

# OUR STORY TELLER



## MR. : MEEKS' : PRISONER.

HE said his name was Meeks, and it struck thoughtful ones in Buffalo Horn that the patronymic was singularly appropriate; for the gentleman himself was a mild-eyed, "sandy-lookin'" little man, with a self-deprecatory air that suggested a standing apology on his part for presuming to exist. He floated into town quietly, and so unobtrusive and modest was he that it was several days before his presence began to be noticed, and then only on account of a rumor that had gained circulation to the effect that he was an officer of the United States Secret Service. Then Buffalo Hornites smiled. Of course, like all Western people, they understood that it is not best to judge from appearances; but, oh! what a chump Uncle Sam must be, to send a wee bit of a man like this to arrest an Oklahoma malefactor!

To be sure, nobody had the temerity to suggest this to Mr. Meeks. There are communities in which the one who presumes upon appearances is taking very long chances, and Buffalo Horn was one of these. Therefore, Mr. Meeks was treated with great show of respect by all the leading citizens, who squared things with themselves by privately "giving him the horse-laugh." And, all unconscious, Mr. Meeks kept on his way, or, rather, stayed where he was and lay in wait for some certain criminal who was wanted for violating a score, more or less, of the Federal statutes.

In strictest confidence, and with child-like faith, he had imparted more or less information concerning his mission to Mart Winslow, the landlord of the little hotel where he was staying—and Mart being, after the manner of his kind, an inveterate gossip, soon spread what information he had gleaned from the stranger, thereby causing a broad grin to appear whenever his guest was mentioned.

"Oh, but ain't 'e easy?" chuckled Mart to a couple of friends, one day, as he nodded towards the bar-room, where Mr. Meeks was engaged in "settin' 'em up" to the ever-ready crowd. "D'ye ever see sech a sneaker? Comes yere an' 'xpees th' duck 'e's layin' fer' 'e lope right intuh th' camp an' give 'issell up, I s'pose; so yere's stays, diggin' up fifteen a week fr board an' spendin' copious at th' bar. Oh, I c'n stand it awhile."

"Gawd! S'posin' th' man sh'd come in, all of a suddint?" said Jim Wylie, the city marshal. "Say, I bet 'e'd die o' sear!"

"What is it th' little feller wants, Mart?" asked some one sitting by the window.

"Sh-h-h! Easy, Frank! \* \* \* Oh, I 'doo, not now. But I'll bet ye one thing—'tain't nobody he's agoin' t' ketch right off."

It came to be rumored, within a day or two, that "Kingfisher" Williams was the man Mr. Meeks was after, this rumor being based upon the fact that the little man had been—very quietly, of course—making inquiries concerning that notorious person, whom numerous county and national officers were more or less anxious to meet. He was not known personally to any one in Buffalo Horn, but Mr. Wylie assured the little man that Kingfisher Williams was a very bad man, indeed, and that if Mr. Meeks effected his capture it would be a great feather in his cap—whereupon the little man swelled up considerably and invited Mr. Wylie to join him at the bar.

It was about a week after this conversation that the secret-service officer and the city marshal were standing in the bar-room, discussing some question or other, when the door opened and a stranger entered and, walking up to the bar, called for whisky. Mr. Meeks was looking earnestly upward into the big marshal's face as the stranger entered, but withdrew his gaze for a moment to glance at the new-comer. Then he reached for his revolver.

"There's my man!" he remarked, calmly, in an undertone, to the marshal. "Get back from the bar, please."

Wylie, dumbfounded, did as he was bidden, in time to see the stranger look up just as Mr. Meeks got him covered.

"Hands up, Mr. Williams!" commanded the little man. "I want you!"

With an oath, the other "drew," and for a few seconds there was a confusion of shots, in which the city marshal could take no part by reason of his revolver getting stuck and refusing to come forth. Then the stranger threw up both hands, in token of surrender.

