morning we found a horrible, odious, little vulgar man in charge of the studio. He began to talk to us at once, before we had even said good morning to him, and in about two minutes he was trying to prove to the General that he was his cousin. A dreadful man without an h in any of his words, and with his face all over yellow paint! It's insufferable!"

A light broke across the darkness in Geoffrey's soul.

"It was Binns!" he cried. He saw the whole scene in a moment, and could not help laughing. "I'm very sorry," he said, "but really I don't think it need annoy you. Binns is a most awfully good little fellow, really, and clever, too, but he's mad on his family tree. His people came down in the world a few generations ago, but according to him they used to be tremendous gods. I'm quite certain that he honestly thought you were connected with them, and hadn't the least intention of annoying you."

"And I am quite certain that he had!" cried the lady. "He didn't mention his absurd idea until after I told him to stop talking and go away."

"Oh, you did that?" said Geoffrey thoughtfully.

"Yes, I did!" she answered. "His manner was insufferable. He actually patronized the General, and told him that the idea of putting up this statue was a mistake. So I told him to be off, and instead of going, he sat down—sat down!—and began to claim kinship with us—with the Bings of Clayford Castle!" She paused for breath.

"Oh, there's no harm in the fellow, I dare say!" said the General. "He's a bit above himself, that's all. It's the result of these damned Socialist agitators. Ruining the country. Want to see the poor rich and the rich poor," concluded the General, vaguely yet epigrammatically.

"I assure you that Binns is a most excellent fellow, and he is not a Socialist," said Geoffrey. "If you met him again he would certainly not allude to your relationship. I gather that you showed him that the allusion annoyed you."

Lady Bing uttered a sharp exclamation of anger.

"As if there could be any relationship!" she cried.

"Quite possible! Black sheep in every family," said the General, who appeared to be enjoying his wife's annoyance. "Think of your Uncle Edmund!"

She ignored him, biting her lip. "He's just the kind of man who would try to blackmail us into giving him money,"

S.C.H.
she said. "I knew in a moment what his intentions were. The General didn’t see through him; he knows what I think of his powers of judging men." The General puffed again; he had evidently passed an uncomfortable ten minutes between the departure of Mr. Binns and the arrival of Geoffrey.

"I think you overrate your own," said the sculptor. "Binns is the last man in the world to accept a favour of anyone. I’m ready now, if you are, General. Aren’t you going to stay, Lady Bing?" For the lady was making for the door.

"Certainly not!" she said, and she departed, furious. The General smiled feebly, but made no further comment on the scene. Geoffrey worked in silence. His soul was aching for Mr. Binns’ version of the affair.

He heard it late that afternoon. "He may be famous and she may be her ladyship and all the rest of it," said Mr. Binns, shining with indignation and gold leaf, "but I tell you this, sir, they’re snobs! I’d hardly said a word when she ordered me out of the place as if it was her own and I was one of her servants. Then, of course, I lost my temper, though I kept externally smiling, and I sat down and told them that I was a near and dear relation. It’s perfect truth. You remember my telling you that only one member of my family had been really celebrated? It was the General as I alluded to, though I didn’t think it right to mention him by name. I’m a Bing myself really of Bray Hill. The General belongs to a younger branch—fifteenth century. We came over with Norman Will, they say. Bing with an i, just as the General spells it. In my ’umble opinion he’s disgraced the family by marrying that woman, and I wish I’d told him so."

Mr. Binns was evidently hurt. Geoffrey attempted to pour balm on his wounds.

"It ain’t that I mind their being annoyed because of what I said about the family," continued Mr. Binns. "In a way that was natural, and I knew before I started that they would be and stirred them up on purpose. What I object to is their disgusting vulgarity and rudeness. You can’t deny it, sir; they’ve patronized you; they’d have treated you as dirt beneath their boots just as they did me if you hadn’t happened to be an artist that they were getting something out of. They’re borjaw to the bottom of their ’earts. But there! What’s the use of talking? The thing’s over, and not worth thinking of, except that it makes one out of ’armony with
human nature. I dare say they've troubles of their own and are all on edge, as it were. Still," concluded Mr. Binns, wagging his head, "civility's civility. You can't get over that. It's the test of a gentleman. Lord! I should like to show 'em that pedigree!"

