

CHALK TALK.

An Interview with Frank Board on American Caricature. Illustrated by Himself.

The American Cartoon and Its Future—Its Possibilities as a Religious Force—The First War Cartoon—Caricatures in Daily Newspapers—Frank Board Illustrates His First Chalk Talk and Tells Interesting Stories About American Caricature—How a Draftee Became a Soldier—The Reminiscences of an Artist.

Illustrated by Frank Board, Caricaturist, Chicago, September 7th.



HAVE JUST had a talk with Frank Board about himself and American caricature. He is, to a certain extent, the father of the American cartoon, and he has been making funny pictures for the newspapers all his life. He is now about thirty years of age, and his first picture was published when he was under ten. He has spent a new field in caricaturing as the editor of the *Hum* in Chicago. In the *Hum* and *Judge*, but his pictures are anti-religious instead of satirical. In Frank Board is trying to return the religious world by exposing its sham. The paper had nothing to do with caricature when he took hold of it. It was published some months, and is really becoming one of the leading papers of the country. Its field was well expressed by Mr. Board during the talk, when I asked him as to what he thought of the future of American caricature. He replied: "I think we are just at the beginning of the use of the cartoon. Pictures can tell stories quicker and better than words, and I believe that cartoons can be used in the service of religion, righteousness, truth and justice without being sold to party. I believe in the fundamental principles of Christianity, and I can take a text from the Bible, and with the utmost reverence can, through the medium of the cartoon, apply it to the condition of today. I can put a moral in this way, and by a picture make a tract which every man who sees it must read. This is what we are trying to do through the *Hum*'s *Hum*, and we are succeeding beyond my expectations."

THE FIRST CHALK TALK.  
My talk with Frank Board took place in his office, and before I go further, I want to tell you how it was carried on. Frank Board is as clear as a pike, and he has been so from the beginning. The only way to talk with him is through a black rubber tube, about as big around as a garden hose and as long as your arm. This he always has about his neck. When you talk to him he speaks it, and puts one end of it to his ear and hands you the other. You place your lips to the mouth of the tube, and through this make your remarks with Frank Board's head. Mr. Board is an inveterate sketcher, and during my conversation he illustrated his points by drawing pictures, making all the while, so that it seemed a race between his tongue and his pencil as to which should convey the idea first. There is no man in the United States who can give forth ideas so fast as he can. He is, you know, the originator of the chalk talk, and there is hardly a town in the United States in which he has not given this sort of a lecture, standing on the platform with a roll of paper stretched on an easel before him, and with a ball of cotton and crayons in his hand. He carries his audience with him while he draws pictures illustrating the philosophy, fact and satire which he utters at them in solid chunks. There are today a score or more of this kind of entertainers in the United States. Frank Board, however, was the author of the business, and he made today a sketch for me in illustration of his story as to how he came to make the first chalk talk. Said he:

"It is now more than twenty years since I gave my first talk of this kind. I was a young artist in New York, and had just gotten married. My wife was an enthusiastic churchgoer, and a great deal of our courtship was carried on in going to and from the Methodist Church. The result was that I struck a revival and became converted. This occurred shortly after I was married, and, like other enthusiastic young Christians, I went to do all I could for the church. I was on hand at all the meetings, and I took part in all the church work. Now our church, like many others in the United States, was very hard up. We were always needing money for something, and we tried to supply this by means of entertainments and socials. Soon after I had joined the young people

gave an exhibition, and the ladies suggested that I draw some pictures as a part of it. I consented, but I felt that the standing up before an audience and sketching without saying anything in illustration of the pictures would be a very silly thing. So I concluded to make a short talk, and draw the sketches in illustration of it. I wrote out my story and rehearsed it a half dozen times. Rehearsed. The entertainment was for a Thanksgiving celebration, and my rehearsal took place at home. My wife, my mother-in-law and the turkey, who was tied up in the chair forming the audience. Well, my wife survived, my mother-in-law did not, but she was talking, and the turkey was not spoken. The exhibition came off in the church, and it was a great success. Other churches heard of it, and I had applications to repeat it again and again. At first I was flattered, and I readily consented. I never thought of charging for it until the demands became so numerous that I was unable to fill them. It was taking more of my energy and localities. To put a stop to it, my wife suggested that I charge as much for each entertainment, but when the next application came, I replied that I could charge them, but that it would cost \$20. To my surprise they accepted my offer by return mail. It was so with many every one who wrote, and I could find that I was making more at my chalk talks than at my newspaper work. I then charged \$25, then \$50 and so on until I now get what is considered a very good price. I story like to lecture very well, however. The wear and tear is too great, and you have to lobby too much to make trains. This was a fortune for a schoolboy, and I was the envy of all my companions."

FRANK BOARD'S FIRST CARTOON.  
"Do you remember what that first joke was, Mr. Board?"  
"Yes," replied the cartoonist, with a laugh. "It was not the most elegant, but it was such a schoolboy joke that it naturally originated. It represented a boy, a schoolboy, with a spelling book in one hand and a ruler in the other, sitting before a little boy recited upon a bench, who was saying to the spelling master, 'Under it were these words all the duties of a private soldier, though the officers were very kind with me on account of my receiving no pay.'"

AN ARTIST PRIVATE.  
"You must have had some curious experiences?" I said.  
"No, not particularly so," replied Frank Board. "My life was that of the private soldier. I had perhaps a few more privileges than some others, but not many. I remember one thing, though, which occurred during the campaign in West Virginia. Lieut. Col. Crockett was in command of our regiment. We were on a hard march, and we had gone for nearly a day without water. I was very thirsty, and I noted that the regiment's negro servant had a lead of full canteens on his back. I concluded to have some of that water, and I asked my sergeant for such an order. I replied that I was thirsty and that I was bound to have a drink. I said, 'You fellows riding along on your horses don't know how we fellows on foot suffer. You ought to get down and try it. If I had a horse like you I wouldn't grumble, and I wouldn't grumble at the fellows who grumbled at canteens to save their lives.'"

