

RUTH'S BOOMERANG

By Claire Seston.

"There," said Ruth, tying the bow. "It's a mean trick, but I suppose that some one will do it to me when I get married and then I shall at least have the satisfaction of feeling that I did it to Gertrude first."

"We certainly are doing it," laughed Harding, as he tacked a "Just Married" sign to the back of the coach. "This will be the best advertised wedding of the season."

"Hand me those old shoes and we are done," ordered Ruth. The shoes were handed over and while Ruth was attaching them to the rear of the carriage with long white streamers, Harding went to the box to warn the driver not to drive up far enough to let the new Mrs. Morse see the decorations, and then he and Ruth ran into the house.

As best man and bridesmaid they were busy throughout the reception, and it was not until the bride was about to descend the stairway that the idea came to Harding.

"Let's take another of the carriages and get to the station first," he suggested. "We can have the laugh on them when they pull up."

"Wait a moment," she laughed. "I want to see if I can catch the bouquet."

Gertrude appeared at the head of the stairs and tossed her flowers into the expectant crowd below. There was more design than accident in her aim, for they almost fell into Ruth's outstretched hands. With a cry of triumph she ran down the steps, followed by Harding.

Headlessly she turned to enter the first carriage, but Harding held her back. "Take the next," he reminded her. "don't you recognize the driver?"

He helped her into the second vehicle and with an order to the coachman to drive to the station followed her in.

The driver whipped up his horses and they started off at a trot. "We will be on the platform when they drive up," she exclaimed. "I wonder if we can get the ribbons and the them on the trunks."

Billy Seston did that," he explained. "He left early and is down there now."

"What a funny bumping noise!" she asked, suddenly.

Harding listened for a moment. "I guess it's a small boy on behind," he said, comfortingly. "It sounds like his feet hitting against the body of the carriage."

"That's all right," she smiled back. "I was afraid that there might not be any one in the boots."

"Fred and Gert are in the first carriage," he explained. "I saw the driver."

"Then it's all right," she said. "Look at the crowd waiting for them!" he chuckled, as they drew up to the station platform lined with stiers. Billy must have given them the tip.

A cheer went up when they drew up alongside of the station, and as they stepped out of the vehicle they were showered with rice from the windows of the upper story. Then Seston hurried forward and caught Harding by the arm.

"What's the matter?" he asked anxiously. "Aren't they coming?"

"Certainly," answered Harding. "but I guess you've wasted all that rice on us."

"Serves you right for riding in their carriage!" he growled. "You've gone and spoiled it all."

"Their," gasped Ruth. "On Billy?"

"Was this?" she ran to the rear of the coach while the crowd roared its enjoyment. There was the sign and the long white streamers that they had so carefully prepared for the others. "Clearly the crowd thought that they were the bride and groom," Harding stammered his objections to the coachman.

The explanation was simple enough. The driver of the bridal coach had gone to get a drink and the other man was on the box watching the restive horses. When he returned he was told to keep back and had taken second place in line that the decorations would not show. It was all very simple but decidedly embarrassing.

"You can't convince the crowd that we are not the bride and groom," he complained as he led the way to the waiting room. "Until train time the evidence is all against us. Even the bouquet looks like a giveaway."

"There's Gert," gasped Ruth. "She must have come up while the crowd was occupied with us."

The crowds in the station gathered about them and listened to the joking, but it was not until the Morses left on the train that they realized that the whole thing was a joke to throw off suspicion.

Harding and Ruth stood on the platform as the train rolled off.

"Well," sighed the girl as she turned away. "I am through being a bride. It was sort of nice while it lasted even though it was rather embarrassing."

"I'm glad," he said simply. "That I was embarrassed?"

"No, that you like it," he explained, "because I'm going to ask you to do it all over again just as soon as you can get ready."

"I caught the bouquet," she smiled softly, burying her face in the flowers. "I suppose I must bow to the superstition and make it come true."

"Only to the superstition!" he demanded.

"To the superstition—and love," she amended, from among the roses.

MEXICAN STAFF OF LIFE

The Tortilla is Their Bread—Frijoles Are Baked Beans.

