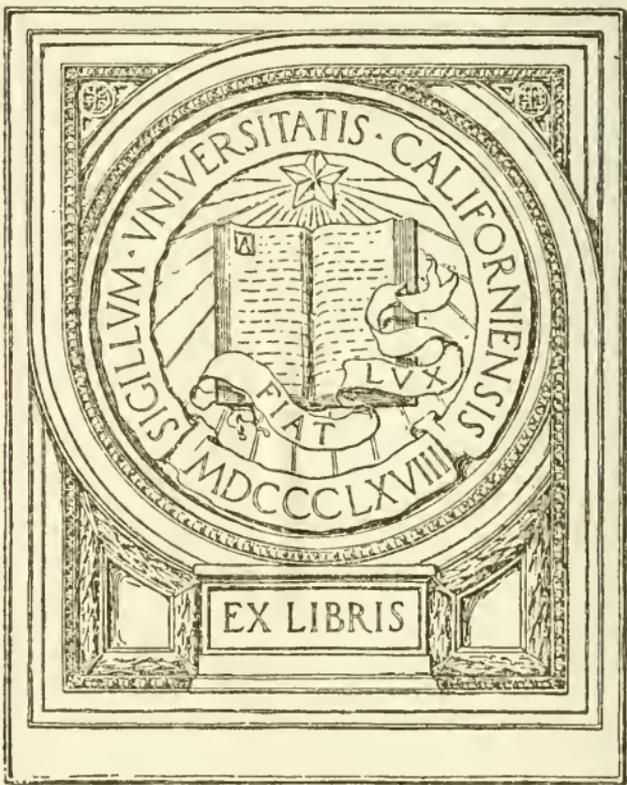


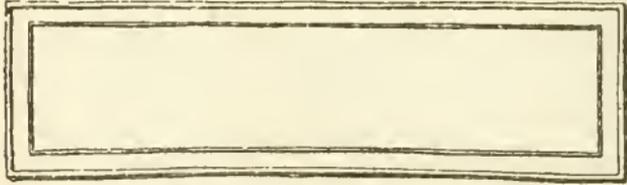


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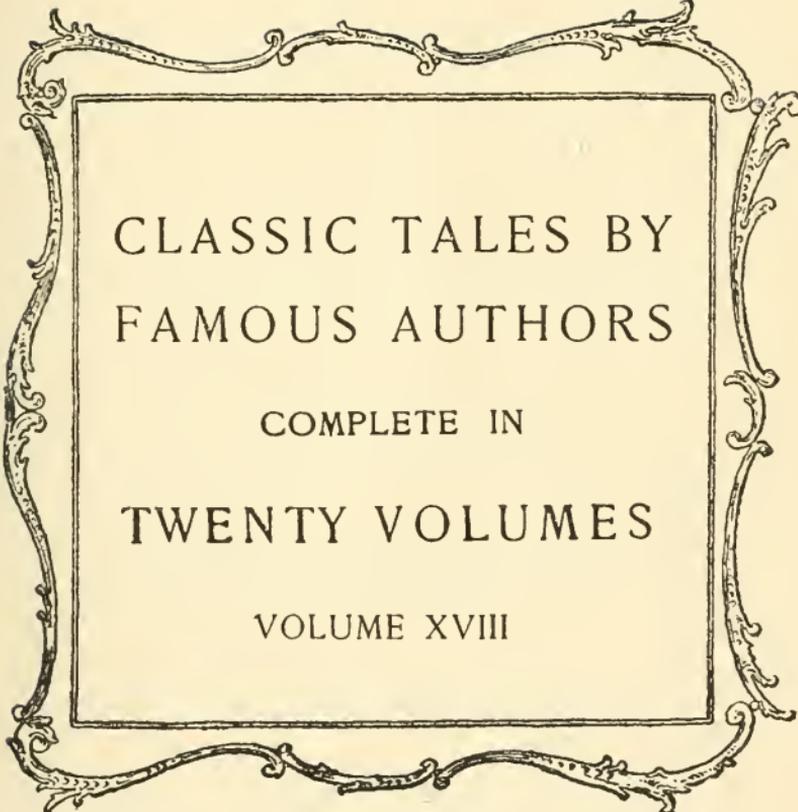










A decorative border with ornate, symmetrical scrollwork and floral motifs surrounds the central text. The border is composed of two parallel lines with intricate designs between them.

CLASSIC TALES BY  
FAMOUS AUTHORS

COMPLETE IN

TWENTY VOLUMES

VOLUME XVIII







James M. Barrie  
Photogravure. From a Photograph

James M. Hill  
Photographed from a photograph

# Classic Tales

by

## Famous Authors

CONTAINING COMPLETE SELECTIONS FROM  
THE WORLD'S BEST AUTHORS WITH PREFATORY  
BIOGRAPHICAL AND SYNOPTICAL NOTES

Edited and Arranged by

FREDERICK B. DE BERARD

. 4537

With a General Introduction by

ROSSITER JOHNSON, LL.D.

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CRITICAL SYNOPSIS  
OF SELECTIONS



## CRITICAL SYNOPSIS OF SELECTIONS

### AN INSPIRED LOBBYIST: BY J. W. DE FOREST:

A little New England State has two capitals. Each capital city is ambitious to be sole possessor of the honor. Ananias Pullwool, the Inspired Lobbyist, experienced in the larger ways of Washington, appears on the scene and sees his opportunity. He inspires Slowburg with hope; and Slowburg raises a large fund wherewith the Inspired Lobbyist pledges himself to secure the coveted prize.

But Fastburg is not left to slumber. The Inspired Lobbyist excites its people by exposing to them the direful secret schemes of their hated rivals, only to be circumvented by a much larger fund, which is promptly supplied. The Inspired Lobbyist makes both funds useful—to himself—and departs to seek new conquests.

### DIVERTING HISTORY OF JOHN GILPIN, THE: BY WILLIAM COWPER:

This tale tells how John Gilpin, a worthy citizen of London, set forth upon a borrowed steed to keep holiday with his wife at Islington; how, being unused to the management of spirited horses, he goaded his mount to madness, so that the steed "ran away" with the terrified Gilpin, galloped through Islington at top speed, and never stopped until he reached Ware, miles beyond. Being rescued and rested at Ware, the timid citizen again mounted his now subdued animal and turned toward Islington, but, alas! the horse determined to return to London, which he did forthwith, at speed rivaling that of his outcoming. So, although Gilpin passed twice through Islington, he got neither dinner nor holiday.

## CRITICAL SYNOPSIS OF SELECTIONS

### FATHER TOM AND THE POPE: BY SAMUEL FERGUSON:

In the first half of the last century, Ireland was to be redeemed by popular education, minutely disseminated among the masses. A part of the plan was regular examination of the teachers, to secure conformity to a high standard of culture. This amusing skit is a jocular satire upon the accomplishments demanded of the Irish "hedge-schoolmaster." Under the compulsion of frequent school-board examinations, Father Tom has become highly accomplished. He visits Rome to do reverence to the Pope. His Holiness having heard of Father Tom's remarkable intellect, challenges him to a contest of wits. In this story the particulars of the encounter are told, and how His Holiness came out second best.

### GHOST BABY, THE: FROM BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE:

The biological laws, so to speak, of ghost-life are decidedly hazy. Romantic literature is full of ghosts, but the literature of science has not yet noted their origin, nature, development, and cycle of life. For the most part, the story-tellers make their ghosts independent of the lapse of time: ordinary ghosts grow no older as time passes, and cling undeviatingly to the fashions and customs which they knew in life. This amusing story offers an exception. It shows clearly that ghosts "grow up" just as living beings do, and that their cycle of life has its various stages, each with its distinctive trials, just as our own has. The story tells how the relator became the guardian of a ghost baby, and the trials and tribulations he suffered in training and educating it until it became a mature ghost, able to care for itself.

### LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW, THE: BY WASHINGTON IRVING:

Where the majestic Hudson expands into the broad reaches of the Tappan Zee, Sleepy Hollow nestles between lofty hills that slope from the margin of the river; and the children of the countryside shiver with dread at the oft-told tale of a headless horseman—a Hessian mercenary justly beheaded by a patriot cannon-ball—who rides at night to fright belated wayfarers. Katrina Van Tassel is

## CRITICAL SYNOPSIS OF SELECTIONS

the village belle, winsome, coquettish and mischievous; Ichabod Crane is the loutish school-master, awkward, ungainly, and ill-favored; and Brom Van Brunt is the shrewd, rollicking, devil-may-care suitor of the charming Katrina. Ichabod casts sheep's eyes at the coquette, is intoxicated by her demure encouragement, and aspires to become the rival of Brom Van Brunt, otherwise Brom "Bones." After a festive evening at the Van Tassel farmhouse, as the schoolmaster jogs slowly homeward through the night, he is terrified by the apparition of the Headless Horseman, who bears his head before him on the saddle-bow. He seeks safety in flight, putting his horse to its utmost speed; but the specter hurls after him the horrible head, he is felled to the ground, and for reasons which appear in the story he vanishes to escape the ridicule which he foresees.

### MENDING THE CLOCK: BY J. M. BARRIE:

This sparkling little skit is an excellent example of pleasant badinage by a popular writer, of that Scottish race which has long been believed jokeless. Nothing was the matter with the clock: it merely needed winding; but it required some experimenting before that simple fact dawned upon the ingenuous literary mind.

### SKIRTS OF CHANCE, THE: BY H. B. MARRIOTT-WATSON:

Lord Francis Charmian, young, airy, flippant and delightful, finding conventional deportment a bore, surrenders himself wholly to the guidance of chance. Whatever suggestion or opportunity chance presents, he accepts and follows blindly, no matter how capricious or whimsical it may be. He dismisses calculation and acts unhesitatingly and instantly upon the impulse of the moment.

Lord Francis does not seek adventures; they roll in upon him unsought, and as he embraces all that come, he finds a surprising variety in the life he thought so dull and eventless. His nonchalance and instant acceptance of the moment get him into all sorts of absurd situations; and his *savoir faire* and ready wit get him out again, although at times his delightful assurance is taxed to the utmost.

Nothing is too whimsical for Lord Francis' fancy.

## CRITICAL SYNOPSIS OF SELECTIONS

He plunges aimlessly into the unknown, driving his yellow coach with green trimmings; he alights aimlessly at an inn, sympathizes with a charming girl in distress, precipitates hostilities with two rival suitors and a guardian, finally brings about general agreement and vanishes, leaving them in wonderment. A mistake of his cab lands him at an evening party where he is totally unknown, and where he causes amusing complications by his ready invention. He finds a lady's purse in the street, is denounced as a pickpocket by a fussy little red-faced man, has an awkward few moments with the police, and is relieved by the ready wit of a charming girl. A lady who has lost a valuable necklace believes Lord Francis to be Mr. Graves, the private detective; he solemnly accepts her commission for the recovery of the stolen jewels, and succeeds by unheard-of means. A stormy night, the wrong brougham, and a strange lady therein produce complications that even Lord Francis is unequal to.

In the adventure of "The Conspiracy" the sprightly young man fairly meets his match. He is very obliging. Lady Chatfield asks of him a peculiar service—that he will make love to her niece, in order to break up an undesirable attachment which that young lady has contracted. Lord Francis makes furious love to Miss Langley, and is far more successful than he intended and desired. The affair seems serious; he is in honor bound to propose, and he is accepted, only to be laughed at in the sequel.

The giddy young lord and his adventures are ingeniously entertaining.

### TACHYPOMP, THE: BY E. P. MITCHELL:

Professor Surd was an enthusiast in the science of mathematics, who declined to give the hand of his charming daughter Abscissa to the eligible young man of her choice until the latter signalized himself by some notable achievement in mathematical science. The young man thereupon declared his purpose to comply with the condition. He invented the Tachypomp—a sort of rapid-transit railroad—an ingenious paradox, which cumulated the separate progressive movements of a number of independent motors, annihilated time and distance, and made transit instan-

## CRITICAL SYNOPSIS OF SELECTIONS

taneous. Hence its Greek name, meaning, "to go quickly." He demonstrated his solution to the satisfaction of the Professor, and won the girl. The Tachypomp was not built, but the inventor never could see any reason why it shouldn't work. Neither could the Professor.

TAM O'SHANTER: BY ROBERT BURNS:

The spirits of Scotland are potent and the witches of Scotland are fearsome. Tam O'Shanter tarried o'er long at the inn, and saw uncanny things on his long and cold homeward ride. The churchyard was ghastly with bluish light, the night was rent with horrid clamors and gibberings, and grisly forms leapt and whirled in the witches' dance, to fiendish music that chilled his blood with dread. But Tam was held by fascination, curiosity lured him close and closer, and the potent spirits which he had imbibed gave him courage to applaud. Witches cannot cross a running stream; by mighty haste Tam won the bridge's crest a hand's-breadth in the lead; but, alas! his puir auld mare, Maggie, left her tail in the grasp of the infuriated witch-wife.

EDITOR.



BIOGRAPHICAL  
DICTIONARY OF AUTHORS

Vol. 18—1



## BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF AUTHORS

**BARRIE, JAMES MATTHEW:** Scottish novelist, essayist, and journalist, born at Kirriemuir, May 9, 1860. Mr. Barrie is a prolific author who commands a wide and increasing audience. His most notable work has dealt with the simple intimate life of Scotch villagers and peasants. They are essentially pictures of humanity, character sketches, depictions of the homely, sturdy sentiment of an upright and single-minded people. Almost devoid of plot, Barrie's principal stories deal mainly with incident and character, marked by vigorous drawing of outline and exquisite delicacy of shading and thought in the detail.

"Auld Licht Idylls," "A Window in Thrums" and "The Little Minister" perhaps hold first place in the list of his works; and they have won high esteem. Among his other writings are: "Better Dead," "When a Man's Single," "My Lady Nicotine," "Tommy and Grizell."

**BURNS, ROBERT:** A famous lyric poet of Scotland, born near Ayr, January 25, 1759; died at Dumfries, July 21, 1796. He was the son of a small farmer, by whom he was given a meager education. Robert Burns likewise followed the pursuit of farming as a means of livelihood. He was unprosperous, being hampered by poverty, and unfitted by temperament for the persistent industry of manual toil required to gain a subsistence from the soil. His domestic life was unhappy and disreputable, he was burdened with a large family, and was oppressed by penury. His later years were clouded by intemperance.

BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF AUTHORS

His first volume of poems was published in 1786 at Kilmarnock. It was so successful that a second edition was printed in the following year at Edinburgh, and Burns was received in the distinguished literary society of that capitol. Another volume of poems appeared in 1793; and a collective edition of his works was published in 1800, after his death.

His productions comprise a great number of lyric poems, ballads, popular songs, and homely dialect verses. Many of his lyrics are of great beauty; and his songs are instinct with genuine feeling that finds a responsive chord in the heart. Few poets are better loved, for few others have so combined high poetic quality with tender human emotion.

In his later years Burns became an excise officer at Dumfries, and devoted himself more closely to his literary work than when he was occupied with the toil of a farm.

COWPER, WILLIAM: (For Biographical Note see Vol. 9, "The Odyssey")

DE FOREST, JOHN WILLIAM: An American novelist, historian and writer of short stories, born at Seymour, Conn., March 31, 1826. He served throughout the Civil War, reaching the rank of major, and was adjutant-general of the veteran reserve corps, 1865 to 1868. His earliest published works were: "History of the Indians of Connecticut" (1853); "Oriental Acquaintance" (1856). Among his novels are: "Seacliff, or the Mysteries of the Westervelts"; "Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession"; "The Oddest of Courtships"; "Kate Beaumont"; "Honest John Vance"; "Overland"; "Playing the Mischief"; and "The Wetherell Affair." He has also written many essays, sketches and short stories.

FERGUSON, SAMUEL (SIR): An Irish author and barrister, born at Belfast, March 10, 1810; died at Howth, August 9, 1886. Educated at Trinity College, Dublin; admitted to the Irish bar, 1838, and Queen's Counsel, 1859-67. In 1867 he was appointed deputy keeper of the public records of Ireland, and was knighted in 1878. His poetical works comprise "Lays of the Western Gael" (1865);

BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY OF AUTHORS

"Congal, an Epic Poem in Five Books" (1872); "Poems" (1880), and minor uncollected poems. He also wrote various sketches of Irish life and character. As an antiquarian, he collected all the known Ogham inscriptions in Ireland.

IRVING, WASHINGTON: (For Biographical Note see Vol. 1, "Battle, Camp and Siege.")

MITCHELL, EDWARD PAGE: An American journalist and writer of stories. Born at Bath, Me., March 24, 1852. Graduated Bowdoin College, 1871, and at once began newspaper work upon the staff of the *Boston Advertiser*. In 1875 he joined the staff of the *New York Sun*, as editorial writer, in which position he has continued to the present time, contributing in a notable degree to the trenchant terseness which is so marked a characteristic of that important journal's editorial page.

WATSON, HENRY BRERETON MARRIOTT: An English author and journalist. He was born in 1863 at Caulfield, Melbourne, and so may be counted as one of the group of Australian authors who have stepped so well to the front during the last ten years.

Mr. Watson did not remain in Melbourne long, however, but went with his father to New Zealand in 1872. Here he graduated at the New Zealand University in 1883 and went to England to live two years later. Shortly after his arrival he took up journalistic work, and a little later published his first novel, "Marahuna: A Romance." This was followed by "Lady Faintheart" (1890), "The Web of the Spider" (1891), "Galloping Dick," and others. He is joint author with Barrie of "Richard Savage," a play produced in London in 1891.

EDITOR.



FATHER TOM AND THE  
POPE



# FATHER TOM AND THE POPE

*As related by Mr. Michael Hefferman, Master of the National School at Tallymactaggart, in the County Leitrim, to a friend, during his official visit to Dublin for the purpose of studying political economy, in the spring of 1838.*

By *Samuel Ferguson*

14537

## CHAPTER I

### HOW FATHER TOM WENT TO TAKE POT-LUCK AT THE VATICAN

**W**HEN his Riv'rence was in Room, ov coorse the Pope axed him to take pot-look wid him. More be token, it was on a Friday; but, for all that, there was plenty of mate; for the Pope gev himself an absolution from the fast on account of the great company that was in it,—at laste so I'm tould. Howandiver, there's no fast on the dhrink, anyhow,—glory be to God!—and so, as they wor sitting, aither dinner, taking their sup together, says the Pope, says he, "Thomaus," for the Pope, you know, spakes that away, and all as one as ov uz,—*"Thomaus a lanna,"* says he, "I'm tould you welt them English heretics out ov the face."

"You may say that," says his Riv'rence to him again. "Be my soul," says he, "if I put your Holiness undher the table, you won't be the first Pope I floored."

## COMEDY

Well, his Holiness laughed like to split; for you know, Pope was the great Prodesan that Father Tom put down upon Purgathory; and ov coorse they knew all the ins and outs of the conthravarsy at Room. "Faix, Thomaus," says he, smiling across the table at him mighty agreeable,—“it's no lie what they tell me, that yourself is the pleasant man over the dhrop ov good liquor.”

“Would you like to thry?” says his Riv'rence.

“Sure, and am n't I thrying all I can?” says the Pope. “Sorra betther bottle ov wine's betuxt this and Salamanca, nor there's fornenst you on the table; it's raal Lachrymachrystal, every spudh ov it.”

“It's mortal could,” says Father Tom.

“Well, man alive,” says the Pope, “sure, and here's the best ov good claret in the cut decanther.”

“Not maning to make little ov the claret, your Holiness,” says his Riv'rence, “I would prefir some hot wather and sugar, with a glass ov spirits through it, if convanient.”

“Hand me over the bottle of brandy,” says the Pope to his head butler, “and fetch up the materi'ls,” says he.

“Ah, then, your Holiness,” says his Riv'rence, mighty eager, “maybe you'd have a dhrop ov the native in your cellar? Sure, it's all one throuble,” says he, “and, troth, I dunna how it is, but brandy always plays the puck wid my inthrails.”

“'Pon my conscience, then,” says the Pope, “it's very sorry I am, Misther Maguire,” says he, “that it is n't in my power to plase you; for I'm sure and certaint that there's not as much whiskey in Room this blessed minit as 'ud blind the eye ov a midge.”

“Well, in troth, your Holiness,” says Father Tom, “I knewn there was no use in axing; only,” says he, “I didn't know how else to exqueeze the liberty I tuck,” says he, “of bringing a small taste,” says he,

## FATHER TOM AND THE POPE

"of the real stuff," says he, hauling out an imperi'l quart bottle out ov his coat-pocket; "that never seen the face ov a gauger," says he, setting it down on the table fornenst the Pope; "and if you'll jist thry the full ov a thimble ov it, and it doesn't rise the cockles ov your Holiness's heart, why then, my name," says he, "isn't Tom Maguire!" and with that he out's wid the cork.

Well, the Pope at first was going to get vexed at Father Tom for fetchin dhrink thataway in his pocket, as if there wasn't lashins in the house; so says he, "Misther Maguire," says he, "I'd have you to comprehend the differ betuxt an inwitation to dinner from the succissor of Saint Pether, and from a common nagur of a Prodesan squirean that maybe hasn't liquor enough in his cupboard to wet more nor his own heretical whistle. That may be the way wid them that you wisit in Leithrim," says he, "and in Roscommon; and I'd let you know the differ in the prisint case," says he, "only that you 're a champion ov the Church and entitled to laniency. So," says he, "as the liquor's come, let it stay. And, in troth, I'm curi's myself," says he, getting mighty soft when he found the delightful smell ov the *putteen*, "in inwistigating the composition ov distilled liquors; it's a branch ov natural philosophy," says he, taking up the bottle and putting it to his blessed nose.

Ah! my dear, the very first snuff he got ov it, he cried out, the dear man, "Blessed Vargin, but it has the divine smell!" and crossed himself and the bottle half a dozen times running.

"Well, sure enough, it's the blessed liquor now," says his Riv'rence, "and so there can be no harm any way in mixing a dandy of punch; and," says he, stirring up the materi'ls wid his goolden meeddlar,—for every-thing at the Pope's table, to the very shcrew for draw-

## COMEDY

ing the corks, was ov vergin goold—"if I might make boold," says he, "to spake on so deep a subjic afore your Holiness, I think it 'ud considherably whactlate the investigation ov its chemisthry and phwarmacutics, if you'd jist thry the laste sup ov it inwardly."

"Well, then, suppose I do make the same expiriment," says the Pope, in a much more condescinding way nor you'd have expected,—and wid that he mixes himself a real stiff facer.

"Now, your Holiness," says Father Tom, "this bein' the first time you ever dispinsed them chymicals," says he, "I'll jist make bould to lay doun one rule ov orthography," says he, "for conwhounding them, *secundum mortem*."

"What's that?" says the Pope.

"Put in the sperits first," says his Riv'rence; "and then put in the sugar; and remember, every dhrop ov wather you put in after that, spoils the punch."

"Glory be to God!" says the Pope, not minding a word Father Tom was saying. "Glory be to God!" says he, smacking his lips. "I never knewn what dhrink was afore," says he. "It bates the Lachrymal-crystal out ov the face!" says he,—“it's Necthar itself, it is, so it is!" says he, wiping his epistolical mouth wid the cuff ov his coat.

"'Pon my secret honor," says his Riv'rence, "I'm raally glad to see your Holiness set so much to your satiswhaction; especially," says he, "as, for fear ov accidents, I tuck the liberty of fetching the fellow ov that small vesshel," says he, "in my other coat-pocket. So devil a fear of our running dhry till the but-end ov the evening, anyhow," says he.

"Dhrow your stool into the fire, Misther Maguire," says the Pope, "for faix," says he, "I'm bent on anilizing the metaphwysics ov this phinomenon. Come,

## FATHER TOM AND THE POPE

man alive, clear off," says he, "you're not dhrinking at all."

"Is it dhrink?" says his Riv'rence; "by Gorra, your Holiness," says he, "I'd dhrink wid you till the cows 'ud be coming home in the morning."

So wid that they tackled to, to the second fugil apiece, and fell into a larned discourse.

But it's time for me now to be off to the lecthir at the Boord. O, my sorra light upon you, Dochter Whately, wid your p'litical econimy and your hyderastatics! What the *divul* use has a poor hedge-masther like me wid sich deep larning as is only fit for the likes ov them two I left over their second tumbler? How-andiver, wishing I was like them, in regard ov the sup ov dhrink, anyhow, I must brake off my norration for the prisint; but when I see you again, I'll tell you how Father Tom made a hare ov the Pope that evening, both in theology and the cube root.

## CHAPTER II.

### HOW FATHER TOM SACKED HIS HOLINESS IN THEOLOGY AND LOGIC.

Well, the lecther's over, and I'm kilt out and out. My bitter curse be upon the man that invinted the same Boord! I thought onc't I'd fadomed the say ov throuble; and that was when I got through fractions at ould Mat Kavanagh's school, in Firdramore,—God be good to poor Mat's sowl, though he did deny the cause the day he suffered! but its fluxions itself we're set to bottom now, sink or shwim! May I never die if my head isn't as through other as anything wid their ordinals and cardinals,—and, begad, it's all nothing to the econimy lecthir that I have to go to at two o'clock. Howandiver, I mustn't forget that we left his Riv'rence and his Holiness sitting fornenst one another in the parlor ov the Vatican, jist afther mixing their second tumbler.

When they had got well down into the same, they fell as I was telling you, into learned discourse. For you see, the Pope was curious to find out whether Father Tom was the great theologinall that people said; and says he, "Mister Maguire," says he, "what answer do you make to the heretics when they quote them passidges agin thransubstantiation out ov the Fathers?" says he.

"Why," says his Riv'rence, "as there is no sich passidges I make myself mighty asy about them; but if you want to know how I dispose ov them," says he,

## FATHER TOM AND THE POPE

"just repate one ov them, and I'll show you how to catapomphericate it in two shakes."

"Why, then," says the Pope, "myself disremimbers the particlar passidges they allidge out ov them ould felleys," says he, "though sure enough they're more numerous nor edifying,—so we'll jist suppose that a heretic was to find sich a saying as this in Austin, 'Every sensible man knows that thransubstantiation is a lie,' or this out of Tertullian or Plutarch, 'the bishop ov Rome is a common imposther,'—now tell me, could you answer him?"

"As easy as kiss," says his Riv'rence. "In the first, we're to understand that the exprission, 'Every sinsible man,' signifies simply, 'every man that judges by his nath'ral sines': and we all know that nobody follying them seven deludhers could ever find out the mysthery that's in it, if somebody didn't come in to his assistance wid an eighth sinse, which is the only sinse to be depended on, being the sinse ov the Church. So that, regarding the first quotation which your Holiness has supposed, it makes clane for us, and tee-totally agin the heretics."

"That's the explanation sure enough," says his Holiness; 'and now what div you say to my being a common imposther?"

"Faix, I think," says his Riv'rence, "wid all submission to the better judgment ov the learned father that your Holiness has quoted, he'd have been a thrifle nearer the thruth if he had said that the bishop ov Rome is the grand imposther and top-sawyer in that line over us all."

"What do you mane?" says the Pope, getting quite red in the face.

"What would I mane," says his Riv'rence, as composed as a docther ov physic, "but that your Holiness is at the head ov all them,—troth I had a'most forgot

COMEDY

I wasn't a bishop myself," says he, the deludher was going to say, as the head of all *uz*, "that has the gift ov laying on hands. For sure," says he, "imposther and *imposithir* is all one, so you're only to undherstand *manuum*, and the job is done. Auvuich!" says he, "if any heretic 'ud go for to cast up sich a passidge as that agin me, I'd soon give him a p'lite art ov cutting a stick to welt his own back wid."

"'Pon my apostolical word," says the Pope, "you've cleared up them two pints in a most satiswhactery manner."

"You see," says his Riv'rence,—by this time they wor mixing their third tumbler,—“the writings of them Fathers is to be thrated wid great veneration; and it 'ud be the height ov presumption in any one to sit down to interpret them widout providing himself wid a gen-teel assortment ov the best figures of rhetoric, sich as mettonymy, hyperbol, cattychraysis, prolipsis, mettylip-sis, superbaton, pollysyndreton, husteronprotheron, prosodypeia and the like, in ordher that he may never be at a loss for shuitable sintiments when he comes to their high-flown passidges. For unless we thrate them Fathers liberally to a handsome allowance ov thropes and figures they'd set up heresy at onct, so they would.”

“It's thru for you,” says the Pope; “the figures ov spache is the pillars ov the Church.”

“Bedad,” says his Riv'rence, “I dunna what we'd do widout them at all.”

“Which one do you prefir?” says the Pope; “that is,” says he, “which figure of spache do you find most usefulest when you're hard set?”

“Metaphour's very good,” says his Riv'rence, “and so's mettonymy,—and I 've known prosodypeia stand to me at a pinch mighty well,—but for a constancy, superbaton's the figure for my money. Devil be in me,”

says he, "but I'd prove black white as fast as a horse 'd throt wid only a good stick ov superbaton."

"Faix," says the Pope, wid a sly look, "you'd need to have it backed, I judge, wid a small piece of assurance."

"Well now, jist for that word," says his Riv'rence, "I'll prove it widout aither one or other. Black," says he, "is one thing and white is another thing. You don't conthravene that? But everything is aither one thing or another thing; I defy the Apostle Paul to get over that dilemma. Well! If anything be one thing, well and good; but if it be another thing, then it's plain it isn't both things, and so can't be two things,—nobody can deny that. But what can't be two things must be one thing,—*Ergo*, whether it's one thing or another thing it's all one. But black is one thing and white is another thing,—*Ergo*, black and white is all one. *Quod erat demonsthrandum.*"

"Stop a bit," says the Pope, "I can't althegither give in to your second miner—no—your second major," says he, and he stopped. "Faix, then," says he, geting confused, "I don't rightly remimber where it was exactly that I thought I seen the flaw in your premises. Howsomdiver," says he, "I don't deny that it's a good conclusion, and one that 'ud be ov materil service to the Church if it was dhrawn wid a little more distinctiveness."

"I'll make it as plain as the nose on your Holiness's face, by superbaton," says his Riv'rence. "My adversary says, black is not another color, that is white? Now that's jist a parallel passidge wid the one out ov Tartulion that me and Hayes smashed the heretics on in Clarendon Sthreet. 'This is my body, that is, the figure ov my body.' That's a superbaton, and we showed that it ought n't to be read that way at all, but this way, 'This figure of my body *is* my body.' Jist so

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wid my adversary's proposition, it mustn't be undherstood the way it reads, by no manner of manes; but it's to be taken this way,—'Black, that is, white, is not another color,'—green, if you like, or orange, by dad, for anything I care, for my case is proved. 'Black,' that is, 'white,' lave out the 'that,' by sinnalapyhy, and you have the orthodox conclusion, 'Black is white,' or by convarasion, 'White is black.'"

"It's as clear as mud," says the Pope.

"Bedad," says his Riv'rence, "I'm in great humor for disputin' to-night. I wisht your Holiness was a heretic jist for two minutes," says he, "till you'd see the flaking I'd give you!"

"Well, then, for the fun o' the thing suppose me my namesake, if you like," says the Pope, laughing. "though, by Jayminy," says he, "he's not one that I take much pride out ov."

"Very good,—devil a bitter joke ever I had," says his Riv'rence. "Come, then, Misther Pope," says he, "hould up that purty face ov yours, and answer me this question. Which 'ud be the biggest lie, if I said I seen a turkey-cock lying on the broad ov his back, and pick-ing the stars out ov the sky, or if I was to say that I seen a gandher in the same intherrestin' posture, ray-creating himself wid similar asthronomical experi-ments? Answer me that, you ould swaddler?" says he.

"How durst you call me a swaddler, sir?" says the Pope, forgetting, the dear man, the part that he was acting.

"Don't think to bully me!" says his Riv'rence. "I always daar to spake the truth, and it's well known that you're nothing but a swaddling ould sent ov a saint," says he, never letting on to persave that his Holiness had forgot what they were agreed on.

"By all that's good," says the Pope, "I often hard ov the imperance ov you Irish afore," says he, "but

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I never expected to be called a saint in my own house, either by Irishman or Hottentot. I'll till you what. Misther Maguire," says he, "if you can't keep a civil tongue in your head, you had better be walking off wid yourself; for I beg lave to give you to undherstand, that it won't be for the good ov your health if you call me by sich an outprobrious epithet again," says he.

"O, indeed! then things is come to a purty pass," says his Riv'rence, (the dear funny soul that he ever was!) "when the like ov you compares one of the Maguires ov Tempo wid a wild Ingine! Why, man alive, the Maguires was kings ov Fermanagh three thousand years afore your grandfather, that was the first ov your breed that ever wore shoes and stockings" (I'm bound to say, in justice to the poor Prodesan, that this was all spoken by his Riv'rence by way of a figure ov spache) "was sint his Majesty's arrand to cultivate the friendship of Prince Lee Boo in Botteney Bay! O, Bryan dear," says he, letting on to cry, "if you were alive to hear a *boddagh Sassenagh* like this casting up his counthry to me ov the name ov Maguire."

"In the name ov God," says the Pope, very solemnly, "what is the maning ov all this at all at all?" says he.

"Sure," says his Riv'rence, whispering to him across the table,—“sure, you know we're acting a conthrawarsy, and you tuck the part ov the Prodesan champion. You wouldn't be angry wid me, I'm sure, for sarving out the heretic to best ov my ability."

"O begad, I had forgot," says the Pope, the good-natured ould crethur; "sure enough, you were only taking your part as a good Milesian Catholic ought agin the heretic Sassenagh. Well," says he, "fire away now, and I'll put up wid as many conthroversial compliments as you plase to pay me."

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"Well, then, answer me my question, you santimonious ould dandy," says his Riv'rence.

"In troth, then," says the Pope, "I dunna which 'ud be the biggest lie, to my mind," says he; "the one appears to be about as big a bounce as the other."

"Why, then, you poor simpleton," says his Riv'rence, "don't you persave that forbye the advantage the gandher 'ud have in the length ov his neck, it 'ud be next to empossible for the turkey-cock lying thataway to see what he was about, by rason ov his djollars and other accouthrements hanging back over his eyes? The one about as big a bounce as the other! O you misfortunate crethur! if you had ever larned your A B C in theology, you'd have known that there's a differ betuxt them two lies so great, that, begad, I wouldn't wondher if it 'ud make a balance ov five years in purgathory to the sowl that 'ud be in it. Ay, and if it wasn't that the Church is too liberal entirely, so she is, it 'ud cost his heirs and succissors bettler nor ten pounds to have him out as soon as the other. Get along, man, and take half a year at dogmatical theology: go and read your Dens, you poor dunce, you!"

"Raaly," says the Pope, "you're making the heretic shoes too hot to hould me. I wundher how the Prodesans can stand afore you at all."

"Don't think to delude me," says his Riv'rence, "don't think to back out ov your challenge now," says he, "but come to the scratch like a man, if you are a man, and answer me my question. What's the rason, now, that Julius Cæsar and the Vargin Mary was born upon the one day,—answer me that, if you wouldn't be hissed off the platform?"

Well, my dear, the Pope could'nt answer it, and he had to acknowledge himself sacked. Then he axed his Riv'rence to tell him the rason himself; and Father

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Tom communicated it to him in Latin. But as that is a very deep question, I never hard what the answer was, except that I'm tould it was so mysterious, it made the Pope's hair stand on end. But there's two o'clock, and I'll be late for the lecthir.

### CHAPTER III.

#### HOW FATHER TOM MADE A HARE OF HIS HOLINESS IN LATIN.

O Docther Whately, Docther Whately, I'm sure I'll never die another death, if I don't die aither ov consumption or production! I ever and always thought that astronomy was the hardest science that was till now,—and it's no lie I'm telling you, the same astronomy is a tough enough morsel to brake a man's fast upon,—and geoliddy is middling and hard, too,—and hydherastatics is no joke,—but ov all the books ov science that ever was opened and shut, that book upon P'litical Econimy lifts the pins! Well, well, if they wait till they persuade me that taking a man's rints out ov the counthry, and spinding them in forrain parts isn't doing us out ov the same, they'll wait a long time in truth. But you're waiting, I see, to hear how his Riv'rence and his Holiness got on after finishing the disputation I was telling you of. Well, you see, my dear, when the Pope found he couldn't hould a candle to Father Tom in theology and logic, he thought he'd take a shine out ov him in Latin anyhow: so says he, "Misther Maguire," says he, "I quite agree wid you that it's not lucky for us to be spaking on them deep subjects in sich languidges as the evil spirits is acquainted wid; and," says he, "I think it 'ud be no harm for us to spake from this out in Latin," says he, "for 'fraid the devil 'ud undherstand what we are saying."

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"Not a hair I care," says Father Tom, "whether they undherstand what we're saying or not, as long as we keep off that last pint we were discussing, and one or two others. Listners never hear good ov themselves," says he, "and if Belzhebut takes anything amiss that aither you or me says in regard ov himself or his faction, let him stand forrid like a man, and never fear, I'll give him his answer. Howandiver, if it's for a taste ov classic conversation you are, jist to put us in mind ov ould Cordarius," says he, "here's at you." And wid that he lets fly at his Holiness wid his health in Latin.

"Vesthræ Sanctitatis salutem volo," says he.

"Vesthræ Revirintiæ salutritati bibo," says the Pope to him again (faith, it's no joke, I tell you, to remember sich a power ov larning). "Here's to you wid the same," says the Pope, in the raal Ciceronian. "Nunc poculum alterhum imple," says he.

"Cum omni jucunditate in vita," says his Riv'rence. "Cum summâ concupiscintiâ et animositate," says he, as much as to say, "Wid all the veins ov my heart, I'll do that same,"—and so wid that they mix'd their fourth gun apiece.

"Aqua vitæ vesthra sane est liquor admirabilis," says the Pope.

"Verum est pro te,—it's throe for you,"—says his Riv'rence, forgetting the idyim ov the Latin phwraseology in a manner.

"Prava est tua Latinitas, domine," says the Pope, finding fault wid his etymology.

"Parva culpa mihi," "small blame to me, that's," says his Riv'rence, "nam multum laboro in partibus interioribus," says he—the dear man! that never was at a loss for an excuse!

"Quid tibi incommodi?" says the Pope, axing him what ailed him.

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“Habesne id quod Anglicè vocamus a looking-glass,” says his Riv’rence.

“Immo, habeo speculum splendidissimum subther operculum pyxididis hujus starnutatoriæ” says the Pope, pulling out a beautiful goold snuff-box, wid a looking-glass in undher the lid—“Subther operculum pyxididis hujus starnutatorii — no — starnutatoriæ — quam dono accipi ab Arch-duce Austhriaco siptuagisima prætheritâ,” says he,—as much as to say that he got the box in a prisint from the Queen ov Spain last Lint, if I rightly remimber.

Well, Father Tom laughed like to burst. At last, says he, “Pather Sancte,” says he, “sub errore jaces. ‘Looking-glass,’ apud nos habet significationem quamdam peculiarem ex tempore diei dependentem,”—there was a sstring ov accusatives for yez!—“nam mane speculum sonat,” says he, “post prandium vero mat—mat—mat”—sorra be in me but I disremimber the classic appellivation ov the same article. Howandiver, his Riv’rence went on explaining himself in such a way as no scholar could mistake. “Vesica mea,” says he, “ab illo ultimo eversore distenditur, donec similis est rumpere. Verbis apertis,” says he, “Vesthræ Sanctitatis præsentia salvata, aquam facere valde desidhero.”

“Ho, ho, ho!” says the Pope, grabbing up his box, “si inquinavisses meam pyxidem, excimnicari debuisses —Hillo, Anthony,” says he to his head butler, “fetch Misther Maguire a—”

“You spoke first!” says his Riv’rence, jumping off his sate,—“you spoke first in the vernacular! I take Misther Anthony to witness,” says he.

“What else would you have me to do?” says the Pope, quite dogged like to see himself bate thataway at his own waypons. “Sure,” says he, “Anthony

wouldn't undherstand a B from a bull's foot, if I spoke to him any other way."

"Well, then," says his Riv'rence, "in considheration ov the needcessity," says he, "I'll let you off for this time! but mind now, after I say *præstho!* the first ov us that spakes a word ov English is the hare—*præstho!*"

Neither ov them spoke for near a minit, considering wid themselves how they were to begin sich a great thrial ov shkill. At last, says the Pope,—the blessed man, only think how 'cute it was ov him!—"Domine Maguire," says he, "valce desidhero, certiore fieri de significatione istius verbi *eversor* quo jam jam usus es"—(well, surely, I *am* the boy for the Latin!)

"*Eversor*, id est cyathus," says his Riv'rence, "namo apud nos *tumbleri* seu eversores, dicti sunt ab evertendo ceremoniam inter amicos; non, ut Temperantiæ Societatis frigidis fautoribus placet, ab evertendis ipsis potatoribus." (It's not every masher undher the Boord, I tell you, could carry sich a car-load ov the dead langidges.) "In agro vero Louthiano et Midensi," says he, "nomine gaudent quodam secundum linguam Anglicanam significante bombardam seu tormentum; quia ex eis tanquam ex telis jaculatoriis liquorem facibus immittere solent. Etiam inter hæreticos illos melanostomos" (that was a touch ov Greek). "Presbyterianos Septentrionales, qui sunt terribiles potatores, Cyathi dicti sunt *faceres*, et dimidium Cyathi *haef-a-glessus*. Dimidium Cyathi verò apud Metropolitanos Hibernicos dicitur *dandy*."

"En verbum Anglicanum!" says the Pope, clapping his hands,—"*leporem te fecisti*;" as much as to say that he had made a hare of himself.

"*Dandæus, dandæus*, verbum erat," says his Riv'rence,—O, the dear man, but it's himself that was handy ever and always at getting out ov a hobble,—"*dandæus*

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verbum erat," says he, "quod dicturus eram, cum me intherpillavisti."

"Ast ego dico," says the Pope very sharp, "quod verbum erat *dandy*."

"Per tibiaem qui coram Mose modulatus est," says his Riv'ence, "id flagellat mundum! *Dandæus* dixi, et tu dicis *dandy*; ergo tu es lepus, non ego—Ah, ha! Saccavi vesthram Sanctitatem!"

"Mendacium est!" says the Pope, quite forgetting himself, he was so mad at being sacked before the sarvints.

Well, if it hadn't been that his Holiness was in it, Father Tom 'd have given him the contints of his tumbler betuxt the two eyes, for calling him a liar; and, in troth, it's very well it was in Latin the offince was conweyed, for, if it had been in the vernacular, there's no saying what 'ud ha' been the consequence. His Riv'ence was mighty angry anyhow. "Tu senex lathro," says he, "quomodo audes me mendacem prædicare?"

"Et, tu, sacrilege nebulo," says the Pope, "quomodo audacitatem habeas, me Dei in terris vicarium, lathronem conwiciari?"

"Interroga circumcirca," says his Riv'ence.

"Abi ex ædibus meis," says the Pope.

"Abi tu in malam crucem," says his Riv'ence.

"Excimnicabo te," says the Pope.

"Diabolus curat," says his Riv'ence.

"Anathema sis," says the Pope.

"Oscula meum pod—" says his Riv'ence—but, my dear, afore he could finish what he was going to say, the Pope broke out into the vernacular, "Get out o' my house, you reprobate!" says he, in sich a rage that he could contain himself widin the Latin no longer.

"Ha, ha, ha!—ho, ho, ho!" says his Riv'ence.

"Who's the hare now, your Holiness? O, by this and

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by that, I've sacked you clane! Clane and clever I've done it, and no mistake! You see what a bit of desate will do wid the wisest, your Holiness,—sure it was joking I was, on purpose to aggravate you,—all's fair, you know, in love, law, and conthravarsy. In troth if I'd thought you'd have taken it so much to heart, I'd have put my head into the fire afore I'd have said a word to offend you," says he, for he seen that the Pope was very vexed. "Sure, God forbid, that I'd say anything agin your Holiness, barring it was in fun: for aren't you the father ov the faithful, and the throe vicar ov God upon earth? And aren't I ready to go down on my two knees this blessed minit and beg your apostolical pardon for every word that I said to your displeasment?"

"Are you in arnest that it is in fun you were?" says the Pope.

"May I never die if I aren't," says his Riv'rence. "It was all to provoke your Holiness to commit a brache ov the Latin, that I tuck the small liberties I did," says he.

"I'd have you to take care," says the Pope, "how you take sich small liberties again, or maybe you'll provoke me to commit a brache ov the pace."

"Well, and if I did," says his Riv'rence, "I know a sartan preparation ov chymicals that's very good for curing a brache either in Latinity or friendship."

"What's that?" says the Pope, quite mollified, and sitting down again at the table that he had ris from in the first pluff of his indignation. "What's that?" says he, "for 'pon my Epistolical 'davy, I think it 'ud n't be asy to bate this miraculous mixthir that we've been thrying to anilize this two hours back," says he, taking a mighty scientifical swig out ov the bottom ov his tumbler.

"It's good for a beginning," says his Riv'rence; "it

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lays a very nate foundation for a more sarious operation; but we're now arrived at a pariod ov the evening when it's time to proceed wid our shuperstructure by compass and square, like free and excipted masons, as we both are."

My time's up for the present; but I'll tell you the rest in the evening at home.

## CHAPTER IV

### HOW FATHER TOM AND HIS HOLINESS DISPUTED AT METAPHYSICS AND ALGEBRA

God be wid the time when I went to the classical seminary ov Firdramore! when I'd bring my sod o' turf undher my arm, and sit down on my shnug boss o' straw, wid my back to the mather and my shins to the fire, and score my sum in Dives's denominations ov the double rule o' three, or play fox and geese wid purty Jane Cruise, that sat next me, as plisantly as the day was long, widout any one so much as saying, "Mikey Hefferman, what's that you're about?"—for ever since I was in the one lodge wid poor ould Mat I had my own way in his school as free as ever I had in my mother's shebeen.

God be wid them days, I say again, for it's althered times wid me, I judge, since I got undher Carlisle and Whateley. Sich sthrictness! sich ordher! sich dhrilling, and lecthiring, and tuthoring as they do get on wid. I wisht to gracious the one-half ov their rules and regulations was sunk in the say. And they're getting so sthric, too, about having fair play for the heretic childer! We've to have no more schools in the chapels, nor masses in the schools. O, by this and by that, it'll never do at all!

The ould plan was twenty times better; and, for my own part, if it wasn't that the clargy supports them in a manner, and the grant's a thing not easily done widout these hard times, I'd see if I couldn't get a shel-

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tered spot nigh hand the chapel, and set up again on the good ould principle; and faix, I think our metropolitan 'ud stand to me, for I know that his Grace's motto was ever and always, that, "Ignorance is the thrue mother ov piety."

But I'm running away from my narrative entirely, so I am. "You'll plase to ordher up the housekeeper, then," says Father Tom to the Pope, "wid a pint ov sweet milk in a skillet, and the bulk ov her fist ov butther, along with a dust ov soft sugar in a saucer, and I'll show you the way of producing a decoction that, I'll be bound, will hunt the thirst out ov every nook and corner in your Holiness's blessed carcidge."

The Pope ordhered up the ingredients, and they were brought in by the head butler.

"That'll not do at all," says his Riv'rence, "the ingredients won't combine in due proportion unless ye do as I bid yes. Send up the housekeeper," says he, "for a faymale hand is ondispinsably necessary to produce the adaption of the particles and the concurrence of the corpus'cles, widout which you might boil till morning and never fetch the cruds off ov it."

Well, the Pope whispered to his head butler, and by and by up there comes an ould faggot ov a *Cuillean*, that was enough to frighten a horse from his oats.

"Don't thry for to desave me," says his Riv'rence, "for it's no use, I tell yes. Send up the housekeeper, I bid yes: I seen her presarving gooseberries in the panthry as I came up: she has eyes as black as a sloe," says he, "and cheeks like the rose in June; and sorra taste ov this celestial mixthir shall crass the lips ov man or mortéal this blessed night till she stirs the same up wid her own delicate little finger."

"Misther Maguire," says the Pope, "it's very unproper ov you to spake that way ov my housekeeper: I won't allow it, sir."

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"Honor bright, your Holiness," says his Riv'rence, laying his hand on his heart.

"O, by this and by that, Misther Maguire," says the Pope, "I'll have none of your insinivations; I don't care who sees my whole household," says he; "I don't care if all the faymales undher my roof was paraded down the High Street of Room," says he.

"O, it's plain to be seen how little you care who sees them," says his Riv'rence. "You're afeard, now, if I was to see your housekeeper that I'd say she was too handsome."

"No, I'm not!" says the Pope. "I don't care who sees her," says he. "Anthony," says he to the head butler, "bid Eliza throw her apron over her head, and come up here." Wasn't that stout in the blessed man? Well, my dear, up she came, stepping like a three-year-old, and blushing like the brake o' day; for though her apron was thrown over her head as she came forrid, till you could barely see the tip ov her chin,—more, be token, there was a lovely dimple in it, as I've been tould,—yet she let it shlip a bit to one side, by chance like, jist as she got fornenst the fire, and if she wouldn't have given his Riv'rence a shot if he hadn't been a priest, it's no matther.

"Now, my dear," says he, "you must take that skillet and hould it over the fire till the milk comes to a blood hate; and the way you'll know that will be by stirring it onc't or twice wid the little finger ov your right hand, afore you put in the butther; not that I misdoubt," says he, "but that the same finger's fairer nor the whitest milk that ever came from the tit."

"None of your deludhering talk to the young woman, sir," says the Pope, mighty stern. "Stir the posset as he bids you, Eliza, and then be off wid yourself," says he.

"I beg your Holiness's pardon ten thousand times."

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says his Riv'rence, "I'm sure I meant nothing on-proper; I hope I'm uncapable ov any sich dirilection of my duty," says he. "But, merciful Saver!" he cried out, jumping up on a suddent, "look behind you, your Holiness,—I'm blest but the room's on fire!"

Sure enough, the candle fell down that minit, and was near setting fire to the windy-curtains, and there was some bustle, as you may suppose, getting things put to rights. And now I have to tell you ov a really onpleasant occurrence. If I was a Prodesan that was in it, I'd say that while the Pope's back was turned, Father Tom made free wid the two lips of Miss Eliza; but, upon my conscience, I believe it was a mere mistake that his Holiness fell into on account of his being an ould man and not having aither his eyesight or his hearing very perfect. At any rate, it can't be denied but that he had a sthrong imprission that sich was the case; for he wheeled about as quick as thought, jist as his Riv'rence was sitting down, and charged him wid the offince plain and plump. "Is it kissing my housekeeper before my face you are, you villain!" says he. "Go down out o' this," says he, to Miss Eliza, "and do you be packing off wid you," he says to Father Tom, "for it's not safe, so it isn't, to have the likes ov you in a house where there's temptation in your way."

"Is it me?" says his Riv'rence; "why, what would your Holiness be at, at all? Sure I wasn't doing no such thing."

"Would you have me doubt the evidence ov my sinses?" says the Pope; "would you have me doubt the testimony ov my eyes and ears?" says he.

"Indeed I would so," says his Riv'rence, "if they pretend to have informed your Holiness ov any sich foolishness."

"Why," says the Pope, "I've seen you after kissing Eliza as plain as I see the nose on your face; I heard

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the smack you gave her as plain as ever I heard thunder."

"And how do you know whether you see the nose on my face or not?" says his Riv'rence, "and how do you know whether what you thought was thunder was thunder at all? Them operations on the sinses," says he, "comprises only particular corporal emotions, connected wid sartain confused percptions called sinsations, and isn't to be depended upon at all. If we were to follow them blind guides we might jist as well turn heretics at onc't. 'Pon my secret word, your Holiness, it's neither charitable nor orthodox ov you to set up the testimony ov your eyes and ears agin the character ov a clergyman. And now, see how aisy it is to explain all them phwenomena that perplexed you. I ris and went over beside the young woman because the skillet was boiling over, to help her save the dhrop ov liquor that was in it; and as for the noise you heard, my dear man, it was neither more nor less nor myself dhrawing the cork out ov this blissed bottle."