"They're a pair of idiots," said Geoffrey, "though the General is not so bad, really. You forget all about them, Binns."

"I may forgive but I never forget," said Mr. Binns sublimely. "I see the statue's nearly finished, sir. Ah, he's a poor type, a poor type. Fatty degeneration of the mind, I call it. But when you think of her you can't wonder."

He made no further allusion to the scene, and the General and his wife visited the studio no more. A few days later the statue was ready to go to Market Clayford, where a plinth already awaited it.

VII

It had been Geoffrey's intention to accompany the effigy of the General and to attend the ceremony of unveiling. But a day or two before the date of this function he received a letter from Paris which informed him that John Wilton was seriously ill. John Wilton was a painter, and Geoffrey's most intimate friend; in olden days they had shared a studio in the Quartier, pooled their scanty resources, and even, like heroes of Mürger, worn each other's clothes. After Geoffrey's departure Wilton had isolated himself from everyone and become a complete recluse. His former friends attributed this sudden hatred of the world to an unfortunate love-affair. For a time they tried to break through his seclusion, but he showed them, quite politely but unmistakably, that he preferred to be alone, and they desisted one by one from the attempt. Wilton was left to live, solitary and splendid, in his dilapidated old studio near the Jardin des Plantes.

The thought of Wilton lying ill and untended in that melancholy dwelling depressed Geoffrey's honest soul, and he resolved to go to Paris as soon as the memorial was unveiled. But when a telegram came which announced that Wilton was much worse and in grave danger, the statue of the
Commander suddenly dwindled to most microscopic importance, and Geoffrey made up his mind to leave for Paris without delay. Mr. Binns, he decided, should go as his deputy—even at the risk of another collision with Lady Bing—and should watch over the statue until it was safely on its pedestal. He sent for the great man and gave him instructions as to packing and transporting, all of which Mr. Binns promised to follow faithfully. Geoffrey packed a bag and caught the night train to Paris. When he arrived Wilton was out of danger, but Geoffrey found the sight of old familiar things very pleasant, and was also greatly relieved at the thought of escaping the foolish ceremony and all the congratulations on a work of art of which he felt no reason to be proud. He did not hurry back to England. He felt that he could rely absolutely on Mr. Binns. Mark the workings of Destiny, how she manipulates the pawns in her great game!

On the evening when the statue was to be sent off a domestic crisis occurred in the household of Mr. Binns. The young man Jenks, an amiable and too romantic youth, was observed by the fair Luna, his betrothed, to be paying conspicuous attention to some unknown damsel in the little garden that lies between Cheyne Walk and the river. The result of this vision was that when the unsuspecting Jenks returned to tea at the Binns’ house he became the target for various fine examples of feminine invective. Mrs. Binns called him a regular young Don Juan, and Luna (in tears, with her hair most becomingly dishevelled) feverishly thrust buns into a bag and besought him to return with them to the Embankment, adding the cynical information that the bag contained ample provision for two persons. The volatile Jenks was for a time overwhelmed by this tornado of reproaches, but at length he became angry and began to retort. Mr. Binns entered the room in time to hear him assert that since they wanted him to go he’d go, and not come back till the 30th of February, for he knew now what their tongues were like, and as for all their everlasting jabber about their family and their ancestors that were dukes, he was fed up to the chin with it. Mr. Jenks then withdrew, but the majesty of his departure was marred by the fact that he forgot his hat and had to come back for it.
THE STATUE OF THE COMMANDER

Mr. Binns was the only member of the family who did not attach any serious importance to the episode. "He'll come to his senses all right, my love," he said, patting the weeping Luna on her heaving back. But nevertheless the ultimate utterance of Jenks galled his soul, and the mournful faces of his family depressed him. He went out when he had finished his tea, and a few yards from his door he met Tomes the photographer, who had a red nose but was extremely cultured and a great student of History. Mr. Binns caught Mr. Tomes by the lapel of his coat.

"If I am not mistaken, George," said Mr. Binns, "today is the anniversary of the birthday of the great and never-to-be-forgotten poet 'Omer.'"

Mr. Tomes knew the formula, and replied with another.

"I had almost forgotten it, William," he said. "You have a wonderful memory for such matters."

Mr. Binns meditated for a moment, then spoke.

"Port, I think," he said.

