks like she's had a shampoo and a bay rum, should come out with a white frock on and a rose in her hair and sing 'Way Down Upon the Swaney River,' I'll be glad to attend. But when all the foreign vocalists that have so far managed to resist the call of the Central Park Zoo assemble on the stage and begin to dream for help in a language that is not generally understood in the United States, with an orchestra from the boiler works down below performing to the best of its ability to sneeze, somebody else can have my little red plush seat because I'll have to be going."

"But the weaker sex, as you have erroneously called them, never miss a performance. Night after night the most swagger spinal columns of the smart set may be seen gantly undulating above a lot of extensible bodies in the boxes of the Metropolitan Opera House. But not so with the mere men who have been dragged there by their wives, or who in a moment of weakness have yielded to the lure of the stage. The creatures known as true music lovers. They're there as long as they can, sleeping when the



"A WEAKER VESSEL I MAY BE," SHE SAYS, "BUT THANK HEAVENS I'M NO DEMIJOHN."

orchestra will let 'em and swearing when it won't, and then they flee madly to the nearest life-saving station and hoist the red ball as a sign that it's time to go skating.

"Do you remember last Summer when

the hot wave and the princess gown were having their vogues at the same time? On those sultry evenings when the asphalt turned into chewing gum that's just been chewed and you and I, reaching for our handkerchiefs, found

our pockets full of perspiration, the ladies of our great city were paddling up and down Broadway wearing nice cloth frocks that fitted onto them like the peeling fits into the pawpaw, with veils hanging down between their faces

and any breezes that might be stirring, and they looked perfectly cool and comfortable; and what's more, they were. Or coming down to the immediate present, suppose you go out on the street at this moment and look 'em over?"

"It's too cold to be standing 'round out doors tonight," said the house detective. "This here overcoat I got on is purty light for a night when there's snow on the ground and ice forming."

"You think so," said the hotel clerk

plyingly. "Pampered weakling that you are, you think so. Well, if you only felt strong enough to unfold your feeble frame in that thin and insufficient ulster of yours, that can't weigh over nine pounds, and ventured out upon our main street, you wouldn't be there half a minute before you'd see some slender, delicate little creature sitting by a fire and warm in an openwork silk frock and a hat as big as the nest made by the cuckoo which is a bird that makes no nest, with her arms partly covered by a pair of kid gloves and her elbows out in the rigors of the climate and a lot of lace at her throat with more peskyboos in it than there are in a Swiss cheese, and a muf about the size of the envelope on a wedding invitation and a pair of low-cut slippers with soles almost as thick as three layers of tissue paper."

"Now, Larry, if you were to stroll forth into a December snow storm in your undershirt and a straw hat, remarking that you were perfectly comfortable because you had on a good warm pair of red suspenders, you'd be arrested on suspicion of having a puncture in your pecan and you'd be convicted on your own admissions and sent to the wheel works. But if you'd ask the dainty creature I've just described how she kept warm in such weather, she'd say it was because she wore an ostrich bon around her neck and what's more, it would be the truth."

"The weakest woman you know can put on a pair of shoes with heels like hour-glasses, only they'll turn every minute instead of every hour, and wrap herself into a wonderful costume that's mostly held together by the power of moral suasion, added by a few pins here and there. She'll have her hair built up like the hip-roof on a new courthouse and spiked down with 800 hairpins. She'll have a hat that weighs nine pounds, net. She'll have nothing much for her hands to do except to carry a handkerchief, a hand-bag, a pocketbook and a parasol, and hold her skirts up and reach back every now and then to see if her placket is smiling at her behind her back and keep her bracelets on her arms properly. Thus equipped she'll go out and fight her way aboard a crowded car without ruffling a feather and ride down town and walk up and down Twenty-third street eight or nine miles and come home fresh as a daisy, looking just as she did when she started."

"Because she has an oppressed feeling when she crowds herself into a corset that's three inches smaller around the waist than she is, she decides she's got indigestion and ought to diet. So she takes a raw egg and a pinch of bird seed for breakfast, a great gross of marshallows for lunch and lobster mayonnaise and a cold hotted ham for dinner, and the next day she announces that she's completely cured. What man do you know that could duplicate these feats?"

