

FANTASTIC FABLES

BY

AMBROSE BIERCE

From The Collected Works of Ambrose Bierce volume 6



NEW YORK & WASHINGTON
THE NEALE PUBLISHING COMPANY
1911

Rosings Digital Publications



MORAL PRINCIPLE AND MATERIAL INTEREST

A Moral Principle met a Material Interest on a bridge wide enough for but one.

“Down, you base thing!” thundered the Moral Principle, “and let me pass over you!”

The Material Interest merely looked in the other’s eyes without saying anything.

“Ah,” said the Moral Principle, hesitatingly, “let us draw lots to see which one of us shall retire till the other has crossed.”

The Material Interest maintained an unbroken silence and an unwavering stare.

“In order to avoid a conflict,” the Moral Principle resumed, somewhat uneasily, “I shall myself lie down and let you walk over me.”

Then the Material Interest found his tongue. “I don’t think you are very good walking,” he said. “I am a little particular about what I have underfoot. Suppose you get off into the water.”

It occurred that way.

THE CRIMSON CANDLE

A Man lying at the point of death called his wife to his bedside and said:

“I am about to leave you forever; give me, therefore, one last proof of your affection and fidelity. In my desk you will find a crimson candle, which has been blessed by the High Priest and has a peculiar mystical significance. Swear to me that while it is in existence you will not remarry.”

The Woman swore and the Man died. At the funeral the Woman stood at the head of the bier, holding a lighted crimson candle till it was wasted entirely away.

ESCUTCHEON AND ERMINE

A Blotted Escutcheon, rising to a question of privilege, said:

“Mr. Speaker, I wish to hurl back an allegation and explain that the spots upon me are the natural markings of one who is a direct descendant of the sun and a spotted fawn. They come of no accident of character, but inhere in the divine order and constitution of things.”

When the Blotted Escutcheon had resumed his seat a Soiled Ermine rose and said:

“Mr. Speaker, I have heard with profound attention and entire approval the explanation of the honorable member, and wish to offer a few remarks on my own behalf. I, too, have been foully calumniated by our ancient enemy, the Infamous Falsehood, and I wish to point out that I am made of the fur of the *Mustela maculata*, which is dirty from birth.”

THE INGENIOUS PATRIOT

Having obtained an audience of the King an Ingenious Patriot pulled a paper from his pocket, saying:

“May it please your Majesty, I have here a formula for constructing armor plating that no gun can pierce. If these plates are adopted in the Royal Navy our warships will be invulnerable and therefore invincible. Here, also, are reports of your Majesty’s Ministers, attesting the value of the invention. I will part with my right in it for a million tumtums.”

After examining the papers, the King put them away and promised him an order on the Lord High Treasurer of the Extortion Department for a million tumtums.

“And here,” said the Ingenious Patriot, pulling another paper from another pocket, “are the working plans of a gun that I have invented, which will pierce that armor. Your Majesty’s royal brother, the Emperor of Bang, is eager to purchase it, but loyalty to your Majesty’s throne and person constrains me to offer it first to your Majesty. The price is one million tumtums.”

Having received the promise of another check, he thrust his hand into still another pocket, remarking:

“The price of the irresistible gun would have been much greater, your Majesty, but for the fact that its missiles can be so effectively averted by my peculiar method of treating the armor plates with a new—”

The King signed to the Great Head Factotum to approach.

“Search this man,” he said, “and report how many pockets he has.”

“Forty-three, Sire,” said the Great Head Factotum, completing the scrutiny.

“May it please your Majesty,” cried the Ingenious Patriot, in terror, “one of them contains tobacco.”

“Hold him up by the ankles and shake him,” said the King; “then give him a check for forty-two million tumtums and put him to death. Let a decree issue making ingenuity a capital offence.”

OFFICER AND THUG

A Chief of Police who had seen an Officer beating a Thug was very indignant, and said he must not do so any more on pain of dismissal.

“Don’t be too hard on me,” said the Officer, smiling; “I was beating him with a stuffed club.”

“Nevertheless,” persisted the Chief of Police, “it was a liberty that must have been very disagreeable, though it may not have hurt. Please do not repeat it.”

“But,” said the Officer, still smiling, “it was a stuffed Thug.”

In attempting to express his gratification the Chief of Police thrust out his right hand with such violence that his skin was

ruptured at the arm-pit and a stream of sawdust poured from the wound. He was a stuffed Chief of Police.

TWO KINGS

The King of Madagao, being engaged in a dispute with the King of Bornegascar, wrote him as follows:

“Before proceeding further in this matter I demand the recall of your Minister from my capital.”

Greatly enraged by this impossible demand, the King of Bornegascar replied:

“I shall not recall my Minister. Moreover, if you do not immediately retract your demand I shall withdraw him!”

This threat so terrified the King of Madagao that in hastening to comply he fell over his own feet, breaking the Third Commandment.

THE CONSCIENTIOUS OFFICIAL

While a Division Superintendent of a railway was attending closely to his business of placing obstructions on the track and tampering with the switches he received word that the President of the road was about to discharge him for incompetency.

“Good Heavens!” he cried; “there are more accidents on my division than on all the rest of the line.”

“The President is very particular,” said the Man who brought him the news; “he thinks the same loss of life might be effected with less damage to the company’s property.”

“Does he expect me to shoot passengers through the car windows?” exclaimed the indignant official, spiking a loose tie across the rails. “Does he take me for an assassin?”

THE MORAL SENTIMENT

A Pugilist met the Moral Sentiment of the Community, who was carrying a hat-box. “What have you in the hat-box, my friend?” inquired the Pugilist.

“A new frown,” was the answer. “I am bringing it from the frownery—the one over there with the gilded steeple.”

“And what are you going to do with the nice new frown?” the Pugilist asked.

“Put down pugilism—if I have to wear it night and day,” said the Moral Sentiment of the Community, sternly.

“That’s right,” said the Pugilist, “that is right, my good friend; if pugilism had been put down yesterday, I wouldn’t have this kind of nose to-day. I had a rattling hot fight last evening with—”

“Is that so?” cried the Moral Sentiment of the Community, with sudden animation. “Which licked? Sit down here on the hat-box and tell me all about it!”

HOW LEISURE CAME

A Man to Whom Time Was Money, and who was bolting his breakfast in order to catch a train, had leaned his newspaper against the sugar-bowl and was reading as he ate. In his haste and abstraction he stuck a pickle-fork into his right eye, and on removing the fork the eye came with it. In buying spectacles the needless outlay for the right lens soon reduced him to poverty, and the Man to Whom Time Was Money had to sustain life by fishing from the end of a wharf.

THE POLITICIANS

An Old Politician and a Young Politician were traveling through a beautiful country, by the dusty highway which leads to the City of Prosperous Obscurity. Lured by the flowers and the shade and charmed by the songs of birds which invited to woodland paths and green fields, his imagination fired by glimpses of golden domes and glittering palaces in the distance on either hand, the Young Politician said:

“Let us, I beseech thee, turn aside from this comfortless road, leading, thou knowest whither, but not I. Let us turn our backs upon duty and abandon ourselves to the delights and advantages beckoning from every grove and calling to us from every shining hill. Let us, if so thou wilt, follow this beautiful path, which, as thou seest, hath a guide-board saying, ‘turn in here all ye who seek the Palace of Popular Attention.’”

“It is a beautiful path, my son,” said the Old Politician, without either slackening his pace or turning his head, “and it leadeth among pleasant scenes. But the search for the Palace of Popular Attention is beset with one mighty peril.”

“What is that?” said the Young Politician.

“The peril of finding it,” the Old Politician replied, pushing on.

THE CHRISTIAN SERPENT

A Rattlesnake came home to his brood and said: “My children, gather about and receive your father’s last blessing, and see how a Christian dies.”

“What ails you, Father?” asked the Small Snakes.

“I have been bitten by the editor of a partisan journal,” was the reply, accompanied by the ominous death-rattle.

THE THOUGHTFUL WARDEN

The Warden of a Penitentiary was one day putting locks on the doors of all the cells when a mechanic said to him:

“Those locks can all be opened from the inside—you are very imprudent.”

The Warden did not look up from his work, but said:

“If that is called imprudence I wonder what would be called a thoughtful provision against the vicissitudes of fortune.”

TREASURY AND ARMS

A Public Treasury, feeling Two Arms lifting out its contents, exclaimed:

“Mr. Shareman, I move for a division.”

“You seem to know something about parliamentary forms of speech,” said the Two Arms.

“Yes,” replied the Public Treasury, “I am familiar with the hauls of legislation.”

THE BROOM OF THE TEMPLE

The city of Gakwak being about to lose its character of capital of the province of Ukwuk, the Wampog issued a proclamation convening all the male residents in council in the Temple of Ul to devise means of defence. The first speaker thought the best policy would be to offer a fried jackass to the gods. The second suggested a public procession headed by the Wampog himself, bearing the Holy Poker on a cushion of cloth-of-brass. Another thought that a scarlet mole should be buried alive in the public park and a suitable incantation chanted over the remains. The advice of the fourth was that the columns of the capitol be rubbed with oil of dog by a person having a moustache on the calf of his leg. When all the others had spoken an Aged Man rose and said:

“High and mighty Wampog and fellow-citizens, I have listened attentively to all the plans proposed. All seem wise, and I do not suffer myself to doubt that any one of them would be efficacious. Nevertheless, I cannot help thinking that if we would put an improved breed of polliwogs in our drinking water, drain our roadways, groom the street cows, offer the stranger within our gates a free choice between the poniard and the potion and relinquish our private system of morals, the other measures of public safety would be needless.”

The Aged Man was about to speak further, but the meeting informally adjourned in order to sweep the floor of the temple—for the men of Gakwak are the tidiest housewives in all that province. The Aged Man was the broom.

THE CRITICS

While bathing, Antinoüs was seen by Minerva, who was so enamoured of his beauty that, all armed as she happened to be, she descended from Olympus to woo him; but unluckily displaying her shield with the head of Medusa on it, she had the unhappiness to see the beautiful mortal turn to stone from catching a glimpse of it. She straightway ascended to ask Jove to

restore him; but before this could be done a Sculptor and a Critic passed that way and espied him.

“This is a very bad Apollo,” said the Sculptor: “the chest is too narrow, and one arm is at least a half-inch shorter than the other. The attitude is unnatural, and I may say impossible. Ah! my friend, you should see my statue of Antinoüs.”

“In my judgment,” said the Critic, “the figure is tolerably good, though rather Etrurian, but the expression of the face is decidedly Tuscan, and therefore false to nature. By the way, have you read my work on ‘The Fallaciousness of the Aspectual in Art’?”

A CALL TO QUIT

Seeing that his audiences were becoming smaller every Sunday, a Minister of the Gospel broke off in the midst of a sermon, descended the pulpit stairs and walked on his hands down the central aisle of the church. He then remounted his feet, ascended to the pulpit and resumed his discourse, making no allusion to the incident.

“Now,” said he to himself, as he went home, “I shall have, henceforth, a large attendance and no snoring.”

But on the following Friday he was waited upon by the Pillars of the Church, who informed him that in order to be in harmony with the New Theology and get full advantage of modern methods of Gospel interpretation they had deemed it advisable to make a change. They had therefore sent a call to Brother Jowjeetum-Fallal, the world-renowned Hindoo human pin-wheel, then holding forth in Hoopitup’s circus. They were happy to say that the reverend gentleman had been moved by the Spirit to accept the call, and on the ensuing Sabbath would break the bread of life for the brethren or break his neck in the attempt.

THE DISCONTENTED MALEFACTOR

A Judge having sentenced a Malefactor to the penitentiary was proceeding to point out to him the disadvantages of crime and the profit of reformation.

“Your Honor,” said the Malefactor, interrupting, “would you be kind enough to alter my punishment to ten years in the penitentiary and nothing else?”

“Why,” said the Judge, surprised, “I have given you only three years!”

“Yes, I know,” assented the Malefactor—“three years’ imprisonment and the preaching. If you please, I should like to commute the preaching.”

FATHER AND SON

“My boy,” said an aged Father to his fiery and disobedient Son, “a hot temper is the soil of remorse. Promise me that when

next you are angry you will count one hundred before you move or speak.”

No sooner had the Son promised than he received a stinging blow from the paternal walking-stick, and by the time he had counted to seventy-five had the unhappiness to see the old man jump into a waiting cab and whirl away.

THE FOOLISH WOMAN

A Married Woman, whose lover was about to reform by running away, procured a pistol and shot him dead.

“Why did you do that, madam?” inquired a Policeman, sauntering by.

“Because,” replied the Married Woman, “he was a wicked man, and had purchased a ticket to Chicago.”

“My sister,” said an adjacent Man of God, solemnly, “you cannot stop the wicked from going to Chicago by killing them.”

MAN AND LIGHTNING

A Man Running for Office was overtaken by Lightning.

“You see,” said the Lightning, as it crept past him inch by inch, “I can travel considerably faster than you.”

“Yes,” the Man Running for Office replied, “but think how much longer I keep going!”

THE LASSOED BEAR

A Hunter who had lassoed a Bear was trying to disengage himself from the rope, but the slip-knot about his wrist would not yield, for the Bear was all the time pulling in the slack with his paws. In the midst of his trouble the Hunter saw a Showman passing by and managed to attract his attention.

“What will you give me,” he said, “for my Bear?”

“It will be some five or ten minutes,” said the Showman, “before I shall want a bear, and it looks to me as if prices would fall during that time. I think I’ll wait and watch the market.”

“The price of this animal,” the Hunter replied, “is down to bed-rock; you can have him for a cent a pound, spot cash, and I’ll throw in the next one that I lasso. But the purchaser must remove the goods from the premises forthwith, to make room for three man-eating tigers, a cat-headed gorilla and an armful of rattlesnakes.”

But the Showman passed on in maiden meditation, fancy free, and being joined soon afterward by the Bear, who was absently picking his teeth, it was inferred that they were not unacquainted.

A PROTAGONIST OF SILVER

Some Financiers were whetting their tongues on their teeth because the Government had “struck down” silver. They were about to “inaugurate” a season of sweatshed, when they were addressed by a Member of their honorable and warlike body:

“Comrades of the thunder and companions of death, I can but regard it as singularly fortunate that we who by conviction and sympathy are designated by nature as the champions of that fairest of her products, the white metal, should also, by a happy chance, be engaged mostly in the business of mining it. Nothing could be more just than that those who from unselfish motives and elevated sentiments are doing battle for the people’s rights and interests should themselves be the chief beneficiaries of success. Therefore, O children of the earthquake and the storm, let us stand shoulder to shoulder, heart to heart and pocket to pocket!”

This speech so pleased the other Members of the convention that actuated by a magnanimous impulse they sprang to their feet and left the hall. It was the first time they had ever been known to leave anything having value.

THE WOODEN GUNS

An Artillery Regiment of a State Militia applied to the Governor for wooden guns to practice with.

“Those,” they explained, “will be cheaper than real ones.”

“It shall not be said that I sacrificed efficiency to economy,” said the Governor. “You shall have real guns.”

“Thank you, thank you,” cried the warriors, effusively. “We will take good care of them, and in the event of war return them to the arsenal.”

THE HOLY DEACON

An Itinerant Preacher who had wrought hard in the moral vineyard for several hours whispered to a Holy Deacon of the local church:

“Brother, these people know you, and your active support will bear fruit abundantly. Please pass the plate for me, and you shall have one fourth.”

The Holy Deacon did so, and putting the money into his pocket waited till the congregation was dismissed, then said good-night.

“But the money, brother, the money that you collected!” said the Itinerant Preacher.

“Nothing is coming to you,” was the reply; “the Adversary has hardened their hearts and one fourth is all they gave.”

THE INEFFECTIVE ROOTER

A Drunken Man was lying in the road with a bleeding nose, upon which he had fallen, when a Pig passed that way.

“You wallow fairly well,” said the Pig, “but, my fine fellow, you have much to learn about rooting.”

A HASTY SETTLEMENT

“Your Honor,” said an Attorney, rising, “what is the present status of this case—as far as it has gone?”

“I have given a judgment for the residuary legatee under the will,” said the Court, “put the costs upon the contestants, decided all questions relating to fees and other charges; and, in short, the estate in litigation has been settled, with all controversies, disputes, misunderstandings and differences of opinion thereunto appertaining.”

