

BYGONE DAYS RECALLED

AN OLD TIMER'S REMINISCENCES OF PEOPLE AND EVENTS.

Assistant Alderman Gay and Some of His Exploits—His Interest in the Folks at Loch Lomond—How Some of His Jokes were Turned Upon Himself.

VII.

If Needham as Alderman was strong in character and left his impression upon the old Council Board, our other friend Assistant Alderman Gay (it is not required that I shall come any closer to his real name) was no less remarkable, for his many idiosyncrasies, not so much in the discharge of his public duties as in his character as a citizen, like Yorick, a man of infinite jest and thoroughly good humor, overlying a heart full of benevolence and kindness towards his fellow-man. To relate all his exploits, of which I am cognizant, would be to write a book, I shall therefore only recall a few incidents for the remembrance of your older readers.

Our friend took a great interest in the colored race, especially the descendants of Ham residing at Loch Lomond, with the names of every resident man, woman and child he was quite familiar. There was a colored caterer named Sorley, whose pastry shop was situated on Princess street, about where Brackett's dye works are now conducted. Sorley was the great gun among the gentry in attending to their dinner parties, arranging the table and providing the viands, and the liquors, and so forth. This shop was the rendezvous of the colored folks, when invited in squads of a dozen at a time by our friend Gay, when he desired to have a performance for his own and his friends' gratification, an account of one of which will serve as an illustration. He would have present half a dozen of the oldest women, and as many more of the oldest men, mixed up with the more juvenile portion of the population. He would then call upon Nancy Jones for a song. As not one of them, perhaps, ever sang a note, poor Nancy was no exception to the rule. But sing she must, whether she could or not—and the more she resisted, Gay would belabor her over the shins, with a stout cane, which he always used as his wand of authority. At length, Nancy, finding there was no getting clear, would set up a squeal, and kept on squealing louder and louder, with every stroke of the cane, which Gay applied with a view of keeping up the excitement. He would then make one of the old men go through the same performance, while the cane had a wonderful influence in accelerating the poet's motion. The next performance was to make them all dance, while he himself would furnish the music by whistling, of which he knew about as much in shaping a tune as the darkies did about dancing. He would have them all upon the floor at the same time, and cane any he found lagging, or not lively enough in their motions. The whistling and the stamping of feet, and the laughter and noise generally, rendered the whole scene so terribly ludicrous, that it generally took us the whole night to get over it. After indulging in these freaks for some time he would march all the performers, two and two, into a large back room, in the centre of which stood a table supplied with plain eatables, and mits and socks, and warm clothing for the winter, just coming on, suitable for male and female, children included. He would then mount the table and disburse its contents, calling upon each by name to come and take, as he handed the articles. This was certainly a strange combination of cruel fun and benevolence exhibited, the like of which it would be hard to find anywhere, and for the reason Gay was an exceptional character—a man with a big streak of humor running through every fibre of his nature, and a big heart to back it up, and nobody was displeased; even the darkies themselves always showed a willingness when wanted to come forward and be made a spectacle of, when they knew there were so many good things in store for them, provided by Massa Gay.

On one occasion he, with several friends, went for a day's outing into the country, some miles distant. There were no railroads then. The landlady of the inn was a tall, stout body, with a mouth capable of enunciating vociferously, and the thought struck Gay that he might have a little fun at her expense. On approaching her to order dinner for six, he placed his open hand behind his ear, as if deaf, and the lady of course had to raise her voice to meet his case, he pretending not to hear even then, she shouted as loud as she could, when Gay for the first time pretended to understand her. When the party were all seated at dinner, our hero occupying the head of the table, the lady entered with a large tureen, and shouted as loud as she knew how—"Mr. Gay, will you take pea soup first?" This shout was the climax to the joke. Every one roared, while the lady dashed down the tureen and swartwouted as fast as she could from the room. She, however, got square with her tormentor—for in presenting her bill there was an item charged, "\$2 for carry on," which the jolly company thought it best to pay, although they did not hesitate to say it was a pretty expensive joke. They took no more pea soup at that house.

One evening I was present in the corner room of the old St. John Hotel (kept by the Messrs. Scammell) directly over the

shop now occupied by D. O. L. Warlock, head of King street, South corner. This room served as an office and place of meeting every night for certain outside gentlemen, fond of conversation and something else. Our friend Gay was present, indeed he was one of the habitués of these *bon-homme* quarters. We all used to smoke—in fact we didn't know much unless we knew the difference between a Richmond and Havana cigar—cigarettes and pipes were not recognizable at all among us. In the course of one evening a stranger made his appearance, an American gentleman, who seemed to be acquainted with one of our company, who introduced him all round, and when he came to our friend Gay, the latter asked the stranger very politely if he would allow him to light his cigar by his—of course the stranger with equal politeness handed Gay his cigar, and on returning it to the gentleman he managed to do it in such way that it came in contact with one of the gentleman's fingers and burned him, when our friend very politely begged his pardon—was very sorry—hoped he would excuse him, etc. etc. It was one of Gay's practical jokes, and although we all alike sympathized with the stranger, who thought it best to put on the best face possible and not get cross. Conversation went on. Glass after glass of the real Monongohala boiling hot, disappeared, while wreaths of smoke curled up and pervaded the close atmosphere and jollity reigned supreme. But as the best of friends must part, so was it with the company, for we had got into the "wee sma' hour ayont

same. The whole town seemed to be filled with red stockings, and looked for the time like a Cardinal City. Our friend Gay thought he would come to the rescue and free the town of this red stocking incubus. He accordingly bought up all the red stockings he could procure—called a meeting of his colored friends—they were more numerous than than now, they were the hand cartmen, a good stout, able bodied set. Who of our old folks does not remember Moody, a six footer and fine specimen of a man! Gay arranged about 20 of these citizens in red stockings and sent them through the streets, and in order to emphasize the ruse, he had some of them put in an appearance in the vicinity of the officers' quarters, Lower Cove. It was all fun for the darkies, for they were not only paid for turning out, but each got a good, comfortable, warm pair of overalls. The result was, Her Majesty's officers were placed *hors-de-combat*, and appeared no more upon the public streets in red stockings. Their adversaries, on the contrary, stuck to theirs until they were worn out, fashion or no fashion, regimental or otherwise.