"Don't offer to thrape that upon me!" says the Pope; "here's the cork in the bottle still, as tight as a wedge."

"I beg your pardon," says his Riv'rence, "that's not the cork at all," says he; "I dhrew the cork a good two minits ago, and it's very purtily spitted on the end ov this blessed corkshcrew at this prisint moment; how-andiver you can't see it, because it's only its real prisince that's in it. But that appearance that you call a cork," says he, "is nothing but the outward spacies and external qualities of the cortical nathur. Them's nothing but the accidents of the cork that you're looking at and handling; but, as I tould you afore, the real cork's dhrew and is here prisint on the end ov this nate little insthument, and it was the noise I made in dhrawing

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it, and nothing else, that you mistook for the sound ov the *pogue*."

You know there was no conthravening what he said; and the Pope couldn't openly deny it. Howandiver he thried to pick a hole in it this way. "Granting," says he, "that there is the differ you say betwixt the reality ov the cork and these cortical accidents; and that it's quite possible, as you allidge, that the throe cork is really prisint on the end ov the shcrew, while the accidents keep the mouth ov the bottle stopped—still," says he, "I can't undherstand, though willing to acquit you, how the dhrawing ov the real cork, that's onpalpable and widout accidents, could produce the accident ov that sinsible explosion I heard jist now."

"All I can say," says his Riv'rence, "is that it was a rale accident, anyhow."

"Ay," says the Pope, "the kiss you gev Eliza, you mane."

"No," says his Riv'rence, "but the report I made."

"I don't doubt you," says the Pope.

"No cork could be dhrew with less noise," says his Riv'rence.

"It would be hard for anything to be less nor nothing, barring algebra," says the Pope.

"I can prove to the conthrary," says his Riv'rence. "This glass ov whiskey is less nor that tumbler ov punch, and that tumbler ov punch is nothing to this jug ov scaltheen."

"Do you judge by superficial misure or by the liquid contents?" says the Pope.

"Don't stop me, betwixt my premises and my conclusion," says his Riv'rence; "*Ergo*, this glass ov whiskey is less than nothing; and for that raison I see no harm in life in adding it to the contents ov the same jug, just by way ov a frost-nail."

"Adding what's less nor nothing," says the Pope,

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"is subtraction according to algebra, so here goes to make the rule good," says he, filling his tumbler wid the blessed stuff, and sitting down again at the table, for the anger didn't stay two minits on him, the good-hearted ould sowl.

"Two minuses make one plus," says his Riv'rence, as ready as you plase, "and that'll account for the increased daycrement I mane to take the liberty of producing in the same mixed quantity," says he, follying his Holiness's epistolical example.

"By all that's good," says the Pope, "that's the best stuff I ever tasted; you call it a mix'd quantity, but I say it's prime."

"Since it's ov the first ordher, then," says his Riv'rence, "we'll have the less deffeequilty in reducing it to a simple equation."

"You'll have no fractions at my side, anyhow," says the Pope. "Faix, I'm afear'd," says he, "it's only too aisly ov solution our sum is like to be."

"Never fear for that," says his Riv'rence, "I've a good stick ov surds here in the bottle; for I tell you it will take us a long time to exthtract the root ov it, at the rate we're going on."

"What makes you call the blessed quart an irrational quantity?" says the Pope.

"Because it's too much for one and too little for two," says his Riv'rence.

"Clear it ov its coefficient, and we'll thry," says the Pope.

"Hand me over the exponent, then," says his Riv'rence.

"What's that?" says the Pope.

"The shcrew, to be sure," says his Riv'rence.

"What for?" says the Pope.

"To dhraw the cork," says his Riv'rence.

"Sure, the cork's dhrew," says the Pope.

## COMEDY

"But the sperets can't get out on account ov the accidents that's stuck in the neck ov the bottle," says his Riv'rence.

"Accident ought to be passable to sperit," says the Pope, "and that makes me suspect that the reality ov the cork's in it afther all."

"That's a barony-masia," says his Riv'rence, "and I'm not bound to answer it. But the fact is, that it's the accidents ov the sperits, too, that's in it, and the reality's passed out through the cortical spacies, as you say; for, you may have observed, we've both been in real good sperits ever since the cork was dhrawn, and where else would the real sperits come from if they wouldn't come out ov the bottle?"

"Well, then," says the Pope, "since we've got the reality, there's no use throubling ourselves wid the accidents."

"O, begad," says his Riv'rence, "the accidents is very essential, too; for a man may be in the best ov good sperits, as far as his immaterial part goes, and yet need the accidental qualities ov good liquor to hunt the sensible thirst out ov him." So he dhraws the cork in earnest, and sets about brewing the other skillet ov *scaltheen*; but faix, he had to get up the ingradients this time by the hands ov ould Moley; though devil a taste ov her little finger he'd let widin a yard ov the same coction.

But, my dear, here's the "Freeman's Journal," and we'll see what's the news afore we finish the residuary proceedings of their two Holinesses.

## CHAPTER V

### THE REASON WHY FATHER TOM WAS NOT MADE A CARDINAL

*Hurroo*, my darlings!—didn't I tell you it 'ud never do? Success to bould John Tuam and the ould siminary ov Firdramore! O, more power to your Grace every day you rise, 'tis you that has broken their Boord into shivers undher your feet! Sure, and isn't it a proud day for Ireland, this blessed feast ov the chair ov Saint Pether? Isn't Carlisle and Whateley smashed to pieces, and their whole college of swaddling teachers knocked into smidhereens. John Tuam, your sowl, has tuck his pasthoral staff in his hand and beathen them out o' Connaught as fast as ever Pathric druve the sar-pints into Clew Bay.

Poor ould Mat Kevanagh, if he was alive this day, 'tis he would be the happy man. "My curse upon their g'ographies and Bibles," he used to say; "where's the use ov perplexing the poor childre wid what we don't undherstand ourselves?" No use at all, in troth, and so I said from the first myself.

Well, thank God and his Grace, we'll have no more thrigonometry nor scripther in Connaught. We'll hould our lodges every Saturday night, as we used to do, wid our chairman behind the masher's desk, and we'll hear our mass every Sunday morning wid the blessed priest standing afore the same.

I wisht to goodness I hadn't parted wid my Seven Champions ov Christendom and Freney the Robber: they're books that'll be in great requist in Leithrim as

## COMEDY

soon as the pasthoral gets wind. Glory be to God! I've done wid their lecthirs,—they may all go and be d—d wid their consumption and production.

I'm off to Tallymactaggart before daylight in the morning, where I'll thry whether a sod or two o' turf can't consume a cart-load ov heresy, and whether a weekly meeting ov the lodge can't produce a new thay-ory ov rint.

But afore I take my lave ov you, I may as well finish my story about poor Father Tom that I hear is coming up to slate the heretics in Adam and Eve during the Lint.

The Pope—and indeed it ill became a good Catholic to say anything agin him—no more would I, only that his Riv'rence was in it—but you see the fact ov it is, that the Pope was as envious as ever he could be, at seeing himself sacked right and left by Father Tom; and bate out o' the face, the way he was, on every science and subjec' that was started. So, not to be outdone altogether, he says to his Riv'rence, "You're a man that's fond of the brute crayation, I hear, Mistor Maguire?"

"I don't deny it," says his Riv'rence. "I've dogs that I'm willing to run agin any man's, ay, or to match them agin any other dogs in the world for genteel edication and polite manners," says he.

"I'll hould you a pound," says the Pope, "that I've a quadhruped in my possession that's a wiser baste nor any dog in your kennel."

"Done," says his Riv'rence, and they staked the money.

"What can this larned quadhruped o' yours do?" says his Riv'rence.

"It's my mule," says the Pope, "and, if you were to offer her goolden oats and clover off the meadows o' Paradise, sorra taste ov aither she'd let pass her teeth

## FATHER TOM AND THE POPE

till the first mass is over every Sunday or holiday in the year."

"Well, and what 'ud you say if I showed you a baste ov mine," says his Riv'rence, "that, instead ov fasting till first mass is over only, fasts out the whole four and twenty hours ov every Wednesday and Friday in the week as reg'lar as a Christian?"

"O, be asy, Masther Maguire," says the Pope.

"You don't b'lieve me, don't you?" says his Riv'rence; "very well, I'll soon show you whether or no." And he put his knuckles in his mouth and gev a whistle that made the Pope stop his fingers in his ears. The aycho, my dear, was hardly done playing wid the cobwebs in the cornish, when the door flies open, and in jumps Spring. The Pope happened to be sitting next the door, betuxt him and his Riv'rence, and, may I never die, if he didn't clear him, thriple crown and all, at one spring. "God's presence be about us!" says the Pope, thinking it was an evil spirit come to fly away wid him for the lie that he had told in regard ov his mule (for it was nothing more nor a thrick that consisted in grazing the brute's teeth); but, seeing it was only one ov the greatest beauties ov a greyhound that he'd ever laid his epistolical eyes on, he soon recovered ov his fright, and began to pat him, while Father Tom ris and went to the sideboord, where he cut a slice ov pork, a slice ov beef, a slice ov mutton, and a slice ov salmon, and put them all on a plate thegither. "Here, Spring, my man," says he, setting the plate down afore him on the hearthstone, "here's your supper for you this blessed Friday night." Not a word more he said nor what I tell you; and, you may believe it or not, but it's the blessed truth that the dog, afther jist tasting the salmon and spitting it out again, lifted his nose out o' the plate, and stood wid his jaws wathering and his tail wagging, looking up in his Riv'-

## COMEDY

rence's face, as much as to say, "Give me your absolution, till I hide them temptations out o' my sight."

"There's a dog that knows his duty," says his Riv'rence; "there's a baste that knows how to conduct himself aither in the parlor or the field. You think him a good dog, looking at him here; but I wisht you seen him on the side ov Sleeve-an-Eirin! Be my soul, you'd say the hill was running away from undher him. O, I wisht you had been wid me," says he, never letting on to see the dog stale, "one day, last Lent, that I was coming from mass. Spring was near a quarther ov a mile behind me, for the childher was delaying him wid bread and butther at the chapel door; when a lump ov a hare jumped out ov the plantations ov Grouse Lodge and ran across the road; so I gev the whilloo, and knowing that she'd take the rise of the hill, I made over the ditch, and up through Mullaghcashel as hard as I could pelt, still keeping her in view, but afore I had gone a perch Spring seen her, and away the two went like the wind, up Drumrewy, and down Clooneen, and over the river, widout his being able onc't to turn her. Well, I run on till I come to the Diffagher, and through it I went, for the wather was low and I didn't mind being wet shod, and out on the other side, where I got up on a ditch, and seen sich a coorse as I'll be bound to say was never seen afore or since. If Spring turned that hare onc't that day, he turned her fifty times, up and down, back and for'ard, throughout and about. At last he run her right into the big quarryhole in Mullaghbawn, and when I went up to look for her fud, there I found him sthretched on his side, not able to stir a foot, and the hare lying about an inch afore his nose as dead as a door-nail, and divil a mark of a tooth upon her. Eh, Spring, isn't that throe?" says he. Just at that minit the clock sthruck twelve, and, before you could say thrap-sticks, Spring had the plateful

## FATHER TOM AND THE POPE

of mate consaled. "Now," says his Riv'rence, "hand me over my pound, for I've won my bate fairly."

"You'll excuse me," says the Pope, pocketing his money, "for we put the clock half an hour back, out ov compliment to your Riv'rence," says he, "and it was Sathurday morning afore he came up at all."

"Well, it's no matter," says his Riv'rence, putting back his pound-note in his pocket-pook. "Only," says he, "it's hardly fair to expect a brute baste to be so well skilled in the science ov chronology."

In troth his Riv'rence was badly used in the same bet, for he won it clever; and, indeed, I'm afeard the shabby way he was thrated had some effect in putting it into his mind to do what he did. "Will your Holiness take a blast ov the pipe?" says he, dhrawing out his dhudeen.

"I never smoke," says the Pope, "but I haven't the least objection to the smell of the tobaccay."

"O, you had betther take a dhraw," says his Riv'rence, "it'll relish the dhrink, that 'ud be too luscious entirely, widout something to flavor it."

"I had thoughts," said the Pope, wid the laste sign ov a hiccup on him, "ov getting up a broiled bone for the same purpose."

"Well," says his Riv'rence, "a broiled bone 'ud do no manner ov harm at this present time; but a smoke," says he, "'ud flavor both the devil and the dhrink."

"What sort o' tobaccy is it that's in it?" says the Pope.

"Raal nagur-head," says his Riv'rence, "a very mild and salubrious spacies ov the philosophic weed."

"Then, I don't care if I do take a dhraw," says the Pope. Then Father Tom held the coal himself till his Holiness had the pipe lit; and they sat widout saying anything worth mentioning for about five minutes.

At last the Pope says to his Riv'rence, "I dunna what gev me this plaguy hiccup," says he. "Dhrink

COMEDY

about," says he—"Begorra," he says, "I think I'm getting merrier 'an's good for me. Sing us a song, your Riv'rence," says he.

Father Tom then sung him Monatagrenage and the Bunch o' Rushes, and he was mighty well pleased wid both, keeping time wid his hands, and joining in the choruses, when his hiccup 'ud let him. At last, my dear, he opens the lower button ov his waistcoat, and the top one of his waistband, and calls to Masther Anthony to lift up one ov the windys. "I dunna what's wrong wid me, at all, at all," says he; "I'm mortal sick."

"I thrust," says his Riv'rence, "the pasthry that you ate at dinner hasn't disagreed wid your Holiness's stomach."

"Oh my! oh!" says the Pope, "what's this at all?" gasping for breath and as pale as a sheet, wid a could swate bursting out over his forehead, and the palms ov his hands spread out to cotch the air. "O my! O my!" says he, "fetch me a basin!—Don't spake to me. Oh!—oh!—blood alive!—O, my head, my head, hould my head!—oh!—ubh!—I'm poisoned!—ach!"

"It was them plaguy pasthries," says his Riv'rence. "Hould his head hard," says he, "and clap a wet cloth over his timpls. If you could only thry another dhraw o' the pipe, your Holiness, it 'ud set you to rights in no time."

"Carry me to bed," says the Pope, "and never let me see that wild Irish priest again. I'm poisoned by his manes—ubplsch!—ach—ach!—He dined wid Cardinal Wayld yestherday," says he, "and he's bribed him to take me off. Send for a confessor," says he, "for my lather end's approaching. My head's like to split—so it is!—O my! Oh my!—ubplsch!—ach!"

Well, his Riv'rence never thought it worth his while to make him an answer; but, when he seen how un-

## FATHER TOM AND THE POPE

gratefully he was used, aafter all his throuble in making the evening agreeable to the ould man, he called Spring and put the butt-end ov the second bottle into his pocket, and left the house widout once wishing "Good night, an' plaisant dhrames to you;" and, in troth, not one of *them* axed him to leave them a lock ov his hair.

That's the story as I heard it tould; but myself doesn't b'lieve over one-half of it. Howandiver, when all's done, it's a shame, so it is, that he's not a bishop this blessed day and hour, for, next to the goiant ov Saint Garlath's, he's out and out the cleverest fellow ov the whole jing-bang.



THE DIVERTING HISTORY  
OF JOHN GILPIN



Portrait of William Cowper

Portrait of William Cowper





# THE DIVERTING HISTORY OF JOHN GILPIN

*By William Cowper*

**J**OHN GILPIN was a citizen  
Of credit and renown,  
A train-band captain eke was he  
Of famous London Town.

John Gilpin's spouse said to her dear,  
"Though wedded we have been  
These twice ten tedious years, yet we  
No holiday have seen.

"To-morrow is our wedding-day,  
And we will then repair  
Unto the Bell at Edmonton,  
All in a chaise and pair.

"My sister and my sister's child,  
Myself, and children three,  
Will fill the chaise; so you must ride  
On horseback after we."

He soon replied, "I do admire  
Of womankind but one,  
And you are she, my dearest dear,  
Therefore it shall be done.

COMEDY

"I am a linendraper bold,  
As all the world doth know,  
And my good friend, the Calender,  
Will lend his horse to go."

Quoth Mrs. Gilpin, "That's well said;  
And for that wine is dear,  
We will be furnished with our own,  
Which is both bright and clear."

John Gilpin kissed his loving wife;  
O'erjoyed was he to find  
That, though on pleasure she was bent,  
She had a frugal mind.

The morning came, the chaise was brought,  
But yet was not allowed  
To drive up to the door, lest all  
Should say that she was proud.

So three doors off the chaise was stayed,  
Where they did all get in,  
Six precious souls, and all agog  
To dash through thick and thin.

Smack went the whip, round went the wheels,  
Were never folk so glad;  
The stones did rattle underneath,  
As if Cheapside were mad.

John Gilpin, at his horse's side,  
Seized fast the flowing mane,  
And up he got, in haste to ride,  
But soon came down again.

JOHN GILPIN

For saddle-tree scarce reached had he,  
His journey to begin,  
When, turning round his head, he saw  
Three customers come in.

So down he came; for loss of time,  
Although it grieved him sore,  
Yet loss of pence, full well he knew,  
Would trouble him much more.

'Twas long before the customers  
Were suited to their mind,  
When Betty, screaming, came down-stairs,  
"The wine is left behind!"

"Good lack!" quoth he, "yet bring it me,  
My leathern belt likewise,  
In which I bear my trusty sword  
When I do exercise."

Now Mistress Gilpin (careful soul!)  
Had two stone-bottles found,  
To hold the liquor that she loved,  
And keep it safe and sound.

Each bottle had a curling ear,  
Through which the belt he drew,  
And hung a bottle on each side,  
To make his balance true.

Then over all, that he might be  
Equipped from top to toe,  
His long red cloak, well brushed and neat,  
He manfully did throw.

COMEDY

Now see him mounted once again  
Upon his nimble steed,  
Full slowly pacing o'er the stones,  
With caution and good heed,

But finding soon a smoother road  
Beneath his well-shod feet,  
The snorting beast began to trot,  
Which galled him in his seat.

So, "Fair and softly," John he cried,  
But John he cried in vain ;  
That trot became a gallop soon,  
In spite of curb and rein.

So stooping down, as needs he must  
Who cannot sit upright,  
He grasped the mane with both his hands,  
And eke with all his might.

His horse, who never in that sort  
Had handled been before,  
What thing upon his back had got  
Did wonder more and more.

Away went Gilpin, neck or nought ;  
Away went hat and wig ;  
He little dreamt, when he set out,  
Of running such a rig.

The wind did blow, the cloak did fly,  
Like streamer long and gay,  
Till loop and button failing both,  
At last it flew away.

JOHN GILPIN

Then might all people well discern  
The bottles he had slung;  
A bottle swinging at each side,  
As hath been said or sung.

The dogs did bark, the children screamed,  
Up flew the windows all;  
And every soul cried out, "Well done!"  
As loud as he could bawl.

Away went Gilpin—who but he?  
His fame soon spread around,  
"He carries weight! he rides a race!  
'Tis for a thousand pound!"

And still as fast as he drew near,  
'Twas wonderful to view  
How in a trice the turnpike men  
Their gates wide open threw.

And now, as he went bowing down  
His reeking head full low,  
The bottles twain behind his back  
Were shattered at a blow.

Down ran the wine into the road,  
Most piteous to be seen,  
Which made his horse's flanks to smoke  
As they had basted been.

But still he seemed to carry weight,  
With leathern girdle braced;  
For all might see the bottle necks  
Still dangling at his waist.

COMEDY

Thus all through merry Islington  
These gambols he did play,  
Until he came unto the wash  
Of Edmonton so gay ;

And there he threw the wash about  
On both sides of the way,  
Just like unto a trundling mop,  
Or a wild goose at play.

At Edmonton his loving wife  
From the balcony spied  
Her tender husband, wondering much  
To see how he did ride.

“Stop, stop, John Gilpin!—Here’s the house”—  
They all aloud did cry ;  
“The dinner waits, and we are tired” ;  
Said Gilpin, “So am I !”

But yet his horse was not a whit  
Inclined to tarry there ;  
For why? his owner had a house  
Full ten miles off, at Ware.

So like an arrow swift he flew,  
Shot by an archer strong ;  
So did he fly—which brings me to  
The middle of my song.

Away went Gilpin, out of breath,  
And sore against his will,  
Till, at his friend the Calender’s,  
His horse at last stood still.

JOHN GILPIN

The Calender, amazed to see  
His neighbor in such trim,  
Laid down his pipe, flew to the gate,  
And thus accosted him :

“What news? what news? your tidings tell ;  
Tell me you must and shall—  
Say, why bare-headed you are come,  
Or why you come at all?”

Now Gilpin had a pleasant wit,  
And loved a timely joke ;  
And thus unto the Calender,  
In merry guise, he spoke :

“I came because your horse would come ;  
And, if I well forebode,  
My hat and wig will soon be here,  
They are upon the road.”

The Calender, right glad to find  
His friend in merry pin,  
Returned him not a single word,  
But to the house went in ;

Whence straight he came, with hat and wig,  
A wig that flowed behind ;  
A hat not much the worse for wear,  
Each comely in its kind.

He held them up, and in his turn  
Thus showed his ready wit ;  
“My head is twice as big as yours,  
They therefore needs must fit.

COMEDY

“But let me scrape the dust away  
That hangs upon your face ;  
And stop and eat, for well you may  
Be in a hungry case.”

Said John, “It is my wedding-day,  
And all the world would stare,  
If wife should dine at Edmonton,  
And I should dine at Ware.”

So, turning to his horse, he said,  
“I am in haste to dine ;  
'Twas for your pleasure you came here,  
You shall go back for mine.”

Ah, luckless speech, and bootless boast !  
For which he paid full dear ;  
For, while he spake, a braying ass  
Did sing most loud and clear ;

Whereat his horse did snort, as he  
Had heard a lion roar,  
And galloped off with all his might,  
As he had done before.

Away went Gilpin, and away  
Went Gilpin's hat and wig ;  
He lost them sooner than at first,  
For why?—they were too big.

Now Mrs. Gilpin when she saw  
Her husband posting down  
Into the country far away,  
She pulled out half-a-crown ;

JOHN GILPIN

And thus unto the youth she said,  
That drove them to the Bell,  
"This shall be yours, when you bring back  
My husband safe and well."

The youth did ride, and soon did meet  
John coming back amain ;  
Whom in a trice he tried to stop,  
By catching at his rein ;

But not performing what he meant,  
And gladly would have done,  
The frightened steed he frightened more,  
And made him faster run.

Away went Gilpin, and away  
Went postboy at his heels,  
The postboy's horse right glad to miss  
The rumbling of the wheels.

Six gentlemen upon the road  
Thus seeing Gilpin fly,  
With postboy scampering in the rear,  
They raised a hue and cry :

"Stop thief !—stop thief !—a highwayman !"  
Not one of them was mute ;  
And all and each that passed that way  
Did join in the pursuit.

And now the turnpike gates again  
Flew open in short space :  
The toll-men thinking, as before,  
That Gilpin rode a race.

COMEDY

And so he did, and won it too,  
For he got first to town:  
Nor stopped till where he had got up  
He did again get down.

Now let us sing, long live the king,  
And Gilpin, long live he ;  
And, when he next doth ride abroad,  
May I be there to see.

AN INSPIRED LOBBYIST



## AN INSPIRED LOBBYIST

*By J. W. DeForest*

**A** CERTAIN fallen angel (politeness toward his numerous and influential friends forbids me to mention his name abruptly) lately entered into the body of Mr. Ananias Pullwool, of Washington, D. C.

As the said body was a capacious one, having been greatly enlarged circumferentially since it acquired its full longitude, there was accommodation in it for both the soul of Pullwool himself (it was a very little one) and for his distinguished visitant. Indeed, there was so much room in it that they never crowded each other, and Pullwool hardly knew, if he even so much as mistrusted, that there was a chap in with him. But other people must have been aware of this double tenantry, or at least must have been shrewdly suspicious of it, for it soon became quite common to hear fellows say, "Pullwool has got the Devil in him."

There was, indeed, a remarkable change—a change not so much moral as physical and mental—in this gentleman's ways of deporting and behaving himself. From being loggy in movement and slow, if not absolutely dull, in mind, he became wonderfully agile and energetic. He had been a lobbyist, and he remained a lobbyist still, but such a different one, so much more vigorous, eager, clever and impudent, that his best

## COMEDY

friends (if he could be said to have any friends) scarcely knew him for the same Pullwool. His fat fingers were in the buttonholes of Congressmen from the time when they put those buttonholes on in the morning to the time when they took them off at night. He seemed to be at one and the same moment treating some honorable member in the barroom of the Arlington and running another honorable member to cover in the committee-rooms of the Capitol. He log-rolled bills which nobody else believed could be log-rolled, and he pocketed fees which absolutely and point-blank refused to go into other people's pockets. During this short period of his life he was the most successful and famous lobbyist in Washington, and the most sought after by the most rascally and desperate claimants of unlawful millions.

But, like many another man who has the Devil in him, Mr. Pullwool ran his luck until he ran himself into trouble. An investigating committee pounced upon him; he was put in confinement for refusing to answer questions; his filings were held up to the execration of the envious both by virtuous members and a virtuous press; and when he at last got out of durance he found it good to quit the District of Columbia for a season. Thus it happened that Mr. Pullwool and his eminent lodger took the cars and went to and fro upon the earth seeking what they might devour.

In the course of their travels they arrived in a little State, which may have been Rhode Island, or may have been Connecticut, or may have been one of the Pleiades, but which, at all events, had two capitals. Without regard to Morse's Gazetteer, or to whatever other Gazetteer may now be in currency, we shall affirm that one of these capitals was called Slowburg and the other Fastburg. For some hundreds of years

## AN INSPIRED LOBBYIST

(let us say five hundred, in order to be sure and get it high enough) Slowburg and Fastburg had shared between them, turn and turn about, year on and year off, all the gubernatorial and legislative pomps and emoluments that the said State had to bestow. On the 1st of April of every odd year the governor, preceded by citizen soldiers, straddling or curvetting through the mud—the governor, followed by twenty barouches full of eminent citizens, who were not known to be eminent at any other time, but who made a rush for a ride on this occasion as certain old ladies do at funerals—the governor, taking off his hat to pavements full of citizens of all ages, sizes and colors, who did not pretend to be eminent—the governor, catching a fresh cold at every corner, and wishing the whole thing were passing at the equator,—the governor triumphantly entered Slowburg,—observe, Slowburg,—read his always long message there, and convened the legislature there. On the 1st of April of every even year the same governor, or a better one who had succeeded him, went through the same ceremonies in Fastburg. Each of these capitals boasted, or rather blushed over, a shabby old barn of a State House, and each of them maintained a company of foot-guards and ditto of horse-guards, the latter very loose in their saddles. In each the hotels and boarding-houses had a full year and a lean year, according as the legislature sat in the one or in the other. In each there was a loud call for fresh shad and stewed oysters, or a comparatively feeble call for fresh shad and stewed oysters, under the same biennial conditions.

Such was the oscillation of grandeur and power between the two cities. It was an old-time arrangement, and like many other old-fashioned things, as, for instance, wood fires in open fireplaces, it had not only its substantial merits, but its superficial inconveniences.

## COMEDY

Every year certain ancient officials were obliged to pack up hundreds of public documents and expedite them from Fastburg to Slowburg, or from Slowburg back to Fastburg. Every year there was an expense of a few dollars on this account, which the State treasurer figured up with agonies of terror, and which the opposition roared at as if the administration could have helped it. The State-Houses were two mere deformities of patched plaster and leprous whitewash; they were such shapeless, graceless, dilapidated wigwams that no sensitive patriot could look at them without wanting to fly to the uttermost parts of the earth; and yet it was not possible to build new ones, and hardly possible to obtain appropriations enough to shingle out the weather; for Fastburg would vote no money to adorn Slowburg, and Slowburg was equally niggardly toward Fastburg. The same jealousy produced the same frugality in the management of other public institutions, so that the patients of the lunatic asylum were not much better lodged and fed than the average sane citizen, and the gallows-birds in the State's prison were brought down to a temperance which caused admirers of that species of fowl to tremble with indignation. In short, the two capitals were as much at odds as the two poles of a magnet, and the results of this repulsion were not all of them worthy of hysterical admiration.

But disadvantages seesawed with disadvantages. In this double-ender of a State political jobbery was at fault, because it had no headquarters. It could not get together a ring; it could not raise a corps of lobbyists. Such few axe-grinders as there were had to dodge back and forth between the Fastburg grindstone and the Slowburg grindstone, without ever fairly getting their tools sharpened. Legislature here and legislature there; it was like guessing at a pea between two

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thimbles; you could hardly put your finger on the right one. Then what one capital favored the other disfavored; and between them appropriations were kicked and hustled under the table; the grandest of railroad schemes shrunk into waste-paper baskets; in short, the public treasury was next door to the unapproachable. Such, indeed, was the desperate condition of lobbyists in this State that, had it contained a single philanthropist of the advanced radical stripe, he would surely have brought in a bill for their relief and encouragement.

Into the midst of this happily divided community dropped Mr. Ananias Pullwool with the Devil in him. It remains to be seen whether this pair could figure up anything worth pocketing out of the problem of two capitals.

It was one of the even years, and the legislature met in Fastburg, and the little city was brimful. Mr. Pullwool with difficulty found a place for himself without causing the population to slop over. Of course, he went to a hotel, for he needed to make as many acquaintances as possible, and he knew that a bar was a perfect hot-house for ripening such friends as he cared for. He took the best room he could get; and as soon as chance favored he took a better one, with parlor attached; and on the sideboard in the parlor he always had cigars and decanters. The result was that in a week or so he was on jovial terms with several senators, numerous members of the lower house, and all the members of the "third house." But lobbying did not work in Fastburg as Mr. Pullwool had found it to work in other capitals. He exhibited the most dazzling double-edged axes, but nobody would grind them; he pointed out the most attractive and convenient of logs for rolling, but nobody would put a lever to them.

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"What the doose does this mean?" he at last inquired of Mr. Josiah Dicker, a member who had smoked dozens of his cigars and drunk quarts out of his decanters. "I don't understand this little old legislature at all, Mr. Dicker. Nobody wants to make any money; at least, nobody has the spirit to try to make any. And yet the State is full; never been bled a drop; full as a tick. What does it mean?"

Mr. Dicker looked disconsolate. Perhaps it may be worth a moment's time to explain that he could not well look otherwise. Broken in fortune and broken in health, he was a failure and knew it. His large forehead showed power, and he was, in fact, a lawyer of some ability; and still he could not support his family, could not keep a mold of mortgages from creeping all over his house-lot, and had so many creditors that he could not walk the streets comfortably. The trouble lay in hard drinking, with its resultant waste of time, infidelity to trust, and impatience of application. Thin, haggard, duskily pallid, deeply wrinkled at forty, his black eyes watery and set in baggy circles of a dull brown, his lean, dark hands shaky and dirty, his linen wrinkled and buttonless, his clothing frayed and unbrushed, he was an impersonation of failure. He had gone into the legislature with a desperate hope of somehow finding money in it, and as yet he had discovered nothing more than his beggarly three dollars a day, and he felt himself more than ever a failure. No wonder that he wore an air of profound depression, approaching to absolute wretchedness and threatening suicide.

He looked the more cast down by contrast with the successful Mr. Pullwool, gaudily alight with satin and jewelry, and shining with deceit. Pullwool, by the way, although a dandy (that is, such a dandy as one sees in gambling-saloons and behind liquor bars),

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was far from being a thing of beauty. He was so obnoxiously gross and shapeless, that it seemed as if he did it on purpose and to be irritating. His fat head was big enough to make a dwarf of, hunchback and all. His mottled cheeks were vast and pendulous to that degree that they inspired the imaginative beholder with terror, as reminding him of avalanches and landslides which might slip their hold at the slightest shock and plunge downward in a path of destruction. One puffy eyelid dropped in a sinister way; obviously that was the eye that the Devil had selected for his own; he kept it well curtained for purposes of concealment. Looking out of this peep-hole, the Satanic badger could see a short, thick nose, and by leaning forward a little he could get a glimpse of a broad chin of several stories. Another unpleasing feature was a full set of false teeth, which grinned in a ravenous fashion that was truly disquieting, as if they were capable of devouring the whole internal revenue. Finally, this continent of physiognomy was diversified by a gigantic hairy wart, which sprouted defiantly from the temple nearest the game eye, as though Lucifer had accidentally poked one of his horns through. Mr. Dicker, who was a sensitive, squeamish man (as drunkards sometimes are, through bad digestion and shaky nerves), could hardly endure the sight of this wart, and always wanted to ask Pullwool why he didn't cut it off.

"What's the meaning of it all?" persisted the Washington wire-puller, surveying the Fastburg wire-puller with bland superiority, much as the city mouse may have surveyed the country mouse.

"Two capitals," responded Dicker, withdrawing his nervous glance from the wart, and locking his hands over one knee to quiet their trembling.

Mr. Pullwool, having the Old Harry in him, and being consequently full of all malice and subtlety, per-

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ceived at once the full scope and force of the explanation.

"I see," he said, dropping gently back into his arm-chair, with the plethoric, soft movement of a subsiding pillow. The puckers of his cumbrous eyelids drew a little closer together; his bilious eyes peered out cautiously between them, like sallow assassins watching through curtained windows; for a minute or so he kept up what might without hyperbole be called a devil of a thinking.

"I've got it," he broke out at last. "Dicker, I want you to bring in a bill to make Fastburg the only capital."

"What is the use?" asked the legislator, looking more disconsolate, more hopeless than ever. "Slowburg will oppose it and beat it."

"Never you mind," persisted Mr. Pullwool. "You bring in your little bill and stand up for it like a man. There's money in it. You don't see it? Well, I do; I'm used to seeing money in things; and in this case I see it plain. As sure as whiskey is whiskey, there's money in it."

Mr. Pullwool's usually dull and, so to speak, extinct countenance was fairly alight and aflame with exultation. It was almost a wonder that his tallowy person did not gutter beneath the blaze, like an over-fat candle under the flaring of a wick too large for it.

"Well, I'll bring in the bill," agreed Mr. Dicker, catching the enthusiasm of his counselor and shaking off his lethargy. He perceived a dim promise of fees, and at the sight his load of despondency dropped away from him, as Christian's burden loosened in presence of the cross. He looked a little like the confident, resolute Tom Dicker who twenty years before had graduated from college the brightest, bravest, most

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eloquent fellow in his class, and the one who seemed to have before him the finest future.

"Snacks!" said Mr. Pullwool.

At this brazen word Mr. Dicker's countenance fell again; he was ashamed to talk so frankly about plundering his fellow-citizens; "a little grain of conscience turned him sour."

"I will take pay for whatever I can do as a lawyer," he stammered.

"Get out!" laughed the Satanic one. "You just take all there is a-going! You need it bad enough. I know when a man's hard up. I know the signs. I've been as bad off as you; had to look all ways for five dollars; had to play second fiddle and say thanky. But what I offer you ain't a second fiddle. It's as good a chance as my own. Even divides. One-half to you and one-half to me. You know the people and I know the ropes. It's a fair bargain. What do you say?"

Mr. Dicker thought of his decayed practice and his unpaid bills; and flipping overboard his little grain of conscience he said, "Snacks."

"All right," grinned Pullwool, his teeth gleaming alarmingly. "Word of a gentleman," he added, extending his pulpy hand, loaded with ostentatious rings, and grasping Dicker's recoiling fingers. "Harness up your little bill as quickly as you can, and drive it like Jehu. Fastburg to be the only capital. Slowburg no claims at all, historical, geographical, or economic. The old arrangement a humbug; as inconvenient as a fifth wheel of a coach; costs the State thousands of greenbacks every year. Figure it all up statistically and dab it over with your shiniest rhetoric and make a big thing of it every way. That's what you've got to do; that's your little biz. I'll tend to the rest."

"I don't quite see where the money is to come from," observed Mr. Dicker.

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"Leave that to me," said the veteran of the lobbies; "my name is Pullwool, and I know how to pull the wool over men's eyes, and then I know how to get at their britches-pockets. You bring in your bill and make your speech. Will you do it?"

"Yes," answered Dicker, bolting all scruples in another half tumbler of brandy.

He kept his word. As promptly as parliamentary forms and mysteries would allow, there was a bill under the astonished noses of honorable lawgivers removing the seat of legislation from Slowburg and centering it in Fastburg. This bill Mr. Thomas Dicker supported with that fluency and fiery enthusiasm of oratory which had for a time enabled him to show as the foremost man of his State. Great was the excitement, great the rejoicing and anger. The press of Fastburg sent forth shrieks of exultation, and the press of Slowburg responded with growlings of disgust. The two capitals and the two geographical sections which they represented were ready to fire Parrott guns at each other, without regard to life and property in the adjoining regions of the earth. If there was a citizen of the little Commonwealth who did not hear of this bill and did not talk of it, it was because that citizen was as deaf as a post and as dumb as an oyster. Ordinary political distinctions were forgotten, and the old party-whips could not manage their very wheel-horses, who went snorting and kicking over the traces in all directions. In short, both in the legislature and out of it, nothing was thought of but the question of the removal of the capital.

Among the loudest of the agitators was Mr. Pullwool; not that he cared one straw whether the capital went to Fastburg, or to Slowburg, or to Ballyhack; but for the money which he thought he saw in the agitation he did care mightly, and to get that money he labored

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with a zeal that was not of this world alone. At the table of his hotel, and in the barroom of the same institution, and in the lobbies of the legislative hall, and in editorial sanctums and barbers' shops, and all other nooks of gossip, he trumpeted the claims of Fastburg as if that little city were the New Jerusalem, and deserved to be the metropolis of the sidereal universe. All sorts of trickeries, too; he sent spurious telegrams and got fictitious items into the newspapers; he lied through every medium known to the highest civilization. Great, surely, was his success, for the row which he raised was tremendous. But a row alone was not enough; it was the mere breeze upon the surface of the waters; the treasure-ship below was still to be drawn up and gutted.

"It will cost money," he whispered confidentially to capitalists and land-owners. "We must have the sinews of war, or we can't carry it on. There's your city lots goin' to double in value if this bill goes through. What per cent. will you pay on the advance? That's the question. Put your hands in your pockets and pull 'em out full, and put back ten times as much. It's a sure investment; warranted to yield a hundred per cent.; the safest and biggest thing a-going."

Capitalists and land-owners and merchants hearkened and believed and subscribed. The slyest old hunks in Fastburg put a faltering forefinger into his long pocket-book, touched a greenback which had been laid away there as neatly as a corpse in its coffin, and resurrected it for the use of Mr. Pullwool. By tens, by twenties, by fifties and by hundreds the dollars of the ambitious citizens of the little metropolis were charmed into the portemonnaie of this rattlesnake of a lobbyist.

"I never saw a greener set," chuckled Pullwool. "By

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jiminy, I believe they'd shell out for a bill to make their town a seaport, if it was a hundred miles from a drop of water."

But he was not content with individual subscriptions, and conscientiously scorned himself until he had got at the city treasury.

"The corporation must pony up," he insisted, with the mayor. "This bill is just shaking in the wind for lack of money. Fastburg must come down with the dust. You ought to see to it. What are you chief magistrates for? Ain't it to tend to the welfare of the city?"

"Look here now; you call the common council together; secret session, you understand. You call 'em together and let me talk to 'em. I want to make the loons comprehend that it's their duty to vote something handsome for this measure."

The mayor hummed and hawed one way, and then he hawed and hummed the other way, and the result was that he granted the request. There was a secret session in the council-room, with his honor at the top of the long green table, with a row of more or less respectable functionaries on either side of it, and with Mr. Pullwool and the Devil at the bottom. Of course, it is not to be supposed that this last-named personage was visible to the others, or that they had more than a vague suspicion of his presence. Had he fully revealed himself, had he plainly exhibited his horns and hoofs, or even so much as uncorked his perfume-bottle of brimstone, it is more than probable that the city authorities would have been exceedingly scandalized, and they might have adjourned the session. As it was, seeing nothing more disagreeable than the obese form of the lobbyist, they listened calmly while he unfolded his project.

Mr. Pullwool spoke at length, and to Fastburg ears eloquently. Fastburg must be the sole capital; it had

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every claim, historical, geographical, and commercial, to that distinction; it ought, could, would and should be the sole capital; that was the substance of his exordium.

"But, gentlemen, it will cost," he went on. "There is an unscrupulous and furious opposition to the measure. The other side—those fellows from Slowburg and vicinity—are putting their hands into their britches-pockets. You must put your hands into yours. The thing will be worth millions to Fastburg. But it will cost thousands. Are you ready to fork over? *Are you ready?*"

"What's the figure?" asked one of the councilmen. "What do you estimate?"

"Gentlemen, I shall astonish *some* of you," answered Mr. Pullwool, cunningly. It was well put; it was as much as to say, "I shall astonish the green ones; of course, the really strong heads among you won't be in the least bothered." "I estimate," he continued, "that the city treasury will have to put up a good round sum, say a hundred thousand dollars, be it more or less."

A murmur of surprise, of chagrin, and of something like indignation ran along the line of official mustaches. "Nonsense," "The dickens," "Can't be done," "We can't think of it," broke out several councilmen, in a distinctly unparliamentary manner.

"Gentlemen, one moment," pleaded Pullwool, passing his greasy smile around the company, as though it were some kind of refreshment. "Look at the whole job. We must have lawyers; we must have newspapers in all parts of the State; we must have writers to work up the historical claims of the city; we must have fellows to buttonhole honorable members; we must have fees for honorable members themselves. How can you do it for less?"

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Then he showed a schedule; so much to this wire-puller and that and the other; so much apiece to so many able editors; so much for eminent legal counsel; finally, a trifle for himself. And one hundred thousand dollars or thereabouts was what the schedule footed up, turn it whichever way you would.

Of course, this common council of Fastburg did not dare to vote such a sum for such a purpose. Mr. Pullwool had not expected that it would; all that he had hoped for was the half of it; but that half he got.

"Did they do it?" breathlessly inquired Tom Dicker of him, when he returned to the hotel.

"They done it," calmly, yet triumphantly, responded Mr. Pullwool.

"Thunder!" exclaimed the amazed Dicker. "You are the most extraordinary man! You must have the very Devil in you!"

Instead of being startled by this alarming supposition, Mr. Pullwool looked gratified. People thus possessed generally do look gratified when the possession is alluded to.

But the inspired lobbyist did not pass his time in wearing an aspect of satisfaction. When there was money to get and to spend, he could run his fat off almost as fast as if he were pouring it into candle-moulds. The ring—the famous capital ring of Fastburg—must be seen to, its fingers greased, and its energy quickened. Before he rolled his apple-dumpling of a figure into bed that night he had interviewed Smith and Brown, the editors; Jones and Robinson, the lawyers; Smooth and Slow, the literary characters, various lobbyists, and various lawgivers.

"Work, gentlemen, and capitalize Fastburg and get your dividends," was his inspiring message to one and all. He promised Smith and Brown ten dollars for every editorial and five dollars for every humbugging

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telegram, and two dollars for every telling item. Jones and Robinson were to have five hundred dollars apiece for concurrent legal statements of the claim of the city; Smooth and Slow, as being merely authors and so not accustomed to obtain much for their labor, got a hundred dollars between them for working up the case historically. To the lobbyists and members Pullwool was munificent; it seemed as if those gentlemen could not be paid enough for their "influence;" as if they alone had that kind of time which is money. Only, while dealing liberally with them, the inspired one did not forget himself. A thousand for Mr. Sly; yes, Mr. Sly was to receipt for a thousand; but he must let half of it stick to Pullwool fingers. The same arrangement was made with Mr. Green and Mr. Sharp and Mr. Bummer and Mr. Pickpurse and Mr. Buncombe. It was a game of snacks, half to you and half to me; and sometimes it was more than snacks,—a thousand for you two and a thousand for me, too.

With such a greasing of the wheels, you may imagine that the machinery of the ring worked to a charm. In the city and in the legislature and throughout the State there was the liveliest buzzing and humming and clicking of political wheels and cranks and cogs that had ever been known in those hitherto pastoral localities. The case of Fastburg against Slowburg was put in a hundred ways, and proved as sure as it was put. It really seemed to the eager burghers as if they had already heard the clink of hammers on a new State House, and beheld a perpetual legislature sitting on their fences and curbstones until the edifice should be finished. The great wire-puller and his gang of stipendiaries were the objects of popular gratitude and adoration. The landlord of the hotel which Mr. Pullwool patronized actually would not take pay for that gentleman's board.

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"No, sir!" declared this simple Boniface, turning crimson with enthusiasm. "You are going to put thousands of dollars into my purse, and I'll take nothing out of yours. And any little thing in the way of cigars and whiskey that you want, sir, why, call for it. It's my treat, sir."

"Thank you, sir," kindly smiled the great man. "That's what I call the square thing. Mr. Boniface, you are a gentleman and a scholar; and I'll mention your admirable house to my friends. By the way, I shall have to leave you for a few days."

"Going to leave us!" exclaimed Mr. Boniface, aghast. "I hope not till this job is put through."

"I must run about a bit," muttered Pullwool, confidentially. "A little turn through the State, you understand, to stir up the country districts. Some of the members ain't as hot as they should be, and I want to set their constituents after them. Nothing like getting on a few deputations."

"Oh, exactly!" chuckled Mr. Boniface, ramming his hands into his pockets and cheerfully jingling a bunch of keys and a penknife for lack of silver. It was strange indeed that he should actually see the Devil in Mr. Pullwool's eye and should not have a suspicion that he was in danger of being humbugged by him. "And your rooms?" he suggested. "How about them?"

"I keep them," replied the lobbyist, grandly, as if blaspheming the expense—to Boniface. "Our friends must have a little hole to meet in. And while you are about it, Mr. Boniface, see that they get something to drink and smoke; and we'll settle it between us."

"Pre—cisely!" laughed the landlord, as much as to say, "My treat!"

And so Mr. Pullwool, that Pericles and Lorenzo de' Medici rolled in one, departed for a season from the

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city which he ruled and blessed. Did he run about the State and preach and crusade in behalf of Fastburg, and stir up the bucolic populations to stir up their representatives in its favor? Not a bit of it; the place that he went to, and the only place that he went to, was Slowburg; yes, covering up his tracks in his usual careful style, he made direct for the rival of Fastburg. What did he propose to do there? Oh, how can we reveal the whole duplicity and turpitude of Ananias Pullwool? The subject is too vast for a merely human pen; it requires the literary ability of a recording angel. Well, we must get our feeble lever under this boulder of wickedness as we can, and do our faint best to expose all the reptiles and slimy things beneath it.

The first person whom this apostle of lobbyism called upon in Slowburg was the mayor of that tottering capital.

"My name is Pullwool," he said to the official, and he said it with an almost enviable ease of impudence, for he was used to introducing himself to people who despised and detested him. "I want to see you confidentially about this capital ring which is making so much trouble."

"I thought you were in it," replied the mayor, turning very red in the face, for he had heard of Mr. Pullwool as the leader of said ring; and being an iracund man, he was ready to knock his head off.

"In it!" exclaimed the possessed one. "I wish I was. It's a fat thing. More than fifty thousand dollars paid out already!"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the mayor in despair.

"By the way, this is between ourselves," added Pullwool. "You take it so, I hope. Word of honor, eh?"

"Why, if you have anything to communicate that

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will help us, why, of course, I promise secrecy," stammered the mayor. "Yes, certainly; word of honor."

"Well, I've been looking about among those fellows a little," continued Ananias. "I've kept my eyes and ears open. It's a way I have. And I've learned a thing or two that it will be to your advantage to know. Yes, sir! fifty thousand dollars!—the city has voted it and paid it, and the ring has got it. That's why they are all working so. And depend upon it, they'll carry the legislature and turn Slowburg out to grass, unless you wake up and do something."

"By heavens!" exclaimed the iracund mayor, turning red again. "It's a piece of confounded rascality. It ought to be exposed."

"No, don't expose it," put in Mr. Pullwool, somewhat alarmed. "That game never works. Of course, they'd deny it and swear you down, for bribing witnesses is as easy as bribing members. I'll tell you what to do. Beat them at their own weapons. Raise a purse that will swamp theirs. That's the way the world goes. It's an auction. The highest bidder gets the article."

Well, the result of it all was that the city magnates of Slowburg did just what had been done by the city magnates of Fastburg, only instead of voting fifty thousand dollars into the pockets of the ring, they voted sixty thousand. With a portion of this money about him, and with authority to draw on the rest on proper vouchers, Mr. Pullwool, his tongue in his cheek, bade farewell to his new allies. As a further proof of the ready wit and solid impudence of this sublime politician and model of American statesmen, let me here introduce a brief anecdote. Leaving Slowburg by the cars, he encountered a gentleman from Fastburg, who saluted him with tokens of amazement, and said, "What are you doing here, Mr. Pullwool?"

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“Oh, just breaking up these fellows a little,” whispered the man with the Devil in him. “They were making too strong a fight. I had to *see* some of them,” putting one hand behind his back and rubbing his fingers together, to signify that there had been a taking of bribes. “But be shady about it. For the sake of the good cause, keep quiet. Mum’s the word.”

The reader can imagine how briskly the fight between the two capitals reopened when Mr. Pullwool reentered the lobby. Slowburg now had its adherents, and they struggled like men who saw money in their warfare, and they struggled not in vain. To cut a very long story very short, to sum the whole of an exciting drama in one sentence, the legislature kicked overboard the bill to make Fastburg the sole seat of government. Nothing had come of the whole row, except that a pair of simple little cities had spent over one hundred thousand dollars, and that the capital ring, fighting on both sides and drawing pay from both sides, had lined its pockets, while the great creator of the ring had crammed his to bursting.

“What does this mean?” demanded the partially honest and entirely puzzled Tom Dicker, when he had discovered by an unofficial count of noses how things were going. “Fastburg has spent all its money for nothing. It won’t be sole capital, after all.”

“I never expected it would be,” replied Pullwool, so tickled by the Devil that was in him that he could not help laughing. “I never wanted it to be. Why, it would spoil the little game. This is a trick that can be played every year.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Mr. Dicker, and was dumb with astonishment for a minute.

“Didn’t you see through it before?” grinned the grand master of all guile and subtlety.

“I did not,” confessed Mr. Dicker, with a mixture

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of shame and abhorrence. "Well," he presently added, recovering himself, "shall we settle?"

"Oh, certainly, if you are ready," smiled Pullwool, with the air of a man who has something coming to him.

"And what, exactly, will be my share?" asked Dicker, humbly.

"What do you mean?" stared Pullwool, apparently in the extremity of amazement.

"You said *snacks*, didn't you?" urged Dicker, trembling violently.

"Well, *snacks* it is," replied Pullwool. "Haven't you had a thousand?"

"Yes," admitted Dicker.

"Then you owe me five hundred."

Mr. Dicker did not faint, though he came very near it, but he staggered out of the room as white as a sheet, for he was utterly crushed by this diabolical impudence.

That very day Mr. Pullwool left for Washington, and the Devil left for *his* place, each of them sure to find the other when he wanted him, if indeed their roads lay apart.

THE GHOST BABY



## THE GHOST BABY

*Blackwood's Magazine*

**S**OME years ago business took me down to the little town of Tlemsbury, and as I expected to have to stay some time, my uncle, John, offered to lend me his house there, as it was standing empty.

Everybody who has ever been at Tlemsbury—and that means almost everybody—knows the Old House, though they may not know its name. It is the large red-brick building with a pediment and a white porch, standing a little back from the road on your left hand side as you go down to the bridge. It is a fine old place, believed to have been built by Sir Christopher Wren, and contains carvings by Grinling Gibbons and all kinds of treasures for those who can appreciate them—has a garden, with a little terrace on the river, and a ghost. The possession of the last mentioned curiosity, however, was not generally appreciated.