“Ah, yes, I see,” said the Attorney, thoughtfully, “we are making progress—we are getting on famously.”

“Progress?” echoed the Judge—“progress? Why, sir, the matter is concluded!”

“Exactly, exactly; it had to be concluded in order to give relevancy to the motion that I am about to make. Your Honor, I move that the judgment of the Court be set aside and the case reopened.”

“Upon what ground, sir?” the Judge asked in surprise.

“Upon the ground,” said the Attorney, “that after paying all fees and expenses of litigation and all charges against the estate there will still be something left.”

“There may have been an error,” said his Honor, thoughtfully—“the Court may have underestimated the value of the estate. The motion is taken under advisement.”

THE POET’S DOOM

An Object was walking along the King’s highway wrapped in meditation and with little else on, when he suddenly found himself at the gates of a strange city. On applying for admittance, he was arrested as a necessitator of ordinances and taken before the King.

“Who are you,” said the King, “and what is your business in life?”

“Snouter the Sneak,” replied the Object, with ready invention—“pick-pocket.”

The King was about to command him to be released when the Prime Minister suggested that the prisoner’s fingers be examined. They were found greatly flattened and calloused at the ends.

“Ha!” cried the King; “I told you so!—he is addicted to counting syllables. He is a poet. Turn him over to the Lord High Dissuader from the Head Habit.”

“My liege,” said the Inventor-in-Ordinary of Ingenious Penalties, “I venture to suggest a keener affliction.”

“Name it,” the King said.

“Let him retain that head!”

It was so ordered.

NOSER AND NOTE

The Head Rifler of an insolvent bank, learning that it was about to be visited by the official Noser into Things, placed his own personal note for a large amount among its resources, and gaily touching his guitar awaited the inspection. When the Noser came to the note he asked, “What’s this?”

“That,” said the Assistant Pocketeer of Deposits, “is one of our liabilities.”

“A liability?” exclaimed the Noser. “Nay, nay, an asset. That is what you mean, doubtless.”

“Therein you err,” the Pocketeer explained; “that note was written in the bank with our own pen, ink and paper, and we have not paid a stationery bill for six months.”

“Ah, I see,” the Noser said, thoughtfully; “it is a liability. May I ask how you expect to meet it?”

“With fortitude, please God,” answered the Assistant Pocketeer, his eyes to Heaven raising — “with fortitude and a firm reliance on the laxity of the law.”

“Enough, enough,” exclaimed the faithful servant of the State, choking with emotion; “here is a certificate of solvency.”

“And here is a bottle of ink,” the grateful financier said, slipping it into the other’s pocket; “it is all that we have.”

LION AND RATTLESNAKE

A Man having found a Lion in his path undertook to subdue him by the power of the human eye; and near by was a Rattlesnake engaged in fascinating a small bird.

“How are you getting on, brother?” the Man called out to the other reptile, without removing his eyes from those of the Lion.

“Admirably,” replied the serpent. “My success is assured; my victim draws nearer and nearer in spite of her efforts.”

“And mine,” said the Man, “draws nearer and nearer in spite of mine. Are you sure it is all right?”

“If you don’t think so,” the reptile replied as well as he then could, with his mouth full of bird, “you’d better give it up.”

A half-hour later the Lion, thoughtfully picking his teeth with his claws, told the Rattlesnake that he had never in all his varied experience in being subdued, seen a subduer try so earnestly to give it up. “But,” he added, with a wide, significant smile, “I looked him into countenance.”

THE LITERARY ASTRONOMER

The Director of an Observatory, who, with a thirty-six inch refractor, had discovered the moon, hastened to an Editor, with a four-column account of the event.

“How much?” said the Editor, sententiously, without looking up from his essay on the circularity of the political horizon.

“One hundred and sixty dollars,” replied the man who had discovered the moon.

“Not half enough,” was the Editor’s comment.

“Generous man!” cried the Astronomer, glowing with warm and elevated sentiments, “pay me, then, what you will.”

“Great and good friend,” said the Editor, blandly, looking up from his work, “we are far asunder, it seems. The paying is to be done by you.”

The Director of the Observatory gathered up the manuscript and went away, explaining that it needed correction—that he had neglected, to dot an m.

THE REFORM SCHOOL BOARD

The members of the School Board in Doosnoswair being suspected of appointing female teachers for an improper consideration, the people elected a Board composed wholly of women. In a few years the scandal was at an end; there were no female teachers in the Department.

ALDERMAN AND RACCOON

“I see quite a number of rings on your tail,” said an Alderman to a Raccoon that he met in a zoological garden.

“Yes,” replied the Raccoon, “and I hear quite a number of tales on your ring.”

The Alderman, being of a sensitive, retiring disposition, shrank from further comparison, and strolling to another part of the garden stole the camel.

CAT AND KING

A Cat was looking at a King, as permitted by the proverb. “Well,” said the monarch, observing her inspection of the royal person, “how do you like me?”

“I can imagine a King,” said the Cat, “whom I should like better.”

“For example?”

“The King of Mice.”

The sovereign was so pleased with the wit of the reply that he gave her permission to scratch his Prime Minister’s eyes out.

THE MAN WITH NO ENEMIES

An Inoffensive Person walking in a public place was assaulted by a Stranger with a Club, and severely beaten.

When the Stranger with a Club was brought to trial, the complainant said to the Judge:

“I do not know why I was assaulted; I have not an enemy in the world.”

“That,” said the defendant, “is why I struck him.”

“Let the prisoner be discharged,” said the Judge; “a man who has no enemies has no friends. The courts are not for such.”

THE FLYING-MACHINE

An Ingenious Man who had built a flying-machine invited a great concourse of people to see it go up. At the appointed moment, everything being ready, he boarded the car and turned on the power. The machine immediately broke through the massive substructure upon which it was builded, and sank out of sight into the earth, the aeronaut springing out barely in time to save himself.

“Well,” said he, “I have done enough to demonstrate the correctness of my details. The defects,” he added, with a look at the ruined brick-work, “are merely basic and fundamental.”

On this assurance the people came forward with subscriptions to build a second machine.

THE ANGEL’S TEAR

An Unworthy Man who had laughed at the woes of a Woman whom he loved, was bewailing his indiscretion in sack-cloth-of-gold and ashes-of-roses, when the Angel of Compassion looked down upon him, saying: “Poor mortal!—how unblest not to know the wickedness of laughing at another’s misfortune!”

So saying, he let fall a great tear, which, encountering in its descent a current of cold air, was congealed into a hail-stone. This struck the Unworthy Man upon the head and set him rubbing that bruised organ vigorously with one hand while vainly attempting to expand an umbrella with the other.

Thereat the Angel of Compassion did most shamelessly and wickedly laugh.

THE CITY OF POLITICAL DISTINCTION

Jamrach the Rich, being anxious to reach the City of Political Distinction before nightfall, arrived at a fork of the road and was undecided which branch to follow; so he consulted a Wise-Looking Person who sat by the wayside.

“Take *that* road,” said the Wise-Looking Person, pointing it out; “it is known as the Political Highway.”

“Thank you,” said Jamrach, and was about to proceed.

“About how much do you thank me?” was the reply. “Do you suppose I am here for my health?”

As Jamrach had not become rich by stupidity he handed something to his guide and hastening on soon came to a toll-gate kept by a Benevolent Gentleman, to whom he gave something and was suffered to pass. A little farther along he came to a bridge across an imaginary stream, where a Civil Engineer (who had built the bridge) demanded something for interest on his investment, and it was forthcoming. It was growing late when Jamrach came to the margin of what appeared to be a lake of black ink, and there the road terminated. Seeing a Ferryman in his boat he paid something for his passage and was about to embark.

“No,” said the Ferryman. “Put your neck in this noose, and I will tow you over. It is the only way,” he added, seeing that the passenger was about to complain of the accommodations.

In due time he was dragged across, half strangled and dreadfully beslobbered by the feculent waters. “There,” said the Ferryman, hauling him ashore and disengaging him, “you are now in the City of Political Distinction. It has fifty millions of inhabitants, and as the color of the Filthy Pool does not wash off, they all look exactly alike.”

“Alas!” exclaimed Jamrach, weeping and bewailing the loss of all his possessions, paid out in tips and tolls; “I will go back with you.”

“I don’t think you will,” said the Ferryman, pushing off; “this city is situated on the Island of the Unreturning.”

THE PARTY OVER THERE

A Man in a Hurry, whose watch was at his lawyer’s, asked a Grave Person the time of day.

“I heard you ask that Party Over There the same question,” said the Grave Person. “What answer did he give you?”

“He said it was about three o’clock,” replied the Man in a Hurry; “but he did not look at his watch, and as the sun is nearly down I think it is later.”

“The fact that the sun is nearly down,” the Grave Person said, “is immaterial, but the fact that he did not consult his timepiece and make answer after due deliberation and consideration is fatal. The answer given,” continued the Grave Person, consulting his own timepiece, “is of no effect, invalid, and void.”

“What, then,” said the Man in a Hurry, eagerly, “is the time of day?”

“The question is remanded to the Party Over There for a new answer,” replied the Grave Person, returning his watch to his pocket and moving away with great dignity.

He was a Judge of an Appellate Court.

THE POET OF REFORM

One pleasant day in the latter part of eternity, as the Shades of all the great writers were reposing upon beds of asphodel and moly in the Elysian fields, each happy in hearing from the lips of the others nothing but copious quotation from his own works (for so Jove had kindly bedeviled their ears) there came in among them with triumphant mien a Shade whom none knew. She (for the newcomer showed such evidences of sex as cropped hair and a manly stride) took a seat in their midst and smiling a superior smile explained:

“After centuries of oppression I have wrested my rights from the grasp of the jealous gods. On earth I was the Poetess of Reform and sang to inattentive ears. Now for an eternity of honor and glory.”

But it was not to be so, and soon she was the unhappiest of immortals, vainly desirous to wander again in gloom by the infernal lakes. For Jove had not bedeviled her ears, and she heard from the lips of each blessed Shade an incessant flow of quotation from his own works. Moreover, she was denied the happiness of repeating her poems. She could not recall a line of them, for Jove had decreed that the memory of them abide in Pluto’s painful domain as a part of the apparatus.

THE UNCHANGED DIPLOMATIST

The republic of Madagonia had been long and well represented at the court of the King of Patagascar by an officer called a Dazie, but one day the Madagonian Parliament conferred upon him the superior rank of Dandee. The next day after being apprised of his new dignity he hastened to inform the King of Patagascar.

“Ah, yes, I understand,” said the King; “you have been promoted and given increased pay and allowances. There was an appropriation?”

“Yes, your Majesty.”

“And you have now two heads, have you not?”

“Oh, no, your Majesty—only one, I assure you.”

“Indeed? And how many legs and arms?”

“Two of each, Sire—only two of each.”

“And only one body?”

“Just a single body, as you perceive.”

Thoughtfully removing his crown and scratching the royal head, the monarch was silent a moment, and then he said:

“I fancy that appropriation has been misapplied. You seem to be about the same kind of damned fool that you were before.”

AN INVITATION

A Pious Person who had overcharged his paunch with dead bird by way of attesting his gratitude for escaping the many calamities which Heaven had sent upon others fell asleep at table and dreamed. He thought he lived in a country where turkeys were the ruling class, and every year they held a feast to manifest their sense of Heaven's goodness in sparing their lives, to kill them later. One day, about a week before one of these feasts, he met the Supreme Gobbler, who said:

"You will please get yourself into good condition for the Thanksgiving dinner."

"Yes, your Excellency," replied the Pious Person, delighted, "I shall come hungry, I assure you. It is no small privilege to dine with your Excellency."

The Supreme Gobbler eyed him for a moment in silence; then he said:

"As one of the lower domestic animals, you cannot be expected to know much, but you might know something. Since you do not, you will permit me to point out that being asked to dinner is one thing; being asked to dine is another and different thing."

With this significant remark the Supreme Gobbler left him, and thenceforward the Pious Person dreamed of himself as white meat and dark until rudely awakened by terror.

THE ASHES OF MADAME BLAVATSKY

The brightest two Lights of Theosophy being in the same place at once in company with the Ashes of Madame Blavatsky, an Inquiring Soul thought the time propitious to learn something worth while. So he sat at the feet of one awhile, and then he sat awhile at the feet of the other, and at last he applied his ear to the keyhole of the casket containing the Ashes of Madame Blavatsky. When the Inquiring Soul had completed his course of instruction he declared himself the Ahkoond of Swat, fell into the baleful habit of standing on his head and swore that the mother who bore him was a pragmatic paralogism. Wherefore he was held in so high reverence that when the two other gentlemen were hanged for lying the Theosophists elected him to the leadership of their Disastral Body, and after a quiet life and an honorable death by the kick of a jackass he was reincarnated as a Yellow Dog. As such he ate the Ashes of Madame Blavatsky, and Theosophy was no more.

THE OPOSSUM OF THE FUTURE

One day an Opossum who had gone to sleep hanging from the highest branch of a tree by the tail, awoke and saw a large

Snake wound about the limb, between him and the trunk of the tree.

“If I hold on,” he said to himself, “I shall be swallowed; if I let go I shall break my neck.”

But suddenly he bethought himself to dissemble.

“My perfected friend,” he said, “my parental instinct recognizes in you a noble evidence and illustration of the theory of development. You are the Opossum of the Future, the ultimate Fittest Survivor of our species, the ripe result of progressive prehensibility— all tail!”

But the Snake, proud of his ancient eminence in Scriptural history, was strictly orthodox and did not accept the scientific view.

THE LIFE-SAVER

Seventy-five Men presented themselves before the President of the Humane Society and demanded the great gold medal for life-saving.

“Why, yes,” said the President; “by diligent effort so many men must have saved a considerable number of lives. How many did you save?”

“Seventy-five, sir,” replied their Spokesman.

“Ah, yes, that is one each—very good work—very good work, indeed,” the President said. “You shall not only have the Society’s great gold medal, but its recommendation for employment at the several life-boat stations along the coast. But how did you save so many lives?” The Spokesman of the Men replied: “We are officers of the law, and have just abandoned the pursuit of two murderous outlaws.”

THE AUSTRALIAN GRASSHOPPER

A Distinguished Naturalist was traveling in Australia, when he saw a Kangaroo in session and flung a stone at it. The Kangaroo immediately adjourned, tracing against the sunset sky a parabolic curve spanning seven provinces, and vanished below the horizon. The Distinguished Naturalist looked interested, but said nothing for an hour; then he said to his native Guide:

“You have pretty wide meadows here, I suppose?”

“No, not very wide,” the Guide answered; “about the same as in England and America.”

After another long silence the Distinguished Naturalist said:

“The hay which we shall purchase for our horses this evening—I shall expect to find the stalks about fifty feet long. Am I right?”

“Why, no,” said the Guide; “a foot or two is about the usual length of our hay. What can you be thinking of?”

The Distinguished Naturalist made no immediate reply, but later, as in the shades of night they journeyed through the desolate vastness of the Great Lone Land, he broke the silence:

“I was thinking,” he said, “of the uncommon magnitude of that grasshopper.”

THE PAVIOR

An Author saw a Laborer hammering stones into the pavement of a street, and approaching him said:

“My friend, you seem weary. Ambition is a hard taskmaster.”

“I’m working for Mr. Jones, sir,” the Laborer replied.

“Well, cheer up,” the Author resumed; “fame comes at the most unexpected times. To-day you are poor, obscure and disheartened, but to-morrow the world may be ringing with your name.”

“What are you telling me?” the Laborer said. “Can not an honest pavior perform his work in peace, and get his money for it, and his living by it, without others talking rot about ambition and hopes of fame?”

“Can not an honest writer?” said the Author.

THE TRIED ASSASSIN

An Assassin being put upon trial in a New England court, his Counsel rose and said: “Your Honor, I move for a discharge on the ground of ‘once in jeopardy:’ my client has been already tried for that murder and acquitted.”

“In what court?” asked the Judge.

“In the Superior Court of San Francisco,” the Counsel replied.

“Let the trial proceed—your motion is denied,” said the Judge.

“An Assassin is not in jeopardy when tried in California.”

TWO POETS

Two Poets were quarreling for the Apple of Discord and the Bone of Contention, for they were very hungry.

