

AN ASPIRANT FOR CONGRESS

P. H. Woodward

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A few years ago, the "Hon." John Whimpery Brass, of Georgia, one of the "thoughtful patriots" of the period, who now and then found time to lay aside the cares of statecraft to nurse little private jobs of his own, allured by the seductive offers of "Wogan & Co." of New York City, wrote to that somewhat mythical concern proposing to become their agent for the circulation of the "queer." Even after receiving the first installment of their wares, the honorable gentleman did not comprehend that the firm dealt exclusively in sawdust, not in currency. He wrote again, complaining that, after a journey of sixty miles over a rough road to the nearest reliable express office, he found nothing but a worthless package, marked "C. O. D.," awaiting him. Did Wogan & Co. distrust either his parts or fidelity? He ventured to assert that no man in the State could serve them so effectually. He had just run for Congress, and though beaten at the polls by "fraud," intended to contest the seat with the chances of success in his favor. The mountaineers among whom he lived did not care whether the money in their pockets was good or bad so long as it circulated. He could put thousands of counterfeits afloat without the slightest fear of detection. His constituency believed in him and would stand by him. Currency was very scarce in that congressional district, and it would really be doing his people a great favor to give them more. After setting forth the mutual benefits to accrue from trusting him, he appealed to Wogan & Co. with the vehemence and energy of the sewing-machine man, or life-insurance agent, to send on the goods without further delay. They should never regret dealing with him, his character and standing being a sufficient guaranty that he could not play false. He was acting in good faith, and expected like treatment in return.

Unfortunately for the political aspirations of "Hon." John Whimpery Brass, the authorities not long after made a descent upon the den of Wogan & Co., finding a great many letters from credulous fools, and a large supply of sawdust—their only stock in trade. The missives of the prospective congressman were published, thus gaining much more extensive currency than he proposed to give to the imitation greenbacks. It was supposed that the noisy fellow would slink away to some cave in his native mountains, and never show his brazen face among honest people again. But the impudence of "Hon." John Whimpery Brass rose to the level of the emergency. Instead of hiding or hanging himself, he published a card representing that he embarked in the scheme for the purpose of entrapping Wogan & Co. and bringing them to justice.

Pathetic was the spectacle, showing the confidence of an ingenuous soul in its own prowess, of the volunteer detective, digging parallels on the southern spurs of the Blue Ridge for the capture of the wily swindler a thousand miles away! Armed with a kernel of corn, the doughty gosling sets forth to catch the wicked fox that is preying on the flock! If the bold mountaineers, the constituency of "Hon." John Whimpery Brass, cannot commend the discretion displayed by the projector of the enterprise, they must certainly admire his pluck. In face of the odds, few goslings would volunteer.

Perhaps the card might have been accepted by the more trustful class of adherents as a satisfactory explanation of the letters, had not the aspiring statesman in course of time fallen under the ban of the law for defrauding widows of their pensions, the campaign against Wogan & Co. having so completely exhausted the virtue of the amateur who planned it as to leave no residue to fructify in subsequent operations.