

NEGLIGIBLE TALES

by

AMBROSE BIERCE

from THE COLLECTED WORKS
OF AMBROSE BIERCE, *volume VIII*



NEW YORK & WASHINGTON
THE NEALE PUBLISHING CO.
1911

Rosings Digital Publications



2012

CONTENTS

A BOTTOMLESS GRAVE

JUPITER DOKE, BRIGADIER GENERAL

THE WIDOWER TURMORE

THE CITY OF THE GONE AWAY

THE MAJOR'S TALE

CURRIED COW

A REVOLT OF THE GODS

THE BAPTISM OF DOBSHO

THE RACE AT LEFT BOWER

THE FAILURE OF HOPE & WANDEL

PERRY CHUMLY'S ECLIPSE

A PROVIDENTIAL INTIMATION

MR. SWIDLER'S FLIP-FLAP

THE LITTLE STORY

NEGLIGIBLE TALES

A BOTTOMLESS GRAVE

MY name is John Brenwalter. My father, a drunkard, had a patent for an invention for making coffee-berries out of clay; but he was an honest man and would not himself engage in the manufacture. He was, therefore, only moderately wealthy, his royalties from his really valuable invention bringing him hardly enough to pay his expenses of litigation with rogues guilty of infringement. So I lacked many advantages enjoyed by the children of unscrupulous and dishonorable parents, and had it not been for a noble and devoted mother, who neglected all my brothers and sisters and personally supervised my education, should have grown up in ignorance and been compelled to teach school. To be the favorite child of a good woman is better than gold.

When I was nineteen years of age my father had the misfortune to die. He had always had perfect health, and his death, which occurred at the dinner table without a moment's warning, surprised no one more than himself. He had that very morning been notified that a patent had been granted him for a device to burst open safes by hydraulic pressure, without noise. The Commissioner of Patents had pronounced it the most ingenious, effective and generally meritorious invention that had ever been submitted to him, and my father had naturally looked forward to an old age of prosperity and honor. His sudden death was, therefore, a deep disappointment to him; but my mother, whose piety and resignation to the will of Heaven were conspicuous virtues of her character, was apparently less affected. At the close of the meal, when my poor father's body had been removed from the floor, she called us all into an adjoining room and addressed us as follows:

"My children, the uncommon occurrence that you have just witnessed is one of the most disagreeable incidents in a good man's life, and one in which I take little pleasure, I assure you. I beg you to believe that I had no hand in bringing it about. Of course," she added, after a pause, during which her eyes were cast down in deep thought, "of course it is better that he is dead."

She uttered this with so evident a sense of its obviousness as a self-evident truth that none of us had the courage to brave her surprise by asking an explanation. My mother's air of surprise when any of us went wrong in any way was very terrible to us. One day, when in a fit of peevish temper, I had taken the liberty to cut off the baby's ear, her simple words, "John, you surprise me!" appeared to me so sharp a reproof that after a sleepless night I

went to her in tears, and throwing myself at her feet, exclaimed: "Mother, forgive me for surprising you." So now we all—including the one-eared baby—felt that it would keep matters smoother to accept without question the statement that it was better, somehow, for our dear father to be dead. My mother continued:

"I must tell you, my children, that in a case of sudden and mysterious death the law requires the Coroner to come and cut the body into pieces and submit them to a number of men who, having inspected them, pronounce the person dead. For this the Coroner gets a large sum of money. I wish to avoid that painful formality in this instance; it is one which never had the approval of—of the remains. John"—here my mother turned her angel face to me—"you are an educated lad, and very discreet. You have now an opportunity to show your gratitude for all the sacrifices that your education has entailed upon the rest of us. John, go and remove the Coroner."

Inexpressibly delighted by this proof of my mother's confidence, and by the chance to distinguish myself by an act that squared with my natural disposition, I knelt before her, carried her hand to my lips and bathed it with tears of sensibility. Before five o'clock that afternoon I had removed the Coroner.

I was immediately arrested and thrown into jail, where I passed a most uncomfortable night, being unable to sleep because of the profanity of my fellow-prisoners, two clergymen, whose theological training had given them a fertility of impious ideas and a command of blasphemous language altogether unparalleled. But along toward morning the jailer, who, sleeping in an adjoining room, had been equally disturbed, entered the cell and with a fearful oath warned the reverend gentlemen that if he heard any more swearing their sacred calling would not prevent him from turning them into the street. After that they moderated their objectionable conversation, substituting an accordion, and I slept the peaceful and refreshing sleep of youth and innocence.

The next morning I was taken before the Superior Judge, sitting as a committing magistrate, and put upon my preliminary examination. I pleaded not guilty, adding that the man whom I had murdered was a notorious Democrat. (My good mother was a Republican, and from early childhood I had been carefully instructed by her in the principles of honest government and the necessity of suppressing factional opposition.) The Judge, elected by a Republican ballot-box with a sliding bottom, was visibly impressed by the cogency of my plea and offered me a cigarette.

"May it please your Honor," began the District Attorney, "I do not deem it necessary to submit any evidence in this case. Under the law of the land you sit here as a committing magistrate. It is therefore your duty to commit. Testimony and argument alike would imply a doubt that your Honor means to perform your

sworn duty. That is my case.”

My counsel, a brother of the deceased Coroner, rose and said: “May it please the Court, my learned friend on the other side has so well and eloquently stated the law governing in this case that it only remains for me to inquire to what extent it has been already complied with. It is true, your Honor is a committing magistrate, and as such it is your duty to commit—what? That is a matter which the law has wisely and justly left to your own discretion, and wisely you have discharged already every obligation that the law imposes. Since I have known your Honor you have done nothing but commit. You have committed embracery, theft, arson, perjury, adultery, murder—every crime in the calendar and every excess known to the sensual and depraved, including my learned friend, the District Attorney. You have done your whole duty as a committing magistrate, and as there is no evidence against this worthy young man, my client, I move that he be discharged.”

An impressive silence ensued. The Judge arose, put on the black cap and in a voice trembling with emotion sentenced me to life and liberty. Then turning to my counsel he said, coldly but significantly:

“I will see you later.”

The next morning the lawyer who had so conscientiously defended me against a charge of murdering his own brother—with whom he had a quarrel about some land—had disappeared and his fate is to this day unknown.

In the meantime my poor father’s body had been secretly buried at midnight in the back yard of his late residence, with his late boots on and the contents of his late stomach unanalyzed. “He was opposed to display,” said my dear mother, as she finished tamping down the earth above him and assisted the children to litter the place with straw; “his instincts were all domestic and he loved a quiet life.”

My mother’s application for letters of administration stated that she had good reason to believe that the deceased was dead, for he had not come home to his meals for several days; but the Judge of the Crowbait Court—as she ever afterward contemptuously called it—decided that the proof of death was insufficient, and put the estate into the hands of the Public Administrator, who was his son-in-law. It was found that the liabilities were exactly balanced by the assets; there was left only the patent for the device for bursting open safes without noise, by hydraulic pressure and this had passed into the ownership of the Probate Judge and the Public Administrator—as my dear mother preferred to spell it. Thus, within a few brief months a worthy and respectable family was reduced from prosperity to crime; necessity compelled us to go to work.

In the selection of occupations we were governed by a variety

of considerations, such as personal fitness, inclination, and so forth. My mother opened a select private school for instruction in the art of changing the spots upon leopard-skin rugs; my eldest brother, George Henry, who had a turn for music, became a bugler in a neighboring asylum for deaf mutes; my sister, Mary Maria, took orders for Professor Pumpnickel's Essence of Latchkeys for flavoring mineral springs, and I set up as an adjuster and gilder of crossbeams for gibbets. The other children, too young for labor, continued to steal small articles exposed in front of shops, as they had been taught.

In our intervals of leisure we decoyed travelers into our house and buried the bodies in a cellar.

In one part of this cellar we kept wines, liquors and provisions. From the rapidity of their disappearance we acquired the superstitious belief that the spirits of the persons buried there came at dead of night and held a festival. It was at least certain that frequently of a morning we would discover fragments of pickled meats, canned goods and such débris, littering the place, although it had been securely locked and barred against human intrusion. It was proposed to remove the provisions and store them elsewhere, but our dear mother, always generous and hospitable, said it was better to endure the loss than risk exposure: if the ghosts were denied this trifling gratification they might set on foot an investigation, which would overthrow our scheme of the division of labor, by diverting the energies of the whole family into the single industry pursued by me—we might all decorate the cross-beams of gibbets. We accepted her decision with filial submission, due to our reverence for her worldly wisdom and the purity of her character.

One night while we were all in the cellar—none dared to enter it alone—engaged in bestowing upon the Mayor of an adjoining town the solemn offices of Christian burial, my mother and the younger children, holding a candle each, while George Henry and I labored with a spade and pick, my sister Mary Maria uttered a shriek and covered her eyes with her hands. We were all dreadfully startled and the Mayor's obsequies were instantly suspended, while with pale faces and in trembling tones we begged her to say what had alarmed her. The younger children were so agitated that they held their candles unsteadily, and the waving shadows of our figures danced with uncouth and grotesque movements on the walls and flung themselves into the most uncanny attitudes. The face of the dead man, now gleaming ghastly in the light, and now extinguished by some floating shadow, appeared at each emergence to have taken on a new and more forbidding expression, a maligner menace. Frightened even more than ourselves by the girl's scream, rats raced in multitudes about the place, squeaking shrilly, or starred the black opacity of some

distant corner with steadfast eyes, mere points of green light, matching the faint phosphorescence of decay that filled the half-dug grave and seemed the visible manifestation of that faint odor of mortality which tainted the unwholesome air. The children now sobbed and clung about the limbs of their elders, dropping their candles, and we were near being left in total darkness, except for that sinister light, which slowly welled upward from the disturbed earth and overflowed the edges of the grave like a fountain.

Meanwhile my sister, crouching in the earth that had been thrown out of the excavation, had removed her hands from her face and was staring with expanded eyes into an obscure space between two wine casks.

“There it is!—there it is!” she shrieked, pointing; “God in heaven! can’t you see it?”

And there indeed it was!—a human figure, dimly discernible in the gloom—a figure that wavered from side to side as if about to fall, clutching at the wine-casks for support, had stepped unsteadily forward and for one moment stood revealed in the light of our remaining candles; then it surged heavily and fell prone upon the earth. In that moment we had all recognized the figure, the face and bearing of our father—dead these ten months and buried by our own hands!—our father indubitably risen and ghastly drunk!

On the incidents of our precipitate flight from that horrible place—on the extinction of all human sentiment in that tumultuous, mad scramble up the damp and mouldy stairs—slipping, falling, pulling one another down and clambering over one another’s back—the lights extinguished, babes trampled beneath the feet of their strong brothers and hurled backward to death by a mother’s arm!—on all this I do not dare to dwell. My mother, my eldest brother and sister and I escaped; the others remained below, to perish of their wounds, or of their terror—some, perhaps, by flame. For within an hour we four, hastily gathering together what money and jewels we had and what clothing we could carry, fired the dwelling and fled by its light into the hills. We did not even pause to collect the insurance, and my dear mother said on her death bed, years afterward in a distant land, that this was the only sin of omission that lay upon her conscience. Her confessor, a holy man, assured her that under the circumstances Heaven would pardon the neglect.

About ten years after our removal from the scenes of my childhood I, then a prosperous forger, returned in disguise to the spot with a view to obtaining, if possible, some treasure belonging to us, which had been buried in the cellar. I may say that I was unsuccessful: the discovery of many human bones in the ruins had set the authorities digging for more. They had found the treasure and had kept it for their honesty. The house had not been rebuilt; the whole suburb was, in fact, a desolation. So many unearthly

sights and sounds had been reported thereabout that nobody would live there. As there was none to question nor molest, I resolved to gratify my filial piety by gazing once more upon the face of my beloved father, if indeed our eyes had deceived us and he was still in his grave. I remembered, too, that he had always worn an enormous diamond ring, and never having seen it nor heard of it since his death, I had reason to think he might have been buried in it. Procuring a spade, I soon located the grave in what had been the backyard and began digging. When I had got down about four feet the whole bottom fell out of the grave and I was precipitated into a large drain, falling through a long hole in its crumbling arch. There was no body, nor any vestige of one.

Unable to get out of the excavation, I crept through the drain, and having with some difficulty removed a mass of charred rubbish and blackened masonry that choked it, emerged into what had been that fateful cellar.

All was clear. My father, whatever had caused him to be “taken bad” at his meal (and I think my sainted mother could have thrown some light upon that matter) had indubitably been buried alive. The grave having been accidentally dug above the forgotten drain, and down almost to the crown of its arch, and no coffin having been used, his struggles on reviving had broken the rotten masonry and he had fallen through, escaping finally into the cellar. Feeling that he was not welcome in his own house, yet having no other, he had lived in subterranean seclusion, a witness to our thrift and a pensioner on our providence. It was he who had eaten our food; it was he who had drunk our wine—he was no better than a thief! In a moment of intoxication, and feeling, no doubt, that need of companionship which is the one sympathetic link between a drunken man and his race, he had left his place of concealment at a strangely inopportune time, entailing the most deplorable consequences upon those nearest and dearest to him—a blunder that had almost the dignity of crime.

JUPITER DOKE, BRIGADIER-GENERAL

From the Secretary of War to the Hon. Jupiter Doke, Hardpan Crossroads, Posey County, Illinois.

WASHINGTON, November 3, 1861.

HAVING faith in your patriotism and ability, the President has been pleased to appoint you a brigadier-general of volunteers. Do you accept?

From the Hon. Jupiter Doke to the Secretary of War.

HARDPAN, ILLINOIS, November 9, 1861.

It is the proudest moment of my life. The office is one which should be neither sought nor declined. In times that try men's souls the patriot knows no North, no South, no East, no West. His motto should be: "My country, my whole country and nothing but my country." I accept the great trust confided in me by a free and intelligent people, and with a firm reliance on the principles of constitutional liberty, and invoking the guidance of an all-wise Providence, Ruler of Nations, shall labor so to discharge it as to leave no blot upon my political escutcheon. Say to his Excellency, the successor of the immortal Washington in the Seat of Power, that the patronage of my office will be bestowed with an eye single to securing the greatest good to the greatest number, the stability of republican institutions and the triumph of the party in all elections; and to this I pledge my life, my fortune and my sacred honor. I shall at once prepare an appropriate response to the speech of the chairman of the committee deputed to inform me of my appointment, and I trust the sentiments therein expressed will strike a sympathetic chord in the public heart, as well as command the Executive approval.

From the Secretary of War to Major-General Blount Wardorg, Commanding the Military Department of Eastern Kentucky.

WASHINGTON, November 14, 1861.

