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ISAACS' TESTIMONIAL

By OWEN OLIVER

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The road was very hot, and I was very dry. I stood my dusty bicycle against the palings of the "Adam and Eve," and invited the landlord to join me in a tankard under the alder tree. While we were sitting there, an old man, bent into an acute rheumatic angle, shambled by, carrying his coat over his arm.

"Good afternoon, Testimonial," said the landlord.

"Afternoon," grumbled the old man.

"It's a queer name," I remarked.

The landlord finished the tankard, wiped his mouth with his sleeve, and told me this story:

There was four of them in it. Testimonial Williams, as he's been called ever since; and Phillips, the sexton as was; and Brown, the barber; and Abraham Isaacs, what was a Jew, as you might always suspect from his name, and kept the old clothes shop. The way it came about was this:

There was a young doctor at Fieldham, five miles from here, what got married and left the place. And having been popular, and people feeling for him, they made up their minds to give him somethink, what was a gold watch, really, but they put up little bills all over the place calling it a testimonial. That was how we came by the word, which is French for a present, I have heard say. Anyhow, when Williams heard of it he got excited in his mind, being an old soldier, and always wanting to get his rights.

"What's he done more'n us?" he said, "that people should go wasting their substance on him?" Them was his words in my bar parlor, where him and the others met regular every night; and he stuck to it, through thick and thin, as we hadn't got our rights.

So they all got it into their heads as testimonials was due to them, and folks ought to be made to give them.

The missus called me out to a tinker chap what had ordered a pint, and hadn't got no money to pay. When I came back I found as they'd made up their minds to get up testimonials to one another, and was just drawing lots who was to have the first, seeing as they couldn't do it all at once. Isaacs made out the papers, the rest not writing well, and shared them round, and naturally he got the first choice! He turns to me, very prompt, and says: "Now, landlord, what are you putting down for a start on the subscription list for my testimonial?"

"Ah!" I says. "Might you be going to hold your meetings here?"

"Yes," they all says. I figured out in my mind as they'd get thirsty talking so much. "You can put me down for half a sovereign," I told them, "to be set off against anythink you might order at the meetings."

They said it was handsome of me; and the meetings would begin the next night.

They drunk my half sovereign up in two nights, and the missus asked me very scornful where the testimonial would be when the expenses of collecting was deducted, as they all agreed they should be.

Well, first they went to the squire and told him as they were getting up a testimonial to their esteemed fellow townsman, Mr. Abraham Isaacs, and he hoped he'd lend his countenance to it. And the squire says as his countenance wasn't to lend! That would have settled most people; but Williams had sense. So he just laughs as if there was a joke. Then the squire says: "What's he done? I never heard of him." And Williams says very prompt: "Shows he can't have done no harm, squire." Squire says that's more'n you can say of most people that gets testimonials, and he'll give a pound.

Similarly they coaxed little sums out of other people, til they got quite a nice amount together. There wasn't no doubt but they had a gift in the collecting line.

They tackled Springs, the clockmaker. He says: "Testimonial, eh? Then you'll be wanting a clock or a watch, maybe." They says as how they didn't know but they wouldn't. "Then," he promises, "I'll give ten per cent. discount for cash down, what will go towards the fund." They told him they'd think it over.

"Might as well be a watch as anything else," Phillips remarked. "It's more'n he deserves, anyhow, for he must have cheated us when we drawed lots."

They went on to Mrs. Pinch, at the fancy shop. "Testimonial?" she says. "Oh, certainly. A nice dressing-case would be the thing. I've got one wrapped up in silver paper, five pounds, and dirt cheap; and I'll allow five shillings off for the testimonial."

They looks at one another doubtful like, and says they'll think of that, too. You see, Isaacs never dressed, so to speak.

Finally they decided to put it to Isaacs which he would have. He says he didn't want nothing of the kind, only a purse.