"Larry, are you converted to the truth? You are? Then let us now drink your original toast—'To the weaker sex—ourselves.'"

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### The Vanished Days.

Atlanta Georgian.  
Lay the feet about the julep in the camp-  
nion balls at last.  
For the mint has happened and the olden  
days are past;  
That which makes Milwaukee thirsty does  
not foam in Tennessee.  
And the lid on old Missouri is as tight  
locked as can be.  
Oh, the comic paper and his cronies  
well may sigh.  
For the mint is waving gaily, but the South  
is going dry.

By the still side on the hillside in Ken-  
tucky—all is still.  
For the only damp refreshment must be  
dipped from up the river.  
N'th China's stately ruler gives his soda  
glass a shove  
And discusses local option with the South  
China gov.  
It is useless at the fountain to be winking  
of the eye.  
For the cocktail glass is dusty, and the  
South is going dry.

It is water, water everywhere and not a  
drop to drink.  
We no longer hear the music of the mellow  
crystal tinkle.  
When the Colonel and the Major and the  
General and the Judge and the  
Meet to have a little nip to give their ap-  
petites an edge.  
For the canoes now is negligible and the rye  
has gone awry.  
And the punch bowls hold carnations, and  
the South is going dry.

All the night caps now have tassels and  
are worn upon the head.  
Not the night caps that were taken when  
nobody went to bed.  
And the breezes above the bluegrass is as  
solemn as is death.  
For it bears no pungent clove-frag on its  
odoriferous breath.  
And each man can walk a chalkline when  
the stars are in the sky.  
For the fox glass now is fustian, and the  
South is going dry.

Lay the feet about the julep 'neath the  
chestnut tree at last.  
For there's but one kind of moonshine and  
the olden days are past;  
For the water wagon rumbles through the  
Southland on its trip.  
And it helps no one to drop off to pick up  
the driver's whip.  
For the mint bed makes a pasture and the  
corkscrew hangs high.  
And all is still along the still side, and the  
South is going dry.

### To the Pumpkin Flower.

Lura W. Sheldon in Lippincott's.  
Queen of the garden! Wondrous golden  
thing!  
Thou hast a beauty that my Muse shall  
sing!  
What flower more modest in its fullest  
bloom?  
Or what more bright in all thine acred  
room?

What rare exotic can, with priceless power,  
Ease more the hungry longings of an hour?  
When all the Autumn's treasures are by  
Thy memory lingers—in the pumpkin pie.

# Smiling "Round the World"

BY MARSHALL P. WILDER

### More Japanese Snapshots.

WHILE at the Imperial Hotel, Tokio, we were permitted to witness a portion of a Japanese wedding; that is, the feast and reception. Like our Hebrew friends in America, the Japs now hire the parlors of a hotel, chiefly because their little doll houses are so small. It was very funny; the women all like embarrassed images, done up in their best kimonos and not saying a word, while the men, in stiff, badly fitting European "store clothes," stood around in little groups and talked, looking like animated tailors' dummies.

One young man picked out a native air on the piano with one finger, while the children were the only ones who were at all happy, or didn't look as if they wished they hadn't come.

We were not surprised to see children there, as they go everywhere in Japan, even to the theater, where they trot about between the acts and even invade the stage. Such universal consideration is shown them I was reminded of a story which, however, does not apply to Japanese domestic life, but to worth the telling. Says Mrs. Peace to Miss Sharp, a caller:

"My husband and I never dispute before the children. When a quarrel seems imminent we always send them out."

Miss Sharp: "Ah, I've often wondered why they're so much in the street?"

Hateful life, wasn't she?"

English is quite generally spoken, particularly among the boys. The rickshaw men almost all have a smattering, and by my side I traveled one night in one of these Japanese sleeping cars, and it will always stand out in my memory as one of the most uncomfortable I ever passed. The cars are divided into compartments, two long leather seats facing each other, running across the car. The backs of these seats lift up and, propped by poles, make four bunks altogether. The bedding is clean and sufficient, but there are no springs in the beds, absolutely no privacy, and one tiny window for the whole compartment, public opinion being usually divided as to whether it shall be opened or closed.