"Have you—er—a pair of handcuffs, Mr. Wylie?" asked Mr. Meeks. "Put 'em on him, please. Sorry, Mr. Williams, but I can't take any chances with you."

Williams did not answer, but growled angrily under his breath as he submitted to being handcuffed.

"I'll git you for this!" he said to Wylie, as the latter stepped back after finishing the operation.

"Oh, ye will, will ye? Wait ontell my friend, Mr. Meeks, gits through 'th ye, Mr. Williams," was the cheerful reply. "Wan' t' put 'im in th' cooler?" asked the marshal, presently.

"No, thanks. He'll bunk with me to-night, and to-morrow we leave. Much obliged, all the same."

It was not more than an hour before every one in Buffalo Horn knew that little Mr. Meeks had, single-handed, captured the notorious Kingfisher Williams, after a short battle in which nobody was hurt; and the general sentiment was of the "Well, I'll be dog-goned!" variety.

That night Mr. Meeks had a levee and blushing received the congratulations of the best citizens of Buffalo Horn during a period of two hours, while his now staunch friend, Jim Wylie, obligingly guarded his desperate prisoner. Had he been a less temperate man, he might have retired somewhat the worse for liquor, as did most of the citizens of Buffalo Horn; but he kept his wits about him and was as sober as his prisoner when they turned in.

Next morning, a half-score of leading citizens had sufficiently recovered from the night's revelries to accompany him and his prisoner to Four-Mile Creek. This honor was modestly protested against by the little man, who seemed not to see that he had done anything remarkable, but he was hooted down, and when they reached Four-Mile his escort parted from his with three rousing cheers and a volley of revolver-shots by way of salute.

It was about one o'clock in the afternoon when an excited, hatless man, mounted on a panting horse that dripped with perspiration, dashed up to the Hotel Winslow, in front of which a number of citizens were sitting discussing the events of the day and night previous, and hoarsely announced: "Kingfisher—he's killed 'im!"

"What? Who?" asked Winslow.

"What ye talkin' about, man?"

The stranger was gasping for breath, but presently managed to explain that, twenty miles south, he had been resting under a tree by a stream, when a little man and a big man, whom he had known in Kingfisher as "Kingfisher" Williams, came along and dismounted near by. The little man was leaning over to get a drink when Williams sneaked up behind him and struck him down with his handcuffs. After this, said the stranger, he saw Williams take the keys from the little man's pocket and unlock his handcuffs. Then he shot the insensible victim with the latter's own gun, mounted, and rode away; and the new-comer hurried into Buffalo Horn the faster because Williams caught sight of him as he was leaving and took a few shots at him.

"W'y didn't ye shoot back—r else git th' drop on 'im w'en 'e hit little Meeks w' th' bracelets?" asked Jim Wylie, fiercely.

"Cause, in the first place, I didn't think 'e'd kill th' man. Second—and the stranger eyed Wylie quizzically—"I reckon ye hain't real well acquainted 'th Kingfisher Williams, be ye?"

In less than an hour the little town was practically depopulated of men, all but the cashier of the local bank and a few bar-tenders having gone on the warpath to catch and hang Kingfisher Williams for the murder of Mr. Meeks.

The stranger did not accompany them, his horse being blown and himself not being anxious to meet Mr. Williams. However, it made no difference, as every one knew the ford which the

stranger said was the scene of the tragedy.

Thus, nearly every one being gone southward to mete out justice to the alleged murderer of Mr. Meeks, it was really child's play for that gentleman and Mr. Williams, emerging from their hiding-place in the hills just north of the town, and joining the stranger who had brought the news, to loot the bank, three stores, the hotel, and every saloon in the place, and to get safely away on fresh horses at least three hours before the pursuit could be organized.

And that is why every officer whose business takes him into Buffalo Horn and neighboring towns is looked upon with suspicion until his credentials are approved.—Lester Ketchum, in the San Francisco Argonaut.

### WILLIE AND TAD LINCOLN.

The Two Sons of the Great President and Their Natures.