Of course, the great, old house was much too large for a solitary, unprotected male. Accordingly, only one or two rooms had been prepared for me—the dining-room, a pleasant little morning-room to serve for sitting and working in, and a splendid bedroom on the first floor looking out on the river. I was shown over it all by an old woman of pleasant appearance, who had been put in there, with her daughter, by my uncle, to look after the house when he was away. I think she was an old nurse of his or something of that kind. My own impression is that my uncle's early upbringing

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must have been a work of considerable difficulty; he seemed to have such a number of pensioners who had acted in some capacity connected with it.

The old woman was inclined to be apologetic about the bedroom she had prepared for me, saying she had had so little notice, and that none of the other rooms were fit to sleep in; to be sure, it was the best room in the house, and she didn't believe there was any truth in the stories that were told about it.

"Why," I asked, "is this the haunted room?"

"Well, sir, it is the one where the people says the noises are; but, of course, a gentleman like yourself don't care for none of them stories."

I was not so sure about that. I had no great anxiety to be introduced to a ghost, supposing such things to exist. I made an attempt at an incredulous laugh and assured Mrs. Creed that it didn't matter; but I was somewhat uncomfortable all the same.

However, I got a very good dinner, which restored my spirits, and turned to afterwards at a bit of work I had to do, till all thoughts of the haunted room went out of my head. After going through a series of very abstruse calculations, I tried to refresh myself with a novel and fell fast asleep in my chair.

Some people say that a short sleep in your chair refreshes you; but, for my part, I always find that I wake up sleepier than before. At any rate, all I was good for when I woke up this time was to tumble upstairs and into bed as soon as possible, and there I fell fast asleep again. When I awoke next, which I suppose must have been between one and two o'clock, it was with the consciousness that I was no longer alone.

The doors of what I had supposed to be a great press at the other end of the room stood wide open, disclosing a small secret room built in the thickness of the wall.

Out of this room now came forth a figure—a lady

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dressed in a strange, antiquated fashion, a long, loose, blue dress of the kind which, I believe, is called a sacque and with a great tower of a headdress, carrying a baby in her arms and singing softly to it as she walked to and fro, without taking the least notice of me.

After the first minutes of utter bewilderment I began to be conscious that this must be the ghost that people spoke of; certainly it was not a substantial living creature. I cannot deny that I felt a curious kind of thrill at the idea that I was actually face to face with a disembodied spirit, even going so far as a general tendency to shivering and chattering of teeth; but these feelings I succeeded in repressing. One thing which conduced greatly to strengthen my resolution was the moral impossibility of getting out of bed to run away. I have always been brought up in the strictest principles of propriety, and I could not take a step which would be an outrage to the feelings of a lady, even of a ghost lady. Obviously it was my duty as a gentleman to remain quietly in bed.

The sense of duty is encouraging, and I began to feel quite composed, even with a soothing tendency to grumble; for, as I put it to myself, while my conduct at the present juncture is in the highest degree creditable, it serves to show, at the same time, how entirely unjustifiable is the conduct of a lady ghost in haunting a gentleman's bedroom. Comforted as I was with these reflections, it was somewhat disturbing to find, on looking up again, that the lady's eyes were fixed upon mine, though with no particularly terrible or malevolent expression. I returned her gaze as steadily as I could, and the lady, after a while, broke into a smile, and said in a pleasant but somewhat affected voice, "You are not afraid of me?"

"N—no, Madam. I don't think I am," I said, rather hesitatingly.

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"You are not quite sure?" said the apparition, kindly. "But I ask you the question with a serious purpose, and you must answer truthfully. Are you really not afraid of me?"

This was rather an awkward question, as the truth is that I was still rather uncomfortable; but I felt it must be answered in the affirmative. I had read ghost stories and I saw that the time was coming when the ghost would confide in me respecting the family papers behind the wainscoting or the treasure buried in the garden. Under these circumstances I determined that I would not be afraid.

After all, I said to myself, what is there to be afraid of? The lady, who was anxiously awaiting my answer, evidently meant me no harm; her appearance was in no way terrible—indeed, her face, though sadly thin and worn, showed traces of great beauty. There was nothing but the irrational horror of something that has died and yet lives—a condition of existence, by the way, in which we formally express our belief every Sunday. So I firmly and confidently replied, "I am not afraid of you."

"Are you quite, quite certain?" repeated the lady, anxiously. "Remember to whom you are speaking, and do not say so unless you are perfectly sure. I am a ghost, you know, a spirit. I have been dead and buried these hundred and fifty years. Are you still quite sure you are not afraid?"

Repressing what I felt to be an absurd inclination to shudder, I replied, "I am perfectly sure."

The lady gave a sigh of relief.

"You speak confidently, sir," she said, "and I believe truly. Heaven knows there is little enough to fear in me, yet you are the first that I have seen since I have haunted this apartment who could say so much. Your courage shall not go unrewarded. To you I feel that

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I can deliver the precious charge which I can no longer retain. Are you willing to receive it?"

"Madam," I replied, "you do me too much honor. I shall be proud to render you any assistance in my power."

The lady looked at me very seriously.

"It is a very great trust that I am about to impose upon you; and though it cannot fail to bring you great joy and happiness, it is one not to be lightly undertaken. Yet I cannot think I have chosen badly. You are young and inexperienced, but you seem to be kind and honest. You are sure that you are ready to receive this charge?"

I bowed in assent as well as in acknowledgment of the compliment, which only my duty as a faithful historian induces me to transcribe. At the same time, I may mention that it is an extremely difficult thing, when one is in bed, to bow to a lady with any degree of propriety, not to say grace. As for the trust, I decided it must be treasure, which I was probably intended to apply to some particular purpose.

"A hundred and fifty years ago," continued the apparition, "this poor child," meaning the baby she carried, "died here in my arms of privation and misery when I was hiding her from those who would have been her ruthless murderers. For that long term she has, according to our laws, remained such as she was in life, but now that the hundred and fifty years are gone, she will begin to grow older and bigger as if she were still a child of this world. Such is our law. It is not in my power to watch over her in the future; other duties call me elsewhere. Already I have often been compelled to absent myself, and now I can only hope to be able to visit her at long intervals. To you then, generous young man, I intrust my dearest hopes, the care of my beloved daughter. It will be your duty and

your pleasure alike to watch her grow in strength and in beauty ——”

“But good heavens, Madam,” I cried in alarm, “you don’t mean that——”

“To your kind and watchful guardianship—for kind and watchful I am sure that you will be—I hereby resign her. Under your care she will thrive better than if exposed to all the trouble and hardship that must fall to my lot.”

“But pardon me,” I interposed. “I really cannot for a moment——”

“Give me no thanks,” said the phantom, in a stately manner; “they are not needed. The task that is before you is no light one, and the obligation is not on your side alone.”

“I should think it wasn’t,” I replied, indignantly. “I had no intention of thanking you. I cannot entertain the idea of such a thing for a moment. I——”

“You have passed your word,” said the lady, coldly (she had now replaced the baby in a cradle in the secret room and was hushing it to sleep), “and it cannot be retracted. Fear not! she will bring happiness and prosperity to you. In after years she will be the joy and pride of her guardian.”

“But I won’t be her guardian,” I shouted, in desperation. “I can’t—I don’t know how; it is quite out of my power.”

“She is called Euphemia,” continued the lady, without noticing my words—“the Lady Euphemia Crancelin. I am the Countess of Ruetown, born a Mailcote, you know,” and she stepped back to the door of the secret room to take what was evidently intended to be a farewell look at the baby. I could only look on helplessly; I think if I had not been in bed I might have argued the point; but it was this very circumstance which put me at such a disadvantage all the time.

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"Farewell, my child," she continued. "Farewell, kind friend. Be assured that my daughter will well reward your care; but remember, also, that the gravest consequences may follow any remissness or neglect. Once more, farewell!"

And she disappeared.

I don't know what happened next; I was left in a kind of dazed condition, and I think I must have gone to sleep because I didn't know what else to do. Anyhow, the next thing I was conscious of was waking up in the morning cheerful and comfortable, and utterly oblivious of ghosts and babies. The sun was shining brightly into the room, and I felt the kind of exhilaration that a fine morning naturally brings to a young and healthy man untroubled by duns, in good training, and with a fair but not excessive day's work before him. I got up and dressed quickly, and, having nearly finished my toilet, was looking out of the window at the river below, when I heard a slight sound behind me, and on turning round saw the doors of the secret room fly open of their own accord. In a moment the whole thing came back to my memory—the ghost and the baby and the whole scene of the night before. The cheery, hopeful prospects of a moment before were replaced by a sickening feeling of discouragement and disgust. The sun went out like a candle; the river was muddy and smelled nasty; the temperature of the room fell at least ten degrees. I daresay this will be considered a very disagreeable way of regarding the matter; but it is not easy to realize the feelings of a man who suddenly finds himself placed in the supremely absurd and embarrassing position of guardian to a baby ghost.

There was the little room exactly as I had seen it the night before, and the cradle in the middle of it. After

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some hesitation I determined to go and see with my own eyes, in broad daylight, whether there really was a baby there or not. After all, perhaps it had all been a dream; perhaps I had not really received the extraordinary charge that I fancied the ghost had intrusted to me. Alas! my illusions on this point were soon dispelled. As I reached the door of the secret room a curious, inarticulate sound reached my ears—something between a crow and a chuckle, but indubitably proceeding from the throat of that blessed baby. While I was yet hesitating whether I should relieve my mind by substituting a different participle, I heard the old housekeeper's footstep in the passage outside, and at the same moment the folding-doors banged to again within an inch of my nose.

"Breakfast is ready, sir," said Mrs. Creed, and glad of any interruption I hastily followed her downstairs.

Later on, when I went about my work, I mentally carried that baby about with me everywhere. What was I to do? All my hopes of advancement and success in life seemed irremediably blighted. What career can be open to a man who has always to be dragging a fine young ghost about with him? Who will give him employment? People don't bargain for that kind of thing. Besides, what was I expected to do in my capacity of guardian? For, after all, I was guardian to the blessed little nuisance, and I should have to behave myself as such. I am a conscientious man, I believe, and not at all given to shirking my obligations, but really the task of bringing up a ghost baby was rather too much for me. I caught myself wondering whether the Foundling Hospital would take it in, setting aside the difficulty of carriage—and I knew that I should be perfectly unable to transfer the baby to any place where it didn't want to go. I felt it to be my duty to watch over its infancy myself. It was to me

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that the mother had confided her child. I tried to persuade myself that I had a noble task before me—to bring up a ghost in the way it should go; but, in any case, it was very difficult to know how to set about it.

While I revolved these schemes about the baby's future I had made little progress in personal acquaintance with it. When the folding-doors flew open—and they always did in the morning, and often at night—I would go up to the cradle and look into it. At first I could only see something very shadowy and indistinct, but it gradually became clearer, and after the first week I could make out its little features plainly enough.

I don't know whether it was pretty. All the babies I have seen yet appear to me to be very much alike in that respect; but it seemed a nice baby enough. It crowed and chuckled, and held out its little arms to me when I came in, though it was a good fortnight before I mustered up courage to say "Good-morning, Baby," which I felt politeness required of me. Then I used to stand for a few minutes, not exactly knowing what to do next, while the Baby crowed away like a little bantam, and then I would say, "Well, good-bye for the present, Baby," and go out, locking the doors after me and taking away the key—an entirely useless precaution, by the way. It generally appeared quite satisfied, and, at all events, it very rarely cried, which was what I was most afraid of. On the whole, I judged it to be a good-natured, easy-going sort of infant, whom it would not be difficult to get on with—if it was a necessity of fate that I was to be saddled with a baby of one kind or another.

Later on, indeed, we got to be very good friends, Euphemia and I. I felt it to be a great advance the day I first addressed it as Euphemia, and it was greatly delighted itself. It was always pleased to see me. I couldn't go and see it very often on account of my

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work, and also to keep the servants from finding out anything about it.

Mrs. Creed and her daughter had already spoken several times about the noises that were heard in the cupboard; but fortunately, though they could hear it cry—or, rather, crow, for it hardly every did cry—it was quite invisible to them. I knew this, because Mrs. Creed once came into my room when I had carried the cradle out on to the hearthrug in my own room—for the Baby always enjoyed the fire, and I was afraid of trying to carry it alone, as it looked so very unsubstantial. Mrs. Creed came in suddenly—which she had no business to do—and though she was startled at the sight of the cradle she certainly saw nothing in it. The cradle, I said, I had found in the lumber-room, and brought downstairs to examine it, and, indeed, it was a very curious piece of old carved-oak work, and very well worth examining.

As I have said, we got on very well for the present, but I was very uneasy in my mind about the future. In the first place, I could not stay in Temsbury forever, and what was the Baby to do when I had to go away? It is true that my difficulties upon this point were soon removed, when, being suddenly called away to London one day, I found, on going to my chambers in the evening, the Baby calmly reposing upon the chest of drawers in my bedroom. It seemed a rather uncomfortable resting-place, so I managed to improvise a kind of cradle out of my portmanteau, after turning all the things out. To this the Baby managed to transport itself somehow, and, on all future occasions when I had to leave Temsbury, this portmanteau served as its resting-place, and it seemed very comfortable. While, however, some of my uneasiness was removed by this discovery, it increased my anxieties for the future in another direction. A bachelor who is invariably ac-

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accompanied by a baby, of which he is absolutely incapable of giving what would be considered a satisfactory account is, undoubtedly, a suspicious character. It is true that the Baby was invisible to Mrs. Creed; but would it be the same thing with Alice Raynsley? I don't remember, by the way, whether I mentioned our engagement. She is Alice Morrison now, I am happy to say (my name is Robert Morrison). What would Alice think of my being in possession of an unnecessary infant like this? It was a very serious question.

At one time I thought of consulting the Society of Psychical Research; but I was afraid that if they could actually lay their hands on a real ghost, they would want to dissect it, or put it under a microscope, or something of that kind. On the other hand, they might not be able even to see it. Clearly, there was little help to be expected in my strange task from living man.

Under these circumstances, I began to consider whether I might not seek for aid among those who were not living. Ours is a country which simply teems with haunted houses, and it would be a reproach, indeed, if, in our civilized United Kingdom, there could not be found one ghost ready to hold out his hand to succor a helpless child. One of my oldest friends was at that time secretary to a society occupied in researches into the supernatural, and through his agency I determined to put forth such an appeal to the ghosts of Great Britain and Ireland as, I felt sure, would meet with a ready response. All I had to do was to find out some respectable old ghost who would either take charge of the Baby himself or seek out the mother and oblige her to take it back.

With this idea, I represented myself as an inquirer desirous of throwing more light on such subjects and

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not afraid of carrying out my researches in person. The society accepted my proposals with eagerness and pointed out to me a glorious enterprise which was waiting ready to my hand. A daring man was wanted to watch for the ghost in Grimleigh Manor, a fine old house belonging to the Duke of Birmingham, which had not been inhabited for some time, owing to the general terror caused by the apparition.

I closed with this offer at once. The Duke, who was to pay all expenses, drew out the programme of my operations, and one of his gamekeepers was appointed to be the companion of my watch.

I will not trouble my readers with all the negotiations and arrangements to be gone through before the eventful evening when Giles, the keeper, and I crept in as secretly as possible by the back door of the manor to begin our adventure. It was a fine autumn night, with a bright moon shining, so that there was no necessity for artificial light, of which I was very glad, for I am not sure that I should have liked to face the ghost in the dark, and yet I was required to observe the strictest secrecy.

The Grimleigh ghost was an armed knight, presumably some early member of the Duke's family, who haunted a long gallery, with a little room at the end of it, through which he used to walk. This room I had selected as my point of observation. In a dark corner I posted myself a little after eleven o'clock, the apparition being usually seen at about midnight, and gave my companion instructions to remain at the bottom of the staircase, and on no account to come up one step unless I called him—a course which seemed to be in perfect accordance with honest Giles' own inclination.

I don't suppose I waited more than an hour or so; but it seemed about five times as much. The thought of what the Baby would be doing was what principally oc-

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cupied me, though naturally, when my thoughts were a-wandering, they often reverted to Alice Raynsley, and I wished that Baby had never been born. And what was the use of wishing? The Baby was there, and I couldn't get rid of it. Anyhow, it would not be in my way that night.

At last I heard a heavy footstep coming along the gallery, and I cannot say that I was comfortable when I first heard it. The door was open; but from my corner I could not see anything of the ghost till it came into the room. I had been sure that it would be conscious of my presence; but it was not. An armed figure, such as had been described to me, merely came into the room, walked to the opposite wall and then back again, without heeding me or giving me a chance of speaking. It occurred to me that the figure was unusually heavy and awkward; its armor was very substantial and its demeanor by no means awe-inspiring.

I pushed forward as it stalked out again, and in the long gallery, lighted up as it was by the moon, I saw, to my utter amazement, the form of Euphemia apparently hanging in mid-air in some extraordinary fashion of its own—I never professed to really understand that Baby. I was not the only one who saw it. With a yell of terror the ghost dropped the lance and shield it carried and turned to rush back to the room, but at sight of me made a bolt for the staircase.

"Stop that man!" I shouted, and Giles came up quickly at the call; but the ghost no sooner saw him than it gave another scream, and fell down apparently insensible. We dragged the apparition into the hall, and on taking off its helmet and armor discovered as common and dull-looking a young boor as one would wish to see, now just coming to himself, but still evidently in a state of frantic terror.

"Mark **T**ester, that is," said Giles, coolly, as he tied the ghost's hands and feet. "Well, sir, this is a go!"

It was. We got the police over from the neighboring town, and instituted a thorough search. The house had been taken possession of by a fraternity of bad characters, living chiefly on burglary and poaching, with an occasional spice of highway robbery. Two or three of them were caught returning to their rendezvous before the discovery got wind. A number more were indicated in the statement of Mark Tester, who turned Queen's evidence, but only about six were brought to trial at all. The secrecy we had observed proved extremely fortunate, as the gang were perfectly unsuspecting, and that night had left only their greenest hand to look after the stolen property stored there, and to personate the harmless, necessary ghost who had been their surest defense. I was kept down there for some time to help in the investigations, and had a room prepared for me in the house, when the Baby turned up again at once, evidently much satisfied with itself, and in the best of tempers. She was always that, though, poor Euphemia! How she came to Grimleigh that night, how she knew what to do, and how or where she spent the night when she was not suspended in mid-air, like Mohammed's coffin, are questions that I do not feel called upon to solve.

"The Grimleigh Ghost" was the heading of many an article in the newspapers of that time, as I dare say many of my readers will remember. For a time I heard of nothing but praises of my own courage and sagacity—praises which I felt I did not deserve, as it was the Baby who had done it all. Commissions to examine into other apparitions poured in from various quarters, and I felt that I could not keep up my reputation without accepting some of them. If I had been in my sober senses, probably I should have remained

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satisfied with the laurels I had already gained, but I was certainly a little intoxicated with all the praises that were showered upon me. Besides, the Duke of Birmingham had forced upon me a very handsome check in return for my services, which I had not felt justified in refusing. I had done him a great service—Grimleigh Manor is his favorite residence now—or, rather, the Baby and I had; and if I could not have managed it without the Baby, no more would the Baby have ever taken any steps in the matter without me. Moreover, as I had all the inconveniences of being Euphemia's guardian, it was only right that I should get what good I could out of it.

These considerations, joined to a fresh success in discovering a really transparent imposture which had frightened some innocent rustics in an out-of-the-way Buckinghamshire village, led me, after long reflection and hesitation, to set up in business as a professional ghost-seeker. I announced myself as possessing exceptional capacities for discovering imposture in the case of supposed apparitions. I did not say that I relied upon Euphemia's assistance, because I felt that any mention of her would merely serve to disturb the public mind. My scale of fees was extremely moderate; expenses were, of course, to be paid, and board and lodging free during investigation. The other charges varied; so much was charged for the satisfactory exposure of a fraud, so much less for formally testifying to the existence of a ghost, and in cases where I was unable to make a decisive statement one way or another, nothing at all. The plan succeeded wonderfully; fresh orders arrived in shoals, and in a month's time I was in full career of business, with really more commissions than I could execute.

Of course, I exercised a certain discretion. I could do nothing without the Baby, and I never could think

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of taking that guileless infant into objectionable company. "Fullest references given and required" was on all my prospectuses, and I was quite as careful about the respectability of the ghost in question as of the family who owned it. Thus, for instance, I refused a very liberal offer from the Earl of Finsbury, who wished me to visit his country seat in Essex, where an ancestor of his lived very freely two hundred years ago, and is believed to keep it up still with his old boon companions in the old banqueting hall at Frimstead. nor was I willing to inconvenience Euphemia by the exposure to cold, and often to storm, consequent on watching for such specters as disport themselves in the open air. This led me to reject such cases as that of the Bleeding Nun who haunts the ruined cloister of Harminster, the Wild Huntsman of Gresleyford Chase, or Captain Crackhemp, the highwayman, who is still to be seen on bad nights riding about Banningham Heath.

The Baby took to the business at once, and I must say that its sagacity was unerring. I was often troubled at the idea that the money ought really to belong to it, and I used to cudgel my brains in search of some way of laying the profits out for its advantage. But Euphemia did not seem to care. Of course, I was looking out the whole time for some ghost of good character and charitable disposition who would help me to restore her to her mother's care, or otherwise provide for her future in a more suitable manner than I ever should be able to do. All my efforts in this direction failed. I saw a great number of ghosts whose appearance and general reputation inclined me to speak to them on the subject, but I could not get any of them to discuss the matter with me. There was the old Abbott of Greyford, the most venerable-looking old ghost I ever saw, who showed great favor to Euphemia, and gave her his blessing in the most paternal manner,

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but when I said "Amen!" he vanished at once. There was old Lady Dorothy Snailing at Webleyhurst, who kissed the baby and almost cried over it, but only shook her stick at me and was gone before I could think what I should say to her. The White Lady of Darkleton, the Prioress of Nonnancourt, the Grey Priest of Wrangley Grange, and many others, showed a distinct partiality to the Baby, but none of them would listen to what I had to say.

Absorbed as I was in my new profession, I had had little time left to see anything of the old friends of a quieter and less successful time. I am naturally a sociable fellow, and I felt this considerably. Even Alice Raynsley I only saw now and then, and she, too, said I was changed, but not as the others did. She spoke of the worn, worried look she had never seen in me before, and begged me to tell her what it was that lay so heavily on my mind. Sometimes I had thoughts of telling her all about it, but what would have been the good? Besides, I was doubtful whether I was at liberty to speak about the Baby to any one; doubtful, too, I dare say, whether she would believe such an improbable story. Something she must be told soon; for I had practically lost all hope of getting rid of the Baby, and, in that case, our engagement must be at an end, and I must devote myself in solitude to the duties of my guardianship. Some time, perhaps, when the Baby came of age—but that was a long time to look forward to.

It was a real pleasure to me, in this condition of affairs, to get an invitation to go down and spend a week with my old friend, George Kirby, at his place in Cumberland. There was a party of some ten or twelve people in the house, besides the host and hostess, all very friendly and merry, as far as I could make out.

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To make matters more cheerful, Kirby called me aside shortly after I arrived, and informed me that his wife was expecting Alice Raynsley down in a few days. I communicated this fact to Euphemia; but she seemed to care very little about it, and was altogether in a curious dreamy state I had never observed in her before.

The party at dinner that evening was a very jovial one, and there was a great deal of chaffing about my ghost-seeking experiences; but that I was accustomed to.

"Of course, we have put you in the haunted room," said Kirby; "I know that's the sort of company you like, and you're in luck, I can tell you. One of the maids saw the ghost less than a fortnight ago, and it's probably still about."

"I didn't know you had a ghost here," I answered.

"Oh, yes; we have—not of our own, you know—not a family ghost; they don't make those things at Leeds. It belongs to the old family who lived here ages ago—for this is really a very old house, though my father gave it a new outside—a great Cumberland family, the Mailcotes. What's the matter, Morrison? Find your orange too sour? Take some sugar with it."

"No, no, never mind; it's sweet enough," I said, hurriedly. "You said the Mailcotes?" I remembered that Euphemia's mother had told me she was a Mailcote.

"Yes, the Mailcotes of Birkenholme—great people in the old days. Birkenholme's the real name of this place, you know."

"And what is the ghost, Mr. Kirby?" asked one of the guests, laughing.

"Well, I can't say exactly," said our host; "it's a lady, I know—the Blue Lady, we call her, because, I believe, she wears a blue sacque—do take some sugar,

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Morrison; there's no good in making a martyr of yourself—but I have never seen her myself. I daresay Morrison will tell you all about her to-morrow."

There was a good deal more laughing and joking about the ghosts and much merry anticipation of the wonderful story I should have to tell in the morning. I myself was much excited by the little that Kirby had said about the ghost, all of which seemed so perfectly applicable to the apparition I had seen at Temsbury—the mother of Euphemia. Could it really be she? I wondered.

I got away to my room as early as I could, and waited anxiously for the appearance of the ghost. I had some idea of telling Euphemia about it, in case she might be able to exercise some kind of occult influence over her mother's spirit, and at least oblige her to appear and speak to me. But I decided against this plan. Though the Baby had practically been deserted by its mother, it might not be conscious of the fact, and, at any rate, I was not going to try to set any division between them, if such did not exist already. Respect of parents is one of the first Christian principles, and I am satisfied that if this was properly impressed upon all little ghosts, they would, in many cases, turn out much more creditable members of society than they are at present. Besides, the Baby was still in the same dreamy, quiescent kind of state, and I did not like to disturb it. Perhaps it was not well—and then came over me the dreadful thought, what on earth I should do if it fell ill. It was a contingency I had never thought of before, and the conviction that I should, in such a case, be wholly unable to do anything to relieve its sufferings was extremely painful. Clearly I was not fitted to be the Baby's guardian, and I looked forward anxiously to what seemed to be the only chance of getting her off my hands.

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Absorbed in these considerations, it was some time before I observed that the phantom I wished to speak with had already appeared in the room. Chancing to look towards the cradle, I now saw the same figure that I had seen before at Temsbury bending over the cradle and fondly caressing the Baby, who seemed equally delighted at the meeting. As I gazed at the pair the lady looked up and smiled, and I bowed, but otherwise she took no notice of me. Not knowing exactly what to do, I coughed once or twice in the hope of attracting her attention again; but as she took no notice, I determined to speak out boldly without waiting for her to address me.

"Madam," I began, "I—a—I—ahem—I believe I have the honor to address the Countess of Ruetown?" I said at last, in despair of finding something else to say.

The lady bowed slightly, with some appearance of astonishment at my audacity.

"I desire to speak to your ladyship concerning your daughter. I—I am not at all easy in my mind about her. I do not think——"

"Why, she is not ill?" said the Countess, anxiously interrupting me.

"N—no, not ill," I said—"not that I know of, at least—I am not sure—I believe not. But, Madam, I see how the mere suggestion of Euphemia——"

"Of the Lady Euphemia, you were saying," said the Countess, severely.

"The Lady Euphemia—exactly," I acquiesced, while thinking it was rather hard that one might not speak of one's own ward by her Christian name alone; "how the mere suggestion of her falling ill affects you. May I represent to you, Madam, how utterly unable I should be in such a case to give your daughter the care she required?"

"Do you mean to say," broke in the lady, indignantly, "that you would not do everything in your power——"

"In my power—certainly," said I, venturing to interrupt in my turn; "but that is just the point. The attentions which would be required in such a case would be beyond my power to give. In fact, Madam, I regret that experience has convinced me that there are many points in which it is quite impossible for a living man like myself to discharge the duties of the guardianship which you have been good enough to confer upon me."

"In other words, you wish to renounce the sacred charge I intrusted to you," said the Countess, sternly. "Is it not so?"

"Well—I—a—in fact, I must say I do think that that course would be the most satisfactory for all concerned."

"Strange," muttered the Countess, musingly—"unaccountable indeed;" then she cried suddenly, in a tone that rather frightened me: "Why do you say this? Is it not a great honor to you to be intrusted with the custody of my child? Has she not, even in this short time, brought happiness and prosperity to her guardian?"

"Well, yes," I admitted—"prosperity certainly, of a kind; but as to happiness, I am not quite so sure about that."

"Could any one be anything but happy with that sweet child?" said the lady, indignantly.

"She is a nice child," I agreed, for I wasn't going to be unjust to the Baby—"an uncommonly nice child—and certainly one ought to be very happy with her; but the fact is, I had hoped to be happy with somebody else. You see, Madam, I had already formed other ties, even at the time when I first had the honor of seeing you——"

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"And when you accepted the guardianship of my child," said the lady, severely.

"If you will excuse me, I did nothing of the kind. I had not the remotest idea what the charge was you were going to commit to me. If you had allowed me to explain then, I should have told you that I am engaged to be married, and I should have strongly protested against your proposal to make me the guardian of your child."

"You wish, then, to be relieved from the guardianship of my child? It is well, Sir. Such as I do not require to thrust their favors upon those who are unwilling to receive them. But remember, the prosperity which this charge would have brought to you is lost to you forever."

"I care little for that," I said—I was quite bold, now that there seemed some chance of success—"I only hope, Madam, that you are not thinking of taking this charge from me merely in order to impose it upon some other unfortunate man."

"You are mistaken, Sir," said the Countess, proudly; "I have only once asked a favor from mortal man, and assuredly I will never do so again. From henceforth my child remains with me, to share in all the miseries of my wandering, unhappy existence. It will be a pleasant thought for you," she added, with a flash of anger in her eyes, "in the happiness you have prepared for yourself, to think that from these dangers you might have saved her—and would not."

This was horrible. I began to feel that I must be acting like an absolute ruffian. The Countess had taken the Baby into her arms now, and stood looking defiantly at me. I felt that she might vanish at any moment and take the Baby with her; and though her doing so would relieve me of my personal difficulties,

## THE GHOST BABY

still it was my duty to try and do something for Euphemia.

"Madam," I said, at last, "I hope you will reflect before taking so serious a step. The Baby—I mean the Lady Euphemia—appears to me to be a young lady of great promise, and I think something better could be done for her. If you will allow me to say so, I doubt whether the profession of a ghost is one that a conscientious mother should bring up her child to."

"It is all that is left to us," said the lady, sadly; "what else can we do?"

"Of that, Madam, you must be a much better judge than I can be. Surely if you had power to put the Baby under my care, you must also be capable of disposing of it—I should say her—in some other more convenient manner. You yourself say that the life of a ghost is not a happy one, and I am sure it can only in very exceptional cases be considered useful. Do you not think, if representations were made in the proper quarters, it might be possible to relieve her, at least, from the life you were speaking of?"

"It is a strange proposal," said the lady, meditatively. "I had never thought that such a thing could be possible, but—yes, Sir, yes, perhaps you are right. In any case, it is worth trying. I will do anything to save my poor child from such a life, and if she can be free, what matters it what becomes of me?"

"Let me hope, Madam," said I, delighted at having carried my point, "that you also will obtain your freedom. And wh'ere we are upon this subject," I continued, thinking the opportunity a good one for laying down certain moral reflections which had occurred to me during my ghost-seeking career, "let me endeavor to explain to you, Lady Ruetown, the ideas which have been suggested to me by my own personal experiences, and which may prove of great value to yourself and

## COMEDY

your—a—companions in misfortune. Judging from what I have seen and heard, it is—a—my deliberate opinion that——”

I broke off abruptly, as I became suddenly conscious that my audience was gone, vanished in a moment, without even taking any leave of me, their benefactor, as I felt myself to be. I did, for a moment, see the Baby waving its little hand to me, but it did not show the least desire to stay. It is a pity, for I think I could have drawn attention to some facts which would have been of value to the ghost world, but it was not my fault.

When I come to think of it, I very much doubt whether the Baby was ever satisfied with the arrangement by which she was put under my care. I think she must have seen the absurdity of the position from the very beginning, but being a Baby of strong character, she determined to adapt herself to the circumstances, and certainly she succeeded wonderfully well. Poor Euphemia! I sometimes think I should like to see her again, but never from that time to this have I—or any other person, I believe—set eyes upon either mother or daughter.

There is hardly anything more to tell. Though the great obstacle to our happiness was removed by the Baby's disappearance, it was only a very short time ago that Alice Raynsley and I were married.

I have told her the story, and I am bound to admit that she does not believe it.

She thinks, however, that other people may, perhaps; at any rate, whether they do or not, I can assure them that the above is a true and faithful account of the circumstances which attended my extraordinary and probably unique position as guardian to a ghost baby.

MENDING THE CLOCK



## MENDING THE CLOCK

*By J. M. Barrie*

**I**T is a little American clock, which I got as a present about two years ago. The donor told me it cost half a guinea, but on inquiry at the shop where it was bought (this is what I always do when I get a present), I learned that the real price was four-and-sixpence. Up to this time I had been hesitating about buying a stand for it, but after that I determined not to do so. Since I got it, it has stood on my study mantelpiece, except once or twice at first, when its loud tick compelled me to wrap it up in flannel and bury it in the bottom of the drawer. Until a fortnight ago my clock went beautifully, and I have a feeling that had we treated it a little less hardly it would have continued to go well. One night a fortnight ago it stopped as if under the impression that I had forgotten to wind it up. I wound it up as far as possible, but after going for an hour it stopped again. Then I shook it and it went for five minutes. I strode into another room to ask who had been meddling with my clock, but no one had touched it. When I came back it was going again, but as soon as I sat down it stopped. I shook my fist at it, which terrified it into going for half a minute, and then it went creak, creak, like a clock in pain. The last thing it did before stopping finally was to strike nineteen.

For two days I left my clock serenely alone, nor

## COMEDY

would ever have annoyed myself with the thing had it not been for my visitors. I have a soul above mechanics, but when these visitors saw that my clock had stopped they expressed surprise at my not mending it. How different I must be, they said, from my brother, who had a passion for making himself generally useful. If the clock had been his he would have had it to pieces and put it right within the hour. I pointed out that my mind was so full of weightier matters that I could not descend to clocks, but they had not the brains to see that what prevented my mending the clock was not incapacity, but want of desire to do so. This has ever been the worry of my life, that, because I don't do certain things, people take it for granted that I can't do them. I took no prizes at school or college, but you entirely misunderstand me if you think that was because I could not take them. The fact is, that I had always a contempt for prizes and prizemen, and I have ever been one of the men who gather statistics to prove that it is the boy who sat at the foot of the class that makes his name in after life. I was that boy, and though I have not made my mark in life as yet, I could have done it had I wanted to do so as easily as I could mend a clock. My visitors, judging me by themselves, could not follow this argument, though I have given expression to it in their presence many times, and they were so ridiculous as to say it was a pity that my brother did not happen to be at home.

"Why, what do I need him for?" I asked, irritably.

"To mend the clock," they replied, and all the answer I made them was that if I wanted the clock mended I would mend it myself.

"But you don't know the way," they said.

"Do you really think," I asked them, "that I am the kind of man to be beaten by a little American clock?"

## MENDING THE CLOCK

They replied that that was their belief, at which I coldly changed the subject.

"Are you really going to attempt it?" they asked, as they departed.

"Not I," I said. "I have other things to do."

Nevertheless, the way they flung my brother at me annoyed me, and I returned straight from the door to the study to mend the clock. It amused me to picture their chagrin when they dropped in the next night and found my clock going beautifully. "Who mended it?" I fancied them asking, and I could not help practicing the careless reply, "Oh, I did it myself." Then I took the clock in my hands, and sat down to examine it.

The annoying thing, to begin with, was that there seemed to be no way in. The clock was practically hermetically sealed, for, though the back shook a little when I thumped it on my knee, I could see quite well that the back would not come off unless I broke the main-spring. I examined the clock carefully round and round, but to open the thing up was as impossible as to get into an egg without chipping the shell. I twisted and twirled it, but nothing would move. Then I raged at the idiots who made clocks that would not open. My mother came in about that time to ask how I was getting on.

"Getting on with what?" I asked.

"With the clock," she said.

"The clock," I growled, "is nothing to me," for it irritated me to hear her insinuating that I had been foiled.

"But I thought you were trying to mend it," she said.

"Not at all," I replied. "I have something else to do."

"What a pity," she said, "that Andrew is not here."

Andrew is the brother they are always flinging at me.

"He could have done nothing," I retorted, "for the asses made this clock not to open."

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"I'm sure it opens," my mother said.

"Why should you be sure?" I asked, fiercely.

"Because," she explained, "I never saw or heard of a clock that doesn't open."

"Then," I snarled, "you can both see and hear of it now"—and I pointed contemptuously at my clock.

She shook her head as she went out, and as soon as the door shut I hit the clock with my clenched fist, stunning my fourth finger. I had a presentiment that my mother was right about the clock's opening, and I feared she still labored under the delusion that I had been trying to mend the exasperating thing.

On the following day we had a visit from my friend Summer, and he had scarcely sat down in my study when he jumped up, exclaiming, "Hullo, is that the right time?"

I said to him that the clock had stopped, and he immediately took it on his knees. I looked at him sideways, and saw at once that he was the kind of man who knows about clocks. After shaking it he asked me what was wrong.

"It needs cleaning," I said at a venture, for if I had told him the whole story he might have thought that I did not know how to mend a clock.

"Then you have opened it and examined the works?" he asked, and, not to disappoint him, I answered yes.

"If it needs cleaning, why did you not clean it?" was his next question.

I hate inquisitiveness in a man, but I replied that I had not had time to clean it. He turned it round in his hands, and I knew what he was looking for before he said:

"I have never taken an American clock to pieces. Does it open in the ordinary way?"

This took me somewhat aback, but Summer being my guest, had to be answered.

## MENDING THE CLOCK

"Well," I said, cautiously, "it does and it doesn't."

He looked at it again, and then held it out to me, saying: "You had better open it yourself, seeing that you know the way."

There was a clock in the next room, and such a silence was there in my study after that remark that I could distinctly hear it ticking.

"Curiously unsettled weather," I said.

"Very," he answered. "But let me see how you get at the works of the clock."

"The fact is," I said, "that I don't want this clock mended: it ticks so loud that it disturbs me."

"Never mind," Summer said, "about that. I should like to have a look at its internals, and then we can stop it if you want to do so."

Summer talked in a light way, and I was by no means certain whether, once it was set agoing, the clock could be stopped so easily as he thought, but he was evidently determined to get inside.

"It is a curious little clock," I said to him, "a sort of puzzle, indeed, and it took me ten minutes to discover how to open it myself. Suppose you try to find out the way?"

"All right," Summer said, and then he tried to remove the glass.

"The glass doesn't come off, does it?" he asked.

"I'm not going to tell you," I replied.

"Stop a bit," said Summer, speaking to himself; "is it the feet that screw out?"

It had never struck me to try the feet. but I said: "Find out for yourself."

I sat watching with more interest than he gave me credit for, and very soon he had both the feet out; then he unscrewed the ring at the top, and then the clock came to pieces.

"I've done it," said Summer.

COMEDY

"Yes," I said, "but you have been a long time about it."  
He examined the clock with a practiced eye, and then—

"It doesn't seem to me," he said, "to be requiring cleaning."

A less cautious man than myself would have weakly yielded to the confidence of this assertion, and so have shown that he did not know about clocks.

"Oh, yes, it does," I said, in a decisive tone.

"Well," he said, "we had better clean it."

"I can't be bothered cleaning it," I replied, "but, if you like, you can clean it."

"Are they cleaned in the ordinary way, those American clocks?" he asked.

"Well," I said, "they are and they aren't."

"How should I clean it, then?" he asked.

"Oh, in the ordinary way," I replied.

Summer proceeded to clean it by blowing at the wheels, and after a time he said, "We'll try it now."

He put it together again and then wound it up, but it would not go.

"There is something else wrong with it," he said.

"We have not cleaned it properly," I explained.

"Clean it yourself," he replied, and flung out of the house.

After he had gone I took up the clock to see how he had opened it, and to my surprise it began to go. I laid it down triumphantly. At last I had mended it. When Summer came in an hour afterward he exclaimed—

"Hullo, it's going."

"Yes," I said, "I put it to rights after you went out."

"How did you do it?" he asked.

"I cleaned it properly," I replied.

As I spoke I was leaning against a mantelpiece, and I heard the clock beginning to make curious sounds. I

## MENDING THE CLOCK

gave the mantelpiece a shove with my elbow, and the clock went all right again.

Summer had not noticed. He remained in the room for half an hour, and all that time I dared not sit down. Had I not gone on shaking the mantelpiece the clock would have stopped at any moment. When he went at last I fell thankfully in a chair, and the clock had stopped before he was half-way downstairs. I shook it and it went for five minutes, and then stopped. I shook it again, and it went for two minutes. I shook it, and it went for half a minute. I shook it, and it did not go at all.

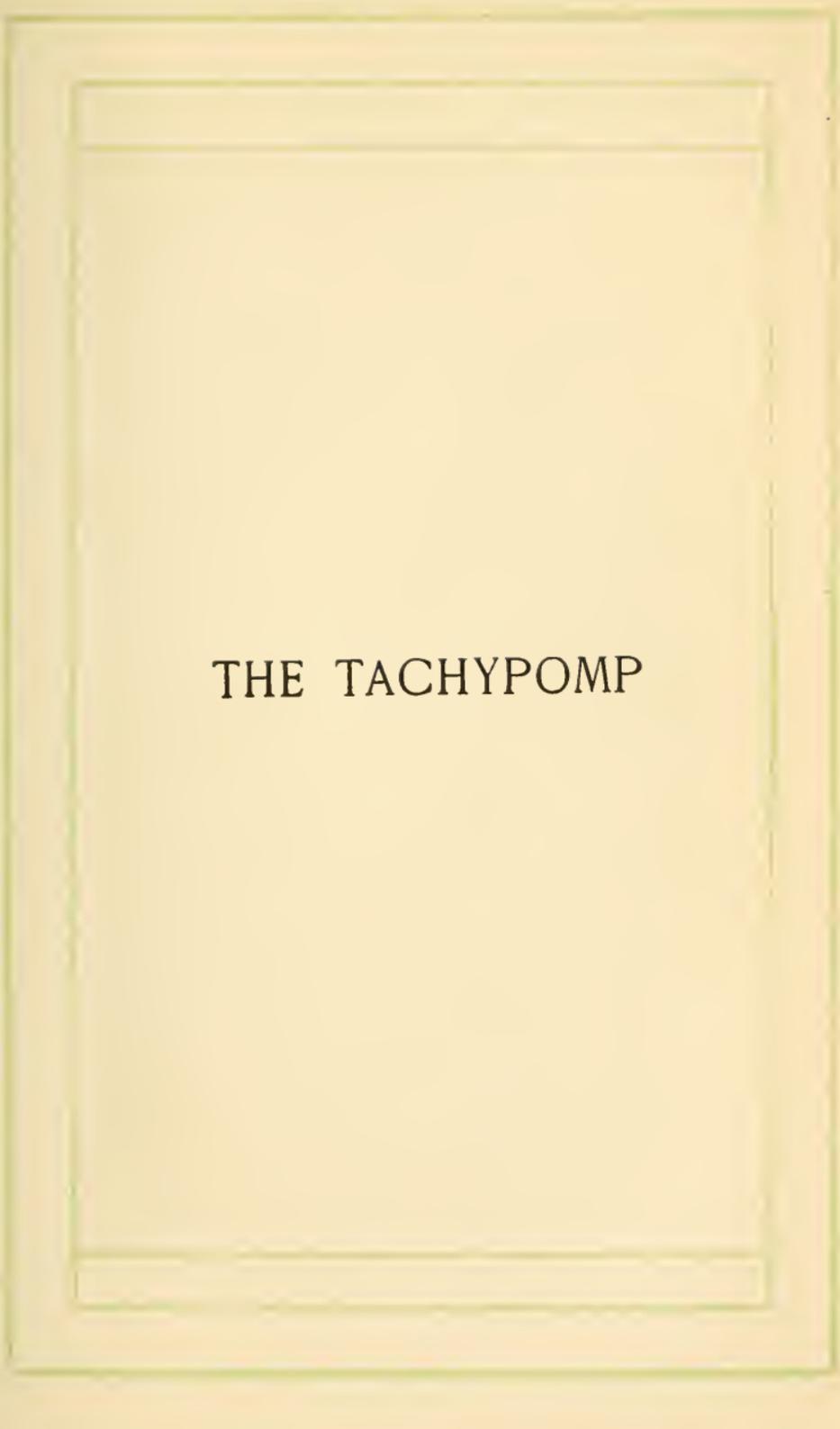
The day was fine, and my study window stood open. In a passion, I seized hold of that clock and flung it fiercely out into the garden. It struck against a tree and fell into a flower-bed.

Then I stood at a window sneering at it, when suddenly I started. I have mentioned that it has a very loud tick. Surely I heard it ticking! I ran into the garden.

The clock was going again! Concealing it beneath my coat, I brought it back to the study, and since then it has gone beautifully.

Everybody is delighted except Summer, who is naturally a little annoyed.





THE TACHYPOMP



# THE TACHYPOMP

A MATHEMATICAL DEMONSTRATION

*By E. P. Mitchell*

**T**HERE was nothing mysterious about Professor Surd's dislike for me. I was the only poor mathematician in an exceptionally mathematical class. The old gentleman sought the lecture-room every morning with eagerness, and left it reluctantly. For was it not a thing of joy to find seventy young men who, individually and collectively, preferred  $x$  to XX; who had rather differentiate than dissipate; and for whom the limbs of the heavenly bodies had more attractions than those of earthly stars upon the spectacular stage?

So affairs went on swimmingly between the Professor of Mathematics and the Junior Class at Polyp University. In every man of the seventy the sage saw the logarithm of a possible La Place, of a Sturm, or of a Newton. It was a delightful task for him to lead them through the pleasant valleys of conic sections, and beside the still waters of the integral calculus. Figuratively speaking, his problem was not a hard one. He had only to manipulate, and eliminate, and to raise to a higher power, and the triumphant result of examination day was assured.

But I was a disturbing element, a perplexing unknown quantity, which had somehow crept into the work, and which seriously threatened to impair the accuracy of his

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calculations. It was a touching sight to behold the venerable mathematician as he pleaded with me not so utterly to disregard precedent in the use of cotangents; or as he urged, with eyes almost tearful, that ordinates were dangerous things to trifle with. All in vain. More theorems went on to my cuff than into my head. Never did chalk do so much work to so little purpose. And, therefore, it came that Furnace Second was reduced to zero in Professor Surd's estimation. He looked upon me with all the horror which an unalgebraic nature could inspire. I have seen the Professor walk around an entire square rather than meet the man who had no mathematics in his soul.

For Furnace Second were no invitations to Professor Surd's house. Seventy of the class supped in delegations around the periphery of the Professor's tea-table. The seventy-first knew nothing of the charms of that perfect ellipse, with its twin bunches of fuchsias and geraniums in gorgeous precision at the two foci.

This, unfortunately enough, was no trifling deprivation. Not that I longed especially for segments of Mrs. Surd's justly celebrated lemon pies; not that the spheroidal damsons of her excellent preserving had any marked allurements; not even that I yearned to hear the Professor's jocose table-talk about binomials, and chatty illustrations of abstruse paradoxes. The explanation is far different. Professor Surd had a daughter. Twenty years before, he made a proposition of marriage to the present Mrs. S. He added a little Corollary to his proposition not long after. The Corollary was a girl.

Abscissa Surd was as perfectly symmetrical as Giotto's circle, and as pure, withal, as the mathematics her father taught. It was just when spring was coming to extract the roots of frozen-up vegetation that I fell in love with the Corollary. That she herself was not indifferent I soon had reason to regard as a self-evident truth.

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The sagacious reader will already recognize nearly all the elements necessary to a well-ordered plot. We have introduced a heroine, inferred a hero, and constructed a hostile parent after the most approved model. A movement for the story, a *Deus ex machina*, is alone lacking. With considerable satisfaction I can promise a perfect novelty in this line—a *Deus ex machina* never before offered to the public.

It would be discounting ordinary intelligence to say that I sought with unwearied assiduity to figure my way into the stern father's good-will; that never did dullard apply himself to mathematics more patiently than I; that never did faithfulness achieve such meager reward. Then I engaged a private tutor. His instructions met with no better success.

My tutor's name was Jean Marie Rivarol. He was a unique Alsatian—though Gallic in name, thoroughly Teuton in nature; by birth a Frenchman, by education a German. His age was thirty; his profession, omniscience; the wolf at his door, poverty; the skeleton in his closet, a consuming but unrequited passion. The most recondite principles of practical science were his toys; the deepest intricacies of abstract science his diversions. Problems which were foreordained mysteries to me were to him as clear as Tahoe water. Perhaps this very fact will explain our lack of success in the relation of tutor and pupil; perhaps the failure is alone due to my own unmitigated stupidity. Rivarol had hung about the skirts of the University for several years; supplying his few wants by writing for scientific journals, or by giving assistance to students who, like myself, were characterized by a plethora of purse and a paucity of ideas; cooking, studying and sleeping in his attic lodgings; and prosecuting queer experiments all by himself.

We were not long discovering that even this eccentric

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genius could not transplant brains into my deficient skull. I gave over the struggle in despair. An unhappy year dragged its slow length around. A gloomy year it was, brightened only by occasional interviews with Abscissa, the Abbie of my thoughts and dreams.

Commencement day was coming on apace. I was soon to go forth, with the rest of my class, to astonish and delight a waiting world. The Professor seemed to avoid me more than ever. Nothing but the conventionalities, I think, kept him from shaping his treatment of me on the basis of unconcealed disgust.

At last, in the very recklessness of despair, I resolved to see him, plead with him, threaten him if need be, and risk all my fortunes on one desperate chance. I wrote him a somewhat defiant letter, stating my aspirations, and, as I flattered myself, shrewdly giving him a week to get over the first shock of horrified surprise. Then I was to call and learn my fate.

During the week of suspense I nearly worried myself into a fever. It was first crazy hope, and then saner despair. On Friday evening, when I presented myself at the Professor's door, I was such a haggard, sleepy, dragged-out specter that even Miss Jocasta, the harsh-favored maiden sister of the Surd, admitted me with commiserate regard, and suggested pennyroyal tea.

Professor Surd was at a faculty meeting. Would I wait?

Yes, till all was blue, if need be. Miss Abbie?

Abcissa had gone to Wheelborough to visit a school-friend. The aged maiden hoped I would make myself comfortable, and departed to the unknown haunts which knew Jocasta's daily walk.

Comfortable! But I settled myself in a great uneasy chair and waited, with the contradictory spirit common to such junctures, dreading every step lest it should herald the man whom, of all men, I wished to see.

## THE TACHYPOMP

I had been there at least an hour, and was growing right drowsy.

At length Professor Surd came in. He sat down in the dusk opposite me, and I thought his eyes glinted with malignant pleasure as he said, abruptly:

"So, young man, you think you are a fit husband for my girl?"

I stammered some inanity about making up in affection what I lacked in merit; about my expectations, family and the like. He quickly interrupted me.

"You misapprehended me, sir. Your nature is destitute of those mathematical perceptions and acquirements which are the only sure foundations of character. You have no mathematics in you. You are fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils.—Shakespeare. Your narrow intellect cannot understand and appreciate a generous mind. There is all the difference between you and a Surd, if I may say it, which intervenes between an infinitesimal and an infinite. Why, I will even venture to say that you do not comprehend the Problem of the Couriers!"

I admitted that the Problem of the Couriers should be classed rather without my list of accomplishments than within it. I regretted this fault very deeply, and suggested amendment. I faintly hoped that my fortune would be such——

"Money!" he impatiently exclaimed. "Do you seek to bribe a Roman Senator with a penny whistle? Why, boy, do you parade your paltry wealth, which, expressed in mills, will not cover ten decimal places, before the eyes of a man who measures the planets in their orbits, and close crowds infinity itself?"

I hastily disclaimed any intention of obtruding my foolish dollars, and he went on:

"Your letter surprised me not a little. I thought *you* would be the last person in the world to presume to an

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alliance here. But having a regard for you personally"—and again I saw malice twinkle in his small eyes—"and still more regard for Abscissa's happiness, I have decided that you shall have her—upon conditions. Upon conditions," he repeated, with a half-smothered sneer.