This reminds me of a story my friend Colonel Cody ("Buffalo Bill") used to tell.

He said that once upon a time an Englishman who had never been in the West before was his guest. They were riding through a Rocky Mountain tanyon one day, when suddenly a tremendous gust of wind came swooping down upon them, and actually carried the Englishman clear off the wagon seat. After he had been plucked up he combed the sand and gravel out of his whiskers and said:

"I say! I think you overdo ventilation in this bloomin' country!"

My berth was over the wheels, and this, together with a roadbed of which a coal railroad in Pennsylvania would be ashamed, produced such jolts and bumps that my brain felt as though it had been through an egg-beater. The compartment was full, one occupant being a German army officer, who, beside being in full uniform, even to enormous fur-lined overcoat, sword and spurs, brought in to choke the little available space a matchbox, a large flat wicker hamper and a packing box. He also had a very industrious and far-reaching snore with him.

The third occupant being a traveling

Catholic priest and, like the soldier, a man of huge proportions, I was rather interested to know which of these was to occupy the berth over me, for it seemed can tell the different points of interest, though frequently one has to make some rather wild guesses as to what they mean. When, however, the fact has been grasped that "dewotomy" means "department," and "sea soldare" means "sea soldier" or marine, "Horean Agaton" means "Austrian Legation"; these, with other numberless examples, make conversation fairly plain sailing.

One sees many signs in English, but the people who make them have their own ideas as to arrangement. For instance, in Yokohama may be seen a sign over a butcher shop that reads "Befand-hemmet." It looks like some foreign word, but after close inspection resolves itself into "Beef and hen meat."

In Tokio a jewelry store has on the window "The Watches Shop," and tacked on a fence at the top of a high hill I saw the following:

"As danger is, should not throw the stones."  
Japanese trains are small and slow, and seem not to think it necessary ever to be on time. Smoking is allowed in every class, even in the sleeping cars, though a flimsy sort of affair, and I took particular pains to see that it was well propped up.

I was rather relieved to find it was to be the soldier, for I consoled myself with the old adage that the pen is mightier than the sword and decided it would be a worse calamity to have the church down on me than the Army. Even if sleep with all these considerations had been possible, the frequent stops would have completely put it to flight, for the moment a train arrives at a station, no matter what the time of night, the sellers of lunch boxes, hot milk, tea or tobacco, begin to cry their wares in tones that are like the wailings of lost souls, and for penetration and volume are unequalled by anything in my experience.

The sellers of tea at the stations will give one a small teapot filled with hot

tea, and a tiny cup, all for three sen, or a cent and a half in American money.

At the railroad stations during the war with Russia one was sure to see parties of wounded soldiers returning from the front, or those who were departing for the seat of war. These latter were always attended by a crowd of men and women, who waved small Japanese flags and gave a shout as the train moved away. This shout is really more of a screech than a good, round cheer, such as would be heard in America, for it seems as if there is some physical reason why the Japanese people cannot raise their voices without producing the most blood-curdling sounds. The street cries are all strident and unpleasant; the commands of officers to their men tinny and rasp-like, while Japanese singing, to a foreigner, is conducive to nervous prostration. As for the brass bands, their music is like unto nothing under the heavens or—I will safely wager—above them. And their fondness for

American airs—Sousa's marches and the like—adds to the torture. "Marching Through Georgia" is a prime favorite with them, but I would have to study over the tune, as they produced it, a long while before I would dare take my oath that I had ever heard it before.

I have spoken somewhat of the external attitude of these people. Of their inner attitude, I have said and mind much more might be said, especially in regard to their late war with Russia, which was going on at the time of my visit. This was something they would not talk about. Any mention of the subject was met with an adroit change of the conversation into other channels; but intense patriotism, the most supreme confidence in their ultimate success, reigned in every heart. Examples of the most heroic self-sacrifice were not lacking. A Japanese mother had given her three sons to the war. The first was reported slain. She smiled, and said, "It is well. I am happy." The second lay dead upon the field. She smiled again, and said, "It is well. I am happy." The third gave up his life, and they said to

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