

CLOVERDALE COURIER.

VOL. 12.

CLOVERDALE, TILLAMOOK COUNTY, OREGON, JULY 20, 1916

NO. 2

The Old Showman

He Tells How He Invented a New Animal.

By M. QUAD

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"Gentlemen," began the old showman as his little crowd of admirers assembled to listen to his tale, "did any of you ever hear of an animal called a 'guyasticutus'?"

"There never was such an animal," replied one. "There is such a word as guyasticutus, but it is a slang word. When you call a man a guyasticutus you express your contempt for him."

"My friends, you are wrong, and I shall take great pleasure in convincing you of the fact. I can't say that such an animal exists now, but he surely did forty years ago, for I invented him myself."

"Give us the yarn!" was called out from every one.

"Well, I was head keeper of the menagerie traveling with the circus. We had started out of winter quarters with five hyenas in the cage, but four of them had gone dead on us. I guess it was pneumonia that carried them off. The one left was an old he hyena, and he could stand any sort of weather and take the bumps of the country highways. However, after his companions had departed this life we saw a change in him. He didn't fall sick, but he got lonesome and sulky.

"There were daily complaints that our hyena was a fraud, and I was wondering what we could do about it when the boss came to me one day and said:

"George, that old hyena is making trouble for us. What's the matter with him anyhow?"

"I guess he is tired of being a hyena," I replied.

"But he can't be anything else, can he?"

"Why, we can't make a bird of him, but maybe I can make some other animal of him."

"Then do it, man."

"I changed the hyena's food a dozen times and gave him whisky to lap instead of water," said the old showman, "but it didn't improve him any, and I set myself to wonder how I could make him over. The bright idea came to me at last, and one Sunday, when we had a lazy day of it, I bought various paints and brushes. There was a farmer's hired man hanging around the show. He had deserted the plow for the romance of the circus. He had offered to work for \$5 a week and his board, but I had no room for him. When I got the idea of making the hyena over I beckoned to this chap and said:

"Joshaway, I will give you \$5 a week and your board if you will do what I want you to do. It concerns the old hyena in the cage over there. I want to make a guyasticutus of him."

"Joshaway promised, and the first thing to do was to tie the old hyena up. We got ropes and straps around his legs and a muzzle over his nose, and then went to work with the paints. He didn't give us much trouble; he was too lonesome and homesick for that. We gave him bright green ears; we gave him a bright red nose and red eyebrows; we spotted his body here and there with green, red, blue, yellow and black paints. We put a dozen rings around his tail, and we painted his legs one color and his feet another. Say, boys, when we got through with that hyena we had to sit back and roar with laughter.

"We had a special cage made for him and gave it such a position that

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only the front with its iron bars could be seen. Behind it on a chair was Joshaway, the young man who was looking for romance. He did all the talking, but it seemed to come from the guyasticutus. Joshaway had a voice like the filing of a saw, and his talk was a great success. The animal in front of him went on with a long rigmarole as to his forest home in Honduras and what he did there.

"The fatal day did not arrive until we had shown that guyasticutus for two years and a half. I renewed the paint on him every other Sunday and saw to it that he had the choicest kind of food."

"But what about the fatal day?" was queried.

"Oh, yes, about that fatal day," replied the old showman. "Well, it came about in this way. That young man Joshaway undertook to eat an apple while he was giving his talk, and the seed of the fruit got into his throat and stuck there. He had to choke and cough and sputter, and the fact that there was a man somewhere hidden behind the guyasticutus could not be concealed. There were shouts of excitement and derision and calls for an investigation. Half a dozen men pressed forward and seized the cage and pulled it off its benches. That same

half a dozen men seized Joshaway by the neck or somewhere else as he still choked and sputtered over the seeds and brought him out for the crowd to pick on. In just one minute it was plain that the public had been swindled for years. They had had a guyasticutus instead of a hyena and had double their money's worth, but they wanted their revenge, and they took it. The cage was kicked about until it was smashed and its occupant was killed, and they stepped on Joshaway and poked and pounded him until he would never again feel romantic, and the fight spread until something like a thousand men and women were engaged in it. We had to stop the circus performance and pack up and move on, and we had to go for a full hundred miles before we heard the last of our scheme to outdo natural history."

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