"What are they?" cried I, eagerly enough. "Only name them."

"Well, sir," he continued, and the deliberation of his speech seemed the very refinement of cruelty, "you have only to prove yourself worthy an alliance with a mathematical family. You have only to accomplish a task which I shall presently give you. Your eyes ask me what it is. I will tell you. Distinguish yourself in that noble branch of abstract science in which, you cannot but acknowledge, you are at present sadly deficient. I will place Abscissa's hand in yours whenever you shall come before me and square the circle to my satisfaction. No! That is too easy a condition. I should cheat myself. Say perpetual motion. How do you like that? Do you think it lies within the range of your mental capabilities? You don't smile. Perhaps your talents don't run in the way of perpetual motion. Several people have found that theirs didn't. I'll give you another chance. We were speaking of the Problem of the Couriers, and I think you expressed a desire to know more of that ingenious question. You shall have the opportunity. Sit down some day, when you have nothing else to do, and discover the principle of infinite speed. I mean the law of motion which shall accomplish an infinitely great distance in an infinitely short time. You may mix in a little practical mechanics, if you choose. Invent some method of taking the tardy Courier over his road at the rate of sixty miles a minute. Demonstrate me this discovery (when you have made it!) mathematically, and approximate it practically, and Abscissa is yours. Until

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you can, I will thank you to trouble neither myself nor her."

I could stand his mocking no longer. I stumbled mechanically out of the room, and out of the house. I even forgot my hat and gloves. For an hour I walked in the moonlight. Gradually I succeeded to a more hopeful frame of mind. This was due to my ignorance of mathematics. Had I understood the real meaning of what he asked, I should have been utterly despondent.

Perhaps this problem of sixty miles a minute was not so impossible after all. At any rate I could attempt, though I might not succeed. And Rivarol came to my mind. I would ask him. I would enlist his knowledge to accompany my own devoted perseverance. I sought his lodgings at once.

The man of science lived in the fourth story, back. I had never been in his room before. When I entered, he was in the act of filling a beer mug from a carboy labelled *Aqua fortis*.

"Seat you," he said. "No, not in that chair. That is my Petty Cash Adjuster." But he was a second too late. I had carelessly thrown myself into a chair of seductive appearance. To my utter amazement it reached out two skeleton arms and clutched me with a grasp against which I struggled in vain. Then a skull stretched itself over my shoulder and grinned with ghastly familiarity close to my face.

Rivarol came to my aid with many apologies. He touched a spring somewhere and the Petty Cash Adjuster relaxed its horrid hold. I placed myself gingerly in a plain cane-bottomed rocking-chair, which Rivarol assured me was a safe location.

"That seat," he said, "is an arrangement upon which I much felicitate myself. I made it at Heidelberg. It has saved me a vast deal of small annoyance. I consign to its embraces the friends who bore, and the visitors who

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exasperate, me. But it is never so useful as when terrifying some tradesman with an insignificant account. Hence the pet name which I have facetiously given it. They are invariably too glad to purchase release at the price of a bill receipted. Do you well apprehend the idea?"

While the Alsatian diluted his glass of *Aqua fortis*, shook into it an infusion of bitters, and tossed off the bumper with apparent relish, I had time to look around the strange apartment.

The four corners of the room were occupied respectively by a turning-lathe, a Rhumkorff Coil, a small steam-engine and an orrery in stately motion. Tables, shelves, chairs and floor supported an odd aggregation of tools, retorts, chemicals, gas-receivers, philosophical instruments, boots, flasks, paper-collar boxes, books diminutive and books of preposterous size. There were plaster busts of Aristotle, Archimedes, and Comte, while a great drowsy owl was blinking away, perched on the benign brow of Martin Farquhar Tupper. "He always roosts there when he proposes to slumber," explained my tutor. "You are a bird of no ordinary mind. *Schlafen Sie wohl.*"

Through a closet door, half open, I could see a human-like form covered with a sheet. Rivarol caught my glance.

"That," said he, "will be my masterpiece. It is a Microcosm, an Android, as yet only partially complete. And why not? Albertus Magnus constructed an image perfect to talk metaphysics and confute the schools. So did Sylvester II.; so did Robertus Greathead. Roger Bacon made a brazen head that held discourses. But the first named of these came to destruction. Thomas Aquinas got wrathful at some of its syllogisms and smashed its head. The idea is reasonable enough. Mental action will yet be reduced to laws as definite as those which govern the physical. Why should not I ac-

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comply with a manikin which shall preach as original discourses as the Rev. Dr. Allchin, or talk poetry as mechanically as Paul Anapest? My Android can already work problems in vulgar fractions and compose sonnets. I hope to teach it the Positive Philosophy."

Out of the bewildering confusion of his effects Rivarol produced two pipes and filled them. He handed one to me.

"And here," he said, "I live and am tolerably comfortable. When my coat wears out at the elbows I seek the tailor and am measured for another. When I am hungry I promenade myself to the butcher's and bring home a pound or so of steak, which I cook very nicely in three seconds by this oxy-hydrogen flame. Thirsty, perhaps, I send for a carboy of *Aqua fortis*. But I have it charged, all charged. My spirit is above any small pecuniary transaction. I loathe your dirty greenbacks, and never handle what they call scrip."

"But are you never pestered with bills?" I asked. "Don't the creditors worry your life out?"

"Creditors!" gasped Rivarol. "I have learned no such word in your very admirable language. He who will allow his soul to be vexed by creditors is a relic of an imperfect civilization. Of what use is science if it cannot avail a man who has accounts current? Listen. The moment you or any one else enters the outside door this little electric bell sounds me warning. Every successive step on Mrs. Grimler's staircase is a spy and informer vigilant for my benefit. The first step is trod upon. That trusty first step immediately telegraphs your weight. Nothing could be simpler. It is exactly like any platform scale. The weight is registered up here upon this dial. The second step records the size of my visitor's feet. The third his height, the fourth his complexion, and so on. By the time he reaches the top of the first flight I have a pretty accurate description of him right

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here at my elbow, and quite a margin of time for deliberation and action. Do you follow me? It is plain enough. Only the A B C of my science."

"I see all that," I said, "but I don't see how it helps you any. The knowledge that a creditor is coming won't pay his bill. You can't escape unless you jump out of the window."

Rivarol laughed softly. "I will tell you. You shall see what becomes of any poor devil who goes to demand money of me—of a man of science. Ha! ha! It pleases me. I was seven weeks perfecting my Dun Suppressor. Did you know"—he whispered exultingly—"did you know that there is a hole through the earth's centre? Physicists have long suspected it; I was the first to find it. You have read how Rhuighens, the Dutch navigator, discovered in Kerguelen's Land an abyssmal pit which fourteen hundred fathoms of plumb-line failed to sound. Herr Tom, that hole has no bottom! It runs from one surface of the earth to the antipodal surface. It is diametric. But where is the antipodal spot? You stand upon it. I learned this by the merest chance. I was deep-digging in Mrs. Grimler's cellar, to bury a poor cat I had sacrificed in a galvanic experiment, when the earth under my spade crumbled, caved in, and wonder-stricken I stood upon the brink of a yawning shaft. I dropped a coal-hod in. It went down, down, down, bounding and rebounding. In two hours and a quarter that coal-hod came up again. I caught it and restored it to the angry Grimler. Just think a minute. The coal-hod went down, faster and faster, till it reached the center of the earth. There it would stop, were it not for acquired momentum. Beyond the center its journey was relatively upward, toward the opposite surface of the globe. So, losing velocity, it went slower and slower till it reached that surface. Here it came to rest for a second and then fell back again, eight thousand odd

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miles, into my hands. Had I not interfered with it, it would have repeated its journey, time after time, each trip of shorter extent, like the diminishing oscillations of a pendulum, till it finally came to eternal rest at the center of the sphere. I am not slow to give a practical application to any such grand discovery. My Dun Suppressor was born of it. A trap, just outside my chamber door: a spring in here; a creditor on the trap:—need I say more?"

"But isn't it a trifle inhuman?" I mildly suggested. "Plunging an unhappy being into a perpetual journey to and from Kerguelen's Land, without a moment's warning."

"I gave them a chance. When they come up the first time I wait at the mouth of the shaft with a rope in hand. If they are reasonable and will come to terms, I fling them the line. If they perish, 'tis their own fault. Only," he added, with a melancholy smile, "the center is getting so plugged up with creditors that I am afraid there soon will be no choice whatever for 'em."

By this time I had conceived a high opinion of my tutor's ability. If anybody could send me waltzing through space at an infinite speed, Rivarol could do it. I filled my pipe and told him the story. He heard with grave and patient attention. Then, for full half an hour, he whiffed away in silence. Finally he spoke.

"The ancient cipher has overreached himself. He has given you a choice of two problems, both of which he deems insoluble. Neither of them is insoluble. The only gleam of intelligence Old Cotangent showed was when he said that squaring the circle was too easy. He was right. It would have given you your *Liebchen* in five minutes. I squared the circle before I discarded pantalets. I will show you the work—but it would be a digression, and you are in no mood for digressions. Our first chance, therefore, lies in perpetual motion. Now,

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my good friend, I will frankly tell you that, although I have compassed this interesting problem, I do not choose to use it in your behalf. I too, Herr Tom, have a heart. The loveliest of her sex frowns upon me. Her somewhat mature charms are not for Jean Marie Rivarol. She has cruelly said that her years demand of me filial rather than connubial regard. Is love a matter of years or of eternity? This question did I put to the cold, yet lovely Jocasta."

"Jocasta Surd!" I remarked in surprise, "Abscissa's aunt!"

"The same," he said, sadly. "I will not attempt to conceal that upon the maiden Jocasta my maiden heart has been bestowed. Give me your hand, my nephew in affliction as in affection!"

Rivarol dashed away a not discreditable tear, and resumed:

"My only hope lies in this discovery of perpetual motion. It will give me the fame, the wealth. Can Jocasta refuse these? If she can, there is only the trap-door and—Kerguellen's Land!"

I bashfully asked to see the perpetual-motion machine. My uncle in affliction shook his head.

"At another time," he said. "Suffice it at present to say, that it is something upon the principle of a woman's tongue. But you see now why we must turn in your case to the alternative condition—infinite speed. There are several ways in which this may be accomplished, theoretically. By the lever, for instance. Imagine a lever with a very long and a very short arm. Apply power to the shorter arm which will move it with great velocity. The end of the long arm will move much faster. Now keep shortening the short arm and lengthening the long one, and as you approach infinity in their difference of length, you approach infinity in the speed of the long arm. It would be difficult to demonstrate this practically to the

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Professor. We must seek another solution. Jean Marie will meditate. Come to me in a fortnight. Good-night. But stop! Have you the money—*das Geld?*”

“Much more than I need.”

“Good! Let us strike hands. Gold and Knowledge; Science and Love. What may not such a partnership achieve? We go to conquer thee, Abscissa. *Vorwärts!*”

When, at the end of a fortnight, I sought Rivarol’s chamber, I passed with some little trepidation over the terminus of the Air Line to Kerguellen’s Land, and evaded the extended arms of the Petty Cash Adjuster. Rivarol drew a mug of ale for me, and filled himself a retort of his own peculiar beverage.

“Come,” he said at length. “Let us drink success to The TACHYPOMP?”

“Yes. Why not? *Tachu*, quickly, and *pempo*, *pempopa*, to send. May it send you quickly to your wedding-day. Abscissa is yours. It is done. When shall we start for the prairies?”

“Where is it?” I asked, looking in vain around the room for any contrivance which might seem calculated to advance matrimonial prospects.

“It is here,” and he gave his forehead a significant tap. Then he held forth didactically.

“There is force enough in existence to yield us a speed of sixty miles a minute, or even more. All we need is the knowledge how to combine and apply it. The wise man will not attempt to make some great force yield some great speed. He will keep adding the little force to the little force, making each little force yield its little speed, until an aggregate of little forces shall be a great force, yielding an aggregate of little speeds, a great speed. The difficulty is not in aggregating the forces; it lies in the corresponding aggregation of the speeds. One musket-ball will go, say a mile. It is not hard to increase the force of muskets to a thousand, yet the

thousand musket-balls will go no farther, and no faster, than the one. You see, then, where our trouble lies. We cannot readily add speed to speed, as we add force to force. My discovery is simply the utilization of a principle which extorts an increment of speed from each increment of power. But this is the metaphysics of physics. Let us be practical or nothing.

"When you have walked forward, on a moving train, from the rear car, toward the engine, did you ever think what you were really doing?"

"Why, yes, I have generally been going to the smoking car to have a cigar."

"Tut, tut—not that! I mean, did it ever occur to you on such an occasion, that absolutely you were moving faster than the train? The train passes the telegraph poles at the rate of thirty miles an hour, say. You walk toward the smoking-car at the rate of four miles an hour. Then *you* pass the telegraph poles at the rate of thirty-four miles. Your absolute speed is the speed of the engine, plus the speed of your own locomotion. Do you follow me?"

I began to get an inkling of his meaning, and told him so.

"Very well. Let us advance a step. Your addition to the speed of the engine is trivial, and the space in which you can exercise it, limited. Now suppose two stations, A and B, two miles distant by the track. Imagine a train of platform cars, the last car resting at station A. The train is a mile long, say. The engine is therefore within a mile of station B. Say the train can move a mile in ten minutes. The last car, having two miles to go, would reach B in twenty minutes, but the engine, a mile ahead, would get there in ten. You jump on the last car, at A, in a prodigious hurry to reach Abscissa, who is at B. If you stay on the last car it will be twenty long minutes before you see her. But the engine reaches

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B and the fair lady in ten. You will be a stupid reasoner, and an indifferent lover, if you don't put for the engine over those platform cars, as fast as your legs will carry you. You can run a mile, the length of the train, in ten minutes. Therefore, you reach Abscissa when the engine does, or in ten minutes—ten minutes sooner than if you had lazily sat down upon the rear car and talked politics with the brakeman. You have diminished the time by one-half. You have added your speed to that of the locomotive to some purpose. *Nicht wahr?*”

I saw it perfectly; much plainer, perhaps, for his putting in the clause about Abscissa.

He continued:

“This illustration, though a slow one, leads up to a principle which may be carried to any extent. Our first anxiety will be to spare your legs and wind. Let us suppose that the two miles of track are perfectly straight, and make our train one platform car, a mile long, with parallel rails laid upon its top. Put a little dummy engine on these rails, and let it run to and fro along the platform car, while the platform car is pulled along the ground track. Catch the idea? The dummy takes your place. But it can run its mile much faster. Fancy that our locomotive is strong enough to pull the platform car over the two miles in two minutes. The dummy can attain the same speed. When the engine reaches B in one minute, the dummy, having gone a mile a-top of the platform car, reaches B also. We have so combined the speeds of those two engines as to accomplish two miles in one minute. Is this all we can do? Prepare to exercise your imagination.”

I lit my pipe.

“Still two miles of straight track, between A and B. On the track a long platform car, reaching from A to within a quarter of a mile of B. We will now discard ordinary locomotives and adopt as our motive power a

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series of compact magnetic engines, distributed underneath the platform car, all along its length."

"I don't understand those magnetic engines."

"Well, each of them consists of a great iron horseshoe, rendered alternately a magnet and not a magnet by an intermittent current of electricity from a battery, this current in its turn regulated by clock-work. When the horseshoe is in the circuit, it is a magnet, and it pulls its clapper toward it with enormous power. When it is out of the circuit, the next second, it is not a magnet, and it lets the clapper go. The clapper, oscillating to and fro, imparts a rotary motion to a fly-wheel, which transmits it to the drivers on the rails. Such are our motors. They are no novelty, for trial has proved them practicable.

"With a magnetic engine for every truck of wheels, we can reasonably expect to move our immense car, and to drive it along at a speed, say, of a mile a minute.

"The forward end, having but a quarter of a mile to go, will reach B in fifteen seconds. We will call this platform car number 1. On top of number 1 are laid rails on which another platform car, number 2, a quarter of a mile shorter than number 1, is moved in precisely the same way. Number 2, in its turn, is surmounted by number 3, moving independently of the tiers beneath, and a quarter of a mile shorter than number 2. Number 2 is a mile and a half long; number 3 a mile and a quarter. Above, on successive levels, are number 4, a mile long; number 5, three quarters of a mile; number 6, half a mile; number 7, a quarter of a mile, and number 8, a short passenger car, on top of all.

"Each car moves upon the car beneath it, independently of all the others, at the rate of a mile a minute. Each car has its own magnetic engines. Well, the train being drawn up with the latter end of each car resting against a lofty bumping-post at A, Tom Furnace, the gentleman-

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ly conductor, and Marie Rivarol, engineer, mount by a long ladder to the exalted number 8. The complicated mechanism is set in motion. What happens?

“Number 8 runs a quarter of a mile in fifteen seconds and reaches the end of number 7. Meanwhile number 7 has run a quarter of a mile in the same time and reached the end of number 6; number 6, a quarter of a mile in fifteen seconds, and reached the end of number 5; number 5, the end of number 4; number 4, of number 3; number 3, of number 2; number 2, of number 1. And number 1, in fifteen seconds, has gone its quarter of a mile along the ground track, and has reached station B. All this has been done in fifteen seconds. Wherefore, numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 come to rest against the bumping-post at B, at precisely the same second. We, in number 8, reach B just when number 1 reaches it. In other words, we accomplish two miles in fifteen seconds. Each of the eight cars, moving at the rate of a mile a minute, has contributed a quarter of a mile to our journey, and has done its work in fifteen seconds. All the eight did their work at once, during the same fifteen seconds. Consequently we have been whizzed through the air at the somewhat startling speed of seven and a half seconds to the mile. This is the Tachypomp. Does it justify the name?”

Although a little bewildered by the complexity of cars, I apprehended the general principle of the machine. I made a diagram, and understood it much better. “You have merely improved on the idea of my moving faster than the train when I was going to the smoking car?”

“Precisely. So far, we have kept within the bounds of the practicable. To satisfy the Professor, you can theorize in something after this fashion: If we double the number of cars, thus decreasing by one half the distance which each has to go, we shall attain twice the speed. Each of the sixteen cars will have but one-

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eighth of a mile to go. At the uniform rate we have adopted, the two miles can be done in seven and a half instead of fifteen seconds. With thirty-two cars, and a sixteenth of a mile, or twenty-two rods difference in their length, we arrive at the speed of a mile in less than two seconds; with sixty-four cars, each traveling but ten rods, a mile under the second. More than sixty miles a minute! If this isn't rapid enough for the Professor, tell him to go on, increasing the number of his cars and diminishing the distance each one has to run. If sixty-four cars yield a speed of a mile inside the second, let him fancy a Tachypomp of six hundred and forty cars, and amuse himself calculating the rate of car number 640. Just whisper to him that when he has an infinite number of cars with an infinitesimal difference in their lengths, he will have obtained that infinite speed for which he seems to yearn. Then demand Abscissa."

I wrung my friend's hand in silent and grateful admiration. I could say nothing.

"You have listened to the man of theory," he said proudly. "You shall now behold the practical engineer. We will go to the west of the Mississippi and find some suitably level locality. We will erect thereon a model Tachypomp. We will summon thereunto the professor, his daughter, and why not his fair sister Jocasta, as well? We will take them a journey which shall much astonish the venerable Surd. He shall place Abscissa's digits in yours and bless you both with an algebraic formula. Jocasta shall contemplate with wonder the genius of Rivarol. But we have much to do. We must ship to St. Joseph the vast amount of material to be employed in the construction of the Tachypomp. We must engage a small army of workmen to effect that construction, for we are to annihilate time and space. Perhaps you had better see your bankers."

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I rushed impetuously to the door. There should be no delay.

"Stop! stop! *Um Gottes Willen*, stop!" shrieked Rivarol. "I launched my butcher this morning and I haven't bolted the—"

But it was too late. I was upon the trap. It swung open with a crash, and I was plunged down, down, down! I felt as if I were falling through illimitable space. I remember wondering, as I rushed through the darkness, whether I should reach Kerguelen's Land or stop at the center. It seemed an eternity. Then my course was suddenly and painfully arrested.

I opened my eyes. Around me were the walls of Professor Surd's study. Under me was a hard, unyielding plane which I knew too well was Professor Surd's study floor. Behind me was the black, slippery, hair-cloth chair which had belched me forth, much as the whale served Jonah. In front of me stood Professor Surd himself, looking down with a not unpleasant smile.

"Good-evening, Mr. Furnace. Let me help you up. You look tired, sir. No wonder you fell asleep when I kept you so long waiting. Shall I get you a glass of wine? No? By the way, since receiving your letter I find that you are a son of my old friend, Judge Furnace. I have made inquiries, and see no reason why you should not make Abscissa a good husband."

Still I can see no reason why the Tachypomp should not have succeeded. Can you?



THE SKIRTS OF CHANCE



“They Made a Handsome and Engaging Couple”

“They Made a Handsome and Engaging Couple”





# THE SKIRTS OF CHANCE

*Being Some Adventures of Francis, Second Son of the  
Late Marquess of Auriol.*

*By H. B. Marriott Watson*

## CHAPTER I

### THE INN AT HOOK

THE high spring sun danced among the gay colors that lined the Lady's Mile, as Lord Francis Charmian, debonair and indifferent, drove his four bays round the turn and fetched them gently through the archway of Hyde Park Corner. The coach, which was of a mustard yellow picked out with green, was tenanted only by the driver and a man in livery who sat behind, impassive, with his arms folded—as stiff a figure as the long horn protruding over his shoulder or the cockade upon his hat. The emptiness of this fine coach was remarkable, for the meeting of the Club is invariably the cause of a popular demonstration, and seats upon the coaches are deemed honorable, and are always the matter of competition, particularly among ladies. A fusilade of envious glances, and some indignant exclamations of disgust, saluted the mustard coach in its passage from the magazine between the lines of spectators; but Lord Francis neither heard, saw, nor cared. With his hat set well back on his head, and his nose dipping incuriously towards his horses, he bowled softly and pleasantly along, to all appearances enveloped in

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an amiable satisfaction with himself. He chose to drive an empty coach; and, as he paid for it, criticism was merely impertinent, and at least mattered nothing in the world to him.

It was known to none but Charmian himself exactly upon what expedition he was bound that fine June day; nor is any one ever likely to learn, for circumstances, which abruptly changed the course of his intentions, as you shall presently hear. The secret of that frivolous adventure is buried deep in Charmian's breast, and all that his man Jacob knew was that the horses were to be changed at a certain hostelry some distance from London. As a matter of fact, the horses were changed twice, and the coach was thus kept running at a precipitate rate deeper and deeper into the heart of that pleasant southern county. Jacob had his instructions, and blew his horn tunefully, but with the gravest of austere faces and the most stiff and immaculate of postures. What the villagers saw when they ran to their doors was a monstrous yellow coach, rolling upon its great springs, and fleeting like a mammoth moth through clouds of grey dust, a solitary and grimy driver on the box, and the mechanical apparatus of a postboy behind. It was clear, however, that this pace could not continue all day, but it was long after Jacob's patience had given out that his master also wearied; and, dashing into a little hamlet upon the high road, he pulled up his team in front of the venerable inn that looks out through a huge sycamore upon the cottages of Hook.

It was by now five of the clock, and the sun still shone very briskly and hotly that summer weather. Charmian descended, and, resigning his horses to the ostler, who had rushed forth to meet this grand equipage, walked into the "Anchor" at a stride.

"Dinner!" said he, meeting a civil waiter in the hall.

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"Yes, sir; *table d'hôte*, sir, at seven o'clock," replied the man.

"Oh, confound your *table d'hôte!*" returned Charmian, irritated that not even yet had he come clear of town.

The waiter looked embarrassed. "Would you like something before that, sir?" he asked, his glance passing out of the open doorway, and resting appreciatively upon the coach.

"Why, naturally," said the young man brusquely: "Water, soap, a towel, and tea,—no watercress, you know, waiter."

He fixed imperturbable eyes upon the man, who coughed as if deferentially suggesting that he would never of course have imagined watercress, and that such a thing was inconceivable in the "Anchor."

The inn, to be sure, presented a solemn and even a royal air of decorum in its grave oaken hall; and the long spreading dining-room, with its low roof, the woodwork blackened by the stain of generations, while making no pretences, was somehow dignified and respectable. Here, all day long throughout the summer season, the small tables stood spread with white linen, and the glasses sparkled in the dim light. Upon this warm and dusty day of June the room smelled very cool, and offered a very quiet and gentlemanly welcome to a thirsty visitor. Charmian dropped lazily into a chair, readjusted his tie, and cocked his head towards a sporting picture which hung upon the wall near by. Then he yawned; and his glance traveled leisurely and with a trace of weariness across the broad vacancy of the chamber. Not even the waiter was in sight. The peace was rest to him; he had partaken of a feast of noisy, clattering solitude upon his journey down, and new the drums murmured in his ears of the road, like shells echoing of a distant roaring sea.

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Suddenly he pulled his attention together, arrested by a sound. It came out of the twilight of that cool and empty room, and he recognized it at once. It was beyond all possibility of misconception. He heard it now not for the first time, and he frowned as he always frowned when he encountered the experience. It was the sound of a sob.

There is only one sex that will sob; and this sob was a gulp of tears, suddenly broken forth against the will, unexpected of the poor sad soul within, tremulously and precipitately suppressed and stifled with shame and fear. Charmian turned round and fixed a wondering eye upon a window-sill, that rose but two feet from the floor and was partly veiled in silk curtains. It was the direction of the sob; and as he came to this conclusion a second sob succeeded. He rose instantly. Some child, maybe, was weeping on her broken doll behind that kindly arras.

He strode across the room, pulled aside the curtain, and found that he had trespassed on a woman's private sorrow.

The wide eyes were open with alarm, and still wet from weeping. The whole figure of the girl, as she lay heaped into a corner of the sill, was distressingly pitiful. Charmian made a bow.

"You will forgive my impertinence," said he, "but I thought it was a mouse, and I have a certain terror of mice."

A look of perplexity was followed on her face by one of indignation, and then her teeth gleamed in the spectre of a smile.

"I did not know any one was in the room," she observed diffidently.

"Precisely my case," returned Charmian, politely: "I only thought of mice."

The girl was quite young and handsome to the eyes,

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and the sparkle in her expression suggested to him that her grief was probably not much more deeply serious than that of the child he had conjectured.

"I am aware," he went on with his most solemn manner, "that it's usual in such cases for the intruder to withdraw apologizing. But I think we are not living in a story-book, and things happen most extravagantly in real life. Can I be of any use?"

She looked at him in uncertainty, her brows advertising her embarrassment, and for a time there was a pause.

"Oh, well," said he, and would have dropped the curtain with a civil expression. But it seemed that she had small powers of restraint, and that she was after all in some difficulty, for upon that she went swiftly and unexpectedly into tears.

"My dear young lady," said Charmian, in his most paternal manner—"my dear young lady, I see that I must take this affair into my own hands. I really think that yours are not capable. You are in some distress. Perhaps we can find a remedy?"

His voice seemed to win upon her, and she ceased from her tears, considering him with a desperate entreaty. Her face was very sprightly by nature, but was most tragically convulsed with her present emotions.

"Come," said he, "I am about to have tea, and should be delighted if you will join me. I should not venture to invite you to dinner, but tea is, I think, respectable; and after all I have the makings of a gentleman."

He looked at her significantly, and she smiled through her distress.

"Yes," she said of a sudden and impetuously, "I will come."

"That is right," said Charmian, with approval; "you will infinitely oblige me if you will pour out my tea, for I am very hot and dusty."

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She settled in the chair opposite him, and facing each other across the little table they made a handsome and engaging couple. The girl played the hostess, at his invitation, but now with some embarrassment and an access of awkwardness.

"This trouble, now . . ." said Charmian, calmly doubling his bread-and-butter: "perhaps we had better come to business; and to clear the ground, I may say, my dear madam—whose name I do not know," with an apologetic bow in her direction, where she sat with her eyes ashamed and a reddened cheek—"that I am a mere bird of passage, that I wandered into this inn out of the dust and heat of the day but ten minutes since, and that in ten minutes more I shall no doubt be again upon the wing, somewhat vague as to my destination, but fleet, covering a vast deal of ground between us, I would remind you, and sunk in the most profound and melancholy dejection."

He paused. Her pretty eyes sparkled upon his with eager curiosity.

"Now then," he ended, "shall I have the pleasure of carrying with me the thought of one good action, of one opportunity recovered from the limbo of the lost?"

"It's a long story," she faltered, dropping her eyes.

Charmian made a gesture. "We have still a few minutes," said he, "as my horses have not yet finished their dinner."

"I have run away," she said, even in a smaller voice, while her face was once more colored like a pink.

"And repent?" he ventured.

"No," she cried sharply, and casting a quick glance of resolution at him. The negation steeled her, and she ran on more equably: "I have been used ill; my guardian would have me"—an infinitely little pause of shame marked her voice—"marry a man I hate. The engagement is pressed on me harshly, and I—I—there is some

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one else. . .” She ended, of the redness of a carnation.

“Oh, but this is very easy,” cried Charmian; “because there are two roads, and if you refuse one you are free to take the other.”

But here again the girl showed signs of returning to her state of tears. “But he has not come,” she faltered, with a sob.

“My dear young lady, *who* has not come?” inquired he in perplexity.

“Mr. Gray,” she answered.

“I see,” said he; “and Mr. Gray is the fortunate . . . Well, he is unintelligible; I cannot understand him.”

“And I have no means of getting home or doing anything, for I have no money, and I know no one,” she wailed, suddenly falling back into the clutches of her woe.

Charmian leaned across the table. “My dear child,” he said, “you shall have all the money you require, if that’s all your trouble; and no doubt some day you will return it to my bankers, who are, of course, very ogreish people. And for this Mr. Gray—well, I think he ought to be ashamed of himself.”

“I am sure it is not his fault,” she said indignantly.

“No doubt—no doubt,” he said, soothingly. “Well, then, your guardian and the other gentleman ought to be ashamed of themselves.”

“They ought indeed!” she assented. “We were to have met and been married to-day,” she explained, drying her eyes, “and I have been waiting here since early this morning,” she sobbed.

“Abominable!” exclaimed Charmian, adding hastily, “of your guardian and the other gentleman, of course. Well, now——” he was resuming, when all of a sudden the girl took him by the arm.

“Oh, he is coming—he is here!” she cried, with a tragic face.

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"My dear young lady, then let me heartily congratulate you," he answered, "and resign my——"

"No, no," she implored him in distress; "he is coming into the inn now."

"*Who* is coming?" he asked in bewildered despair.

"My guardian,—look!"

He followed the course of her gaze through one of the long narrow windows, which commanded a broad gravel sunlit pathway through the formal garden; and, surely enough, there was a figure of a tall, elderly man, something in haste, striding up to the entrance.

"Don't let him take me!" she wept, clinging to him; "I will not, I dare not go home. I——"

"Stay," said Charmian, knitting his brows; and then, looking about. "Here is a further room." He opened the door. "There is a flight of stairs. You will find some refuge at the top. I will meet your guardian. His name is——"

"Windsor," she whispered, and was gone.

Charmian closed the door, and stood with his hands behind him and his feet well apart, and at that moment the new-comer entered. He glanced about him with a very brusque manner, and making use of an angry face.

"You have lost something?" inquired Charmian, politely.

The old gentleman scowled, as if he would resent this question, but answered shortly, "Yes, sir."

"A brooch?" queried Charmian in his civilest and most affable tones, "or a parrot?"

The old gentleman glanced at him furiously, but seeming to recollect something, quickly changed his demeanour.

"No, sir; but perhaps you would be good enough to tell me? I was looking for a young lady who was

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here a few minutes ago. Can you inform me where she went?"

Charmian had the appearance of deep thought. "No, sir,"—he shook his head gravely,—“I fear I cannot.”

“But you must have seen her,” began the old gentleman, testily. “I know she was here a moment——” He broke off as his glance lighted upon the tea-table, by which Charmian stood. Suspicion grew in his eye and deranged his bearing. He turned and stared savagely at the young man, who was regarding him with scrupulous and incurious indifference.

“I think I know you,” exclaimed the old man presently, in a deep voice of indignant satisfaction; “I recognize the description. It had escaped me before.”

“Precisely,” assented Charmian in some bewilderment.

“You are Mr. Gray,” asserted the old man.

“You are Mr. Windsor,” declared Charmian.

“It’s well to know where we are,” continued Mr. Windsor, displaying an ironic calm. “And now that we do, we may as well get to business. I demand my ward.”

“I very much regret to say that your demand comes too late,” replied Charmian, pleasantly. “But it will, of course, receive due consideration,” he added courteously.

“What!” cried Mr. Windsor furiously: “do you mean to insinuate that you are married?”

Charmian had meant nothing of the kind; but he made no answer, for at that the girl herself, held by her own timidities within earshot, and overhearing the rising voices of an altercation, impetuously thrust open the door of her refuge and stood revealed to her guardian. His gaze narrowed upon her in an ugly frown, and when he spoke it was with the restraint of passion.

“So you are married, eh?” he said, shortly.

Charmian fluttered hastily towards her. “As you see,”

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he observed urbanely, and gently taking in his one of her hands. She gazed in bewilderment, and opened her mouth as if to speak, but he intervened quickly. "Come, come, my dear," said he decisively, "you must let me manage this."

The red mounted once more into her soft cheeks.

"I do not believe it. Where is your ring?" demanded the old gentleman truculently.

Charmian's glance followed his, and rested on the bare and slender fingers of her left hand. "My dear," he remonstrated tenderly, "you must really not forget your ring another time. She is so new to it, sir," he explained.

"I demand to see your certificate," exclaimed Mr. Windsor, pompously: "I do not believe in this marriage."

"My good sir," cried Charmian, "do you suppose we walk about with our certificate inside our boots? You shall have the name and address of the parson who married us. Come, that should solve your doubts. And besides, I ask you to consider. We have been here since ten this morning. If you leave two young people together all that time, what are you to expect but that they will get married?"

"I will upset the match, sir," exploded Mr. Windsor.

"Nothing, my dear sir, can break the bonds of two true hearts, as I may remind you," remarked Charmian, placidly; and he softly pressed the fingers he held, now thoroughly enjoying himself.

"No doubt you expect to be happy," sneered Mr. Windsor.

"We hope so—we believe so—nay, we are sure so," murmured Charmian, looking affectionately into the girl's face: "don't we—er—er——" But here, suddenly recalling that he had not the advantage of her name, he ended rather lamely—with boldness, indeed, but not

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with that fluency which his previous assurance would have suggested, "er—er—darling?"

"I have the honor to be posted in your affairs, Mr. Gray," said Mr. Windsor, savagely, "although I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance."

"The loss is mine," interpolated the young man, politely.

"And I am quite aware how you stand financially," pursued the old gentleman, without regarding his interruption. "May I ask what you propose to live on?"

"Oh, we shall drag along," said Charmian cheerfully, smiling encouragement at his false bride.

The airy imperturbability of these replies at length brought Mr. Windsor to a pause. He threw up his hands with a gesture of impotent contempt.

"I have no doubt you will starve," he observed with satisfaction.

"Oh, come!" said Charmian, reproachfully.

Mr. Windsor turned on the girl. "Sir Edward Quinton will be here presently. How will you care to face him?" he asked savagely.

"Pardon me, it is I who will face him," replied Charmian; "and I have yet to learn that a common knight or baronet can come between husband and wife."

Mr. Windsor bit his lip, and turned away. "What do you suppose I am to say to him?" he asked irritably.

"If I might suggest, tell him to go to the devil," said Charmian, amiably; and, turning to the girl, "My dear, excuse the language, but, as you know, my temper is violent."

The reckless levity of this young gentleman disconcerted Mr. Windsor; and, moreover, his original anger had had time to cool. He now turned on his heel and made for the door without a word. Seeing him to be thus routed, Charmian fired a final shot at long range.

"Won't you stay, sir," he called in the softest tones,

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"and dine with us? Do," he urged: "it is our wedding breakfast practically——"

Mr. Windsor flamed forth, "Sir, I would remind you that you are a pauper, as we all understand."

"But I have managed to borrow enough for this," pleaded Charmian, mildly.

"Mr. Gray," said the old gentleman, facing towards him for the last time as he went out, and speaking not without some dignity, "you are either a great rascal or a great fool; and in either case you are shameless. My parting advice to you is to practice economy."

"What have you done?" cried the girl in alarm, as the door closed with a bang. She was red and white by turns, and fingered nervously at her bodice.

"Madam," said Charmian, "let me reassure you. This is not Scotland, and you are not my wife."

Her eyes fell from his, and she played with her glove.

"Pray put those on," said he; "we must not be caught again like that."

"But there will be no one else who——"

"Forgive me—yes—there is this Sir Edward, the bold bad baronet."

"I had forgotten him. How hateful!" she said; and then, "Oh, how kind you have been, and how clever! I was amazed at what you said and how you held yourself."

"I lied very plump and pat, I will confess," said Charmian, complacently.

She surveyed him with admiration, but suddenly took an unexpected change. "But oh," she cried aghast, "what am I to do now? I can't go back; he thinks me married."

Charmian stared at her. "By Jove," he said, after a pause, "and that's true. I had not considered that;" adding, "Mr. Gray is a——"

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She stopped him at the word. "You have no right to say so," she protested.

"My dear young lady, I have said nothing, but I was about to remark that Mr. Gray was a most unfortunate gentleman. Simultaneously I envy and pity Mr. Gray."

"You have no right to pity him," said she with some asperity.

"My dear young lady," cried Charmian in despair, "I pity him because he is not here, enjoying the remarkable privileges which I am enjoying, and the rights which I am not unwillingly but accidentally usurping."

She glanced at him with some suspicion in her eye, but displaying a certain embarrassment.

"What are we to do?" she asked.

It seemed that she had thrust the responsibility upon him, and that they were both involved together in the imbroglio. But Charmian was not for retiring at this juncture; certainly he did not wince before his obligations.

"Why, madam, I am sure you are in need of rest after this exhausting interview, and if you will leave me I will worry it out myself."

She wrung her hands. "We can do nothing," she declared.

"We might, of course, confess we lied," suggested Charmian, coolly: "it would not be agreeable to our vanity, but——"

"No, I would rather starve," cried the girl, vehemently.

"Mr. Windsor suggested that we would probably do that in any case," he put in.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, coloring prettily after her fashion, "how could you let him suppose . . . ? Why, and I do not know your name!"

"Nor I yours, by the way," he said: "that reminds

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me that to obviate any further difficulties I might as well learn it."

But he got no further, for a sound of feet in the passage sent her flying through the doorway and up the staircase. Charmian closed the door and turned his attention to the new comer. This was a brisk, dark young man, of a height with himself, and a year or two younger. He approached with a great fervor in his appearance, and showing the vestiges of strong emotion. There could be no doubt about him in Charmian's mind. This was the abominable Sir Edward. He took the situation by the horns. "Sir," he said, "I know very well whom you are looking for; but be advised by me and give up the game. I assure you your persecution is useless."

The dark young man came to an amazed pause, and surveyed Charmian, first coolly, and then with irritation and growing anger. "Ha!" he snorted, "I begin to see. So that is how the land lies!"

"I congratulate you on your quickness of wit," said Charmian, sweetly; "and now, since you see so much, no doubt you will be off."

"No, I'm damned if I will," exclaimed the dark young man.

Charmian shrugged his shoulders, and his opponent folded his arms, confronting him somewhat melodramatically.

"So you think you have secured her?" he observed, with an ill-concealed sneer.

"I wish he would say *who*," thought Charmian; but falling back on the defence which had proved so useful already, he replied firmly enough; "When I tell you that we are already married——"

The dark young man interrupted him savagely. "It's a lie," repeated the other. "My darling Cicely would never——"

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"Pardon me—*my* darling Cicely," interposed Charmian, courteously, but firmly, feeling thankful at last to know her name.

The dark young man seemed to be staggered by this assurance. He frowned blackly, and was momentarily silent; while Charmian, gazing upon him, wondered if, maybe, Miss Cicely had played unkindly with this supposititious villain. He had the marks of anxiety upon his face. Presently he turned sullenly to Charmian.

"You have coerced her into this. I demand to be brought face to face with her, and to hear from her lips the truth."

This sounded familiar to Charmian, who had not time, however, to identify the source of the sentiment. "You had better go away," he said soothingly. "We are busy, and don't want to see any one."

"Very well," said the dark young man, tragically. "You must take the consequences of your brutal refusal."

Charmian was not to learn what these consequences, threatened in so broken a voice, might be; for on that instant a third man, somewhat taller and older than either, and very cool and matter-of-fact in his bearing, came quietly into the room. Charmian glanced at him; and the stranger, seeing himself observed, opened his mouth.

"May I ask, is Miss ——?" he had begun, when Charmian, heaving a sigh of relief, sprang forward and warmly shook his hand. "My dear sir, I am delighted to see you!" he cried; "you come in the nick of time. The fact is, that I am supposed to be you, while I really am some one else, and I have kept up the pretence to save a lady's feelings—whereas, you see, it is really you who are married."

As he spoke, he winked significantly into the be-

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wildered face of the tall man. But this revelation fetched up the dark young man at once.

"What!" he cried at Charmian in astonished indignation; "are you not Sir Edward Quinton?"

"My dear sir, said Charmian, testily, "please keep your head clearer. I may have purposely confused myself with some one else, but I'm damned if I'm going to be confounded with you."

"I don't understand this," observed the tall man feebly. "Pray, who are you? And are you married to Cicely?"

"Well, yes and no," answered Charmian, who was annoyed to find that the very man who should have aided him was stupidly betraying him to the enemy.

"My good sir," exclaimed the tall man, "you will make my head swim. What is it all about?"

"I can explain very easily," said Charmian, angry at this stupidity. "Up till now I have been Mr. Gray."

"You have been nothing of the kind, sir!" cried the dark young man angrily.

Charmian made a gesture of resignation. "My dear sirs, have it as you will," he exclaimed wearily; "I think you had better fight it out between you. Meanwhile, I have a mind to be off with the lady, who seems too good for either of you."

"I demand to see Cicely!" exclaimed the dark young man.

"My dear man, since Mr. Gray, her natural protector, is now here, I have not the least objection in the world to offer," said Charmian; and, opening the door, he called gently up the stairs, "Cicely! Cicely!"

He took her hand and led her into the room. "My dear," he said gently, "here are two gentlemen who——"

But he had got no further, when she suddenly broke from him and precipitated herself into the arms of the dark young man. The tall man frowned and turned

away. Charmian lifted his eyebrows, and then bit his lip.

"So this appears to be Mr. Gray," he remarked. "I suppose I owe some one an apology, but I really don't know whom."

The dark young man turned on him. "And who the devil are you?" he demanded with asperity.

"Upon my word, I really don't know—a fool, I suppose," said Charmian desperately; adding, "You mean my name? It is Charmian."

"Charmian!" interrupted the tall stranger, speaking for the first time since Cicely's entrance: "not mad Charmian?"

"I had not thought I had such celebrity, sir," replied Charmian with a bow, "and I am assuming that you are the real Sir Edward. Well, sir, I learn with regret that you have pressed your attentions too warmly. You must excuse me," he apologized airily, "but I still speak for Cicely, for, as she very well knows, we are married."

"It is not true! Oh, how can you?" cried the girl.

"My dear child," said Charmian easily, "pray discover your hand to Mr. Gray, whom I regret to see jumping some one else's property."

"What's this?" demanded Gray of the girl suspiciously. "Why are your gloves on? What is there on your hand? I demand to see your fingers. What are you hiding?"

For answer she flushed warmly, and, extricating herself from his clutch, stepped deliberately and with much decision towards Charmian.

"By what right do you command me?" she asked coldly of her lover.

"Yes, I should like to know that," put in Charmian. "I am waiting to learn what is his *locus standi* here."

"I see what it is," exclaimed Gray to Charmian indig-

nantly: "You would turn all this into a farce. You would make us appear ridiculous."

"My dear friend," interposed Charmian fervently, "let me reassure you: there is no necessity. I——"

But here Cicely came forward imperiously.

"This gentleman," she said with dignity, "has been good enough to help me in very awkward circumstances. He has stood between me and" (her glance reflected on Sir Edward) "what I was anxious to avoid. I owe him many thanks, and I offer them to him now."

"In that case," said Gray quickly, "I too offer him my thanks."

Charmian bowed. "Sir Edward does not?" he said whimsically.

Sir Edward shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know. Why not? I have been witness of a touching reunion. We take these affections too seriously. It is better to be amused."

"But he knows we are not married. He will inform Mr. Windsor," exclaimed the girl suddenly, in alarm.

"My dear Cicely," said Charmian, "he will do nothing of the kind, for I trust he will take a drive with me. I hope, by the way, you *will* get married," he observed. He bowed and turned away, facing the baronet. "Sir Edward Quinton," he said, "I have a conveyance outside, and if you are going somewhere I dare say I could drive you there as speedily as anything else, provided you can endure my company."

"Lord Francis, I bear no animosity, and your four-in-hand is famous," returned Sir Edward, with an appearance of alacrity.

"What, is that your coach?" said Cicely, in admiration. It seemed that she was in wonder to have met so grand a person.

"Madam," said Charmian, as he bowed from the door-

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way, "a little while ago it was yours, but since you have chosen to discard me, I must put up with Sir Edward." With which little jest he got out of the room, and, accompanied by his guest, thus oddly invited, clambered up on the coach.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PURSE

The stream of passengers upon the eastern side of Regent street flowed in a full tide; quickened by freshets from every doorway that fine spring afternoon, it poured and surged and broke in eddies along the pavement. Men and women, ranks and masses, swayed, tossed and buffeted together, and the exterior fragments of the crowd were thrown against the lamp-posts. Lord Francis Charmian made part of this busy tumult, picking his way carefully and lazily through the gaps. He was bent upon no object, he had no mission, not even that of shopping; but it was a fact that he vastly enjoyed the sunshine, and the variety of human faces encountered in this medley amused him for the time. He observed the manners of a crowd with interest. The women moved all in a fuss, but seemed to get nowhere in particular. They fluttered about the windows like bees, and then buzzed off, humming together most importantly. The comparison of them with bees tickled Charmian's fancy, and he began to see his simile develop. Now and then one would detach herself from a group about the gorgeous window, fly out into the pathway with an appearance of anxiety, and dart away, emotion shining in her eye, her reticule dangling after her. Even so had he seen bees rise, satiated from the flowers, and take precipitately to their wings. The reticules excited his attention; they were the honey bags, but they were inadequately guarded. He had already seen several which had invited the thief. At this moment, in front

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of him, and pushing through the throng like himself, he noticed a tall, commanding woman, of middle age, her sails spread solidly to the breeze, bellying along her path, and a bag dropped open in her hand. Charmian moved closer, and even as he looked a jerk tossed the bag about, and its contents fell to the pavement. He stooped and picked up what he perceived to be a purse, and for a moment, stood meditating, with a contemplative eye upon the receding lady. It was really time these women were taught a lesson. Then he was putting the purse coolly into his pocket, when, of a sudden, he was seized violently and feebly shaken from behind.

"Thief, thief! I saw you. Thief! Police!" cried a voice; and, turning his head as well as he was able, Charmian saw that he was in the possession of a little red-faced old gentleman, wearing eyeglasses and armed with a large umbrella.

"Police! Police! Seize hold of him! I saw him. Thief!" screamed the old gentleman, shaking Charmian weakly, but with great bitterness. His glasses had fallen down his nose, and in glaring over them he assumed a ferocious aspect, while the clutch he kept upon his umbrella drove it painfully into Charmian's back.

"My dear sir," cried the young man in an agony, "if you will please remove that infernal stick——"

"Police!" screamed the old gentleman; though by this time, indeed, his cries were unnecessary, for the police had elbowed their way through the excited crowd, and one was already at Charmian's shoulder. He put a hand upon the young man.

"All right, constable," said he, "I am not going to bolt. Besides, the crowd would prevent it. I think this gentleman has gone suddenly mad."

The little red old gentleman relinquished his prisoner to the police with visible reluctance, and stood by, pre-

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pared to spring again, but slowly cooling and bringing his mind to bear upon his fresh responsibilities.

"I charge this man with stealing," he declared vigorously; and part of the crowd about him applauded. He looked round with a sense of satisfaction, readjusting his glasses. "He picked a lady's pocket—that's what he did. I charge him with theft."

Now, to say the truth, the attack had been so unexpected, had been delivered so sharply and with such ferocity, that Charmian had been overtaken with a surprised bewilderment, which not even the repeated exclamations of the old gentleman could penetrate. Suddenly, and in a breath, he saw how he stood. The purse was between his fingers; he was caught red-handed. The frolic began to take an ugly shape. One of the constables brought out a note-book. He made a rapid transcript of the old gentleman's statements.

"Do I look like a pickpocket?" asked Charmian mildly, but plying his wits in all directions. It was preposterous; he would be the laughing-stock of London. There is nothing more humiliating than the jest that has missed fire.

"Swell mobsman," came from the crowd in a murmur; and one voice more boldly ventured to isolate itself and proclaim its naked evidence. "I have no doubt that this is the man I saw last week in Clerkenwell. He was just about his height, and got up swell the same way. I know he's the fellow."

The policeman made a note of this also, at which, however, the owner of the voice retired precipitately; and then he turned to Charmian.

"You must come along with me," he said.

But Charmian was now himself again, and he looked into the levelled eyes of that hot ring of faces with urbane coolness, even effrontery.

"You will pardon me," said he; "but I should like to

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get the bearing of the situation. I am naturally somewhat upset at this extravagant performance, and hardly understand. I believe that this gentleman with the hard umbrella accuses me of stealing a purse—this purse," he held it up—"from a lady. Is that so?"

The constable agreed.

There was silence. "Come," he pursued, "am I to be set upon, beaten with a hard umbrella, cross-questioned, arrested and dragged off to a police-station, simply because a short-sighted old gentleman, with glasses, chooses to bring a ridiculous accusation against me? Where is this lady? Let us know, first, if she has lost anything?"

But at this again there was no reply, only an echo from the crowd, "Where's the lady?"

The imperturbability of Charmian's manner, and his undoubted air of distinction, moreover, had prevailed upon the policeman, who began to doubt and hesitate. The crowd, with iniquitous recklessness, changed its sympathies. The little old gentleman found himself alone.

"I—I demand," said he, "that this fellow be taken to the lock-up."

"That's all right. Don't be in a hurry," replied one of the officers, with soothing sarcasm. "What's your name?"

"My name is James Cleophas Rodgers, and here is my address," returned the old gentleman proudly; "and I demand——"

"Yes, yes, we know all that, old cock," interposed some invisible and irreverent wag from the circle; "tell us something really nice."

Charmian looked on now with recaptured indifference. "Well, constable," said he at length, "perhaps while this good gentleman is looking for his friend, the lady, we might adjourn this meeting, which I find, to say the truth, somewhat inconvenient."

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"Take the Albert 'All," responded the wag.

"In the meantime," pursued Charmian airily, "here is my card and my address, where I may be found at any time, at any rate by appointment."

The officer read the card without visible emotion, but a change struck at once into his manner. "All right, sir," he said, and to his comrade, "You have the address?" and then, raising his voice on the monotone of dispassionate equity, "Pass along, please—pass along there."

The crowd, seeing the excitement melt so quickly, itself faded and disappeared, leaving only the old gentleman indignantly explaining the situation to a few curious sympathizers. Charmian was left standing there.

"Even if the police have not done their duty," said the old gentleman fiercely, "I will remember your face. You can rely on that."

"My dear sir," said Charmian, lightly dropping the purse into his pocket, "and I can assure you I shall remember your umbrella."

He turned and made in the direction of St. James's, for, to say the truth, he had been somewhat disconcerted, and he wanted some refreshment. At the club he forgot the incident, but later at night encountering the purse in a pocket, he drew it out and examined it. There were two gold pieces and some shillings in the purse—"not a great haul," as Charmian remarked to himself. But there was also a card, on which he read, "Mrs. Aubyn," with an address in the far West.