"That," said Phillips, "we'll do easy; and the best morocco." But Isaacs explained as he meant what wasn't spent on the purse to go inside it. There wasn't no need, he said, in these days of cheap foreign articles, to give more'n sixpence for the purse.

They had another meeting to reckon up what would be left for the inside of the purse. It worked out at one and fourpence, after paying for the expenses and the use of the cooperative hall to make the presentation.

"That," says Isaacs, sarcastic like, "is more'n I care to stand up in front of the village and take." In course they say as what he said was right, and they'd be bringing ridicule on the whole affair. They got so puzzled they called me in, and asked what was to be done.

"The first thing," I says, very firm, "is to pay for the drinks of these last two meetings."

They didn't like this at all; but they was in such a fix that they paid me, very grudging.

Then Isaacs got up and spoke very feeling.

"Fellow members," he says, "you meant well by me, and I'll take the will for the deed. Supposing you save the cost of the purse, and the hall, and hand over the balance now?"

But they wouldn't listen to this. Everybody had been told there would be a public meeting, and they'd gone as far as to bespeak the hall.

Then Isaacs stood up and tapped on the table.

"Gentlemen," he said, "just listen to me. You can't give no testimonial when you ain't got nobody to give it to; and you can't give none when you haven't none to give, unless you pretend you have. Pretend, do you see?" He winked at them terribly artful.

"Supose the squire or some one looks into it?" suggested Brown.

"As is like enough," says Phillips.

Isaacs spreads out his hands and laughs. A sort of fat Jewish laugh he had, if you know what I mean.

"If money was put in the purse," he says, "it doesn't follow as it would stop there. It might be handed back after the meeting for example." He winked again. And they looked at one another and winked, too. Never saw winking like it in my parlor since we lost Lizzie Harmer, the barmaid what my wife sent off sudden. A good-looking gal she was, and no fault to find with her, that I could see; but women is queer in their ideas!

So they agreed to make up a sort of temporary purse for the looks of it, to be handed back after the meeting.

"The handsomer we make it," says Isaacs, "the more they'll feel bound to do when your turns come!" So they put five pounds each, including Isaacs himself, what made somewhere about £20, I reckon.

Saturday week they held the meeting very successful. The squire was in the chair, and the doctor close beside him. Isaacs had some new second-hand clothes on, and his hair cut, and a shave at Brown's, and a sort of wash. Never knew such a change in any man. He had a smart young fellow from London with him. Mr. Moses, he said his name was.

If we didn't hardly know Isaacs when we saw him, you might have thought we'd never knowed him at all, to hear the things the speaker said. He was a man, it seemed, what had every virtue that ever was invented! He was an ornament to the village—what I don't say he wasn't, in his new second-hand suit. Isaacs spoke very feeling, as you wouldn't haxe thought.

"The contents of this purse means different to me from what them as subscribed knows," he said, with tears in his eyes. Williams and Brown and Phillips grinned at one another. "It is, in fact, less a gift, to my mind, than a loan, which I shall always owe to my kind friends to repay. Mr. Chairman, and ladies and gents, I thank you."

When he had finished they cheered till the cobwebs shook down off the ceiling. Williams moved a vote of thanks to the squire for presiding, and the squire moved a vote to Williams for asking him to preside; and everybody moved votes of thanks to everybody else. Twenty minutes before closing time, I moved the adjournment of the meeting for refreshments, and they all moved themselves to my house. A rare busy time we had; and my missus said as, for once, I'd showed presence of mind.

Isaacs was so overcome that he went straight home, but Testimonial and the others was in the bar-parlor. "It'll nigh break his heart, paying it back to-morrow morning," he remarked, shaking his head, "but it serves him right."

I went with them next morning to see him. Leastways I went. I didn't see him then—or since! A man was painting a new name over the shop. It was opening under new and improved management, the young man named Moses said. Mr. Isaacs had sold it to him, and had left the neighborhood. He had bought the purse, except the contents, with the rest of the stock, he mentioned; and we could have it cheap, if we were getting up another testimonial!

An Eye for an Eye.