“My sons,” said Apollo, “I will part the prizes between you. You,” he said to the First Poet, “excel in Art—take the Apple. And you,” he said to the Second Poet, “in Imagination—take the Bone.”

“To Art the best prize!” said the First Poet, triumphantly, and endeavouring to devour his award broke all his teeth. The Apple was a work of Art.

“That shows our master’s contempt for mere Art,” said the Second Poet, grinning.

Thereupon he attempted to gnaw his Bone, but his teeth passed through it without encountering resistance. It was an imaginary Bone.

THE WITCH'S STEED

A Broomstick that had long served a witch as a steed complained of the nature of its employment, which it thought degrading.

"Very well," said the Witch, "I will give you work in which you will be associated with intellect—you will come in contact with brains. I shall present you to a housewife."

"What!" said the Broomstick, "do you consider the hands of a housewife intellectual?"

"I referred," said the Witch, "to the head of her good man,"

THE SAGACIOUS RAT

A Rat that was about to emerge from his hole caught a glimpse of a Cat waiting for him, and descending to the colony at the bottom of the hole invited a Friend to join him in a visit to a neighboring corn-bin. "I would have gone alone," he said, "but could not deny myself the pleasure of such distinguished company."

"Very well," said the Friend, "I will go with you. Lead on."

"Lead?" exclaimed the other. "What! I precede so great and illustrious a rat as you? No, indeed—after you, sir, after you."

Pleased with this great show of deference, the Friend went ahead, and, leaving the hole first, was caught by the Cat, who trotted away with him. The other then went out unmolested.

THE BUMBO OF JIAM

The Pahdour of Patagascar and the Gookul of Madagonia were disputing about an island that both claimed. Finally, at the suggestion of the International League of Cannon Founders, which had important branches in both countries, they decided to refer their claims to the Bumbo of Jiam, and abide by his judgment. In settling the preliminaries of the arbitration they had, however, the misfortune to disagree, and appealed to arms. At the end of a long and disastrous war, when both sides were exhausted and bankrupt, the Bumbo of Jiam intervened in the interest of peace.

"My great and good friends," he said to his brother sovereigns, "it will be advantageous to you to learn that some questions are more complex and perilous than others, presenting a greater number of points upon which it is possible to differ. For four generations your royal predecessors disputed about possession of that island without falling out. Beware, oh, beware the perils of international arbitration!—against which I feel it my duty to protect you henceforth."

So saying, he annexed both countries, and after a long, peaceful and happy reign was poisoned by his Prime Minister.

LEGISLATOR AND SOAP

A member of the Kansas Legislature meeting a Cake of Soap was passing it by without recognition, but the Cake of Soap insisted on stopping and shaking hands. Thinking it might possibly be in the enjoyment of the elective franchise, he gave it a cordial and earnest grasp. On letting it go he observed that a part of it adhered to his fingers, and running to a brook in great alarm, proceeded to wash it off. In doing so he necessarily got some on the other hand, and when he had finished washing both were so white that he went to bed and sent for a physician.

THE SHADOW OF THE LEADER

A Political Leader was walking out one sunny day, when he observed his Shadow leaving him and walking rapidly away.

“Come back here, you scoundrel,” he cried.

“If I had been a scoundrel,” answered the Shadow, increasing its speed, “I should not have left you.”

THE ALL-DOG

A Lion seeing a Poodle fell into laughter at the ridiculous spectacle.

“Who ever saw so small a beast?” he said.

“It is very true,” said the Poodle, with austere dignity, “that I am small; but, sir, I beg you to observe that I am all dog.”

A CAUSEWAY

A Rich Woman having returned from abroad disembarked at the foot of Kneedeep Street, and was about to walk to her hotel through the mud.

“Madam,” said a Policeman, “I cannot permit you to do that; you would soil your shoes and stockings.”

“Oh, that is of no importance, really,” replied the Rich Woman, with a cheerful smile.

“But, madam, it is needless; from the wharf to the hotel, as you observe, extends an unbroken line of prostrate newspaper men who crave the honor of having you walk upon them.”

“In that case,” she said, seating herself in a doorway and unlocking her satchel, “I shall have to put on my rubber boots.”

THE THISTLES UPON THE GRAVE

A Mind Reader made a wager that he would be buried alive and remain so for six months, then be dug up alive. In order to secure the grave against secret disturbance, it was sown with thistles. At the end of three months the Mind Reader lost his bet. He had come up to eat the thistles.

ALARM AND PRIDE

“Good morning, my friend,” said Alarm to Pride; “how are you this morning?”

“Very tired,” answered Pride, seating himself on a stone by the wayside and mopping his steaming brow. “The politicians are wearing me out by pointing to their dirty records with me, when they could as well use a stick.”

Alarm sighed sympathetically and said:

“It is pretty much the same way here. Instead of using an opera-glass they view the acts of their opponents with me!”

As these patient drudges were mingling their tears, they were notified that they must go on duty again, for one of the political parties had nominated a thief and was about to hold a gratification meeting.

THE FARMER’S FRIEND

A Great Philanthropist who had thought of himself in connection with the Presidency and had introduced a bill into Congress requiring the Government to lend every voter all the money that he needed, on his personal security, was explaining to a Sunday-school at a railway station how much he had done for the country, when an angel looked down from Heaven and wept.

“For example,” said the Great Philanthropist, watching the teardrops pattering in the dust, “these early rains are of incalculable advantage to the farmer.”

PHYSICIANS TWO

A Wicked Old Man finding himself ill sent for a Physician, who prescribed for him and went away. Then the Wicked Old Man sent for Another Physician, saying nothing of the first, and an entirely different treatment was ordered. This continued for some weeks, the physicians visiting him on alternate days and treating him for two different disorders, with constantly enlarging doses of medicine and more and more rigorous nursing. But one day they accidentally met at his bedside while he slept and, the truth coming out, a violent quarrel ensued.

“My good friends,” said the patient, awakened by the noise of the dispute, and apprehending the cause of it, “pray be more reasonable. If I could for weeks endure you both, can you not for a little while endure each other? I have been well for ten days, but have remained in bed in the hope of gaining by repose the strength that would justify me in taking your medicines. So far I have touched none of them.”

THE HONEST CADI

A Robber who had plundered a merchant of one thousand pieces of gold was taken before the Cadi, who asked him if he had anything to say why he should not be decapitated.

“Your Honor,” said the Robber, “I could do no otherwise than take the money, for Allah made me that way.”

“Your defence is ingenious and sound,” said the Cadi, “and I must acquit you of criminality. Unfortunately, Allah has also made me so that I must take off your head—unless,” he added, thoughtfully, “you offer me a half of the gold; for He made me weak under temptation.”

Thereupon the Robber put five hundred pieces of gold into the Cadi’s hand.

“Good,” said the Cadi. “I shall now remove only one-half your head. To show my trust in your discretion I shall leave intact the half that you talk with.”

THE OVERLOOKED FACTOR

A Man that owned a fine Dog, and by a careful selection of its mate had bred a number of animals but a little lower than the angels, fell in love with his washerwoman, married her and reared a family of dolts.

“Alas!” he exclaimed, contemplating the melancholy result, “had I but chosen a mate for myself with half the care that I did for my Dog I should now be a proud and happy father.”

“I’m not so sure of that,” said the Dog, overhearing the lament. “There’s a difference, certainly, between your whelps and mine, but I flatter myself that it is not due altogether to the mothers. You and I are not entirely alike ourselves.”

A RADICAL PARALLEL

Some White Christians engaged in driving Chinese Heathens out of an American town found a newspaper published in Peking in the Chinese tongue and compelled one of their victims to translate an editorial. It turned out to be an appeal to the people of the province of Pang Ki to drive the foreign devils out of the country and burn their dwellings and churches. At this evidence of Mongolian barbarity the White Christians were so greatly incensed that they carried out their original design.

KANGAROO AND ZEBRA

A Kangaroo hopping awkwardly along with some bulky object concealed in her pouch met a Zebra, and desirous of keeping his attention upon himself, said:

“Your costume looks as if you might have come out of the penitentiary.”

“Appearances are deceitful,” replied the Zebra, smiling in the consciousness of a more insupportable wit, “or I should have to think that you had come out of the Legislature.”

A MATTER OF METHOD

A Philosopher seeing a Fool beating his Donkey, said:

“Abstain, my son, abstain, I implore. Those who resort to violence shall suffer from violence.”

“That,” said the Fool, diligently belaboring the animal, “is what I’m trying to teach this beast—which has kicked me.”

“Doubtless,” said the Philosopher to himself, as he walked away, “the wisdom of fools is no deeper nor truer than ours, but they really do seem to have a more impressive way of imparting it.”

A MAN OF PRINCIPLE

During a shower of rain the Keeper of a Zoological garden observed a Man of Principle crouching beneath the belly of the ostrich, which had drawn itself up to its full height to sleep.

“Why, my dear sir,” said the Keeper, “if you fear to get wet you’d better creep into the pouch of yonder female kangaroo—the *Saltatrix mackintosha*—for if that ostrich wakes he will kick you to death in a moment!”

“I can’t help that,” the Man of Principle replied, with that lofty scorn of practical considerations distinguishing his species. “He may kick me to death if he wish, but until he does he shall give me shelter from the storm. He has swallowed my umbrella.”

THE RETURNED CALIFORNIAN

A Man was hanged by the neck until he was dead. This was in 1893.

“Whence do you come?” Saint Peter asked when the Man presented himself at the gate of Heaven.

“From California,” replied the applicant.

“Enter, my son, enter; you bring joyous tidings.”

When the Man had vanished inside, Saint Peter took his memorandum tablet and made the following entry:

“February 16, 1893. California settled by the Christians.”

THE COMPASSIONATE PHYSICIAN

A Kind-Hearted Physician sitting at the bedside of a patient afflicted with an incurable and painful disease heard a noise behind him and turning saw a Cat laughing at the feeble efforts of a wounded Mouse to drag itself out of the room.

“You cruel beast!” he cried. “Why don’t you kill it at once, like a lady?”

Rising, he kicked the Cat out of the door and picking up the Mouse compassionately put it out of its misery by pulling off its head. Recalled to the bedside by the moans of his patient, the Kind-Hearted Physician administered a stimulant, a tonic and a nutrient, and went away.

A PROPHET OF EVIL

An Undertaker Who Was a Member of a Trust saw a Man Leaning on a Spade, and asked him why he was not at work.

“Because,” said the Man Leaning on a Spade, “I belong to the Gravediggers’ National Extortion Society, and we have decided to limit the production of graves and get more money for the reduced output. We have a corner in graves and purpose working it to the best advantage.”

“My friend,” said the Undertaker Who Was a Member of the Trust, “this is a most hateful and injurious scheme. If people can not be assured of graves I fear they will no longer die, and the best interests of civilization will wither like a frosted leaf.”

And blowing his eyes upon his handkerchief, he walked away lamenting.

RELIGIONS OF ERROR

Hearing a sound of strife, a Christian in the Orient asked his Dragoman the cause of it.

“The Buddhists are cutting Mohammedan throats,” the Dragoman replied, with Oriental composure.

“I did not know,” remarked the Christian, with scientific interest, “that that would make so much noise.”

“The Mohammedans are cutting Buddhist throats,” added the Dragoman.

“It is astonishing,” mused the Christian, “how violent and how general are religious animosities.”

So saying he visibly smugged and went off to telegraph for a brigade of cut-throats to protect Christian interests.

THE TAIL OF THE SPHINX

A Dog of a taciturn disposition said to his Tail:

“Whenever I am angry you rise and bristle; when I am pleased you wag; when I am alarmed you tuck yourself in out of danger. You are too mercurial—you disclose all my emotions. My notion is that tails are given to conceal thought. It is my dearest ambition to be as impassive as the Sphinx.”

“My friend, you must recognize the laws and limitations of your being,” replied the Tail, with flexions appropriate to the sentiments uttered, “and try to be great some other way. The Sphinx has one hundred and fifty qualifications for impassiveness which you lack.”

“What are they?” the Dog asked.

“One hundred and forty-nine tons of sand on its tail.”

“And—?”

“A stone tail.”

THE CREW OF THE LIFEBOAT

The Gallant Crew at a life-saving station were about to launch their lifeboat for a spin along the coast when they discovered, a little distance away, a capsized vessel with a dozen men clinging to her keel.

“We are fortunate,” said the Gallant Crew, “to have seen that in time. Our fate might have been the same as theirs.”

So they hauled the lifeboat back into its house and were spared to the service of their country.

A TREATY OF PEACE

Through massacres of each other’s citizens China and the United States had been four times plunged into devastating wars, when, in the year 1994, arose a Philosopher in Madagascar, who laid before the Governments of the two distracted countries the following *modus vivendi*:

“Massacres are to be sternly forbidden as heretofore; but any citizen or subject of either country disobeying the injunction is to detach the scalps of all persons massacred and deposit them with a local officer designated to receive and preserve them and sworn to keep and render a true account thereof. At the conclusion of each massacre in either country, or as soon thereafter as practicable, or at stated regular periods, as may be provided by treaty, there shall be a counting of scalps, without regard to sex or age; the Government having the greatest number is to be taxed on the excess at the rate of \$1000 a scalp, and the other Government credited with the amount. Once in every decade there shall be a general settlement, when the balance due shall be paid to the creditor nation in Mexican dollars.”

The plan was adopted, the necessary treaty made, with legislation to carry out its provisions; the Madagascarene Philosopher took his seat in the Temple of Immortality and Peace spread her white wings over the two nations, to the unspeakable defiling of her plumage.

THE NIGHTSIDE OF CHARACTER

A Gifted and Honorable Editor, who by practice of his profession had acquired wealth and distinction, applied to an Old Friend for the hand of his daughter in marriage.

“With all my heart, and God bless you!” said the Old Friend, grasping him by both hands. “It is a greater honor than I had dared to hope for.”

“I knew what your answer would be,” replied the Gifted and Honorable Editor. “And yet,” he added, with a sly smile, “I feel that I ought to give you as much knowledge of my character as I possess. In this scrap-book is such testimony relating to my shady side as I have within the past ten years been able to cut from the columns of my competitors in the business of elevating humanity to a higher plane of mind and morals—my ‘loathsome contemporaries.’”

Laying the book on a table, he withdrew in high spirits to make arrangements for the wedding. Three days later he received the scrap-book from a messenger, with a note warning him never again to darken his Old Friend’s door.

“See!” the Gifted and Honorable Editor exclaimed, pointing to that injunction—“I am a painter and grainer!”

And he was led away to the Asylum for the Indiscreet.

THE FAITHFUL CASHIER

The Cashier of a bank having defaulted was asked by the Directors what he had done with the money taken.

“I am greatly surprised by such a question,” said the Cashier; “it sounds as if you suspected me of selfishness. Gentlemen, I applied that money to the purpose for which I took it; I paid it as an initiation fee and one year’s dues in advance to the Treasurer of the Cashiers’ Mutual Defence Association.”

“What is the object of that organization?” the Directors inquired.

“When any one of its members is under suspicion,” replied the Cashier, “the Association undertakes to clear his character by submitting evidence that he was never a prominent member of any church, nor foremost in Sunday-school work.”

Recognizing the value to the bank of a spotless reputation for its officers, the President drew his check for the amount of the shortage and the Cashier was restored to favor.

THE CIRCULAR CLEW

A Detective searching for the murderer of a dead man was accosted by a Clew.

“Follow me,” said the Clew, “and there’s no knowing what you may discover.”

So the Detective followed the Clew a whole year through a thousand sinuosities and at last found himself in the office of the Morgue.

“There!” said the Clew, pointing to the open register.

The Detective eagerly scanned the page and found an official statement that the deceased was dead. Thereupon he hastened to Police Headquarters to report progress. The Clew, meanwhile,

sauntered among the busy haunts of men, arm in arm with an Ingenious Theory.

THE DEVOTED WIDOW

A Widow weeping on her husband's grave was approached by an Engaging Gentleman who, in a respectful manner, assured her that he had long entertained for her the most tender feelings.

"Wretch!" cried the Widow. "Leave me this instant! Is this a time to talk to me of love?"

"I assure you, madam, that I had not intended to disclose my affection," the Engaging Gentleman humbly explained, "but the power of your beauty has overcome my discretion."