"Oh, come," thought Charmian, "I am not to prove a real thief after all. I will send it back to-morrow."

As it chanced, Charmian was dining upon the next afternoon in a part of that large region which is called Kensington, and by some fortuitous train of thought he once more recalled the purse. "I will return it my-

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self—and now,” he resolved, and, forthwith consulting the card, drove to Mrs. Aubyn’s door.

The house was placed in the corner of a pretty square, was set within white walls and owned a tiny garden. It was a quarter of the town from which the tide of population had retired long since. The builder had overlooked it, or remarked it with contempt, and no trespass of advancing progress broke the peace and sleep of this abandoned suburb. The square, neatly and economically ordered, was bright with flowers, and the sun shone on the green grass and the red roofs as upon some country village. Upon these few observations, made with no great interest, in Charmian’s mind, the door opened, and in answer to his inquiries he was informed that Mrs. Aubyn was in. He refused his name on the ground that he had come on business merely, and, seated in a small sweet-smelling drawing-room, he was presently awaiting the lady’s arrival.

A little while after a door towards the back of the room was opened gently, and a girl came forward. Charmian rose and bowed.

“You are Mrs. Aubyn?” he asked, feeling certain now that he had made a mistake, and that the card had not belonged to the owner of the purse.

“That is my mother,” replied the girl: “you are expecting her? She would have come, but she is detained. But perhaps I would do as well.”

Evidently she was very politely explaining that her mother did not wish to see him. Yet Charmian could not be certain that Mrs. Aubyn was the lady whose purse he had taken, and he was for the time at a loss how to make inquiries. A glance at the lady herself would have settled his doubts, for he was quite safe to remember that bold, commanding figure.

He bowed.

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"It is a little elaborate," said he. "If I may sit down and explain——"

She begged him to be seated, and herself sat opposite, her glance resting kindly upon him from brown eyes. She was slight, pretty, deliberate and serious as a nun.

"Mrs. Aubyn is quite well, I trust?" said he, sinking into a chair and fixing his eyes on her.

The girl, lifting her eyebrows a trifle, answered that Mrs. Aubyn was in admirable health.

"Ah, I feared lest perhaps the weather, you know . . .," exclaimed Charmian, smoothing his hat. But all the time he was wondering if he might broach the purse, so to say, to this austere young lady. It was a long explanation on which to embark, and he was not at all confident that he had come to the right house. She waited for him, still polite, but offering no encouragement. It seemed that he must speak.

"You are, madame, I may ask, in Mrs. Aubyn's confidence?" he inquired.

The young lady was taken aback, this question seemed to be surprising: she made no immediate answer; in truth, she stammered.

"I—I—hardly . . . Is your business very private?" she asked.

"Well," replied Charmian apologetically, "from one point of view, yes; and yet again perhaps it would be considered a matter under your cognizance. Certainly I should prefer to broach it to Mrs. Aubyn."

The girl rose, as if with the intention of leaving the room to fetch her fother. Charmian thought he read the purpose plainly in her face. But as speedily she hesitated; a look of indecision came over her, and she considered him uncomfortably.

"Come," said Charmian pleasantly, "my dear young lady, I know what you are thinking, if you will excuse

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me. You are wondering if I am a beggar, or maybe a blackmailer. I can reassure you. I have no guns to unmask upon your mother; and I have driven here in a cab. To some extent these facts, of which I assure you, clear my character. And now I have changed my mind, and if you will please sit down, I will tell you all about it."

She colored shyly, but accepted his invitation.

"I fear my mother is engaged," she murmured formally.

"Yes, precisely," said Charmian, "and I don't blame her. Who wants to see an anonymous stranger?" Where she sat, very demure, and a little confounded, she took a light that set her face in a lovely glow, and Charmian had no desire to lose the spectacle. "You will pardon me," he went on, as though under the spur of a sudden thought: "you are not by any chance a Yorkshire family?"

Miss Aubyn assured him that they were not.

"Ah," said Charmian, "I have some friends—But of course you are not. But you might be Cornish," he said hopefully.

"We are Londoners," replied the girl simply. She had still the air of waiting, of inviting his attention to the business on which he had come.

"Indeed!" cried Charmian, as one in great surprise. "You astonish me. I know most shires of England, and I could have sworn that only in one or two, and never in London, was that particular complexion seen."

Miss Aubyn shifted uncomfortably. "Perhaps, Mr. . . ." she hesitated on his name—"I had better see if my mother is disengaged."

"Not for worlds," cried Charmian hurriedly, adding, "I should be loth to disturb her. I can very well explain my business to you, madam, but as it is somewhat involved, it takes time."

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The girl's compressed lips conveyed to him her unspoken assent to this proposition.

"It is always well to approach these matters delicately," went on Charmian deliberately: "a false step, caused by undue haste now, may involve an infinity of work and annoyance later. I daresay you will follow me there, my dear young lady."

"I think, sir," she replied with diffidence, "if you would kindly tell me what I can do——"

"Most certainly," agreed Charmian, amiably as ever, and surveying her with admiring eyes. "Then I will be quite blunt. Do you know a Mr. Brown?"

She considered with an appearance of interest. "I—I—don't think we do," she said. "At least not—only a tradesman, I fancy."

"Ah," said Charmian, like one in relief. "That is good news. Then I may take it that no one named Brown lives hereabouts?"

She detected nothing insincere in his voice; she was very grave and simple, and she broke out eagerly, "No, I am quite sure of that. We have lived here ever since I was a little girl, and we should have known; though," she added, and a note of regret entered unconsciously into her voice, "we are leaving here next week."

"Leaving here!" echoed Charmian, delighted with the new opening and breaking through at a gallop. "Really! Why, to leave this pleasant house and outlook! To go into the country, I assume?"

"No," said the girl briefly, "the lease is to be sold."

She exhibited some embarrassment in her melancholy, and Charmian, who was quick beyond the common to reach conclusions, decided that the family were newly impoverished. "You must be attached to the place?" he suggested.

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"We have no choice," she replied, turning sharply away.

A vague remembrance of a board, displaying "For Sale," hanging from the area railings recurred to Charmian. He was momentarily divided between the attractions of the girl and a rising sense of shame. It appeared that he was leaving the fields of humorous entertainment; and he decided that he had best be quit of his purse and go.

Miss Aubyn faced near by, mistress of herself. "If I can give you any help about Mr. Brown . . ." she began, with an air of dismissal.

"My dear Miss Aubyn," stammered Charmian, fingering the purse in his pocket, and wondering what plea he might find, after his pretences. But at this instant the door creaked open on a sound of voices, and Charmian beheld the tall, commanding lady in the doorway with no other than the little red old gentleman at her heels.

The sight, it must be confessed, took him awkwardly aback. How the devil did he come there? But upon the thought instantaneously succeeded the realization of his position. Here was he once more, so to speak, taken in the act, and once more the little, spectacled gentleman was the detective. That uncompromising enemy of injustice advanced, paused abreast of Mrs. Aubyn, and stared aghast at him. Then he broke forth furiously.

"My dear madam, this is the very man," he cried. "What is he doing here? This is astounding impudence. He must be seized at once. Hold him. He has your purse."

Charmian straightened himself: for his life he could not at the moment spy an escape from this dilemma, and he held his tongue like a wise man.

COMEDY

"Who is this?" demanded Mrs. Aubyn, in a most ominous manner, regarding him menacingly.

"This is a gentleman," said the young lady, seeing that Charmian did not answer, "who has come to see you on business. He——"

"Business! yes, I guess his business," interposed the old gentleman on her halting words. "I tell you, madam, this is the thief himself, and I will have him locked up as sure as my name's Rodgers."

"May I ask, Mr. Rodgers, since that is your name," said Charmian smoothly, "what this is all about?"

"You are best answered with a policeman," declared Mr. Rodgers, barring the door with his umbrella. "I won't have any impudence from you."

"May I ask what your business is here, sir?" demanded Mrs. Aubyn, with stately hauteur.

By this time, however, it had grown clear to Charmian that the matter of the purse must be sunk in oblivion. He had been a quarter of an hour or more in the young lady's company and had breathed no word of his proposed restitution; nay, he had even given out quite another reason for his visit. To be sure, appearances made him look like a housebreaker, seeking for an opportunity.

"I have already explained my business to your daughter, madam," he said, with equal dignity, and bowing in Miss Aubyn's direction.

"Take care, take care: he is a dangerous man," exclaimed Mr. Rodgers, mopping himself with a handkerchief. "If I had not seen you come out of that shop and thought of asking them if you were known, he would have been able to carry on his nefarious practices at his leisure. But, thank God, he is unmasked now. Have an eye to your daughter, madam. Lock him up. A most dangerous man! Heaven knows what he would add to robbery."

## THE SKIRTS OF CHANCE

As it was at that moment, it was Charmian who had an eye to the daughter, faintly whimsical in expression, which Mrs. Aubyn observed.

"Come here, Evelyn," cried she sharply, like a hen gathering her chickens out of danger.

Miss Aubyn crossed the room from where she was standing by Charmian.

"This gentleman," she continued austerely, "accuses you of stealing my purse, which I have missed since yesterday. Have you anything to say?"

"Mother!" cried Evelyn, in tears of distress, and looking pitifully at Charmian.

"Madam," said he, bowing, "I am dumb before this gentleman."

"Pray allow me, my dear lady," said Mr. Rodgers, fussily. "I will fetch in the constable myself. Keep an eye on him, I beg." And he bustled out of the room.

Mrs. Aubyn followed, beckoning her daughter with a gesture. But the girl, moving to the door, closed it, and stood, her pretty face pale and agitated, looking toward Charmian.

"You are not . . ." she began in a low, tremulous voice. She hesitated.

"My dear Miss Evelyn," said Charmian, shrugging his shoulders, "the pity of it is that it is true, every word."

She drew a long breath. "Then Mr. Brown——"

"Was an invention," he replied.

For a moment there was silence. "If you had not told me I would not have believed it," she said, "and because you tell me, I don't believe it."

"It is pleasant to find such innocent faith," said Charmian, somewhat touched at this. "But how, I wonder, do you justify your confidence?"

COMEDY

"Oh, how can you stand there and jest," she cried, "when the—the——"

"Police?" he suggested.

"When you are in such danger," she amended.

Charmian settled himself into a chair, and put down his hat at his feet. "They will have to drag me forth," he said moodily.

At that moment a voice called from the hall beyond, "Evelyn! Evelyn!"

The girl opened the door slightly, and answered tremulously, "Yes, mother; I— am keeping my eye on him." She shut the door again hurriedly, standing with her back against it, and turned to him with the marks of growing emotion. "They will be back directly," she cried. "Oh, what can we do? How can I help you?"

"You had better give me up, my dear young lady," said Charmian, observing her with increased interest.

"But you never did it?" she exclaimed, much disconcerted.

"I shall be the victim of circumstances," he said. "You see, Mr. Rodgers and the police are not like you."

"But—but," she stammered, "can't you set it right? You took my mother's purse, you say. I am sure you did it for some good purpose."

"You are correct," he murmured, with a smile. "I don't mind telling you that I picked it up with the foolish design of reading her a lesson on the vanity of open reticules; but I would tell no one else. The fact is, I would die rather; and, what is more, they wouldn't believe me. It is a nasty thing to be mixed up with the police. I have no doubt I shall do time. Besides, I deserve to be punished for my presumption in setting forth to teach Mrs. Aubyn anything."

"But why did you not return the purse?" she asked, puzzled.

"My friend Mr. Rodgers was unhappily too quick for

## THE SKIRTS OF CHANCE

me. He has a sharp eye behind his glasses; and, ere I could explain to the police, your mother was gone—fortunately for me,” he added.

“Oh, that is all right, then,” cried Miss Aubyn eagerly. “You came to return it, did you not? I knew I was right. Of course. And——”

“And I haven’t, you see,” interposed Charmian, making a little grimace. She stared, as if not understanding. “I have been—how long was it? It seems but a moment or two—in your company without mentioning the purse.”

“Oh!” she cried, drawing a deep breath.

“You see,” he went on, “that things are looking very black.”

“But why did you not return it to me?” she asked despondently.

“To be quite frank,” he replied, “I enjoyed my conversation with you too much to desire to terminate it.”

“My conversation!” she echoed in astonishment.

“And your pretty presence,” added Charmian with a deferential bow.

“You should not have said that,” she cried quickly, coloring very suddenly.

“No, I don’t think I should have said it,” he admitted after a pause. “But it’s true for all that,” he added.

This was a way of making his offence worse, while escaping censure through seeming to repent—a trick of which Charmian was fond. She glowed as she looked at him, divided between her embarrassment and her fears; and then a noise in the hall sent the blood from her face, and her white arm went out instinctively as though to bar the door. Charmian swiftly had a vision of innumerable explanations, uncomfortable detention in a police-cell, messages, interviews, apologies, and the odium of private ridicule among his friends; and his brows drew sharply together in a frown.

COMEDY

"Where is the purse?" whispered the girl from the door, breaking in upon that interval of silence.

He drew it from his pocket; and gliding with swift, lissom limbs across the room, she took it from his hands. "Let me have it. I will——"

But she had time for no more, as the door opened immediately, and there was Mr. Rodgers, beaming from his glasses, flanked by a great constable, wearing a business-like air.

"This is the man," observed Mr. Rodgers, cheerfully. "You give this man in charge, madam?"

"Certainly," said the lady promptly.

"Stealing a purse," commented the policeman.

Charmian remained seated, and shrugged his shoulders. The affair was a most abominable nuisance. But rapidly before him there flashed out, with a whirl of her girlish skirts, Miss Aubyn, dramatically tragic, and covered with agitation.

"There is a mistake, policeman," she cried breathlessly. "The gentleman has not taken my mother's purse. I have it."

"What!" screamed Mrs. Aubyn, turning on her.

Miss Aubyn held up the purse. "I have had it all along. My mother mislaid it." She lied freely, fiercely, angrily, as if daring a denial.

The old gentleman stared in bewilderment, and then his glasses traveled from the purse to the girl, and from the girl to Charmian, who had risen to his feet. Mrs. Aubyn was slowly recovering from her astonishment, and appeared now to be somewhat covered with confusion.

"I must have left it behind," she murmured absently.

"Not a bit of it, madam," cried Mr. Rodgers, firmly.

"I tell you I saw this man steal that purse."

"Then do you tell me that I am lying?" demanded the girl quietly.

## THE SKIRTS OF CHANCE

Charmian's heart leapt up. "Brava! brava! little girl!" he cried to himself.

Her bodice was rising and falling with her emotion, and her cheeks were heightened with color; but she held forth a hand clutching the purse for ail to view.

Mr. Rodgers gasped. Charmian stepped forward.

"I may say, madam," he said placidly, "that it is not the first time that this gentleman has persecuted me in this way. He appears to be suffering from some hallucination, which is very sad. Perhaps his friends——"

But this was too much for Mr. Rodgers, who grew ensanguined to the eyes, and burst forth unable to contain himself:

"Hallucination! God bless me! What—why the——" and then, with deadly calm. "May I ask, then, what, sir, is the reason of your presence here, since you are not known to this lady?"

"I see no reason why I should gratify your curiosity, sir," replied Charmian, coldly. "But now that I am at last privileged to see the lady for whom I have been waiting for the last half-hour, and to whom, but for this unfortunate interruption, I should have already broached my errand, I think, if she will pardon me, we will get to business."

"Who are you, sir?" asked Mrs. Aubyn, still between suspicion and confusion.

"My name, madame, is immaterial at present," said he; "but I am come from Mr. ——" (the name, dimly remembered from the board outside, returned in the nick of time—"Mr. Clark, I think is the name.")

"About the house?" she inquired in quite other tones.

"About the house," assented Charmian. He felt now that he must make an effort to get out of the situation with credit, and he was feeling his way slowly. His glance rested on Miss Aubyn, who had fallen a little aside, and still breathing deeply, was watching him in

## COMEDY

wonder. He seemed in that second to catch some spark of inspiration from her brown and serious eyes. Something touched him, and his mind went forward with a leap. In confused and unconvinced humiliation the old gentleman had retired into the hall with his policeman, and they stood whispering together.

"I may say, madam," explained Charmian, "that I have purchased the lease of this house from Mr. Brown——"

"Clarke," corrected Mrs. Aubyn, breathlessly.

"Clarke, of course—and I came to say that you would greatly oblige me by staying on, if your plans would allow you to do so."

A gleam of astonishment, of relief, of real happiness, was visible in Mrs. Aubyn's face; but she contained her delight, and answered formally, even with dignity. Charmian took up his hat. The little red gentleman and the policeman were now quarreling in the street, and the sound of indignant remonstrances came through the open doorway. Mrs. Aubyn preceded Charmian into the hall, murmuring an apology for the misunderstanding. On the threshold he paused, and looked for the girl, who stood some distance away against a pretty shabby piano, regarding him with amazement, even with alarm. She recovered and came forward. "You know this is not true!" she whispered.

"My dear Miss Aubyn," said Charmian, engaged in smoothing his hat, "I have heard so many things which are not true since I entered this house that my brain whirls, and I——"

"You know we can't accept this," she said.

He glanced into the hall to make sure he was unnoticed. "My dear Miss Evelyn," he said gravely, "when I give myself a pleasure I expect to pay for it. When I make a mistake I expect to pay even more. If

## THE SKIRTS OF CHANCE

I choose to pay a certain price for my folly. . . . Besides, it is a good investment."

She shook her head. "I don't know who you are, but this is not possible."

"More things are possible than we dream of, I assure you," said he lightly. "And if you refuse you betray me and I go to prison."

"She looked at him doubtfully, with tears of perplexity in his eyes. "I—I—I think you are very generous, whoever you are," she murmured.

"Tut, tut, my dear child," he answered, and of an impulse taking her two hands in his he looked earnestly into her pretty, excited face. "Allow me to tell you what I think of you." He paused, and gently dropped her hands. "No; I daren't do that," and with a bow he hurried away,

## CHAPTER III

### THE OPEN DOOR

The night had fallen very bright and soft, and the pleasant airs, caught by the rolling body of the hansom, whistled gently in the corners of the cab, and wandered over Charmian's face. He sat back, the doors thrust open, his head bare to those cool breezes, and a dust-coat negligently slipping from his knees. Outside, beside and before him, streamed and swirled the mellow lights of the streets. The lamps burned cool and faint under that nocturnal glow, the fanlights twinkled from the houses, and the gleam of carriages went sparkling by. Charmian had passed a very dull evening, as he had several times reflected during his drive from Chelsea. It was in that reputable and quiet district that the Lady Georgiana Radcliffe, elder sister of George Augustus Charmian, tenth Marquess of Auriol, occupied her quarters for the season. Once, at least, during that annual tenancy did it fall to Lord Francis to eat a dinner and to exchange family news with his aunt. But Lady Georgiana was not lively company, being encumbered with a sense of her obligations, and with the need for right living; and the shadows of her sombre person still clouded Charmian's spirits. He had sat within the confines of her realm, obedient to its regulations and conventions, for fully three hours. It was now past ten, and he breathed deeply of his freedom in the fine night air. His wits returned in a flow upon him. He put his head forth and looked round. The

town was at its best that summer night. The horizon still glowed with day, and above the roofs of the houses and by the black chimneys already seemed to creep the feet of the dawn. A confluence of carriages met and detained his cab; he was whisked into the stream and passed along with it. The region, as he saw, was Belgravia, and the street in which they had now descended to a foot-pace was somewhat lean and broken, and was lined by huge banks of houses.

The cabman opened the lid and put his eyes to the hole. "I can't get out of this block, sir," said he apologetically, "they're passing us along."

"Very well," assented Charmian. "We must wait our turn. Break away when you can," and, dropping back, he thought no more about it.

Presently, however, he was aware that the cab had come to a stop, and a face suddenly emerged from the twilight before him. He started from his musing, and found that a servant in colored silk stockings, clad in a brilliant livery and bobbing a powdered head, was laying a hand on his coat.

"What's this?" said he, and looked out, suddenly and swiftly aware of the mistake. His cab swung into a procession of carriages that were setting down before this house. The cabman overhead was irritably explaining to the servant, who, because his head was thrust into the cab, and by reason also of the many noises of the street, neither heard nor heeded. With his customary quickness of decision Charmian leapt up. The blood pulsed in him fast; he had spent a very sluggish evening, and his wits and heart quickened in a reaction. Of a sudden he took up his coat, flung a piece of silver into the servant's hands, and skipped out upon the pavement. This he accomplished with such impetuosity as almost to fall into the arms of a young lady, who, newly alight-

ed from a neighboring brougham, was awaiting her companion upon the carpet and under the awning.

"I'm sure I beg your pardon," he cried, with elaborate civility, lifting his hat and bowing profoundly; and then on a sudden whim, feigning to examine her carefully, "How very stupid of me! Do you know, I did not recognize you at the first."

"Indeed," she stammered, very grossly taken back, and evidently searching in her memory for his face and name.

"Yes; odd, isn't it? But who would have thought of seeing you here?" he pursued, agreeably rattling along. "I suppose you're going in?"—and he nodded towards the flaming windows of the house.

The young lady assented; she had a very lively face and a quick and ardent manner, but she still seemed to be confounded, glancing at him in a puzzled fashion out of her fine bright eyes. At this moment her partner joined her, fixing an unceremonious stare upon Charmian, and abruptly took her away. She went with a beautiful bow, and Charmian caught the words, brusquely delivered by the man,—

"Who the devil's that?"

He did not hear the answer, as he would have liked; but, smiling softly to himself, he walked briskly up the steps through a spacious portico of stucco and into an ample blazing hall of light.

The house was of great dimensions, and a broad staircase led upwards from the hall to the superior landings. By this a stream of guests were mounting, and Charmian joined them. At the head of the stairs he encountered a magnificent purple figure, who extended him a hand, and warmly bade him welcome. As he had come up at the tail of the procession, and clearly in a little interval of rest, Charmian was received with greater deliberation.

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"So glad you could come," said the lady in purple, smiling her favors upon each side.

"I made up my mind," said Charmian earnestly, "directly I got your kind invitation, that I would come at all hazards."

"So good of you," responded the lady, amiably, but discharging her anxious glances down the staircase at the ascending visitors. "You will find my daughter, Mabel, within," she added, partly, no doubt, inspired with a desire to push him on, and in part out of a vague sense that this must be some friend of her daughter's.

Murmuring his satisfaction, Charmian glided on, and issuing through a great doorway, came again into a flood of light, in which the noise and sibilation of a hundred voices mingled with the strains of a band. He stood awhile in quiet observation of this scene, casting his gaze about the room in expectation of encountering some familiar face. But he could see none. The guests were strange to him—as strange as the hostess. London, of course, is a very populous town, and we cannot know everybody. So Charmian reflected, and "Well, so much the better," thought he, and tripped gaily and irresponsibly into the throng. But immediately upon that the fiddles in the distance slipped insensibly into a waltz tune, the pack of guests that encumbered the floor melted and thinned as at a magic signal, and Charmian found himself solitary, in the center of the room, a conspicuous and dilatory figure. He stood the gauntlet of eyes. A fluttering line of fine whites and pinks, stained, veined and splashed with high colors, a gleam of brilliant sashes, the pleasant harmony of soft and warm flesh-lights, and the twinkling of many silver feet—all these impressions started swiftly in agreeably upon Charmian's senses.

The dancers, slowly detaching from the fringe of guests along the walls, surged, swayed, and, eddying

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solemnly, were swept into the vortex of the dance. Charmian slipped between the couples, delicately poised on his whimsy. He encountered a handsome girl in cream, who seemed on the point of picking her way through the room.

"There," he cried, with arch gaiety, "I thought I should never catch you. This is our dance, I believe?"

The young lady stared at him in bewilderment.

"I knew you meant to jilt me," he pursued, cheerily. "May I help you to a seat? I am afraid we are embarrassing the dancers." He took her arm with gentle authority, and laid it in his, smilingly urbane and pleasantly garrulous.

"But I think," began the girl in cream, "there is a mistake. Really, I——"

Charmian opened his eyes in pained amazement. "May I beg you for your card?" he asked, somewhat coolly. He took it from her tremulous fingers. "There are my initials," he said, with patient melancholy. "But of course, I would not claim you against your will."

"Oh, but indeed——" she broke forth, very red, but striving to attain a smile.

"Ah, I knew you would remember," interposed Charmian complacently, and firmly he led the way into the arena of the waltz.

The young lady cast a despairing glance about her, but finding no help at hand surrendered herself weakly to the pirate. Charmian danced with a grace, and his partner presently yielded herself to the seductions of the moment. She moved with him lithely, breathing deeply at his shoulder. The music ceased, the cinematograph dissolved, and Charmian, with his pretty, panting partner drifted to the door. It was not until then that she came to realize anew her position. Some woman stopped her in the doorway, and whispered a question.

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"I—I don't know," murmured the girl, in some confusion. "He says he knows me."

"Pray let me see that card again," demanded Charmain. "You see," he added, indicating a set of initials, "that all those belong to me—D. V., you know."

The girl stared, reddened, stammered, and her breathlessness increased. She strove to withdraw her arm.

"Allow me," said Charmian firmly, "you are too hot. You must take some refreshment."

He seated her comfortably in the supper-room. "It is always a good plan," he remarked, "to begin supper early; then it lasts a nice long time. Won't you have an ice?"

The girl was coerced into taking an ice, which she held untasted in her hand. Charmian talked.

"Now I'll wager," said he cheerfully, "that you don't remember when first we met?"

"No! I—I don't think I do," she stammered.

"Of course," pursued Charmain lightly, "I don't mean *really* when we first met, because you were hardly out of long skirts on that occasion, but the first time you can remember."

She gasped. "I—I don't remember," she exclaimed.

"There! I was sure of it," cried Charmian, triumphantly. "I might say, what ingratitude! but I only sigh, what cruelty! I recall it with particular distinctness. There was the sun setting, descending on the Campagna——"

"Campagna," she gasped. "Why, I—I've never——"

"Oh, excuse me," said Charmian, with grave reproach. "Don't you recall that time in Italy *now*?"

"There must be some mistake," she stammered. "For I——"

"Mabel," murmured a voice near by, and Charmian's sharp ears caught the whisper, "will you tell me who that is?"

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Out of the corner of his eyes he caught a glimpse of a woman, and remembered her for the bright-eyed creature whom he had accosted on the pavement outside. She was regarding him, as he went on, with vivacious and inquisitive eyes. He heard his poor partner's reply.

"I don't know," she said distressfully. "He says he met me in Italy."

"I think," said Charmian, interposing on the whippers, "it's time we went upstairs—unless, of course, you'd like some more ices," he added, with a look at the untouched plate.

The girl in cream cast a glance of appeal at her friend, but obeyed him. As they neared the door a young man, eagerly pulling his fingers into his gloves, met and confronted them.

"Oh, Miss Potts," he cried gladly, "I couldn't find you anywhere, and we've missed our dance."

"Potts, Potts!" murmured Charmian, "I must remember Potts;" and aloud, "Miss Potts," says he, with a bow, "is much indebted to you for your solicitude, but it was our dance."

"Oh, come," remonstrated the young fellow, with a somewhat sheepish grin.

"We are coming," remarked Charmian, pressing the girl's arm tighter to him. "I must really get away from this sort of nuisance," he whispered. "It is insufferable."

"But—but——" she began, protesting.

"I know, I know," said Charmian, soothingly. "I will deal with him later." He conducted her into the ball-room with splendid ceremony, leaving the young man gaping after them. "I think," he observed, "that we will sit out this dance. I know you won't mind. I always prefer a talk with you to dancing."

Miss Potts rose firmly. "I am sorry I must be going now," she said quickly; and, ere either might venture

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further, the lady in purple, who had welcomed Charmian on the landing, bore down on them. Miss Potts jumped away with an expression of relief, and an ejaculation of "Mother!"

Charmian whistled internally. "So this is 'my daughter Mabel?'" he said. "Well, Mabel is agreeably pretty."

It seemed, however, that she had been rescued for the time. "Who on earth is that?" asked the lady in purple.

"I don't know," said Mabel plaintively. "He says I'm engaged to him for six dances."

Charmian skipped elegantly from the room. Every one seemed to be inquiring about him, and it was very warm. He made his way to a sort of buffet for refreshments.

"Hot," he remarked, assuming as nearly as he might an off-hand aid of cordiality, and addressing an elderly gentleman, who was sipping cold coffee with a thoughtful expression.

"Very," assented the elderly gentleman.

"Crush like this is very abominable," ventured Charmian, putting down a tumbler of claret-cup.

The elderly gentleman observed him. "It is," he agreed deliberately.

"Why on earth do people do it?" asked Charmian, languidly. "It's their wives, I suppose?"

"Yes, I suppose it's their wives, as you say," remarked the elderly gentleman, after a pause.

The conversation did not seem to Charmian to be inspiring; so, "Nice old chap, Potts," he ventured, amiably diverting the current.

"Indeed?" remarked the elderly gentleman, sipping his coffee.

"Nice daughter, too," added Charmian, pleasantly, finishing his drink.

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"Ah; so I've heard," responded the elderly gentleman reflectively.

He did not offer great encouragement to friendliness, and Charmian moved away. As he did so, he ran up against the young man who had claimed Miss Potts. He made a most polite apology for the mishap.

"My sight is so bad," said he.

"Oh, well!" exclaimed the young man angrily, but could get no further for the moment.

"You were remarking?" suggested Charmian attentively.

"You have a damned cheek," said the young man, growing red.

"My dear sir," said Charmian, in his nicest manner, "I can explain it all in a few words. I will not pretend to misunderstand you, now that I see who you are. Can you spare me a few moments in this corner?"

The young man, something confounded by this air of assurance, followed him, and they sat down together. The ease and magnificence of Charmian's manner were already influencing his companion: he was composing himself; and he sat ready to accept the explanation of this unfortunate misunderstanding.

"You were quite right just now," began Charmian, nodding at him gravely. "You had a very just ground of offence. But I assure you that it was not my doing. Affairs took a swing under me and took me off my balance."

"That's all very well," replied the young man; "but it doesn't explain why you jumped my partner."

"Pardon me," said Charmian, lowering his voice: "it does. You understand women—not a doubt of it. Well, put yourself in my place. Was I to gainsay a lady?"

"Sir," cried the young man angrily, "you are making a fool of me."

"Excuse me," said Charmian, pleasantly, "but it is

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the lady who is doing that. The fact is—I had no intention of telling you a private secret three minutes ago, but it seems that this is the best solution of this unpleasant situation, and I trust to your honor—the fact is, we are engaged.”

“You are engaged!” stuttered the young man, rising half way to his feet.

“Well, we look upon ourselves as engaged,” nodded Charmian. “But please no word of this. I only tell you that you may understand——”

But here he was interrupted by the extraordinary agitation of the young man, which broke out into a jumble of furious and startled exclamations.

“It’s a lie! Engaged! Why,—keep it secret indeed! Mabel—the lady—is engaged to me,” he stuttered.

“Pardon me, to me,” said Charmian, somewhat taken aback at this revelation, but seeing no course open but to go forward.

The young man rose from his seat, mightily shaken, and stalked off in a gust of fear and passion. “I will see her at once,” he muttered.

Charmian sat a moment with his eyebrows lifted; and then he, too, hopped to his feet and darted out of the room. At all costs he must anticipate this frenzied hot-head and interview the lady first.

The ball-room was flowing with dancers, and the soft and gentle sound of trailing raiment swished regularly upon Charmian’s ear as he stood in the doorway. The *susurrus* of the dance was heard below the music. The glare of the electric lights affected him, and for some seconds he was at a loss to individualize the faces. But presently he caught sight of his late companion and his supposititious rival, edging anxiously along the wall and scrutinizing eagerly the people in the dance. The next instant beheld the young man’s features start with light, and, following his

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glance, himself discovered Miss Potts, whirling rhythmically in the embrace of a partner.

"I'll catch her when she comes round," thought Charmian, and kept an eye on the lady and on the man. Circling leisurely, Miss Potts approached the spot on which he stood, resolute to take advantage of the least faltering on the part of the waltzers. But they passed on smoothly rhythmical, and Charmian found the distance between them growing. At each turn, too, she drew nearer to the young man. It was, he reflected, like the game he had played in his youth, which had been termed "musical chairs." He was in dread lest they should come to a pause opposite his rival, and, moved by this impatience, he began to walk round with the dance so as to anticipate so unfortunate an accident. The couple would sometimes disappear, sucked into the vortex, when Charmian's fears rose, and he watched with anxiety until they reappeared upon the circumference. In this occupation he pushed unceremoniously past the bystanders, and found himself presently rubbing shoulders with the young man. Then, of a sudden, the fiddles ceased, the dancers stopped with them, and both Charmian and his rival made forward into the arena, which had momentarily swallowed up Miss Potts. Charmian almost upset the elderly gentleman with whom he had spoken earlier, but made his hasty apologies gracefully.

"Of no consequence, sir," replied the other. "Seen old Potts lately?"

"Yes, yes," said Charmian cheerfully: "just had a long talk with him." And he hurried on, haunted with the fear that he was too late, and dimly recognizing in his impetuosity that the elderly gentleman was conducting the lady with the sprightly face. To his satisfaction, he now beheld Miss Potts advancing before him, hanging on the arm of her partner. She

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wore a dull expression upon her pretty face, which changed to a livelier color when she saw him, partly with the recognition and in part with embarrassment. Charmian stopped in front of them, and Miss Potts clung to her partner in alarm.

"Pray excuse me," said he to the latter; and to the lady: "I am asked to conduct you to your mother."

"But my mother is here," cried Miss Potts in bewilderment, casting a glance toward the purple figure that stood near by.

"I beg your pardon," said Charmian abruptly, "Father—father, of course."

With some terror and suspicion in her eye, she yielded, and he took her off, slipping behind a stout woman in time to escape the desperate young man, who was now wildly hunting about the room. Without more than a civil whisper he led his prey to the door.

"Oh, there is my father!" she cried suddenly, and would have pulled away her arm. But Charmian, following her eyes, encountered the gaze of the elderly gentleman and his lively partner, who were steadily observing the pair. So that was old Potts himself! He put his hand to his moist forehead.

"This is getting too warm," he remarked, speaking aloud.

"It is very hot," assented Miss Potts, directing her steps toward her father. Charmian came to a stop.

"My dear young lady," he said desperately, "don't you think, then, that the garden would suit us very well? We might cool down there. I assure you I am in sore need of it."

"But—but——" she began.

"Say no more about it," he interrupted. "I am sure you will grant me this favor. It is all I shall ever ask you, and I swear that I shall keep you but five minutes in the interval between your dances."

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"But—but—you said they were *your* dances," she stammered.

"Did I?" he said. "Oh, yes, of course I did. Well, you know, I made a mistake, and they weren't. In fact, there were none of them my dances. In fact, you're not the person I took you for."

"I'm not?" she cried in confusion, gaping at him.

"No, but see, I can easily explain. It won't take three minutes if you will come into the garden. I hope there's a garden."

"Oh, yes, there's a very nice garden," she said complacently.

"Come, then," said Charmian, with one fearful eye on the elderly gentleman, and the other endeavoring to scour the neighborhood in search of the bitter young man.

She guided him from the room and presently brought him down a flight of steps into a night of stars and dew. Charmian held her arm. "Let me put this wrap on you," he said softly. The thought came comfortably into his mind that they could always hide among the bushes on the lawn. "Now let me begin at the beginning," he went on.

"You said," said Miss Potts timidly, "that I was not the person you supposed."

"That, my dear Miss Mabel," said Charmian in his friendliest manner, "was a very rude speech, spoken in the excitement of embarrassment. The fact is, that I am a different person."

"From what you supposed?" said Miss Potts feebly.

"I can put it best this way," he pursued equably. "I have the honor to know a young lady whom I have not seen for some long time. You chance to resemble her very greatly. It is a wonderful likeness. I—my dear young lady, may I say this quite freely?—I happen to be deeply attached to her, to admire her desperately.

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She is very beautiful, very witty, and very courageous. May I leave you to conceive my blunder, and to forgive it?"

Miss Mabel was silent. He felt her hand slip slowly from his arm.

She trembled.

"I—I am very sorry," she said in a low voice.

"So am I," said Charmian, in as low a voice, significant with feeling. He gently pressed her fingers, which were not now withdrawn. "And now," he resumed, "now that I have explained clearly to you, as was your due, the unhappy mistake which has caused me so much confusion, I will leave you and this house together, for fear I add still further to your embarrassment."

"I don't think," said Miss Mabel softly, "you will hurt me by staying."

"My dear Miss Mabel, I am overwhelmed with shame when I think of my conduct," he declared.

"I wouldn't take it to heart," she urged. "It was only a mistake, and—I suppose you're a friend of papa's?" she inquired.

"Papa's? Yes, papa's," assented Charmian with a gulp.

But at this moment, and as she would put him further questions, a voice called pleasantly out of the darkness:

"Mabel! Mabel!"

"It is Mrs. Langdon," said Miss Mabel quickly, and showing not a little confusion. "I had better go."

"Let me help you," pleaded Charmian, and led her boldly forward into the light. Upon the staircase stood the young lady with the lively face, regarding them now with luminous and smiling intelligence.

"You will catch cold, my dear," she exclaimed pleasantly, "and Mr. Vernon is looking for you anxiously;" and then, making a show of seeing Charmian for the

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first time, she made a start forward and held out a hand. "My dear friend," she cried, "really I had no idea you were here. When I passed you just now I did not recognize you. You remember me, of course?"

Charmian, abashed by this unexpected assault, hesitated a moment. "Why, yes, of course I do," he answered lamely.

"We met in Italy, you remember—in the Campagna, was it not?"

"It—it undoubtedly was, my dear lady," said Charmian.

The same year, of course, that you met Miss Potts?" she pursued cheerfully, fanning herself and languishing out of her lovely eyes.

"Oh—er—yes, of course," assented Charmian, now thoroughly disordered.

"But," cried Miss Mabel in amazement, "you never met me then at all—you know you didn't!" and ere he could speak explained in a lower voice to the other, "He took me for some one else—some one to whom he is deeply attached."

"Poor fellow!" said Mrs. Langdon, with a sweet cadence in her voice.

But Charmian was never discomposed for long, or often, and he had now quite recovered, and was gazing into the well-lighted, dancing eyes of his antagonist.

"I am quite sure of this, Mrs. Langdon," he said, gently, "that I need your sympathy."

"I am quite sure you are a man, sir, who gets all the sympathy he needs," said she brightly. "Mabel," she continued with some authority, "I have told you that Mr. Vernon is looking everywhere for you."

"I think I can guess who Mr. Vernon is," said Charmian.

"I doubt if he could say the same of you," retorted the lady sweetly.

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The girl lingered; she cast puzzled glances from one to the other. Mrs. Langdon made an impatient gesture, and she vanished up the stairs.

Charmian broke into a smile. "Madam," he said, "I own myself defeated. You have me at a disadvantage."

"On the contrary," said she graciously, "it is rather you who have us all at a disadvantage."

"I am an imposter," said he humbly.

"It is a harsh word, but I know no other," said she.

"And I have broken down—I have given myself away."

"After a wonderfully successful course of mischief," she added, lightly.

Charmian considered; he bit his lip. "I confess," he said, "and I will do any penance you will."

The lady shrugged her shoulders daintily. "It has nothing to do with me."

"It was quite an accident," he pleaded. "A mistake of my cab."

"You had better explain that to Mr. Potts," she suggested.

Charmian took pleasure in her sparkling face; he found himself suddenly content to talk and watch her. "In truth," he urged, in his winning voice, "if I had not met you upon the pavement I should not have thought of it."

She started and fixed her gaze on him, coloring ever so faintly. Then she broke out into soft and merry laughter.

"Oh," she said, "I never have met your match."

"Indeed," said Charmian, disconsolately, "but apparently I have."

"Here is Mr. Potts," said she quickly; "and now for your explanations."

Charmian looked her full in the face, elevated his eyebrows, shrugged his shoulders, and turned to meet

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the master of the house. The elderly gentleman approached deliberately, eyeing them dispassionately.

"I should be glad, sir——" he began slowly.

But unexpectedly the lady interposed.

"Oh, I am glad you have come, Mr. Potts. I wanted to introduce to you my friend, Lord Francis Charmian, whom I took the liberty of bringing with me."

Charmian fell back a step in his astonishment, and Mr. Potts seemed somewhat bewildered, but the former recovered; he bowed.

"Yes, Mr. Potts, we're quite old friends—met in the Campagna," he said amiably.

"Oh, indeed!" said Mr. Potts, quite affable and smiling. He shuffled off, after some exchanges, and Charmian turned to his companion.

"You have known all along?" he said in dismay.

"I have managed to recall a photograph I once saw," said she drily.

"My dear lady," he said with some tenderness, "I kiss your hands."

"My dear lord," said Mrs. Langdon, "knowing your reputation, you do nothing of the kind."

Her face shone with pretty color; she was amazingly handsome.

"At least," said Charmian firmly, and seizing upon her hand, "I will take you down to supper."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE GREEN BROUGHAM

The estates, properly belonging to the Dowager Marchioness of Auriol, herself Baroness de Lys in her own right, were situated in an outlying part of that western country which is accounted by its inhabitants the most beautiful. She was a handsome woman of a royal presence, was scarcely fifty, acknowledged to less, and still maintained her position in the world of fashion among younger and less dignified rivals. Upon this property it was natural that Lord Francis Charmian should be supposed to keep an eye. The Marchioness herself journeyed in state at intervals into the west, but to her son she resigned the charges of that territory which should one day be his. Charmian, however, had an eye and a spirit for the country upon occasion, and, even in the heart of the season, was known to have spent a week at the castle with comfort and entertainment to himself.

But it was naturally in winter that his visits were longest, and most satisfactory. He hunted now and then, and he shot at odd times; but his irregular seasons had got him the name of eccentricity from the more rabid partisans of these pursuits. It was, for example, egregious indeed, that Lord Francis should be returning to the castle on a wild January day, instead of some three months earlier. Even Lady Auriol had spent her Christmas in the country, though she had fled to town with her retinue about the middle of January; but here

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was the month drawing to a close, and the future master of the district had only just designed to descend upon it from his preposterous amusements abroad.

The castle lies some long miles from the little market town of Lunn, and only some three from the tiny station at Arraway; yet, as trains to Lunn are more frequent, it was in the market town that Charmian had alighted that stark bleak afternoon of January, stiff and cold from his journey. His carriage was waiting at the station, but, giving the man his orders, he proceeded on foot briskly towards the "White Hart," followed respectfully by the brougham. It was now past three, and he had nothing to eat since breakfast; consequently he lunched comfortably at the inn, enjoyed a pint of warm Burgundy, and toasted his feet till half-past four or even later. At that hour, recalling unwillingly the long drive, he rose, stretched himself, paid his reckoning, and went out accompanied by his obsequious host. As he reached the landing a sudden outbreak of rude noise and laughter came down the stairs.

"What's that?" he asked.

The innkeeper looked at him with apologetic eyes. "A party, my lord," said he: "I'm afraid it's very noisy. Gentleman's been entertaining some friends, and they're . . ." He hesitated.

"Merry, Cotton?" suggested Charmian, drawing on his gloves. "Don't be ashamed of it, man."

"It isn't that, my lord," explained Cotton, with more dignity; "but I'm afraid his poor lady, who is waiting for him, must be very tired."

"That is very kind of you, Cotton," said Charmian airily, "and if there was time I should take the liberty of communicating your sentiments. As it is you must do it yourself,"—and with a nod he skipped out of the door, and emerged into the shadows of the falling night. Ere the innkeeper could recover himself in time to fol-

low (as he would naturally have done) to assist him into his carriage, Charmian had pulled open the door of the brougham that stood before the inn, had clapped it to again, and was rattling next moment along the High street in the direction of the little river which marks the confines of Lunn.

The grey, cold day had broken into a savage evening, and the lamps twinkled through a drizzle of snow. The light had gone out unexpectedly, and it was impossible to see beyond a yard or so. But presently after, and when the carriage had crossed the small bridge, turned into the lane that branched from the highway, and was fully launched upon its voyage into the country, there fell a perfect hurricane of snow. The peaceful tenor of the wind changed; it shook the windows of the brougham; and a stream of flakes rained thickly upon the road and open fields. Charmian looked out across the flat, inhospitable meadows from which the storm was driving. The gusts rustled about the carriage, and he turned complacently to settle himself into his corner. He put out an arm for a rug which he had left upon the seat, and to his astonishment his hand came in contact with something warm and soft.

"What the mischief is this?" thought Lord Francis. Instantaneously with the thought he struck a match, and the light flared and rested on the face and figure of a woman.

She was young and handsome; she lay back with her eyes closed, her body nestled in the cushions, and (as Charmian conceived) *his* rug disposed about her. The light went out, and but for the fear of waking her he would have whistled. As it was, he sank into his own seat and reflected on the position with pleasant amusement. It was plain that the lady must have mistaken the carriage; and, now he considered, there returned to him the conversation of old Cotton, and the tale of an

unfortunate lady who was waiting on a merry-making husband. This must be she; and she, poor creature, had succumbed to the weariness of those long hours, and was delicately enjoying a comfortable slumber in his carriage, and some two miles upon the road to the Castle. The idea tickled him.

"It would be a shame to wake her," he thought. "Heaven be my witness, I am not brute enough for that. The world shall see that I can be kind to women." With which he folded his arms, cuddled close in his corner, and shut his eyes.

The rage and blackness of the night increased. The horses were brought down to walking pace; the snow encumbered the ground thickly, and the timid animals slipped and stumbled on the treacherous surface. Finally one of them came down on his knees with a jerk, and the brougham lurched and shivered. The lady woke with a cry, and starting up, brushed against Charmian.

"What is it, Fred?" she asked. "It is an accident? I must have fallen asleep. "Where are we?"

"My dear madam," answered Charmian, smoothly, "it is not Fred, but me; and it is not an accident. And if you will promise not to scream, I will light a match, which will enable you to gain a better notion of where you are than I can give you."

The lady made no answer, beyond a formless ejaculation; and Charmian struck a second match. He held it before him, and the eyes of the two met in the light above it.

"Who are you, sir?" inquired the lady in a low voice, but not without spirit.

"The circumstances," said he gently, "in which I find myself are, I assure you, not contrived by me. It may seem difficult to believe that—but, my dear madam, consider this. I enter my carriage; I do not perceive you,

owing to the dark, and when I make the discovery we are already miles away from our starting-point, and I can see no other course than to let you have your sleep out, and to carry you to some place from which you can return in comfort and safety whither you will, when the fury of the storm is dropped."

As he spoke the match burned his fingers, and he let it drop hastily, plunging the carriage into darkness.

"But what—what does all this mean?" cried the lady in bewilderment. "We must go back. The carriage must turn back."

"My dear lady," said Charmian, soothingly, "it is not a night for a dog to be out in; and though my coachman is only my coachman—" He felt she had sat bolt upright.

"Sir, I demand that you have the horses turned round," she commanded, with an imperious note in her voice.

"Madam, my carriage is at your service," said Charmian, in his finest Spanish manner, "but——"

He got no further. "*Your* carriage!" she cried indignantly. "It is *my* carriage."

"Pardon me, madam—mine," he asserted firmly.

"Oh, this is monstrous," declared the lady. "Either I or you are mad. You will have it that I am your wife next!" she added sarcastically.

"That, madam, is not true," remarked Charmian, severely; "and to quiet all your doubts I will light another match."

He struck it on the words, and the two pairs of eyes wandered about the brougham. The lady's danced with anger and triumph, and Charmian's stared with amazement. The brougham was upholstered in green, and it was certainly not his. His gaze returned to hers, which was flushed and excited.

"A thousand pardons," he begged humbly; "though I

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have not been lunching a party of friends, it is inexcusable. The darkness—the storm misled me.”

“And now, perhaps, sir,” said the lady with dignity, “you will be good enough to have the horses turned round.”

“Certainly,” replied Charmian, with the same humility. “The coachman is yours, madam.” He hesitated with his hand on the door. “But the question is, where are we? You see, if this is not my carriage, you are probably safely on your road to your destination.”

“True,” said she, as if struck by this fact for the first time. “I had forgotten.”

“Then may I ask,” said Charmian, with some little indignation, “where the devil—I beg your pardon—where that may be?”

“We live at Sackring,” said she, now quite civilly.

Charmian groaned. “A good dozen miles from my journey’s end,” he murmured. He braced himself. “If you will allow me to rap on the glass, perhaps I may best attract the coachman’s attention that way.”

She hesitated; and then, showing her hesitation in her words, “It is a terrible night,” said she. “It would hardly be fair——”

“Oh, what’s fair for him is fair for me,” said Charmian, cheerfully. “Besides, I have deserved it.”

“If I might venture to suggest,” observed the lady more coldly, “you had better come on to Sackring. There is a good inn there.”

“But your husband?” he asked suddenly.

She paused, stammered, and Charmian would have wagered in the darkness that she blushed. Mr. Fletcher,” said she, with great dignity, “will follow, no doubt.”

But just at that moment, and ere Charmian had time to answer the invitation thus amicably offered, the carriage came to a stop abruptly, and each looked out of

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a window. Upon either side the white waste of a great moor stretched and rolled into the night. The coachman had come down from his box, and appeared before the door by Charmian, a spectacle of gleaming snow. He turned the handle, and peered in, putting a finger mechanically to the snow that was his hat.

"Beg pardon, sir, but I've lost my way," says he.

Mrs. Fletcher made an exclamation. "Good heavens! James, you can't mean that?" she cried. "Where are we?"

"Can't exactly make out, ma'am," said James in perplexity. "I know we're on the moor, but the roads have gone, and from the way the horses are plunging I fancy we're on a side track."

"You must find the road at once," commanded the lady in consternation.

"Beg pardon, but perhaps master . . ." began James, and stared apologetically into the corner of the carriage in which he supposed Charmian to be.

"Oh—of course—yes," stammered Mrs. Fletcher. "Well, your master will think it over and let you know presently." And then, upon the withdrawal of the man, to Charmian, "What are we to do? Whatever are we to do? He thinks you are Mr. Fletcher."

"Let him think so," said Charmian promptly.

"But—but . . ." She hesitated.

"My dear lady, the first part (and it is of prime importance) is that we should get somewhere. The night is wild: if I am a judge of the sky, it is beating up for worse; and to lie here twittering about points of etiquette in the drift would expose us to death of cold, hunger, or suffocation. James must drive on."

The decision was communicated to the coachman, and the carriage painfully resumed its jolting journey. The lady had grown submissively meek and silent. She began to be alarmed; and only by a start or an exclamation

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tion of anxiety at each deeper plunge or rougher jolt did she break the stillness of the interior. Charmian sat back; he was very cold, and he was very tired, and he saw no prospect of dining. He was out of patience with the lady. In this neutrality of silence more than half an hour elapsed, upon the end of which the carriage drew up once more, and James appeared at the door.

"We've got somewhere, sir," said he, respectfully, but triumphantly.

Charmian looked out, and through the streaming flakes beheld the feeble light of a wayside inn. His heart warmed within him.

"James mustn't see you," whispered the lady in his ears, in an agitated voice.

Charmian had forgotten. "Not he," he said cheerfully, and opening the further door, hopped lightly into the night. The lady descended with more leisure, and Charmian dodged into the inn. He met the landlord bustling to the doorway.

"A—a lady and I—that is—we have been caught in the storm," he explained. "Can you give us food?"

The landlord gave a phlegmatic assent, his eyes observing the lady where she stood, her garments flecked with white, and her face warm from the thrashing winds. She hung back, but Charmian took her arm and bowed her with stiff courtesy into the coffee-room.

The door once shut, Mrs. Fletcher turned quickly round. "Understand this," she said, showing a hotter face; "I cannot dine with you."

"But, my dear lady," exclaimed Charmian, "we must have food, and we came together; it's plain we cannot dine apart, or we shall raise suspicions."

"I will not dine at all," she said firmly.