Julia Taft Bayne contributes an article to St. Nicholas on "Willie and Tad Lincoln," who were playmates of her brother during the time that they lived in the White House. Mrs. Bayne says: Willie Lincoln was the most lovable boy I ever know—sensible, sweet-tempered, and gentle-mannered. He was rather fair, with blue-gray eyes, while Tad had quick, dark eyes, and a fiery temper. Though very affectionate when he chose, Tad was unyielding in his dislikes. His peculiar defect of speech made it difficult for strangers to understand him, but those who saw him every day had no difficulty.

The two Lincoln boys were then a little over 10 and 8 years of age, my two brothers being a year or two older. The elder, Horatio, or "Budd," as he was always called, was fair, like Willie Lincoln, while Hally was dark. This resemblance of the two pairs of boys was often remarked upon.

Willie and Tad were two healthy, rollicking Western boys who had never been accustomed to restraint. The notice which their father's exalted station brought upon them was at times distasteful. Willie once said: "Wasn't there ever a President who had children before? I wish they wouldn't stare at us so!"

The first time they went to church with us, Willie said: "Will he pray for us, do you think? Preachers always pray so long for Pa." Dr. Smith did pray for them, as he recognized them in our pew. Willie's cheeks grew very red, but Tad was sitting on the floor of the pew, and heeded not. He was so uneasy that he always sat on the floor a good part of the service, drawing pictures, and amusing himself with whatever he could find in his pockets.

On another Sunday, when he was unusually restless, a young officer friend of ours gave him a knife, which he thought Tad would not open, but he did, and cut his finger, and I had to do it up in my best embroidered handkerchief.

On this occasion I was goaded to say: "I'll never take you to church again, Thomas Lincoln!"—he hated of all things to be called Thomas—"I just suffer agonies at the time!" "Well," said Tad, "wasn't Willie sitting up there, good as pie, and you poked me with your toe?"

### Election of United States Senators.

In his paper on "This Country of Ours" in the Ladies' Home Journal, President Harrison writes of Congress, and tells how United States Senators are elected. "The law of 1806," he says, "provides that the Legislature chosen next before the expiration of the term of a Senator shall choose his successor, and that it shall proceed to do so on the second Tuesday after it assembles. On that day each House of the Legislature must vote separately, viva voce, for a Senator, and enter the result on its journal; the two Houses must at 12 m. the next day meet in joint session, and if it appears that the same person has received a majority of the votes in each House he is declared elected; if there has been no election the joint assembly must take a vote, and if any one receives a majority of the votes—a majority of all the members elected to both Houses being present and voting—he is to be declared elected. If there is no election the joint assembly proceeds with the balloting, and must meet every day at 12 m., and take at least one ballot each day until a Senator is elected. The Governor of the State is required to certify the election under the seal of the State, to the President of the Senate, the certificate to be countersigned by the Secretary of State of the State."

### Expenses of the White House.

Congress appropriates between \$40,000 and \$50,000 annually for the current expenses of the Executive Mansion to meet clerk hire, including that of the President's private secretary, which is \$5,000 a year; stenographer, typewriters, telegraph operators, messengers, doorkeepers, a steward, and housekeeper, and light and heat.

### Only That.

Old Gentleman (to railway porter)—Porter, the rain is dripping in from the lamphole all over my trousers.

Porter (reassuringly)—No, sir, it's quite water-tight, I assure you. It's only the oil leaking a bit.—Household Words.

Whenever two women get together, and there is a man in an adjoining room, they soon begin to whisper.

## EARLY DAYS OF OIL.

### BEGINNING OF PETROLEUM DAYS IN PENNSYLVANIA.

Growth and Collapse of the Tremendous Boom that Followed—One Resident Who Objected to the Greenish Scum and Left for Canada.

#### The First Strike.

The story of the discovery of oil in Pennsylvania and the stirring incidents connected therewith is an interesting chapter in the country, with which our readers are undoubtedly familiar. But there are many facts of interest prior to the boring of the wells that are known to but few.