"Mr. Speaker," said the congressman, "I have tried vainly to catch your eye an—"

"Sit down!" thundered the speaker. "I have tried vainly to catch your 'aye' several times when it was needed."—Philadelphia Ledger.

All Settled.

Humorist—I didn't receive payment for that last batch of jokes.

Editor—They were paid for long ago.

"How long ago?"

"Two or three hundred years, I think."—Cleveland Leader.

AUTOS IN GERMAN ARMY.

Corps to Be Recruited from Members of German Automobile Club.

The German army, which already has three battalions of telegraph operators and one of aeronauts, is to be provided in the near future with a volunteer corps of chauffeurs. At first, says the Scientific American, it was proposed to establish an automobile post or station, but the project was abandoned on account of the great cost it would involve. The volunteer automobile corps is to be recruited from among the members of the German Automobile club, and it is limited to the Prussian provinces and the states whose military contingent is under the direction of the Berlin authorities. The persons who wish to enter as volunteers are asked to apply to the Automobile club, with a declaration in which they engage first to serve an unlimited time in case of war; second, to undertake three periods of maneuvers of ten days each, in the space of four years, and, third, to carry out all the orders which are given them by the officer in command. On November 1 of each year the club communicates to the minister of war the list of volunteers available during the following years, with their addresses and the necessary data as to machines, etc. The volunteers are required to wear a gray uniform while in service. Prince Henry of Prussia has been placed at the head of the corps.

WONDERFUL CANARY BIRD.

Singular Performances of Tiny Songster in Massachusetts Town.

A wonderful canary bird belongs to a family in Everett. The little fellow has the freedom of the house, flying whithersoever he listeth at all times, says the Boston Herald. While good friends with every member of the family, he is particularly attached to the child of the house, a little girl four or five years old. When the child comes where the canary is he rushes excitedly to meet her and begins the most frantic caresses, perching on her head and shoulders and finally nestling under her ear, where he reaches round to the rosy chin and lips and kisses them in true bird fashion. But, not content with this ardent demonstration, he insists on making the little girl open her mouth, and then he daintily taps each tooth with his tiny beak. If she refuses to part her lips "to see what the bird will do," as she says, he scolds and flutters and even pecks at her cheek until he finally obtains his own way again. What the idea can be, unless Mr. Canary thinks the white teeth are bits of sugar or cuttlefish, it is difficult to conjecture. That he has some method in his caprice is quite evident. To no one else does he show any such marked attention.

EXPERT EASILY SWINDLED.

French Scientist Was Taken In by a Spurious Letter to Caesar.

M. Chasles, one of the most erudite scientists in France, spent in the course of a few years $28,000 upon the purchase of autographs from the notorious forger, Vrain-Lucas. Among the collection were the false signatures of Pascal, Newton, Galileo, Henry IV. and Francis I.

The acceptance of these emboldened the rogue, who next supplied autograph letters of Charlemagne, of Vercingetorix, of Pythagoras, of Archimedes, of Cleopatra.

At none of these did the savant boggle, and the next batch contained, in all reverence be it repeated, letters purporting to have been written by Lazarus, by Mary Magdalene and by the Saviour.

Galileo was represented to have written a letter speaking of a planet which was not discovered until 141 years later; Vercingetorix wrote, in modern French, a pass for Emperor Julius Caesar! And the possessor of these precious relics died believing them authentic.

UMBRELLAS ARE DOOMED.

London Bankrupt Dealer Lays It to Derby Hats and Subways.

The umbrella has two deadly enemies, which between them will eventually exterminate it. They are, according to a dealer interviewed by the London Mirror, the bowler and the two-penny tube. Ten years ago a self-respecting business man would as soon have thought of starting for the city without his boots as without a silk hat, but all that is changed.

Now the bowler is the invariable wear of at least one cabinet minister, and the weather resisting qualities have endeared the somber dome of felt to the heads, hearts and pockets of the great and small, and with his adoption of the bowler hat the business man is more or less independent of the useful but troublesome umbrella.

