

Mules and Desperadoes

Laramie, Wyoming (La Ramie, a French-Canadian trapper who was despatched in 1817 by the local Indians and his body stuffed under the ice of a beaver pond) is a pleasant city of about 25,000 people. It houses the University of Wyoming, a large institution whose faculty like to tell visitors that in its early days, the State allocated less for the University than it did for bounties on wolves and coyotes.

The town is as flat as a pancake. Recent growth has pushed the residential areas to a fringe of low-lying hills where fancy housing is being constructed. To say that Downtown Laramie provides all the necessities of life, would sum it up. Whether or not these necessities include the wherewithall for warding off cabin fever or for curing the mysterious ills that come when a chinook suddenly raises the temperature

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by forty degrees, seems to be moot.

Local historians still devote a good fraction of their space to listing all the desperadoes that were strung up from house rafters and bridge railings. They like to point out that Superstar Jesse James and his Gang visited Laramie in 1878 and that Calamity Jane was thrown into the local hoosegow more than once. As an indication of current stability and tranquillity, they point out that the last lynching in Laramie took place in 1904 when the perpetrator of a particularly heinous crime was strung up to a lamp post.

On the other side of the picture, one hears that the cattle barons of the old days were ruthless in their treatment of anyone who frustrated their purposes, e.g., sheepgrowers, and that more than one innocent fell victim to their encouragement of lynch law.

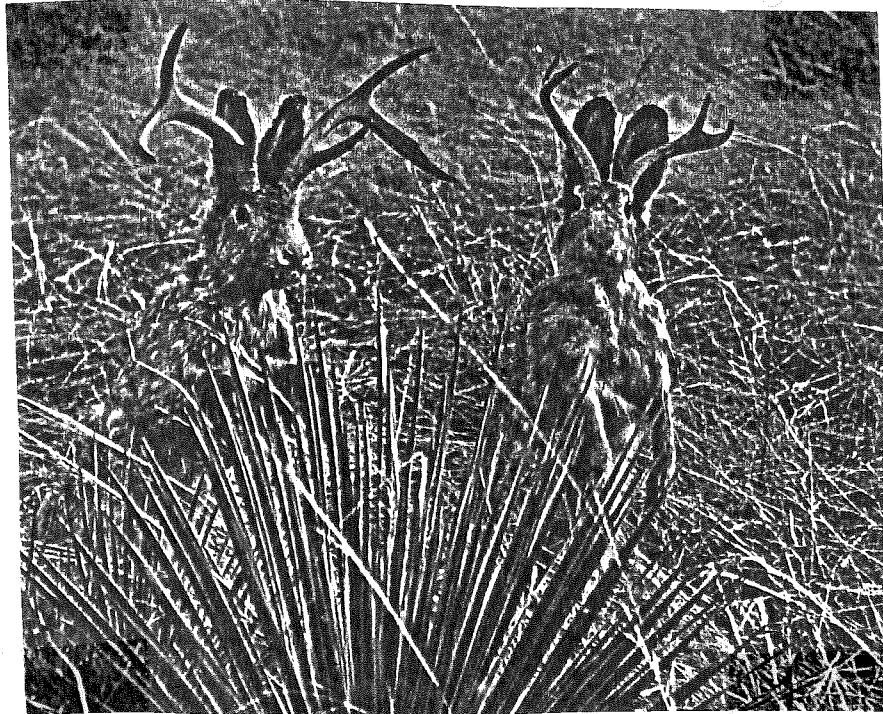
Laramie was where a humorist by the name of Bill Nye lived and ran a newspaper. I was well acquainted with his stuff before I set foot in the city. The Laramie Boomerang is still published, and it carried an item about my coming and giving a talk. Now that's nice treatment. Do you think my talk would rate a line in the New York Times if I showed up on the door-

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step of New York University? Ha!

What's a boomerang doing in Wyoming? Isn't that on the wrong continent? Well, Bill Nye named the paper after his mule.

Nye's humor punctures the pompous and burlesques the hoity-toity. A lot of it has gone down the drain of changing tastes and taboos. I append a piece which I like and think has held up fairly well.



The Jackalope: Wyoming Mascots

Bill Nye From: "Fat Cat and
other Wits" (1882)

Table Etiquette

There are a great many people who behave well otherwise, but at table do things that if not absolutely *outré* and *ensemble*, are at least *pianissimo* and *sine die*.

It is with a view to elevating the popular taste and etherealizing, so to speak, the manners and customs of our readers, that we give below a few hints upon table etiquette.

If by writing an article of this kind we can induce one man who now wipes his hands on the table cloth to come up and take higher ground and wipe them on his pants, we shall feel amply repaid.

If you cannot accept an invitation to dinner do not write your regrets on the back of a pool check with a blue pencil. This is now regarded as *ricochet*.

A simple note to your host informing him that your washerwoman refuses to relent is sufficient.

On seating yourself at the table draw off your gloves and put them in your lap under your napkin. Do not put them in the gravy, as it would ruin the gloves and cast a gloom over the gravy. If you have just cleaned your gloves with benzine, you might leave them out in the front yard.

If you happen to drop gravy on your knife blade, back near the handle, do not run the blade down your throat to remove the gravy, as it might injure your epiglottis, and it is not considered *embonpoint*, anyway.

When you are at dinner do not take up a raw oyster on your fork and playfully ask your host if it is dead. Remarks about death at dinner are in very poor taste.

Pears should be held by the stems and peeled gently but firmly, not as though you were skinning a dead horse. It is not *bon ton*.

Oranges are held on a fork while being pulled, and the facetious style of squirting the juice into the eye of your hostess is now *au revoir*.

Stones in cherries or other fruit should not be placed upon the tablecloth, but slid quietly and unostentatiously into the pocket of your neighbor or noiselessly tossed under the table.

If you strike a worm in your fruit do not call attention to it by mashing it with a nut-cracker. This is not only uncouth, but it is regarded in the best society as *blasé* and exceedingly *vice versa*.

Macaroni should be cut into short pieces and eaten with an even graceful motion, not absorbed by the yard.

In drinking wine, when you get to the bottom of your glass do not throw your head back and draw in your breath like the exhaust of a bath tub in order to get the last drop, as it engenders a feeling of the most depressing melancholy among the guests.

After eating a considerable amount do not rise and unbuckle your vest strap in order to get more room, as it is exceedingly *au fait* and *dishabilite*.

If by mistake you drink out of your finger bowl, laugh heartily and make some facetious remark which will change the course of conversation and renew the friendly feeling among the members of the party.

Ladies should take but one glass of wine at dinner. Otherwise there might be difficulty in steering the male portion of the procession home.

Do not make remarks about the amount your companion has eaten. If the lady who is your company at table, whether she be your wife or the wife of some one else, should eat quite heartily, do not offer to pay your host for his loss or say to her "Great Scott! I hope you will not kill yourself because you have the opportunity," but be polite and gentlemanly, even though the food supply be cut off for a week.

If one of the gentlemen should drop a raw oyster into his bosom and he should have trouble in fishing it out, do not make facetious remarks about it, but assist him to find it, laughing heartily all the time.

From *Forty Liars and Other Lies*.