

A BOOMOPOLIS WEDDING.

THERE was joy in Boomopolis. That thriving city of a year's growth had experienced all the delights of life but one. Progressive shooting bees there had been; donkey parties in the temporary canvas residences of the fashionable boomers had been held, and successfully; there had been four military funerals and two divorces—but no weddings. And now on Christmas Day came the glad tidings that Miss Penelope Hicks, the principal of the Boomopolis Academy of Learning, had plighted her troth to Coyote Bill, *né* Wilkins, formerly of the Cherokee Strip.

It was a great relief to every one, including the happy man, when Miss Hicks gave Mr. Wilkins the measure of the third finger of her left hand, and named January 1st as the happy day, the lady being opposed to long engagements, particularly in a country where no man knoweth when an error of judgment on his part may enable the other man to shoot first.

The reason for the town's relief over the announcement of the approaching nuptials was this: Miss Hicks had been the undisputed belle of Boomopolis ever since her arrival in that Eden of sand and corner lots. She had been for some time the most cherished object of the affections of six gentlemanly cow-boys simultaneously, and Boomopolis was anxious. There were fears that the half-dozen suitors might resolve themselves into executive session and diminish the population of Boomopolis by at least five of her leading citizens, which operation would result in a considerable loss of prestige for the town, particularly in a census year. But, happily for all concerned, Miss Hicks was a woman of much tact, and ready for any emergency. She had been proposed to by each of her several admirers, and for some wholly feminine reason had given each much reason to hope. She did not realize the situation until a few days before Christmas, when a bullet whistling through her parlor window and grazing the hat of the admirer who was at that moment calling upon her showed plainly that something must be done, and quickly.

To realize with Penelope was to act, and the next evening the six heart-stricken cow-boys were gathered together in her parlor, in response to her invitation, upon which she had written R. S. V. P., and in accordance with which they were one and all unarmed, R. S. V. P. in Boomopolis being the abbreviated form of *Rendez-vous sans pistols*.

After all had partaken of a light supper of sandwiches and sarsaparilla, Miss Hicks, in a short address, informed her guests that she loved them all dearly, not to say passionately, and had no doubt whatsoever that if given time she would marry them all, life being fleeting, and in that section particularly uncertain for men; that, as a patriotic citizen of Boomopolis, however, she wanted the question

of priority settled amicably, and without undue loss of population, and she added that, as Christmas was approaching, she could think of no better means of settling the difficulty than that of giving a Christmas tree to her admirers, placing upon that tree six packages, all of a size, and one for each. In one package she would place, she said, a pair of silver-plated Mexican spurs; in another would be the best bridle to be found on that side of the Mississippi; in a third would be a lasso that would make its possessor the envy of the Territory; the fourth would contain a nickel-plated six-shooter, self-cocking, with an ivory handle; in the fifth would be found an order for the finest saddle in the universe; and in the sixth would be a photograph of herself, with which would go a life lease of her heart and hand. The would-be husbands could select each his own package, precedence being decided by numbers drawn from a hat.

The proposition was received with enthusiasm. The six gentlemanly cow-boys vowed eternal friendship for each other, and swore that whoever should prove to be the lucky man, the others would ush for him at the ceremony.

And so it was settled. The tree was had, the packages were distributed, and to Coyote Bill fell the prize of the hand, heart, and photograph of Miss Penelope Hicks.

The week between Christmas and New-Year's passed rapidly away, and on the afternoon of January 1st the youth, beauty, and fashion of Boomopolis assembled in the little portable cathedral on West End Avenue to witness the ceremony. As the melodeon pealed forth an adaptation of Mendelssohn's Wedding March, rendered by the leader of the Boomopolis brass band, the bride, leaning upon the arm of the Mayor, walked up the middle and only aisle of the edifice to the altar, where stood Coyote Bill and his best man, Nevada Pete. As the bride mounted the platform the groom stepped forward to meet her, but started back suddenly as he heard an ominous click in the coat pocket of Nevada Pete. Then Nevada Pete advanced and offered his hand to the bride. She, astonished at this somewhat remarkable proceeding, withdrew her extended hand, and looked inquiringly at the apparently presumptuous Pete.

"It's all right, Miss Hicks," said he. "Coyote Bill will explain."

"Yes, Penelope," said Bill, "it's all right. That six-shooter you gave Pete was such a pretty gun I couldn't resist when Pete offered to swap."

The bride blushed. Coyote Bill withdrew to the best man's place, and Nevada Pete once more offered his hand to Miss Penelope Hicks.

"All right," said she, taking the proffered hand. "I'm satisfied. Let her go, Mr. Parson."

And the marriage was solemnized amid general rejoicing.

JOHN KENDRICK BANGS.