

# Anecdotes of Senator John C. Spooner

**J**OHAN C. SPOONER, recently given his third election to the United States senate by the republicans of Wisconsin, was, in the '60s, private secretary to the late Governor Lucius Fairchild.

The venerable Senator Starks of Sank county called upon the governor to discuss a bill which he had helped through the legislature. He was afraid that Governor Fairchild contemplated vetoing it, and was prepared to do some plain talking in its behalf.

The discussion had begun when the old senator caught sight of the private secretary. Colonel Spooner was a young man then, about 22, and had the appearance of one much younger.

"Governor," said Starks, "I wish you would send that boy out of the room."

Governor Fairchild glanced around.

"I see no boy, senator," he replied.

In a half-petulant manner the senator pointed to Spooner.

"What's that but a boy?" he demanded.

"Step this way, John," said the governor.

"Senator Starks, allow me to introduce my new private secretary, Colonel John C. Spooner."

Then, as the senator endeavored to recover from his embarrassment, the governor, who was much given to saying nice things to and about people, added:

"Take a good look at him, senator; Wisconsin is likely to send 'that boy' to the United States senate one of these times."

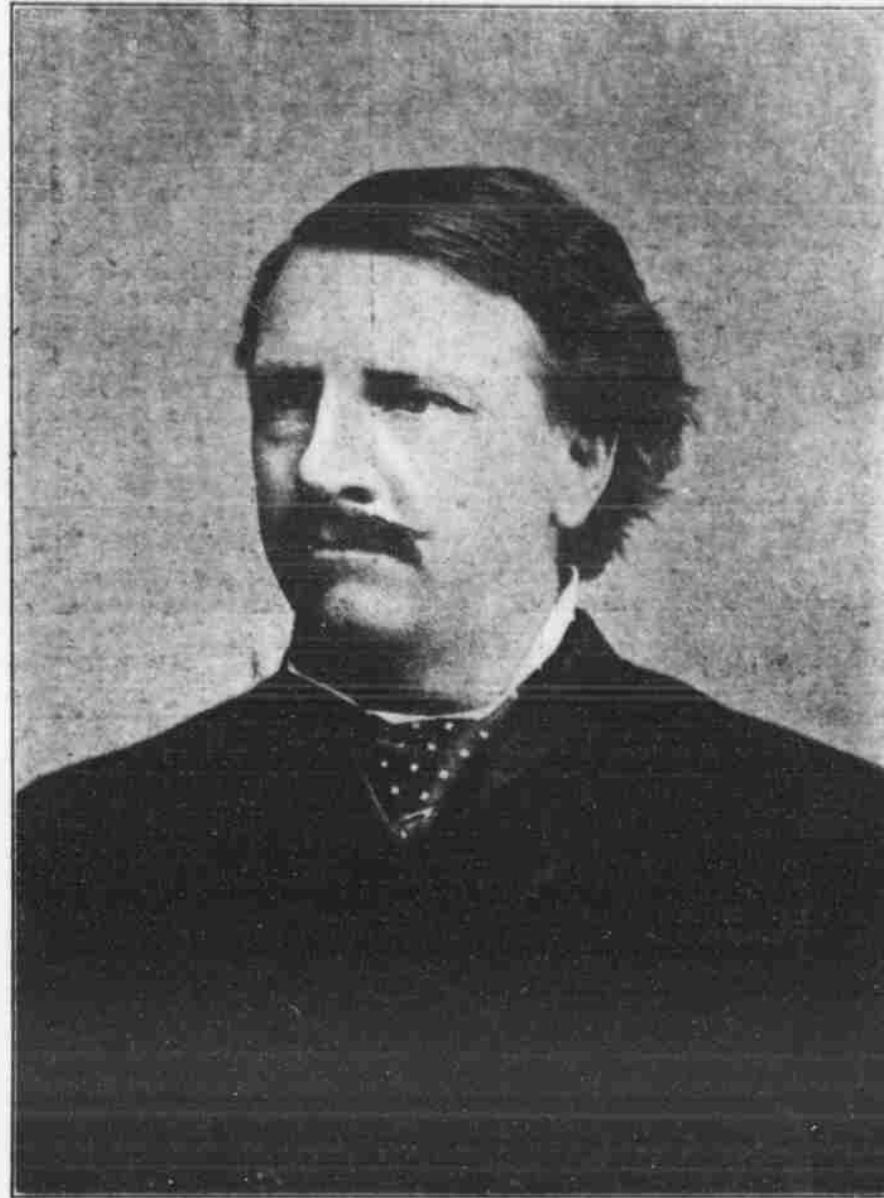
"That boy" at that time, was a graduate of the Wisconsin university, and had served as a soldier in the civil war, winning two commissions—one as captain and the other as major—and was even then a good lawyer, as he is today one of the first in the nation.