"You should see me when I have not been weeping," said the Widow.

THE HARDY PATRIOTS

A Dispenser-Elect of Patronage gave notice through the newspapers that applicants for places would be given none until a certain date.

"You are exposing yourself to a grave danger," said a Lawyer.

"How so?" the Dispenser-Elect inquired.

"It will be nearly two months," the Lawyer answered, "before the day that you mention. Few patriots can live so long without eating, and some of the applicants will be compelled to go to work in the meantime. If that kills them, you will be liable to prosecution for murder."

"You underrate their powers of endurance," the official replied.

"What!" said the Lawyer, "you think they can endure work?"

"No," said the other—"hunger."

THE HUMBLE PEASANT

An Office Seeker whom the President had ordered out of Washington was watering the homeward highway with his tears.

"Ah," he said, "how disastrous is ambition! how unsatisfying its rewards! how terrible its disappointments! Behold yonder peasant tilling his field in peace and contentment! He rises with the lark, passes the day in wholesome toil and lies down at night to pleasant dreams. In the mad struggle for place and power he has no part; the roar of the strife reaches his ear like the distant murmur of the ocean. Happy, thrice happy man! I will approach him and bask in the sunshine of his humble felicity. Peasant, hail!"

Leaning upon his rake, the Peasant returned the salutation with a nod, but said nothing.

"My friend," said the Office Seeker, "you see before you the wreck of an ambitious man—ruined by the pursuit of place and power. This morning when I set out from the national capital—"

“Stranger,” the Peasant interrupted, “if you’re going back there soon maybe you wouldn’t mind using your influence to make me Postmaster at Smith’s Corners.”

The traveler passed on.

THE VARIOUS DELEGATION

The King of Wideout having been offered the sovereignty of Awayoff, sent for the Three Persons who had made the offer, and said to them:

“I am extremely obliged to you, but before accepting so great a responsibility I must ascertain the sentiments of the people of Awayoff.”

“Sire,” said the Spokesman of the Three Persons, “they stand before you.”

“Indeed!” said the King; “are you, then, the people of Awayoff?”

“Yes, your Majesty.”

“There are not many of you,” the King said, attentively regarding them with the royal eye, “and you are not so very large; I hardly think you are a quorum. Moreover, I never heard of you until you came here; whereas Awayoff is noted for the quality of its pork and contains hogs of distinction. I shall send a Commissioner to ascertain the sentiments of the hogs.”

The Three Persons, bowing profoundly, backed out of the presence; but soon afterward they desired another audience, and on being readmitted said, through their Spokesman:

“May it please your Majesty, we are the hogs.”

A HARMLESS VISITOR

At a meeting of the Golden League of Mystery a Woman was discovered, writing in a note-book. A member directed the attention of the Superb High Chairman to her, and she was asked to explain her presence there, and what she was doing.

“I came in for my own pleasure and instruction,” she said, “and was so struck by the wisdom of the speakers that I could not help making a few notes.”

“Madam,” said the Superb High Chairman, “we have no objection to visitors if they will pledge themselves not to publish anything they hear. Are you—on your honor as a lady, now, madam—are you not connected with some newspaper or other publication?”

“Good gracious, no!” cried the Woman, earnestly. “Why, sir, I am an officer of the Women’s Press Association!”

She was permitted to remain and presented with resolutions of apology.

AN INFLATED AMBITION

The President of a great Corporation went into a dry-goods shop and saw a placard which read:

“If You Don’t See What You Want Ask For It.”

Approaching the shopkeeper, who had been narrowly observing him as he read the placard, he was about to speak, when the shopkeeper called to a salesman:

“John, show this gentleman the earth.”

THE NO CASE

A Statesman who had been indicted by an unfeeling Grand Jury was arrested by a Sheriff and thrown into jail. As this was abhorrent to his fine spiritual nature, he sent for the District Attorney and asked that the case against him be dismissed.

“Upon what grounds?” asked the District Attorney.

“Lack of evidence to convict,” replied the accused.

“Do you happen to have the lack with you?” the official asked. “I should like to see it.”

“With pleasure,” said the other; “here it is.”

So saying he handed the other a check, which the District Attorney carefully examined, and then pronounced it the most complete absence of both proof and presumption that he had ever seen. He said it would acquit the poorest man in the world.

JUDGE AND RASH ACT

A Judge who had for years looked in vain for an opportunity for infamous distinction, but whom no litigant thought worth bribing, sat one day upon the Bench, lamenting his hard lot and threatening to put an end to his life if business did not improve. Suddenly he found himself confronted by a dreadful figure clad in a shroud, whose pallor and stony eyes smote him with a horrible apprehension.

“Who are you,” he faltered, “and why do you come here?”

“I am the Rash Act,” was the sepulchral reply; “you may commit me.”

“No,” the Judge said, thoughtfully, “no, that would be quite irregular. I do not sit to-day as a committing magistrate.”

THE PREROGATIVE OF MIGHT

A Slander traveling rapidly through the land upon his joyous mission was accosted by a Retraction and commanded to halt and be killed.

“Your career of mischief is at an end,” said the Retraction, drawing his club, rolling up his sleeves and spitting on his hands.

“Why should you slay me?” protested the Slander. “Whatever my intentions were, I have been innocuous, for you have dogged my strides and counteracted my influence.”

“Dogged your grandmother!” said the Retraction, with contemptuous vulgarity of speech. “In the order of nature it is appointed that we two shall never travel the same road.”

“How then,” the Slander asked, triumphantly, “have you overtaken me?”

“I have not,” replied the Retraction; “we have accidentally met. I came round the world the other way.”

But when he tried to execute his fell purpose he found that in the order of nature it was appointed that he himself perish miserably in the encounter.

AT LARGE—ONE TEMPER

A Turbulent Person was brought before a Judge to be tried for an assault with intent to commit murder, and it was proved that he had been variously obstreperous without apparent provocation, had affected the peripheries of several luckless fellow-citizens with the trunk of a small tree and afterward cleaned out the town. While trying to palliate these misdeeds, the Defendant’s Attorney turned suddenly to the Judge, saying:

“Did your Honor ever lose your temper?”

“I fine you twenty-five dollars for contempt of court!” roared the Judge, in wrath. “How dare you mention the loss of my temper in connection with this case?”

After a moment’s silence the Attorney said, meekly:

“I thought my client might perhaps have found it.”

THE DIVIDED DELEGATION

A Delegation at Washington went to a New President, and said:

“Your Excellency, we are unable to agree upon a Favorite Son to represent us in your Cabinet.”

“Then,” said the New President, “I shall have to lock you up until you do agree.”

So the Delegation was cast into the deepest dungeon beneath the moat, where it maintained a divided mind for many weeks, but finally reconciled its differences and asked to be taken before the New President.

“My children,” said he, “nothing is so beautiful as harmony. My Cabinet selections were all made before our former interview, but you have supplied a noble instance of patriotism in subordinating your personal preferences to the general good. Go now to your beautiful homes and be happy.”

REJECTED SERVICES

A Heavy Operator overtaken by a Reverse of Fortune was bewailing his sudden fall from affluence to indigence.

“Do not weep,” said the Reverse of Fortune. “You need not suffer alone. Name any one of the men who have opposed your schemes, and I will overtake *him*.”

“It is hardly worth while,” said the victim, earnestly. “Not a soul of them has a cent. You have already visited them.”

DECEASED AND HEIRS

A Man died leaving a large estate and many sorrowful relations who claimed it. After some years, when all but one had had judgment given against them, that one was awarded the estate, which he asked his Attorney to have appraised.

“There is nothing to appraise,” said the Attorney, pocketing his last fee.

“Then,” said the Successful Claimant, “what good has all this litigation done me?”

“You have been a good client to me,” the Attorney replied, gathering up his books and papers, “but I must say you betray a surprising ignorance of the purpose of litigation.”

POLITICIANS AND PLUNDER

Several Political Entities were dividing the spoils.

“I will take the management of the prisons,” said a Decent Respect for Public Opinion, “and make a radical change.”

“And I,” said the Blotted Escutcheon, “will retain my present general connection with affairs, while my friend here, the Soiled Ermine, will remain in the Judiciary.”

The Political Pot said it would not boil any more unless replenished from the Filthy Pool.

The Cohesive Power of Public Plunder quietly remarked that the two bosses would, he supposed, naturally be his share.

“No,” said the Lowest Depth of Degradation, “they have already fallen to me.”

MAN AND WART

A Person with a Wart on His Nose met a Person Similarly Afflicted, and said:

“Let me propose your name for membership in the Imperial Order of Abnormal Proboscians, of which I am the High Noble Toby and Surreptitious Treasurer. Two months ago I was the only member. One month ago there were two. To-day we number four Emperors of the Abnormal Proboscis in good standing—doubles every four weeks, see? That’s geometrical progression—you know how that piles up. In a year and a half every man in the country will have a wart on his nose. Powerful Order! Initiation, five dollars.”

“My friend,” said the Person Similarly Afflicted, “here are five dollars. Keep my name off your books.”

“Thank you kindly,” the Man with a Wart on His Nose replied, pocketing the money; “it is just the same to us as if you joined. Good-bye.”

He went away, but in a little while he was back.

“I quite forgot to mention the monthly dues,” he said.

HIS FLY-SPECK MAJESTY

A Distinguished Advocate of Republican Institutions was seen pickling his shins in the ocean.

“Why don’t you come out on dry land?” said the Spectator. “What are you in there for?”

“Sir,” replied the Distinguished Advocate of Republican Institutions, “a ship is expected, bearing His Majesty the King of the Fly-Speck Islands, and I wish to be the first to grasp the crowned hand.”

“But,” said the Spectator, “you said in your famous speech before the Society for the Prevention of the Protrusion of Nail Heads from Plank Sidewalks that Kings are blood-smeared oppressors and hell-bound loafers.”

“My dear sir,” said the Distinguished Advocate of Republican Institutions, without removing his eyes from the horizon, “you wander away into the strangest irrelevancies! I spoke of Kings in general.”

THE PUGILIST’S DIET

The Trainer of a Pugilist consulted a Physician regarding the champion’s diet.

“Beef-steaks are too tender,” said the Physician; “have his meat cut from the neck of a bull.”

“I thought the steaks more digestible,” the Trainer explained.

“That is very true,” said the Physician; “but they do not sufficiently exercise the chin.”

OLD MAN AND PUPIL

A Beautiful Old Man meeting a Sunday-school Pupil laid his hand tenderly upon the lad’s head, saying: “Listen, my son, to the words of the wise and heed the advice of the righteous.”

“All right,” said the Sunday-school Pupil; “go ahead.”

“Oh, I haven’t anything to tell you, really,” said the Beautiful Old Man. “I am only observing one of the customs of age. I am a pirate.”

And when he had taken his hand from the lad’s head the latter observed that his hair was full of clotted blood. Then the Beautiful Old Man went his way, instructing other youth.

A FORFEITED RIGHT

The Chief of the Weather Bureau having predicted a fair day, a Thrifty Person hastened to lay in a large stock of umbrellas, which he exposed for sale on the sidewalk; but the weather remained clear and nobody would buy. Thereupon the Thrifty Person brought an action against the Chief of the Weather Bureau for the cost of the umbrellas.

“Your Honor,” said the Defendant’s Attorney, when the case was called, “I move that this astonishing action be dismissed. Not only is my client in no way responsible for the loss, but he distinctly forecast the fair weather that caused it.”

“That is just it, your Honor,” replied the Counsel for the Plaintiff; “by making a correct forecast the defendant fooled my client in the only way that he could do so. He has lied so much and so notoriously that he has no right to tell the truth.”

Judgment for the plaintiff.

REVENGE

An Insurance Agent was trying to induce a Hard Man to Deal With to take out a policy on his house. After listening to him for an hour, while he painted in vivid colors the extreme danger of fire consuming the house, the Hard Man to Deal With said:

“Do you really think it likely that my house will burn down inside the time that my policy will run?”

“Certainly,” replied the Insurance Agent; “have I not been trying all this time to convince you that I do?”

“Then,” said the Hard Man to Deal With, “why are you so eager to have your Company bet me money that it will not?”

The Agent was silent and thoughtful for a moment; then he drew the other apart into an unfrequented place and whispered in his ear:

“My friend, I will impart to you a dark secret. Years ago the Company betrayed my sweetheart by promise of marriage. Under an assumed name I have wormed myself into its service for revenge; and as there is a heaven above us, I will have its heart’s blood!”

AN OPTIMIST

Two Frogs in the belly of a snake were considering their altered circumstances.

“This is pretty hard luck,” said one.

“Don’t jump to conclusions,” the other said; “we are out of the wet and provided with board and lodging.”

“With lodging, certainly,” said the First Frog; “but I don’t see the board.”

“You are a croaker,” the other explained. “We are the board.”

TWO FOOTPADS

Two Footpads sat at their grog in a roadside resort, comparing the evening's adventures.

"I stood up the Chief of Police," said the First Footpad, "and got away with what he had."

"And I," said the Second Footpad, "stood up the United States District Attorney, and got away with—"

"Good Lord!" interrupted the other in astonishment and admiration, "you got away with what that fellow had?"

"No," the unfortunate narrator explained, "with a small part of what I had."

EQUIPPED FOR SERVICE

During the Civil War a Patriot was passing through the State of Maryland with a pass from the President to join Grant's army and see the fighting. Stopping a day at Annapolis, he visited the shop of a well-known optician and ordered seven powerful telescopes, one for every day in the week. In recognition of this munificent patronage of the State's languishing industries, the Governor commissioned him a colonel.

THE BASKING CYCLONE

A Negro in a boat, gathering driftwood, saw a sleeping Alligator and thinking it was a log, fell to estimating the number of shingles it would make for his new cabin. Having satisfied his mind on that point, he stuck his boat-hook into the beast's back to harvest his good fortune. Thereupon the saurian emerged from his dream and, greatly to the surprise of the man-and-brother, took to the water, making a terrible commotion!

"I never befo' seen sech a cyclone as dat," the Negro exclaimed as soon as he had recovered his breath. "It done carry away de ruf of my house!"

A VALUABLE SUGGESTION

A Big Nation having a quarrel with a Little Nation, resolved to terrify its antagonist by a grand naval demonstration in the latter's principal port. So the Big Nation assembled all its ships of war from all over the world, and was about to send them three hundred and fifty thousand miles to the place of rendezvous, when the President of the Big Nation received the following note from the President of the Little Nation:

"My great and good friend, I hear that you are going to show us your navy in order to impress us with a sense of your power. How needless the expense! To prove to you that we already know all about it I inclose herewith a list and description of all the ships and guns that you have."

The great and good friend was so struck by the hard sense of the letter that he kept his navy at home, saving one thousand million dollars. This economy enabled him to buy a satisfactory decision when the cause of the quarrel was submitted to arbitration.

OPTIMIST AND CYNIC

A man who had experienced the favors of fortune and was an Optimist, met a man who had experienced an optimist and was a Cynic. So the Cynic turned out of the road to let the Optimist roll by in his gold carriage.

“My son,” said the Optimist, stopping the gold carriage, “you look as if you had not a friend in the world.”

“I don’t know if I have or not,” replied the Cynic, “for you have the world.”

THE TAKEN HAND

A Successful Man of Business having occasion to write to a Thief expressed a wish to see him and shake hands.

“No,” replied the Thief, “there are some things that I will not take—among them your hand.”

“You must use a little strategy,” said a Philosopher to whom the Successful Man of Business had reported the Thief’s haughty reply. “Leave your hand out some night and he will take it.”

So one night the Successful Man of Business left his hand out of a neighbor’s pocket and the Thief took it with avidity.

POET AND EDITOR

“My dear sir,” said the Editor to the Poet who had called to see about his poem, “I regret to say that owing to an unfortunate altercation in this office the greater part of your manuscript is illegible; a bottle of ink was upset upon it, blotting out all but the first line—that is to say—

“‘The autumn leaves were falling, falling.’

“Unluckily, not having read the poem, I was unable to supply the incidents that followed; otherwise we could have given them in our own words. If the news is not stale, and has not already appeared in the other papers, perhaps you will kindly relate what occurred, while I make notes of it. ‘The autumn leaves were falling, falling.’ Go on.”

“What!” said the Poet, “do you expect me to reproduce the entire poem from memory?”