I have assigned to your department Brigadier-General Jupiter Doke, who will soon proceed to Distilleryville, on the Little Buttermilk River, and take command of the Illinois Brigade at that point, reporting to you by letter for orders. Is the route from Covington by way of Bluegrass, Opossum Corners and Horsecave still infested with bushwackers, as reported in your last dispatch? I have a plan for cleaning them out.

From Major-General Blount Wardorg to the Secretary of War.

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, November 20, 1861.

The name and services of Brigadier-General Doke are unfamiliar to me, but I shall be pleased to have the advantage of his skill. The route from Covington to Distilleryville via Opossum Corners and Horsecave I have been compelled to abandon to the enemy, whose guerilla warfare made it possible to keep it open without detaching too many troops from the front. The brigade at Distilleryville is supplied by steamboats up the Little Buttermilk.

From the Secretary of War to Brigadier-General Jupiter Doke, Hardpan, Illinois.

WASHINGTON, November 26, 1861.

I deeply regret that your commission had been forwarded by mail before the receipt of your letter of acceptance; so we must dispense with the formality of official notification to you by a committee. The President is highly gratified by the noble and patriotic sentiments of your letter, and directs that you proceed at once to your command at Distilleryville, Kentucky, and there report by letter to Major-General Wardorg at Louisville, for orders. It is important that the strictest secrecy be observed regarding your movements until you have passed Covington, as it is desired to hold the enemy in front of Distilleryville until you are within three days of him. Then if your approach is known it will operate as a demonstration against his right and cause him to strengthen it with his left now at Memphis, Tennessee, which it is desirable to capture first. Go by way of Bluegrass, Opossum Corners and Horsecave. All officers are expected to be in full uniform when *en route* to the front.

From Brigadier-General Jupiter Doke to the Secretary of War.

COVINGTON, KENTUCKY, December 7, 1861.

I arrived yesterday at this point, and have given my proxy to Joel Briller, Esq., my wife's cousin, and a staunch Republican, who will worthily represent Posey County in field and forum. He points with pride to a stainless record in the halls of legislation, which have often echoed to his soul-stirring eloquence on questions which lie at the very foundation of popular government. He has been called the Patrick Henry of Hardpan, where he has done yeoman's service in the cause of civil and religious liberty. Mr. Briller left for Distilleryville last evening, and the standard bearer of the Democratic host confronting that stronghold of freedom will find him a lion in his path. I have been asked to remain here and deliver some addresses to the people in a local contest involving

issues of paramount importance. That duty being performed, I shall in person enter the arena of armed debate and move in the direction of the heaviest firing, burning my ships behind me. I forward by this mail to his Excellency the President a request for the appointment of my son, Jabez Leonidas Doke, as postmaster at Hardpan. I would take it, sir, as a great favor if you would give the application a strong oral indorsement, as the appointment is in the line of reform. Be kind enough to inform me what are the emoluments of the office I hold in the military arm, and if they are by salary or fees. Are there any perquisites? My mileage account will be transmitted monthly.

From, Brigadier-General Jupiter Doke to Major-General Blount Wardorg.

DISTILLERYVILLE, KENTUCKY, January 12, 1862.

I arrived on the tented field yesterday by steamboat, the recent storms having inundated the landscape, covering, I understand, the greater part of a congressional district. I am pained to find that Joel Briller, Esq., a prominent citizen of Posey County, Illinois, and a far-seeing statesman who held my proxy, and who a month ago should have been thundering at the gates of Disunion, has not been heard from, and has doubtless been sacrificed upon the altar of his country. In him the American people lose a bulwark of freedom. I would respectfully move that you designate a committee to draw up resolutions of respect to his memory, and that the office holders and men under your command wear the usual badge of mourning for thirty days. I shall at once place myself at the head of affairs here, and am now ready to entertain any suggestions which you may make, looking to the better enforcement of the laws in this commonwealth. The militant Democrats on the other side of the river appear to be contemplating extreme measures. They have two large cannons facing this way, and yesterday morning, I am told, some of them came down to the water's edge and remained in session for some time, making infamous allegations.

From the Diary of Brigadier-General Jupiter Doke, at Distilleryville, Kentucky.

January 12, 1862.—On my arrival yesterday at the Henry Clay Hotel (named in honor of the late far-seeing statesman) I was waited on by a delegation consisting of the three colonels intrusted with the command of the regiments of my brigade. It was an occasion that will be memorable in the political annals of America. Forwarded copies of the speeches to the Posey *Maverick*, to be spread upon the record of the ages. The gentlemen composing the

delegation unanimously reaffirmed their devotion to the principles of national unity and the Republican party. Was gratified to recognize in them men of political prominence and untarnished escutcheons. At the subsequent banquet, sentiments of lofty patriotism were expressed. Wrote to Mr. Wardorg at Louisville for instructions.

January 13, 1862.—Leased a prominent residence (the former incumbent being absent in arms against his country) for the term of one year, and wrote at once for Mrs. Brigadier-General Doke and the vital issues—excepting Jabez Leonidas. In the camp of treason opposite here there are supposed to be three thousand misguided men laying the ax at the root of the tree of liberty. They have a clear majority, many of our men having returned without leave to their constituents. We could probably not poll more than two thousand votes. Have advised my heads of regiments to make a canvass of those remaining, all bolters to be read out of the phalanx.

January 14, 1862.—Wrote to the President, asking for the contract to supply this command with firearms and regalia through my brother-in-law, prominently identified with the manufacturing interests of the country. Club of cannon soldiers arrived at Jayhawk, three miles back from here, on their way to join us in battle array. Marched my whole brigade to Jayhawk to escort them into town, but their chairman, mistaking us for the opposing party, opened fire on the head of the procession and by the extraordinary noise of the cannon balls (I had no conception of it!) so frightened my horse that I was unseated without a contest. The meeting adjourned in disorder and returning to camp I found that a deputation of the enemy had crossed the river in our absence and made a division of the loaves and fishes. Wrote to the President, applying for the Gubernatorial Chair of the Territory of Idaho.

From Editorial Article in the Posey, Illinois, "Maverick " January 20, 1862.

Brigadier-General Doke's thrilling account, in another column, of the Battle of Distilleryville will make the heart of every loyal Illinoisian leap with exultation. The brilliant exploit marks an era in military history, and as General Doke says, "lays broad and deep the foundations of American prowess in arms." As none of the troops engaged, except the gallant author-chieftain (a host in himself) hails from Posey County, he justly considered that a list of the fallen would only occupy our valuable space to the exclusion of more important matter, but his account of the strategic ruse by which he apparently abandoned his camp and so inveigled a perfidious enemy into it for the purpose of murdering the sick, the

unfortunate *countertempus* at Jayhawk, the subsequent dash upon a trapped enemy flushed with a supposed success, driving their terrified legions across an impassable river which precluded pursuit—all these “moving accidents by flood and field” are related with a pen of fire and have all the terrible interest of romance.

Verily, truth is stranger than fiction and the pen is mightier than the sword. When by the graphic power of the art preservative of all arts we are brought face to face with such glorious events as these, the *Maverick's* enterprise in securing for its thousands of readers the services of so distinguished a contributor as the Great Captain who made the history as well as wrote it seems a matter of almost secondary importance. For President in 1864 (subject to the decision of the Republican National Convention) Brigadier-General Jupiter Doke, of Illinois!

*From Major-General Blount Wardorg to Brigadier-General
Jupiter Doke.*

LOUISVILLE, January 22, 1862.

Your letter apprising me of your arrival at Distilleryville was delayed in transmission, having only just been received (open) through the courtesy of the Confederate department commander under a flag of truce. He begs me to assure you that he would consider it an act of cruelty to trouble you, and I think it would be. Maintain, however, a threatening attitude, but at the least pressure retire. Your position is simply an outpost which it is not intended to hold.

From Major-General Blount Wardorg to the Secretary of War.

LOUISVILLE, January 23, 1862.

I have certain information that the enemy has concentrated twenty thousand troops of all arms on the Little Buttermilk. According to your assignment, General Doke is in command of the small brigade of raw troops opposing them. It is no part of my plan to contest the enemy's advance at that point, but I cannot hold myself responsible for any reverses to the brigade mentioned, under its present commander. I think him a fool.

From the Secretary of War to Major-General Blount Wardorg.

WASHINGTON, February 1, 1862.

The President has great faith in General Doke. If your estimate of him is correct, however, he would seem to be singularly well placed where he now is, as your plans appear to contemplate a considerable sacrifice for whatever advantages you expect to gain.

*From Brigadier-General Jupiter Doke to Major-General Blount
Wardorg.*

DISTILLERYVILLE, February 1, 1862.

To-morrow I shall remove my headquarters to Jayhawk in order to point the way whenever my brigade retires from Distilleryville, as foreshadowed by your letter of the 22d ult. I have appointed a Committee on Retreat, the minutes of whose first meeting I transmit to you. You will perceive that the committee having been duly organized by the election of a chairman and secretary, a resolution (prepared by myself) was adopted, to the effect that in case treason again raises her hideous head on this side of the river every man of the brigade is to mount a mule, the procession to move promptly in the direction of Louisville and the loyal North. In preparation for such an emergency I have for some time been collecting mules from the resident Democracy, and have on hand 2300 in a field at Jayhawk. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty!

*From Major-General Gibeon J. Buxter, C.S.A.,
to the Confederate Secretary of War.*

BUNG STATION, KENTUCKY,
February 4, 1862.

On the night of the 2d inst., our entire force, consisting of 25,000 men and thirty-two field pieces, under command of Major-General Simmons B. Flood, crossed by a ford to the north side of Little Buttermilk River at a point three miles above Distilleryville and moved obliquely down and away from the stream, to strike the Covington turnpike at Jayhawk; the object being, as you know, to capture Covington, destroy Cincinnati and occupy the Ohio Valley. For some months there had been in our front only a small brigade of undisciplined troops, apparently without a commander, who were useful to us, for by not disturbing them we could create an impression of our weakness. But the movement on Jayhawk having isolated them, I was about to detach an Alabama regiment to bring them in, my division being the leading one, when an earth shaking rumble was felt and heard, and suddenly the head-of-column was struck by one of the terrible tornadoes for which this region is famous, and utterly annihilated. The tornado, I believe, passed along the entire length of the road back to the ford, dispersing or destroying our entire army; but of this I cannot be sure, for I was lifted from the earth insensible and blown back to the south side of the river. Continuous firing all night on the north side and the reports of such of our men as have recrossed at the ford convince me that the Yankee brigade has exterminated the disabled survivors. Our loss has been uncommonly heavy. Of my

own division of 15,000 infantry, the casualties—killed, wounded, captured, and missing—are 14,994. Of General Dolliver Billow's division, 11,200 strong, I can find but two officers and a nigger cook. Of the artillery, 800 men, none has reported on this side of the river. General Flood is dead. I have assumed command of the expeditionary force, but owing to the heavy losses have deemed it advisable to contract my line of supplies as rapidly as possible. I shall push southward to-morrow morning early. The purposes of the campaign have been as yet but partly accomplished.

*From Major-General Dolliver Billows, C.S.A.,
to the Confederate Secretary of War.*

BUHAC, KENTUCKY, February 5, 1862.

. . . But during the 2d they had, unknown to us, been reinforced by fifty thousand cavalry, and being apprised of our movement by a spy, this vast body was drawn up in the darkness at Jayhawk, and as the head of our column reached that point at about 11 P.M., fell upon it with astonishing fury, destroying the division of General Buxter in an instant. General Baumschank's brigade of artillery, which was in the rear, may have escaped—I did not wait to see, but withdrew my division to the river at a point several miles above the ford, and at daylight ferried it across on two fence rails lashed together with a suspender. Its losses, from an effective strength of 11,200, are 11,199. General Buxter is dead. I am changing my base to Mobile, Alabama.

*From Brigadier-General Schneddeker Baumschank,
C.S.A., to the Confederate Secretary of War.*

IODINE, KENTUCKY, February 6, 1862.

. . . Yoost den somdings occur, I know nod vot it vos—somedings mackneefcent, but it vas nod vor—und I finds meinselluf, afder leedle viles, in dis blace, midout a hors und mit no men und goons. Sheneral Peelows's deadt. You will please be so goot as to resign me—I vights no more in a dam gontry vere I gets vipped und knows nod how it vos done.

Resolutions of Congress, February 15, 1862.

Resolved, That the thanks of Congress are due, and hereby tendered, to Brigadier-General Jupiter Doke and the gallant men under his command for their unparalleled feat of attacking—themselves only 2000 strong—an army of 25,000 men and utterly overthrowing it, killing 5327, making prisoners of 19,003, of whom more than half were wounded, taking 32 guns, 20,000 stand of small arms and, in short, the enemy's entire equipment.

Resolved, That for this unexampled victory the President be requested to designate a day of thanksgiving and public celebration of religious rites in the various churches.

Resolved, That he be requested, in further commemoration of the great event, and in reward of the gallant spirits whose deeds have added such imperishable lustre to the American arms, to appoint, with the advice and consent of the Senate, the following officer:

One major-general.

Statement of Mr. Hannibal Alcazar Peyton, of Jayhawk, Kentucky.

Dat wus a almighty dark night, sho', and dese yere ole eyes aint wuf shuks, but I's got a year like a sque'l, an' w'en I cotch de mummer o' v'ices I knowed dat gang b'long on de far side o' de ribber. So I jes' runs in de house an' wakes Marse Doke an' tells him: "Skin outer dis fo' yo' life!" An' de Lo'd bress my soul! ef dat man didn' go right fru de winder in his shir' tail an' break for to cross de mule patch! An' dem twenty-free hunerd mules dey jes' t'nk it is de debble hese'f wid de brandin' iron, an' dey bu'st ouden dat patch like a yarthquake, an' pile inter de upper ford road, an' flash down it five deep, an' it full o' Con fed'rates from en' to en'! . . .

THE WIDOWER TURMORE

THE circumstances under which Joram Turmore became a widower have never been popularly understood. I know them, naturally, for I am Joram Turmore; and my wife, the late Elizabeth Mary Turmore, is by no means ignorant of them; but although she doubtless relates them, yet they remain a secret, for not a soul has ever believed her.

When I married Elizabeth Mary Johnin she was very wealthy, otherwise I could hardly have afforded to marry, for I had not a cent, and Heaven had not put into my heart any intention to earn one. I held the Professorship of Cats in the University of Graymaulkin, and scholastic pursuits had unfitted me for the heat and burden of business or labor. Moreover, I could not forget that I was a Turmore—a member of a family whose motto from the time of William of Normandy has been *Laborare est errare*. The only known infraction of the sacred family tradition occurred when Sir Aldebaran Turmore de Peters-Turmore, an illustrious master burglar of the seventeenth century, personally assisted at a difficult operation undertaken by some of his workmen. That blot upon our escutcheon cannot be contemplated without the most poignant mortification.