Seventeen years later there was a three-cornered contest for the United States senatorship in Wisconsin. General Fairchild, who had been secretary of state, governor for three terms, consul to Liverpool, consul-general to Paris and minister to Spain, desired to round up his career in the senate. Colonel Spooner had given three months of his time to canvassing for Blaine in 1884, and had done it so well that from all parts of the state came a demand for his election to the senate. The third candidate was the late Judge William T. Price, then in congress. When Price's lieutenants found that he could not win they wired for a request to help Spooner. The judge complied; all but one of his supporters cast their votes for Spooner and he was nominated on the first ballot.

The first man to offer congratulations to the new senator was Governor Fairchild.

In 1882 the first time that Jerry Rusk was elected governor of Wisconsin, Colonel Spooner was so busy a man in his profession that the minutes counted, and it happened twice during the campaign that he missed a train, and each time was obliged to hire a locomotive in order to keep his speaking engagements. He lived in Hudson then.

The first time that this occurred he was to make a speech in New Richmond. The last train had gone. There was need of a



SENATOR JOHN C. SPOONER OF WISCONSIN.

rousing republican shakeup in that town, and it would not do to disappoint the committee.

"I must be in New Richmond tonight. It is too far to drive. Bring around an engine," he ordered.

The locomotive came, and the young lawyer made one of the best campaign speeches ever heard in New Richmond.

On the way back the colonel sat at the side of the engineer, and, after watching the latter for some minutes, asked for the privilege of running the locomotive. The men exchanged seats, and the future senator immediately proceeded to double the speed. The locomotive jumped along at a mile-a-minute gait until a short turn in the track was reached, when the new engineer was thrown to the fireman's side of the cab, and the regular engineer resumed

charge. Then, as the colonel regained his seat behind his laughing companion, he confided:

"Your confounded old horse doesn't stand the spur worth a cent."

That was the Wisconsin senator's first and last experience as a railroad engineer.

Early in the first Grant campaign an ambitious republican county chairman in the northwestern part of Wisconsin sent to the state chairman for a first-class speaker, naming the best he had. The noted speaker was to arrive at 4 o'clock in the afternoon by stage from Sparta. A fife and drum corps had drawn a large company to the village hotel to welcome the spellbinder, but the stage brought only one passenger—a boy. Great was the glee among the democrats, and deep the gloom

in the republican ranks—the meeting would have to be given up. The one passenger finally made himself known as the speaker that Chairman Rublee had sent to the Falls to address the meeting. When the democrats heard that, they were hilarious. The idea of that boy making a speech. But they would go to see him fail, and to laugh at their opponents' discomfiture.

But in the mail was a letter from Chairman Rublee, afterward minister to Switzerland, explaining why Judge Blank could not go to the Falls, and assuring the county leader that Colonel John C. Spooner was a fine speaker and would surely please the audience. On the strength of that letter the republicans went to work to get up a large meeting, and they succeeded.

The speech was a rouser. When the colonel had spoken an hour and a half the crowd demanded that he go on. He went on for another hour, and when he sat down cheer after cheer was given the young speaker—cheers that were as loud and as enthusiastic as those given the presidential candidate.