The tortilla is the ancient Indian bread of Mexico. Its only constituent is Indian corn (maize), which the women soak in lime water until the corns are at the point of bursting. Then wash thoroughly until it is free from lime, when they grind it by rubbing it on a large block of stone, specially cut for the purpose, with a smaller stone which they hold in their hands.

The operation looks very much like rubbing clothes on a washboard and is a laborious and tedious one. The lime renders the corn dough adhesive, the wheat flour dough, and it is easily patted between the hands into cakes of the size and shape of an ordinary griddle cake and is baked upon a thin stone griddle. Though no salt or even is added fresh tortillas are exceedingly palatable.

The one other food mainstay is frijoles—ordinary beans. They are boiled to a mush and with a liberal quantity of lard are warmed as required in a fat earthen dish that answers for a frying pan. The very poor people do not always have the luxury of frijoles and when they do have them cannot always afford the lard.

And it's Such a Little Thing, Too.

Mr. Luggins of New York, made a wild dash for an uptown subway express and missed it by the tenth of an inch. Then he walked back to the center of the platform and stopped. "I've forgotten something," he muttered. "I know I've forgotten something."

Now, Mr. Luggins's arms and pockets were so filled with bundles that he seemed utterly ridiculous for him to be had forgotten anything.

"Yes," he continued. "I have forgotten something. But what is it? I can't make out. It's no Susan's hair ribbon, for that's in my upper vest pocket. It's not Ann's tooth paste, for that's in my lower vest pocket, and it's not Bobbie's collar for I'm sure I stuffed them in my hat. Now, what in the dickens can it be? It can't be the stove polish or the picture wire or the bird seed or the sample package of Peled Wheat or the toothpicks, for they're in this bundle, and it can't be the carter's tacks or the spool of number forty cotton, or the bottle of marking ink or the colored post cards, for they're all in that bundle. Maybe it's—yes, by heaven, that's it! I've forgotten to buy the piano!"

Nothing Doing.

The tightening-rod agent stopped before the farmhouse and addressed the old man, who was sitting in the doorway sharpening his jack-knife.

"Anything doing in my line to-day, dr?" he asked.

"I dunno. What's yer line?" asked the farmer.

"Lightning rods," said the agent.

"What good be they?" demanded the farmer.

"They'll save your house from lightning," explained the agent hopefully.

"Gill out o' here, goll dern ye!" cried the farmer wrathfully. "I bin payin' ten dollars a year insurance on this shack o' mine for the last ten years and nuthin's happened yet. My 's bad enough as it is without addin' to it with your pesky old dangones. How in Heck d'ye think I ever get my money back with one 'f these things around?"

Not a Petrified Leg.

In one of the leading cities of the Middle West a high church dignitary, obsessed with the monomania that one of his legs is gradually becoming petrified. To test its condition he inches it at frequent intervals. At a dinner party of men and women he made the usual test after the soup and became greatly excited to find that he felt no sensation from a most vigorous pinch. "It has come, it has come!" he cried in alarm. "at last my leg is completely petrified!" The maron sitting next to him whispered harshly. "Excuse me, it is not petrified and it is not yours!"

Not Infectious.

I used to be very much afraid that my children while playing with others would be exposed to some contagious disease, and they were constantly on the lookout for trouble of this kind.

One day little Louise (aged four) came rushing in from the street where she had been playing with a crowd of children. In a very excited manner she burst out. "Well, mother, two of the Meyers children have something, but sister says she don't think we'll catch it, though."

"Well, what is it, darling?" I asked.

"It's the pigeon toes," she replied.

An Error.

His father had found it necessary to rather severely punish Robert, aged five. The little chap came running to me with resentment in his heart.

"Auntie," he sobbed. "did God make you?"

"Yes, Robert," I answered.

"And did He make me?"

"Yes."

"And did He make me?"

"Certainly, my boy."

"And did He make pa, too?"

"Of course he did."

"Well, sobbed Robert sadly, "that's when He made a mistake!"

Her Opportunity.

