THE ECCENTRIC

BIRMINGHAM

GEORGE R. AVERILL, Publisher

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AN "ECCENTRIC" NAME.

Since taking over the management of this great moral engine by the present owners, we are met with the almost daily query "How did the name originate?" and, always anxious to please our readers, we have finally traced the name of the only newspaper published in Christendom under the unique name of "ECCENTRIC" back to its original source.

Away back in 1873 Jules Verne wrote a book entitled "Around the World in Eighty Days," the principal character in which was Phileas Fogg, a member of a celebrated club of millionaires in London, consisting of bachelors in various walks of life who were noted for their eccentric bets and peculiar habits and were quite naturally christened "The Eccentric club." When a member fell from grace and joined the ranks of the benedicts he was summarily kicked out and a new member took his place from the waiting list.

As in almost every town of the size of ours there were a class of young men who are addicted to the reprehensible habit of having Saturday evening meetings and a spread of whatever delicacies of the season as could be obtained by fair means or foul (or fowl) in the line of eatables and drinkables, the latter being easily obtainable in those "delicious old days of dampness when beer was only five a throw in the good old U. S. A." Also there were exclusive fish dinners at Orchard Lake when the landlord was supposed to and did furnish all the fish while the gang sat under the trees and absorbed the scenery and things. ("Man, man, but them was the good old days!")

And it came to pass that somebody in the bunch, under the influence of one of those "moonlight-on-the-lake" atmospheres, suggested that then and there a club of bachelors should be formed, whose membership should be no more nor less than the mystical number nine, with the explicit understanding that as soon as any member strayed from the straight and narrow path of single blessedness and embarked upon the perilous sea of matrimony—Bingo! (just like that) he should be fired. Of course, to somewhat soften the harshness of this decree it afterwards became customary to present to the poor deluded member upon the occasion of his last farewell benefit, a valuable present for the use of the new household. Of course that wasn't all he got by any means. Oh, no! But we digress.

Well, anyway, the constitution and by-laws were duly drawn up, the name of the Eccentric Club of Birmingham duly adopted in honor of the illustrious London organization made famous by Mr. Phileas Fogg and the following young bachelors signed in blood, by the light of a ghibbous moon (whatever that is), viz.—John F. Alber, William C. Jenks, M. A. Randall, Eben L. Parker, Walter F. North, Allie Opdyke, George H. Mitchell and A. Whitehead.

In the course of time the two last named, wishing to have scope for their budding literary aspirations which had been met by the leading publishers of the country with the customary regrets "that they were unable to use the manuscript, although it really possessed considerable merit," etc., decided to start something on their own hook and, by heck, they would show Harper's and Scribner's and The Atlantic Monthly where they headed in and let these misguided editors know where they had made a serious error in judgement! But, in the meantime, what would they name it? And the entire bunch rose up on their behind feet and shouted as one man, "Name it the BIRMINGHAM ECCENTRIC, after our club, of course." And behold, it was so and the name endureth even unto this day.

As for the members of the club, they one after another, like geese going to water, took unto themselves wives, each after his own liking and were kicked out in due form according to the by-laws and customs of the order. Their fortunes have distributed them over the country from Dan unto Beersheba and beyond and the old guy with the scythe and hour-glass has not failed to take his toll from their ranks. As far as we know, those who are still living, are living lives of honesty and uprightousness. So there you have the why and wherefore of the ubiquitous cognomen of "THE BIRMINGHAM ECCENTRIC."

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