A great many democrats kept their promise to go to the meeting, but a good share of them joined in cheering General Grant and Colonel Spooner, and ceased from that time to be democrats.

From that day to this that boy passenger of 1868 has been one of the greatest men in Wisconsin in the eyes of the people of Black River Falls.

In physical courage Senator Spooner has never had any superior among Wisconsin's public men. There has not been a session of congress during his terms in the senate when he has not demonstrated his intellectual strength, and his moral courage is unquestioned by those who know him best.

In a city where Colonel Spooner went to attend court there lived a bully who was deemed a dangerous character when in his cups, and he was sure to be drunk on all unusual occasions, such as a term of the circuit court. While on their way to the court house one day Spooner and two or three other lawyers were advised by a native of the town to take another street. "Bruiser Bill" would soon meet them, and, as he was blind drunk, there would likely be trouble.

"Thank you," said Colonel Spooner, "but we will stick to this street."

"Bruiser Bill" was talking to a woman when the lawyers came along. As they passed the bully they heard him make an insulting remark to her.

Spooner instantly wheeled around, threw off his coat and faced the insulter. His companions hastily endeavored to pull him away.

"Come on, colonel," they pleaded; "that fellow will chew you up in a minute."

"I can thrash any cowardly dog that insults a woman," was the senator's reply.

And he made good his words. The bully had an opportunity to make only one pass at his opponent. After that the lawyer's good right fist hit him in the right spot. "Bruiser Bill" fell like a shot bullet, and he didn't need hitting again that or any other day. The lesson made a sober, decent man of him.

## Episodes and Incidents in the Lives of Noted People

**A**T the durbar state ball Lord Kitchener's knowledge of the figures was of the vaguest kind and in consequence all he succeeded in doing was to tie himself and his partner in the most absurd knot, to the intense amusement of the others in the set and of the large crowd looking on. The hero of Khartoum was beaming with delight, and so he blundered through to the end. When the music ceased at the end of a quadrille he was in the middle of the room looking for his partner, and laughed heartily when she came up and found him.

When Beerbohm Tree was introduced to Gladstone the statesman seemed to be embarrassed as to the turn the conversation would take. Finally and naturally politics was the subject pitched upon. Gladstone asked if actors were, as a rule, liberal or conservative. "Mostly conservative," replied Mr. Tree. "Dear me!" exclaimed Gladstone, "I wonder whether there are any exceptions to this rule?" "I should say," responded Mr. Tree, rather wickedly, "that the scene shifters are radicals to a man."

A certain young Canadian officer of engineers is credited with having "put down" Lord Kitchener during the troubles in South Africa. The young man was in charge of an important piece of railroad work. Kitchener appeared one morning and expressed disapproval of some features, talking in characteristically biting fashion. The young officer has his share of the independence which comes of living on this side of the Atlantic, so he said: "Am I bosing this work or are you?" Kitchener looked at him, recognized a young fellow after his own heart and walked away with a nod of approval.

Congressman Cannon sometimes indulges in metaphor when addressing the house, and at such times he declines to be bound by any rule. As a consequence his metaphor sometimes is mixed. He was arguing

against a proposition favoring a railroad one day. "The railroads have been before the senate on their knees praying and praying and praying," said Uncle Joe in his preacherlike tones, and then, stopping a moment and looking about the house, he concluded to finish with an expression that might better appeal to the understanding of many members, and added: "And, gentlemen, let us call their hand."

J. L. Toole's fondness for practical jokes is well known, relates the New York Tribune. One of the best the English comedian ever played was after he had been photographed in the getup of Old Eccles, the disreputable father in "Caste." Without changing his clothes he went out into the street as he was and walked to the house of a parvenu notorious for his pride. The door was opened by a pompous man servant, and a vista of funkies was seen down the passage. "Would you tell Mr. Smith," said Toole, in his beautifully clear enunciation, "that his brother from the workhouse has called?"

