

Honeycutts an' they're gittin' ready fer the election together."

The lad did not turn his head nor did his lips open.

"These fellers up here tried to bust our county up into little pieces once—an' do you know why? Bekase we was so *lawless*." Steve laughed savagely. "They're gittin' wuss'n we air. They say we stole the State fer that bag o' wind, Bryan,

when we'd been votin' the same way fer forty years. Now they're goin' to gag us an' tie us up like a yearlin' calf. But folks in the mountains ain't agoin' to do much bawlin'—they're gittin' ready."

Still Jason refused to answer, but Steve saw that the lad's hands and mouth were clenched.

"They're gittin' *ready*," he repeated, "an' I'll be thar."

(To be continued.)

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING

By Frederick Landis



HERE was a political landslide that year, and strangers were seen in public and private life. When Congress met the cloak-rooms were filled with victims who spoke of their "emancipation from public care" and then hurried to the President's office to seek manna from that commissary-general of political unfortunates.

But there is an end, even to what the "Great Father" can do, and the bottom of the patronage-bin had been scraped bare some time later when the Hon. Caspar Jones, one of the youngest of the slain, sought refuge from the "ingratitude of republics."

"Make me a consul—anywhere—Zanzibar, even!"

The "Great Father" lifted his hands reproachfully.

"You mean exile to some little ash-pile of a country?"

The Hon. Caspar Jones was so inclined.

"If I had a barrel of such positions, I'd not let you squander your abilities. Why don't you lecture? If you'll permit me to scramble a metaphor, I'll say you could make the public ear eat out of your hand!"

It was the habit of the Hon. Caspar Jones to grow strangely gentle toward all who roamed appreciatingly about his attributes.

"Why, in two years you can be the leader of the platform! I'm only sorry I

can't make you the prize drawing-card right now. I'd name the next battleship after you if I could. Numerically, the Joneses are more entitled to it than Rhode Island, but I've promised it to Rhode Island."

Mr. Jones replied with deep feeling: "I've always side-stepped Chautauquas and county fairs!

"There's something heartless in the way the pillars of our government have invaded the world of amusement and expelled the old settlers. Sword-swallowers have fled heart-broken to the islands of the sea; mermaids have been compelled to take in washing!"

The "Great Father" flung a final gesture toward a painting on his wall.

"What! You'd have me lecture—on 'Lincoln'?"

The "G. F." nodded decisively.

"Poor Lincoln! I fear he will never find rest!"

The "G. F." placed his hand on Caspar's shoulder and spoke as commander-in-chief of the army and navy.

"Every 'Lincoln' has been lectured about, except the plain, every-day one. Take him!"

Walking the brink of decision, the Hon. Caspar Jones made his way to the door.

Drifting down the avenue, he thought of the void in the lyceum. Phillips—Beecher—Ingersoll—gone!

And none to take their places. Why not he? Surely nothing was impossible for one

who had lifted the House to such enthusiasm with a defence of the tariff on burlap!

The morning became luminous in his eyes, though it was the fourth day of March.

People were swarming toward Capitol Hill to witness the adjournment of Congress; they went in street-cars, victorias, limousines, but the Hon. Caspar Jones was wafted airily up on the tide of his prospects.

The excitement of the last hour was upon the law-makers; galleries were packed and a fashionable overflow swayed back and forth through the marble lane between House and Senate. Both chambers had postponed their demise several times by turning back their clocks in order that business might be finished by "noon," a parliamentary body being the only creature of earth which can hold Father Time while his steed paws the pavement.

The members were singing patriotic songs; the defeated were going down to their doom, light of heart, as a romantic land expects of those who have distributed its garden seeds.

For the first time of the session, the Speaker handed the gavel to one of the minority, then a Southern Congressman offered a resolution, thanking the Speaker, and made an eloquent speech to the effect that the old North and South partition had been permanently removed and henceforth the Union was to be one large sitting-room.

