

# THE DESERET WEEKLY.

Truth and Liberty.

No. 14.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, SEPTEMBER 21, 1895.

VOL. LI.

Written for this Paper.

## CHALK TALK.

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CHICAGO, September 7th.



HAVE JUST had a talk with Frank Beard 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 fifty years of age, and his first picture was published when he was under ten. He has opened a new field in cartooning as the editor of the *Ram's Horn*. This is the Puck and Judge of Chicago, but its pictures are semi-religious instead of political. In it Frank Beard is trying to reform the religious world by exposing its shams. The paper had nothing of a circulation when he took hold of it. It now publishes 50,000 a month, and is rapidly becoming one of the leading pictorials of the country. Its field was well expressed by Mr. Beard 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 often 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 subject to party. I believe in the fundamental principles of Christianity, but I can take a text from the Bible, and with the utmost reverence can, through the medium of the cartoon, apply it to the civilization of today. I can point a moral in this way, and by a picture can make a tract which every man who sees it must read. This is what we are trying to do through the *Ram's Horn*, and we are succeeding beyond my expectations."

My talk with Frank Beard took place in his office, and before I go further I want to tell you how it was carried on. Frank Beard is as deaf as a post, and he has been so from birth. 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 uncoils 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 connection with Frank

Beard's brain. Mr. Beard is an inveterate sketcher, and during my conversation he illustrated his points by drawing pictures, talking 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 in this manner 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 half dozen colored crayons in his hand. He carries his audiences with him while he draws pictures illustrating the philosophy, fun and satire which he throws at them in solid chunks. There are today a score or more of this kind of entertainers in the United States. Frank Beard, 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 wanted 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 beforehand. The entertainment was for a Thanksgiving celebration, and my rehearsal took place at home. My wife, my mother-in-law and the turkey, which we tied up in the chair forming the audience. Well, my wife survived, my mother-in-law did not die while I was talking, and the turkey was not spoiled. 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 much of my energy and lots of time. To put a stop to it my wife suggested that I charge so much for each entertainment. So, when the next application came, I replied that I could oblige them, but that it would cost \$30. To my surprise they accepted my offer by return mail. It was so with nearly every one who wrote, and I soon found, that I was making more at my chalk talks than at my newspaper work. I then charged \$40, then \$50, and so on until I now get what is considered a very good price. I don't like to lecture very well, however. The wear and tear is too great, and you have to hurry too much to make trains."

"When did you make your first cartoon, Mr. Beard?" I asked.

"My inclination to make caricatures dates back to my boyhood," was the reply. "My father was an artist, you know, and he has painted some very good pictures. When I was a boy, away back in the fifties, we lived at Painesville, Ohio, a little town near Cleveland. The chief county paper at this time was the *Yankee Notions*. It would be considered a very poor thing today, but it was the best of its kind, then. As soon as I saw it, I became one of its regular subscribers. All of my spare cents went for it. When I was about ten years old, I came in to my mother one day with this paper in my hand and said: 'Ma, I am going to draw some pictures and send them to the *Yankee Notions*.'"

"All right, my son," was the reply, "if you think you can do so."

"I then asked her to give me the jokes that I might make pictures to them. She objected to this, and told me that I must make the jokes, as well as the pictures, and that the man who made the one always made the other. This bothered me somewhat, but I finally succeeded in making a joke and a picture. I mailed it to the paper, and in due time received fifty cents for it. This seemed a great deal of money to me, and for a long time after that I thought of nothing but jokes and pictures. I kept sending more jokes, and sometimes I remember, I got as much as \$5 at a time for ten jokes. This was a fortune for a schoolboy, and I was the envy of all my companions."

"Do you remember what that first joke was, Mr. Beard?"

"Yes," replied the cartoonist, with a laugh. "It was not the most elegant, but it was such as a schoolboy might naturally originate. It represented a lean, old school mistress, with a spelling book in one hand and a ruler in the other, sitting before a little boy perched