“Only the substance of it—just the leading facts. We will add whatever is necessary in the way of amplification and embellishment. It will detain you but a moment. ‘The autumn leaves were falling, falling—’ Now, then.”

There was a sound of a slow getting up and going away. The chronicler of passing events sat through it, motionless, with suspended pen; and when the movement was complete Poesy was represented in that place by nothing but a warm spot on a chair.

AT THE POLE

After a great expenditure of life and treasure a Daring Explorer had succeeded in reaching the North Pole, when he was approached by a Native Galeut who lived there.

“Good morning,” said the Native Galeut. “I’m very glad to see you, but why did you come here?”

“Glory,” said the Daring Explorer, curtly.

“Yes, yes, I know,” the other persisted; “but of what benefit to man is your discovery? To what truths does it give access which were inaccessible before?—facts, I mean, having a scientific value?”

“I’ll be Tom scatted if I know,” the great man replied, frankly; “you will have to ask the Scientist of the Expedition.”

But the Scientist of the Expedition explained that he had been so engrossed with the care of his instruments and the study of his tables that he had found no time to think of it.

PARTY MANAGER AND GENTLEMAN

A Party Manager said to a Gentleman whom he saw minding his own business:

“How much will you pay for a nomination to office?”

“Nothing,” the Gentleman replied.

“But you will contribute something to the campaign fund to assist in your election, will you not?” asked the Party Manager, winking.

“Oh, no,” said the Gentleman, gravely. “If the people wish me to work for them they must hire me without solicitation. I am very comfortable without office.”

“But,” urged the Party Manager, “an election is a thing to be desired. It is a high honor to be a servant of the people.”

“If servitude is a high honor,” the Gentleman said, “it would be indecent for me to seek it; and if obtained by my own exertion it would be no honor.”

“Well,” persisted the Party Manager, “you will at least, I hope, indorse the party platform.”

The Gentleman replied: “It is improbable that its authors have accurately expressed my views without consulting me; and if I indorsed their work without approving it I should be a liar.”

“You are a detestable hypocrite and an idiot!” shouted the Party Manager.

“Even your good opinion of my fitness,” replied the Gentleman, “shall not persuade me.”

AN UNSPEAKABLE IMBECILE

A Judge said to a Convicted Assassin:

“Prisoner at the bar, have you anything to say why the death-sentence should not be passed upon you?”

“Will what I say make any difference?” asked the Convicted Assassin.

“I do not see how it can,” the Judge answered, reflectively. “No, it will not.”

“Then,” said the doomed one, “I should like to remark that you are the most unspeakable old imbecile in seven States and the District of Columbia.”

MINE-OWNER AND JACKASS

While the Owner of a Silver Mine was on his way to attend a convention of his species he was accosted by a Jackass, who said:

“By an unjust discrimination against quadrupeds I am made ineligible to a seat in your convention; so I am compelled to seek representation through you.”

“It will give me great pleasure, sir,” said the Owner of a Silver Mine, “to serve one so closely allied to me in—in—well, you know,” he added, with a significant gesture of his two hands upward from the sides of his head. “What do you want?”

“Oh, nothing—nothing at all for myself individually,” replied the Donkey; “but his country’s welfare should be a patriot’s supreme care. If Americans are to retain the sacred liberties for which their fathers strove Congress must declare our independence of European dictation by maintaining the price of mules.”

A NEEDFUL WAR

The people of Kamzembla had an antipathy to the people of Novakatka and set upon some sailors of a Novakatkan vessel, killing two and wounding twelve. The King of Kamzembla having refused either to apologize or pay, the King of Novakatka made war upon him, saying that it was necessary to show that Novakatkans must not be slaughtered. In the battles that ensued the people of Kamzembla slaughtered two thousand Novakatkans and wounded twelve thousand. But the Kamzemblans were unsuccessful, which so chagrined them that never thereafter in all their land was a Novakatkan secure in property or life.

DOG AND DOCTOR

A Dog that had seen a Doctor attending the burial of a wealthy patient, said: “When do you expect to dig it up?”

“Why should I dig it up?” the Doctor asked.

“When I bury a bone,” said the Dog, “it is with an intention to uncover it later and pick it.”

“The bones that I bury,” said the Doctor, “are those that I can no longer pick.”

LEGISLATOR AND CITIZEN

A former Legislator asked a Most Respectable Citizen for a letter to the Governor, recommending him for appointment as Commissioner of Shrimps and Crabs.

“Sir,” said the Most Respectable Citizen, austerely, “were you not once in the State Senate?”

“Not so bad as that, sir, I assure you,” was the reply. “I was a member of the Slower House. I was expelled for selling my influence.”

“And you dare to ask for mine!” shouted the Most Respectable Citizen. “You have the impudence? A man who will accept bribes will probably offer them. Do you mean to—”

“I should not think of making a corrupt proposal to you, sir; but if I were Commissioner of Shrimps and Crabs I might have some influence with the waterfront population, and be able to help you make your fight for Coroner.”

“In that case I do not feel justified in denying you the letter.”

CITIZEN AND SNAKES

A Public-spirited Citizen who had failed miserably in trying to secure a National political convention for his city suffered acutely from dejection. While in that frame of mind he leaned thoughtlessly against a druggist’s show-window, wherein were one hundred and fifty kinds of assorted snakes. The glass breaking, the reptiles all escaped into the street.

“When you can’t do what you wish,” said the Public-spirited Citizen, “it is worth while to do what you can.”

THE RAINMAKER

An Officer of the Government, with a great outfit of mule-wagons loaded with balloons, kites, dynamite bombs, and electrical apparatus, halted in the midst of a desert where there had been no rain for ten years and set up a camp. After several months of preparation and an expenditure of a million dollars all was in readiness, and a series of tremendous explosions occurred on the earth and in the sky. This was followed by a great downpour of rain, which washed the unfortunate Officer of the Government and the outfit off the face of creation and affected the agricultural heart with joy too deep for utterance. A Newspaper Reporter who had just arrived escaped by climbing a hill near by, and there he found the Sole Survivor of the expedition—a mule-driver—down on his knees behind a mesquite bush, praying with extreme fervor.

“Oh, you can’t stop it that way,” said the Reporter.

“My fellow-traveler to the bar of God,” replied the Sole Survivor, looking up over his shoulder, “your understanding is in darkness. I am not stopping this great blessing; under Providence, I am bringing it.”

“That is a pretty good joke,” said the Reporter, laughing as well as he could in the strangling rain—“a mule driver’s prayer answered!”

“Child of levity and scoffing,” replied the other; “you err again, misled by these humble habiliments. I am the Rev. Ezekiel Thrift, a minister, of the gospel, now in the service of the great manufacturing firm of Skinn & Sheer. They make balloons, kites, dynamite bombs and electrical apparatus.”

FORTUNE AND FABULIST

A Writer of Fables was passing through a lonely forest, when he met a Fortune. Greatly alarmed, he tried to climb a tree, but the Fortune pulled him down and bestowed itself upon him with cruel persistence.

“Why did you try to run away?” said the Fortune, when his struggles had ceased and his screams were stilled. “Why do you glare at me so inhospitably?”

“I don’t know what you are,” replied the Writer of Fables, deeply disturbed.

“I am wealth; I am respectability,” the Fortune explained; “I am elegant houses, a yacht and a clean shirt every day. I am leisure, I am travel, wine, a shiny hat and an unshiny coat. I am enough to eat.”

“All right,” said the Writer of Fables, in a whisper; “but for goodness’ sake speak lower!”

“Why so?” the Fortune asked, in surprise.

“So as not to wake me,” replied the Writer of Fables, a holy calm brooding upon his beautiful face.

A SMILING IDOL

An Idol said to a Missionary, “My friend, why do you seek to bring me into contempt? If it had not been for me what would you have been? Remember thy creator that thy days be long in the land.”

“I confess,” replied the Missionary, fingering a number of ten-cent pieces which a Sunday-school in his own country had forwarded to him, “that I am a product of you, but I protest that you cannot quote Scripture with accuracy and point. Therefore will I continue to go up against you with the sword of the Spirit.”

Shortly afterwards the Idol’s worshipers held a great religious ceremony at the base of his pedestal, and as a part of the rites the Missionary was roasted whole. As the tongue was removed for the high priest’s table, “Ah,” said the Idol to himself, “that is the

sword of the Spirit—the only sword that is less dangerous when unsheathed.”

And he smiled so pleasantly at his own wit that the provinces of M'gwana and Scowow were affected with a blight.

PHILOSOPHERS THREE

A Bear, a Fox and an Opossum were attacked by an inundation.

“Death loves a coward,” said the Bear, and went forward to fight the flood.

“What a fool!” said the Fox. “I know a trick worth two of that.” And he slipped into a hollow stump.

“There are malevolent forces,” said the Opossum, “which the wise will neither confront nor avoid. The thing is to know the nature of your antagonist.”

So saying the Opossum lay down and pretended to be dead.

THE BONELESS KING

Some Apes who had deposed their king fell at once into dissension and anarchy. In this strait they sent a Deputation to a neighboring tribe to consult the Oldest and Wisest Ape in All the World.

“My children,” said the Oldest and Wisest Ape in All the World, when he had heard the Deputation, “you did right in ridding yourselves of tyranny, but your tribe is not sufficiently advanced to dispense with the forms of monarchy. Entice the tyrant back with fair promises, kill him and enthrone. The skeleton of even the most lawless despot makes a good constitutional sovereign.”

At this the Deputation were greatly abashed. “It is impossible,” they said, moving away; “our king has no skeleton; he was a stuffed king.”

A TRANSPOSITION

Traveling through the sage-brush country a Jackass met a Rabbit, who exclaimed in great astonishment:

“Good heavens! how did you grow so big? You are doubtless the largest rabbit living.”

“No,” said the Jackass, “you are the smallest donkey.”

After a good deal of fruitless argument the question was referred for decision to a passing Coyote, who was a bit of a demagogue and desirous to stand well with both.

“Gentlemen,” said he, “you are both right, as was to have been expected of persons so gifted with appliances for receiving instruction from the wise. You, sir,”—turning to the superior animal—“are, as he has accurately observed, a rabbit. And you”—to the

other—"are correctly described as a jackass. In transposing your names man has acted with incredible folly."

They were so pleased with the decision that they declared the Coyote their candidate for the Grizzly Bearship; but whether he ever obtained the office history does not relate.

SIX AND ONE

The Committee on Gerrymander worked late into the night drawing intricate lines on a map of the State, and being weary sought repose in a game of poker. At the close of the game the six Republican members were bankrupt and the single Democrat had all the money. On the next day, when the Committee was called to order for business, one of the luckless six mounted his legs, and said:

"Mr. Chairman, before we bend to our noble task of purifying politics in the interest of good government I wish to say a word of the untoward events of last evening. If my memory serves me the disasters which overtook the Majority of this honorable body always befell when it was the Minority's deal. It is my solemn conviction, Mr. Chairman, and to its affirmation I pledge my life, my sacred fortune and my honor, that that wicked and unscrupulous Minority redistricted the cards!"

UNCALCULATING ZEAL

A man-eating tiger was ravaging the Kingdom of Damnasia, and the King, greatly concerned for the lives and limbs of his subjects, promised his daughter Zodroulra to any man who would kill the animal. After some days Camaraladdin appeared before the King and demanded the reward.

"But where is the tiger?" the King asked.

"May jackasses sing above my uncle's grave," replied Camaraladdin, "if I dared go within a league of him!"

"Wretch!" cried the King, unsheathing his consoler-under-disappointment; "how dare you claim my daughter when you have done nothing to earn her?"

"Thou art wiser, O King, than Solyman the Great, and thy servant is as dust in the tomb of thy dog, yet thou errest. I did not, it is true, kill the tiger, but behold! I have brought thee the scalp of a man who had accumulated five million pieces of gold and was after more."

The King drew his consoler-under-disappointment, and flicking off Camaraladdin's head said:

"Learn, caitiff, the inexpediency of uncalculating zeal. If the millionaire had been let alone he would have devoured the tiger."

THE HONEST CITIZEN

A Political Preferment, labeled with its price, was canvassing the State to find a purchaser. One day it offered itself to a Truly Good Man who after examining the label and finding that the price was twice as great as he was willing to pay spurned the Political Preferment from his door. Then the People said: "Behold, this is an honest citizen!" And the Truly Good Man humbly confessed that it was true.

A CREAKING TAIL

An American Statesman who had twisted the tail of the British Lion until his arms ached was at last rewarded by a sharp, rasping sound.

"I knew your fortitude would give out after a while," said the American Statesman, delighted; "your agony attests my political power."

"Agony I know not!" said the British Lion, yawning; "the swivel in my tail needs a few drops of oil, that is all."

SPORTSMAN AND SQUIRREL

A Sportsman who had wounded a Squirrel, which was making desperate efforts to drag itself away, ran after it with a stick, exclaiming:

"Poor thing! I will put it out of its misery."

At that moment the Squirrel stopped from exhaustion, and looking up at its enemy, said:

"I don't venture to doubt the sincerity of your compassion, though it comes rather late, but you seem to lack the faculty of observation. Do you not perceive by my actions that the dearest wish of my heart is to continue in my misery?"

At this exposure of his hypocrisy the Sportsman was so overcome with shame and remorse that he would not strike the Squirrel, but pointing it out to his dog, walked thoughtfully away.

FOGY AND SHEIK

A Fogy who lived in a cave near a great caravan route returned to his home one day and saw, near by, a great concourse of men and animals, and in their midst a tower, at the foot of which something with wheels smoked and panted like an exhausted horse. He sought the Sheik of the Outfit.

"What sin art thou committing now, O son of a Christian dog?" said the Fogy, with a truly Oriental politeness.

"Boring for water, you black-and-tan galoot!" replied the Sheik of the Outfit, with that ready repartee which distinguishes the Unbeliever.

"Knowest thou not, thou whelp of darkness and father of disordered livers," cried the Fogy, "that water will cause grass to

spring up here, and trees and possibly even flowers? Knowest thou not that thou art, in truth, producing an oasis?"

"And don't you know," said the Sheik of the Outfit, "that caravans will then stop here for rest and refreshment, giving you a chance to steal the camels, the horses and the goods?"

"May the wild hog defile my grave, but thou speakest wisdom!" the Foggy replied, with the dignity of his race, extending his hand. "Sheik."

They shook.

AT HEAVEN'S GATE

Having risen from the tomb, a Woman presented herself at the gate of Heaven, and knocked with a trembling hand.

"Madam," said Saint Peter, rising and approaching the wicket, "whence do you come?"

"From San Francisco," replied the Woman, with embarrassment, as great beads of perspiration spangled her spiritual brow.

"Never mind, my good girl," the Saint said, compassionately. "Eternity is a long time; you can live that down."

"But that, if you please, is not all." The Woman was growing more and more confused. "I poisoned my husband. I chopped up my babies. I—"

"Ah," said the Saint, with sudden austerity, "your confession suggests a grave possibility. Were you a member of the Women's Press Association?"

The lady drew herself up and replied with warmth:

"I was not."

The gates of pearl and jasper swung back upon their golden hinges, making the most ravishing music, and the Saint, stepping aside, bowed low, saying:

"Enter, then, into thine eternal rest."

But the Woman hesitated.

"The poisoning—the chopping—the—the—" she stammered.

"Of no consequence, I assure you. We are not going to be hard on a lady who did not belong to the Women's Press Association. Take a harp."

"But I applied for membership—I was blackballed."

"Take two harps."

WASTED SWEETS

A Candidate canvassing his district met a Nurse wheeling a Baby in a carriage and, stooping, imprinted a kiss upon the Baby's clammy muzzle. Rising, he saw a Man, who laughed.

"Why do you laugh?" asked the Candidate.

"Because," replied the Man, "the Baby belongs to an Orphan Asylum."

“But the Nurse,” said the Candidate—“the Nurse will surely relate the touching incident wherever she goes, and perhaps write to her former master.”

“The Nurse,” said the Man who had laughed, “is an illiterate mute.”

THE CATTED ANARCHIST

An Anarchist Orator who had been struck in the face with a Dead Cat by some Respector of Law to him unknown, had the Dead Cat arrested and taken before a Magistrate.

“Why do you appeal to the law?” said the Magistrate—“you who go in for abolition of law.”