"Well, said Colonel Crockett, 'why don't you get a horse?'"  
"I would if I could," I replied, "but I did you would not let me ride it?"  
"You would not let me ride it?"  
"Then where can I get one?"  
"There is a cavalry regiment just behind us," replied Colonel Crockett. "It is in camp over there, two miles away. Why don't you go there tonight and take one?"  
"He said this of course, in a joke. There was much liberty allowed between officers and men at the beginning of the war, and he had no idea I would carry out his suggestion. That night, however, I slipped out of camp and went to the cavalry regiment. I took the best horse I could find and brought it back with me. Before morning the cavalry was ordered to march, and in inquiry was ever made about the horse. He had the letters 'F. B.' branded upon him, and he was a first-class animal. The colonel carried out his promise and didn't object. I rode him for more than a year, and it was only through my peculiar position as an artist private that I was permitted to do so."

THE FIRST GREAT WAR CARTOON.  
"The war was practically the mother of American newspaper caricature, Mr. Board, was it not?"  
"Yes," was the reply. "The illustrated newspaper grew rapidly during the

war. Before it the only cartoons of much account which we had were in the paper which I spoke of, known as *Yankee Notions*. It is true there were cartoons, but they did not appear in the newspapers. They were drawn and lithographed and sold by the sheet. The cartoonist must in vogue prior to the war consisted of sketched figures with words coming out of their mouths, and the words and not the pictures told the story. I think I am the author of what was perhaps the first war cartoon. It was in 1861, and it represented a southern march on Washington. General Scott was in command of the army, and was defending the capital. The rebels were threatening to march to the north. I made a cartoon representing General Scott as a big bull-dog with a cocked hat on its head, sitting behind a plate containing a bone marked "Washington."

"Lack of him were some terms and the American flag. In front of the bone, and brandishing with fear, covered a lead, hungry, bound, labeled 'Jeff Davis.' This cartoon was looking at the bone, but it failed to win it. Under the cartoon were the words, 'Why don't you take it?' This cartoon made a great hit. It was lithographed, and we sold it in Cleveland for ten cents apiece. It was copied all over the country. It made a great sensation. The newspapers published it and commercial houses had signs made from it and put on their envelopes. Had I had the sense to have copyrighted it, I would have made a great deal of money out of it. But I was a boy then, and did not know as much as I do now."

"What did you do after the war closed?"  
"I went to New York and made sketches for the *Yankee Notions*. I did work on a number of different papers, and turned my hand at anything I could find to do in the way of sketching. I had a bad time at first, and sometimes I nearly starved. I have waited the streets night after night in New York because I had not enough to pay for lodging, and I have made many a bunch of crackers and cheese. I could have gotten money, of course, by sending home but I was too proud to do so. After awhile, however, I got a foothold and I did work on nearly all of the illustrated papers."

THE AMERICAN CARTOON.  
"Tell me something about cartoon making in America."  
"The first paper that published cartoons was the *Yankee Notions* of which I told you. This was owned by a man named Strung, and it had a long run. Tom Nicknocks appeared, which was followed by the *Comic Monthly* and *Frank Leslie's Budget of Fun*. Then we had *Vanity Fair* and then Mrs. Grundy, illustrated by Thomas Nast and published by Harper's. Facts and jokes were later created, and now the daily newspapers are publishing their cartoons."

"Speaking of the cartoon in the daily, Mr. Board, do you think it has come to stay?"  
"Yes," was the reply. "Pictures tell a story so much quicker than anything else that they will always be in demand. They have increased the circulation of

the daily and Sunday newspapers, and they are improving in quality right along. I believe they will continue to improve, and that invention will make such progress of printing that we will be able to produce good work in the daily papers. I think the demand for good sketches increases. Printing must be illustrated nowadays, and the cheap processes will make an increased demand."

MORE MONEY FOR ARTISTS.  
"What is the effect of this upon artists and illustrators?"  
"It increases their value, of course," replied Frank Board. "But it also brings up a great crop of new sketches and of mediocre work. By the past processes of printing now used in the papers the sketches of the best artists look scarcely better than those of the amateurs who scratch out pictures on the cheap plates in the country newspaper offices. Take those *Gilbey's* pictures. They would lose half their force if published in the daily newspapers instead of in the magazines. Still, the increased demand for the better artists, too. Prices are twice as high now as they have been in the past, and the demand for drawings has never been so great as it is now. It is easy to find a man who can draw. It is hard to find one who can tell what to draw. What the world needs is men with ideas. We want creative men, not such men receive higher prices every year. They will be worth more and more as time goes on. Machinery does not hurt them. The only factory that can turn them out is God Almighty."

Frank A. Crockett  
Poetry Notes.  
"While winter is better for growing four than corn."  
Vermin kills as many foes as disease.  
Dey, clear with makes use of the very best materials that can be used in the most bones during the summer.  
To make little lay give them a variety of food, clean quarters and plenty of exercise and do not allow them to get too fat.  
Liner will kill too. It is a great disinfectant. It will partly thaw it, it will make the poultry fowls clean and free from vermin.  
Feeding wheat has a tendency to produce a healthy growth, build up the muscular tissues and aid materially to cause the lungs to lay plenty of cartilage.  
Turkeys do not lose confidence well, whether young or old. When sick up, they soon snap and drop their wings and begin to fall off in condition.  
These never was a time when careful selection failed to give good results, especially when extra attention is given to the selection of the male.  
The only time that it will pay to keep through the winter new fowls that can be relied upon for winter layers or that are needed for brooders.

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