The Busy Beaver Brotherhood.

BY HAYDEN CARRUTH.

The fortunes of the Busy Beaver Co-operative Brotherhood afforded Mr. Milo Bush a good opportunity for the exercise of his narrative powers. The student of social problems might have wished for more particulars concerning the actual working plans of the organization and less about the ingenious Bunker and the ingenuous Ganderfoot; but Mr. Bush was always averse to supplying information on points in which he took no personal interest, so I can only give the account in his own words, as follows:

You see, it was old Perfessor Bunker who interduced the igee into the town and started the thing. A great reader the perfessor was. A stoodent of history, and a hefty thinker. Used to come into Shanks' and set himself down in a cheer and haul out a book and read for two hours, sliding his finger along under each line and sort o' prying up on the hard words, and never peep for for the whole time. Then he'd shut up his book and close his mouth very tight and think—a-digesting what he'd read, he used to say. Then after some time he'd sort o' come to and look around, take a long, sliding pull on his whiskers and say, "My friends, the kentry is going to the dorgs," and get up and walk out. And prob'ly outside he'd meet one of Al Doty's dorgs, and take a kick at it, free and furious, him being ded sot agin dorgs, and generally his boot would fly off, on account of him wearing 'em uncommon roomy for corns, and the dorg would grab the boot and streak it for home, Al being a jovial critter and having 'em trained for this purpose. Which, of course, wouldn't improve the perfessor's temper, and he would go home pretty mad, taking one long step with his stocking foot and two short ones with his boot foot, the same being cowhide, extra heavy. After which Al would take him the other boot in a wheel-barrer, pretending he could hardly push it, and stopping to rest frequent, and with a small part of his dogs, say about a hundred and fifty, follering behind. A very fine neighbor, Al was, and if there could 'a' been a tax collected on his dorgs it would 'a' paid the national debt.

Well, the old man said so mighty little and looked so mighty solemn that we made up our minds he must be 'bout the smartest man in the place, and when he did say anything we just listened and took it to heart. One day he shut up his book as yoosial, tested his whiskers and found 'em still fast, and says he: "Friends, the kentry is going to the dorgs." "If that's the case," says Abner Blackmark, "I move that one million dollars be, and hereby is, apporperated to wedge on the kentry's boots." The perfessor looked around with his mouth shut like a time-lock, and then says he: "Young man, if this is a season for yoomer then I am mistaken. The kentry is going to the dorgs. Something oughter be done." "What's your plan, perfessor?" says Mark Wallis. "I have give the matter some thought," returns the perfessor, "and think I have some igees on the subject. It is the dooty of every man, I conceive, to put his hand to the plow." "Correct," says Mark. "The rich," continners the perfessor, "are growing richer, and the poor poorer. Our republic is being turned into an oligarshy. Our legislative halls are the haunt of corruption. Men are bought and sold like cattle. Justice has fled shrieking from our courts, and our jedges, gentlemen, barter their decisions for pelf. Our constitution, gentlemen, that proudest politercal dockerment framed by the hand of man since the people of England wrung the Maggy Carter from the nobles, is being dragged in the mire and made a door-mat of." He shut his mouth with a snap and looked around. We sot in silence, scarcely breathing. The only sound to be heard was Al Doty's dorgs outside, pounding the sidewalk with their tails in unison, waiting for him to come out.

Well, he talked some more, getting us more and more worked up, and then we asked him what was the remedy. "I conceive it lays in one word," says he; "Co-operation. The system of competition has been weighed in the balances and found wanting. Through co-operation and all working for the common good we may struggle back to peace and happiness. Let us start the movement here. Let us form a co-operative brotherhood and work for the common weal." Well, he talked for some time, and the end of it was that we organized the Busy Beaver Co-operative Brotherhood. Everybody went in, and we had one store where we could get things in exchange for orders worth one dollar apiece, one being issued to every man for each day's work, no matter what he worked at, so all would be on a level and there wouldn't be no hard feelings and no danger of an oligarshy. Winter was just coming on, and there not then being a railroad within a hundred miles, we was shut off from the rest of the corrupt kentry and left alone, a band of brothers.