My incumbency of the Chair of Cats in the Graymaulkin University had not, of course, been marked by any instance of mean industry. There had never, at any one time, been more than two students of the Noble Science, and by merely repeating the manuscript lectures of my predecessor, which I had found among his effects (he died at sea on his way to Malta) I could sufficiently sate their famine for knowledge without really earning even the distinction which served in place of salary.

Naturally, under the straitened circumstances, I regarded Elizabeth Mary as a kind of special Providence. She unwisely refused to share her fortune with me, but for that I cared nothing; for, although by the laws of that country (as is well known) a wife has control of her separate property during her life, it passes to the husband at her death; nor can she dispose of it otherwise by will. The mortality among wives is considerable, but not excessive.

Having married Elizabeth Mary and, as it were, ennobled her by making her a Turmore, I felt that the manner of her death ought, in some sense, to match her social distinction. If I should remove her by any of the ordinary marital methods I should incur a just reproach, as one destitute of a proper family pride. Yet I could not hit upon a suitable plan.

In this emergency I decided to consult the Turmore archives, a priceless collection of documents, comprising the records of the family from the time of its founder in the seventh century of our era. I knew that among these sacred muniments I should find

detailed accounts of all the principal murders committed by my sainted ancestors for forty generations. From that mass of papers I could hardly fail to derive the most valuable suggestions.

The collection contained also most interesting relics. There were patents of nobility granted to my forefathers for daring and ingenious removals of pretenders to thrones, or occupants of them; stars, crosses and other decorations attesting services of the most secret and unmentionable character; miscellaneous gifts from the world's greatest conspirators, representing an intrinsic money value beyond computation. There were robes, jewels, swords of honor, and every kind of "testimonials of esteem"; a king's skull fashioned into a wine cup; the title deeds to vast estates, long alienated by confiscation, sale, or abandonment; an illuminated breviary that had belonged to Sir Aldebaran Turmore de Peters-Turmore of accursed memory; embalmed ears of several of the family's most renowned enemies; the small intestine of a certain unworthy Italian statesman inimical to Turmores, which, twisted into a jumping rope, had served the youth of six kindred generations—mementoes and souvenirs precious beyond the appraisals of imagination, but by the sacred mandates of tradition and sentiment forever inalienable by sale or gift.

As the head of the family, I was custodian of all these priceless heirlooms, and for their safe keeping had constructed in the basement of my dwelling a strong-room of massive masonry, whose solid stone walls and single iron door could defy alike the earthquake's shock, the tireless assaults of Time, and Cupidity's unholy hand.

To this thesaurus of the soul, redolent of sentiment and tenderness, and rich in suggestions of crime, I now repaired for hints upon assassination. To my unspeakable astonishment and grief I found it empty! Every shelf, every chest, every coffer had been rifled. Of that unique and incomparable collection not a vestige remained! Yet I proved that until I had myself unlocked the massive metal door, not a bolt nor bar had been disturbed; the seals upon the lock had been intact.

I passed the night in alternate lamentation and research, equally fruitless; the mystery was impenetrable to conjecture, the pain invincible to balm. But never once throughout that dreadful night did my firm spirit relinquish its high design against Elizabeth Mary, and daybreak found me more resolute than before to harvest the fruits of my marriage. My great loss seemed but to bring me into nearer spiritual relations with my dead ancestors, and to lay upon me a new and more inevitable obedience to the suasion that spoke in every globule of my blood.

My plan of action was soon formed, and procuring a stout cord I entered my wife's bedroom, finding her, as I expected, in a sound sleep. Before she was awake, I had her bound fast, hand

and foot. She was greatly surprised and pained, but heedless of her remonstrances, delivered in a high key, I carried her into the now rifled strong-room, which I had never suffered her to enter, and of whose treasures I had not apprised her. Seating her, still bound, in an angle of the wall, I passed the next two days and nights in conveying bricks and mortar to the spot, and on the morning of the third day had her securely walled in, from floor to ceiling. All this time I gave no further heed to her pleas for mercy than (on her assurance of non-resistance, which I am bound to say she honorably observed) to grant her the freedom of her limbs. The space allowed her was about four feet by six. As I inserted the last bricks of the top course, in contact with the ceiling of the strong-room, she bade me farewell with what I deemed the composure of despair, and I rested from my work, feeling that I had faithfully observed the traditions of an ancient and illustrious family. My only bitter reflection, so far as my own conduct was concerned, came of the consciousness that in the performance of my design I had labored; but this no living soul would ever know.

After a night's rest I went to the Judge of the Court of Successions and Inheritances and made a true and sworn relation of all that I had done—except that I ascribed to a servant the manual labor of building the wall. His honor appointed a court commissioner, who made a careful examination of the work, and upon his report Elizabeth Mary Turmore was, at the end of a week, formally pronounced dead. By due process of law I was put into possession of her estate, and although this was not by hundreds of thousands of dollars as valuable as my lost treasures, it raised me from poverty to affluence and brought me the respect of the great and good.

Some six months after these events strange rumors reached me that the ghost of my deceased wife had been seen in several places about the country, but always at a considerable distance from Graymaulkin. These rumors, which I was unable to trace to any authentic source, differed widely in many particulars, but were alike in ascribing to the apparition a certain high degree of apparent worldly prosperity combined with an audacity most uncommon in ghosts. Not only was the spirit attired in most costly raiment, but it walked at noonday, and even drove! I was inexpressibly annoyed by these reports, and thinking there might be something more than superstition in the popular belief that only the spirits of the unburied dead still walk the earth, I took some workmen equipped with picks and crowbars into the now long unentered strong-room, and ordered them to demolish the brick wall that I had built about the partner of my joys. I was resolved to give the body of Elizabeth Mary such burial as I thought her immortal part might be willing to accept as an equivalent to the privilege of ranging at will among the haunts of

the living.

In a few minutes we had broken down the wall and, thrusting a lamp through the breach, I looked in. Nothing! Not a bone, not a lock of hair, not a shred of clothing—the narrow space which, upon my affidavit, had been legally declared to hold all that was mortal of the late Mrs. Turmore was absolutely empty! This amazing disclosure, coming upon a mind already overwrought with too much of mystery and excitement, was more than I could bear, I shrieked aloud and fell in a fit. For months afterward I lay between life and death, fevered and delirious; nor did I recover until my physician had had the providence to take a case of valuable jewels from my safe and leave the country.

The next summer I had occasion to visit my wine cellar, in one corner of which I had built the now long disused strong-room. In moving a cask of Madeira I struck it with considerable force against the partition wall, and was surprised to observe that it displaced two large square stones forming a part of the wall.

Applying my hands to these, I easily pushed them out entirely, and looking through saw that they had fallen into the niche in which I had immured my lamented wife; facing the opening which their fall left, and at a distance of four feet, was the brickwork which my own hands had made for that unfortunate gentlewoman's restraint. At this significant revelation I began a search of the wine cellar. Behind a row of casks I found four historically interesting but intrinsically valueless objects:

First, the mildewed remains of a ducal robe of state (Florentine) of the eleventh century; second, an illuminated vellum breviary with the name of Sir Aldebaran Turmore de Peters-Turmore inscribed in colors on the title page; third, a human skull fashioned into a drinking cup and deeply stained with wine; fourth, the iron cross of a Knight Commander of the Imperial Austrian Order of Assassins by Poison.

That was all—not an object having commercial value, no papers—nothing. But this was enough to clear up the mystery of the strong-room. My wife had early divined the existence and purpose of that apartment, and with the skill amounting to genius had effected an entrance by loosening the two stones in the wall.

Through that opening she had at several times abstracted the entire collection, which doubtless she had succeeded in converting into coin of the realm. When with an unconscious justice which deprives me of all satisfaction in the memory I decided to build her into the wall, by some malign fatality I selected that part of it in which were these movable stones, and doubtless before I had fairly finished my bricklaying she had removed them and, slipping through into the wine cellar, replaced them as they were originally laid. From the cellar she had easily escaped unobserved, to enjoy her infamous gains in distant parts. I have endeavored to procure a

warrant, but the Lord High Baron of the Court of Indictment and Conviction reminds me that she is legally dead, and says my only course is to go before the Master in Cadavery and move for a writ of disinterment and constructive revival. So it looks as if I must suffer without redress this great wrong at the hands of a woman devoid alike of principle and shame.

THE CITY OF THE GONE AWAY

I WAS born of poor honest parents, and until I was twenty-three years old never knew the possibilities of happiness latent in another person's coin. At that time Providence threw me into a deep sleep and revealed to me in a dream the folly of labor. "Behold," said a vision of a holy hermit, "the poverty and squalor of your lot and listen to the teachings of nature. You rise in the morning from your pallet of straw and go forth to your daily labor in the fields. The flowers nod their heads in friendly salutation as you pass. The lark greets you with a burst of song. The early sun sheds his temperate beams upon you, and from the dewy grass you inhale an atmosphere cool and grateful to your lungs. All nature seems to salute you with the joy of a generous servant welcoming a faithful master. You are in harmony with her gentlest mood and your soul sings within you. You begin your daily task at the plow, hopeful that the noonday will fulfill the promise of the morn, maturing the charms of the landscape and confirming its benediction upon your spirit. You follow the plow until fatigue invokes repose, and seating yourself upon the earth at the end of your furrow you expect to enjoy in fullness the delights of which you did but taste.

"Alas! the sun has climbed into a brazen sky and his beams are become a torrent. The flowers have closed their petals, confining their perfume and denying their colors to the eye. Coolness no longer exhales from the grass: the dew has vanished and the dry surface of the fields repeats the fierce heat of the sky. No longer the birds of heaven salute you with melody, but the jay harshly upbraids you from the edge of the copse. Unhappy man! all the gentle and healing ministrations of nature are denied you in punishment of your sin. You have broken the First Commandment of the Natural Decalogue: you have labored!"

Awakening from my dream, I collected my few belongings, bade adieu to my erring parents and departed out of that land, pausing at the grave of my grandfather, who had been a priest, to take an oath that never again, Heaven helping me, would I earn an honest penny.

How long I traveled I know not, but I came at last to a great city by the sea, where I set up as a physician. The name of that place I do not now remember, for such were my activity and renown in my new profession that the Aldermen, moved by pressure of public opinion, altered it, and thenceforth the place was known as the City of the Gone Away. It is needless to say that I had no knowledge of medicine, but by securing the service of an eminent forger I obtained a diploma purporting to have been granted by the Royal Quackery of Charlatanic Empiricism at Hoodos, which, framed in immortelles and suspended by a bit of

crêpe to a willow in front of my office, attracted the ailing in great numbers. In connection with my dispensary I conducted one of the largest undertaking establishments ever known, and as soon as my means permitted, purchased a wide tract of land and made it into a cemetery. I owned also some very profitable marble works on one side of the gateway to the cemetery, and on the other an extensive flower garden. My Mourner's Emporium was patronized by the beauty, fashion and sorrow of the city. In short, I was in a very prosperous way of business, and within a year was able to send for my parents and establish my old father very comfortably as a receiver of stolen goods—an act which I confess was saved from the reproach of filial gratitude only by my exaction of all the profits.

But the vicissitudes of fortune are avoidable only by practice of the sternest indigence: human foresight cannot provide against the envy of the gods and the tireless machinations of Fate. The widening circle of prosperity grows weaker as it spreads until the antagonistic forces which it has pushed back are made powerful by compression to resist and finally overwhelm. So great grew the renown of my skill in medicine that patients were brought to me from all the four quarters of the globe. Burdensome invalids whose tardiness in dying was a perpetual grief to their friends; wealthy testators whose legatees were desirous to come by their own; superfluous children of penitent parents and dependent parents of frugal children; wives of husbands ambitious to remarry and husbands of wives without standing in the courts of divorce—these and all conceivable classes of the surplus population were conducted to my dispensary in the City of the Gone Away. They came in incalculable multitudes.

Government agents brought me caravans of orphans, paupers, lunatics and all who had become a public charge. My skill in curing orphanism and pauperism was particularly acknowledged by a grateful parliament

Naturally, all this promoted the public prosperity, for although I got the greater part of the money that strangers expended in the city, the rest went into the channels of trade, and I was myself a liberal investor, purchaser and employer, and a patron of the arts and sciences. The City of the Gone Away grew so rapidly that in a few years it had inclosed my cemetery, despite its own constant growth. In that fact lay the lion that rent me.

The Aldermen declared my cemetery a public evil and decided to take it from me, remove the bodies to another place and make a park of it. I was to be paid for it and could easily bribe the appraisers to fix a high price, but for a reason which will appear the decision gave me little joy. It was in vain that I protested against the sacrilege of disturbing the holy dead, although this was a powerful appeal, for in that land the dead are held in religious

veneration. Temples are built in their honor and a separate priesthood maintained at the public expense, whose only duty is performance of memorial services of the most solemn and touching kind. On four days in the year there is a Festival of the Good, as it is called, when all the people lay by their work or business and, headed by the priests, march in procession through the cemeteries, adorning the graves and praying in the temples. However bad a man's life may be, it is believed that when dead he enters into a state of eternal and inexpressible happiness. To signify a doubt of this is an offense punishable by death. To deny burial to the dead, or to exhume a buried body, except under sanction of law by special dispensation and with solemn ceremony, is a crime having no stated penalty because no one has ever had the hardihood to commit it.

All these considerations were in my favor, yet so well assured were the people and their civic officers that my cemetery was injurious to the public health that it was condemned and appraised, and with terror in my heart I received three times its value and began to settle up my affairs with all speed.

A week later was the day appointed for the formal inauguration of the ceremony of removing the bodies. The day was fine and the entire population of the city and surrounding country was present at the imposing religious rites. These were directed by the mortuary priesthood in full canonicals. There was propitiatory sacrifice in the Temples of the Once, followed by a processional pageant of great splendor, ending at the cemetery. The Great Mayor in his robe of state led the procession. He was armed with a golden spade and followed by one hundred male and female singers, clad all in white and chanting the Hymn to the Gone Away. Behind these came the minor priesthood of the temples, all the civic authorities, habited in their official apparel, each carrying a living pig as an offering to the gods of the dead. Of the many divisions of the line, the last was formed by the populace, with uncovered heads, sifting dust into their hair in token of humility. In front of the mortuary chapel in the midst of the necropolis, the Supreme Priest stood in gorgeous vestments, supported on each hand by a line of bishops and other high dignitaries of his prelacy, all frowning with the utmost austerity. As the Great Mayor paused in the Presence, the minor clergy, the civic authorities, the choir and populace closed in and encompassed the spot. The Great Mayor, laying his golden spade at the feet of the Supreme Priest, knelt in silence.