During his term the Hon. Caspar Jones had grown weary of weeping-willow statesmen who went about endlessly shooing doves and their young out of obsolete cannon; but now he was transported!

The Southern member had shown him the way; he would lecture on "Lincoln"—in the South. Possibly he was the flute on which Fate was to render the belated rhapsody of the republic!

In high glee he slapped the delegate from the Sandwich Islands on the back.

The month of June found the Hon. Caspar bound for Texas.

Entering the smoking compartment, he saw an elderly gentleman behind a briar pipe, his sharp face turned to the flying landscape.

"Going far?" inquired the stranger.

"Texas."

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"Why, that's my destination!"

The Hon. Caspar Jones scanned the gentleman's countenance and discovered many lines drawn by frontier days. His manner bespoke an equanimity which fed on peril; his gray eyes looked like a gun-barrel. Certainly here was one who regarded sanguinary episodes as mere matters of routine.

"I should have known you were a Texan," observed Caspar.

"How in the world do you do it?"

Caspar smiled lightly.

"Just a little knowledge of human nature."

"It's certainly a gift—only I've never seen Texas. I'm a New Hampshire Yankee giving Shakespearian readings."

The Hon. Caspar Jones slowly emerged from his astonishment.

"Shake! I'm in the business myself!"

The tragedian withdrew his hand.

"You mean—you're also 'devastating' the South-west?"

"Yes—that is—I'm—lecturing."

"What particular message do you bear to our distant kinsmen?"

The Yankee smiled as the benevolent veteran beams upon a recruit.

"'Lincoln' is my subject."

The veteran leaned forward, his hand to his ear.

"'Lincoln!—Abraham Lincoln!'"

The gentleman refilled his pipe and returned to the scenery, and was silent till a herd of cattle, pinched in the shade of a tree, awoke a pastoral reverie.

"Beef's pretty high these days!"

Mile after mile they sat in a gazing duet till a brunette thrust his face through the curtains.

"Last call for breakfast!"

Shakespeare arose with an air of relief, then turned in the doorway.

"Did you say—'Texas'?"

It was a long, glaring, sandy day on the train and the Hon. Caspar Jones sat in the midst of his papers, while over the aisle the travelling representative of the Bard of Avon played so many kinds of solitaire it was hard to keep one's mind on a masterpiece. Caspar was conscious of that attention which is the lot of all who reveal intellectual qualities en route, and once while rehearsing the passage relied on to

make Texas strangle her last prejudice, a "drummer" paused by his seat.

"What's your line?"

"Suspenders!" exploded the wrathful Demosthenes.

At last they rolled into a region where the soil was red and cars were labelled for blacks and whites. It was near the Texas line, and glancing idly from the car window the Hon. Caspar Jones arose with a start, then called to a tall young man on horseback:

"Oh, Surface!"

The horseman galloped up to the window.

"Great Scott, Jonesey! Where you bound? What you doing?"

The train started off and Surface rode beside it, prolonging the hand shake.

"I'm lecturing."

"What on?"

"Lincoln!"

"What 'Lincoln'?"

"The only one worth lecturing about!"

The train gathered speed and Surface swung his horse aside and put both hands to his mouth.

"So long, Jonesey! Better get an asbestos shirt!"

The Hon. Caspar settled back in his seat and turned the warning over and over. Then he wrote a passage enlarging on Lincoln's tolerance toward all who differed from his views.

He reached his destination at evening, and by that clairvoyance peculiar to railroad stations was able to identify the manager of the Chautauqua, a gentleman who peered through large glasses with a peculiar sparrowlike wistfulness.

"You're the 'talent,' I believe?"

It was as if he had asked the Hon. Caspar Jones if he were the peck of potatoes expected on the evening train.

Mexican influence lingered in the little gray adobe town and fairly rioted in the hack which took them up the hill. It might have been the chaise of Cortez! The hotel had enjoyed great popularity among the mound builders, and behind the desk hung an ancient, cracked unlikeness of Samuel Houston by an artist who evidently had been inspired by the feud spirit of a wild period.