Jose, a bright six-year-old boy, listened very intently while his mama, on showing his new Norfolk suit which she had just finished, explained that she had never bought him a suit; she had made them. Jose was very quiet for a few moments, then said: "It's a great thing for a woman to have children, so she can sew."

THE SHERIFF'S STORY

By Agnes Kilgry.

When I saw the sheriff tilt back his chair, I knew there was a story coming. He threw three long whiffs of his pipe and all the smoke curled slowly upward he began:

"After I had been sheriff only five months I had personally captured one of the most daring desperadoes in the whole mountain region, one Dick Roberts, otherwise known as the gentleman bandit. He was a handsome fellow, tall and slight, with a pale, oval face and a certain willowy grace that reminded one of a young panther.

In the month preceding his capture he had held up the paymaster of Camp Ellis three times, robbed the mail twice and stole Miss Ferkin's saddle horse, and later returned it with a note attached saying that he didn't care to enter into a deal with a woman. When the whole country round was up in arms I came across him quite accidentally. He surrendered without a word, saying with a laugh that he was surprised except for a pair of curling tongs with which he had held up the mail—and upon investigation this was found to be the case.

"One morning, after he had served six months of his fourteen year sentence, I was summoned hastily to the jail. When I arrived they told me that Roberts had chloroformed the guard, bound his hands and feet with the bed-clothing, took his keys and revolver, and walked out of prison. Where he had procured the chloroform was a mystery.

"There was snow on the ground at the time and the armed posse traced the fugitive to the mountains. Here they surrounded him—a circle of a hundred men with another hundred as relief. For two nights and a day they watched, gradually closing in, when word was received that the guard's uniforms had been found in the kitchen of a lone cabin distance north.

"The night was rather dark—ones of those cold, clear January nights with plenty of stars, but no moon. I took the narrow buggy, and I needed the protection of the posse, and started up the carriage road.

"I was going at a pretty good gait and was well into the woods when my horse suddenly shied, and a tall figure clad entirely in white stood at his head. The figure crouched back and a nervous, high-pitched voice cried:

"For God's sake, don't shoot! I am a woman!"

"Before I could reach her who had fallen in a dead flat across the path.

"She wore a light raincoat, a hat of some light fur, and a huge muff of a like material. I put the muff under her head, secured her teeth apart with a small stick, and peered some brassy down her throat. She gulped a little, and an unconscious returned, she yet her hand veerily to her head, and I saw a black ugly bruise on the smooth flesh.

"When she came to she told me her story, a common enough one among the mountaineers. She was Mrs. Hartset, the wife of a miner. Though a college graduate, she had become brutal in his discouragement—then drink—cross words—finally blows. She had left him and attempted to cross the mountains to her brother's in Canada country. She had become terrified at the footsteps of a man behind her, had stepped into the brush to let him pass, and on renewing the path, had suddenly confronted me.

"My courage returned at this information, for I knew there was but one man afoot in the mountains that night, and that was my 'gentleman bandit'."

"I hastily assisted her into my buggy and drove her across to the end of my route. Here I made her accept the flask with what little brandy remained, and she started once more toward her brother's."

"And in your endeavors to play the gallant to a fair damsel in distress you forgot all about the fugitive," said I.

"On the contrary, I doubted the reward, with instructions to capture dead or alive. For a month we searched every inch of the vicinity, but gradually the excitement died out.

"Five years later I had a message from Hadlock. A prisoner was dying of a bullet wound and wished to see me. It was quite a journey, but I went. Imagine my surprise when I was ushered into the presence of 'gentleman Dick'."

"He held out his hand graciously.

"Any of that brassy left, old man?"

"For a minute I was staggered, and then a light dawned.

"You are Mrs. Hartset's brother?"

"He eyed me quizzically. "It has always been a puzzle to me," he said, sweetly, "why they make sheriffs out of such sentimental ass. My innocent goose, I am Mrs. Hartset's self. And you are the kid hearted sheriff who fed brandy to a fugitive and then gave him a comfortable escort out of the country."

"Where did you get the chloroform?"

"The jig is up, so I may as well show you." He touched a spring in a large ring that he wore and the stone flew back revealing a cavity.