It is related of a discouraged pioneer resident of what afterward became famous as the Oil Creek regions that his interest was sufficiently awakened by reports, which reached him in some way, of possibly rich deposits of coal oil across the Canadian border, to cause him to leave Oil Creek and repair to Canada. One of the objectionable features of the farm he left, according to the story, was the oozing of a greenish scum to the surface of the streams, so much that at the point where his horses and cattle drank it was necessary to construct a surface dam, in order that the animals might drink without being compelled to dip through the noxious deposit floating on the surface of the water. This floating substance was of an oily nature and long had been used in the war paints, rites and medicines of the Indians of the region, from whom it derived its name—Seneca oil. No thought, however, of the immensity of the supply of the multiplied uses to which it might be put was entertained by any one. The oily wealth the restless settler sought in Canada failed to materialize at that time. Meanwhile, in the form of the despised scum oozing from the old Oil Creek farm he had deserted, it was making the effort nature afforded to force upon the world more fitting recognition of the volume and value of it stored in the hidden natural reservoirs from which it came. This oil found its way to the surface at various points along the creek flats, notably in the vicinity of



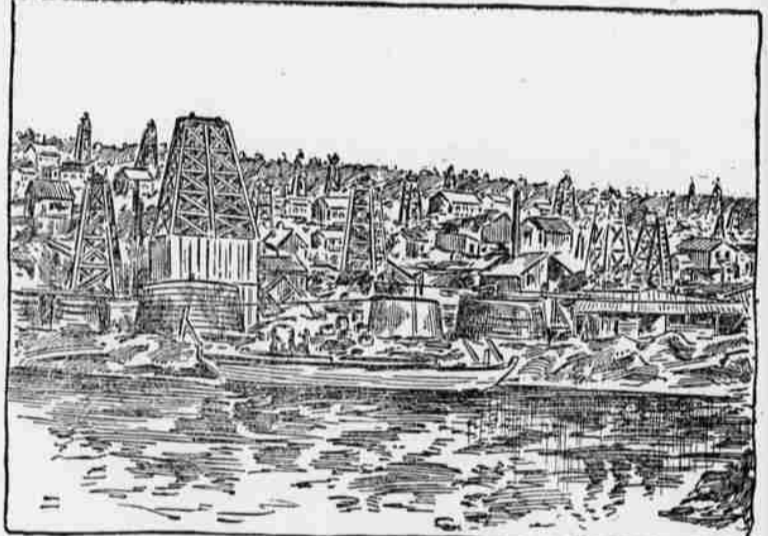
COL. DRAKE.

a crevice as the day's work was being finished, and the tools were pulled out until Monday morning. The following day, Sunday, the senior driller, "Uncle Billy" Smith, strolled down to the well and saw what seemed to be oil within a few feet of the top. He dipped an improvised bailer into the well and it came up filled with petroleum. Thus was the first oil well conceived and completed. It was not the first artesian well in which oil was found, but it was the first well sunk for oil.

The period in which the high-tide mark was reached in the regions, in the volume of business, in interest and population, was in the six years following Col. Drake's strike. The climax of that period found 100,000 people in the regions which had been practically a wilderness but a few years before. Though the striking of the Drake well caused feverish excitement at once, an immediate influx of people to the regions and sent skyward the value of lands along the creek, there was a bar to the boom in the limited means for storing and marketing the product. Within three years the supply so much exceeded the demand that the price dropped from 50 cents a gallon to 10 cents a barrel. There were three big wells at this period, which averaged 2,500 or 3,000 barrels a day, and several hundred small ones. For lack of storage and shipping facilities a great quantity of oil was wasted. In 1862 a small lake of petroleum was kept between the big Fountain and Empire wells and many a boatload was procured at 10 cents a barrel. In the years 1864 and '65 the boom reached its climax and then began its rapid decline.