"Why comest thou here, presumptuous mortal?" said the Supreme Priest in clear, deliberate tones. "Is it thy unhallowed purpose with this implement to uncover the mysteries of death and break the repose of the Good?"

The Great Mayor, still kneeling, drew from his robe a

document with portentous seals: "Behold, O ineffable, thy servant, having warrant of his people, entreateth at thy holy hands the custody of the Good, to the end and purpose that they lie in fitter earth, by consecration duly prepared against their coming." With that he placed in the sacerdotal hands the order of the Council of Aldermen decreeing the removal. Merely touching the parchment, the Supreme Priest passed it to the Head Necropolitan at his side, and raising his hands relaxed the severity of his countenance and exclaimed: "The gods comply."

Down the line of prelates on either side, his gesture, look and words were successively repeated. The Great Mayor rose to his feet, the choir began a solemn chant and, opportunely, a funeral car drawn by ten white horses with black plumes rolled in at the gate and made its way through the parting crowd to the grave selected for the occasion—that of a high official whom I had treated for chronic incumbency. The Great Mayor touched the grave with his golden spade (which he then presented to the Supreme Priest) and two stalwart diggers with iron ones set vigorously to work.

At that moment I was observed to leave the cemetery and the country; for a report of the rest of the proceedings I am indebted to my sainted father, who related it in a letter to me, written in jail the night before he had the irreparable misfortune to take the kink out of a rope.

As the workmen proceeded with their excavation, four bishops stationed themselves at the corners of the grave and in the profound silence of the multitude, broken otherwise only by the harsh grinding sound of spades, repeated continuously, one after another, the solemn invocations and responses from the Ritual of the Disturbed, imploring the blessed brother to forgive. But the blessed brother was not there. Full fathom two they mined for him in vain, then gave it up. The priests were visibly disconcerted, the populace was aghast, for that grave was indubitably vacant.

After a brief consultation with the Supreme Priest, the Great Mayor ordered the workmen to open another grave. The ritual was omitted this time until the coffin should be uncovered. There was no coffin, no body.

The cemetery was now a scene of the wildest confusion and dismay. The people shouted and ran hither and thither, gesticulating, clamoring, all talking at once, none listening. Some ran for spades, fire-shovels, hoes, sticks, anything. Some brought carpenters' adzes, even chisels from the marble works, and with these inadequate aids set to work upon the first graves they came to. Others fell upon the mounds with their bare hands, scraping away the earth as eagerly as dogs digging for marmots. Before nightfall the surface of the greater part of the cemetery had been upturned; every grave had been explored to the bottom and thousands of men were tearing away at the interspaces with as

furious a frenzy as exhaustion would permit. As night came on torches were lighted, and in the sinister glare these frantic mortals, looking like a legion of fiends performing some unholy rite, pursued their disappointing work until they had devastated the entire area. But not a body did they find—not even a coffin.

The explanation is exceedingly simple. An important part of my income had been derived from the sale of *cadavres* to medical colleges, which never before had been so well supplied, and which, in added recognition of my services to science, had all bestowed upon me diplomas, degrees and fellowships without number. But their demand for *cadavres* was unequal to my supply: by even the most prodigal extravagances they could not consume the one-half of the products of my skill as a physician. As to the rest, I had owned and operated the most extensive and thoroughly appointed soapworks in all the country. The excellence of my “Toilet Homoline” was attested by certificates from scores of the saintliest theologians, and I had one in autograph from Badelina Fatti the most famous living soprano.

THE MAJOR'S TALE

IN the days of the Civil War practical joking had not, I think, fallen into that disrepute which characterizes it now. That, doubtless, was owing to our extreme youth—men were much younger than now, and evermore your very young man has a boisterous spirit, running easily to horse-play. You cannot think how young the men were in the early sixties! Why, the average age of the entire Federal Army was not more than twenty-five; I doubt if it was more than twenty-three, but not having the statistics on that point (if there are any) I want to be moderate: we will say twenty-five. It is true a man of twenty-five was in that heroic time a good deal more of a man than one of that age is now; you could see that by looking at him. His face had nothing of that unripeness so conspicuous in his successor. I never see a young fellow now without observing how disagreeably young he really is; but during the war we did not think of a man's age at all unless he happened to be pretty well along in life. In that case one could not help it, for the unloveliness of age assailed the human countenance then much earlier than now; the result, I suppose, of hard service—perhaps, to some extent, of hard drink, for, bless my soul! we did shed the blood of the grape and the grain abundantly during the war. I remember thinking General Grant, who could not have been more than forty, a pretty well preserved old chap, considering his habits. As to men of middle age—say from fifty to sixty—why, they all looked fit to personate the Last of the Hittites, or the Madagascarene Methuselah, in a museum. Depend upon it, my friends, men of that time were greatly younger than men are to-day, but looked much older. The change is quite remarkable.

I said that practical joking had not then gone out of fashion. It had not, at least, in the army; though possibly in the more serious life of the civilian it had no place except in the form of tarring and feathering an occasional "copperhead." You all know, I suppose, what a "copperhead" was, so I will go directly at my story without introductory remark, as is my way.

It was a few days before the battle of Nashville. The enemy had driven us up out of northern Georgia and Alabama. At Nashville we had turned at bay and fortified, while old Pap Thomas, our commander, hurried down reinforcements and supplies from Louisville. Meantime Hood, the Confederate commander, had partly invested us and lay close enough to have tossed shells into the heart of the town. As a rule he abstained—he was afraid of killing the families of his own soldiers, I suppose, a great many of whom had lived there. I sometimes wondered what were the feelings of those fellows, gazing over our heads at their own dwellings, where their wives and children or their aged parents

were perhaps suffering for the necessaries of life, and certainly (so their reasoning would run) cowering under the tyranny and power of the barbarous Yankees.

To begin, then, at the beginning, I was serving at that time on the staff of a division commander whose name I shall not disclose, for I am relating facts, and the person upon whom they bear hardest may have surviving relatives who would not care to have him traced. Our headquarters were in a large dwelling which stood just behind our line of works. This had been hastily abandoned by the civilian occupants, who had left everything pretty much as it was—had no place to store it, probably, and trusted that Heaven would preserve it from Federal cupidity and Confederate artillery. With regard to the latter we were as solicitous as they.

Rummaging about in some of the chambers and closets one evening, some of us found an abundant supply of lady-gear—gowns, shawls, bonnets, hats, petticoats and the Lord knows what; I could not at that time have named the half of it. The sight of all this pretty plunder inspired one of us with what he was pleased to call an “idea,” which, when submitted to the other scamps and scapegraces of the staff, met with instant and enthusiastic approval. We proceeded at once to act upon it for the undoing of one of our comrades.

Our selected victim was an aide, Lieutenant Haberton, so to call him. He was a good soldier—as gallant a chap as ever wore spurs; but he had an intolerable weakness: he was a lady-killer, and like most of his class, even in those days, eager that all should know it. He never tired of relating his amatory exploits, and I need not say how dismal that kind of narrative is to all but the narrator. It would be dismal even if sprightly and vivacious, for all men are rivals in woman’s favor, and to relate your successes to another man is to rouse in him a dumb resentment, tempered by disbelief. You will not convince him that you tell the tale for his entertainment; he will hear nothing in it but an expression of your own vanity. Moreover, as most men, whether rakes or not, are willing to be thought rakes, he is very likely to resent a stupid and unjust inference which he suspects you to have drawn from his reticence in the matter of his own adventures—namely, that he has had none. If, on the other hand, he has had no scruple in the matter and his reticence is due to lack of opportunity to talk, or of nimbleness in taking advantage of it, why, then he will be surly because you “have the floor” when he wants it himself. There are, in short, no circumstances under which a man, even from the best of motives, or no motive at all, can relate his feats of love without distinctly lowering himself in the esteem of his male auditor; and herein lies a just punishment for such as kiss and tell. In my younger days I was myself not entirely out of favor with the ladies, and have a memory stored with much concerning them which

doubtless I might put into acceptable narrative had I not undertaken another tale, and if it were not my practice to relate one thing at a time, going straight away to the end, without digression.

Lieutenant Haberton was, it must be confessed, a singularly handsome man with engaging manners. He was, I suppose, judging from the imperfect view-point of my sex, what women call "fascinating." Now, the qualities which make a man attractive to ladies entail a double disadvantage. First, they are of a sort readily discerned by other men, and by none more readily than by those who lack them. Their possessor, being feared by all these, is habitually slandered by them in self-defense. To all the ladies in whose welfare they deem themselves entitled to a voice and interest they hint at the vices and general unworth of the "ladies' man" in no uncertain terms, and to their wives relate without shame the most monstrous falsehoods about him. Nor are they restrained by the consideration that he is their friend; the qualities which have engaged their own admiration make it necessary to warn away those to whom the allurements would be a peril. So the man of charming personality, while loved by all the ladies who know him well, yet not too well, must endure with such fortitude as he may the consciousness that those others who know him only "by reputation" consider him a shameless reprobate, a vicious and unworthy man—a type and example of moral depravity. To name the second disadvantage entailed by his charms: he commonly is.

In order to get forward with our busy story (and in my judgment a story once begun should not suffer impediment) it is necessary to explain that a young fellow attached to our headquarters as an orderly was notably effeminate in face and figure. He was not more than seventeen and had a perfectly smooth face and large lustrous eyes, which must have been the envy of many a beautiful woman in those days. And how beautiful the women of those days were! and how gracious! Those of the South showed in their demeanor toward us Yankees something of *hauteur*; but, for my part, I found it less insupportable than the studious indifference with which one's attentions are received by the ladies of this new generation, whom I certainly think destitute of sentiment and sensibility.

This young orderly, whose name was Arman, we persuaded—by what arguments I am not bound to say—to clothe himself in female attire and personate a lady. When we had him arrayed to our satisfaction—and a charming girl he looked—he was conducted to a sofa in the office of the adjutant-general. That officer was in the secret, as indeed were all excepting Haberton and the general; within the awful dignity hedging the latter lay possibilities of disapproval which we were unwilling to confront.

When all was ready I went to Haberton and said: "Lieutenant,

there is a young woman in the adjutant-general's office. She is the daughter of the insurgent gentleman who owns this house, and has, I think, called to see about its present occupancy. We none of us know just how to talk to her, but we think perhaps you would say about the right thing—at least you will say things in the right way. Would you mind coming down?"

The lieutenant would not mind; he made a hasty toilet and joined me. As we were going along a passage toward the Presence we encountered a formidable obstacle—the general.

"I say, Broadwood," he said, addressing me in the familiar manner which meant that he was in excellent humor, "there's a lady in Lawson's office. Looks like a devilish fine girl—came on some errand of mercy or justice, no doubt. Have the goodness to conduct her to my quarters. I won't saddle you youngsters with all the business of this division," he added facetiously.

This was awkward; something had to be done.

"General," I said, "I did not think the lady's business of sufficient importance to bother you with it. She is one of the Sanitary Commission's nurses, and merely wants to see about some supplies for the smallpox hospital where she is on duty. I'll send her in at once."

"You need not mind," said the general, moving on; "I dare say Lawson will attend to the matter."

Ah, the gallant general! how little I thought, as I looked after his retreating figure and laughed at the success of my ruse, that within the week he would be "dead on the field of honor!" Nor was he the only one of our little military household above whom gloomed the shadow of the death angel, and who might almost have heard "the beating of his wings." On that bleak December morning a few days later, when from an hour before dawn until ten o'clock we sat on horseback on those icy hills, waiting for General Smith to open the battle miles away to the right, there were eight of us. At the close of the fighting there were three. There is now one. Bear with him yet a little while, oh, thrifty generation; he is but one of the horrors of war strayed from his era into yours. He is only the harmless skeleton at your feast and peace-dance, responding to your laughter and your footing it feately, with rattling fingers and bobbing skull—albeit upon suitable occasion, with a partner of his choosing, he might do his little dance with the best of you.

As we entered the adjutant-general's office we observed that the entire staff was there. The adjutant-general himself was exceedingly busy at his desk. The commissary of subsistence played cards with the surgeon in a bay window. The rest were in several parts of the room, reading or conversing in low tones. On a sofa in a half lighted nook of the room, at some distance from any of the groups, sat the "lady," closely veiled, her eyes modestly fixed upon her toes.

“Madam,” I said, advancing with Haberton, “this officer will be pleased to serve you if it is in his power. I trust that it is.”

With a bow I retired to the farther corner of the room and took part in a conversation going on there, though I had not the faintest notion what it was about, and my remarks had no relevancy to anything under the heavens. A close observer would have noticed that we were all intently watching Haberton and only “making believe” to do anything else.

He was worth watching, too; the fellow was simply an *édition de luxe* of “Turveydrop on Department.” As the “lady” slowly unfolded her tale of grievances against our lawless soldiery and mentioned certain instances of wanton disregard of property rights—among them, as to the imminent peril of bursting our sides we partly overheard, the looting of her own wardrobe—the look of sympathetic agony in Haberton’s handsome face was the very flower and fruit of histrionic art. His deferential and assenting nods at her several statements were so exquisitely performed that one could not help regretting their unsubstantial nature and the impossibility of preserving them under glass for instruction and delight of posterity. And all the time the wretch was drawing his chair nearer and nearer. Once or twice he looked about to see if we were observing, but we were in appearance blankly oblivious to all but one another and our several diversions. The low hum of our conversation, the gentle tap-tap of the cards as they fell in play and the furious scratching of the adjutant-general’s pen as he turned off countless pages of words without sense were the only sounds heard. No—there was another: at long intervals the distant boom of a heavy gun, followed by the approaching rush of the shot. The enemy was amusing himself.

On these occasions the lady was perhaps not the only member of that company who was startled, but she was startled more than the others, sometimes rising from the sofa and standing with clasped hands, the authentic portrait of terror and irresolution. It was no more than natural that Haberton should at these times reseat her with infinite tenderness, assuring her of her safety and regretting her peril in the same breath. It was perhaps right that he should finally possess himself of her gloved hand and a seat beside her on the sofa; but it certainly was highly improper for him to be in the very act of possessing himself of both hands when—boom, *whiz*, BANG!

We all sprang to our feet. A shell had crashed into the house and exploded in the room above us. Bushels of plaster fell among us. That modest and murmurous young lady sprang erect.

“Jumping Jee-rusalem!” she cried.

Haberton, who had also risen, stood as one petrified—as a statue of himself erected on the site of his assassination. He neither spoke, nor moved, nor once took his eyes off the face of Orderly

Arman, who was now flinging his girl-gear right and left, exposing his charms in the most shameless way; while out upon the night and away over the lighted camps into the black spaces between the hostile lines rolled the billows of our inexhaustible laughter! Ah, what a merry life it was in the old heroic days when men had not forgotten how to laugh!