Charmian shrugged his shoulders in despair, while he observed her more nearly. She was tall and young—some five-and-twenty, as he guessed—she owned a pair

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of fine eyes, and her complexion was delicately pink. A spirit flashed in her handsome face, which changed swiftly with the vicissitudes of her emotions. She confronted him now with anger and resolution alike conjoined in her features and sparkling in her eye.

"My dear Mrs. Fletcher," he said gently, "of one thing I am certain: that you shall dine, if I have to walk all the way back to Lunn."

She was silent a moment, and then,—“But you could never do that,” she murmured in another tone. “I don’t want to drive you away. You see my position,” she added, appealingly; “I don’t even know your name.”

“My dear lady, that has nothing to do with your dinner,” he protested.

“I don’t agree with you,” she cried sharply.

“Oh, well,” replied Charmian, “if it will make any difference, call me Smith.”

“Is that your real name?” she asked, suspiciously.

“Madam,” he returned, meeting her look gravely, “in the circumstances perhaps it is all that you need know. After this unfortunate incident is over, I am sure you would wish to forget the humiliating position in which I have unwillingly placed you, and with it the very name and existence of such a person.”

She dropped her eyes and fell into a chair; but as quickly started up again. “But we shall have to stay here all night!” she exclaimed in agitation.

“It looks like it,” confessed Charmian, ruefully.

“But we can’t—we can’t!” she protested. She wrung her hands.

“Hush! hush! here’s some one coming,” interposed Charmian hastily; and rapidly composing themselves, and endeavoring to assume an expectant air, the two drew up to the table.

The landlord entered the room.

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"Beg pardon, sir," said he, "but would the lady . . ." he seemed to pause, and she interposed eagerly.

"Mrs. Fletcher," she cried.

Charmian coughed. "No, no, it's all right," he said reassuringly: "hurry up, hurry up!" and dismissed the fellow with his importunity.

Charmian turned to the lady. "What did you give your name for?" he asked aghast.

"I am not ashamed of my name," she retorted petulantly.

"Heavens! but I have given mine as Smith," he exclaimed.

She turned red. "Well, I could not have said I was Mrs. Smith, could I?"

"No, of course not," stammered Charmian; "that did not occur to me. But you see, he will think we have run away together."

Mrs. Fletcher jumped from her seat. Her cheeks were crimson, and became her dark eyes. "Oh!" she cried, and hid her face in confusion.

"Pray do not take it so hardly," pleaded Charmian, soothingly. "I will undertake to get you out of this."

"Indeed," cried the lady, suddenly raising her head and looking at him with angry eyes, "indeed, as you have got me into it, you can do no less."

Charmian was abashed, but he went on with spirit.

"Well, now let us consider the position. It is not so outrageously serious. We shall have a few minutes before the dinner is fetched. The question is, what are we to be? We must make up a good lie while we're about it."

Mrs. Fletcher was almost in tears. "I can't think of anything," she said, with a tiny sob.

"Well, how would brother and sister do?" inquired Charmian.

"I never thought of that," she said, brightening: yes,

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that would do beautifully. We could be that, couldn't we?"

"Why, of course; and we will," said Charmian decisively, as the door was thrown open and the landlord appeared with the dinner.

The meal went on pleasantly. Mrs. Fletcher found her spirits rising, and from the unexplored recesses of the cellar a tolerable wine was produced. Presently a little silence of embarrassment fell upon her.

"I don't know if I am doing right," she said, haltingly.

"My dear," said Charmian lightly, "it is a mistake to moralize, and to interrogate facts is the part of a sceptic."

"You have no right to say that to me," she said indignantly, and reddening prettily.

"What?" asked Charmian in amazement.

"What you said," she replied, in some confusion.

"I will not misunderstand you," he said: "you refer to the address. But consider the relation in which we stand. It is a fraternal form of speech."

Mrs. Fletcher dropped her glass and pushed back her chair; but just on the instant when Charmian had made up his mind that he was destined to a little outbreak, the door rattled under a knock.

"It is James," she whispered, all her hauteur gone: "I know his step. Oh, what shall we do?"

Charmian rose, hesitated, and slipped behind the chimney-nook. The coachman entered.

"Excuse me, ma'am," said he, "but I wanted a word with master. I can't find him anywhere."

"I will—I will send him to you presently," said Mrs. Fletcher hurriedly. "Good-night, James."

When the danger was over Charmian returned, and looked ruefully at his companion. She was extremely discomposed.

"I don't know what we shall do," she cried in dis-

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tress. "They are sure to find out, and they will think we have . . ."

"What?" said Charmian.

"Run away," she murmured, shamefacedly.

Charmian sighed. "If that is so," said he desperately, "we had better make the best of it, and confess we have."

"Sir!" cried Mrs. Fletcher rising, all aflame.

"For Heaven's sake," he said quickly, "don't let us quarrel. Here's some one else!" And sure enough, upon the words a second knock sounded and the door was gently opened. The intruder, an elderly but vigorous man, advanced with an apology.

"I am sorry to disturb you, but I am staying in the inn, and I left my . . ." He broke off suddenly, and in another voice saluted Charmian. "My dear fellow, I had no idea it was you, or that you were in the neighborhood," and he came forward holding out his hand.

Charmian now recognized him for an old squire living in the neighborhood of the Castle, and, heartily cursing his fortune, rose to meet the proffered hand.

"Oh, yes, I'm here, you see," he stuttered.

"I was told that a Mr. Smith had arrived," said the old gentleman, "and . . ." His puzzled glance fluttered to Mrs. Fletcher.

"Oh, yes, of course. Stupid of them," said Charmian. "Pray allow me to introduce you, Coleman, to——"

He made a momentary pause; the truth was that he had forgotten the name.

"Oh, yes, I understand," said old Coleman, exhibiting some confusion. "To Mrs. Smith, isn't it?"

"No," cried the lady, eagerly interposing in equal confusion—"his sister."

"My—my sister," feebly echoed Charmian.

"Quite so—sister. I beg your pardon," said the old gentleman hastily. "A nice evening, madam;" and then

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to Charmian, "May I have a word with you after your dinner?"

"Have it now," said Charmian desperately, and followed Coleman to the door.

Outside the old gentleman came to a pause, turned the handle deliberately, and faced the young man.

"Look here, Charmian," he said gravely, "you have no sister, you know. This won't do. I can make allowances, you understand, but when it comes to being on your own estate, my dear fellow . . . You won't misunderstand me? I am thinking of your interests."

"Oh, please leave me out," sighed Charmian. "I have no interests just now, except to get out of a most unpleasant situation."

"If it is *that*," said the old gentleman promptly, "pray command me. I knew it was an entanglement."

"No, no; you don't understand," said Charmian. "It is all an accident. The lady dislikes it a good deal more than myself."

"Quite so," said old Coleman formally—"quite so. Well, I fancy I must be going now, as I have some business to attend to."

He hastened away, leaving Charmian with the clear intelligence that he was disbelieved. He sighed deeply, and returned to the room, where Mrs. Fletcher was awaiting him in a state of suspense.

"He knows you?" she asked.

Charmian assented.

She threw up her hands. "Then our case is worse than ever. Whom does he think I am?" she inquired, after a pause.

"My—my sister," stammered Charmian.

"Oh!" she sighed, in a certain relief; and immediately upon that, and as a new thought, "But have you a sister?"

"Well, no," began Charmian; "but I can manage——"

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"Does that man know you have no sister?" she went on, in tones of growing alarm.

"I think he does," said he feebly.

"Oh!" she cried in dismay, "how could you? You have ruined me," and hid her face.

"My dear lady," said Charmian, moodily, "I suggested just now that there was only one honest course before us."

"No!" she exclaimed, and suddenly raised herself and assumed a face of much determination. "I will see this to an end. I will not yield weakly."

"You encourage me," said Lord Francis heartily. "I feel a new man. If that is your disposition, we shall yet be able to confront the world."

He stopped hastily, feeling that Mrs. Fletcher was regarding him with suspicion. But it was his nature to be flippant. Outside the door rose the sound of an altercation, and James's voice mingled with the innkeeper's.

"I tell you," said the latter, "that there's no Mr. Fletcher in there," and the voices fell to be inaudible.

Charmian and the lady exchanged glances of concern, and then James's voice sounded louder. "I'll take my oath I never drove no Mr. Smith here."

The door-handle rattled, Mrs. Fletcher gave a little shriek, and the landlord, red and confused, was before them.

"May I ask," said he in his flurry, "which of you is Mr. Fletcher?"

"I am," said Charmian promptly: "that is to say," he corrected precipitately, "neither of us is; he isn't here."

The innkeeper scratched his head. "Ah!" he said in a bewildered manner, but withdrew with a show of satisfaction.

"I can stand this no longer," cried the lady, displaying considerable agitation; and she moved swiftly

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to the farther door, which opened into the interior of the hostelry.

"What would you do?" asked Charmian in surprise.

"I am going away," she said firmly, but brokenly; and ere he could stop her she was out of the door and was gone.

Charmian made a little grimace, and walked to the window. He threw it open and looked forth. The snow had ceased, and the sky was clearing; but it was not on these facts he reflected, for no sooner was the blind up and his head out than the light from the lamp fell full upon the face of Jacob, his own man, standing by his own carriage before the door.

"Now, how the devil," he wondered, "did Jacob get here?" and called him eagerly.

Jacob advanced, saluting like a machine.

"Glad to catch you, my lord," he said, even with a trace of emotion.

"How did you get here?" asked Charmian in amazement.

"Well, my lord, it was like this: gentleman seized me and made me drive him. Of course, if I'd known that your lordship had—was—what your lordship was doing . . . . But your lordship didn't let me know."

There was no censure implied in this statement: it was merely a statement.

Charmian lowered his voice. "What gentleman?" he asked.

Jacob glanced about him, and also lowered his voice. "Don't know his name, my lord—has a red moustache—and is angry, very angry, my lord—very angry indeed, my lord. He's in the bar now, my lord."

"Drunk?" inquired Lord Francis anxiously.

"Not so very, my lord," said Jacob dispassionately; "not what your lordship would call drunk."

COMEDY

"Ah, Jacob," said Charmian reflectively: "good Jacob! Refresh yourself at once, and be in readiness."

He withdrew his head. As he did so Mrs. Fletcher came into the room, veiled, cloaked with her furs, and prepared for a journey. She was buttoning a glove nervously.

"My carriage is ready," she said resolutely.

"So is mine," said Charmian cheerfully.

"Yours!" she cried.

"Why, yes: Mr. Fletcher has been good enough to bring it. I must tell you that he is here, and——"

He hesitated.

"I understand," she said bitterly, and for a moment there was silence. "He had no right to follow me like that," she broke out, and the tears of mortification, of injured pride, of humiliation, started to her eyes.

"No man has a right to follow his wife," remarked Charmian.

She eyed him with a flush of anger, looking very beautiful.

"I don't know who you are, sir," she said with dignity, "but this I do know, that you have been the cause to me to-day of bitter humiliation and of grave discomfort."

Charmian bowed low. "I have been tragically aware of it," he said gently. "But I have systematically tried to make the situation less serious."

A gleam of amusement shot into her eyes, and a little laugh which was partly of embarrassment rang out.

"And now, if you will allow me," pursued Charmian pleasantly, "I think we can terminate the inconvenience."

"You have a plan?" she asked quickly.

"It is simplicity itself, he said. She interrogated him with her eyes. "Let us embark, each of us, in our respective carriages. . . ."

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He paused. Her eyes kindled. "Leaving . . . ." she breathed.

"Precisely," said Charmian. Their eyes exchanged meanings. The shadow of a smile crept over her mouth, but Charmian's face was grave.

"I certainly think it is time we were home," he murmured.

"And the snow will muffle the sound of the wheels," said Mrs. Fletcher.

A noise was audible outside, as if of some one in the passage. They looked to one another.

"Let us go. I will pay the reckoning," he whispered, and went forth to seek the landlord.

Outside the inn he found her before her carriage.

"Good-bye," she said, holding out her hand. "James must not see you." She laughed a little.

"Well, he knows whom he brought to the inn, that's one thing," said Charmian gaily. He set her in the brougham, and himself hung in the shadows.

Her laughter tinkled pleasantly. "Have you a long drive?" she asked.

"As far as Castle de Lys," said Lord Francis.

She started. "Then you are . . . ." she began.

"My name is Charmian," he explained.

"Oh!" cried the lady; "and what must you think of me?"

"My dear Mrs. Fletcher," said Charmian, pressing her hand, "I think you're a brick."

He closed the door with a bang, the horses started forward, James plied his whip, and the faint light of the stars gleamed for an instant upon a face set in rich furs, smiling from the carriage window. Charmian turned to Jacob.

## CHAPTER V

### AURELIA

Lord Francis had watched with satisfaction the slow approach of the Cape boat towards the quay at Southampton; and as they lay alongside, his eyes, roving upon the scenes and faces by him, sparkled with unaccustomed pleasure. He had been three weeks within the walls of the liner, and his restless nature was deranged by so great a captivity and the endurance of one company so long. His heart rose from its depression, and he surveyed the lively faces of the returning passengers and their shore friends with exhilaration. As he stood thus, indolently awaiting his opportunity, and gazing upon the stream of bustling people, his attention was drawn momentarily by a figure upon the quay. It was that of a girl clad in a blue skirt that danced in the sharp spring breeze. She held a hand to her hat to keep it from the rowdy wind, and the March morning had colored and brightened the pretty features below it. He noticed so much and no more, for by then his chance had come; and, giving final instructions to Jacob with regard to his luggage, he stepped down the gangway ladder with a small bag in his hand. Friendly people, pushing to and fro, nudged, jogged him, and apologized; fellow-passengers smiled farewells, waved good-byes, and detained him to whisper invitations; and thus, in a current of noise and traffic and beaming anxious faces, he passed to the quay, and laying down his bag, stood looking for a porter.

## THE SKIRTS OF CHANCE

It was high noon, and he meant to lunch at an hotel ere going through to London. Here in this little back-water of the rolling current he remained, searching out of his inquiring and unresting eyes; and presently his gaze fell once more upon that light-blue blowing figure with the dancing eyes and the attitude of expectation. Their glances met; the sea-wind shook her like a reed, and the gown fluttered and tore and cracked about her ankles. A faint smile crept into Charmian's expression, and was echoed upon hers. Suddenly behind that dim confession of sympathy grew boldly a blaze of understanding; and the girl, lifting her hand from her hat, made a quick little run towards him, coming to a pause abruptly and breathlessly, with pink-flushed cheeks.

"Aren't you Frank?" she asked excitedly.

"Indeed," said Charmian, smiling gaily, "I have that honor."

"I knew it—I guessed it," cried she, with enthusiasm. "Mother said you wouldn't come, but would be sure to miss your boat as before; and Cissy said nothing. And Hilda and Margaret hoped you would, but I was the only one who *said* you would."

"Well," said Lord Francis in his friendly manner, "so you see you are justified of your faith; and I take it unkindly of both mother and Cissy. I don't like Cissy's silence, to say the truth."

The girl stared at him, and then gave a little laugh.

"You're not at all what I supposed you would be," she went on. "Cissy never told us anything like this. You see we—I——"

"I began to see," said Charmian pleasantly, "that I shall have a crow to pluck with Cissy. But you must be——" He hesitated.

"Aurelia," she cried gaily.

"Of course," said he; "and I should have guessed it anywhere."

## COMEDY

"Well, now," she rattled on, as prettily as ever, "you must come with me, as I've got a trap waiting. I drove the dog-cart over myself, and Redding is waiting with it off the quay. So—where's your luggage?"

"My luggage, my dear Aurelia, will follow in due course," replied Charmian promptly.

It appeared that he was being taken possession of, and he liked the situation. No one could say that he had put out a finger to assist in this mistake. His whimsical mind took flight, and with a jest he grasped his bag. "Come along," said he,—"I'll race you, Aurelia." The girl laughed lightly and, lifting her skirts with one hand, accepted his challenge, so that presently they found themselves by the gates, breathless, smiling, and hugely enjoying one another. Charmian threw the bag into the dog-cart; the youth in livery touched his hat; and the girl leapt swiftly in. Lord Francis lingered, and gazed for one moment into her face. He wondered who the deuce she was, and to what he was committing himself.

"If you don't jump up, Frank, I'll run over you," said Aurelia, who had grown warm under his eyes.

"Try," said he, and leaped with alacrity to a place beside her. The horse started at a sharp pace. They drove through the town, and out upon a settled and wind-swept country, brightening under the young spring sun.

"You will be glad to hear that Baby is rampageously well," said Aurelia presently.

"Now, I wonder who in the name of goodness Baby may be," thought Charmian; but aloud he said, "I am delighted to hear it. I have always had a great interest in Baby."

The girl turned her eyes on him curiously, and meeting his, broke out smiling. "Oh, you are not a bit

## THE SKIRTS OF CHANCE

what I thought you were," she said. "You're not the least bit what Cissy made you out."

"Good Lord!" thought Charmian: "Cissy knows me, then."

There was yet time to explain, to make an apology, to offer some lame excuse, or at the worst to scramble down and bolt for it, bag or no bag; but he had no such intentions. The position piqued him.

"I shall be glad to meet Cissy again," he murmured. "But she never did me justice."

"Why, I should think you would!" said Aurelia frankly.

"Perhaps I'm her brother," reflected Charmian. "No, I have it; I am a cousin—undoubtedly a cousin; Cissy's too, no doubt. But I wish I knew what relation I am to Baby."

"But I forgot to tell you that Cissy isn't at home," pursued Aurelia, as she plied her whip.

"You don't say so!" cried Charmian, with a thrill of relief. "Why, what a pity! how disappointing!"

"Oh, she will be back to-morrow, you know," said Aurelia, soothingly.

"To-morrow!" ejaculated Charmian, adding to himself, "Oh, well, there's till to-morrow, anyhow."

"Yes, it's odd, you know," prattled Aurelia; "but Cissy, though she said nothing, didn't really believe you would come, I'm certain. She was like mother, and thought you'd miss the boat, as you've so often done."

"Yes, I've had confounded luck in that way," said Lord Francis regretfully.

"And she's got very thin; she's not nearly what she used to be. You'll be surprised," Aurelia warned him.

"Thin, has she?" said Lord Francis, sympathetically. "Dear me! I'm sorry to hear it. I liked her so much fat. But——"

COMEDY

"How can you?" exclaimed the girl in surprise. "Cissy was never fat! What I meant was——"

"Yes, that was what I meant," interposed Charmian hastily.

"I meant that she's altered a good deal. I don't think you'd know her," went on Aurelia.

"So have I," said Lord Francis promptly. "I'm sure she won't know me."

"Do you know," said Aurelia, fixing her simple eyes on him, "that I think you're rather cynical. You're not like your letters, which were quite full of—well—you know what I mean."

"Fine feeling?" suggested Charmian.

"Yes; fine feeling," she nodded. "But I remember Cissy always used to smile when I said that."

"Cissy knows me well, you see," said he, wishing that he knew Cissy, or at least what his own name was.

Presently they entered through white gates, and rattling along a short drive drew up before a comfortable and old-fashioned house set in a well-ordered, ample garden. Here they both jumped to the ground, and Charmian with a little misgiving, and a wistful glance down the drive, took down his handbag.

"Why, what initials are those on your bag, Frank?" asked the pretty Aurelia: "they're 'F. C.'!"

"Oh, I stole it," said Charmian promptly, and his companion laughed in a puzzled fashion, and pealed at the bell.

"Well, here we are at Greatfield," she said in a friendly fashion.

"Ah, dear old Greatfield!" sighed Charmian, rolling his gaze over the prospect sentimentally.

"Why, you never saw it before!" she said in astonishment.

"In my dreams, in my dreams," he sighed again, and

## THE SKIRTS OF CHANCE

congratulated himself on a real exhibition of fine feeling.

She was watching him, and he put out his hand. Frankly she clasped it, and Lord Francis pressed warmly on the delicate fingers. A flush suffused her cheeks.

"I'm sure I shall enjoy this," he murmured to himself; "and I'll make a point of finding out who I am at once."

The hall door opened, and what seemed to him a stream of welcome seized him and carried him along. He remembered a venerable man whose voice was broken, an old lady who shed tears, and two girls that tore at his arms. Aurelia stood by with triumph upon her pretty face.

"Who was right now?" she demanded of every one.

Charmian was by this time perfectly sure that, whoever might be right, he was quite wrong. It was a wrong atmosphere; he had no right among these simple and affectionate folk. He decided that he must give it up by some skilful contrivance, and the sooner the better. But meanwhile he would dearly like to know exactly where and what he was. He began to feel aggrieved with Aurelia for letting him in for this impossible adventure.

"We've never seen a photograph of you," observed the old lady amiably. "But you're different from what we thought."

"Yes, yes—bad climate for photography," said Charmian jauntily, remembering he must have come from the Cape.

"Really, now; why, I should have thought——" began the old gentleman, feebly.

"But Cissy had a very good likeness taken!" exclaimed Aurelia and the two girls on his arms, all together.

## COMEDY

Cissy was becoming a great nuisance; Cissy was always fetching him up in his courses.

"Cissy," said Lord Francis emphatically, "is quite another matter. She takes well anywhere."

He succeeded in getting away from the cordial family; and was hustled by two of the girls into a room. Here he sat down in a melancholy manner in order to review the situation. It had become too elaborate, and he longed for Jacob; he envied Jacob, who was doubtless at this moment thundering along the rails to London. But he roused himself presently, and slipping through the doorway noiselessly, escaped the sisters, and got safely into the garden. The daffodils were out upon the banks of the road before the house, and the fields were springing into flower. Charmian espied a girl approaching.

"I must find out who these people are," he said to himself, and breathlessly assailed her.

"Will you be good enough to tell me who lives there?" he asked, pointing at Greatfield.

A stare of amazement was succeeded by a fit of laughter on the part of the young lady.

"Oh, Frank, you are funny!" she cried; and Charmian started. "Good Lord!" he murmured, "this must be Hilda or Hetty or—I'm sure I shall never remember their faces." But he laughed as innocently as herself, and giggling together they shared the amusing little joke as they walked up towards the house.

"I really must get out of this," thought Charmian, and spying Aurelia in the distance he fled to her. "Aurelia's my friend," he murmured; "I feel safe with Aurelia," and he watched her bending over the flowerbeds, hatless and rosy.

"Aurelia," said he, breathlessly but solemnly. "But I ought not even to call you that, since I have been guilty of such a piece of impudence. Well, at any rate,"

he resumed with a choke, "I am going to confess, and you can do what you like with me. Here I have been for the last hour, and I haven't——"

The eyes of Aurelia, who had till now faced him with a puzzled expression, were suddenly kindled with intelligence, and she smiled.

"I know you haven't, and I think it's most disgraceful of you," she said demurely, shaking her head. "But there's just time to repent before lunch; so come along."

She pulled him by the arm towards the house.

"But—but where——" he gasped.

"To see Baby, of course," replied Aurelia, reproachfully. "Poor little thing! and you've been here ever so long."

"Baby, to be sure," said Charmian, recovering himself. "Boy, I hope," he reflected,—“at least I'll make a shot for it;” and boldly followed his guide.

She led him through a bedroom into a nursery beyond, and he was invited stealthily to stoop over a cot, in which a child of some eighteen months was sleeping. Lord Francis was glad it was sleeping, and he ventured on his shot in a whisper.

"Nice little fellow," he said.

"Nice!" echoed Aurelia, "well, is that all you've got to say?"

"He's very nice," said Charmian emphatically, encouraged by his success.

"He's very like you, I think," said Aurelia, abstractedly.

Lord Francis straightened himself from his fond stooping attitude, and faced her.

"I—I beg your pardon," he stammered.

"I said he was like you," repeated Aurelia; "and you ought to be proud. Whom else should he be like, if not his father?"

## COMEDY

Charmian put out his hand wildly and sank into a chair.

"And—and where did you say his mother was?" he said, feebly.

"Oh, Frank, you stupid! I told you Cissy would be back to-morrow."

"Of course she will. How stupid of me!" murmured Lord Francis, patting his forehead: "I'll be forgetting my own name next." He paused. "I think I should like to be alone with Baby for a few minutes," he said weakly.

"Nonsense! lunch is ready," said Aurelia.

"I—I wanted to think," he protested, miserably.

"Think afterwards," suggested Aurelia, and dragged him in a helpless condition downstairs. But at lunch he recovered a little. After all Cissy was not there. But what would Cissy do with him when she came? And what would Cissy's real husband do? These questions were distressing enough in theory, but they did not worry Charmian's light heart. He caught Aurelia's eyes smiling across the board at him in a friendly way, and he invited her to a silent toast; and he pinched Hetty's or Hilda's arms under the table. As a brother-in-law, which was apparently what he was, he was becoming a success, and as Cissy would not be back until to-morrow, Cissy might go—— But he suddenly recalled the Baby. The Baby was alarming, certainly—particularly if it should wake up. He cross-questioned Hetty or Hilda on its habits, but was not relieved to learn that it was generally awake. However, the Baby would not recognize him for an imposter.

Nevertheless there was a deal too much of Baby to satisfy Charmian during the afternoon. He ran away from it on more than one occasion, but was dragged back each time.

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"I'm afraid you're not very fond of Baby," said Aurelia reproachfully.

He assured her that he was—"dreadfully fond," he said; but he was shy.

Finally, driven to bay, he took refuge in his room to reconsider his position. Some step must be taken. In the midst of his reflections a knock fell on the door, and Aurelia poked through a telegram. It was addressed "Akehurst," and evidently came from abroad.

"That's me, I suppose," said Lord Francis, "or perhaps Cissy," and he put it in his pocket.

He resolved to bolt. The thing was going too merrily. Heavens! he considered, this was not his bedroom; it was . . . and stumbling in the twilight in his excitement, he fell over an iron structure, and there arose an angry cry. Charmian gasped.

"Lord! here's Baby again," said he, and set himself vigorously to hush the infant.

"They'll never let me get quit of Baby. Baby will prove my ruin."

Outside the door he suddenly heard voices, and the noise of a great excitement. He half rose, as the door was gently opened. The voices hushed.

"Go in, silly," he heard Aurelia whisper; and then the door closed to on the farther side of a strange woman, who, after a momentary hesitation, advanced to meet him with a quick step.

"How could you," she began in a low voice, no doubt calculated not to arouse Baby—"how dared you?"

Charmian had now stood fully up, and presented his face to her. He knew well enough that the blow had fallen. That confounded Cissy had come home too soon, and there was nothing for it but to confess. The light was none too high, yet what there was in the room illumined both of them, and the woman started back.

## COMEDY

Charmian noticed that she was very tall and very pale, and that she was not at all like Aurelia. He pulled his confidence about him.

"Well, to say the truth," said he humbly, "I really don't know how I dared. But it wasn't wholly my fault, you know. I think it was the devil—or Aurelia," he added pensively. "You see," he explained winningly, "my name really is Frank."

Cissy put a hand on the armchair by the fire-place. She was even a little whiter than before, and she watched him steadily.

"I don't think I quite understand," she said in a hard, even voice. "I find you here on false pretences, masquerading as my—as Mr. Akehurst——"

"I—I've just succeeded in getting Baby to sleep," pleaded Charmian; "please don't wake him."

"And you tell me," she continued, paying no heed to this piece of irrelevance, "that your name is Frank. What has that got to do with this fraud?"

She regarded him sternly, but her bosom rose and fell, as though she were not as calm as she feigned to be.

"It was Aurelia," began Charmian, glibly pleasant.

"You mean Miss Crowther," said Cissy sharply.

"Well, you see, I didn't know her name," pleaded Charmian humbly. "Aurel—Miss Crowther met me coming off the ship, and asked me if my name wasn't Frank. It is, you know. And—well, somehow we got driving here, before I quite well knew what I was doing."

Mrs. Akehurst was silent. "You say you drove from the quay?" she asked, after a second's pause.

"We did. A nice quay," said Charmian flippantly, feeling that things were going on pretty well.

Mrs. Akehurst turned away. "I am prepared to accept your statement," she said in her dry voice. "I

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have no doubt that you intended no wrong by your foolish escapade."

"Escapade! that's just what it was," said he, nodding confidentially.

"But you have placed a family of gentlewomen in a very unpleasant and embarrassing position," went on Cissy coldly.

Lord Francis flushed red, as he was not used to do.

"Madam," said he in another tone, "you have said no more than the truth, and you shall do with me what you will. I will atone by what you may ask of me."

Suddenly she turned her face to him again. "My—Mr. Akehurst will not be here to-day. I do not wish to be hard on you. You can leave Greatfields as you arrived."

"Not—not as your——" stammered the bewildered Charmian.

"As Mr. Akehurst," she said slowly.

His gaze wandered vaguely round the room: from Cissy herself to the furniture, and thence to Baby's cot, and back again to that white, handsome face. He held out a hand, smiling all of a sudden.

"Madam, you have shown a rare generosity, which I don't deserve."

"You do not," she assented coldly, and ignoring his hand.

"My dear madam," said Lord Francis, very seriously and gently, "why you are so kind I know not; but really, if we are to keep up the pretence we must play the game."

"You are right," she cried quickly; and with a sudden change, which startled him, she put her arm in his, and moved to the door.

Lord Francis was now hugely delighted with himself. To encounter so sportive a woman, as he phrased it to himself, was a sufficient pleasure for one afternoon.

COMEDY

And indeed the evening fell fast enough, amid demonstrations from the sisters.

"I suppose I'd better get away as soon as possible?" he whispered to Mrs. Akehurst. She bowed her head, and he seemed disappointed. "Very well," said he with a sigh, and rose to his feet at the dinner-table with a large effusion of sentiment.

"Before I go——" he began.

"Go, Frank!" cried the girls—Hilda and the other one.

"Go!" said Aurelia in consternation, pouting her lips. Cissy said nothing, as Lord Francis had been informed was her habit.

"It is necessary for me to leave you to-night—for—for a brief time," explained Charmian suavely. "But I will come again. Cissy insists on my returning at once, and I need not say that I am . . . . The fact is, my luggage has gone astray, and there are some little presents I have brought . . ." He glanced at Mrs. Akehurst, and hastily went on without completing his sentence. "But ere I go," he resumed airily, recovering himself, "I wish to give you a toast; and, ladies, may I urge you to charge your glasses, and to drink with me (no heel taps, Cissy) to the healths of Aurelia, and Baby, and Cissy, and Hilda, and Hetty, and——" He stopped with Mrs. Akehurst's glittering eye on him, "and Cissy," he finished lamentably.

The girls clapped their hands; but as they did so a noise was audible at the door; Charmian saw Cissy's cold eyes go towards it, now with a new expression of fear. Then it fell open, and two men entered. They were plain, civil fellows, and held their hats in their hands. One of them also held a document, which he unfolded.

"Mr. Frank Akehurst?" he asked, with his docile eyes on Charmian.

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"What is this?" cried the old gentleman, feebly alarmed.

"I have a warrant for the arrest of Frank Fielding Akehurst, late of Kimberley, South Africa, on the charge of forgery," said the man.

A scream rose from some one, and there was audible in the room the deep drawing of breath. Charmian turned his glance from the detectives to Cissy, who sat, her white face upon her hands, looking towards them without a sign, save in the faster rising of her bosom. In that pause, whether drawn by his gaze or not, she turned also and met his eyes. For a full moment her breath seemed to stop, her bodice to rest silent over her heart. Then he looked again to the detectives, and broke the terrible stillness.

"Yes, I am the man," he said easily. "How did you catch me?"

"Followed you from Southampton. Saw you meet the lady, sir, but wished for help first," said the officer.

Charmian held out his hands.

"Well, no, sir," said the detective, with an embarrassed air; "perhaps we needn't say anything about these just yet awhile—not just yet awhile. The main thing is in your surrender."

"Lord!" said Charmian cheerily, "I thought they were always used. Do you want me now?"

"If you please, sir," was the answer.

He looked about the room, the hush of which was not yet broken, and surveyed the grave and frightened faces.

"Cissy, Cissy, did you know this?" cried Aurelia suddenly, in a tremulous voice.

Mrs. Akehurst raised herself. "Yes, I knew that there was something wrong," she said dully.

Charmian shrugged his shoulders. "Well, you'll let me say the usual farewells," he said pleasantly. "Cissy,

COMEDY

I'll see you again, but you might give me a farewell kiss. I'm innocent, you know."

He approached her, smiling very quietly, and looked her full in the face. She shrank away with a start.

"This is your revenge," she whispered under her breath.

"My dear lady, I am going to prison," he pleaded.

She still drew away, and swiftly Aurelia leaped forward, her pretty face shining with her emotions.

"I will,—kiss me, Frank," she cried earnestly.

He touched her lightly with his lips, a little soft smile on his face.

"Good-bye, Aurelia," he said: "I don't suppose *we* shall meet again."

"But we *shall*, Frank, we shall indeed; and——"

He made a comical face and put his hand in his pocket.

"At any rate I will leave you a memorial of me," he said, and brought out a gold pencil. The girl grew red, and tears sprang to her eyes; but Charmian had remembered something now, and pulling out of his pocket the telegram which he had forgotten, he handed it to Mrs. Akehurst.

"It is your property," he murmured. "Forgive me for forgetting."

The lady tore it open, and stared stupidly at the contents for some moments. Then she raised her glance sharply, and spoke to the detectives.

"There has been enough of this jest, sirs. The joke is none too agreeable, and I must apologize for being any party to it. The fact is, this house is Mr. Crowther's, these are his daughters, and this gentleman has nothing to do with Mr. Akehurst."

The detectives opened their eyes and smiled broadly.

"Quite so, ma'am," said the principal. "Who is this gentleman, then?"

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"Would you deny your own husband, Cissy?" murmured Charmian reproachfully.

Mrs. Akehurst hesitated and colored, and Charmian gazed at her whimsically. "I—I . . . He is a friend," she said.

"I suppose you wouldn't take *my* word, officer," said Lord Francis, casually.

The man grinned. "I think we'd best be getting on, sir."

"But stop," cried Cissy vehemently. "Don't I say that this is not Mr. Akehurst? I ought to know."

"There's no denying that, Cissy," said Charmian, airily.

But she paid him no heed. "If you need proof, there it is," she exclaimed, thrusting in the detective's hands the open telegram. He read it with surprise, and handed it to his companion.

"This is rum," said he. "The real man seems to have got off to China. Then who the dickens are you, sir?"

Charmian took him aside. "Did you ever hear of a practical joke, officer?" he asked, and he whispered in his ear. Within two minutes the detectives were out of the house, with apologies, and Charmian was left, the centre of a staring circle. He grew aware soon of a sense of discomfort, and one of the girls (Hilda, he thought) said helplessly,—*"But you haven't told us who you are?"*

"Oh, I'm a friend—a—a friend of—Cissy's," said Charmian, fluttering lightly over the difficulty. Perhaps she wouldn't refuse him. But she did.

"Indeed you're nothing of the kind," said Mrs. Akehurst, coldly. "I never set eyes on you before to-day."

He looked hopelessly about the circle, and his eye fell on Aurelia.

"A—a friend of Aur——" he was beginning, when a vivid blush sprang into her face, and upon that,—

COMEDY

"Oh," cried Hilda, "and you kissed us all—Aurelia, too!"

"Not Cissy," he protested, by way of mitigating the charge.

"I think, sir," said the old gentleman, solemnly, "that you owe us some explanation of this extraordinary affair. If you have really committed forgery——"

But at this point Mrs. Akehurst interposed rather brusquely,——

"He owes us nothing," she said decisively, "and I think it is time we said good-bye."

"I really have said it already," said Charmian, politely, and with a glance at Aurelia. She colored again. "But if you insist——" he held out his hand to Cissy.

For a moment she hesitated, and then put forth her arm. "I am glad he escaped," murmured Charmian, softly.

She shrugged her shoulders. Charmian turned to Aurelia, who stood watching him with serious shyness.

"Is it all true?" she asked him. "Are you not Frank?"

"I am one kind of Frank, my dear young lady," said he. "But not your Frank. I wish I was, barring the——barring Cissy, I mean."

"Oh, we like you much better than the real Frank," said Hilda (or was it Hetty?) impulsively.

He became aware at this moment that Aurelia was holding out a gold pencil, and he frowned at it abstractedly.

"This is yours," she stammered; "I can't—you mustn't go without it."

"My dear Aurelia, I mean, of course, Miss—er—Miss Crowther," said Charmian fluently, "you must not think anything of that. The fact is, I travel in pencils, and I——"

He was interrupted by the opening of a door, and a voice sounding from behind him,—

THE SKIRTS OF CHANCE

"Beg pardon, my lord, but you'll miss your train."

Lord Francis turned sharply. "Damn it, it's Jacob!" he exclaimed, much discomposed. "How the deuce... Get outside, Jacob,"—and to the amazed family he apologized. "You see, even my own man doesn't know who I am. We're so mixed up," and he backed with ceremonious bows to the door. Once in the hall he ran for his life, and outside, from the carriage which the faithful Jacob had provided, he cast a look backwards. The door was closed as against a confessed impostor, but Aurelia's eyes were shining from the window, and, so he thought Hilda's (or Hetty's) too.

## CHAPTER VI

### A CONSPIRACY

Lord Francis Charmian had fully made up his mind that he would be dull at Dutton, where he had agreed to spend a week before the opening of the season. Yet he had not been there two days ere he was very pleasantly occupied. Lady Chatfield, one of the house party, was the author of this change, Lady Chatfield—who in herself he had found admirably amusing. She was brown of face, stout of body, and excellently comfortable to look on; and grey hair prematurely marked her five-and-forty years. Her voice was very slow, and rich; and her ideas were often elaborately singular. She was amazingly tolerant, she cared for no one, and she could not be thrown out of patience. She had also a mild sense of the ridiculous. For these reasons, and for her even and imperturbable talk, Charmian was entertained by her, and sought her company. And it was upon the second day of his visit that she broached a suggestion which was not only highly characteristic of her, but also took him hugely.

"I have been greatly concerned about Imogen," said she, dropping upon the personal in a lull of the conversation.

"Imogen!" said Charmian, wondering who she might be.

"Perhaps you have noticed her, Lord Francis," said the lady, with a manner which indicated that it was not of much consequence if he hadn't.

"Naturally; of course,—how could you suppose not?"

## THE SKIRTS OF CHANCE

murmured Charmian in his most courteous way. Imogen must be somewhere in the house, he decided.

"It is really of no interest to you," said Lady Chatfield, heaving a comfortable sigh, "but I like to talk. What do you think? Do you think Imogen is looking well?"

"Well," hesitated Charmian,—“perhaps not.”

Lady Chatfield turned on him a face which was by no means anxious.

"In what way?" she asked: "tell me frankly."

"Oh, well," hesitated Charmian, "I thought she had a worn, far-away look, so to speak."

Lady Chatfield nodded. "Just so," she said, without perturbation: "that is it precisely. She has got entangled."

"With a man?" suggested Charmian, to show his sympathy.

"A most undesirable person, my dear Lord Francis," she went on. "Not only has he not a penny, but (what I consider far worse) he is a rake—which I consider far worse," she repeated amiably.

"So do I," said Charmian promptly. "We all of us do."

Perhaps if Lady Chatfield had not been so deeply engaged in her own thoughts her eyes might have twinkled; but she continued impassively.

"I have argued with her, but she is as obstinate as a mule. Her father has done the same. It is hopeless. We are obliged to submit." She paused. "There is only one chance."

"What is that?" asked Charmian, politely, supposing that he was intended to do so.

"That she should fall in love with some one else," said Lady Chatfield.

"A man?" suggested Charmian again.

"That is what set me thinking of you," said Lady Chatfield, without paying him any attention.

## COMEDY

Lord Francis started. "Me!" said he in amazement.

"Why not?" asked his companion cheerfully. "You are young, and handsome, and have a name. Moreover, I am told you have a reputation in these affairs."

"My dear lady!" pleaded Charmian.

"Won't you help me?" inquired Lady Chatfield indifferently. "Wean her from this disgraceful attachment. It is monstrous to throw away a girl's life like that."

"You want me to marry Imogen?" said Charmian in dismay.

"No, my dear young man," said Lady Chatfield, affectionately, "but I don't want Imogen to marry some one else."

Charmian considered, and suddenly a light danced into his eyes. His glance met Lady Chatfield's, and both broke forth into soft laughter.

"You will do it?" she asked.

"It all depends on Miss Imogen," said he, smilingly.

"My dear Lord Francis, try," said the lady, resting a hand on his arm. "Try, and save the jade."

Charmian was not sure if he could save her, but he had certainly made up his mind to try, and the first duty that lay upon him was to discover which was Imogen. The house-party was large, and he had only vaguely supposed that Lady Chatfield owned a daughter. But evidently she was Imogen, and Imogen was there. He put hints together and discovered her that evening, discovering also at the same time that he knew her already. Her name was Langley. He approached her smiling.

"How in the name of all that's honest and respectable and just and fair you have found it in your conscience to ignore me these two days, Miss Langley, is more than I can understand, and far more than I can bear," said he.

## THE SKIRTS OF CHANCE

Miss Langley looked at him coolly, and, now that he observed her closely, he saw her to be quite handsome.

"Oh, have you been here?" she said abruptly, "I didn't know. When did you come?"

"It seems years," said he reproachfully. "But now I have forgotten that dreary time. I have stared you out of face, I thought, and with no result. My eyes have taken on a permanent squint through watching you."

She smiled a little at this whimsical extravagance, and considered him with more interest.

"Well, you see, I've only just come to-day; so I must apologize for my rudeness. I didn't come with my mother."

Charmian made a little grimace, but he was not at all discomposed. "Ah, that's a bad plan—a bad plan," said he, shaking his head with grave impudence: "I always think young girls should stick to their mothers. One never knows what temptations, you know . . ."

His air of deprecation, together with the boldness with which he wholly ignored his dilemma, stirred Miss Langley to laughter. He took a seat by her and when she ceased smiling she found his eyes fixed earnestly upon her. He dropped them at once, and fidgeted. She was certainly a pretty woman.

Miss Langley offered him a remark, which he answered with hot zeal; he pressed closer to her on the sofa.

"You don't mind my sitting here," he asked anxiously.

"Why, no—of course," said Miss Langley, wondering.

"That's right," he nodded, "then we can be quite comfortable. At least, as long as you are I am. I don't want to move. I have no objection to be rooted here."

Miss Langley laughed again. "You are absurd," she said.

## COMEDY

"Absurd!" he repeated, shrugging his shoulders and turning away.

Miss Langley also turned away, and when her glance came back from a chattering group in the room, Charmian's soft eyes were again resting upon her face, as though they would inhabit there. Miss Langley colored ever so slightly, and Charmian dropped his gaze once more with a show of confusion.

"Come into the garden," said he abruptly, and rising. Miss Langley hesitated. "I—I . . ." she began.

"It's quite warm! I'll fetch you a wrap," said he.

Miss Langley stood up. She was tall, slim, straight and pliant as a wand, with a gentle bosom, ripe brown hair, and a look of quick decision in her grey eyes. Yet she now appeared to wonder. They passed out by the long window that soft spring night, and were presently among the lilacs and the scent of the sweet narcissus.

"I want you to understand," said he firmly, but in a low agitated voice—"I want you to understand how much this means for me."

"How much!" she echoed, with some awkwardness. "Yes, it's sweet here, isn't it?"

"I tell you this," cried Charmian, vehemently: "you shall not misunderstand me. It shall not be for lack of plain speaking if you do. I know girls," he continued in a tone of angry scorn, "that they feign and pretend and make as if they knew nothing. But I tell you—well, never mind—the time has not come," he concluded more softly.

"I think, Lord Francis, that we had better go in," said Miss Langley firmly.

"Ah, you're frightened," he said, with an unkind sneer.

"Indeed, I am not," exclaimed Miss Langley, indignantly; "I only was wondering if the air had got into your head."

## THE SKIRTS OF CHANCE

"And you can say that!" he murmured, seizing her hand and looking intently into her face.

Miss Langley quickly pulled her hand away, but she made no reply; no reply seemed to be ready. Perhaps she had been somewhat cruel. She made no movement to go in, and they lingered together among the breaking rhododendrons. The sky was jeweled brightly, and Lord Francis stood with his head back looking into that vault of stars, apparently at peace. Miss Langley noted that he wore a wistful expression.

"Night," said he presently, "is my avatar." He quoted a line of verse, and sighed.

"I really thing it is getting a little chilly," remarked Miss Langley, amiably.

Charmian paid no heed for a moment. She caught him staring at her yet again; and she stirred uncomfortably.

"I beg your pardon," said he suddenly, "I am very remiss, but you . . . Yes, we will go in. I would not have you take cold for a fortune," and with a little gracious air of familiarity which she suffered, he pulled the wrap tenderly about her, and led her back to the house.

Charmian felt that he was heavily handicapped, and though he was thoroughly enjoying himself, he despaired of success.

"You see," as he observed to Lady Chatfield next morning, "Imogen is very *difficile*. Also I have only a few days, and I am forced to make the running. I must go too rapid a pace. I don't think she keeps time with me. It's not fair on me. You are asking me too much."

"Don't lose heart," said Lady Chatfield, encouragingly, "I've no doubt you did very well. You have probably sown the seed. And there is a well-worn old serviceable trick—I shall make a point of abusing you persistently," she said.

## COMEDY

"Thank you very much," said Charmian. "That might help me on a little. But I'm afraid that Miss Langley has a way of forming her own judgments and opinions."

"Don't let her," said her mother, composedly; "form them for her."

Thus stimulated and given fresh license by Lady Chatfield, Charmian pressed forward with perfervid enthusiasm. It was a new game, and had all the excitement of flirtation with added perils. He plunged through the breaches when they showed, and scaled high battlements. He used a score of wiles, in the most dazzling succession.

"Miss Langley," said he, dragging her into the conservatory after dinner, "let us get away from those terrible people. They make me shudder, with their shooting and their hunting and their tame sports."

"So do they me," agreed Miss Langley, eagerly. "But, but—where are we . . . Oh, I don't think we'll go there."

He pleaded with her and he coaxed her: it was not for nothing he had a reputation; and she obeyed. Something in her instincts responded to this masterful cajoling. It was as though he threatened and petted her together. They took seats in a dark corner.

"I could sit here," said Charmian presently, with a sigh, "forever."

"How foolish!" said Miss Langley, elevating her eyebrows, but smiling.

"Oh, no, it isn't foolish," said he quickly; "it is all very serious. I doubt if women know what powers they really have."

Miss Langley stirred in her seat, but it is possible that she did not dislike it; at any rate she said nothing. Charmian resolved to go further. There was no time to be lost.

"The stars," said he bitterly, "go round, and the sun

THE SKIRTS OF CHANCE

moves. I suppose the universe is very prettily constructed?"

"What an original remark!" commented the lady.

"There are things which touch us nearly—such as death, birth, love," suggested Charmian, with his eyes on the glow of the brooch below her white neck.

"If that is all you wanted to say, Lord Francis——" she began, rising; but he stopped her hastily.

"No, no; sit down, please. I have heaps to say to you, but it won't all come at once."

"Perhaps it had better not come at all," suggested Miss Langley.

"Is that your opinion? Do you really think that?" he inquired earnestly.

She laughed uncomfortably. "Oh, how can I tell? I don't know what you are going to say."

"Let me draw a picture for you," said he softly. "It is that of some one I love."

"I had rather you didn't," interposed Miss Langley hurriedly.

"Tell me," he asked abruptly, seizing her hand, "how would you like a home?"

"I have one, thank you," she said demurely.

"Ah, but a home of your own, to be happy in," he said anxiously; "and a—a husband and—a—a—children?"

"Lord Francis!" said Miss Langley, coloring very swiftly, and rising again.

"I don't mean your children, but my children," he hastened to explain, in some confusion.

"I think, if you won't mind, I will go back to the drawing-room," said she freezingly, for all her warm face.

"Ah, I see how it is," broke in Charmian, and gritting his teeth in the best style, and assuming a savage voice. "It is that damned fellow, Mountesk."

"Lord Francis!" cried the girl indignantly.

COMEDY

"Well, you know you let him follow you about," he declared, feeling that he was now upon the proper track. "What is he to you? I demand to know. Why, only this morning I saw his face quite close to yours when——"

"It is false," said Miss Langley angrily. "I—how can you say such things!" She hesitated. "And I think I ought to tell you," she went on, with some embarrassment, "that I am—I didn't want to say anything about it, as it is a secret—but I think you ought to know that——"

Charmian felt sure he knew what was coming, and it would spoil everything. "Yes, I do know," he interrupted quickly. "But I don't care if I am a brute. I have reason for being one. There, I am frank with you."

"No, but what I wanted to say," began Miss Langley again seriously, "is that I am——"

"I don't care what you are," he broke in desperately. "I only know that I——"

"I wish you would listen to me," she said tremulously. "Because it is essential that you should know. The fact is I——"

But here Charmian started to his feet. "Hush!" he whispered, "here is some one. We can resume this conversation later." And with elaborate, but hasty ceremony, he escorted her out of the conservatory.

He was in despair in his talk with Lady Chatfield next morning. "Here have I been two days at it, and I've got no farther," he said gloomily.

"I abused you a good deal yesterday," said Lady Chatfield.

"You are very good," said he, "but it hasn't been of much use. The fact is, I am an amateur. I say the wrong things."

"You certainly said the wrong things last night.

## THE SKIRTS OF CHANCE

Imogen tells me you frightened her. She asked me if you were quite right."

"There you are," said Charmian, shrugging his shoulders. "I can only feel my way. Girls have such odd ideas.

"I don't think much of her being frightened," said Lady Chatfield placidly. "Lord Chatfield frightened me."

"I'm glad to hear you say that," said Charmian; "you see what we want to do is to make her see that there is some one else as good as—what's his name, by the way?"

"The man's name is Pearse," said Lady Chatfield thoughtfully.

"As good as Pearse, then. We want to loosen the bonds, so to speak," said Lord Francis airily.

"Of course, she mustn't transfer her affections to you," said Lady Chatfield, looking at him gravely.

"Oh, dear, no. My dear lady, how can you think of it? To break the habit—that's what we're aiming at—to dull rather than besmirch a girlish ideal; so that Pearse shall shine forth no more than I or Mountesk or any one else. To call him names would be to gild him brighter."

"I shall be astonished if you don't succeed," said Lady Chatfield with animation, "and if you do you will earn my deepest gratitude, and Lord Chatfield's."

"Well, I've only got three days, you know," said Charmian hurriedly, "and it's now half-past ten. You will excuse me if I leave you." And he opened the windows of the breakfast room, and went out upon the lawns with renewed zeal.

But Miss Langley could not be found just then; and it was not until after lunch that they met. She approached him frankly, as though to make a communication, but what she said was not what he anticipated.

COMEDY

"Lord Francis," said he, "I am very sorry for being so rude last night—I mean so impatient. I—I was upset; will you forgive me?"

He forgave her readily, congratulating himself that she had not begun to renew her confidence. He was delighted.

"My dear Miss—Imogen—may I call you that?" he asked, in his softest voice.

"Better not," murmured Miss Langley, plucking at the wall-flowers.

"Imogen—there is nothing to forgive," said he, ignoring this.

"Lord Francis, I would rather you didn't" she said, averting her pink face with fresh signals of embarrassment.

But Charmian was not generous; he pressed his advantage. At the same time he wondered vaguely within himself how far he might safely go, at what point it would be right and politic to leave off. In the result he allowed circumstances to determine this. Besides, he could not be sure of her. She grew cold very readily, and broke out in impulsive heat as quickly. He was fingering very sensible machinery, which he did not understand. Yet there was no question that Miss Langley liked his company, and yielded to his persistence.

There was a dispute that evening over some question, which sent Charmian impetuously to the library, where he wandered helplessly among the ancient volumes. Presently he was aware of some one by him, and was startled to perceive Miss Langley.

"I came in with Sir William," she cried, with a little gasp of dismay, "and now he has gone: some one called him."

Charmian thought her very sweet to the eyes. He

## THE SKIRTS OF CHANCE

got off the ladder on which he was sitting with a great book on his knee.