“That,” replied the Anarchist, who was not without a certain hardness of head, “that is none of your business; I am not bound to be consistent. You sit here to do justice between me and this Dead Cat.”

“Very well,” said the Magistrate, putting on the black cap and a solemn look; “as the accused makes no defence, and is undoubtedly guilty, I sentence her to be eaten by the public executioner; and as that position happens to be vacant, I appoint you to it, without bonds.”

One of the most delighted spectators at the execution was the unknown Respector of Law who had flung the condemned.

THE HONORABLE MEMBER

A member of a Legislature who had pledged himself to his Constituents not to steal brought home at the end of the session a large part of the dome of the Capitol. Thereupon the Constituents held an indignation meeting and passed a resolution of tar and feathers.

“You are most unjust,” said the Member of the Legislature. “It is true I promised you that I would not steal; but had I ever promised you that I would not lie?”

The Constituents said he was an honorable man and elected him to the United States Congress, unpledged and unfledged.

THE EXPATRIATED BOSS

A Boss who had gone to Canada was taunted by a Citizen of Montreal with having fled to avoid prosecution.

“You do me a grave injustice,” said the Boss, parting with a pair of tears. “I came to Canada solely because of its political attractions; its Government is said to be the most corrupt in the world.”

“Pray forgive me,” said the Citizen of Montreal.

They fell upon each other’s neck, and at the conclusion of that touching rite the Boss had two watches.

AN INADEQUATE FEE

An Ox unable to extricate himself from the mire into which he sank was advised to make use of a Political Pull. When the Political Pull had arrived the Ox said: "My good friend, please make fast to me and let nature take her course."

So the Political Pull made fast to the Ox's head and nature took her course: the Ox was drawn, first, from the mire and next from his skin. Then the Political Pull looked back upon the good fat carcass of beef that he was dragging to his lair and said, with a discontented spirit:

"That is hardly my customary fee; I'll take home this first installment, then return for the skin."

A STATESMAN

A Statesman who attended a meeting of a Chamber of Commerce rose to speak, but was objected to on the ground that he had nothing to do with commerce.

"Mr. Chairman," said an Aged Member, rising, "I conceive that the objection is not well taken; the gentleman's connection with commerce is close and intimate. He is a commodity."

TWO DOGS

The Dog as created had a rigid tail, but after some centuries of a cheerless existence, unappreciated by Man, who made him work for his living, he implored the Creator to endow him with a wag. This being done he was able to dissemble his resentment with a sign of affection, and the earth was his and the fullness thereof. Observing this, the Politician (an animal created later) petitioned that a wag might be given him too. As he was incaudate it was conferred upon his chin, which he now wags with great profit and gratification except when he is at his meals.

JUDGE AND PLAINTIFF

A Man of Experience in Business was awaiting the judgment of the Court in an action for damages that he had brought against a railway company. The door opened and the Judge of the Court entered.

"Well," said he, "I am going to decide your case to-day. If I should decide in your favor I wonder how you would express your satisfaction."

"Sir," said the Man of Experience in Business, "I should risk your anger by offering you one-half the sum awarded."

"Did I say I was going to decide that case?" said the Judge, abruptly, as if awakening from a dream, "Dear me, how absent-minded I am! I mean I have already decided it, and judgment has been entered for the full amount that you sued for."

“Did I say I would give you one-half?” said the Man of Experience in Business, coldly. “Dear me, how near I came to being a rascal! I mean, that I am greatly obliged to you.”

RETURN OF THE REPRESENTATIVE

Hearing that the Legislature had adjourned, the People of an Assembly District held a mass-meeting to devise a suitable punishment for their Dishonorable Representative. By one speaker it was proposed that he be disembowelled, by another that he be made to run the gauntlet. Some favored hanging, some thought that it would do him good to appear in a suit of tar and feathers. An Old Man famous for his wisdom and his habit of drooling on his shirt-front suggested that they first catch their hare. So the Chairman appointed a committee to watch for the victim at midnight and take him as he should attempt to sneak into town across-lots from the tamarack swamp. At this point in the proceedings they were interrupted by the sound of a brass band. Their Dishonorable Representative was driving up from the railway station in a coach-and-four, with music and a banner. A few moments later he entered the hall, went upon the platform and said it was the proudest moment of his life. (Cheers.)

THE MIRROR

A silken-eared Spaniel who traced his descent from King Charles the Second chanced to look into a mirror that was leaning against the wainscoting of a room on the ground floor of his mistress' house. Seeing his reflection, he supposed it to be another dog, outside, and said:

“I can chew up any such milksoppy pup as that, and I will.”

So he ran out-of-doors and around to the side of the house where he fancied the enemy was. It so happened that at that moment a Bulldog sat there sunning his teeth. The Spaniel stopped short in dire consternation and after regarding the Bulldog a moment from a safe distance said:

“I don't know whether you cultivate the arts of peace or your flag is flung to the battle and the breeze and your voice is for war. If you are a civilian the windows of this house flatter you worse than a newspaper, but if you're a soldier they do you a grave injustice.”

This speech being unintelligible to the Bulldog he only civilly smiled, which so terrified the Spaniel that he dropped dead in his tracks.

SAINT AND SINNER

“My friend,” said a distinguished officer of the Salvation Army to a Most Wicked Sinner, “I was once a drunkard, a thief, an assassin. The Divine Grace has made me what I am.”

The Most Wicked Sinner looked at him from head to foot. "Henceforth," he said, "the Divine Grace, I fancy, will let well enough alone."

A WEARY ECHO

A Convention of female writers, which for two days had been stuffing Woman's couch with goose-quills and hailing the down of a new era, adjourned with unabated enthusiasm, shouting, "*Place aux dames!*" And Echo wearily replied, "O, damn."

THREE RECRUITS

A Farmer, an Artisan and a Laborer went to the King of their country and complained that they were compelled to support a large standing army of consumers, who did nothing for their keep.

"Very well," said the King, "my subjects' wishes are the highest law."

So he disbanded his army and the consumers became producers also. The sale of their products so brought down prices that farming was ruined and their skilled and unskilled labor drove artisans and laborers into almshouses and highways. In a few years the national distress was so great that the Farmer, the Artisan and the Laborer petitioned the King to restore the standing army.

"What!" said the King; "you wish to support those idle consumers again?"

"No, your Majesty," they replied—"we wish to enlist."

THE ANCIENT ORDER

Hardly had that ancient order, the Sultans of Exceeding Splendor, been completely founded by the Grand Flashing Inaccessible, when a question arose as to what should be the title of address among the members. Some wanted it to be simply "my lord," others held out for "your dukeness," and still others preferred "my sovereign liege." Finally the gorgeous jewel of the order gleaming upon the breast of every member suggested "your badgesty," which was adopted and the order became popularly known as the Kings of Catarrh.

A FATAL DISORDER

A Dying Man who had been shot was requested by officers of the law to make a statement and be quick about it.

"You were assaulted without provocation, of course," said the District Attorney preparing to set down the answer.

"No," replied the Dying Man, "I was the aggressor."

"Yes, I understand," said the District Attorney; "you committed the aggression—you were compelled to, as it were. You did it in self-defence."

“I don’t think he would have hurt me if I had let him alone,” said the other. “No, I fancy he was a man of peace and would not have hurt a fly. I brought such a pressure to bear on him that he naturally had to yield—he couldn’t hold out. If he had refused to shoot me I don’t see how I could decently have continued his acquaintance.”

“Good Heavens!” exclaimed the District Attorney, throwing down his notebook and pencil; “this is all quite irregular. I can’t make use of such an ante-mortem statement as that.”

“I never before knew a man to tell the truth,” said the Chief of Police, “when dying of violence.”

“Violence nothing!” the Police Surgeon said, pulling out and inspecting the man’s tongue—“it is the truth that is killing him.”

A TALISMAN

Having been summoned to serve as a juror, a Prominent Citizen sent a physician’s certificate stating that he was afflicted with softening of the brain.

“The gentleman is excused,” said the Judge, handing back the certificate to the person who had brought it—“he has a brain.”

AN ANTIDOTE

A Young Ostrich came to its Mother, groaning with pain and with its wings tightly crossed upon its stomach.

“What have you been eating?” the Mother asked, with solicitude.

“Nothing but a keg of nails,” was the reply.

“What!” exclaimed the Mother; “a whole keg of nails, at your age! Why, you will kill yourself that way. Go quickly, my child, and swallow a claw-hammer.”

CONGRESS AND PEOPLE

Successive Congresses having greatly impoverished the People, they were discouraged and wept copiously.

“Why do you weep?” inquired an Angel who had perched upon a tree near by.

“They have taken all we have,” replied the People—“excepting,” they added, noting the suggestive visitant—“excepting our hope in Heaven. Thank God they cannot deprive us of that!”

But at last came the Congress of 1889!

SHIP AND MAN

Seeing a ship sailing by upon the sea of politics, toward the Presidency, an Ambitious Person started in hot pursuit along the strand; but the people’s eyes being fixed upon the ship no one observed the pursuer. This greatly annoyed him and, recollecting

that he was not aquatic, he stopped and shouted across the waves' tumultuous roar:

"Take my name off the passenger list."

Back to him over the waters, hollow and heartless, like laughter in a tomb, rang the voice of the Skipper:

"Tain't on!"

And there, in the focus of a million pairs of convergent eyes, the Ambitious Person sat him down between the sun and moon and murmured sadly to his own soul:

"Marooned, by thunder!"

THE JUSTICE AND HIS ACCUSER

An eminent Justice of the Supreme Court of Gowk was accused of having obtained his appointment by fraud.

"You wander," he said to the Accuser; "it is of little importance how I obtained my power; it is only important how I have used it."

"I confess," said the Accuser, "that in comparison with the rascally way in which you have conducted yourself on the Bench the rascally way in which you got there does seem rather a trifle."

AN AEROPHOBE

A Celebrated Divine having affirmed the fallibility of the Bible, was asked why, then, he preached the religion founded on it.

"If it is fallible," he replied, "there is the greater reason that I explain it, lest it mislead."

"Then am I to infer," said his Questioner, "that you are not fallible?"

"You are to infer that I am not pneumophagous."

THE THRIFT OF STRENGTH

A Weak Man going down-hill met a Strong Man going up, and said:

"I take this direction because it requires less exertion, not from choice. I pray you, sir, assist me to regain the summit."

"Gladly," said the Strong Man, his face illuminated with the glory of his thought. "I have always considered my strength a sacred gift in trust for my fellow-men. I will take you up with me. Go behind me and push."

THE TYRANT FROG

A Snake swallowing a frog head-first was approached by a Naturalist with a stick.

"Ah, my deliverer," said the Snake as well as he could, "you have arrived just in time; this reptile, you see, is pitching into me without provocation."

“Sir,” replied the Naturalist, “I need a snakeskin for my collection, but if you had not explained I should not have molested you, for I thought you were at dinner.”

TWO POLITICIANS

Two Politicians were exchanging ideas regarding the rewards for public service.

“The reward that I most desire,” said the First Politician, “is the gratitude of my fellow citizens.”

“That would be very gratifying, no doubt,” said the Second Politician, “but, alas! in order to obtain it one has to retire from politics.”

For an instant they gazed upon each other with inexpressible tenderness; then the First Politician murmured, “God’s will be done! Since we cannot hope for reward let us be content with what we have.”

And lifting their right hands for a moment from the public treasury they swore to be content.

THE FUGITIVE OFFICE

A Traveler arriving at the capital of a nation saw a vast plain outside the wall, filled with struggling and shouting men. While he looked upon the alarming spectacle an Office broke away from the throng and took shelter in a tomb near to where he stood, the crowd being too intent upon hammering one another to observe that the cause of their contention had departed.

“Poor bruised and bleeding creature,” said the compassionate Traveler, “what was your offense?”

“I ‘sought the man,” said the Office.

HIGHWAYMAN AND TRAVELER

A Highwayman confronted a Traveler, and covering him with a firearm, shouted: “Your money or your life!”

“My good friend,” said the Traveler, “according to the terms of your demand my money will save my life, my life my money; you imply that you will take one or the other, but not both. If that is what you mean please be good enough to take my life.”

“That is not what I mean,” said the Highwayman; “you cannot save your money by giving up your life.”

“Then take it anyhow,” the Traveler said. “If it will not save my money it is good for nothing.”

The Highwayman was so pleased with the Traveler’s philosophy and wit that he took him into partnership and this splendid combination of talent started a newspaper.

THE ELIGIBLE SON-IN-LAW

A Truly Clever Person who conducted a savings bank and lent money to his sisters and his cousins and his aunts was approached by a Tatterdemalion who applied for a loan of one hundred thousand dollars.

“What security have you to offer?” asked the Truly Clever Person.

“The best in the world,” the applicant replied, confidentially; “I am about to become your son-in-law.”

“That would indeed be gilt-edged,” said the Banker, gravely; “but what claim have you to the hand of my daughter?”

“One that cannot be lightly denied,” said the Tatterdemalion. “I am about to become worth one hundred thousand dollars.”

Unable to detect a weak point in this scheme of mutual advantage, the Financier gave the Promoter in Disguise an order for the money and wrote a note to his wife directing her to count out the girl.

STATESMAN AND HORSE

A Statesman who had saved his country was returning from Washington on foot, when he met a Race Horse going at full speed, and stopped him.

“Turn about and travel the other way,” said the Statesman, “and I will keep you company as far as my home. The advantages of traveling together are obvious.”

“I cannot do that,” said the Race Horse; “I am following my master to Washington. I did not go fast enough to suit him, and he has gone on ahead.”

“Who is your master?” inquired the Statesman.

“He is a Statesman who saved his country,” answered the Race Horse.

“There appears to be some mistake,” the other said. “Why did he wish to travel so fast?”

“So as to be there in time to get the country that he saved.”

“I guess he got it,” said the other, and limped along, sighing.

POLICEMAN AND CITIZEN

A Policeman finding a man who had fallen in a fit said, “This man is drunk,” and began beating him on the head with his club. A passing Citizen said:

“Why do you murder a man that is already harmless?”

Thereupon the Policeman left the man in a fit and attacked the Citizen, who after receiving several severe contusions ran away.

“Alas,” said the Policeman, “why did I not attack the sober one before exhausting myself upon the other?”

Thenceforward he pursued that plan, and by zeal and diligence rose to be Chief, and sobriety is unknown in the region subject to his sway.

MAN AND BIRD

A Man with a Shotgun said to a Bird:

“It is all nonsense, you know, about shooting being a cruel sport. I put my skill against your cunning—that is all there is of it. It is a fair game.”

“True,” said the Bird, “but I don’t wish to play.”

“Why not?” inquired the Man with a Shotgun.

“The game,” the Bird replied, “is fair as you say; the chances are about even; but consider the stake. I am in it for you, but what is there in it for me?”

Not being prepared with an answer to the question, the Man with a Shotgun sagaciously removed the propounder.

WRITER AND TRAMPS

An Ambitious Writer distinguished for the condition of his linen was traveling the high road to fame, when he met a Tramp.

“What is the matter with your shirt?” inquired the Tramp.

“It bears the marks of that superb unconcern which is the characteristic of genius,” replied the Ambitious Writer, contemptuously passing him by.

Resting by the wayside a little later, the Tramp carved upon the smooth bark of a birch-tree the words, “John Gump, Champion Genius.”

THE GOOD GOVERNMENT

“What a happy land you are!” said a Republican Form of Government to a Sovereign State. “Be good enough to lie still while I walk upon you, singing the praises of universal suffrage and descanting upon the blessings of civil and religious liberty. In the meantime you can relieve your feelings by cursing the one-man power and the effete monarchies of Europe.”

“My public servants have been fools and rogues from the date of your accession to power,” replied the State; “my legislative bodies, both State and municipal, are bands of thieves; my taxes are insupportable; my courts are corrupt; my cities are a disgrace to civilization; my corporations have their hands at the throat of every private interest—all my affairs are in disorder and criminal confusion.”

“That is all very true,” said the Republican Form of Government, putting on its hobnail shoes; “but consider how I thrill you every Fourth of July.”

THREE OF A KIND

A Lawyer was retained for the defence of a Burglar whom the police had taken after a desperate struggle with someone not in custody. In consultation with his client the Lawyer asked, "Have you accomplices?"