Haberton slowly came to himself. He looked about the room less blankly; then by degrees fashioned his visage into the sickliest grin that ever libeled all smiling. He shook his head and looked knowing.

“You can’t fool *me!*” he said.

CURRIED COW

MY Aunt Patience, who tilled a small farm in the state of Michigan, had a favorite cow. This creature was not a good cow, nor a profitable one, for instead of devoting a part of her leisure to secretion of milk and production of veal she concentrated all her faculties on the study of kicking. She would kick all day and get up in the middle of the night to kick. She would kick at anything—hens, pigs, posts, loose stones, birds in the air and fish leaping out of the water; to this impartial and catholic-minded beef, all were equal—all similarly undeserving. Like old Timotheus, who “raised a mortal to the skies,” was my Aunt Patience’s cow; though, in the words of a later poet than Dryden, she did it “more harder and more frequently.” It was pleasing to see her open a passage for herself through a populous barn-yard. She would flash out, right and left, first with one hind-leg and then with the other, and would sometimes, under favoring conditions, have a considerable number of domestic animals in the air at once.

Her kicks, too, were as admirable in quality as inexhaustible in quantity. They were incomparably superior to those of the untutored kine that had not made the art a life study—mere amateurs that kicked “by ear,” as they say in music. I saw her once standing in the road, professedly fast asleep, and mechanically munching her cud with a sort of Sunday morning lassitude, as one munches one’s cud in a dream. Snouting about at her side, blissfully unconscious of impending danger and wrapped up in thoughts of his sweetheart, was a gigantic black hog—a hog of about the size and general appearance of a yearling rhinoceros. Suddenly, while I looked—without a visible movement on the part of the cow—with never a perceptible tremor of her frame, nor a lapse in the placid regularity of her chewing—that hog had gone away from there—had utterly taken his leave. But away toward the pale horizon a minute black speck was traversing the empyrean with the speed of a meteor, and in a moment had disappeared, without audible report, beyond the distant hills. It may have been that hog.

Currying cows is not, I think, a common practice, even in Michigan; but as this one had never needed milking, of course she had to be subjected to some equivalent form of persecution; and irritating her skin with a currycomb was thought as disagreeable an attention as a thoughtful affection could devise. At least she thought it so; though I suspect her mistress really meant it for the good creature’s temporal advantage. Anyhow my aunt always made it a condition to the employment of a farm-servant that he should curry the cow every morning; but after just enough trials to convince himself that it was not a sudden spasm, nor a mere local disturbance, the man would always give notice of an intention to quit, by pounding the beast half-dead with some foreign body and

then limping home to his couch. I don't know how many men the creature removed from my aunt's employ in this way, but judging from the number of lame persons in that part of the country, I should say a good many: though some of the lameness may have been taken at second-hand from the original sufferers by their descendants, and some may have come by contagion.

I think my aunt's was a faulty system of agriculture. It is true her farm labor cost her nothing, for the laborers all left her service before any salary had accrued; but as the cow's fame spread abroad through the several States and Territories, it became increasingly difficult to obtain hands; and, after all, the favorite was imperfectly curried. It was currently remarked that the cow had kicked the farm to pieces—a rude metaphor, implying that the land was not properly cultivated, nor the buildings and fences kept in adequate repair.

It was useless to remonstrate with my aunt: she would concede everything, amending nothing. Her late husband had attempted to reform the abuse in this manner, and had had the argument all his own way until he had remonstrated himself into an early grave; and the funeral was delayed all day, until a fresh undertaker could be procured, the one originally engaged having confidently undertaken to curry the cow at the request of the widow.

Since that time my Aunt Patience had not been in the matrimonial market; the love of that cow had usurped in her heart the place of a more natural and profitable affection. But when she saw her seeds unsown, her harvests ungarnered, her fences overtopped with rank brambles and her meadows gorgeous with the towering Canada thistle she thought it best to take a partner.

When it transpired that my Aunt Patience intended wedlock there was intense popular excitement. Every adult single male became at once a marrying man. The criminal statistics of Badger county show that in that single year more marriages occurred than in any decade before or since. But none of them was my aunt's. Men married their cooks, their laundresses, their deceased wives' mothers, their enemies' sisters—married whomsoever would wed; and any man who, by fair means or courtship, could not obtain a wife went before a justice of the peace and made an affidavit that he had some wives in Indiana. Such was the fear of being married alive by my Aunt Patience.

Now, where my aunt's affection was concerned she was, as the reader will have already surmised, a rather determined woman; and the extraordinary marrying epidemic having left but one eligible male in all that county, she had set her heart upon that one eligible male; then she went and carted him to her home. He turned out to be a long Methodist parson, named Huggins.

Aside from his unconscionable length, the Rev. Beronus Huggins was not so bad a fellow, and was nobody's fool. He was, I

suppose, the most ill-favored mortal, however, in the whole northern half of America—thin, angular, cadaverous of visage and solemn out of all reason. He commonly wore a low-crowned black hat, set so far down upon his head as partly to eclipse his eyes and wholly obscure the ample glory of his ears. The only other visible article of his attire (except a brace of wrinkled cowskin boots, by which the word “polish” would have been considered the meaningless fragment of a lost language) was a tight-fitting black frock-coat, preternaturally long in the waist, the skirts of which fell about his heels, sopping up the dew. This he always wore snugly buttoned from the throat downward. In this attire he cut a tolerably spectral figure. His aspect was so conspicuously unnatural and inhuman that whenever he went into a cornfield, the predatory crows would temporarily forsake their business to settle upon him in swarms, fighting for the best seats upon his person, by way of testifying their contempt for the weak inventions of the husbandman.

The day after the wedding my Aunt Patience summoned the Rev. Berosus to the council chamber, and uttered her mind to the following intent:

“Now, Huggy, dear, I’ll tell you what there is to do about the place. First, you must repair all the fences, clearing out the weeds and repressing the brambles with a strong hand. Then you will have to exterminate the Canadian thistles, mend the wagon, rig up a plow or two, and get things into ship-shape generally. This will keep you out of mischief for the better part of two years; of course you will have to give up preaching, for the present. As soon as you have—O! I forgot poor Phoebe. She—”

“Mrs. Huggins,” interrupted her solemn spouse, “I shall hope to be the means, under Providence, of effecting all needful reforms in the husbandry of this farm. But the sister you mention (I trust she is not of the world’s people)—have I the pleasure of knowing her? The name, indeed, sounds familiar, but—”

“Not know Phoebe!” cried my aunt, with unfeigned astonishment; “I thought everybody in Badger knew Phoebe. Why, you will have to scratch her legs, every blessed morning of your natural life!”

“I assure you, madam,” rejoined the Rev. Berosus, with dignity, “it would yield me a hallowed pleasure to minister to the spiritual needs of sister Phoebe, to the extent of my feeble and unworthy ability; but, really, I fear the merely secular ministration of which you speak must be entrusted to abler and, I would respectfully suggest, female hands.”

“Whyyy, youuu ooold, foool!” replied my aunt, spreading her eyes with unbounded amazement, “Phoebe is a cow!”

“In that case,” said the husband, with unruffled composure, “it will, of course, devolve upon me to see that her carnal welfare is

properly attended to; and I shall be happy to bestow upon her legs such time as I may, without sin, snatch from my strife with Satan and the Canadian thistles.”

With that the Rev. Mr. Huggins crowded his hat upon his shoulders, pronounced a brief benediction upon his bride, and betook himself to the barn-yard.

Now, it is necessary to explain that he had known from the first who Phoebe was, and was familiar, from hearsay, with all her sinful traits. Moreover, he had already done himself the honor of making her a visit, remaining in the vicinity of her person, just out of range, for more than an hour and permitting her to survey him at her leisure from every point of the compass. In short, he and Phoebe had mutually reconnoitered and prepared for action.

Amongst the articles of comfort and luxury which went to make up the good parson's *dot*, and which his wife had already caused to be conveyed to his new home, was a patent cast-iron pump, about seven feet high. This had been deposited near the barn-yard, preparatory to being set up on the planks above the barn-yard well. Mr Huggins now sought out this invention and conveying it to its destination put it into position, screwing it firmly to the planks. He next divested himself of his long gabardine and his hat, buttoning the former loosely about the pump, which it almost concealed, and hanging the latter upon the summit of the structure. The handle of the pump, when depressed, curved outwardly between the coat-skirts, singularly like a tail, but with this inconspicuous exception, any unprejudiced observer would have pronounced the thing Mr. Huggins, looking uncommonly well.

The preliminaries completed, the good man carefully closed the gate of the barn-yard, knowing that as soon as Phoebe, who was campaigning in the kitchen garden, should note the precaution she would come and jump in to frustrate it, which eventually she did. Her master, meanwhile, had laid himself, coatless and hatless, along the outside of the close board fence, where he put in the time pleasantly, catching his death of cold and peering through a knot-hole.

At first, and for some time, the animal pretended not to see the figure on the platform. Indeed she had turned her back upon it directly she arrived, affecting a light sleep. Finding that this stratagem did not achieve the success that she had expected, she abandoned it and stood for several minutes irresolute, munching her cud in a half-hearted way, but obviously thinking very hard. Then she began nosing along the ground as if wholly absorbed in a search for something that she had lost, tacking about hither and thither, but all the time drawing nearer to the object of her wicked intention. Arrived within speaking distance, she stood for a little while confronting the fraudulent figure, then put out her nose toward it, as if to be caressed, trying to create the impression that fondling

and dalliance were more to her than wealth, power and the plaudits of the populace—that she had been accustomed to them all her sweet young life and could not get on without them. Then she approached a little nearer, as if to shake hands, all the while maintaining the most amiable expression of countenance and executing all manner of seductive nods and winks and smiles. Suddenly she wheeled about and with the rapidity of lightning dealt out a terrible kick—a kick of inconceivable force and fury, comparable to nothing in nature but a stroke of paralysis out of a clear sky!

The effect was magical! Cows kick, not backward but sidewise. The impact which was intended to project the counterfeit theologian into the middle of the succeeding conference week reacted upon the animal herself, and it and the pain together set her spinning like a top. Such was the velocity of her revolution that she looked like a dun, circular cow, surrounded by a continuous ring like that of the planet Saturn—the white tuft at the extremity of her sweeping tail! Presently, as the sustaining centrifugal force lessened and failed, she began to sway and wobble from side to side, and finally, toppling over on her side, rolled convulsively on her hack and lay motionless with all her feet in the air, honestly believing that the world had somehow got atop of her and she was supporting it at a great sacrifice of personal comfort. Then she fainted.

How long she lay unconscious she knew not, but at last she unclosed her eyes, and catching sight of the open door of her stall, “more sweet than all the landscape smiling near,” she struggled up, stood wavering upon three legs, rubbed her eyes, and was visibly bewildered as to the points of the compass. Observing the iron clergyman standing fast by its faith, she threw it a look of grieved reproach and hobbled heart-broken into her humble habitation, a subjugated cow.

For several weeks Phoebe’s right hind leg was swollen to a monstrous growth, but by a season of judicious nursing she was “brought round all right,” as her sympathetic and puzzled mistress phrased it, or “made whole,” as the reticent man of God preferred to say. She was now as tractable and inoffensive “in her daily walk and conversation” (Huggins) as a little child. Her new master used to take her ailing leg trustfully into his lap, and for that matter, might have taken in into his mouth if he had so desired. Her entire character appeared to be radically changed—so altered that one day my Aunt Patience, who, fondly as she loved her, had never before so much as ventured to touch the hem of her garment, as it were, went confidently up to her to soothe her with a pan of turnips. Gad! how thinly she spread out that good old lady upon the face of an adjacent stone wall. You could not have done it so evenly with a trowel.

A REVOLT OF THE GODS

MY father was a deodorizer of dead dogs, my mother kept the only shop for the sale of cats'-meat in my native city. They did not live happily; the difference in social rank was a chasm which could not be bridged by the vows of marriage. It was indeed an ill-assorted and most unlucky alliance; and as might have been foreseen it ended in disaster. One morning after the customary squabbles at breakfast, my father rose from the table, quivering and pale with wrath, and proceeding to the parsonage thrashed the clergyman who had performed the marriage ceremony. The act was generally condemned and public feeling ran so high against the offender that people would permit dead dogs to lie on their property until the fragrance was deafening rather than employ him; and the municipal authorities suffered one bloated old mastiff to utter itself from a public square in so clamorous an exhalation that passing strangers supposed themselves to be in the vicinity of a saw-mill. My father was indeed unpopular. During these dark days the family's sole dependence was on my mother's emporium for cats'-meat.

The business was profitable. In that city, which was the oldest in the world, the cat was an object of veneration. Its worship was the religion of the country. The multiplication and addition of cats were a perpetual instruction in arithmetic. Naturally, any inattention to the wants of a cat was punished with great severity in this world and the next; so my good mother numbered her patrons by the hundred. Still, with an unproductive husband and seventeen children she had some difficulty in making both ends cats'-meat; and at last the necessity of increasing the discrepancy between the cost price and the selling price of her carnal wares drove her to an expedient which proved eminently disastrous: she conceived the unlucky notion of retaliating by refusing to sell cats'-meat until the boycott was taken off her husband.

On the day when she put this resolution into practice the shop was thronged with excited customers, and others extended in turbulent and restless masses up four streets, out of sight. Inside there was nothing but cursing, crowding, shouting and menace. Intimidation was freely resorted to—several of my younger brothers and sisters being threatened with cutting up for the cats—but my mother was as firm as a rock, and the day was a black one for Sardasa, the ancient and sacred city that was the scene of these events. The lock-out was vigorously maintained, and seven hundred and fifty thousand cats went to bed hungry!

The next morning the city was found to have been placarded during the night with a proclamation of the Federated Union of Old Maids. This ancient and powerful order averred through its

Supreme Executive Head that the boycotting of my father and the retaliatory lock out of my mother were seriously imperiling the interests of religion. The proclamation went on to state that if arbitration were not adopted by noon that day all the old maids of the federation would strike—and strike they did.

The next act of this unhappy drama was an insurrection of cats. These sacred animals, seeing themselves doomed to starvation, held a mass-meeting and marched in procession through the streets, swearing and spitting like fiends. This revolt of the gods produced such consternation that many pious persons died of fright and all business was suspended to bury them and pass terrifying resolutions.

Matters were now about as bad as it seemed possible for them to be. Meetings among representatives of the hostile interests were held, but no understanding was arrived at that would hold. Every agreement was broken as soon as made, and each element of the discord was frantically appealing to the people. A new horror was in store.