"May I offer you this seat?" he said gently. "I can't find that abominable passage."

"Can't you?" she asked, with a little laugh, in which he seemed to read self-consciousness.

"Perhaps you could," he suggested, offering her the volume so that their hands met.

"I—I don't think I could," stammered Miss Langley.

Charmian's heart smote him; also it gave a jump and thrilled.

Miss Langley turned over some pages nervously. "No, I'm sure I couldn't," she said. "I think I'll go and get Sir William.

Charmian put out a hand as though to stay her, but she made no movement.

"This—this light's very bad," said Miss Langley presently, as she still made a pretence of examining the pages.

For answer, Charmian stepped forward and turned it—lower.

"Oh!" she cried in dismay.

"I beg your pardon," said Charmian: "my clumsiness—I . . . ." But he did not repair his error.

"I really think I ought to bolt," he murmured to himself, but he didn't. Instead he took Miss Langley's hand.

"Imogen," he said, "I . . . ." Then somehow he had kissed her.

Her face rested ashamedly upon his shoulder, where it had fallen, and he could only take in the fragrance of her hair.

But even under these wonderful influences he realized that the situation had gone wrong. Miss Langley pulled herself away with some force, and he could not

COMEDY

see her very clearly in the twilight. But next he heard her voice, which sounded broken.

"I didn't know you really cared."

"Imogen—Miss Langley . . ." stammered Charmian, and he got no farther. But it was impossible not to do something, and he had a dim sense that what he did was not wise. But Imogen suddenly withdrew herself, hiding her face.

"People will miss us," she said in a low voice of shame. "We had better go back. Let me go first, please."

Charmian stammered: "Wait, one second, Imogen—dear, that is," he said. "What about—I am anxious to know, of course, what about Mr.—Mr. Pearse?"

"Pearse!" she exclaimed, looking at him—"Pearse! what can you mean? Oh, I see. You have heard something of that old . . . I am rather ashamed of it, Lord Francis, but it was only pretence and make-believe. There was nothing serious in it, and it is long over. I'm so glad you spoke of it."

She looked at him intensely, and for a second his eyes dropped, and he was silent. Then he looked up. "You have taken a load off my mind," said he bravely, and he gathered her to his breast swiftly, ere she could resist, and kissed her again.

"I may as well enjoy what I can," was his thought.

There was a fine warm color upon Imogen's cheeks when he saw her presently in the other room. She *was* handsome, but he frowned at his thoughts all the same.

Next day he sought Lady Chatfield at once with his news.

"Yes," said she, calmly. "Imogen told me as much last night. She seemed very happy.

"But what is to be done?" he demanded in despair.

"I'm afraid you've bungled it," commented Lady Chatfield, shaking her head. "You've overdone it."

## THE SKIRTS OF CHANCE

"She said that Pearse was off—that it was never serious," he groaned.

"I am very glad to hear it," said Lady Chatfield, smoothing out her paper. "It relieves my mind."

"But, my dear lady," he exclaimed, "there is me."

"What will you do?" asked Lady Chatfield, placidly.

"Good heavens, I can't say," he cried. "But you know it is impossible, as we agreed. A jest——"

"I don't know," said Lady Chatfield thoughtfully; "you will be Lord de Lys some day, and in the meantime you have quite enough. I have no objection in the world to you. Does she seem very fond of you?"

"How can I tell?" he wailed. "She let me kiss her."

"She's very good-looking, you know," suggested her mother.

"She's beautiful, I admit," said Charmian. "But——"

"I think you'll like her very much," she continued.

"I do like her," cried Charmian. "But——"

"You could have Langley, and there is your place at the Towers," she pursued, dispassionately.

"Perhaps—perhaps I should beat her," said Charmian.

"You'd get along very well, I'm sure. Oh yes, you'd like her very much," added Lady Chatfield.

"I'm sure I should beat her," said Lord Francis viciously.

Lady Chatfield eyed him with some compassion. "Of course, you could break it off," she suggested.

He made a grimace. "You know that is impossible," he returned, "unless she did."

Lady Chatfield took up her paper. He stood up and strode twice up and down the room; then meeting her eyes he went off into a fit of laughter, in which his companion good-humoredly joined.

"Oh well," he said, as he left the room, "Imogen is pretty, and that's something."

## COMEDY

By the time he had reached the meadows beyond the park he had considered himself into quite a cheerful frame of mind. He was not of a character to take things too solemnly, and in any case the present was always sufficient for him. So when he encountered Imogen quite by accident in a pied field of buttercups and marsh-marigolds, he met her with an eager air.

"Imogen—dearest," said he quite easily, and would have drawn her sharply to him.

She had greeted him with shy satisfaction, but now her cheeks stained red, and she drew back, a puzzled expression in her eyes.

"I'd—I'd rather not, Lord Francis," said she awkwardly.

The denial piqued him. "Darling!" he said reproachfully; "and 'Lord Francis,' too!"

It was nicer and pleasanter than he had imagined.

She grew more embarrassed. "You see," she explained in a lame and hurried voice, "I'd rather it was kept secret just now, and—and in that case, you see you mustn't—mustn't——"

"Mustn't I?" he asked in dismay, feeling that his only consolation for the situation was slipping from him. "Upon my soul, Imogen, I don't think that's fair."

"Well, you see, people might—might see," she pleaded, in her agitation. "And besides—there isn't—what is there in?—it isn't very much to——"

"Oh, isn't it?" remarked Charmian, seating himself gloomily on the tree-bole, while she stood by, watching him anxiously. "It shows, my dear, how little you know. Why, it's the one consola—that is, the chief pleasure in meeting you. You will get accustomed to it, believe me," he went on philosophically, almost in her mother's manner. "You'll get to like it, I'm sure."

Imogen was hotter than ever, and turned away abruptly.

## THE SKIRTS OF CHANCE

"You're surely not going!" he went on. "Oh, Imogen! When shall I see you again? Will you sit next me at luncheon?"

"Of course I couldn't do such a silly thing," she said impatiently.

"Well, will you come into the garden with me after dinner? or the conservatory? and mind, if you speak to that fool Mountesk I shall be angry with you!"

"You are unreasonable," broke out Imogen indignantly.

"Well, my dear, I have a violent temper of jealousy, and the sooner we're married the better," he pursued agreeably. "Upon my soul, I don't see why we shouldn't be married in June—after May, you know."

"Married!" echoed Miss Langley aghast, and in tearful tones. "You never think *I* have anything to say about it," she stammered. "I—I——"

"Well, well, think over it, and let me know tomorrow," said Charmian graciously.

The next day he detained her after breakfast. He noticed that she was silent, and he fancied that he saw a disposition to avoid him. This set him on more ardently, and he began to take warmly to his part.

"Imogen, may I have a word with you?" he whispered in her reluctant ears; and when they were alone, "Now, what about our wedding day?" It seemed to him that she started and drew a frightened breath, also that she whitened. "Come," he went on with cheerful alacrity, "the Towers will be quite ready in June, and I've wired about the furniture, and asked the housekeeper to attend to matters, and . . . Oh, I say, I hope you won't mind, but I've let it out to Mountesk."

"To whom?" she asked, tremblingly.

"Mountesk. I couldn't stand his face, and his airs, and his—his superiority."

"You told Lord Mountesk?" Miss Langley cried in dismay. "What did he say?"

"Oh, I think he swore," said Charmian indifferently. "I didn't pay much attention. In fact, I've just left him, and I don't advise any lady to pass that way just now."

A flush of anger, derived whence he knew not, captured Imogen's face.

"Now, just one kiss, Imogen," he began briskly; when suddenly she flamed forth an exclamation, swept from him, and was gone. Charmian stared ruefully at the door; then he whistled.

"If this is being engaged, I don't call it much fun," he murmured. Then he took his hunting-crop and went out to the stables, humming an air.

Miss Langley came to him in the evening. She was grave, she was humble, she was downcast, and she was troubled; and her eyes were rimmed with a mist of tears.

"I have—a confession to make to you, Lord Francis," she began in a low voice. "I wonder if—if you can forgive me."

"Try me, dear," he said flippantly.

"No, no; you will not understand. I have made a mistake,"—she hurried forward,—*"a horrible mistake."*

"A mistake!" repeated Lord Francis, wondering what turn affairs might be taking.

"I overheard accidentally parts of a talk you had with my mother; and, you see, I—oh, I am ashamed—I abominably misinterpreted it. I thought you were—were—doing what you did in jest. I never guessed—believe me, I never guessed you were serious, or I would not have tampered with—with——"

"With my young affections," said Charmian, drily: "I see."

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There was a silence. It ought to have been a relief, but somehow it was not to Charmian. On the contrary he felt a trifle annoyed. But he put on his usual good humor when he spoke.

"I hope this will be a lesson to you, Miss Langley," he said solemnly, "not to——"

"It will be—it will be," she promised him tearfully.

"Then that was why you wouldn't let me——"

"Yes, that was why," said Miss Langley very hurriedly.

There was another period of silence. "Then you are still engaged, after all, to Mr.—Mr.——"

"No," she cried, "I never really was. That was true. I only pretended to be, to frighten mother. He was horrid."

"Well," said Charmian more cheerfully, strange to say: "it seems to me you're quite good at pretending. But if that is so, it may not be too late for us. I hope I'm not horrid."

"Oh no, but you don't understand," she cried in distress, turning her favorite red. "You see, there is another—some one else."

"Ah!" said Charmian, and then, with an inspiration, "not Mountesk?" he cried.

He saw the admission in her pretty face.

"Damn!" said he. "I beg your pardon, but I think I've been a fool, and I think Lord Mountesk will have taken me for one."

"Oh, it is I, it is I who have made you one," she cried penitently.

"My dear Imogen, there is no doubt of that," said Charmian drily. "You did, but you couldn't have made so big a fool of me if you hadn't had my assistance."

"Forgive me," she pleaded, lifting an abashed but smiling face.

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"I will," he said. "But I'm hanged if I'll forgive Mountesk!"

"But he has done nothing," she exclaimed. "It is all me."

"That is true," assented Charmian. "Well, I'll forgive you both." She had the air of restlessness—of one awaiting her dismissal. "I hope you'll be happy," said he in broken tones, and, pressing her hand, abruptly turned away. Miss Langley gazed wistfully after him.

"I don't like it," confessed Charmian to himself, as he walked off. "It's abominable. But perhaps she would have grown old like her mother. No; I shall prefer her to talk to."

## CHAPTER VII

### THE TURQUOISE NECKLACE

There was no quarter of the town to which Lord Francis Charmian considered himself confined. He roamed over the points of the compass at his pleasure: Piccadilly, Belgravia, Bayswater, or the extreme shores of the East. There was one, Bailey, who had been at college with him—a pushing, industrious, and capable fellow, assured of success in his profession, which was the Bar. Bailey sent him from time to time formal cards of invitation to evening parties and “at homes,” which he had rarely acknowledged and never used. Yet Bailey had been quite an excellent fellow seven years back, and as he turned over his cards Charmian suddenly remembered this to his shame. His heart pricked him. He recalled that Bailey had red hair, and wanted to get on. Besides, he could not for the life of him remember which of the other invitations for that night he had accepted and which refused. That settled the question. He called a cab and drove off to Ashton Gardens, Kensington.

Bailey was delighted to see him, muttered something pleasantly awkward about their old friendship, and introduced him to the widow of a baronet, who sat stark and prim and discussed church work. Charmian recognized again that Bailey was striving hard to get on, and on his earliest opportunity escaped. He knew no one present save his host, which was all the better. It seemed a queer assemblage to him, and they did things

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he had not thought of. For one, you might turn into a further room when you wished, and ask a fat waiter for a champagne cup or claret. Charmian did so once; then he changed his order to whisky; and a little after he began to look more briskly upon the room. The lights glanced pleasantly about him from old polished furniture and wonderful glasses. Bailey had a knack of taste and knew how to furnish to a nicety. The room was a pleasure; so, also, he discerned next, were one or two women. They dressed well, and they looked well, and what was more, they seemed to talk well. If they had a fault, they knew too much and showed it. Bailey was abominably busy and abominally gay. Charmian wrenched himself away from some one who would talk of Hurlingham, and precipitated himself on an old gentleman of a grave and severe expression.

"I beg your pardon," said he. "The crush is so great, and there is a girl there in pink who has shoved me over three times."

The old gentleman did not respond to this flippancy, but he acknowledged the apology with a severe bow. "Pray do not mention it," said he; "you have only made me swallow half a cup of coffee the wrong way."

"As you ask me, I won't," said Lord Francis, cheerily. "By the way, you don't happen to be our host, do you? No? I'm glad to hear that. But one never knows in these fashionable assemblages. And by the way again, do you happen to know which *is* our host, and what he is?"

"Mr. Bailey," said the old gentleman acidly, "is a very rising barrister. I was well acquainted with his father. My name is Grant, and I am of the firm of Grant & Beach, accountants."

This was delivered in a tone of such disapproval as invited obviously a similar confidence or a withdrawal.

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But Charmian neither gave his confidence nor retired. Instead, he broke out in a friendly, interested voice.

"Accountants! By Jove! I'm so glad I met you. I've got shares in some companies, and I've always wanted to know. I read the balance-sheets regularly. But—look here, do tell me. Who gets all that money?"

"I fear I am in the dark as to what you are alluding to," remarked Mr. Grant with dignity and prudence.

"My dear sir, I'm sure you know," said Charmian confidentially. "I express myself badly. Those accounts, you know—they put down what they pay out three times or so, and then add it up and subtract it from . . . Well, hang it, they haven't paid three times, you know. Now, who gets that balance they make out of the mess? Between ourselves now, isn't it the accountant?"

"Sir!" cried Mr. Grant, very red and furious.

"Oh! my dear sir . . ." began Charmian, but at that second his eye was caught by a girl's face across the room. "We will resume this argument later, sir," he said hurriedly. "My name's George, sir—George, the socialist, you know," and he was swallowed in the crowd in an instant.

Lord Francis had seized a chance. This same girl was one that he had picked out earlier, but had lost continually. He rushed through the throng, and fell into a seat next her in the nick of time, thereby receiving upon his knees the weight of a stout man who had been more deliberate.

"I beg your pardon," said both together, and Charmian turned to the girl and laughed. "Won't you have some 'cup'?" he asked anxiously.

The girl, startled out of her sympathetic smile, drew in her breath with a gasp and faltered. "Do!" said Charmian, rising.

He led the way into the next room, and placed a

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chair for her. "The fact is," said he, filling her glass, "you are wondering who I am, and why I address you so abruptly. Well, perhaps I wonder myself as to the latter, but one never knows. Still, I can relieve your mind about the first. I am a private detective."

The young lady started once more, spilling the "cup" over her dress.

"I am very sorry," said he, "if I have alarmed you," and he mopped at the dress skilfully with his handkerchief. "Let me recommend boracic acid," he said: "most useful. I always use it in my cases."

"Thank you," relied the lady, stammering; "but—but—may I ask—why are you—what—are you a friend of Mr. Bailey's?"

"Hush!" remonstrated Charmian. "Not a word. We may be overheard, and I have no desire to give Mr. Bailey away. No, I am not. I am here under an *alias* to watch some one. Don't be alarmed: it isn't you. I'm supposed to be a member of the aristocracy—Lord Francis something or other they call me—Bailey calls me, that is," he added with contempt. "But please, Miss—Miss——"

"Bagot," said the lady hesitatingly.

"Miss Bagot,—please don't say anything to Bailey. The fact is, as I hope you see, I am really of a rather superior quality to the ordinary detective. But poverty—poverty—you can guess, Miss Bagot."

He sighed airily, and looked about the room. He had no motive in this impudent nonsense, which issued out of the irrepressible whimsicality of his nature; and to say the truth, his interest was now wandering to something else. But it appeared that his companion was more deeply engrossed. She sat meditating and fidgeting, and presently she turned to him.

"May I ask you a question, Mr.—Mr.——?"

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"Graves is my professional name," said Charmian meaningly.

"Mr. Graves—I don't know why you have told me this."

"I told you I didn't either," said Lord Francis helplessly.

"But," pursued Miss Bagot eagerly, "I should like to know whether you—I mean if you are here professionally, perhaps you could help—you see I—I have lost something."

Charmian drew down his cuff. "My dear young lady," said he promptly, "let me have the particulars."

She shook her head. "Oh no; not here. I couldn't. It's very serious. I—my brother's here. Could you drive back with us? I will speak to him."

As she spoke she fluttered away towards an elderly young man who had just entered the refreshment room, and Charmian observed her engage in an animated conversation.

"Well," thought he, "I've let myself in for it this time, unless I make a bolt for it."

He did not bolt, however, for something amusing turned up, and he forgot Miss Bagot, until, having bidden his host farewell, he left the house, and found himself tapped on the arm.

"I'm glad you've come. Mr. Graves, isn't it?" said the elderly young man. "I'm Mr. Bagot. My sister tells me you are going to be good enough to help us."

"Why, to be sure!" cried Charmian brightly, after a momentary stare of surprise. "I think I'm your man—Miss Bagot's man, I mean."

"She has lost a valuable piece of jewelry—not only valuable, but precious to her. There is no question that it was stolen, and we cannot bear to feel there is a thief in the house. We were thinking of calling in a

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detective only yesterday, but we are fortunate in having met you."

"You are," assented Charmian affably—"very fortunate! I'll soon put this case right for you."

"It is late now——" began Mr. Bagot.

"Oh, bless you, never too late," interposed Lord Francis airily. "I often begin my cases at three in the morning. In fact, I prefer it. You have more time for quiet thought and observation."

"I thought I might call at your office to-morrow," suggested Mr. Bagot.

"Oh—er—well—I—there again I have my method too," said Charmian. "I should prefer to call on you *privately*."

"Certainly, certainly, Mr. Graves," assented Mr. Bagot: "we will trust to you entirely."

"And what the devil am I to trust to?" asked Charmian comically of himself as he whirled home in his hansom.

The first thing upon which Charmian's eyes lighted the next morning, after his man had shaved him, was a card on the mantelpiece, reading:

*Mr. Richard Bagot,  
Clayton Square, W.*

"Now, who the—why, of course, yes," said he musingly. "It's that pretty detective girl with those uncommon eyes." He was silent for a time, turning the card in his fingers and considering. "Jacob, call a cab," he said at last, abruptly.

In twenty minutes Lord Francis was driving west at an hour, as he considered, not too early for business. At Clayton Square Mr. Bagot was in; indeed, as he himself explained, was awaiting his visitor. "We look to you, Mr. Graves," he said; and Charmian, nodding his head, reassured him.

"At the same time, Mr. Graves," pursued Mr. Bagot deliberately, with his finger-tips together, "it would be satisfactory to both of us, I imagine, if you were to give me a reference as to—your credentials, in fact. Those things, you know," he added with a deprecating smile, "are customary even with ambassadors."

"My dear sir," said Lord Francis glibly, "I rejoice to see you so prudent a man, for it shows me my task will be easier. If you will refer to the Duke of Revelstoke, you will, I have no doubt, satisfy yourself completely. I had the honor to be of use to the Duchess in a little affair some six months ago—very awkward little affair."

"Thank you, thank you," said Mr. Bagot courteously; "I will write at once."

"And now that that is amicably arranged," went on Charmian, speaking with continued glibness, and sustained by the recollection that the Duke was out of Europe, and at all events would never discern his shameless nephew under the *alias* of Mr. Graves,—“and now let's to business”: with which he pulled out a very new and large note-book, bound with silver clasps, and, plying a large pencil, looked austere at his employer.

"Pardon me; there is one thing more, and that is terms," said Mr. Bagot.

Charmian waved his pencil with graceful indifference. "I will leave that to you, sir," said he.

"Pardon me," remonstrated Mr. Bagot firmly, amazed at this unusual attitude, "I never go into anything without a clear understanding."

Charmian considered; he had no notion as to the charges of this class of professional. "My customary fee is twenty pounds," he said with dignity.

Mr. Bagot opened his eyes, and Charmian saw that he had overshot the mark. "We will say half a sovereign," he said hurriedly.

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Mr. Bagot coughed and frowned. "Oh, well, I suppose you know your business, Mr. Graves; we will, if you please, now proceed to facts."

"Yes, let us get to facts," said Charmian with relief. "May I have Miss Bagot in the room? Thank you; I shall want to refer to her."

Mr. Bagot rang the bell, and his sister was presently brought, seeming to be very greatly interested and wholesomely handsome.

"Now then, please," said Charmian, in tones of invitation.

"It—it was a turquoise necklace," began Miss Bagot breathlessly, "and it was stolen from my dressing-table a week ago."

"That's important," put in Charmian, scribbling in his note-book. "What time?"

"Well, I couldn't tell you that," replied Miss Bagot; "but it was there, I know, when I came down to dinner, and next morning it was gone."

"Absolutely gone," added Mr. Bagot.

"Absolutely gone," replied Charmian, nodding as he made his notes. "And now," said he, rising, "I had better inspect the room."

"Oh, but I haven't finished," pleaded the young lady, and he sat down at once.

"No; of course not," he said cheerfully. "Pray continue, my dear young lady."

Mr. Bagot eyed him with some coldness, and Charmian fancied that he had not been behaving properly. He frowned and stuck the harder to his pencil, and at last, under the impression that he must redeem himself, he ventured on a more abrupt manner. "This is all very well—yes, yes," he interrupted her, "but it is quite immaterial."

"Pardon me," said Mr. Bagot, precisely, "I fail to

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see how the engagements of the servants can be otherwise than most material to the problem."

The worm turned. "My dear sir," said Charmian impatiently, laying aside his pencil, "am I conducting this case, or you?"

Mr. Bagot agreed primly that the case was in Mr. Graves' hands.

"Very well," said Charmian, "then I must be allowed my way. "You see," he was good enough to explain, "you see, the one thing we've got to bear in mind is that the most unlikely person is sure to be the guilty one."

"Not *sure* to be, Mr. Graves?" asked Miss Bagot, doubtfully.

"Quite—quite sure—that is to say, almost sure," he corrected, with a wish that before he had started he had looked into the rules laid down for detectives by a famous writer. However, he remembered that one. "Now, where were your servants?"

"Why, I told you that!" exclaimed Miss Bagot.

"Why—'m—yes—to be sure—so you did," he muttered, examining his notes hastily.

"If I may be allowed to——" began Mr. Bagot, deliberately.

"My dear sir," said Charmian, testily, "I wish you would be good enough to go away. Miss Bagot and I could manage this affair so much better together."

"Mr. Graves!" said Mr. Bagot with formidable solemnity.

"Pray forgive my abruptness," interrupted Charmian soothingly, "but I am always irritable when I have a theory. It is my practice. I should like to be alone with Miss Bagot."

"You have a theory?" asked Mr. Bagot, mollified.

Charmian touched his head, and of a sudden some

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particulars as to what his conduct should be recurred to him.

"If you will be so good as to leave me here with a glass of milk and Miss Bagot for ten minutes—and if Miss Bagot would play a little——"

"I can't play," said Miss Bagot, in a little blushing confusion.

"Oh, that's awkward; nor can I," said Charmian, "but never mind—I'll manage without it. Stay; I think I'd better go and inspect Miss Bagot's room."

This time there was no objection taken; Mr. Bagot was silenced if not convinced, and Miss Bagot was bubbling with excitement as she led the way.

"You will excuse me if I am rude," whispered Charmian to the lady; "I hardly know what I'm doing when I'm on a job like this. I am regularly afire."

Miss Bagot murmured some sympathetic words of respect, and opened the door of a room.

"It was here," she explained.

"Ah!" observed Lord Francis, and instantly sprang at the window, examining the blind. He also looked under the bed, and tapped the walls; finally he carefully inspected the mirror.

Miss Bagot watched him with admiration, which was enhanced by his exclamations and gestures. Unfortunately Charmian had not yet determined at what point his investigations should begin; yet he desired not to disappoint his client, and he cried, "Ah!" or "Certainly," or nodded, or raised his eyebrows at intervals in the course of his inspection.

"Do—do—you think you can find out?" inquired Miss Bagot eagerly, when at length he came to a pause.

"Madam," said he coldly, remembering the best models in time, "I never promise anything."

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"Oh, but you said you could," cried the girl in dismay.

"Quite so; yes, I was thinking of something else," said Charmian, hurriedly, and sat down in a flurry upon the bed with his note-book to cover his confusion.

"Now let us see. Where were we? Oh, who was here on the 7th?"

"Well, you see, it was a small dinner-party," cried Miss Bagot, now reassured; "and besides ourselves there were Mr. and Mrs. Shaw-Bingham, and Aunt Mary (Mrs. Kelway is her name), and Mr. Granton."

"Ha!" said Charmian. "Addresses?" He set down these. "Now, who are these people?"

"Oh, it couldn't be any of *them!*" cried Miss Bagot, emphatically; "we've known them all our lives."

"Excuse me, my dear lady, you know what I have told you—the most unlikely is the most certain. Well, now servants?"

"They've all been with us more than five years, except John: he's new. But I don't suspect any one. Only John's—well, we don't much *care* for him."

"Ah!" reflected Charmian, "prejudice. A good woman's reason, forsooth—suspects him because she doesn't like him." But aloud he said, "Oh, we'll catch him, never fear. I have never yet had a failure. And, by the way, not a word of this to any one."

"Oh, no," said Miss Bagot eagerly; "not a soul knows, except, of course, that the necklace has been lost."

"Good," said Charmian; "I'll look in again this evening."

"But—but we have a party this evening," said she, with some hesitation.

"All the better," said Charmian. "Better chance of catching him."

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He snapped the locks of his note-book, and took his departure.

At his club in the afternoon he spent an hour endeavoring to decipher the mysterious words and hieroglyphics he found in this book under the dignified heading, "Notes of a conversation with Richard Bagot of Clayton Square . . . Do. of a conversation with Miss Josephine Bagot, same address." Unhappily he could make out nothing much, nor did he see his way to discover the thief. Yet the problem interested his excitable and frivolous mind, and he abandoned a dinner party to pursue his researches at the Bagots' house that evening.

Miss Bagot looked extremely pretty, but also anxious and timid. She glanced at him with apprehension.

"It's all right," he whispered; "no one will take me for what I am in this disguise. I'll put my finger on the rascal."

"But it can't be one of the guests," said Miss Bagot in distress. "It really——"

"Oh, you never know," said he, cheerfully, "you leave it to me."

He had an idea by this time which inspirited him, and the result was that with great reluctance Miss Bagot was persuaded to leave on her dressing-table a valuable ring.

"Tempt him," said he: "reconstruct the opportunity. It is a theory of my own, and I've often seen it come off."

So the trap was baited, and Charmian prepared to watch. Presently he noticed an old stout lady issue from the drawing-room and slowly drag herself upstairs. His expectations rose high when she stopped on the second floor and tried the handle of a door gently. It was Miss Bagot's room.

Charmian slipped from his hiding-place stealthily,

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and approached the door through which the stout lady had vanished. He peeped in, and saw her pause before the table. His heart bounded; his simple trick had succeeded; for real originality, he reflected, trust a person of inspiration, not the staid and mechanical professional. The diamonds instantly fascinated the lady; she reached forth a hand, diffidently, and suddenly snatched up the ring. The act was enough for Charmian. He entered complacently.

"Pardon me," he said, "but I have been a witness."

"Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself to confess it," said the old lady, who had started on his entrance with a cry.

"It is most unfortunate," said Charmian benignly.

"I should think so," declared the old lady, eyeing him with ironical calm. "What are you doing in this bedroom?"

"My dear madam, precisely what I was to ask you. You have anticipated me."

"It seems to me I did well," responded the old lady with significant emphasis.

"If you refer to your late act, it seems to me that you might in one sense be said to have done so—very," assented Charmian cordially. "But really, you know, my profession obliges me to take the one course. I will spare you all I can."

"Spare me!" she echoed angrily.

"Certainly," said Charmian; "only Mr. and Miss Bagot shall see you."

The old lady glared at him. "I know not what sort of madman you are, but I do not choose to be alone with you longer," she said with growing choler.

"Naturally," said Charmian, soothingly; "but in the circumstances——"

She approached with such menace in her face that he gave way, and went hurriedly to the door, which he

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shut and locked. There was a scream of rage from within.

"Lord!" he cried, "she'll have the door down," and perceiving a figure in the hall below, he hailed it through the balusters.

The man appeared and answered as a servant. "Hi! you: is it John?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said John.

"Well, I've got some one in here, explained Charmian, "and I want you to fetch Mr. Bagot and Miss Bagot at once, d'ye hear?"

"Yes, sir," said John, politely, "certainly, sir."—and he disappeared, to reappear presently with the lady and gentleman, both in a condition of evident excitement.

"I've got her—I've got her," said Charmian, triumphantly.

"You mean him," said Miss Bagot.

"No, it's her," explained Charmian.

"This is very awkward, very awkward," murmured Mr. Bagot.

"You're sure you haven't made a mistake?" suggested Miss Bagot.

"Indeed, no," said Charmian; "put your ear to that keyhole, and you'll hear the most awful language. At least, I mean you, Mr. Bagot."

"Thanks I . . . Well, we had better perhaps interview the—er—thief," said Mr. Bagot, gathering his wits.

Charmian unlocked the door and threw it open.

"Be prepared," he warned them.

"Aunt Mary!" said both sister and brother together in amazement.

"Quite so!" exclaimed the stout old lady, who was very red in the face, "and perhaps you'll be good enough to explain how that lunatic comes to be in your

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house, not to speak of Josephine's bedroom, where I caught him?"

"Where you caught him?" said Charmian; "but——"

"This is Mrs. Kelway, aunt upon the late Mrs. Bagot's side," said Mr. Bagot severely. "Perhaps you will explain how you come to have locked our aunt up, Mr. Graves?"

"Oh, Lord!" cried poor Charmian, "but I saw her steal your ring, Miss Bagot."

"The ring," said Mrs. Kelway, with ostentatious calm, "that I gave my niece Josephine a month ago on her twenty-first birthday, and which I regret to see has lost one stone, which I intended to have re-set."

Charmian could think of nothing. He remarked with feebleness, "I thought you weren't more than twenty-one, Josephine—Miss Bagot, I mean."

"Perhaps you will kindly explain," repeated Mr. Bagot angrily. Miss Bagot looked most distressed.

"If he doesn't I shall remember this in my will," said Mrs. Kelway in a most threatening voice.

Mr. Bagot's agitation increased, and he made a step toward Charmian, but that supple young man had a sudden flight of fancy.

"I will explain everything," he said, with a return of his usual confident manner, "and in anticipation, let me premise that I apologize. I told you, Miss Bagot, that I had a theory. I have it still. These little affairs are not obvious. I took a liberty, madam," to Mrs. Kelway with a ceremonious bow, "but it was my only chance."

"I'd like to know what all this means, young man," said that lady significantly.

"You shall," said Charmian, bowing again. "I am coming to that, but you will excuse me if I don't take you into my confidence entirely. Suffice it to say that Miss Bagot has lost a valuable piece of jewelry, a

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necklace, and that part of my scheme to discover the thief was to lock you up."

"May I ask why?" inquired Mr. Bagot in bewilderment.

"Don't you see," said Charmian, in astonishment, "to make a feint. The real thief is below, and——"

"Good gracious, Richard! you don't mean to say that you have a thief among your guests!" cried Mrs. Kelway, startled out of her indignation.

"You've hit it, ma'am," said Charmian, wondering in that pause how soon he could get out of the house.

"Then it seems to me that you had just better go and bring him up, if that's what your business is," said Mrs. Kelway grimly.

"I will, I will," said Charmian, with alacrity, and hastened out of the room, stumbling over John, who begged pardon and drew himself up stiffly.

"John," said Charmian sadly, "I can see you're an active fellow. I want your help. I'm going to take you into my confidence. Who was in the house when Miss Bagot lost her necklace?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Shaw-Bingham, sir, Mrs. Kelway and Mr. Granton," said John, promptly.

"Quite so, quite so," said Charmian. "Well, John, I think I'll be going. I'm not equal to the strain, and——"

"Excuse me, are you the gentleman that's come to look into that little matter?" asked John.

"I am," assented Charmian, with no readiness.

"I thought you was," explained John, confidentially; "I seen through you the first minute. I knew you weren't no regular gentleman."

"Your perspicuity does you credit, John," said Charmian, smiling weakly.

"Hanged if I don't believe the old girl done it after

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all," said John, with emphasis: "she's always on the pry."

"She's a tough customer, John, I admit, but there are several obstacles in the way of your theory. Well, I'm not going to be beaten. I don't leave this house till I lay my hands on the right person."

"I'm sure we'll all be willing to 'ave our boxes searched," observed John, respectfully.

"Quite right—not a bad idea," assented Charmian; "meanwhile, I want you to point me out the guests who were here on that night. Are they all here this evening?"

John looked about him cautiously. "They are, sir," he said in a low voice, "and it's borne in my mind to say something, though I never suspected him of anything, not knowing, so to speak. But I ketched that Mr. Granton sneaking down the stairs that night. Oh, I don't say anything, but I thought as you'd like to know."

"Good for you, John," said Charmian hastily, "yet we must be careful; we must not jump to conclusions. Show me Mr. Granton, and I'll make further inquiries."

John had no difficulty in doing this, and Charmian made his way through the guests to a tall young man of engaging appearance.

"Excuse me, sir," he said precipitately, "might I have a word with you?"

"By all means, sir," replied Mr. Granton, looking astonished.

But Charmian remembered that infuriated old lady who was waiting above, and he could afford to waste no time. The two went into the hall and confronted each other. "It is best," reflected Charmian, "to be abrupt. Then I may catch him out."

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"There is a piece of jewelry which Miss Bagot usually wears," said he sharply.

He remarked that Mr. Granton had a slight access of color.

"Well, sir?" he said, with some acerbity.

"You know of it, Mr. Granton," exclaimed Lord Francis, pointing a finger accusingly at him.

"What business is it of yours?" asked Mr. Granton in angry tones, which were clearly intended to "bluff."

"Never mind," said Charmian suavely; "say I am interested. I can explain my right if I like."

"Right!" exclaimed Mr. Granton, displaying considerable agitation. "I've never seen you before. Who are you?"

"All in good time, my good sir," responded Charmian soothingly. "Call me Jones in the meantime."

"Has—has Mr. Bagot found out?" inquired the young man, with increasing confusion.

Charmian nodded. He was in high spirits, and rather sorry for Mr. Granton. "I suppose you are hard up?" he observed expressively.

"Oh, that is obvious," said Mr. Granton, turning away with an impatient gesture. "I suppose I'd better go."

"Well," said Charmian, exhibiting some hesitation, "I should be glad to let you go myself, but I fear you must see Mr. Bagot first—and the old lady."

"The old lady!" echoed Mr. Granton in dismay. "For heaven's sake——"

"She's waiting for you; I said I'd bring you up to her," went on Charmian.

Mr. Granton groaned, but, making no resistance, followed his captor to the boudoir in which Mr. Bagot stiffly kept his aunt company.

Charmian rubbed his hands in what he considered a

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professional manner. "Well, madam, here we are at last," he said cheerfully.

Mr. Bagot gasped. "What! Mr. Granton!" he cried.

"Ask him, my dear sir—ask him yourself," said Charmian, complacently.

Mr. Granton, quite red in the face, shrugged his shoulders. "I don't deny it; I take the blame entirely upon myself," he said.

"Ah!" observed Mr. Bagot dryly, "I think you are too generous. Surely I am to blame, or Miss Bagot."

"Indeed, she is not," said the young man, eagerly; "I want you to understand that."

"Oh, well, come, come," interposed Charmian in a friendly voice, "don't let us apportion responsibility in this way. The first thing, of course, is that the jewelry should be restored."

Mr. Granton laughed shortly. "You make a great fuss," said he. "But certainly, if Miss Bagot desires. The matter rests in her hands."

At that moment the door opened, and that young lady entered, with an exclamation of surprise. "All is found out, Josephine," remarked Mr. Granton somewhat sheepishly, "and they want you to return my locket."

"Josephine! Locket!" cried Mr. Bagot, stuttering.

Charmian cast an eye toward the door in consternation. What on earth had he done? He foresaw that he should have to bolt.

"Certainly; what is the matter?" stammered Mr. Granton.

"I shall not return it, as Richard must understand at once," said Miss Bagot, firmly and with heightened color. "He shall not dictate to me. I don't care if you are poor."

"I wish some one would tell me what all this is

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about," said Mrs. Kelway's voice, feebly breaking in. "Did this man steal the necklace?"

"Necklace!" cried Mr. Granton, in amazement. "What necklace?"

All eyes of a sudden turned on Charmian, who opened his lips to begin a charming little speech, but hesitated, and finally turned and darted for the open door, in which stood John. He shook him fiercely, so that the man's head wobbled on his shoulders.

"Oh, you villain!" he said. "Oh, you blessed ruffian!"

Something leaped from the struggling John's inner pockets and rattled to the floor. Mechanically he picked it up, and, his gaze falling on it, he turned with one of his rapid changes, cool and polite.

"Madam," he said, "I promised you should have the villain. Here he is," he thrust the servant forward; "and here's the booty," saying which he set the necklace, with a bow, in Miss Bagot's hands.

"But—but—what—why did you bring up Mr. Granton?" asked Mr. Bagot in his bewilderment.

"Oh!" said Charnian lightly, "a little trick was necessary. I hope the gentleman will forgive it. But we detectives have our ways, you understand. And I hope no harm's done, and no offence taken."

This seemed to him an excellent phrase.

"You seem to be a very smart man, after all," commented the stout lady; but I'd like to know——"

"Oh, not so smart," interrupted Lord Charmian hastily. "This was an easy job, very easy. Lord! you should see some of my jobs. By the way," he added, "no one is anxious to appear in this business, I suppose. No? Then this fellow had better go. John, cut your hook as fast as you can."

This order was eagerly obeyed by the frightened man, and Mr. Bagot formally thanked Mr. Graves for

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his services, ending by a request that he would step downstairs with the gentleman to receive his fee.

"I shall be glad also to be able to inform Mr. Bailey, who has just arrived, how successfully you have solved for us this difficult problem," he added; "and if at any time I have need of your services——"

"Thanks, thanks!" said Charmian, quickly. "Did you say Mr. Bailey was here? On second thoughts I'll not wait for the check, but you can send it on to me."

He bowed charmingly and hastened out of the room; but when he was halfway down the stairs he heard a voice from above.

"Mr. Graves! Mr. Graves! you haven't left your address!"

"Box 13a1, *Daily Telegraph*," he cried back, glibly, and slipped down the stairs and escaped out of the doorway, half a minute before Bailey arrived in the hall.



THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY  
HOLLOW



# THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW

*By Washington Irving.*

A pleasing land of drowsy head it was,  
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;  
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,  
Forever flushing round a summer sky.

—*Castle of Indolence.*

**I**N the bosom of one of those spacious coves which indent the eastern shore of the Hudson, at that broad expansion of the river denominated by the ancient Dutch navigators the Tappan Zee, and where they always prudently shortened sail, and implored the protection of St. Nicholas when they crossed, there lies a small market town or rural port, which by some is called Greensburgh, but which is more generally and properly known by the name of Tarry Town. This name was given it, we are told, in former days, by the good housewives of the adjacent country, from the inveterate propensity of their husbands to linger about the village tavern on market days. Be that as it may, I do not vouch for the fact but merely advert to it for the sake of being precise and authentic. Not far from this village, perhaps about three miles, there is a little valley or rather lap of land among high hills, which is one of the quietest places in the whole world. A small brook glides through

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it with just murmur enough to lull one to repose; and the occasional whistle of a quail or tapping of a woodpecker is almost the only sound that ever breaks in upon the uniform tranquility.

I recollect that when a stripling my first exploit in squirrel-shooting was in a grove of tall walnut-trees that shades one side of the valley. I had wandered into in at noon-time when all nature is peculiarly quiet and was startled by the roar of my own gun as it broke the Sabbath stillness around and was prolonged and reverberated by the angry echoes. If ever I should wish for a retreat whither I might steal from the world and its distractions and dream quietly away the remnant of a troubled life, I know of none more promising than this little valley.

From the listless repose of the place, and the peculiar character of its inhabitants, who are descendants from the original Dutch settlers, this sequestered glen has long been known by the name of SLEEPY HOLLOW, and its rustic lads are called the Sleepy Hollow Boys throughout all the neighboring country. A drowsy, dreamy influence seems to hang over the land, and to pervade the very atmosphere. Some say that the place was bewitched by a high German doctor, during the early days of the settlement; others, that an old Indian chief, the prophet or wizard of his tribe, held his powwows there before the country was discovered by Master Hendrick Hudson. Certain it is the place still continues under the sway of some witching power, that holds a spell over the minds of the good people, causing them to walk in a continual reverie. They are given to all kinds of marvelous beliefs; are subject to trances and visions, and frequently see strange sights, and hear music and voices in the air. The whole neighborhood abounds with local tales, haunted spots and twilight superstitions; stars shoot and meteors glare oftener

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across the valley than in any other part of the country, and the nightmare, with her whole nine fold, seems to make it the favorite scene of her gambols.

The dominant spirit, however, that haunts this enchanted region, and seems to be commander-in-chief of all the powers of the air, is the apparition of a figure on horseback without a head. It is said by some to be the ghost of a Hessian trooper, whose head had been carried away by a cannon-ball, in some nameless battle during the Revolutionary War, and who is ever and anon seen by the country folk, hurrying along in the gloom of night, as if on the wind. His haunts are not confined to the valley, but extend at times to the adjacent roads, and especially to the vicinity of a church that is at no great distance. Indeed, certain of the most authentic historians of those parts, who have been careful in collecting and collating the floating facts concerning this spectre, allege, that the body of the trooper having been in the churchyard, the ghost rides forth to the scene of battle in nightly quest of his head, and that the rushing speed with which he sometimes passes along the hollow, like a midnight blast, is owing to his being belated, and in a hurry to get back to the churchyard before daybreak.

Such is the general purport of this legendary superstition, which has furnished materials for many a wild story in that region of shadows; and the spectre is known at all the country firesides, by the name of the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow.

It is remarkable, that the visionary propensity I have mentioned is not confined to the native inhabitants of the valley, but is unconsciously imbibed by every one who resides there for a time. However wide awake they may have been before they entered that sleepy region, they are sure, in a little time, to inhale the witch-

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ing influence of the air, and begin to grow imaginative—to dream dreams, and see apparitions.

I mention this peaceful spot with all possible laud; for it is in such little retired Dutch valleys, found here and there embosomed in the great State of New York, that population, manners and customs remain fixed, while the great torrent of migration and improvement, which is making such incessant changes in other parts of this restless country, sweeps by them unobserved. They are like those little nooks of still water, which border a rapid stream, where we may see the straw and bubble riding quietly at anchor, or slowly revolving in their mimic harbor, undisturbed by the rush of the passing current. Though many years have elapsed since I trod the drowsy shades of Sleepy Hollow, yet I question whether I should not find the same trees and the same families vegetating in its sheltered bosom.

In this by-place of nature there abode, in a remote period of American history, that is to say, some thirty years since, a worthy wight of the name of Ichabod Crane, who sojourned, or, as he expressed it, "tarried," in Sleepy Hollow, for the purpose of instructing the children of the vicinity. He was a native of Connecticut, a State which supplies the Union with pioneers for the mind as well as for the forest, and sends forth yearly its legions of frontier woodmen and country schoolmasters. The cognomen of Crane was not inapplicable to his person. He was tall, but exceedingly lank, with narrow shoulders, long arms and legs, hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, feet that might have served for shovels, and his whole frame most loosely hung together. His head was small, and flat at top, with huge ears, large green glassy eyes, and a long snipe nose, so that it looked like a weathercock perched upon his spindle neck, to tell which way the wind blew. To see him striding along the profile of a hill on a windy day,

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with his clothes bagging and fluttering about him, one might have mistaken him for the genius of famine descending upon the earth, or some scarecrow eloped from a cornfield.

His school-house was a low building of one large room, rudely constructed of logs; the windows partly glazed, and partly patched with leaves of copy-books. It was most ingeniously secured at vacant hours, by a withe twisted in the handle of the door, and stakes set against the window-shutters; so that though a thief might get in with perfect ease, he would find some embarrassment in getting out:—an idea most probably borrowed by the architect, Yost Van Houten, from the mystery of an eelpot. The school-house stood in a rather lonely but pleasant situation, just at the foot of a woody hill, with a brook running close by, and a formidable birch-tree growing at one end of it. From hence the low murmur of his pupils' voices, conning over their lessons, might be heard of a drowsy summer's day, like the hum of a beehive; interrupted now and then by the authoritative voice of the master, in the tone of menace or command; or, peradventure, by the appalling sound of the birch, as he urged some tardy loiterer along the flowery path of knowledge. Truth to say, he was a conscientious man, that ever bore in mind the golden maxim, "Spare the rod and spoil the child." Ichabod Crane's scholars certainly were not spoiled.

I would not have it imagined, however, that he was one of those cruel potentates of the school, who joy in the smart of their subjects; on the contrary, he administered justice with discrimination rather than severity; taking the burden off the backs of the weak, and laying it on those of the strong. Your mere puny stripling, that winced at the least flourish of the rod, was passed by with indulgence; but the claims of justice were satisfied by inflicting a double portion on some

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little, tough, wrong-headed, broad-skirted Dutch urchin, who sulked and swelled and grew dogged and sullen beneath the birch. All this he called "doing his duty by their parents"; and he never inflicted a chastisement without following it by the assurance so consolatory to the smarting urchin, that "he would remember it and thank him for it the longest day he had to live."

When school hours were over, he was even the companion and playmate of the larger boys; and on holiday afternoons would convey some of the smaller ones home, who happened to have pretty sisters or good housewives for mothers, noted for the comforts of the cupboard. Indeed, it behooved him to keep on pretty good terms with his pupils. The revenue arising from his school was small, and would have been scarcely sufficient to furnish him with daily bread, for he was a huge feeder, and though lank, had the dilating powers of an anaconda; but to help out his maintenance, he was, according to country custom in those parts, boarded and lodged at the houses of the farmers, whose children he instructed. With these he lived successively a week at a time, thus going the rounds of the neighborhood, with all his worldly effects tied up in a cotton handkerchief.

That all this might not be too onerous on the purses of his rustic patrons who are apt to consider the costs of schooling a grievous burden, and schoolmasters as mere drones, he had various ways of rendering himself both useful and agreeable. He assisted the farmers occasionally in the lighter labors of their farms; helped to make hay; mended the fences; took the horses to water; drove the cows from pasture; and cut wood for the winter fire. He laid aside, too, all the dominant dignity and absolute sway with which he lorded it in his little empire, the school, and became wonderfully gentle and ingratiating. He found favor in the eyes of the mothers by petting the children, particularly the young-

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est; and like the lion bold, which whilom so magnanimously the lamb did hold, he would sit with a child on one knee, and rock a cradle with his foot for whole hours together.

In addition to his other vocations, he was the singing-master of the neighborhood, and picked up many bright shillings by instructing the young folks in psalmody. It was a matter of no little vanity to him on Sundays, to take his station in front of the church gallery, with a band of chosen singers; where, in his own mind, he completely carried away the palm from the parson. Certain it is, his voice resounded far above all the rest of the congregation, and there are peculiar quavers still to be heard in that church, and which may even be heard half a mile off, quite to the opposite side of the mill-pond, on a still Sunday morning, which are said to be legitimately descended from the nose of Ichabod Crane. Thus, by divers little makeshifts, in that ingenious way which is commonly denominated "by hook and by crook," the worthy pedagogue got on tolerably enough, and was thought, by all who understood nothing of the labor of head-work, to have a wonderful easy life of it.

The schoolmaster is generally a man of some importance in the female circle of a rural neighborhood; being considered a kind of idle gentleman-like personage, of vastly superior taste and accomplishments to the rough country swains, and, indeed, inferior in learning only to the parson. His appearance, therefore, is apt to occasion some little stir at the tea-table of a farmhouse, and the addition of a supernumerary dish of cakes or sweetmeats, or peradventure, the parade of a silver tea-pot. Our man of letters, therefore, was peculiarly happy in the smiles of all the country damsels. How he would figure among them in the churchyard, between services on Sundays! gather grapes for them

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from the wild vines that overrun the surrounding trees; reciting for their amusement all the epitaphs on the tombstones; or sauntering with a whole bevy of them along the banks of the adjacent mill-pond; while the more bashful country bumpkins hung sheepishly back, envying his superior elegance and address.

From his half-itinerant life, also, he was a kind of traveling gazette, carrying the whole budget of local gossip from house to house; so that his appearance was always greeted with satisfaction. He was, moreover, esteemed by the women as a man of great erudition, for he had read several books through, and was a perfect master of Cotton Mather's History of New England Witchcraft, in which, by the way, he most firmly and potently believed.

He was, in fact, an odd mixture of small shrewdness and simple credulity. His appetite for the marvelous and his powers of digesting it were equally extraordinary; and both had been increased by his residence in this spell-bound region. No tale was too gross or monstrous for his capacious swallow. It was often his delight, after his school was dismissed in the afternoon, to stretch himself on the rich bed of clover, bordering the little brook that whimpered by his school-house, and there con over old Mather's direful tales, until the gathering dusk of evening made the printed page a mere mist before his eyes. Then, as he wended his way, by swamp and stream and awful woodland, to the farmhouse where he happened to be quartered, every sound of nature, at that witching hour, fluttered his excited imagination: the moan of the whip-poor-will from the hillside; the boding cry of the tree-toad, that harbinger of storm; the dreary hooting of the screech-owl; or the sudden rustling in the thicket of birds frightened from their roost. The fire-flies, too, which sparkled most vividly in the darkest places, now and then startled him,

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as one of uncommon brightness would stream across his path; and if, by chance, a huge blockhead of a beetle came winging his blundering flight against him, the poor varlet was ready to give up the ghost, with the idea that he was struck with a witch's token. His only resource on such occasions, either to drown thought, or drive away evil spirits, was to sing psalm tunes;—and the good people of Sleepy Hollow, as they sat by their doors of an evening, were often filled with awe, at hearing his nasal melody, “in linked sweetness long drawn out,” floating from the distant hill, or along the dusky road.

Another of his sources of fearful pleasure was, to pass long winter evenings with the old Dutch wives as they sat spinning by the fire, with a row of apples roasting and sputtering along the hearth, and listen to their marvelous tales of ghosts, and goblins, and haunted fields and haunted brooks, and haunted bridges and haunted houses, and particularly of the headless horseman, or galloping Hessian of the Hollow, as they sometime called him. He would delight them equally by his anecdotes of witchcraft, and of the direful omens and portentous sights and sounds in the air, which prevailed in the early times of Connecticut; and would frighten them wofully with speculations upon comets and shooting stars, and with the alarming fact that the world did absolutely turn round, and that they were half the time topsy-turvy!

But if there was a pleasure in all this, while snugly cuddling in the chimney corner of a chamber that was all of a ruddy glow from the crackling wood fire, and where, of course, no specter dared to show its face, it was dearly purchased by the terrors of his subsequent walk homewards. What fearful shapes and shadows beset his path, amidst the dim and ghastly glare of a snowy night!—With what wistful look did he eye every trem-

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bling ray of light streaming across the waste fields from some distant window!—How often was he appalled by some shrub covered with snow, which like a sheeted specter beset his very path!—How often did he shrink with curdling awe at the sound of his own steps on the frosty crust beneath his feet; and dread to look over his shoulder, lest he should behold some uncouth being tramping close behind him!—and how often was he thrown into complete dismay by some rushing blast, howling among the trees, in the idea that it was the galloping Hessian on one of his nightly scourings!

All these, however, were mere terrors of the night, phantoms of the mind, that walk in darkness: and though he had seen many specters in his time, and been more than once beset by Satan in divers shapes, in his lonely perambulations, yet daylight put an end to all these evils; and he would have passed a pleasant life of it, in despite of the Devil and all his works, if his path had not been crossed by a being that causes more perplexity to mortal man than ghosts, goblins, and the whole race of witches put together; and that was—a woman.