Caspar registered, and in an unguarded moment requested a room with bath,

whereupon the clerk jabbed the pen into the potato with undisguised impatience.

"This evening's bath's been 'spoke' for!"

The Chautauqua manager followed Caspar to his room, and inquired if there was any truth in the report that he was to discuss a theme which possibly might be "uncongenial."

"The report is absolutely correct, sir!"

The Hon. Caspar did not use "sir" lightly. He drew it from the scabbard only when emergencies demanded extreme measures.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, the chairman resolved that it might possibly save innocent lives to tell the worst.

"Ah—this meeting to-night—it's to be given by the Confederate veterans' camp, you know!"

The Adam's apple of the Hon. Caspar Jones registered an extreme disturbance within, but his voice was valiant.

"I could hardly have hoped for such a happy arrangement!"

The manager was appalled at such innocence.

"It seems the veterans didn't exactly understand your subject. An old sheep man, William Johnstone, has asked to preside to-night; he was badly wounded in the war. He's a very peaceable citizen; he's never shot anybody that let him alone!"

The Hon. Caspar did not dine with that relish usually ascribed to the condemned, but drank much black coffee. Now and then a villager would linger in the dining-room door, then join a whispering crowd in the lobby which Caspar watched for manifestations of hemp.

The meeting was held in the plaza, which was three times the size of a Northern public square, and the night was cloudless, a fortunate circumstance, for it was a sky-canopied function.

Jones never had seen such luminous stars, nor such a quiet audience. Over three thousand sat on hard benches.

"Where did they come from?"

The manager pointed to the buggies hitched round the plaza.

"From the country; most of them came a long way."

They pushed their way to the rough, pine platform, where a tall, spare, gray-

bearded man sat with excruciating starchiness behind a table decorated with pitcher and glass.

Caspar and his mate mounted the platform and sat whispering mysteriously for some seconds, as is prescribed in the oratorical by-laws.

The scene inspired this most silvery-tongued of the Joneses; his bosom heaved and heaved again, then fell very flat. The first two rows were filled with Confederate veterans, some in faded, gray coats, and in their midst was a war-torn flag.

He started at the thought that possibly some of these men had been at the massacre of Fort Pillow! Then he turned nervously to the chairman.

"There's positively nothing left to be desired! I can hardly wait!"

The tall, spare chairman poured a glass of water and arose, fumbling the top button of an old Prince Albert coat.

"I'm no talker, my friends. I'm just a sheep man. It may seem strange that I'm up here, an' I'll tell you why."

He turned and cast an ominous glance toward the Hon. Caspar Jones.

"Durin' the 'late unpleasantness' I was a 'Johnnie.'"

The two rows of veterans grinned, and a cheer starting in the outskirts swept the audience.

"I was at Gettysburg—with Pickett. A shell struck me—an' then I was no 'count. I couldn't hold a musket—so they made me a spy.

"Well, the 'Yanks' ketched me—an' one morning I was settin' in a tent with a soldier at either end. I had an engagement—to be hung. I'd just finished a letter to my mother an' was lookin' at the address when a staff officer rode up an' said, 'The General presented his compliments'—an' I knew that I was to hear my death-warrant."

The countenances of the old Confederates were like steel traps; the audience was an aggregate frown, and as for the Hon. Caspar Jones, he wished he were to discuss the tariff on burlap.

The chairman cleared his throat.

"They marched me to head-quarters, where there was a short, stocky man with a stubby beard. He wore a slouch hat and a plain soldier blouse—an' smoked a pow-

erful, black cigar. He was the only man in the place who didn't have on a badge. It was General Grant.

"Well, he handed me a paper an' I read it—an' then everything got white—so sizzlin' white I closed my eyes. It was a pardon from Mr. Lincoln."

The old man bit his lips for an instant.