It will be remembered that my father was a deodorizer of dead dogs, but was unable to practice his useful and humble profession because no one would employ him. The dead dogs in consequence reeked rascally. Then they struck! From every vacant lot and public dumping ground, from every hedge and ditch and gutter and cistern, every crystal rill and the clabbered waters of all the canals and estuaries—from all the places, in short, which from time immemorial have been preempted by dead dogs and consecrated to the uses of them and their heirs and successors forever—they trooped innumerable, a ghastly crew! Their procession was a mile in length. Midway of the town it met the procession of cats in full song. The cats instantly exalted their backs and magnified their tails; the dead dogs uncovered their teeth as in life, and erected such of their bristles as still adhered to the skin.

The carnage that ensued was too awful for relation! The light of the sun was obscured by flying fur, and the battle was waged in the darkness, blindly and regardless. The swearing of the cats was audible miles away, while the fragrance of the dead dogs desolated seven provinces.

How the battle might have resulted it is impossible to say, but when it was at its fiercest the Federated Union of Old Maids came running down a side street and sprang into the thickest of the fray. A moment later my mother herself bore down upon the warring hosts, brandishing a cleaver, and laid about her with great freedom and impartiality. My father joined the fight, the municipal authorities engaged, and the general public, converging on the battle-field from all points of the compass, consumed itself in the center as it pressed in from the circumference. Last of all, the dead held a

meeting in the cemetery and resolving on a general strike, began to destroy vaults, tombs, monuments, headstones, willows, angels and young sheep in marble—everything they could lay their hands on. By nightfall the living and the dead were alike exterminated, and where the ancient and sacred city of Sardasa had stood nothing remained but an excavation filled with dead bodies and building materials, shreds of cat and blue patches of decayed dog. The place is now a vast pool of stagnant water in the center of a desert.

The stirring events of those few days constituted my industrial education, and so well have I improved my advantages that I am now Chief of Misrule to the Dukes of Disorder, an organization numbering thirteen million American workingmen.

THE BAPTISM OF DOBSHO

IT was a wicked thing to do, certainly. I have often regretted it since, and if the opportunity of doing so again were presented I should hesitate a long time before embracing it. But I was young then, and cherished a species of humor which I have since abjured. Still, when I remember the character of the people who were burlesquing and bringing into disrepute the letter and spirit of our holy religion I feel a certain satisfaction in having contributed one feeble effort toward making them ridiculous. In consideration of the little good I may have done in that way, I beg the reader to judge my conceded error as leniently as possible. This is the story.

Some years ago the town of Harding, in Illinois, experienced "a revival of religion," as the people called it. It would have been more accurate and less profane to term it a revival of Rampageanism, for the craze originated in, and was disseminated by, the sect which I will call the Rampagean communion; and most of the leaping and howling was done in that interest. Amongst those who yielded to the influence was my friend Thomas Dobsho. Tom had been a pretty bad sinner in a small way, but he went into this new thing heart and soul. At one of the meetings he made a public confession of more sins than he ever was, or ever could have been guilty of; stopping just short of statutory crimes, and even hinting, significantly, that he could tell a good deal more if he were pressed. He wanted to join the absurd communion the very evening of his conversion. He wanted to join two or three communions. In fact, he was so carried away with his zeal that some of the brethren gave me a hint to take him home; he and I occupied adjoining apartments in the Elephant Hotel.

Tom's fervor, as it happened, came near defeating its own purpose; instead of taking him at once into the fold without reference or "character," which was their usual way, the brethren remembered against him his awful confessions and put him on probation. But after a few weeks, during which he conducted himself like a decent lunatic, it was decided to baptise him along with a dozen other pretty hard cases who had been converted more recently. This sacrilegious ceremony I persuaded myself it was my duty to prevent, though I think now I erred as to the means adopted. It was to take place on a Sunday, and on the preceding Saturday I called on the head revivalist, the Rev. Mr. Swin, and craved an interview.

"I come," said I, with simulated reluctance and embarrassment, "in behalf of my friend, Brother Dobsho, to make a very delicate and unusual request. You are, I think, going to baptise him to-morrow, and I trust it will be to him the beginning of a new and better life. But I don't know if you are aware that his family are all Plungers, and that he is himself tainted with the

wicked heresy of that sect. So it is. He is, as one might say in secular metaphor, 'on the fence' between their grievous error and the pure faith of your church. It would be most melancholy if he should get down on the wrong side. Although I confess with shame I have not myself embraced the truth, I hope I am not too blind to see where it lies."

"The calamity that you apprehend," said the reverend lout, after solemn reflection, "would indeed seriously affect our friend's interest and endanger his soul. I had not expected Brother Dobsho so soon to give up the good fight."

"I think sir," I replied reflectively, "there is no fear of that if the matter is skillfully managed. He is heartily with you—might I venture to say with us?—on every point but one. He favors immersion! He has been so vile a sinner that he foolishly fears the more simple rite of your church will not make him wet enough. Would you believe it? his uninstructed scruples on the point are so gross and materialistic that he actually suggested soaping himself as a preparatory ceremony! I believe, however, if instead of sprinkling my friend, you would pour a generous basinful of water on his head—but now that I think of it in your enlightening presence I see that such a proceeding is quite out of the question. I fear we must let matters take the usual course, trusting to our later efforts to prevent the backsliding which may result."

The parson rose and paced the floor a moment, then suggested that he'd better see Brother Dobsho, and labor to remove his error. I told him I thought not; I was sure it would not be best. Argument would only confirm him in his prejudices. So it was settled that the subject should not be broached in that quarter. It would have been bad for me if it had been.

When I reflect now upon the guile of that conversation, the falsehood of my representations and the wickedness of my motive I am almost ashamed to proceed with my narrative. Had the minister been other than an arrant humbug, I hope I should never have suffered myself to make him the dupe of a scheme so sacrilegious in itself, and prosecuted with so sinful a disregard of honor.

The memorable Sabbath dawned bright and beautiful. About nine o'clock the cracked old bell, rigged up on struts before the "meeting-house," began to clamor its call to service, and nearly the whole population of Harding took its way to the performance. I had taken the precaution to set my watch fifteen minutes fast. Tom was nervously preparing himself for the ordeal. He fidgeted himself into his best suit an hour before the time, carried his hat about the room in the most aimless and demented way and consulted his watch a hundred times. I was to accompany him to church, and I spent the time fussing about the room, doing the most extraordinary things in the most exasperating manner—in

short, keeping up Tom's feverish excitement by every wicked device I could think of. Within a half hour of the real time for service I suddenly yelled out—

“O, I say, Tom; pardon me, but that head of yours is just frightful! Please *do* let me brush it up a bit!”

Seizing him by the shoulders I thrust him into a chair with his face to the wall, laid hold of his comb and brush, got behind him and went to work. He was trembling like a child, and knew no more what I was doing than if he had been brained. Now, Tom's head was a curiosity. His hair, which was remarkably thick, was like wire. Being cut rather short it stood out all over his scalp like the spines on a porcupine. It had been a favorite complaint of Tom's that he never could do anything to that head. I found no difficulty—I did something to it, though I blush to think what it was. I did something which I feared he might discover if he looked in the mirror, so I carelessly pulled out my watch, sprung it open, gave a start and shouted—

“By Jove! Thomas—pardon the oath—but we're late. Your watch is all wrong; look at mine! Here's your hat, old fellow; come along. There's not a moment to lose!”

Clapping his hat on his head, I pulled him out of the house, with actual violence. In five minutes more we were in the meeting-house with ever so much time to spare.

The services that day, I am told, were specially interesting and impressive, but I had a good deal else on my mind—was preoccupied, absent, inattentive. They might have varied from the usual profane exhibition in any respect and to any extent, and I should not have observed it. The first thing I clearly perceived was a rank of “converts” kneeling before the “altar,” Tom at the left of the line. Then the Rev. Mr. Swin approached him, thoughtfully dipping his fingers into a small earthen bowl of water as if he had just finished dining. I was much affected: I could see nothing distinctly for my tears. My handkerchief was at my face—most of it inside. I was observed to sob spasmodically, and I am abashed to think how many sincere persons mistakenly followed my example.

With some solemn words, the purport of which I did not quite make out, except that they sounded like swearing, the minister stood before Thomas, gave me a glance of intelligence and then with an innocent expression of face, the recollection of which to this day fills me with remorse, spilled, as if by accident, the entire contents of the bowl on the head of my poor friend—that head into the hair of which I had sifted a prodigal profusion of Seidlitz-powders!

I confess it, the effect was magical—anyone who was present would tell you that. Tom's pow simmered—it seethed—it foamed yeastily, and slavered like a mad dog! It steamed and hissed, with angry spurts and flashes! In a second it had grown bigger than a

small snowbank, and whiter. It surged, and boiled, and walloped, and overflowed, and sputtered—sent off feathery flakes like down from a shot swan! The froth poured creaming over his face, and got into his eyes. It was the most sinful shampooing of the season!

I cannot relate the commotion this produced, nor would I if I could. As to Tom, he sprang to his feet and staggered out of the house, groping his way between the pews, sputtering strangled profanity and gasping like a stranded fish. The other candidates for baptism rose also, shaking their pates as if to say, “No you don’t, my hearty,” and left the house in a body. Amidst unbroken silence the minister reascended the pulpit with the empty bowl in his hand, and was first to speak:

“Brethren and sisters,” said he with calm, deliberate evenness of tone, “I have held forth in this tabernacle for many more years than I have got fingers and toes, and during that time I have known not guile, nor anger, nor any uncharitableness. As to Henry Barber, who put up this job on me, I judge him not lest I be judged. Let him take that and sin no more!”—and he flung the earthen bowl with so true an aim that it was shattered against my skull. The rebuke was not undeserved, I confess, and I trust I have profited by it.

THE RACE AT LEFT BOWER

“IT’S all very well fer you Britishers to go assin’ about the country tryin’ to strike the trail o’ the mines you’ve salted down yer loose carpital in,” said Colonel Jackhigh, setting his empty glass on the counter and wiping his lips with his coat sleeve; “but when it comes to hoss racin’, w’y I’ve got a cayuse ken lay over all the thurrerbreds yer little mantel-ornymment of a island ever panned out—bet yer britches I have! Talk about yer Durby winners—w’y this pisen little beast o’ mine’ll take the bit in her teeth and show ’em the way to the horizon like she was takin’ her mornin’ stroll and they was tryin’ to keep an eye on her to see she didn’t do herself an injury—that’s w’at she would! And she haint never run a race with anything spryer’n an Injun in all her life; she’s a green amatoor, *she* is!”

“Oh, very well,” said the Englishman with a quiet smile; “it is easy enough to settle the matter. My animal is in tolerably good condition, and if yours is in town we can have the race to-morrow for any stake you like, up to a hundred dollars.

“That’s jest the figger,” said the colonel; “dot it down, barkeep. But it’s like slarterin’ the innocents,” he added, half-remorsefully, as he turned to leave; “it’s bettin’ on a dead sure thing—that’s what it is! If my cayuse knew wa’t I was about she’d go and break a laig to make the race a fair one.”

So it was arranged that the race was to come off at three o’clock the next day, on the mesa, some distance from town. As soon as the news got abroad, the whole population of Left Bower and vicinity knocked off work and assembled in the various bars to discuss it. The Englishman and his horse were general favorites, and aside from the unpopularity of the colonel, nobody had ever seen his “cayuse.” Still the element of patriotism came in, making the betting very nearly even.

A race-course was marked off on the mesa and at the appointed hour every one was there except the colonel. It was arranged that each man should ride his own horse, and the Englishman, who had acquired something of the free-and-easy bearing that distinguishes the “mining sharp,” was already atop of his magnificent animal, with one leg thrown carelessly across the pommel of his Mexican saddle, as he puffed his cigar with calm confidence in the result of the race. He was conscious, too, that he possessed the secret sympathy of all, even of those who had felt it their duty to bet against him. The judge, watch in hand, was growing impatient, when the colonel appeared about a half-mile away, and bore down upon the crowd. Everyone was eager to inspect his mount; and such a mount as it proved to be was never before seen, even in Left Bower!

You have seen “perfect skeletons” of horses often enough, no

doubt, but this animal was not even a perfect skeleton; there were bones missing here and there which you would not have believed the beast could have spared. "Little" the colonel had called her! She was not an inch less than eighteen hands high, and long out of all reasonable proportion. She was so hollow in the back that she seemed to have been bent in a machine. She had neither tail nor mane, and her neck, as long as a man, stuck straight up into the air, supporting a head without ears. Her eyes had an expression in them of downright insanity, and the muscles of her face were afflicted with periodical convulsions that drew back the corners of the mouth and wrinkled the upper lip so as to produce a ghastly grin every two or three seconds. In color she was "claybank," with great blotches of white, as if she had been pelted with small bags of flour. The crookedness of her legs was beyond all comparison, and as to her gait it was that of a blind camel walking diagonally across innumerable deep ditches. Altogether she looked like the crude result of Nature's first experiment in equifaction.

As this libel on all horses shambled up to the starting post there was a general shout; the sympathies of the crowd changed in the twinkling of an eye! Everyone wanted to bet on her, and the Englishman himself was only restrained from doing so by a sense of honor. It was growing late, however, and the judge insisted on starting them. They got off very well together, and seeing the mare was unconscionably slow the Englishman soon pulled his animal in and permitted the ugly thing to pass him, so as to enjoy a back view of her. That sealed his fate. The course had been marked off in a circle of two miles in circumference and some twenty feet wide, the limits plainly defined by little furrows. Before the animals had gone a half mile both had been permitted to settle down into a comfortable walk, in which they continued three-fourths of the way round the ring. Then the Englishman thought it time to whip up and canter in.

But he didn't. As he came up alongside the "Lightning Express," as the crowd had begun to call her, that creature turned her head diagonally backward and let fall a smile. The encroaching beast stopped as if he had been shot! His rider plied whip, and forced him again forward upon the track of the equine hag, but with the same result.

The Englishman was now alarmed; he struggled manfully with rein and whip and shout, amidst the tremendous cheering and inextinguishable laughter of the crowd, to force his animal past, now on this side, now on that, but it would not do. Prompted by the fiend in the concavity of her back, the unthinkable quadruped dropped her grins right and left with such seasonable accuracy that again and again the competing beast was struck "all of a heap" just at the moment of seeming success. And, finally, when by a tremendous spurt his rider endeavored to thrust him by, within

half a dozen lengths of the winning post, the incarnate nightmare turned squarely about and fixed upon him a portentous stare—delivering at the same time a grimace of such prodigious ghastliness that the poor thoroughbred, with an almost human scream of terror, wheeled about, and tore away to the rear with the speed of the wind, leaving the colonel an easy winner in twenty minutes and ten seconds.

THE FAILURE OF HOPE & WANDEL

*From Mr. Jabez Hope, in Chicago, to Mr. Pike Wandel,
of New Orleans, December 2, 1877.*

I WILL not bore you, my dear fellow, with a narrative of my journey from New Orleans to this polar region. It is cold in Chicago, believe me, and the Southron who comes here, as I did, without a relay of noses and ears will have reason to regret his mistaken economy in arranging his outfit.