AN OLD TIMER.

DISCOURAGED IN HIS REFORM.

The Story of a Certain Attendant at One of the Moncton Churches.

Who shall dare to say that Moncton is not a religious town, in spite of the profanity of its small street boys? Why even the very dogs attend church with as much regularity as circumstances over which they have no control will permit, and it must be a cold day when no canine worshiper makes

speaking, lying, etc., he can at least raise the moral tone of his character by keeping his little busy paws from picking and stealing. So he goes to church regularly, meditates over his past sins, and forms good resolutions for the future. Last Sunday was a field day for Jeremiah. He arrived in good time. Some five minutes before service began, and after an exhaustive search of the chancel and vestry for possible rats, he devoted his spare time to clearing off the arrears of his visiting list, and paid visits of congratulation and condolence to his many friends amongst the congregatoa, shook hands gravely with a few particular friends of the family, who manifested a desire to clasp one honest paw during the day, and finally settled down for a peaceful snooze.

But, alas, for brown-eyed Jerry! Not all his gravity of demeanor and reverence of attitude could save him from the hand of the spoiler. He was sitting far more quietly than most children sit in church, soaking in sound doctrine and good theology through every pore of little white and tan skin, when one of the averse circumstances referred to above overtook him. It assumed the form of a leading church member, who arose in all the majesty of his office as vestryman, and grasping the unsuspecting Jerry by what is vulgarly called "the scruff of his neck," he bore that unoffending pup down the centre aisle, in full view of the assembled congregation, with his trim little legs dangling just off the ground, and every nerve quivering with indignation.

Not a sound escaped the victim. He bore his wrongs in silence, only a faint and far titter like "the sigh of summer lightning" broke the silence. But there was a look of grim determination about the clear cut lips of Jeremiah as he passed my seat that told me the work of months had been undone. His reformation had been arrested in mid career, and if that vestryman possessed any creature that wore fur or feathers they were marked out for slaughter as surely as if Jeremiah had been a leading member of the Clan-na-Gael.

Probably, ere this his revenge has been accomplished. Thus is many a noble nature thrown back upon itself and warped for life by one act of cold, cruel tyranny, which crushes every generous impulse and withers every flower of poetry in our hearts.

GEOFFERY CUTHBERT STRANGE.



the twal." Then came the hand shaking all round. But when the stranger came to the parting with our friend Gay, he held his hand as if in a vice, and the way he squeezed that hand for a moment or two, was quite palpable to us all—for he brought Gay down upon his knees, groaning in agony. There was more pain in this grip than the stranger had experienced in his burnt finger—and it was all done so politely too. The stranger departed in good humor, grim satisfaction betokened upon his countenance. But Gay did not recover the use of his hand for some days, for his fingers were so red and jumbled together that he found it hard work to unravel them. This was a *quid pro quo* which our friend did not calculate upon; it was a second edition of the pea soup revenge, only a little more pungent.

The Regimental Officers fifty years ago, when stationed in St. John, had a penchant for sporting themselves in odd ways. During sleighing times their turnouts were got up in the most grotesque styles—such as robes representing the living animals—a bear, a fox, a buffalo, or what not. In their attire in going through the streets they would appear like Indians, or bandits, or Russians. And then the young men of the town would attempt imitations, as far as they dare do it—for "the boys" would be down upon them and hoot them as they passed along. On one occasion these gallant sons of Mars took it into their heads to appear upon the streets, the snow being pretty deep, in long red stockings, or overalls, coming up to the hips. Some of the young fellows thought they should do the

his appearance in any of the Moncton churches. I must say that nearly all of them manifest a leaning towards the good old Church of England, for St. Georges is a very favorite resort with the more serious minded of Moncton's four-footed tax payers.

Not very long ago a gigantic Newfoundland arrived on the scene just before service and showed great fastidiousness in his choice of a seat. The pews were narrow and he was broad, and after selecting one that looked eligible, he rashly attempted to turn round and got stuck hard and fast, his squeals of embarrassment and apprehension tending to greatly enliven the service, till he wrenched himself loose and "flopped," like Mrs. Jerry Crucher, on the floor in a state of panting exhaustion.

Another shining example of the church going dog is a handsome brown spaniel, with the lustrous speaking eyes and beautiful smile, of which none but a dog's face is capable. He is one of the most perfectly polished gentlemen I have ever had the pleasure of meeting, with manners that would do credit to a Chesterfield, and a deep sense of the responsibility of his position as a sort of canine class leader.

But the champion church attendant among the higher circles of dog aristocracy in our town is Jeremiah, esthwhile chicken thief and general pirate, who has already scraped acquaintance with the readers of PROGRESS. But Jeremiah has too evidently seen the error of his ways and turned from them. He has sown his wild oats and reformed, like the Jackdaw of Rheims. If he can't keep his tongue from evil

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