"It held enough to knock a man out, but not entirely, or I'd never die in prison."

"And the female disguise?" I asked.

"Pardon me, that's my secret."

"He did the next day and I heaved a sigh of relief that the story did with him."

FACE-WASHERS

Native Method of Chasing a Winner and Making Bets.

The native of India wagers his money according to the colors worn by the jockeys and takes up head-to-head a horse ridden by his favorite jockey, no matter whether the animal is a crack outsider or not.

His ideas of gambling, in fact, are distinctly novel. Some of the more wealthy Indians form rings and back every horse in the race, thus gaining the satisfaction of getting a winner every time. It is really only of late years that the native of India has become a habitual gambler on the turf, and nowadays the bulk of the betting of the various racing conventions in India is done by natives. Indeed the authorities are becoming somewhat concerned about the growth of the betting which takes place among Indian natives, it being asserted that as many as thirty lacs of rupees (about \$300,000) is lost and won in the course of a season.

The ignorant masses have not a great deal of actual money to wager but so badly bitten are many of them with the craze for betting at race meetings that they frequently wager what little property they possess of a horse, and if they lose they simply replace their loss by stealing a neighbor's goods. The consequence is that when the racing season comes around the police are kept very busy dealing with cases of petty larceny and other crimes involving loss of property.

A Mere Hint.

The young man had married the rich man's daughter, and wasn't killing himself with work to support her. One day the old man took him to ask.

"Look here," he said, emphatically. "why don't you go to work?"

"I don't have to," the son-in-law replied, with brazen effrontery.

"Well, you will have to."

"Why will I?"

"Because, sir, I cannot live always to support you."

"But you will leave me something?"

"Not much, I won't. There won't be anything to leave."

The son-in-law was alarmed.

"Great father!" he exclaimed, "you don't mean to tell me you have nothing?"

"That's about the size of it."

The son-in-law devoted himself to profound thought for several seconds.

"I have a suggestion to offer," he said, in a businesslike manner.

"What is it?" asked the old gent.

"Well, I suggest that you take out say, \$25,000 life insurance on yourself to save wear and tear on my mind."

Not Without Fieps.

A Richmond man, whose business frequently takes him to the wilds of West Virginia, tells an incident illustrating an interesting phase of the mountaineer's character. In that section it seems that the Richmond man was desirous of employing for work in the region referred to, a certain Hank Waters, and so had asked a number of mountaineers questions as to his character, fitness for the work, etc.

"He's pretty well and favorably known in this locality, isn't he?" asked the Richmond man of one old fellow never out of the mountains in all his life.

"Well, maybe he ain't so well known as lots o' others," replied the old chap in an apologetic tone. "He ain't killed nobody yet that I knows of; but," he added, gravely, "Hank Waters is mighty promisin'."

Chinese in United States.

There appears to be no authentic record of the first arrival of Chinese in the United States, although there is reason to suppose that the earliest men landed on the Pacific coast some time in the forties. The discovery of gold in California was the pioneer incentive for the coming of Chinese. It is estimated that no less than 10,000 of them landed in California between 1849 and 1852.

One authority estimates that prior to 1851 there were not more than 77 Chinese in the United States. The same writer thinks they first began coming to this country in about 1844 all landing on the Pacific coast. It is estimated that there are now 100,000 of them in this country.

Too Tough.

A traveler in the dining car of a railroad had ordered fried eggs for breakfast.

"Can't give yo' fried eggs, boss," the negro waiter informed him, "lessen yo want to wait till we stop."

"Why, how is that?"

"Well, de cook he says de road's so rough dat every time he tries it (ry eggs dey scramble."

A Revised Version.

Teddy was saying his prayers at bedtime one night not long ago. Kneeling down at his mother's knee, the sleepy little fellow began. "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep," he paused. "If—his mother prompted. "If he hollers, let him go; enis, menis, minie, mo."

Willing to Oblige.

The mother of Anna, aged three hearing but not seeing her, called "Anna, what are you doing?"

Anna came running into view and responded sweetly. "Not any silt (thing); do you want me to knit (it?"

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