"Yes, sir," replied the Burglar. "I have two, but neither has been taken. I hired one to defend me against capture and you to defend me against conviction."

This answer deeply impressed the Lawyer, and having ascertained that the Burglar had accumulated no money in his profession he threw up the case.

THE LIFESAVER

An Ancient Maiden, standing on the edge of a wharf near a Modern Swain, was overheard rehearsing the words:

"Noble preserver! The life that you have saved is yours!"

Having repeated them several times with various intonations, she sprang into the water, where she was suffered to drown.

"I am a noble preserver," said the Modern Swain, thoughtfully moving away; "the life that I have saved is indeed mine."

FROM THE MINUTES

An Orator afflicted with atrophy of the organ of common-sense rose in his place in the halls of legislation and pointed with pride to his Unblotted Escutcheon. Seeing what it supposed to be the finger of scorn pointed at it, the Unblotted Escutcheon turned black with rage. Seeing the Unblotted Escutcheon turning black with what he supposed to be the record of his own misdeeds showing through the whitewash, the Orator fell dead of mortification. Seeing the Orator fall dead of what they supposed to be atrophy of the organ of common-sense, his colleagues resolved that whenever they should adjourn because they were tired it should be out of respect to the memory of him who had so frequently made them so.

THE FABULIST

An Illustrious Satirist was visiting a traveling menagerie with a view to collecting literary materials. As he was passing near the Elephant that animal said:

"How sad that so justly famous a censor should mar his work by ridicule of persons with pendulous noses—who are the salt of the earth!"

The Kangaroo said:

"I do so enjoy that great man's censure of the ridiculous—particularly his attacks on the proboscidæ; but, alas! he has no reverence for the marsupials, and laughs at our way of carrying our young in a pouch."

The Camel said:

“If he would only respect the Sacred Hump, he would be faultless. As it is, I can not permit his work to be read in the presence of my family.”

The Ostrich, seeing his approach, thrust her head into the straw, saying:

“If I do not conceal myself, he may be reminded to write something disagreeable about my lack of a crest, or my appetite for scrap-iron; and although he is inexpressibly brilliant when he devotes himself to ridicule of folly and greed, his dullness is matchless when he transcends the limits of legitimate comment.”

“That,” said the Buzzard to his mate, “is the distinguished author of that glorious fable, ‘The Ostrich and the Keg of Raw Nails.’ I regret to add, that he wrote also, ‘The Buzzard’s Feast,’ in which a carrion diet is contumeliously disparaged. A carrion diet is the foundation of sound health. If nothing but corpses were eaten, death would be unknown.”

Seeing an attendant approaching, the Illustrious Satirist passed out of the tent and mingled with the crowd. It was afterward discovered that he had crept in under the canvas without paying.

A REVIVALIST REVIVED

A Revivalist who had fallen dead in the pulpit from too violent religious exercise was astonished to wake up in Hades. He promptly sent for the Adversary of Souls and demanded his freedom, explaining that he was entirely orthodox, and had always led a pious and holy life.

“That is all very true,” said the Adversary, “but you taught by example that a verb should not agree with its subject in person and number, whereas the Good Book says that contention is worse than a dinner of herbs. You also tried to release the objective case from its thralldom to the preposition, and it is written that servants should obey their masters. You stay right here.”

THE DEBATERS

A Hurlled-back Allegation which after a brief rest had again started forth upon its mission of mischief met an Inkstand in mid-air.

“How did the Honorable Member whom you represent know that I was coming again?” inquired the Hurlled-back Allegation.

“He did not,” the Inkstand replied; “he isn’t at all forehanded at repartee.”

“Why, then, do you come, things being even when he had hurled me back?”

“He wanted to be a little ahead.”

TWO OF THE PIOUS

A Christian and a Heathen in His Blindness were disputing, when the Christian, with that charming consideration which serves to distinguish the truly pious from wolves that perish, exclaimed:

“If I could have my way I’d blow up all your gods with dynamite.”

“And if I could have mine,” retorted the Heathen in His Blindness, bitterly malevolent but oleagiously suave, “I’d fan all yours out of the universe.”

THE DESPERATE OBJECT

A Dishonest Gain was driving in its luxurious carriage through its private park, when it saw something which frantically and repeatedly ran against a stone wall, endeavoring to butt out its brains.

“Hold, hold! thou desperate Object,” cried the Dishonest Gain; “these beautiful private grounds are no place for such work as thine.”

“True,” said the Object, pausing; “I have other and better grounds for it.”

“Then thou art a happy man,” said the Dishonest Gain, “and thy bleeding head is but mere dissembling. Who art thou, great actor?”

“I am known,” said the Object, dashing itself again at the wall, “as the Consciousness of Duty Well Performed.”

THE MOURNING BROTHERS

Observing that he was about to die, an Old Man called his two Sons to his bedside and expounded the situation.

“My children,” said he, “you have not shown me many marks of respect during my life, but you will attest your sorrow for my death. To him who the longer wears a weed upon his hat in memory of me shall go my entire fortune. I have made a will to that effect.”

So when the Old Man was dead each of the youths put a weed upon his hat and wore it until he was himself old, when, seeing that neither would give in, they agreed that the younger should leave off his weed and the elder give him half the estate. But when the elder applied for the property he found that there had been an Executor!

Thus were hypocrisy and obstinacy fitly punished.

A NEEDLESS LABOR

After waiting many a weary day to revenge himself upon a Lion for some unconsidered manifestation of contempt, a Skunk finally saw him coming and posting himself in the path ahead uttered the inaudible discord of his race. Observing that the Lion

gave no attention to the matter, the Skunk, keeping carefully out of reach, said:

“Sir, I beg leave to point out that I have set on foot an implacable odor.”

“My dear fellow,” the Lion replied, “you have taken a needless trouble; I already knew that you are not a rose.”

A FLOURISHING INDUSTRY

“Are the industries of this country in a flourishing condition?” asked a Traveler from a Foreign Land of the first Man he met in America.

“Splendid!” said the Man. “I have more orders than I can fill.”

“What is your business?” the Traveler from a Foreign Land inquired.

The Man replied, “I make boxing-gloves for the tongues of pugilists.”

PATRIOT AND BANKER

A Patriot who had taken office poor and retired rich was introduced at a bank where he desired to open an account.

“With pleasure,” said the Honest Banker; “we shall be glad to do business with you; but first you must make yourself an honest man by restoring what you stole from the Government.”

“Good heavens!” cried the Patriot; “if I do that, I shall have nothing to deposit with you.”

“I don’t see that,” the Honest Banker replied. “We are not the whole American people.”

“Ah, I understand,” said the Patriot, musing. “At what sum do you estimate this bank’s proportion of the country’s loss by me?”

“About a dollar,” answered the Honest Banker.

And with a proud consciousness of serving his country wisely and well he charged that sum to the account.

THE APPROPRIATE MEMORIAL

A High Public Functionary having died, the citizens of his town held a meeting to consider how to honor his memory, and Another High Public Functionary rose and addressed the meeting.

“Mr. Chairman and Gintlemen,” said the Other, “it sames to me, and I’m hopin’ yez wull approve the suggistion, that an appropriate way to honor the mimory of the decaised would be to erect an emolument sootably inscribed wid his vartues.”

The soul of the great man looked down from Heaven and wept.

A DEFECTIVE PETITION

An Associate Justice of the Supreme Court was sitting by a river when a Traveler approached and said:

“I wish to cross. Will it be lawful to use this boat?”

“It will,” was the reply; “it is my boat.”

The Traveler thanked him, and pushing the boat into the water embarked and rowed away. But the boat sank and he was drowned.

“Heartless man!” said an Indignant Spectator. “Why did you not tell him that your boat had a hole in it?”

“The matter of the boat’s condition,” said the great jurist, “was not brought before me.”

THE DISINTERESTED ARBITER

Two Dogs who had been fighting for a bone, without advantage to either, referred their dispute to a Sheep. The Sheep patiently heard their statements, then flung the bone into a pond.

“Why did you do that?” said the Dogs.

“Because,” replied the Sheep, “I am a vegetarian.”

THE REFORMED ANARCHIST

A famous Anarchist wrecked at sea was cast ashore upon the island of Gowqueechy, inhabited by the ancient and powerful tribe of Tumtums. He was found and taken before the Jamgrogrum, who asked him his political faith.

“We ask all strangers that,” the Jamgrogrum explained, “in the hope that some day we shall hear of political principles that are superior to ours.”

“I am an Anarchist,” answered the stranger; “I hold that all government is wicked, all laws are oppressive. I teach that all Jamgrogra should be assassinated.”

The monarch called his Prime Minister to his side and giving him some whispered instructions retired.

The next day, when the Prime Minister had presented himself at the palace and had eaten a handful of clay, as court etiquette required, he was asked by the Jamgrogrum for news of the Anarchist.

“May your Majesty’s tomb stand forever,” said the Prime Minister. “I had him taken to the baths and carefully washed all over.”

“Well?”

“When asked, according to your Majesty’s instructions, if he were still an Anarchist, he replied that no treatment, however harsh and cruel, could alter his convictions.”

“Indeed,” exclaimed the Jamgrogrum, with the dejected air of one deprived of a cherished illusion, “then my theory of the unity of dirt and anarchism is overthrown.”

“No, your Majesty,” said the Prime Minister; “he died ten minutes after the bath.”

TWO SONS

A Man had Two Sons. The elder was virtuous and dutiful, the younger wicked and crafty. When the father was about to die, he called them before him and said: "I have only two things of value—my herd of camels and my blessing. How shall I allot them?"

"Give to me," said the Younger Son, "thy blessing, for it may reform me. The camels I should be sure to sell and squander the money."

The Elder Son, disguising his joy, said that he would try to be content with the camels and a pious mind.

It was so arranged and the Man died. Then the wicked Younger Son went before the Cadi and said: "Behold, my brother has defrauded me of my lawful heritage. He is so bad that our father, as is well known, denied him his blessing; is it likely that he gave him the camels?"

So the Elder Son was compelled to give up the herd and was soundly bastinadoed for his rapacity.

THE FORTUNATE EXPLORER

An Emissary from the President of the United States to the Emperor of Abyssinia was taking leave of that sovereign, who, to attest his regret according to the custom of his country, let fall a flood of tears.

"My fame is assured," said the Emissary; "I have discovered the source of the Nile."

THE DUTIFUL SON

A Millionaire who had gone to an almshouse to visit his father met a Neighbor there, who was greatly surprised.

"What!" said the Neighbor, "you do sometimes visit your father?"

"If our situations were reversed," said the Millionaire, "I am sure he would visit me. The old man has always been rather proud of me. Besides," he added softly, "I had to have his signature; I am insuring his life."

WIDOW AND SOLDIER

A Widow whose husband had been hanged in chains was keeping vigil by the corpse the first night and tearfully beseeching the Sentinel who guarded it to let her steal it.

"Madam," he said, "I can no longer resist your entreaties; your beauty overcomes my sense of duty. I will deliver the body to you and take its place in the cage, where a stroke of my dagger will baffle justice and give me the happiness of dying for so lovely a lady."

"No," said the lady, "I cannot consent to the sacrifice of so noble a life. If indeed you look upon me with favor, assist me and

my servants to remove the sacred object to my chateau, where you shall remain in concealment until we can escape from the country.”

“Nay,” said the Sentinel, “I should surely be discovered and torn from your arms. In three days you can claim the body of your beloved husband; then you can confer upon an honorable soldier such happiness and distinction as you may think his devotion merits.”

“Three days!” the lady exclaimed. “That is long for waiting and short for flight. If unincumbered we may reach the frontier. Already the day begins to break—let us leave the body and set out.”

A NIGGARDLY OFFER

Two Soldiers lay dead upon the field of honor.

“What would you give to be alive again?” one asked the other.

“To the enemy, victory,” was the reply, “to my country, a long life of disinterested service as a civilian. What would you give?”

“The plaudits of my countrymen.”

“You are a pretty tight-fisted bargainer,” said the other.

DIPLOMACY

“If you do not submit my claim to arbitration,” wrote the President of Omohu to the President of Modugy, “I shall take immediate steps to collect it in my own way!”

“Sir,” replied the President of Modugy, “you may go to the devil with your threat of war.”

“My great and good friend,” wrote the other, “you mistake the character of my communication. It is an antepenultimatum.”

TWO SCEPTICS

Some heathens whose Idol was greatly weatherworn threw it into a river, and erecting a new one, engaged in public worship at its base.

“What is this all about?” inquired the New Idol.

“Father of Joy and Gore,” said the High Priest, “be patient and I will instruct you in the doctrines and rites of our holy religion.”

A year later, after a course of study in theology, the Idol asked to be thrown into the river, declaring himself an atheist.

“Do not let that trouble you,” said the High Priest—“so am I.”

A FAULTY PERFORMANCE

A pet Opossum belonging to a Great Critic stole his favorite kitten and was about to kill and eat it when she saw him approaching, and fearing detection she concealed it in her pouch.

“Well, my pretty one,” said the Great Critic, with condescension, “what new charms and graces have you to-day?”

Before she could reply the kitten set up a diligent and persistent mewling. When at last the music had ceased the Opossum said:

"I've been dabbling a little in mimicry and ventriloquism; I thought it would please you, sir."

"The desire to please is ever pleasing," the Great Critic answered, not without a touch of professional dignity, "but you have much to learn about the mewling of kittens."

AFTERMATH

"What is that great convulsion of nature?" Neptune asked, turning one ear upward toward the surface of the sea. "That, sir," replied a Triton, "is a furious engagement by the heroes of the Senegambian Navy."

"So soon again?" said the sea god in surprise. "And whom, pray, are they fighting this time?"

"One another," the Triton explained. "They have fallen out over their recent exploit in sinking the Timbuctonese fleet."

Neptune rose from his couch of coral and paced the ocean's floor with the nervous, irregular strides of one in anger. "See here!" he thundered, "we can't have this kind of thing! When I saw those squadrons fighting I felt that trouble would come of it. A sea fight is pretty to look at, and the music of guns lulls like the evensong of a mermaid in the gloaming, but always the entertainment is prelude to a savage and insupportable uproar among the victors. The next time you see sailors fighting at sea please prevent a disagreeable result by sinking both fleets."

THE PLAUDITS OF THE PEOPLE

A Man who had been mentioned for high political preferment explained through the newspapers that he was "not a candidate." Thereupon he was lustily cheered by the populace.

"Why do you not cheer?" some one asked a Silent Person standing moodily apart.

"Because," answered the Silent Person, "I understand these plaudits to be given for his humility. Whenever you raise the shout for his knowledge of the English language you can count on the assistance of both my lungs."

"Why, how is that?" asked those who stood nearest.

"A 'candidate' is one who has been nominated," said the Silent Person. "He has not succeeded, as yet, in moving Heaven and Earth sufficiently to procure that distinction."

A HALF LOAF

Having found the Enemy's fleet in a harbor, the Scourge of the Seas sank a collier in the narrow entrance; and then from his

cavernous helmet his merriment rang out over the waters like laughter from a tomb.

“Why this unseemly glee?” the Enemy signaled. “That hulk prevents my coming out.”

“I know that, alas!” the Scourge wigwagged back; “but it prevents my going in. That is better than no bread.”

BY THE RIVER MARGE

Seeing a Politician taking a bath an Observer, curious as to the singular habits of the lower animals, exclaimed:

“What! is nothing left for you to take more valuable than that? Why do you do this thing?”

“I have been in the hands of my friends,” replied the Politician.

“Then I should suggest skinning,” the Observer said.

“My friend, you are late: somebody suggested it to *them*. I am cleaning the finger marks off my bones.”

THE MAIN THING

A Poet proffering his work to an Editor said: “This is a small poem, but quality is the main thing. I venture to think you’ll find it true poetry.”

Having read it the Editor put it into a drawer and handing the Poet a ten-cent piece said:

“This is a smallish coin, but I am so bold as to hope that you will be pleased with its purity. It is nearly all silver.”

THE INCREDULOUS SUBORDINATE

A Commanding General retreating after defeat came upon the camp of a Subordinate, who was playing cards with his men.

“Why did you not march to my assistance, sir?” thundered the Commanding General. “Did you not hear the reports of my guns?”

“Reports? O, yes,” the Subordinate replied. “I heard them all right, but I did not believe them. I used to be a reporter.”

THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS

Having been told by an angel that Nouredin Becar was the happiest man in the world, the Sultan caused him to be brought to the palace and said:

“Impart to me, I command thee, the secret of thy happiness.”

“O father of the sun and the moon,” answered Nouredin Becar, “I did not know that I was happy.”

“That,” said the Sultan, “is the secret that I sought.”

Nouredin Becar retired in deep dejection, fearing that his new-found happiness might forsake him.

ATONEMENT

Two Women in heaven claimed one Man newly arrived.

“I was his wife,” said one.

“I his sweetheart,” said the other.

St. Peter said to the Man: “Go down to the Other Place—you have suffered enough.”

A PART OF THE WAGES

“Ours is a life of self-sacrifice,” said a Clergyman. “While others pursue gain or pleasure we burn the midnight oil in studying how to crack the hardest theological nuts. And all for what earthly reward?”

“Well,” said his Parishioner, thoughtfully, “there are, for example, the kernels.”

TWO PARROTS

An Author who had made a fortune by writing slang had a Parrot.

“Why have I not a gold cage?” asked the bird.

“Because,” said its master, “you are a better thinker than repeater, as your question shows. And we have not the same audience.”

TWIN INTOLERABLES

A Rattlesnake observing the approach of a Man with a Camera crept under a flat stone, leaving nothing exposed but the tip of his nose.

“I was not going to photograph you,” the Man with a Camera explained with a touch of sadness in his voice. “Holding the ancient faith in the divine wisdom of serpents, I have come to ask you why I am hated and shunned by all mankind.”

“Alas,” said the Rattlesnake, “the gods have denied me that knowledge. Can you tell me why I am myself not very much sought after as a companion?”

CONSOLATION

A great country having vindicated its courage and prowess by fifteen defeats in which none of its enemy’s troops suffered any damage, its Prime Minister sued for peace.

“I’ll not be hard on you,” said the Victor: “you shall keep everything except your colonies, your liberty, your credit and your self-respect.”

“Ah,” said the Prime Minister, “you are indeed magnanimous; you leave us our honor.”

FAMINE VERSUS PESTILENCE

“It is hard on you, my gallant friend,” said the Victorious Besieger, “but I must say it. Pestilence was among my troops, and if you had not surrendered to me I should have surrendered to you.”

“That is what I feared you would do,” replied the Vanquished Commander. “My men were eating their belts and cartridge boxes; we could not properly provide for you.”

THE MONARCHIST RECLAIMED

A recreant Citizen of a Great Republic went abroad, hoping to shine in “the fierce light that beats upon a throne.” While intriguing to be presented at the court of a fly-speck principality, he fell asleep and dreamed that he was visited by an Angel wearing the robes of a lord high chamberlain.

“Come,” said the Angel; “I will present you to all the crowned heads of Europe.”

Miraculously conveyed through the air, they arrived at the portal of a vast building. The visitor’s name and his rank in the order of the Dukes of Trade were announced, the great iron doors swung open and he found himself in the presence of all the crowned heads of Europe. The bodies had been carted away by the public scavenger.

The royal pageant so disappointed him that he awoke with a sigh, and returning to the land of the free, he plunged into patriotism, became a leader of the Mobocratic party and died an illustrious statesman with both hands in the public treasury.

SAINT AND SOUL

St. Peter was sitting at the gate of Heaven when a Soul approached, and, bowing civilly, handed him its card.

“I am very sorry, sir,” said St. Peter, after reading the card, “but I really cannot admit you. You will have to go to the Other Place. Sorry, sir, very sorry.”

“Don’t mention it,” said the Soul; “I have been all the month at a watering place, and it will be an agreeable change. I called only to ask if my friend Elihu Root is here.”

“No, sir,” the Saint replied; “Mr. Root is not dead.”

“O, I know that,” said the Soul. “I thought he might be visiting God.”

THE STATUE AT BUMBOOGLE

On a high hill overlooking the ancient city of Bumboogle is a colossal statue, erected by the nation, to the memory of the illustrious Gaaka-Wolwol, “the best and wisest of mankind.” A Traveler from a distant country said to the Custodian of the Statue, who is the highest officer of the realm: “The winds of the

sea, O Most Exalted, have not blown the fame of your great countryman to my native shores. What did he do?"

"Nothing; that is how we know him to have been good."

"But his wisdom—what did he say?"

"Nothing; that is how we know him to have been wise."

IMPROVIDENCE

A Person who had fallen from wealth to indigence appealed to a Rich Man for alms.

"No," said the Rich Man, "you did not keep what you had. What assurance have I that you will keep what I may give you?"

"But I don't want it to keep," the beggar explained; "I want to exchange it for bread."

"That is just the same," said the Rich Man. "You would not keep the bread."

SHEEP AND LION

"You are a beast of war," said the Sheep to the Lion, "yet men go gunning for you. Me, a believer in non-resistance, they do not hunt."

"They do not need to," replied the son of the desert; "they can breed you."

THE INCONSOLABLE WIDOW

A Woman in widow's weeds was weeping upon a grave.

"Console yourself, madam," said a Sympathetic Stranger. "Heaven's mercies are infinite. There is another man somewhere, besides your husband, with whom you can still be happy."

"There was," she sobbed—"there was, but this is his grave."

AN INTRUSION

Morality put her toe into international politics and it was promptly chopped off.

"A thousand thanks," said Diplomacy, with an engaging bow; "we will keep it in memory of a most distinguished honor."

And Morality has limped a little ever since.

THE TOLERANT SOVEREIGN

The Gamdoodle of Moop summoned his Secretary of War to an audience and said:

"Sir, you cannot be unaware of the great outcry that my loyal subjects are making against you. They say that you are a rascal."

"Your Majesty," replied the Secretary of War, "it is untrue."

"I'm right glad to hear it," the Gamdoodle replied, rising to intimate that the interview was at an end. But observing that the official did not depart, he aded: "Is there anything to say?"

“Yes, your Majesty,” the Secretary of War answered; “I wish to surrender my portfolio; for while the public outcry is untrue it is not unjust. I am a fool.”

At this the Gamdoodle was graciously pleased to smile. “My good man,” he said, “return to your duties. I am that way myself.”

THE MYSTERIOUS WORD

The Chief of a battalion of war correspondents read a manuscript account of a battle.

“My son,” he said to its Author, “your story is distinctly unavailable. You say we lost only two men instead of a hundred; that the enemy’s loss is unknown, instead of ten thousand, and that we were defeated and ran away. That is no way to write.”

“But consider,” expostulated the conscientious scribe, “my story may be tame with regard to the number of our casualties, disappointing as to the damage done to the enemy and shocking in its denouement, but it has the advantage of being the truth.”

“I don’t quite understand,” said the Chief, scratching his head.

“Why, the advantage,” the other exclaimed —“the merit—the distinction—the profitable excellence—the—”

“Oh,” said the Chief, “I know very well the signification of ‘advantage;’ but what the devil do you mean by ‘truth’?”

A BORN CAPTAIN

A Near-Sighted Man in Luzon met one day a Gorgeous Being whom he mistook for the American Commander.

“General,” he said, “do you not find the United States volunteers difficult to manage?”

“I might,” the Gorgeous Being replied, “if I were their commander; but, no, I am Aguinaldo.”

REVELATION

A Lion was attacked by a pack of famishing Wolves, who circled about him, howling as loud as they could, though none dared approach him.

“These are very useful creatures,” said the Lion, as he lay down for his afternoon nap—“they apprise me of my virtues. I never before knew that I was good to eat.”

SOLDIER AND VULTURE

A Soldier struggling through a pestilential morass saw a Vulture perching on the branch of a tree and solemnly snapping its beak.

“What are you?” asked the Soldier, who had never seen a Vulture. “You look like the father of all chickens.”

“Men call me all kinds of names,” the bird replied, “according to the language that they speak. I call myself an Expansionist.”

The soldier grew very grave. "I was that myself until now," he said, "but if you are the thing to be expanded I shall have to think about it."

But when he tried he found that heaven had not supplied him with a thinker.

HER HONOR THE MAYOR

A statesman running for Office had the bad luck to fall and break his heart. As he lay bewailing his hard fate the Office of which he had been in pursuit came back to him, keeping just out of reach.

"My poor friend," said the Office, "what was your business with me?"

"I wanted to hold you," the sufferer explained.

"I should think," the Office said, reproachfully, "that it would be much easier to go home and hold the baby."

"Alas," said the unfortunate Statesman, "my home is in Colorado and my wife is Mayor of Maverick—there is no baby."

IN ADVANCE OF HIS TIME

Some rowdies, having savagely beaten an Unoffending Person, were haled before a Judge and prosecuted by their victim. "I seem to remember you," said the Judge to the prosecuting witness. "Did you not make a speech on a street corner recently, denouncing law and tyranny?"

"I did, your Honor."

"The very Law to which you now appeal for protection?"

"Yes, your Honor, I hate all law."

"In short, you are an anarchist, are you not?"

"Yes, I am—but not a bigoted one."

"Well, I am not a bigoted enforcer of the law. The prisoners are discharged, and I invite attention to the fact that you are without standing in this court."

Soon afterward the Judge was removed from office, respected by all who knew him.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

A thirteen-inch gun having uttered a projectile relapsed into silence. Then sounded a Far, Faint Voice from beyond the earth's curvature: "Did you damage anything?"

"Did I damage anything?" echoed the portentous tube right scornfully. "If you are envious enough about that to investigate you will find a wide and ragged hole in the public treasury."

"Ah, permit me to introduce myself," said the Far, Faint Voice: "I am that hole. It is a wise child that knows its father—I had supposed myself due to the annual salary warrant of a Rear-Admiral."

THE UNSHREWD ASSASSIN

A convicted Murderer whom a Sheriff was engaged in hanging was asked if he had anything to say.

“Will it do me any good,” he inquired, “to say something?”

“That,” replied the Sheriff, adjusting the noose, “depends somewhat upon what you say. I thought you might perhaps put yourself into an easier frame of mind by damning the District Attorney.”

“How much does he owe you?” the Murderer asked.

“You are not so shrewd as you think yourself,” the Sheriff said; “I owe him fifty dollars.”

“It is pretty much the same thing,” said the Murderer.

“It is altogether the same thing,” the Sheriff assented, springing the drop—“to you.”

ENVIRONMENT

“Prisoner,” said the Judge, austerely, “you are justly convicted of murder. Are you guilty, or were you brought up in Kentucky?”

A CHAINED EAGLE

A Provincial Statesman newly elected to the parliament of Despotamia declared that he would introduce a resolution censuring the king. As he left the parliament house, he met a Stranger who warned him that if he persisted in his disloyal design he would lose his head.

“That,” said he, “would be a smaller privation than the loss of my liberty.”

“I do not know that,” said the Stranger. “Liberty is something that I cannot rightly appraise, never having had it. I am the king.”

THE POWERLESS POET

A Poet whose lines never would scan was summoned before the King and commanded to show cause why he should not be put to death.

“If your ear is imperfect,” said the King, “you could count your syllables on your fingers, like an honest workman.”

“May your Majesty outlive your Prime Minister by as many years as remain to you,” said the Poet, reverently. “I do count my syllables. But observe: my left hand lacks a finger—bitten off by a critic.”

“Then,” said the King, “why don’t you count on the right hand?”

“Alas!” was the reply of the Poet, as he held up the mutilated left, “that is impossible—there is nothing to count with! It is the forefinger that is lacking.”

“Unfortunate man!” exclaimed the sympathetic monarch. “We must make your limitations and disabilities immaterial. You shall write for the magazines.”

FROM GENERAL TO PARTICULAR

A Man of Candor said to his Wife: “I cannot permit you to think me better than I am. I have many vices and weaknesses.”

“That is only natural,” said she, smiling sweetly; “none of us is perfect.”

Encouraged by her magnanimity, he confessed to a particular falsehood that he had once told her.

“Abominable wretch!” she cried, and clapped her hands thrice.

Thereupon a gigantic Nubian slave appeared and dispatched him with a scimitar.

DISAPPOINTMENT

A Dog that had been engaged in pursuit of his own tail abandoned the chase and lying down curled up for repose. In his new posture he found his tail within easy reach of his teeth and seized it with avidity, but immediately released it, wincing with pain.

“After all,” he said, “there is more joy in pursuit than in possession.”

THE MERCIFUL ASPIRANT

A Person who had been made President was walking along a lonely road when he met an Aspirant to Office and called loudly for help. But nobody heard except the Aspirant, who said:

“I have here seven hundred and fifty recommendations for my appointment as National Inspector of Dead Dogs.”

The President fell upon his knees and explained that he had a wife and twenty-nine small children. The Aspirant put away the papers, taking some more from another pocket.

“These documents,” he said, “are affidavits of my neighbors; they attest my fitness for the office.”

The President wrung his hands and wept audibly. He said:

“Eight Cabinet officers are dependent on me for their bread, and most of them are orphans.”

The heart of the Aspirant to office was touched at last.

“I spare you,” he said, putting away his papers and moving on, “for the sake of those who cannot. Keep your National Inspectorship of Dead Dogs. It shall not be said that I am a hard man to deal with.”

The President rose and dusted his knees. “I could not have given it him without breaking my word,” he said to himself. “I have promised it to sixteen others.”

A DISCOMFITED PHILOSOPHER

The King of Remotia had a favorite Philosopher to whom he said:

“Thou hast been so faithful a slave that I am desirous to reward thee. Ask of me anything that thou wouldst have.”

“Give me,” said the Philosopher, “a hair from the head of a man that hath never flattered thee.”

The King promised and dismissed him. The next day he summoned him before the throne and handed him a hair.

“Thou art attempting to deceive me,” said the Philosopher, carefully scrutinizing the gift. “This hair is from the head of a flatterer who assured thee that he would think it an honor to give thee his head also.”

“Thou art not so astute as thou thinkest,” the King replied. “That hair is from the head of the only deaf mute in my kingdom.”

A MONARCH FOREARMED

The Emperor of Jiam being dissatisfied with himself resolved to make war upon the King of Geylon.

“You’d better not,” said the King.

“Why not?” the Emperor inquired, contemptuously—“in my realm every man is a soldier.”

“That is why not,” the King explained. “In mine every other man is a civilian.”

Perceiving that in peace the King had prepared for war, the bellicose Emperor prudently sought a more military antagonist.

WOLF AND TORTOISE

A Wolf meeting a Tortoise said: “My friend, you are the slowest thing out of doors. I do not see how you manage to escape from your enemies.”

“As I lack the power to run away,” replied the Tortoise, “Providence has thoughtfully supplied me with an impenetrable shell.”

The Wolf reflected a long time, then he said:

“It seems to me that it would have been just as easy to give you long legs.”

A CONDITION PRECEDENT

The King of Dogs was petitioned by one of his subjects, a reformer, to command that strangers when meeting should treat one another with amity and forbearance. He issued a royal rescript to that effect and ordered the Petitioner to cry it through the world; but whenever the herald appeared he was set upon by

the dogs of the locality and cruelly bitten before he could perform his duty.

“Alas!” he said, “I perceive that reform must be preceded by reformation.”

THE AMBITIOUS STATESMAN

A Man Out of Office applied for relief to the King of the Quakers.

“What can you do?” his Majesty asked.

“I have been a Secretary of War,” the Man Out of Office replied, “but I was deposed. That position in your Majesty’s Cabinet would, I think, be filled by me very creditably.”

The King being greatly pleased by the applicant’s manner and appearance, walked across the audience hall to his Prime Minister.

“Tell me how to make a vacancy in the Cabinet,” he said.

“Appoint one,” said the Prime Minister. “And permit me, Sire, to recommend the one with whom you have just been speaking.”

THE LIMIT

The King of the Faraway Islands appointed his horse prime minister and rode a man. Observing that under the new order of things the realm prospered, an Aged Statesman advised the king to turn himself out to grass and put an ox upon the throne.

“No,” said the sovereign, thoughtfully, “a good principle may be pushed to an injurious extreme. True reform stops short of revolution.”

AS USUAL

Annoyed by an Irrelevant Consideration, a Point-at-issue commanded her to get out of his hearing forthwith, but the Irrelevant Consideration gathered up her skirts and trampling him into the mire went her way amidst the plaudits of the populace.