"I never knew how it come about till long after. Near the end of the war Mr. Lincoln tied up all the death-warrants he could, an' one morning Secretary Stanton took a basketful of them to the White House and demanded immediate action.

"Mr. Lincoln was happy that morning.

"'Stanton,' said he, 'that was a glorious victory yesterday—an' the war's 'most over, thank God!' Then he saw Stanton's basket an' walked to the window.

"'Just look over there at Virginia. How green her hills are. Stanton, it's too fine a morning to sentence any poor devil to be hung!'"

"An' with that Mr. Lincoln dumped that basketful o' death-warrants into the grate—struck a match—an' pardoned the whole crowd!"

William Johnstone stood erect and his voice quivered.

"An' the chairman o' this meetin' happened to be one o' the wild cucumbers in that basket."

For an instant the audience sat as if stunned, then the old Confederates sprang to their feet, and the air was pierced with the blood-curdling yell never forgotten by those who heard it on the field of battle.

The chairman's face grew pale.

"After Appomattox I made up my mind to see Mr. Lincoln—to thank him—an' I started to Washington—afoot. I had gone a long way an' one day I was settin' by the road, restin', an' a stragglin' Yankee soldier come along an' he fetched terrible 'word.' I was a wounded soldier o' the 'Stars an' Bars,' but that 'word' was so terrible I even forgot that we had surrendered—an' that Yankee soldier said:

"'You a sheddin' tears! You, a 'Johnnie'!"

Johnstone proceeded very slowly.

"I picked up my things—they were tied in a bandanna handkerchief—an' I went on to Washington. I did see Mr. Lincoln—but I couldn't thank him!—the South had lost her best friend."

Turning to the speaker of the evening, Johnstone bowed him forth with a fine blending of stage-fright and courtliness, then put his hand on Jones's shoulder.

"When I heard that this 'Yank' was to talk about Mr. Lincoln, I said to Mrs. Johnstone, 'I'm goin' to preside at that meetin', an' I hitched up the old gray mare—an' we come.'"

It was a long time before the Hon. Caspar Jones could speak, for just as the applause would subside, the old soldiers would start it again. After the greatest meeting of his life, they escorted the speaker to his hotel and the fife and drum were in hands which held them in the days "which tried men's souls."

Then these old soldiers drew up resolutions which were very formal and put a great seal on them, then they sent a copy to every Confederate camp where Jones was to speak, and till the train came in they sought for other courtesies to bestow.

It was a remarkable series of meetings, in a sense the most unique in our history. There are those who like to think that the

thoroughbred spirit which they exemplified grows taller in the young republic than in the older kingdoms.

It was past midnight and the Hon. Caspar Jones, having finished his engagements, was waiting for the International Express to take him home. A group of old men with lanterns waited with him, and he hardly noticed that the International was two hours late, for these old men told tales which were the envy of romantic fiction. Some of them had served with Stonewall Jackson; some with Albert Sidney Johnston; some with Robert E. Lee.

At last the great headlight flashed upon the little band, and as he started away the Hon. Caspar Jones stood on the observation platform and a strange loneliness came over him. He watched the swinging lanterns till they seemed golden balls in a juggler's hands and then they disappeared.

He propped himself on his pillows and wondered how things would have been had he been born in Texas.

Then he came very near to the wish that the stork went South in winter, as some other birds are prone to do.

THE MASTER BEGGAR

By Edith Rickert

Love may come limping, halt, or blind,
Yea, he may wear the mask of sin;
Though he be brutal, rough, unkind—
Open the door and let him in.

He stands and laughs at the hands that deny,
He knows that for him there is no nay;
He knocks where he will, with low and high—
Enters and sets his staff away.

You may crowd your hall with many a guest,
To pipe and dance in his despite;
You may work and forget him, mock him with jest—
Patient he sits there, morn and night.

No alms may content him. Silent to wait
Till he hold the keys of life—his part;
The beggar is master and keeps his state
Alone by the fireside of the heart.