To business. Lake Michigan is frozen stiff, Fancy, O child of a torrid clime, a sheet of anybody's ice, three hundred miles long, forty broad, and six feet thick! It sounds like a lie, Pikey dear, but your partner in the firm of Hope & Wandel, Wholesale Boots and Shoes, New Orleans, is never known to fib. My plan is to collar that ice. Wind up the present business and send on the money at once. I'll put up a warehouse as big as the Capitol at Washington, store it full and ship to your orders as the Southern market may require. I can send it in planks for skating floors, in statuettes for the mantel, in shavings for juleps, or in solution for ice cream and general purposes. It is a big thing!

I inclose a thin slip as a sample. Did you ever see such charming ice?

*From Mr. Pike Wandel, of New Orleans, to Mr. Jabez Hope, in
Chicago, December 24, 1877.*

Your letter was so abominably defaced by blotting and blurring that it was entirely illegible. It must have come all the way by water. By the aid of chemicals and photography, however, I have made it out. But you forgot to inclose the sample of ice.

I have sold off everything (at an alarming sacrifice, I am sorry to say) and inclose draft for net amount. Shall begin to spar for orders at once. I trust everything to you—but, I say, has anybody tried to grow ice in *this* vicinity? There is Lake Ponchartrain, you know.

*From Mr. Jabez Hope, in Chicago, to Mr. Pike Wandel, of New
Orleans, February 27, 1878.*

Wannie dear, it would do you good to see our new warehouse for the ice. Though made of boards, and run up rather hastily, it is as pretty as a picture, and cost a deal of money, though I pay no ground rent. It is about as big as the Capitol at Washington. Do you think it ought to have a steeple? I have it nearly filled—fifty

men cutting and storing, day and night—awful cold work! By the way, the ice, which when I wrote you last was ten feet thick, is now thinner. But don't you worry; there is plenty.

Our warehouse is eight or ten miles out of town, so I am not much bothered by visitors, which is a relief. Such a giggling, sniggering lot you never saw!

It seems almost too absurdly incredible, Wannie, but do you know I believe this ice of ours gains in coldness as the warm weather comes on! I do, indeed, and you may mention the fact in the advertisements.

From Mr. Pike Wandel, of New Orleans, to Mr. Jabez Hope, in Chicago, March 7, 1878.

All goes well. I get hundreds of orders. We shall do a roaring trade as "The New Orleans and Chicago Semperfrigid Ice Company." But you have not told me whether the ice is fresh or salt. If it is fresh it won't do for cooking, and if it is salt it will spoil the mint juleps.

Is it as cold in the middle as the outside cuts are?

From Mr. Jabez Hope, from Chicago, to Mr. Pike Wandel, of New Orleans, April 3, 1878.

Navigation on the Lakes is now open, and ships are thick as ducks. I'm afloat, en route for Buffalo, with the assets of the New Orleans and Chicago Semperfrigid Ice Company in my vest pocket. We are busted out, my poor Pikey—we are to fortune and to fame unknown. Arrange a meeting of the creditors and don't attend.

Last night a schooner from Milwaukee was smashed into match-wood on an enormous mass of floating ice—the first berg ever seen in these waters. It is described by the survivors as being about as big as the Capital at Washington. One-half of that iceberg belongs to you, Pikey.

The melancholy fact is, I built our warehouse on an unfavorable site, about a mile out from the shore (on the ice, you understand), and when the thaw came—O my God, Wannie, it was the saddest thing you ever saw in all your life! You will be *so* glad to know I was not in it at the time.

What a ridiculous question you ask me. My poor partner, you don't seem to know very much about the ice business.

PERRY CHUMLY'S ECLIPSE

THE spectroscope is a singularly beautiful and delicate instrument, consisting, essentially, of a prism of glass, which, decomposing the light of any heavenly body to which the instrument is directed, presents a spectrum, or long bar of color. Crossing this are narrow, dark and bright lines produced by the gases of metals in combustion, whereby the celestial orb's light is generated. From these dark and bright lines, therefore, we ascertain all that is worth knowing about the composition of the sun and stars.

Now Ben had made some striking discoveries in spectroscopic analysis at his private garden observatory, and had also an instrument of superior power and capacity, invented, or at least much improved, by himself; and this instrument it was that he and I were arranging for an examination of the comet then flaming in the heavens. William sat by apparently uninterested. Finally we had our arrangements for an observation completed, and Ben said: "Now turn her on."

"That reminds me," said William, "of a little story about Perry Chumly, who—"

"For the sake of science, William," I interrupted, laying a hand on his arm, "I must beg you not to relate it. The comet will in a few minutes be behind the roof of yonder lodging house. We really have no time for the story."

"No," said Ben, "time presses; and, anyhow, I've heard it before."

"This Perry Chumly," resumed William, "believed himself a born astronomer, and always kept a bit of smoked glass. He was particularly great on solar eclipses. I have known him to sit up all night looking out for one."

Ben had now got the spectroscope trained skyward to suit him, and in order to exclude all irrelevant light had let down the window-blind on the tube of it. The spectrum of the comet came out beautifully—a long bar of color crossed with a lovely ruling of thin dark and bright lines, the sight of which elicited from us an exclamation of satisfaction.

"One day," continued William from his seat at another window, "some one told Perry Chumly there would be an eclipse of the sun that afternoon at three o'clock. Now Perry had recently read a story about some men who in exploring a deep cañon in the mountains had looked up from the bottom and seen the stars shining at midday. It occurred to him that this knowledge might be so utilized as to give him a fine view of the eclipse, and enable him at the same time to see what the stars would appear to think about it."

"*This*" said Ben, pointing to one of the dark lines in the

cometic spectrum, "this is produced by the vapor of carbon in the nucleus of the heavenly visitant. You will observe that it differs but slightly from the lines that come of volatilized iron. Examined with this magnifying glass"—adjusting that instrument to his eye—"it will probably show—by Jove!" he ejaculated, after a nearer view, "it isn't carbon at all. *It is MEAT!*"

"Of course," proceeded William, "of course Perry Chumly did not have any cañon, so what did the fellow do but let himself down with his arms and legs to the bottom of an old well, about thirty feet deep! And, with the cold water up to his middle, and the frogs, polly-wogs and aquatic lizards quarreling for the cosy corners of his pockets, there he stood, waiting for the sun to appear in the field of his 'instrument' and be eclipsed."

"Ben, you are joking," I remarked with some asperity; "you are taking liberties with science, Benjamin. It *can't* be meat, you know."

"I tell you it *is* though," was his excited reply; "it is just meat, I tell you! And this other line, which at first I took for sodium, is bone—bone, sir, or I'm an asteroid! I never saw the like; that comet must be densely peopled with butchers and horseknackers!"

"When Perry Chumly had waited a long time," William went on to say, "looking up and expecting every minute to see the sun, it began to get into his mind, somehow, that the bright, circular opening above his head—the mouth of the well—was the sun, and that the black disk of the moon was all that was needed to complete the expected phenomenon. The notion soon took complete possession of his brain, so that he forgot where he was and imagined himself standing on the surface of the earth."

I was now scrutinizing the cometic spectrum very closely, being particularly attracted by a thin, faint line, which I thought Ben had overlooked.

"Oh, that is nothing," he explained; "that's a mere local fault arising from conditions peculiar to the medium through which the light is transmitted—the atmosphere of this neighborhood. It is whisky. This other line, though, shows the faintest imaginable trace of soap; and these uncertain, wavering ones are caused by some effluvium not in the comet itself, but in the region beyond it. I am compelled to pronounce it tobacco smoke. I will now tilt the instrument so as to get the spectrum of the celestial wanderer's tail. Ah! there we have it. Splendid!"

"Now this old well," said William, "was near a road, along which was traveling a big and particularly hideous nigger."

"See here, Thomas," exclaimed Ben, removing the magnifying glass from his eye and looking me earnestly in the face, "if I were to tell you that the *coma* of this eccentric heavenly body is really hair, as its name implies, would you believe it?"

“No, Ben, I certainly should not.”

“Well, I won’t argue the matter; there are the lines—they speak for themselves. But now that I look again, you are not entirely wrong: there is a considerable admixture of jute, moss, and I think tallow. It certainly is most remarkable! Sir Isaac Newton—”

“That big nigger,” drawled William, “felt thirsty, and seeing the mouth of the well thought there was perhaps a bucket in it. So he ventured to creep forward on his hands and knees and look in over the edge.” Suddenly our spectrum vanished, and a very singular one of a quite different appearance presented itself in the same place. It was a dim spectrum, crossed by a single broad bar of pale yellow.

“Ah!” said Ben, “our waif of the upper deep is obscured by a cloud; let us see what the misty veil is made of.”

He took a look at the spectrum with his magnifying glass, started back, and muttered: “Brown linen, by thunder!”

“You can imagine the rapture of Perry Chumly,” pursued the indefatigable William, “when he saw, as he supposed, the moon’s black disk encroaching upon the body of the luminary that had so long riveted his gaze. But when that obscuring satellite had thrust herself so far forward that the eclipse became almost annular, and he saw her staring down upon a darkened world with glittering white eyes and a double row of flashing teeth, it is perhaps not surprising that he vented a scream of terror, fainted and collapsed among his frogs! As for the big nigger, almost equally terrified by this shriek from the abyss, he executed a precipitate movement which only the breaking of his neck prevented from being a double back-somersault, and lay dead in the weeds with his tongue out and his face the color of a cometic spectrum. We laid them in the same grave, poor fellows, and on many a still summer evening afterward I strayed to the lonely little church-yard to listen to the smothered requiem chanted by the frogs that we had neglected to remove from the pockets of the lamented astronomer.

“And, now,” added William, taking his heels from the window, “as you can not immediately resume your spectroscopic observations on that red-haired chamber-maid in the dormer-window, who pulled down the blind when I made a mouth at her, I move that we adjourn.”

A PROVIDENTIAL INTIMATION

MR. ALGERNON JARVIS, of San Francisco, got up cross The world of Mr. Jarvis had gone wrong with him overnight, as one's world is likely to do when one sits up till morning with jovial friends, to watch it, and he was prone to resentment. No sooner, therefore, had he got himself into a neat, fashionable suit of clothing than he selected his morning walking-stick and sallied out upon the town with a vague general determination to attack something. His first victim would naturally have been his breakfast; but singularly enough, he fell upon this with so feeble an energy that he was himself beaten—to the grieved astonishment of the worthy *rôtisseur*, who had to record his hitherto puissant patron's maiden defeat. Three or four cups of *café noir* were the only captives that graced Mr. Jarvis' gastric chariot-wheels that morning. He lit a long cigar and sauntered moodily down the street, so occupied with schemes of universal retaliation that his feet had it all their own way; in consequence of which, their owner soon found himself in the billiard-room of the Occidental Hotel. Nobody was there, but Mr. Jarvis was a privileged person; so, going to the marker's desk, he took out a little box of ivory balls, spilled them carelessly over a table and languidly assailed them with a long stick.

Presently, by the merest chance, he executed a marvelous stroke. Waiting till the astonished balls had resumed their composure, he gathered them up, replacing them in their former position. He tried the stroke again, and, naturally, did not make it. Again he placed the balls, and again he badly failed. With a vexed and humiliated air he once more put the indocile globes into position, leaned over the table and was upon the point of striking, when there sounded a solemn voice from behind:

“Bet you two bits you don't make it!”

Mr. Jarvis erected himself; he turned about and looked at the speaker, whom he found to be a stranger—one that most persons would prefer should remain a stranger. Mr. Jarvis made no reply. In the first place, he was a man of aristocratic taste, to whom a wager of “two bits” was simply vulgar. Secondly, the man who had proffered it evidently had not the money. Still it is annoying to have one's skill questioned by one's social inferiors, particularly when one has doubts of it oneself, and is otherwise ill-tempered. So Mr. Jarvis stood his cue against the table, laid off his fashionable morning-coat, resumed his stick, spread his fine figure upon the table with his back to the ceiling and took deliberate aim.

At this point Mr. Jarvis drops out of this history, and is seen no more forever. Persons of the class to which he adds lustre are sacred from the pen of the humorist: they are ridiculous but not amusing. So now we will dismiss this uninteresting young

aristocrat, retaining merely his outer shell, the fashionable morning-coat, which Mr. Stenner, the gentleman, who had offered the wager, has quietly thrown across his arm and is conveying away for his own advantage.

An hour later Mr. Stenner sat in his humble lodgings at North Beach, with the pilfered garment upon his knees. He had already taken the opinion of an eminent pawnbroker on its value, and it only remained to search the pockets. Mr. Stenner's notions concerning gentlemen's coats were not so clear as they might have been. Broadly stated, they were that these garments abounded in secret pockets crowded with a wealth of bank notes interspersed with gold coins. He was therefore disappointed when his careful quest was rewarded with only a delicately perfumed handkerchief, upon which he could not hope to obtain a loan of more than ten cents; a pair of gloves too small for use and a bit of paper that was not a cheque. A second look at this, however, inspired hope. It was about the size of a flounder, ruled in wide lines, and bore in conspicuous characters the words, "Western Union Telegraph Company." Immediately below this interesting legend was much other printed matter, the purport of which was that the company did not hold itself responsible for the verbal accuracy of "the following message," and did not consider itself either morally or legally bound to forward or deliver it, nor, in short, to render any kind of service for the money paid by the sender.

Unfamiliar with telegraphy, Mr. Stenner naturally supposed that a message subject to these hard conditions must be one of not only grave importance, but questionable character. So he determined to decipher it at that time and place. In the course of the day he succeeded in so doing. It ran as follows, omitting the date and the names of persons and places, which were, of course, quite illegible:

"Buy Sally Meeker!"

Had the full force of this remarkable adjuration burst upon Mr. Stenner all at once it might have carried him away, which would not have been so bad a thing for San Francisco; but as the meaning had to percolate slowly through a dense dyke of ignorance, it produced no other immediate effect than the exclamation, "Well, I'll be bust!"

In the mouths of some persons this form of expression means a great deal. On the Stenner tongue it signified the hopeless nature of the Stenner mental confusion.

It must be confessed—by persons outside a certain limited and sordid circle—that the message lacks amplification and elaboration; in its terse, bald diction there is a ghastly suggestion of traffic in human flesh, for which in California there is no market since the abolition of slavery and the importation of thoroughbred beeves. If woman suffrage had been established all would have been clear;

Mr. Stenner would at once have understood the kind of purchase advised; for in political transactions he had very often changed hands himself. But it was all a muddle, and resolving to dismiss the matter from his thoughts, he went to bed thinking of nothing else; for many hours his excited imagination would do nothing but purchase slightly damaged Sally Meekers by the bale, and retail them to itself at an enormous profit.