#### The Polar Snow Cap of Mars.

We have received the following information from America: "A telegram received at Harvard Observatory on Jan. 11 from Lowell Observatory, now located near the City of Mexico, says that a rift has been observed since Jan. 7 in the north polar cap of Mars in longitude 40." This "rift" is probably similar to those observed at the opposition of 1894, in the southern cap. Prof. W. H. Pickering, with a six-inch telescope, found one in May 22, crossing the cap from longitude 330 to 170. This grew considerable in size, measurements made on June 6 and 15 indicating a width of 100 and 350 miles respectively. Mr. Douglass also during the same month, June 10, detected a second and third rift, the latter running from longitude 170 to 90. The sequence of phe-



A TYPICAL OIL TOWN IN THE EARLY SIXTIES.

the lumber mill of Brewer, Watson & Co., perhaps a mile south of Titusville. Eventually a high value was put upon it for medicinal purposes, and the gathering of it—principally by the process of soaking it from the water with blankets—became quite a profitable business. It also had a limited use as a lubricant, and a more limited use as an illuminant in its crude state.

In the days just prior to the discovery of oil the Oil Creek valley, from Titusville southward to the Alleghany River, or to the present site of Oil City, a distance of about twenty miles, was practically uninhabited. Titusville was a little lumbering village. It was not until 1857 that it was believed that oil existed in sufficient quantities for commercial purposes, and in that year drilling through rock was begun at Titusville under the direction of Col. Edwin L. Drake, who had been a railroad contractor at New Haven, Conn. His salary was to be \$1,000 a year and the company had provided him with \$1,000 with which to begin the work of sinking a well. The little village afforded but few of the necessary equipments for the work, and the funds were soon exhausted. The company, losing faith in the enterprise and becoming indifferent, failed to advance Col. Drake more money. It was then the latter's troubles began. The drillers he had engaged failed to appear. This was due in part to the report spread over the regions that Drake was crazy in believing that oil would be found by drilling into the rock. But his faith on this point was unshaken, after his study of the salt wells and other investigations of insanity, only served to intensify his determination to demonstrate that the theory was correct. It was not until the middle of June, 1859, that he was able to proceed with the well, and then only from outside assistance.

#### The First Completed Well.

On Saturday, August 28, 1859, the drill at the shallow depth of 69½ feet, about 35 feet in the rock, dropped into

nomena observed seems to indicate that they are due to the lower levels at the poles being uncovered; in this way, as the snow melts, the bare ground is exposed, appearing dark in contrast to the snow still lying on the more elevated heights. Their broadening is then a natural result of the departing snow, and indicates that the polar cap is at that time in a far advanced state of disintegration.—Nature.

#### No Big Men.

A man from the mountains of East Tennessee was in Washington recently and visited the capitol. He met Congressman-elect Brownlow of the First District, who knows every man in Tennessee and calls them by their given names.

"Well, John," asked the statesman, "what do you think of Washington?" "Waal, Walt," replied the Tennesseean, "'tween yo' an' me, I'm sorter disappointed. I've bin layin' out ter cum ter Washington fer thirty-odd y'ar. I've heard ther all th' big men o' th' United States was hyar. I done sarched high an' low all day fer 'em, an' I didn't see none. The feller on th' bench, th' Judge, I reckon, he be, in one o' them two co't rooms up thar is middlin' hefty, but ole Abe Thompson ther runs the saloon in Bristol 'd made two o' him, 'th enough trimmin's lef' over ter make two or three boys. Ther may be big men hyar, but I kaln't fin' 'em."—Washington Star.

#### One-Cent Newspapers.

There are now \$8,000,000 worth of one-cent pieces in circulation, and the call upon the mint is still for more. Not all these cents are wanted for the plate collection. It is one-cent journalism more than anything else which keeps the wheels turning in the mint, as in the marts of trade.—Philadelphia Record.

When a woman complains a good deal of cold feet, it is a sign she is an old maid.