Among the musical disciples who assembled, one evening in each week, to receive his instructions in psalmody, was Katrina Van Tassel, the daughter and only child of a substantial Dutch farmer. She was a blooming lass of fresh eighteen; plump as a partridge; ripe and melting and rosy-checked as one of her father's peaches, and universally famed, not merely for her beauty, but her vast expectations. She was withal a little of a coquette, as might be perceived even in her dress, which was a mixture of ancient and modern fashions, as most suited to set off her charms. She wore the ornaments of pure yellow gold, which her great-great-grandmother had brought over from Saardam; the tempting stomacher of the olden time, and withal a pro-

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vokingly short petticoat, to display the prettiest foot and ankle in the country round.

Ichabod Crane had a soft and foolish heart towards the sex; and it is not to be wondered at, that so tempting a morsel soon found favor in his eyes, more especially after he had visited her in her paternal mansion. Old Baltus Van Tassel was a perfect picture of a thriving, contented, liberal-hearted farmer. He seldom, it is true, sent either his eyes or his thoughts beyond the boundaries of his own farm; but within these, everything was snug, happy and well-conditioned. He was satisfied with his wealth, but not proud of it; and piqued himself upon the hearty abundance, rather than the style in which he lived. His stronghold was situated on the banks of the Hudson, in one of those green, sheltered, fertile nooks, in which the Dutch farmers are so fond of nestling. A great elm-tree spread its broad branches over it; at the foot of which bubbled up a spring of the softest and sweetest water, in a little well, formed of a barrel; and then stole sparkling away through the grass, to a neighboring brook, that babbled along among alders and dwarf willows. Hard by the farm-house was a vast barn, that might have served for a church; every window and crevice of which seemed bursting forth with the treasures of the farm; the flail was busily resounding within it from morning to night; swallows and martins skimmed twittering about the eaves; and rows of pigeons, some with one eye turned up, as if watching the weather, some with their heads under their wings, or buried in their bosoms, and others swelling, and cooing, and bowing about their dames, were enjoying the sunshine on the roof. Sleek unwieldy porkers were grunting in the repose of their pens, from whence sallied forth, now and then, troops of sucking pigs, as if to sniff the air. A stately squadron of snowy geese were riding in an adjoining pond, conveying whole fleets of ducks;

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regiments of turkeys were gobbling through the farm-yard, and guinea-fowls fretting about it like ill-tempered housewives, with their peevish, discontented cry. Before the barn door strutted the gallant cock, that pattern of a husband, a warrior, and a fine gentleman; clapping his burnished wings and crowing in the pride and gladness of his heart—sometimes tearing up the earth with his feet, and then generously calling his ever-hungry family of wives and children to enjoy the rich morsel which he had discovered.

The pedagogue's mouth watered, as he looked upon this sumptuous promise of luxurious winter fare. In his devouring mind's eye, he pictured to himself every roasting pig running about, with a pudding in its belly, and an apple in its mouth; the pigeons were snugly put to bed in a comfortable pie, and tucked in with a coverlet of crust; the geese were swimming in their own gravy; and the ducks pairing cosily in dishes, like snug married couples, with a decent competency of onion sauce. In the porkers he saw carved out the future sleek side of bacon, and juicy relishing ham; not a turkey, but he beheld daintily trussed up, with its gizzard under its wing, and, peradventure, a necklace of savory sausages; and even bright chanticleer himself lay sprawling on his back, in a side dish, with uplifted claws, as if craving that quarter which his chivalrous spirit disdained to ask while living.

As the enraptured Ichabod fancied all this, and as he rolled his great green eyes over the fat meadow lands, the rich fields of wheat, of rye, of buckwheat, and Indian corn, and the orchards burdened with ruddy fruit, which surrounded the warm tenement of Van Tassel, his heart yearned after the damsel who was to inherit these domains, and his imagination expanded with the idea, how they might readily be turned into cash, and the money invested in immense tracts of wild land, and

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shingle palaces in the wilderness. Nay, his busy fancy already realized his hopes, and presented to him the blooming Katrina, with a whole family of children mounted on the top of a wagon loaded with household trumpery, with pots and kettles dangling beneath; and he beheld himself bestriding a pacing mare, with a colt at her heels, setting out for Kentucky, Tennessee—or the Lord knows where!

When he entered the house, the conquest of his heart was complete. It was one of those spacious farm-houses, with high-ridged, but low-sloping roofs, built in the style handed down from the first Dutch settlers. The low projecting eaves forming a piazza along the front, capable of being closed up in bad weather. Under this were hung flails, harness, various utensils of husbandry, and nets for fishing in the neighboring river. Benches were built along the sides for summer use; and a great spinning-wheel at one end, and a churn at the other, showed the various uses to which this important porch might be devoted. From this piazza the wonderful Ichabod entered the hall, which formed the centre of the mansion, and the place of usual residence. Here, rows of resplendent pewter, ranged on a long dresser, dazzled his eyes. In one corner stood a huge bag of wool, ready to be spun; in another, a quantity of linsey-woolsey just from the loom; ears of Indian corn, and strings of dried apples and peaches, hung in gay festoons along the walls, mingled with the gaud of red peppers; and a door left ajar, gave him a peep into the best parlor, where the claw-footed chairs, and dark mahogany tables, shone like mirrors; andirons, with their accompanying shovel and tongs, glistened from their covert of asparagus tops; mock-oranges and conch shells decorated the mantelpiece; strings of various colored birds' eggs were suspended above it; a great ostrich egg was hung from the centre of the room, and

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a corner cupboard, knowingly left open, displayed immense treasures of old silver and well-mended china.

From the moment Ichabod laid his eyes upon these regions of delight, the peace of his mind was at an end, and his only study was how to gain the affections of the peerless daughter of Van Tassel. In this enterprise, however, he had more real difficulties than generally fell to the lot of a knight-errant of yore, who seldom had anything but giants, enchanters, fiery dragons, and such like easily conquered adversaries, to contend with, and had to make his way merely through gates of iron and brass, and walls of adamant to the castle-keep, where the lady of his heart was confined; all which he achieved as easily as a man would carve his way to the center of a Christmas pie, and then the lady gave him her hand as a matter of course. Ichabod, on the contrary, had to win his way to the heart of a country coquette, beset with a labyrinth of whims and caprices, which were forever presenting new difficulties and impediments, and he had to encounter a host of fearful adversaries of real flesh and blood, and numerous rustic admirers, who beset every portion of her heart; keeping a watchful and angry eye upon each other, but ready to fly out in the common cause against any new competitor.

Among these, the most formidable was a burly, roaring, roystering blade, of the name of Abraham, or according to the Dutch abbreviation, Brom Van Brunt, the hero of the country round, which rung with his feats of strength and hardihood. He was broad-shouldered and double-jointed, with short, curly black hair, and a bluff, but not unpleasant countenance, having a mingled air of fun and arrogance. From his Herculean frame and great powers of limb, he had received the nickname of BROM BONES, by which he was universally known. He was famed for great knowledge and skill in horse-

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manship, being as dexterous on horseback as a Tartar. He was foremost at all races and cock-fights, and with the ascendancy which bodily strength always acquires in rustic life, was the umpire in all disputes, setting his hat on one side, and giving his decisions with an air and tone that admitted of no gainsay or appeal. He was always ready for either a fight or a frolic; had more mischief than ill-will in his composition; and with all his overbearing roughness, there was a strong dash of waggish good-humor at bottom. He had three or four boon companions of his own stamp, who regarded him as their model, and at the head of whom he scoured the country, attending every scene of feud or merriment for miles around. In cold weather, he was distinguished by a fur cap, surmounted with a flaunting fox's tail; and when the folks at a country gathering descried this well-known crest at a distance, whisking about among a squad of hard riders, they always stood by for a squall. Sometimes his crew would be heard dashing along past the farm-houses at midnight, with whoop and halloo, like a troop of Don Cossacks, and the old dames, startled out of their sleep, would listen for a moment till the hurry-scurry had clattered by, and then exclaim, "Ay, there goes Brom Bones and his gang!" The neighbors looked upon him with a mixture of awe, admiration, and good will; and when any madcap prank or rustic brawl occurred in the vicinity, always shook their heads, and warranted Brom Bones was at the bottom of it.

This rantipole hero had for some time singled out the blooming Katrina for the object of his uncouth galantries, and though his amorous toyings were something like the gentle caresses and endearments of a bear, yet it was whispered that she did not altogether discourage his hopes. Certain it is, his advances were signals for rival candidates to retire, who felt no inclina-

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tion to cross a lion in his amours; insomuch, that when his horse was seen tied to Van Tassel's palings, on a Sunday night, a sure sign that his master was courting, or, as it is termed, "sparking" within, all other suitors passed by in despair, and carried the war into other quarters.

Such was the formidable rival with whom Ichabod Crane had to contend, and considering all things, a stouter man than he would have shrunk from the competition, and a wiser man would have despaired. He had, however, a happy mixture of pliability and perseverance in his nature; he was in form and spirit like a supple-jack—yielding, but tough; though he bent, he never broke; and though he bowed beneath the slightest pressure, yet, the moment it was away—jerk!—he was as erect, and carried his head as high as ever.

To have taken the field openly against his rival would have been madness; for he was not a man to be thwarted in his amours, any more than that stormy lover, Achilles. Ichabod, therefore, made his advances in a quiet and gently-insinuating manner. Under cover of his character of singing-master, he made frequent visits at the farm-house; not that he had anything to apprehend from the meddlesome interference of parents, which is so often a stumbling-block in the path of lovers. Balt Van Tassel was an easy indulgent soul; he loved his daughter better even than his pipe, and like a reasonable man, and excellent father, let her have her way in everything. His notable little wife, too, had enough to do to attend to her housekeeping and manage the poultry; for, as she sagely observed, ducks and geese are foolish things, and must be looked after, but girls can take care of themselves. Thus, while the busy dame bustled about the house, or plied her spinning-wheel at one end of the piazza, honest Balt would sit smoking his evening pipe at the other, watching the achievements of a little

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wooden warrior, who, armed with a sword in each hand, was most valiantly fighting the wind on the pinnacle of the barn. In the meantime, Ichabod would carry on his suit with the daughter by the side of the spring under the great elm, or sauntering along in the twilight, that hour so favorable to the lover's eloquence.

I profess not to know how women's hearts are wooed and won. To me they have always been matters of riddle and admiration. Some seem to have but one vulnerable point, or door of access; while others have a thousand avenues, and may be captured in a thousand different ways. It is a great triumph of skill to gain the former, but a still greater proof of generalship to maintain possession of the latter, for a man must battle for his fortress at every door and window. He that wins a thousand common hearts, is therefore entitled to some renown; but he who keeps undisputed sway over the heart of a coquette, is indeed a hero. Certain it is this was not the case with the redoubtable Brom Bones; and from the moment Ichabod Crane made his advances, the interests of the former evidently declined; his horse was no longer seen tied at the palings on Sunday nights, and a deadly feud gradually arose between him and the preceptor of Sleepy Hollow.

Brom, who had a degree of rough chivalry in his nature, would fain have carried matters to open warfare, and settled their pretensions to the lady, according to the mode of those most concise and simple reasoners, the knights-errant of yore—by single combat; but Ichabod was too conscious of the superior might of his adversary to enter the lists against him; he had overheard the boast of Bones that he would "double the schoolmaster up, and put him on a shelf," and he was too wary to give him an opportunity. There was something extremely provoking in this obstinately pacific system; it left Brom no alternative but to draw upon the funds of

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rustic waggery in his disposition, and to play off boorish practical jokes upon his rival. Ichabod became the object of whimsical persecutions to Bones and his gang of rough riders. They harried his hitherto peaceful domains; smoked out his singing-school by stopping up the chimney; broke into the school-house at night, in spite of its formidable fastenings of withe and window-stakes, and turned everything topsy-turvy; so that the poor schoolmaster began to think all the witches in the country held their meetings there. But what was still more annoying, Brom took all opportunities of turning him into ridicule in presence of his mistress, and had a scoundrel dog whom he taught to whine in the most ludicrous manner, and introduced as a rival of Ichabod's to instruct her in psalmody.

In this way, matters went on for some time, without producing any material effect on the relative situations of the contending powers. On a fine autumnal afternoon, Ichabod, in pensive mood, sat enthroned on the lofty stool from whence he usually watched all the concerns of his literary realm. In his hand he swayed a ferule, that sceptre of despotic power; the birch of justice reposed on three nails, behind the throne, a constant terror to evil doers; while on the desk before him might be seen sundry contraband articles and prohibited weapons, detected upon the persons of idle urchins; such as half-munched apples, popguns, whirligigs, fly-cages, and whole legions of rampant little paper game-cocks. Apparently there had been some appalling act of justice recently inflicted, for the scholars were all busily intent upon their books, or slyly whispering behind them with one eye kept upon the master; and a kink of buzzing stillness reigned throughout the schoolroom. It was suddenly interrupted by the appearance of a negro in tow-cloth jacket and trowsers, a round crowned fragment of a hat, like a cap of Mercury, and mounted on

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the back of a ragged, wild, half-broken colt, which he managed with a rope by way of halter. He came clattering up to the school-door with an invitation to Ichabod to attend a merry-making, or "quilting-frolic," to be held that evening at Mynheer Van Tassel's; and having delivered his message with that air of importance, and effort at fine language, which a negro is apt to display on petty embassies of the kind, he dashed over the brook, and was seen scampering away up the hollow, full of the importance and hurry of his mission.

All was now bustle and hubbub in the late quiet school-room. The scholars were hurried through their lessons, without stopping at trifles; those who were nimble, skipped over half with impunity, and those who were tardy, had a smart application now and then in the rear, to quicken their speed, or help them over a tall word. Books were flung aside, without being put away on the shelves; inkstands were overturned, benches thrown down, and the whole school was turned loose an hour before the usual time; bursting forth like a legion of young imps, yelping and racketing about the green, in joy at their early emancipation.

The gallant Ichabod now spent at least an extra half-hour at his toilet, brushing and furnishing up his best, and indeed only suit of rusty black, and arranging his looks by a bit of broken looking-glass, that hung up in the schoolhouse. That he might make his appearance before his mistress in the true style of a cavalier, he borrowed a horse from the farmer with whom he was domiciliated, a choleric old Dutchman, of the name of Hans Van Ripper, and thus gallantly mounted, issued forth like a knight-errant in quest of adventures. But it is meet I should, in the true spirit of romantic story, give some account of the looks and equipments of my hero and his steed. The animal he bestrode was a broken-down plough-horse, that had outlived almost

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everything but his viciousness. He was gaunt and shagged, with a ewe neck and a head like a hammer; his rusty mane and tail were tangled and knotted with burrs; one eye had lost its pupil, and was glaring and spectral, but the other had the gleam of a genuine devil in it. Still he must have had fire and mettle in his day, if we may judge from his name, which was Gunpowder. He had, in fact, been a favorite steed of his master's the choleric Van Ripper, who was a furious rider, and had infused, very probably, some of his own spirit into the animal; for, old and broken-down as he looked, there was more of the lurking devil in him than in any young filly in the country.

Ichabod was a suitable figure for such a steed. He rode with short stirrups, which brought his knees nearly up to the pommel of the saddle; his sharp elbows stuck out like grasshoppers'; he carried his whip perpendicularly in his hand, like a scepter, and as the horse jogged on, the motion of his arms was not unlike the flapping of a pair of wings. A small wool hat rested on the top of his nose, for so his scanty strip of forehead might be called, and the skirts of his black coat fluttered out almost to the horse's tail. Such was the appearance of Ichabod and his steed as they shambled out of the gate of Hans Van Ripper, and it was altogether such an apparition as is seldom to be met with in broad daylight.

It was, as I have said, a fine autumnal day; the sky was clear and serene, and nature wore that rich and golden livery which we always associate with the idea of abundance. The forests had put on their sober brown and yellow, while some trees of the tenderer kind had been nipped by the frosts into brilliant dyes of orange, purple, and scarlet. Streaming files of wild ducks began to make their appearance high in the air; the bark of the squirrel might be heard from the groves of beech and hickory-

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nuts, and the pensive whistle of the quail at intervals from the neighboring stubble field.

The small birds were taking their farewell banquets. In the fullness of their revelry, they fluttered, chirping and frolicking, from bush to bush, and tree to tree, capricious from the very profusion and variety around them. There was the honest cockrobin, the favorite game of stripling sportsmen, with its loud querulous note, and the twittering blackbirds flying in sable clouds; and the golden-winged woodpecker, with his crimson crest, his broad black gorget, and splendid plumage; and the cedar-bird, with its red-tipt wings and yellow-tipt tail and its little monteiro cap of feathers; and the blue jay, that noisy coxcomb, in his gay light blue coat and white underclothes, screaming and chattering, nodding, and bobbing, and bowing, and pretending to be on good terms with every songster of the grove.

As Ichabod jogged slowly on his way, his eye, ever open to every symptom of culinary abundance, ranged with delight over the treasures of jolly autumn. On all sides he beheld vast stores of apples, some hanging in oppressive opulence on the trees; some gathered into baskets and barrels for the market; others heaped up in rich piles for the cider-press. Farther on he beheld great fields of Indian corn, with its golden ears peeping from their leafy coverts, and holding out the promise of cakes and hasty-pudding; and the yellow pumpkins lying beneath them, turning up their fair round bellies to the sun, and giving ample prospects of the most luxurious of pies; and anon he passed the fragrant buckwheat fields breathing the odor of the beehive; and as he beheld them, soft anticipations stole over his mind of dainty slap-jacks, well-buttered, and garnished with honey or treacle, by the delicate little dimpled hand of Katrina Van Tassel.

Thus feeding his mind with many sweet thoughts and

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“sugared suppositions,” he journeyed along the sides of a range of hills which look out upon some of the goodliest scenes of the mighty Hudson. The sun gradually wheeled his broad disk down in the west. The wide bosom of the Tappan Zee lay motionless and glassy, excepting that here and there a gentle undulation waved and prolonged the blue shadow of the distant mountain. A few amber clouds floated in the sky, without a breath of air to move them. The horizon was of a fine golden tint, changing gradually into a pure apple green, and from that into the deep blue of the mid-heaven. A slanting gray lingered on the woody crests of the precipices that overhung some parts of the river, giving greater depth to the dark gray and purple of their rocky sides. A sloop was loitering in the distance, dropping slowly down with the tide, her sail hanging uselessly against the mast; and as the reflection of the sky gleamed along the still water, it seemed as if the vessel was suspended in the air.

It was toward evening that Ichabod arrived at the castle of the Herr Van Tassel, which he found thronged with the pride and flower of the adjacent country. Old farmers, a spare, leathern-faced race, in homespun coats and breeches, blue stockings, huge shoes, and magnificent pewter buckles. Their brisk, withered little dames, in close crimped caps, long-waisted gowns, homespun petticoats, with scissors and pin-cushions, and gay calico pockets hanging on the outside. Buxom lasses, almost as antiquated as their mothers, excepting where a straw hat, a fine ribbon, or perhaps a white frock, gave symptoms of city innovations. The sons, in short square skirted coats, with rows of stupendous brass buttons, and their hair generally queued in the fashion of the times, especially if they could procure an eelskin for the purpose, it being esteemed throughout the country as a potent nourisher and strengthener of the hair.

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Brom Bones, however, was the hero of the scene, having come to the gathering on his favorite steed Daredevil, a creature, like himself, full of mettle and mischief, and which no one but himself could manage. He was, in fact, noted for preferring vicious animals, given to all kinds of tricks which kept the rider in constant risk of his neck, for he held a tractable, well-broken horse as unworthy of a lad of spirit.

Fain would I pause to dwell upon the world of charms that burst upon the enraptured gaze of my hero, as he entered the state parlor of Van Tassel's mansion. Not those of the bevy of buxom lasses, with their luxurious display of red and white; but the ample charms of a genuine Dutch country tea-table, in the sumptuous time of autumn. Such heaped-up platters of cakes of various and almost indescribable kinds, known only to experienced Dutch housewives! There was the doughy doughnut, the tender olykoek, and the crisp and crumbling cruller; sweet cakes and short cakes, ginger cakes and honey cakes, and the whole family of cakes. And then there were apple pies, and pumpkin pies; besides slices of ham and smoked beef; and moreover delectable dishes of preserved plums, and peaches, and pears, and quinces; not to mention broiled shad and roasted chickens; together with bowls of milk and cream, all mingled higgledy-piggledy, pretty much as I have enumerated them, with the motherly tea-pot sending up its clouds of vapor from the midst—Heaven bless the mark! I want breath and time to discuss this banquet as it deserves, and am too eager to get on with my story. Happily, Ichabod Crane was not in so great a hurry as his historian, but did ample justice to every dainty.

He was a kind and thankful creature, whose heart dilated in proportion as his skin was filled with good cheer, and whose spirit rose with eating, as some men's do with drink. He could not help, too, rolling his large

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eyes round him as he ate, and chuckling with the possibility that he might one day be lord of all this scene of almost unimaginable luxury and splendor. Then, he thought, how soon he'd turn his back upon the old school-house; snap his fingers in the face of Hans Van Ripper, and every other niggardly patron, and kick any itinerant pedagogue out of doors that should dare to call him comrade!

Old Baltus Van Tassel moved about among his guests with a face dilated with content and good-humor, round and jolly as the harvest moon. His hospitable attentions were brief, but expressive, being confined to a shake of the hand, a slap on the shoulder, a loud laugh, and a pressing invitation to "fall to, and help themselves."

And now the sound of the music from the common room, or hall, summoned to the dance. The musician was an old gray-headed negro, who had been the itinerant orchestra of the neighborhood for more than half a century. His instrument was as old and battered as himself. The greater part of the time he scraped away on two or three strings, accompanying every movement of the bow with a motion of the head; bowing almost to the ground, and stamping with his foot whenever a fresh couple were to start.

Ichabod prided himself upon his dancing as much as upon his vocal powers. Not a limb, not a fibre about him was idle; and to have seen his loosely hung frame in full motion, and clattering about the room, you would have thought St. Vitus himself, that blessed patron of the dance, was figuring before you in person. He was the admiration of all the negroes; who, having gathered, of all ages and sizes, from the farm and the neighborhood, stood forming a pyramid of shining black faces at every door and window; gazing with delight at the scene; rolling their white eye-balls, and showing grinning rows of ivory from ear to ear. How could the flogger of

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urchins be otherwise than animated and joyous? the lady of his heart was his partner in the dance, and smiling graciously in reply to all his amorous oglings; while Brom Bones, sorely smitten with love and jealousy, sat brooding by himself in one corner.

When the dance was at an end, Ichabod was attracted to a knot of the sager folks, who, with Old Van Tassel, sat smoking at one end of the piazza, gossiping over former times, and drawing out long stories about the war.

This neighborhood, at the time of which I am speaking, was one of those highly favored places which abound with chronicle and great men. The British and American line had run near it during the war; it had, therefore, been the scene of marauding, and infested with refugees, cow-boys, and all kinds of border chivalry. Just sufficient time had elapsed to enable each story-teller to dress up his tale with a little becoming fiction, and, in the indistinctness of his recollection, to make himself the hero of every exploit.

There was the story of Doffue Martling, a large blue-bearded Dutchman, who had nearly taken a British frigate with an old iron nine-pounder from a mud breastwork, only that his gun burst at the sixth discharge. And there was an old gentleman who shall be nameless, being too rich a mynheer to be lightly mentioned, who in the battle of Whiteplains, being an excellent master of defence, parried a musket-ball with a small sword, insomuch that he absolutely felt it whiz round the blade, and glance off at the hilt; in proof of which he was ready at any time to show the sword, with the hilt a little bent. There were several more that had been equally great in the field, not one of whom but was persuaded that he had a considerable hand in bringing the war to a happy termination.

But all these were nothing to the tales of ghosts and

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apparitions that succeeded. The neighborhood is rich in legendary treasures of the kind. Local tales and superstitions thrive best in these sheltered, long-settled retreats; but are trampled under foot by the shifting throng that forms the population of most of our country places. Besides, there is no encouragement for ghosts in most of our villages, for they have scarcely had time to finish their first nap, and turn themselves in their graves, before their surviving friends have traveled away from the neighborhood; so that when they turn out at night to walk their rounds, they have no acquaintance left to call upon. This is perhaps the reason why we so seldom hear of ghosts except in our long-established Dutch communities.

The immediate cause, however, of the prevalence of supernatural stories in these parts, was doubtless owing to the vicinity of Sleepy Hollow. There was a contagion in the very air that blew from that haunted region; it breathed forth an atmosphere of dreams and fancies infecting all the land. Several of the Sleepy Hollow people were present at Van Tassel's and, as usual, were doling out their wild and wonderful legends. Many dismal tales were told about funeral trains, and mourning cries and wailings heard and seen about the great tree where the unfortunate Major André was taken, and which stood in the neighborhood. Some mention was made also of the woman in white, that haunted the dark glen at Raven Rock, and was often heard to shriek on winter nights before a storm, having perished there in the snow. The chief part of the stories, however, turned upon the favorite specter of Sleepy Hollow, the headless horseman, who had been heard several times of late, patrolling the country; and it is said, tethered his horse nightly among the graves in the churchyard.

The sequestered situation of this church seems always to have made it a favorite haunt of troubled spirits. It

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stands on a knoll, surrounded by locust-trees and lofty elms, from among which its decent, whitewashed walls shine modestly forth, like Christian purity, beaming through the shades of retirement. A gentle slope descends from it to a silver sheet of water, bordered by high trees, between which, peeps may be caught at the blue hills of the Hudson. To look upon its grass-grown yard, where the sunbeams seem to sleep so quietly, one would think that there at least the dead might rest in peace. On one side of the church extends a wide woody dell, along which raves a large brook among broken rocks and trunks of fallen trees. Over a deep black part of the stream, not far from the church, was formerly thrown a wooden bridge; the road that led to it, and the bridge itself, were thickly shaded by overhanging trees, which cast a gloom about it, even in the day-time; but occasioned a fearful darkness at night. Such was one of the favorite haunts of the headless horseman, and the place where he was most frequently encountered. The tale was told of old Brouwer, a most heretical disbeliever in ghosts, how he met the horseman returning from his foray into Sleepy Hollow, and was obliged to get up behind him; how they galloped over bush and brake, over hill and swamp, until they reached the bridge; when the horseman suddenly turned into a skeleton, threw old Brouwer into the brook, and sprang away over the tree-tops with a clap of thunder.

This story was immediately matched by a thrice marvelous adventure of Brom Bones, who made light of the galloping Hessian as an arrant jockey. He affirmed, that on returning one night from the neighboring village of Sing-Sing, he had been overtaken by a midnight trooper; that he had offered to race him for a bowl of punch, and should have won it too, for Daredevil beat the goblin horse all hollow, but just as they came to the

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church bridge, the Hessian bolted, and vanished in a flash of fire.

All these tales, told in that drowsy undertone with which men talk in the dark, the countenances of the listeners only now and then receiving a casual gleam from the glare of a pipe, sunk deep in the mind of Ichabod. He repaid them in kind with large extracts from his invaluable author, Cotton Mather, and added many marvelous events that had taken place in his native State of Connecticut, and fearful sights which he had seen in his nightly walks about Sleepy Hollow.

The revel now gradually broke up. The old farmers gathered together their families in their wagons, and were heard for some time rattling along the hollow roads, and over the distant hills. Some of the damsels mounted on pillions behind their favorite swains, and their light-hearted laughter mingling with the clattering of hoofs, echoed along the silent woodlands, sounding fainter and fainter, until they gradually died away—and the late scene of noise and frolic was all silent and deserted. Ichabod only lingered behind, according to the custom of country lovers, to have a tête-à-tête with the heiress; fully convinced that he was now on the high road to success. What passed at this interview I will not pretend to say, for in fact I do not know. Something, however, I fear me, must have gone wrong, for he certainly sallied forth, after no very great interval, with an air quite desolate and chapfallen—Oh, these women! these women! Could that girl have been playing off any of her coquetish tricks?—Was her encouragement of the poor pedagogue all a mere sham to secure her conquest of his rival?—Heaven only knows, not I!—Let it suffice to say, Ichabod stole forth with the air of one who had been sacking a henroost, rather than a fair lady's heart. Without looking to the right or left to notice the scene of rural wealth, on which he had so

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often gloated, he went straight to the stable, and with several hearty cuffs and kicks, roused his steed most uncourteously from the comfortable quarters in which he was soundly sleeping, dreaming of mountains of corn and oats, and whole valleys of timothy and clover.

It was the very witching hour of night that Ichabod, heavy-hearted, and crest-fallen, pursued his travel homewards, along the sides of the lofty hills which rise above Tarry Town, and which he had traversed so cheerily in the afternoon. The hour was as dismal as himself. Far below him the Tappen Zee spread its dusky and indistinct waste of waters, with here and there the tall mast of a sloop, riding quietly at anchor under the land. In the dead hush of midnight he could even hear the barking of the watch-dog from the opposite shore of the Hudson; but it was so vague and faint as only to give an idea of his distance from this faithful companion of man. Now and then, too, the long-drawn crowing of a cock, accidentally awakened, would sound far, far off, from some farm-house away among the hills—but it was like a dreaming sound in his ear. No sign of life occurred near him, but occasionally the melancholy chirp of a cricket, or perhaps the guttural twang of a bull-frog from a neighboring marsh, as if sleeping uncomfortably, and turning suddenly in his bed.

All the stories of ghosts and goblins that he had heard in the afternoon, now came crowding upon his recollection.—The night grew darker and darker; the stars seemed to sink deeper in the sky, and driving clouds occasionally hid them from his sight. He had never felt so lonely and dismal. He was, moreover, approaching the very place where many of the scenes of the ghost stories had been laid. In the centre of the road stood an enormous tulip-tree, which towered like a giant above all the other trees of the neighborhood, and formed a kind of landmark. Its limbs were gnarled and fantastic,

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large enough to form trunks for ordinary trees, twisting down almost to the earth, and rising again into the air. It was connected with the tragical story of the unfortunate André, who had been taken prisoner hard by, and was universally known by the name of Major André's tree. The common people regarded it with a mixture of respect and superstition, partly out of sympathy for the fate of its ill-starred namesake, and partly from the tales of strange sights, and doleful lamentations told concerning it.

As Ichabod approached this fearful tree, he began to whistle; he thought his whistle was answered: it was but a blast sweeping sharply through the dry branches. As he approached a little nearer, he thought he saw something white hanging in the midst of the tree: he paused, and ceased whistling; but on looking more narrowly, perceived that it was a place where the tree had been scathed by lightning, and the white wood laid bare. Suddenly he heard a groan—his teeth chattered and his knees smote against the saddle: it was but the rubbing of one huge bough upon another, as they were swayed about by the breeze. He passed the tree in safety, but new perils lay before him.

About two hundred yards from the tree, a small brook crossed the road, and ran into a marshy and thickly-wooded glen, known by the name of Wiley Swamp. A few rough logs laid side by side, served for a bridge over this stream. On that side of the road where the brook entered the wood, a group of oaks and chestnuts, matted thick with wild grape-vines, threw a cavernous gloom over it. To pass this bridge was the severest trial. It was at this identical spot that the unfortunate André was captured, and under the covert of those chestnuts and vines were the sturdy yoemen concealed who surprised him. This has ever since been considered a

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haunted stream, and fearful are the feelings of a school-boy who has to pass it alone after dark.

As he approached the stream, his heart began to thump; he summoned up, however, all his resolution, gave his horse half a score of kicks in the ribs, and attempted to dash briskly across the bridge; but instead of starting forward, the perverse old animal made a lateral movement, and ran broadside against the fence. Ichabod, whose fears increased with the delay, jerked the reins on the other side, and kicked lustily with the contrary foot: it was all in vain; his steed started, it is true, but it was only to plunge to the opposite of the road into a thicket of brambles and alderbushes. The schoolmaster now bestowed both whip and heel upon the starveling ribs of old Gunpowder, who dashed forwards, snuffing and snorting, but came to a stand just by the bridge, with a suddenness that had nearly sent his rider sprawling over his head. Just at this moment a splashy tramp by the side of the bridge caught the sensitive ear of Ichabod. In the dark shadow of the grove, on the margin of the brook, he beheld something huge, misshapen, black and towering. It stirred not, but seemed gathered up in the gloom, like some gigantic monster ready to spring upon the traveler.

The hair of the affrighted pedagogue rose upon his head with terror. What was to be done? To turn and fly was now too late; and besides, what chance was there of escaping ghost or goblin, if such it was, which could ride upon the wings of the wind? Summoning up, therefore, a show of courage, he demanded in stammering accents—"Who are you?" He received no reply. He repeated his demand in a still more agitated voice. Still there was no answer. Once more he cudgelled the sides of the inflexible Gunpowder, and shutting his eyes, broke forth with involuntary fervor into a psalm tune. Just then the shadowy object of alarm put itself in

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motion, and with a scramble and a bound; stood at once in the middle of the road. Though the night was dark and dismal, yet the form of the unknown might now in some degree be ascertained. He appeared to be a horseman of large dimensions, and mounted on a black horse of powerful frame. He made no offer of molestation or sociability, but kept aloof on one side of the road, jogging along on the blind side of old Gunpowder, who had now got over his fright and waywardness.

Ichabod, who had no relish for this strange midnight companion, and bethought himself of the adventure of Brom Bones with the galloping Hessian, now quickened his steed, in hopes of leaving him behind. The stranger, however, quickened his horse to an equal pace. Ichabod pulled up, and fell into a walk, thinking to lag behind—the other did the same. His heart began to sink within him; he endeavored to resume his psalm tune, but his parched tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and he could not utter a stave. There was something in the moody and dogged silence of this pertinacious companion that was mysterious and appalling. It was soon fearfully accounted for. On mounting a rising ground, which brought the figure of his fellow-traveler in relief against the sky, gigantic in height, and muffled in a cloak, Ichabod was horror-struck, on perceiving that he was headless! but his horror was still more increased, on observing that the head, which should have rested on his shoulders, was carried before him on the pommel of his saddle! His terror rose to desperation; he rained a shower of kicks and blows upon Gunpowder, hoping by a sudden movement, to give his companion the slip—but the specter started full jump with him. Away, then, they dashed through thick and thin; stones flying and sparks flashing at every bound. Ichabod's flimsy garments fluttered in the air, as he stretched his long lank

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body away over his horse's head, in the eagerness of his flight.

They had now reached the road which turns off to Sleepy Hollow; but Gunpowder, who seemed possessed with a demon, instead of keeping up it, made an opposite turn, and plunged headlong down hill to the left. This road leads through a sandy hollow, shaded by trees for about a quarter of a mile, where it crosses the bridge famous in goblin story; and just beyond swells the green knoll on which stands the whitewashed church.

As yet the panic of the steed had given his unskillful rider an apparent advantage in the chase; but just as he had got half way through the hollow, the girths of the saddle gave way, and he felt it slipping from under him. He seized it by the pommel, and endeavored to hold it firm, but in vain; and had just time to save himself by clasping old Gunpowder round the neck, when the saddle fell to the earth, and he heard it trampled under foot by his pursuer. For a moment the terror of Hans Van Ripper's wrath passed across his mind—for it was his Sunday saddle; but this was no time for petty fears; the goblin was hard on his haunches; and (unskilled rider that he was!) he had much ado to maintain his seat; sometimes slipping on one side, sometimes on another, and sometimes jolted on the high ridge of his horse's backbone, with a violence that he verily feared would cleave him asunder.

An opening in the trees now cheered him with the hopes that the church bridge was at hand. The wavering reflection of a silver star in the bosom of the brook told him that he was not mistaken. He saw the walls of the church dimly glaring under the trees beyond. He recollected the place where Brom Bones' ghostly competitor had disappeared. "If I can but reach that bridge," thought Ichabod, "I am safe." Just then he heard the black steed panting and blowing close behind him; he

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even fancied that he felt his hot breath. Another convulsive kick in the ribs, and old Gunpowder sprung upon the bridge; he thundered over the resounding planks; he gained the opposite side, and now Ichabod cast a look behind to see if his pursuer should vanish, according to rule, in a flash of fire and brimstone. Just then he saw the goblin rising in his stirrups, and in the very act of hurling his head at him. Ichabod endeavored to dodge the horrible missile, but too late. It encountered his cranium with a tremendous crash—he was tumbled headlong into the dust, and Gunpowder, the black steed, and the goblin rider, passed by like a whirlwind.

The next morning the old horse was found without his saddle, and with the bridle under his feet, soberly cropping the grass at his master's gate. Ichabod did not make his appearance at breakfast—dinner-hour came, but no Ichabod. The boys assembled at the school-house, and strolled idly about the banks of the brook; but no schoolmaster. Hans Van Ripper now began to feel some uneasiness about the fate of poor Ichabod, and his saddle. An inquiry was set on foot, and after diligent investigation they came upon his traces. In one part of the road leading to the church, was found the saddle trampled in the dirt; the tracks of horses' hoofs deeply dented in the road, and, evidently at furious speed, were traced to the bridge, beyond which, on the bank of a broad part of the brook, where the water ran deep and black, was found the hat of the unfortunate Ichabod, and close beside it a shattered pumpkin.

The brook was searched, but the body of the schoolmaster was not to be discovered. Hans Van Ripper, as executor of his estate, examined the bundle which contained all his worldly effects. They consisted of two shirts and a half; two stocks for the neck; a pair or two worsted stockings; an old pair of corduroy small-clothes; a rusty razor; a book of psalm tunes full of

## THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW

dog's ears; and a broken pitch-pipe. As to the books and furniture of the school-house, they belonged to the community, excepting Cotton Mather's History of Witchcraft, a New England Almanac, and a book of dreams and fortune-telling; in which last was a sheet of foolscap much scribbled and blotted, by several fruitless attempts to make a copy of verses in honor of the heiress of Van Tassel. These magic books and the poetic scrawl were forthwith consigned to the flames by Hans Van Ripper; who, from that time forward, determined to send his children no more to school; observing that he never knew any good come of this same reading and writing. Whatever money the schoolmaster possessed, and he had received his quarter's pay but a day or two before, he must have had about his person at the time of his disappearance.

The mysterious event caused much speculation at the church on the following Sunday. Knots of gazers and gossips were collected in the churchyard, at the bridge, and at the spot where the hat and pumpkin had been found. The stories of Brouwer, of Bones, and a whole budget of others, were called to mind; and when they had diligently considered them all, and compared them with the symptoms of the present case, they shook their heads, and came to the conclusion, that Ichabod had been carried off by the galloping Hessian. As he was a bachelor, and in nobody's debt, nobody troubled his head any more about him; the school was removed to a different quarter of the Hollow, and another pedagogue reigned in his stead.

It is true, an old farmer, who had been down to New York on a visit several years after, and from whom this account of the ghostly adventure was received, brought home the intelligence that Ichabod Crane was still alive; that he had left the neighborhood partly through fear of the goblin and Hans Van Ripper, and partly in mortifi-

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cation at having been suddenly dismissed by the heiress ; that he had changed his quarters to a distant part of the country ; had kept school and studied law at the same time ; had been admitted to the bar ; turned politician ; electioneered ; written for the newspapers ; and finally, had been made a Justice of the Ten Pound Court. Brom Bones, too, who, shortly after his rival's disappearance, conducted the blooming Katrina in triumph to the altar, was observed to look exceedingly knowing whenever the story of Ichabod was related, and always burst into a hearty laugh at the mention of the pumpkin ; which led some to suspect that he knew more about the matter than he chose to tell.

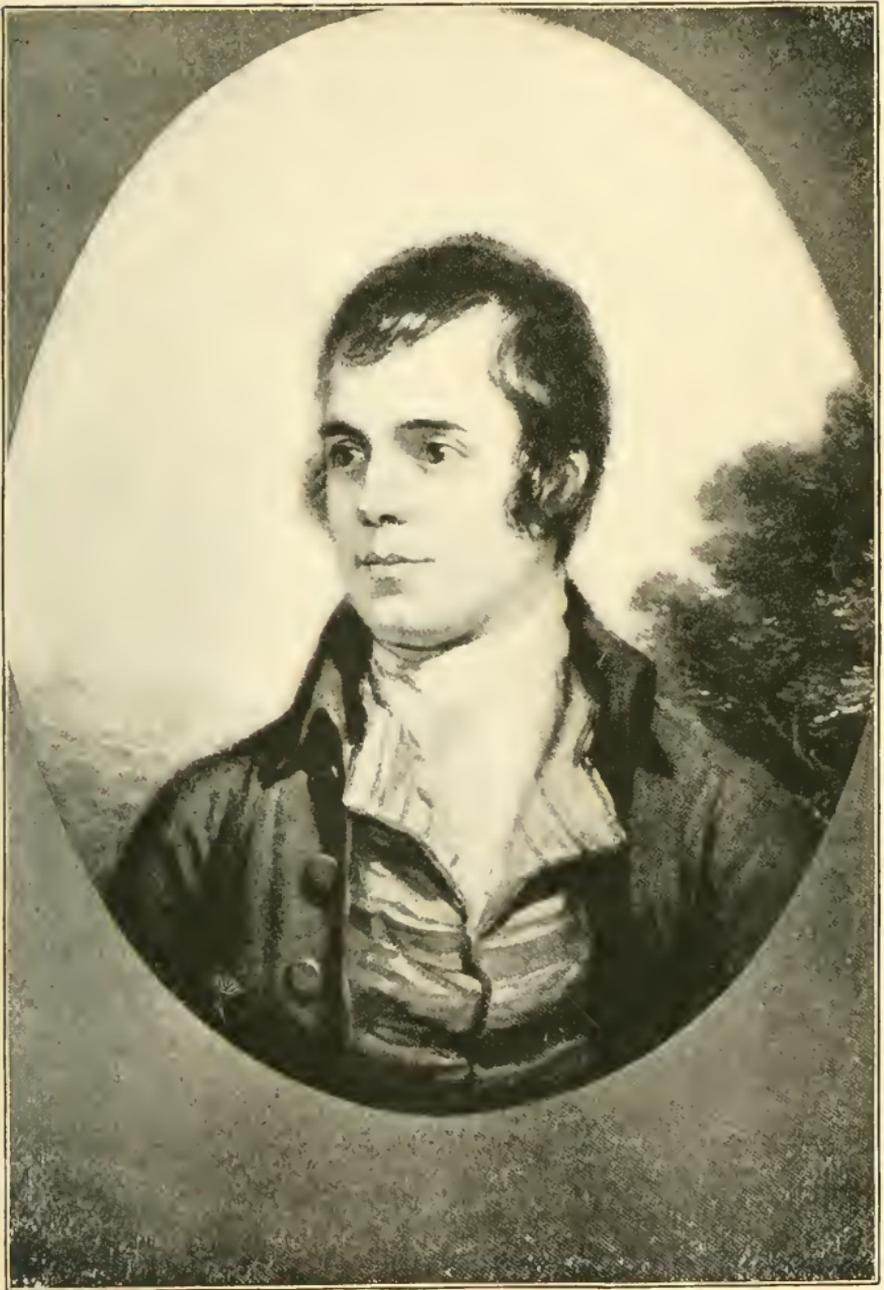
The old country wives, however, who are the best judges of these matters, maintain to this day that Ichabod was spirited away by supernatural means ; and it is a favorite story often told about the neighborhood round the winter evening fire. The bridge became more than ever an object of superstitious awe ; and that may be the reason why the road has been altered of late years, so as to approach the church by the border of the mill-pond. The school-house being deserted, soon fell to decay, and was reported to be haunted by the ghost of the unfortunate pedagogue ; and the ploughboy, loitering homeward of a still summer evening, has often fancied his voice at a distance, chanting a melancholy psalm tune among the tranquil solitudes of Sleepy Hollow.

TAM O'SHANTER



Portrait of Robert Burns

Portrait of Robert Burns





# TAM O'SHANTER

## A TALE

*By Robert Burns.*

*Of Brownie and of Bogie full is this Buke.*

GAWIN DOUGLAS.

**W**HEN chapman billies leave the street,  
And drouthy neebors, neebors meet,  
As market days are wearing late,  
An' folk begin to tak the gate;  
While we sit bousing at the nappy,  
An' getting fou and unco happy,  
We think na on the lang Scots miles,  
The mosses, waters, slaps, and styles,  
That lie between us and our hame,  
Whare sits our sulky sullen dame,  
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,  
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

This truth fand honest Tam O'Shanter,  
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter,  
(Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses,  
For honest men and bonnie lasses.)

O Tam! hadst thou but been sae wise,  
As ta'en thy ain wife Kate's advice!  
She tauld thee weel thou wast a skellum,  
A blethering, blustering, drunken blellum;  
That frae November till October,  
Ae market-day thou was na sober;

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That ilka melder, wi' the miller,  
Thou sat as lang as thou had siller;  
That ev'ry naig was ca'd a shoe on,  
The smith and thee gat roaring fou on;  
That at the Lord's house, ev'n on Sunday,  
Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday.  
She prophesy'd that, late or soon,  
Thou would be found deep drown'd in Doon;  
Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk,  
By Alloway's auld haunted kirk.

Ah, gentle dames! it gars me greet,  
To think how mony counsels sweet,  
How mony lengthen'd, sage advices,  
The husband frae the wife despises!

But to our tale: Ae market night,  
Tam had got planted unco right;  
Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely,  
Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely;  
And at his elbow, Souter Johnny,  
His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony;  
Tam lo'ed him like a vera brither;  
They had been fou for weeks thegither,  
The nights drave on wi' sangs and clatter;  
And aye the ale was growing better:  
The landlady and Tam grew gracious,  
Wi' favors, secret, sweet, and precious:  
The souter tauld his queerest stories;  
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus:  
The storm without might rair and rustle,  
Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,  
E'en drown'd himsel amang the nappy:  
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,  
The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure;  
Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,  
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious!

TAM O'SHANTER

But pleasures are like poppies spread,  
You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed;  
Or like the snow-falls in the river,  
A moment white—then melts forever;  
Or like the borealis race,  
That flit ere you can point their place;  
Or like the rainbow's lovely form  
Evanishing amid the storm.—  
Nae man can tether time or tide;—  
The hour approaches Tam maun ride;  
That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane,  
That dreary hour he mounts his beast in;  
And sic a night he taks the road in,  
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last;  
The rattling show'rs rose on the blast;  
The speedy gleams the darkness swallow'd;  
Loud, deep, and lang, the thunder bellow'd:  
That night, a child might understand,  
The Deil had business on his hand.

Weel mounted on his gray mare, Meg,  
A better never lifted leg,  
Tam skelpit on thro' dub and mire,  
Despising wind, and rain, and fire;  
Whiles holding fast his gude blue bonnet;  
Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet;  
Whiles glow'ring round wi' prudent cares,  
Lest bogles catch him unawares;  
Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,  
Where ghaists and houlets nightly cry.—

By this time he was cross the ford,  
Whare in the snaw, the chapman smoor'd;  
And past the birks and meikle stane,  
Whare drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane;  
And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,  
Where hunters fand the murder'd bairn;

COMEDY

And near the thorn, aboon the well,  
 Whare Mungo's mither hang'd hersel.—  
 Before him Doon pours all his floods;  
 The doubling storm roars thro' the woods;  
 The lightning's flash from pole to pole;  
 Near and more near the thunders roll:  
 When, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,  
 Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a bleeze;  
 Thro' ilka bore the beams were glancing;  
 And loud resounded mirth and dancing.—  
     Inspiring bold John Barleycorn!  
 What dangers thou canst make us scorn!  
 Wi' tippeny, we fear nae evil;  
 Wi' usquebae, we'll face the devil!—  
 The swats sae ream'd in Tammie's noddle,  
 Fair play, he car'd na deils a doddle,  
 But Maggie stood right sair astonish'd,  
 Till, by the heel and hand admonish'd,  
 She ventur'd forward on the light;  
 And, vow! Tam saw an unco sight!  
 Warlocks and witches in a dance;  
 Nae cotillion brent new frae France,  
 But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,  
 Put life and mettle in their heels.  
 A winnock-bunker in the east,  
 There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast;  
 A towzie tyke, black, grim, and large,  
 To gie them music was his charge:  
 He screw'd the pipes and gart them skirl,  
 Till roof and rafters a' did dirl.—  
 Coffins stood round like open presses,  
 That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;  
 And by some devilish cantrip slight  
 Each in its cauld hand held a light,—  
 By which heroic Tam was able  
 To note upon the haly table,

TAM O'SHANTER

A murderer's banes in gibbet airns;  
Twa spang-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns;  
A thief, new-cuttet frae the rape,  
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape;  
Five tomahawks, wi' blude red rusted;  
Five scymitars, wi' murder crusted;  
A garter, which a babe had strangled;  
A knife, a father's throat had mangled,  
Whom his ain son o' life bereft,  
The gray hairs yet stack to the heft;  
Wi' mair o' horrible and awfu',  
Which ev'n to name wad be unlawfu'.

As Tammie glowr'd, amaz'd, and curious,  
The mirth and fun grew fast and furious:  
The piper loud and louder blew;  
The dancers quick and quicker flew;  
They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit,  
Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,  
And coost her duddies to the wark,  
And linket at it in her sark!

Now Tam, O Tam! had they been queans,  
A' plump and strapping in their teens;  
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen,  
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linnen!  
Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,  
That ance were plush, o' gude blue hair,  
I wad hae gi'en them off my hurdies,  
For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies!

But wither'd beldams, auld and droll,  
Rigwoodie hags wad spean a foal,  
Lowping and flinging on a crummock,  
I wonder didna turn thy stomach.

But Tam kend what was what fu' brawlie,  
There was ae winsome wench and walie,  
That night enlisted in the core,  
(Lang after kend on Carriçk shore;

COMEDY

For mony a beast to dead she shot,  
 And perish'd mony a bonnie boat,  
 And shook baith meikle corn and bear,  
 And kept the country-side in fear,  
 Her cutty sark, o' Paisley harn,  
 That while a lassie she had worn,  
 In longitude tho' sorely scanty,  
 It was her best, and she was vauntie.—  
 Ah! little kend thy reverend grannie,  
 That sark she coft for her wee Nanni,  
 Wi' twa pund Scots ('twas a' her riches),  
 Wad ever grac'd a dance of witches!

But here my muse her wing maun cour;  
 Sic flights are far beyond her pow'r;  
 To sing how Nannie lap and flang,  
 (A souple jade she was, and strang.)  
 And how Tam stood, like ane bewitch'd,  
 And thought his very een enrich'd;  
 Even Satan glowr'd, and fidg'd fu' fain,  
 And hotch'd and blew wi' might and main:  
 Till first ae caper, syne anither,  
 Tam tint his reason a' thegither,  
 And roars out, "Weel done, Cutty-sark!"  
 And in an instant all was dark:  
 And scarcely had he Maggie rallied,  
 When out the hellish legion sallied.

As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke,  
 When plundering herds assail their byke;  
 As open pussie's mortal foes,  
 When, pop! she starts before their nose;  
 As eager runs the market-crowd,  
 When, "Catch the thief!" resounds aloud;  
 So Maggie runs, the witches follow,  
 Wi' monie an eldritch skreech and hollow,  
 'Ah, Tam! ah, Tam! thou'll get thy fairin!  
 In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin!

TAM O'SHANTER

In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin!  
Kate soon will be a wofu' woman!  
Now, do thy speedy utmost, Meg,  
And win the key-stane of the brig:  
There at them thou thy tail may toss,  
A running stream they darena cross.  
But ere the key-stane she could make,  
The fient a tail she had to shake!  
For Nannie, far before the rest,  
Hard upon noble Maggie prest,  
And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle;  
But little wist she Maggie's mettle—  
Ae spring brought off her master hale,  
But left behind her ain gray tail:  
The carlin caught her by the rump,  
And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.  
Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,  
Ilk man and mother's son, take heed,  
Whene'er to drink you are inclin'd,  
Or cutty-sarks run in your mind,  
Think, ye may buy the joys o'er dear,  
Remember Tam O'Shanter's mare.



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