Next day, it flashed upon his memory who Sally Meeker was—a racing mare! At this entirely obvious solution of the problem he was overcome with amazement at his own sagacity. Rushing into the street he purchased, not Sally Meeker, but a sporting paper—and in it found the notice of a race which was to come off the following week; and, sure enough, there it was:

“Budd Doble enters g.g. Clipper; Bob Scotty enters b.g. Lightnin’; Staley Tupper enters s.s. Upandust; Sim Salper enters b. m. Sally Meeker.”

It was clear now; the sender of the dispatch was “in the know.” Sally Meeker was to win, and her owner, who did not know it, had offered her for sale. At that supreme moment Mr. Stenner would willingly have been a rich man! In fact he resolved to be. He at once betook him to Vallejo, where he had lived until invited away by some influential citizens of the place. There he immediately sought out an industrious friend who had an amiable weakness for draw poker, and in whom Mr. Stenner regularly encouraged that passion by going up against him every payday and despoiling him of his hard earnings. He did so this time, to the sum of one hundred dollars.

No sooner had he raked in his last pool and refused his friend’s appeal for a trifling loan wherewith to pay for breakfast than he bought a check on the Bank of California, enclosed it in a letter containing merely the words “Bi Saly Mecker,” and dispatched it by mail to the only clergyman in San Francisco whose name he knew. Mr. Stenner had a vague notion that all kinds of business requiring strict honesty and fidelity might be profitably intrusted to the clergy; otherwise what was the use of religion? I hope I shall not be accused of disrespect to the cloth in thus bluntly setting forth Mr. Stenner’s estimate of the parsons, inasmuch as I do not share it.

This business off his mind, Mr. Stenner unbent in a week’s revelry; at the end of which he worked his passage down to San Francisco to secure his winnings on the race, and take charge of his peerless mare. It will be observed that his notions concerning races were somewhat confused; his experience of them had hitherto been confined to that branch of the business requiring, not technical knowledge but manual dexterity. In short, he had done no more than pick the pockets of the spectators. Arrived at San Francisco he was hastening to the dwelling of his clerical agent,

when he met an acquaintance, to whom he put the triumphant question, "How about Sally Meeker?"

"Sally Meeker? Sally Meeker?" was the reply. "Oh, you mean the hoss? Why she's gone up the flume. Broke her neck the first heat. But ole Sim Salper is never a-goin' to fret hisself to a shadder about it. He struck it pizen in the mine she was named a'ter and the stock's gone up from nothin' out o' sight. You couldn't tech that stock with a ten-foot pole!"

Which was a blow to Mr. Stenner. He saw his error; the message in the coat had evidently been sent to a broker, and referred to the stock of the "Sally Meeker" mine. And he, Stenner, was a ruined man!

Suddenly a great, monstrous, misbegotten and unmentionable oath rolled from Mr. Stenner's tongue like a cannon shot hurled along an uneven floor! Might it not be that the Rev. Mr. Boltright had also misunderstood the message, and had bought, not the mare, but the stock? The thought was electrical: Mr. Stenner ran—he flew! He tarried not at walls and the smaller sort of houses, but went through or over them! In five minutes he stood before the good clergyman—and in one more had asked, in a hoarse whisper, if he had bought any "Sally Meeker."

"My good friend," was the bland reply—"my fellow traveler to the bar of God, it would better comport with your spiritual needs to inquire what you should do to be saved. But since you ask me, I will confess that having received what I am compelled to regard as a Providential intimation, accompanied with the secular means of obedience, I did put up a small margin and purchase largely of the stock you mention. The venture, I am constrained to state, was not wholly unprofitable."

Unprofitable? The good man had made a square twenty-five thousand dollars on that small margin! To conclude—he has it yet.

MR. SWIDDLER'S FLIP-FLAP

JEROME BOWLES (said the gentleman called Swiddler) was to be hanged on Friday, the ninth of November, at five o'clock in the afternoon. This was to occur at the town of Flatbroke, where he was then in prison. Jerome was my friend, and naturally I differed with the jury that had convicted him as to the degree of guilt implied by the conceded fact that he had shot an Indian without direct provocation. Ever since his trial I had been endeavoring to influence the Governor of the State to grant a pardon; but public sentiment was against me, a fact which I attributed partly to the innate pigheadedness of the people, and partly to the recent establishment of churches and schools which had corrupted the primitive notions of a frontier community. But I labored hard and unremittingly by all manner of direct and indirect means during the whole period in which Jerome lay under sentence of death; and on the very morning of the day set for the execution, the Governor sent for me, and saying "he did not purpose being worried by my importunities all winter," handed me the document which he had so often refused.

Armed with the precious paper, I flew to the telegraph office to send a dispatch to the Sheriff at Flatbroke. I found the operator locking the door of the office and putting up the shutters. I pleaded in vain; he said he was going to see the hanging, and really had no time to send my message. I must explain that Flatbroke was fifteen miles away; I was then at Swan Creek, the State capital.

The operator being inexorable, I ran to the railroad station to see how soon there would be a train for Flatbroke. The station man, with cool and polite malice, informed me that all the employees of the road had been given a holiday to see Jerome Bowles hanged, and had already gone by an early train; that there would be no other train till the next day.

I was now furious, but the station man quietly turned me out, locking the gates. Dashing to the nearest livery stable, I ordered a horse. Why prolong the record of my disappointment? Not a horse could I get in that town; all had been engaged weeks before to take people to the hanging. So everybody said, at least, though I now know there was a rascally conspiracy to defeat the ends of mercy, for the story of the pardon had got abroad.

It was now ten o'clock. I had only seven hours in which to do my fifteen miles afoot; but I was an excellent walker and thoroughly angry; there was no doubt of my ability to make the distance, with an hour to spare. The railway offered the best chance; it ran straight as a string across a level, treeless prairie, whereas the highway made a wide detour by way of another town.

I took to the track like a Modoc on the war path. Before I had gone a half-mile I was overtaken by "That Jim Peasley," as he was

called in Swan Creek, an incurable practical joker, loved and shunned by all who knew him. He asked me as he came up if I were "going to the show." Thinking it was best to dissemble, I told him I was, but said nothing of my intention to stop the performance; I thought it would be a lesson to That Jim to let him walk fifteen miles for nothing, for it was clear that he was going, too. Still, I wished he would go on ahead or drop behind. But he could not very well do the former, and would not do the latter; so we trudged on together.

It was a cloudy day and very sultry for that time of the year. The railway stretched away before us, between its double row of telegraph poles, in rigid sameness, terminating in a point at the horizon. On either hand the disheartening monotony of the prairie was unbroken.

I thought little of these things, however, for my mental exaltation was proof against the depressing influence of the scene. I was about to save the life of my friend—to restore a crack shut to society. Indeed I scarcely thought of That Jim, whose heels were grinding the hard gravel close behind me, except when he saw fit occasionally to propound the sententious, and I thought derisive, query, "Tired?" Of course I was, but I would have died rather than confess it.

We had gone in this way, about half the distance, probably, in much less than half the seven hours, and I was getting my second wind, when That Jim again broke the silence.

"Used to bounce in a circus, didn't you?" This was quite true! in a season of pecuniary depression I had once put my legs into my stomach—had turned my athletic accomplishments to financial advantage. It was not a pleasant topic, and I said nothing. That Jim persisted.

"Wouldn't like to do a feller a somersault now, eh?"

The mocking tongue of this jeer was intolerable; the fellow evidently considered me "done up," so taking a short run I clapped my hands to my thighs and executed as pretty a flip-flap as ever was made without a springboard! At the moment I came erect with my head still spinning, I felt That Jim crowd past me, giving me a twirl that almost sent me off the track. A moment later he had dashed ahead at a tremendous pace, laughing derisively over his shoulder as if he had done a remarkably clever thing to gain the lead.

I was on the heels of him in less than ten minutes, though I must confess the fellow could walk amazingly. In half an hour I had run past him, and at the end of the hour, such was my slashing gait, he was a mere black dot in my rear, and appeared to be sitting on one of the rails, thoroughly used up.

Relieved of Mr. Peasley, I naturally began thinking of my poor friend in the Flatbroke jail, and it occurred to me that something

might happen to hasten the execution. I knew the feeling of the country against him, and that many would be there from a distance who would naturally wish to get home before nightfall. Nor could I help admitting to myself that five o'clock was an unreasonably late hour for a hanging. Tortured with these fears, I unconsciously increased my pace with every step, until it was almost a run. I stripped off my coat and flung it away, opened my collar, and unbuttoned my waistcoat. And at last, puffing and steaming like a locomotive engine, I burst into a thin crowd of idlers on the outskirts of the town, and flourished the pardon crazily above my head, yelling. "Cut him down!—cut him down!"

Then, as every one stared in blank amazement and nobody said anything, I found time to look about me, marveling at the oddly familiar appearance of the town. As I looked, the houses, streets, and everything seemed to undergo a sudden and mysterious transposition with reference to the points of the compass, as if swinging round on a pivot; and like one awakened from a dream I found myself among accustomed scenes. To be plain about it, I was back again in Swan Creek, as right as a trivet!

It was all the work of That Jim Peasley. The designing rascal had provoked me to throw a confusing somersault, then bumped against me, turning me half round, and started on the back track, thereby inciting me to hook it in the same direction. The cloudy day, the two lines of telegraph poles, one on each side of the track, the entire sameness of the landscape to the right and left—these had all conspired to prevent my observing that I had put about.

When the excursion train returned from Flatbroke that evening the passengers were told a little story at my expense. It was just what they needed to cheer them up a bit after what they had seen; for that flip-flap of mine had broken the neck of Jerome Bowles seven miles away!

THE LITTLE STORY

DRAMATIS PERSONAE—A *Supernumerary Editor. A Probationary Contributor.*

SCENE—“*The Expounder*” Office.

PROBATIONARY CONTRIBUTOR—Editor in?

SUPERNUMERARY EDITOR—Dead.

P.C.—The gods favor me. (*Produces roll of manuscript.*) Here is a little story, which I will read to you.

S.E.—O, O!

P.C.—(*Reads.*) “It was the last night of the year—a naughty, noxious, offensive night. In the principal street of San Francisco—”

S.E.—Confound San Francisco!

P.C.—It had to be somewhere. (*Reads.*)

“In the principal street of San Francisco stood a small female orphan, marking time like a volunteer. Her little bare feet imprinted cold kisses on the paving-stones as she put them down and drew them up alternately. The chilling rain was having a good time with her scalp, and toyed soppily with her hair—her own hair. The night-wind shrewdly searched her tattered garments, as if it had suspected her of smuggling. She saw crowds of determined-looking persons grimly ruining themselves in toys and confectionery for the dear ones at home, and she wished she was in a position to ruin a little—just a little. Then, as the happy throng sped by her with loads of things to make the children sick, she leaned against an iron lamp-post in front of a bake-shop and turned on the wicked envy. She thought, poor thing, she would like to be a cake—for this little girl was very hungry indeed. Then she tried again, and thought she would like to be a tart with smashed fruit inside; then she would be warmed over every day and nobody would eat her. For the child was cold as well as hungry. Finally, she tried quite hard, and thought she could be very well content as an oven; for then she would be kept always hot, and bakers would put all manner of good things into her with a long shovel.”

S.E.—I’ve read that somewhere.

P.C.—Very likely. This little story has never been rejected by any paper to which I have offered it. It gets better, too, every time I write it. When it first appeared in *Veracity* the editor said it cost him a hundred subscribers. Just mark the improvement! (*Reads.*)

“The hours glided by—except a few that froze to the pavement—until midnight. The streets were now deserted, and the almanac having predicted a new moon about this time, the lamps had been conscientiously extinguished. Suddenly a great globe of sound fell from an adjacent church-tower, and exploded on the

night with a deep metallic boom. Then all the clocks and bells began ringing—in the New Year—pounding and banging and yelling and finishing off all the nervous invalids left over from the preceding Sunday. The little orphan started from her dream, leaving a small patch of skin on the frosted lamp-post, clasped her thin blue hands and looked upward, ‘with mad disquietude,’—

S.E.—In *The Monitor* it was “with covetous eyes.”

P.C.—I know it; hadn’t read Byron then. Clever dog, Byron. *(Reads.)*

“Presently a cranberry tart dropped at her feet, apparently from the clouds.”

S.E.—How about those angels?

P.C.—The editor of *Good Will* cut ’em out. He said San Francisco was no place for them; and I don’t believe—

S.E.—There, there! Never mind. Go on with the little story.

P.C.—*(Reads.)* “As she stooped to take up the tart a veal sandwich came whizzing down, and cuffed one of her ears. Next a wheaten loaf made her dodge nimbly, and then a broad ham fell flat-footed at her toes. A sack of flour burst in the middle of the street; a side of bacon impaled itself on an iron hitching-post. Pretty soon a chain of sausages fell in a circle around her, flattening out as if a road-roller had passed over them. Then there was a lull—nothing came down but dried fish, cold puddings and flannel under-clothing; but presently her wishes began to take effect again, and a quarter of beef descended with terrific momentum upon the top of the little orphan’s head.”

S.E.—How did the editor of *The Reasonable Virtues* like that quarter of beef?

P.C.—Oh, he swallowed it like a little man, and stuck in a few dressed pigs of his own. I’ve left them out, because I don’t want outsiders altering the Little Story. *(Reads.)*

“One would have thought that ought to suffice; but not so. Bedding, shoes, firkins of butter, mighty cheeses, ropes of onions, quantities of loose jam, kegs of oysters, titanic fowls, crates of crockery and glassware, assorted house-keeping things, cooking ranges, and tons of coal poured down in broad cataracts from a bounteous heaven, piling themselves above that infant to a depth of twenty feet. The weather was more than two hours in clearing up; and as late as half-past three a ponderous hogshead of sugar struck at the corner of Clay and Kearney Streets, with an impact that shook the peninsula like an earthquake and stopped every clock in town.

“At daybreak the good merchants arrived upon the scene with shovels and wheelbarrow’s, and before the sun of the new year was an hour old, they had provided for all of these provisions—had stowed them away in their cellars, and nicely arranged them on their shelves, ready for sale to the deserving poor.”

S.E.—And the little girl—what became of her?

P.C. —You mustn't get ahead of the Little Story. (*Reads.*)

“When they had got down to the wicked little orphan who had not been content with her lot some one brought a broom, and she was carefully swept and smoothed out. Then they lifted her tenderly, and carried her to the coroner. That functionary was standing in the door of his office, and with a deprecatory wave of his hand, he said to the man who was bearing her:

“There, go away, my good fellow; there was a man here three times yesterday trying to sell me just such a map.”