William B. Leeds, president of the Rock Island railroad and formerly known as the "tinplate king," has purchased a half interest in the racing stable of Andrew Miller, a member of the New York Jockey club. During the running season Mr. Leeds will race in his own name and colors. To comply with the rules of the club, which prohibit two members of a firm from racing horses from the same stable, each member of the new firm will preserve his individuality and race different strings. Mr. Leeds made a big fortune in tin and steel. When a multi-millionaire he drifted into the railroad business and soon became head of the Rock Island system.

"Nick" Longworth, the Cincinnati millionaire, who will be in the next congress, was taken down with chickenpox while visiting Washington. During his illness he received by express a Noah's ark, a rattle, some lead soldiers, a jumping jack and a doll. With these toys was this note, signed

by half a dozen of his Cincinnati cronies: "Dear Longworth—We heard with great regret that you had been suffering with the chickenpox. Having every reason to suppose that the mumps, measles and whooping cough will follow in their regular order, we send you a few of the things usually provided for the amusement of patients suffering from these disorders."

General Manager House of the United Railways of Baltimore recently received the following letter, together with a 5-cent piece:

"Dear Sir—A few days ago I took one of your cars to my home on Gilmore street. The car was crowded and the conductor failed to reach me. I left at my corner, the conductor being too far in front to pay him, and I inclose the amount of my fare, which would have been sent you sooner but for the fact that I have been out of the city."

Mr. House reported the occurrence to the directors of the road, and by their instruction sent the honest patron an annual pass, with a letter remarking on the unusual nature of the case. The honest patron told a neighbor, who spread the news, and the next development was the receipt of another letter containing a 5-cent piece and this bit of gushing confidence:

"Dear Mr. House—I neglected to pay my fare yesterday, and inclose it. Please send me a pass."

Baron Speck von Sternburg, the newly elected charge d'affaires from Berlin, was at a dinner where in a purely humorous spirit the courage of the various nations of the world was being impugned. The German's courage was pretty severely attacked by an Englishman. Baron von Sternburg took revenge on him with this brief story: "An Englishman and a German were to fight a duel. They were locked in a pitch-dark room together with cocked pistols. All was still and neither could tell where the other was. Finally the German, not wishing to have murder on his soul, tipped to the chimney and fired up it. There

was a shriek and the Englishman, badly wounded, came tumbling down."

Although Senator Elkins of West Virginia does not often attend the races nowadays, it was different during his early manhood. One day he and a chum slipped off together from school and on the way to the track came across their professor, who said in surprise: "Young gentlemen, what does this mean? You should be at your lessons." Elkins said: "Sir, we wanted to go to lessons and also to the races, so we tossed for it and it came down for the races." "What did you throw up?" "We threw a lump of coal up. If it stayed up we went to school; if it came down we went to the races; and here we are, sir."

Some years ago there was a man in Detroit who was the original "Pro Bono Publico." He wrote letters to the newspapers, to railroads, to the municipal officials and to about everybody else on all sorts of topics. He had a remedy for everything and considered it his mission to write to people and tell them what was what on every public question. One day President Ledyard sent for C. W. Russell, general counsel of the Michigan Central road, and said: "Russell, I'll raise your salary \$2,000 a year if you will keep that man from writing to me for a year."

Russell accepted. He hunted up the letter-writer and said:

"I want to make a business proposition to you. If you will stop writing letters to Mr. Ledyard for a year I can get a rise in salary of \$2,000 a year. If you will quit I'll split with you and give you \$1,000 of it."

A bargain was made. The arrangement went along all right for seven months. Then the Michigan Central pulled off a wreck somewhere in Michigan that was a wonder. Next morning Mr. Ledyard got a ten-page letter from his old friend, protesting against the loose management of his railroad. That letter was referred to Russell, and he didn't get his raise. The temptation was too strong for this writer to resist, even for \$1,000.