Well, there ain't much more to tell. All would of gone well, and we would have set an example to the world, if it hadn't been for Ganderfoot. Ganderfoot just come along. We didn't know from where, but I reckon it must 'a' been from the corruptest part of the kentry. He was the biggest man you ever seen, over six feet high, and wide. Had a knobby face and considerable lower jaw. Asked about the Brotherhood, and the perfessor explained it all. Said it was right in his line. Agreed with everything the perfessor said. Come in with us, and begun to draw his dollar in scrip every day like the rest of us. The perfessor was tickled. "He is our first recroot from the capital-ridden kentry," said he. "Others will foller. We are lighting a torch which will yet inflame the world." Ganderfoot drawed his dollar order every day, and at night he played poker. We seen, alars, when it was too late, how wicked it is to gamble. Ganderfoot always won. He finally got several hundred dollars' worth of the scrip. Then one day, just before a big blizzard, he came into the store and with his dollar orders bought all the flour, and bacon, and beans, and sugar, and pertaters and such things that there was, and took them over to his house, leaving nothing but baking powder, and saleratus, and kyenne pepper, and lemon extract, and yeast cakes, and breakfast food and such stuff. We looked serious, but the perfessor said it was all right. "He cannot refuse to sell back such as he does not want at the established rate," says he; "I conceive we are brothers." But the next day when we went to him to get something he cocked up his eye at the ceiling and says he, "Gents, owing to the war cloud in Europe the prices of all foodstuffs have advanced one hundred per cent," at the same time leaning on a barrel of flour and making a big gun in his belt obnoxiously conspickerous. We withdrew to the front of the room for a conference. "It's all right," says the perfessor in a whisper; "it's all right. As a practical reformer I have a plan to circumvent the grasping scoundrel. We will issue more scrip unbeknown to him. You go ahead and invest what you've got and I'll go and start up the printing press." So we went back and Abner says to him: "Of course, as business men we understand how these here war clouds play hob with the markets. I'll take a sack of flour at the war price." And he produced a handful of scrip. "Owing to the uncertainty in furren affairs and the stringency in the home markets," says Ganderfoot, again cocking up his eye, "only United States legal tenders is now received." Our jaws dropped, and we filed out and sought the perfessor and related the circumstances. The old man listened with stern lips; then he sot down and the tears bust from his eyes. "Of course you have a remedy for this also?" says we. "There is no remedy in the world for a man who demands cash money," says he. "I conceive we are done up. The oligarshy has us by the throat."

Then he bowed his head and motioned for the boy to stop the press.

Three weeks later the corrupt and soulless Ganderfoot left town, taking with him the last cent in the community.—Saturday Evening Post.

The Middle-Aged Woman.

The passing of the middle-aged woman is a fact that has been accomplished within the last ten years. As long ago as that a woman of 45 was looked upon as pretty well advanced, and not generally regarded as the object of grand passions and universal admiration. When a mother had a son at college, she grew sober in her dress, wore her hair smooth, and took no interest in her figure. She was just one remove from the rural English, who think when nature destroys a front tooth it is sinful to seek to remedy the omission by artifice. And when a mother had a married daughter and began to see in the offing grandchildren looming up, she put on black, gave up corsets, and began to think the theater a too frivolous amusement.

These are the women who now look about the same age as their daughters. At any place where the idle and fashionable rich are represented in large numbers, one sees a few real old ladies, venerable dames of between seventy and eighty, a good many young girls in their teens, and a very large number of maids and matrons who look about twenty-five and thirty, and range from that age to fifty.

The middle-aged woman did not pass from this active and attractive sphere without a struggle. Youth is not thus prolonged without labor. They say the French actresses first taught New York matrons that they could be fresh and fair at fifty. Women who charmed at the age when tradition said they sat in the chimney corner and knit stockings, were something new, and the rich ladies who didn't enjoy doing the stocking act a bit took to the new idea like ducks to water. They have massaged and steamed and creamed themselves back twenty-five years. Dress makes an enormous difference, and they now dress as youthfully as their daughters. As for corsets—a large part of the trick depends on them, and of the whole toilet of the coquette of forty-five they are the most important item.

One can't achieve anything worth while without effort, and the New York woman's great struggle is to avoid fat. This is her crumpled rose-leaf.

It would not have been so bad some years ago, when what the novelists called "opulent curves" were the fashion. But curves are out. To be lean as a lath is now the mode. The ideal figure looks as if a deal board were bound to the front of it under the limpest of gowns, which is drawn so smooth and so tight in the skirt that it fits like a pair of trousers. A fashionable tailor told me the other day that he was making skirts with a seam on the side from the ankle to the hip, and that this seam made the dresses so tight that the wearers could not sit down.

Faced by such fashions, the anxieties of the women inclined to fat may be imagined. And nearly all the smart women in New York are inclined to fat. One can't eat three elaborate meals a day, with tea and muffins at five, and candy off and on all the time, without increase of avoirdupois. Many of these women won't take exercise. When one has a superb open carriage, with sable rugs and eider-down cushions, to go driving in, one must be made of heroic stuff to put on one's heavy boots and go for a walk. How to get off or keep off fat is one of the great subjects of discussion here. When half a dozen women get together it is certain, sooner or later, to come to the surface of the conversation.

Then they all give their opinions with the kindling eye and flushing cheek which denotes the discussion of matters close to the heart. Some of the more determined and forceful bent almost starve themselves. A favorite cure is to drink no water. Some walk, taking brisk constitutionals of miles at a brisk rate of speed. Some take patent medicines, warranted to cure obesity, and nearly kill themselves. But the favorite method is Turkish baths. These are less trouble than any of the others, and vigorously taken, once or twice a week, are said to be very efficacious.—Geraldine Bonner in S. F. Argonaut.

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