As if that were not sufficient to dishearten the umbrella seller, the tube railway has struck another blow at the trade. An umbrella at Clerkenwell county court as a debtor the other day declared that the tubes had run away with his trade.

Bald Assumption.

Wilfred—Pa, are the hairs of our head numbered?

Gunbusta—Yes, my son.

"Your hairs are all back numbers, ain't they?"—N. Y. Times.

PRESIDENT ORDERED ON.

Ulysses Grant Bade His Coachman Obey Orders of Depot Policeman.

One of the older sergeants on the local police force was talking over odd experiences he had had while in the course of his duties. Among the stories which he told was one which illustrated the democratic ideas of President Grant.

The sergeant, then a private, was on duty at the Baltimore & Ohio station one evening. Among his other duties he had to keep carriages from standing at the curb directly in front of the station entrance, it being necessary to keep that place clear for carriages that were coming and going at that point.

President Grant drove to the station to meet one of the incoming trains. While the officer was in another place the carriage stopped in front of the station. When the officer returned he noticed the president's rig standing there, and waited for it to move along. When it did not move and no one alighted, the officer supposed that the president had gone into the station.

"You know as well as I do that you cannot stand there," said the officer to the president's coachman.

"Do you know whose carriage this is?" was the only answer of the man on the box.

"That makes no difference. You must move." But there was no move on the part of the coachman to stir from the place.

"Hawkins," came a voice from inside, "did you hear what that officer said?" And the head of the president of the United States was poked out of the carriage window. The carriage moved.

ALASKA TO CAPE HORN.

Line That Will Follow Route of the Gray Plover Most of the Way.

The gray plover nests in the sedges of Alaska; and when the short summer wanes, it leads its young in perilous flight southward across plains and mountain ranges, and then, guided by the coast-line, wings its way steadily onward until it reaches its winter home in Patagonia, says the Technical World.

For more than one-half of the immense distance of its migration, the flight course of the gray plover is almost coincident with the surveyed line for the projected Pan-American railway, a commercial connection between the northern and southern continents that a few years ago was regarded as the dream of enthusiasts, but which to-day has passed far beyond the realm of visions.

Men whose lives are well behind them will probably live to see the day when they can make an unbroken railway journey from the river Yukon in Alaska to the river Limay in Patagonia.

This journey from the north to the south means more than the traveling of an immense distance within a short space of time, though this thought alone is impressive. It means the passing through alternate cold and heat, moisture and dryness, bare fields and green fields, treeless plains and tropical forests, fertile valleys and sterile mountains; it means acquaintance with men of every hue of skin and of every habit of life.

A Chicago Alderman Owes His Election to Chamberlain's Cough Remedy.

'I can heartily and conscientiously recommend Chamberlain's Cough Remedy for affections of the throat and lungs,' says Hon. John Shenick, 220 So. Peoria St., Chicago. 'Two years ago during a political campaign, I caught cold after being overheated, which irritated my throat and I was finally compelled to stop, as I could not speak aloud. In my extremity a friend advised me to use Chamberlain's Cough Remedy. I took two doses that afternoon and could not believe my senses when I found the next morning the inflammation had largely subsided. I took several doses that day, kept right on talking through the campaign, and I thank this medicine that I won my seat in the Council.' This remedy is for sale at Harry Roberts' drug store.

Died Abroad.

Two Japanese prisoners of war who, owing to illness, could not return to their homes, have died in Germany, and their bodies are to be cremated and the ashes sent to their relatives.

Monkey Business.

For swinging a monkey round his head by its tail George Brown, a showman, was sentenced to 28 days' imprisonment in Liverpool.

A Lively Tussle

with that old enemy of the race, Constipation, often ends in Appendicitis. To avoid all serious trouble with Stomach, Liver and Bowels, take Dr King's New Life Pills. They perfectly regulate these organs, without pain or discomfort. 25c at Smithers' Moreland Pharmacy.

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