"Amen," responded Mr. Tomes. And they retired from the feverish world to a bar parlour.

They did not emerge till eight o'clock, when they parted with extreme friendliness. Mr. Binns did not return home, but directed his steps to Geoffrey Cave's studio, where the statue of the Commander was awaiting its packing-case. He turned on the lights and sank into an armchair, folded his hands across his stomach, and contemplated the finished work of art. He stared at it in silence for several minutes, then he waved one of his hands in the air and murmured, "Borjaw, borjaw." After this he shifted the armchair so that he could see the Aphrodite.

In the dusk—or was it the effect of the port?—she looked misty, ethereal, almost alive. Mr. Binns addressed reverent words to her, assured her that she was not borjaw, and lamented her captivity in the studio. "Thou art noble and nude and hantique," he murmured once more, glancing over his shoulder at the statue of the Commander, which possessed none of those three qualities. Then he sang a little song to himself, lit his pipe, and took off his coat. "Work space, space, space," he carolled. It occurred to him suddenly that he must have consumed a great quantity of port. But it didn't matter, since his depression had vanished. What
had been the cause of the depression? Oh, of course, that young imbecile Jenks. And something else. What was it? Ah!

He turned again to the statue of the Commander and shook his fist at it very slowly. "Not for you but for your missus, you old blighter," he said genially. But the smile died from his face a moment later and he sat down and brooded over the insult that Lady Bing had offered him. The more he thought of it the more intolerable it appeared. "Old virago!" said Mr. Binns, and a crafty gleam came into his eye. "Revenge!" he said suddenly and loudly, with a trans-pontine emphasis that would have curdled the blood of any audience. He stared at the statue, and the gleam in his eye brightened.

"I'll teach you to insult an honest man of ancient family!" he said. The statue regarded him with a cold but mocking eye. "I'll do for you!" cried Mr. Binns, dancing slowly in front of it. Presently he collided with a huge packing-case. He rubbed his elbow and inspected the object carefully. "Those fellers ought to be here by now," he murmured.

Once again he sat down in front of the Aphrodite and pondered.

"What a chance, what a chance!" he murmured at last. "None of the fellers know it!" He began to laugh quietly to himself. "It's doing him a good turn, too!" he added. He rose, and walked up and down the studio several times, then he stood with one arm outstretched towards the Aphrodite—a memorable spectacle.

"I'll do it!" he cried. "I'll do it! Haid me, O Goddess!" He rolled up his shirt-sleeves carefully, picked up a long strip of coconut matting from the floor, and completely enveloped the statue of the Commander in its folds.

"Good night, General Sir John," said Mr. Binns affably, bowing to the enshrouded figure. At that moment he heard the sound of wheels outside. There was a knock at the door; he flung it open and went out.

"Oh, 'ere you are, Tom!" he said calmly. "You're a bit late. Are the others come? Right-oh! The case is ready. Have you got the rollers? It'll be a bit of a job to get him across the gravel."

He re-entered the studio, followed by four workmen of muscular aspect.
THE STATUE OF THE COMMANDER 647

VIII

In the thriving city of Market Clayford there was a sound of revelry by day. The territorials, those sinewy sons of the sword, had formed up on three sides of the market-place, and behind them the local yeomanry restrained their wind-swift steeds. The firemen, in effulgent helmets, manned the tall scarlet fire-escape near the Clock Tower; in front of them was a little regiment of schoolgirls with clean pinafores and garlands of flowers, and in front of these stood the six prettiest maidens of the district (selected, at the price of his personal popularity, by Alderman Gumm) with baskets of roses which were to be strewn at the feet of the hero of the day. There was a great concourse of people and a corresponding hum of voices; the sun shone, the church-bells pealed joyously, and a brass band emitted blood-curdling bursts of popular melody.

The memorial to the General had been hoisted to its place on the pedestal in front of the Jubilee Clock Tower, but a large sheet of canvas concealed each side of it from the public eye. The delicate task of raising the statue had been performed by experts from London under the direction of Mr. Binns. A small boy who had contrived, on the day before the ceremony of unveiling, to peer through a tiny aperture in the canvas, had been rewarded by nothing but the sight of a muffled and bandaged figure and a smart rap over the knuckles from Mr. Binns, who seemed to be perpetually on guard.

It was almost noon; the crowd became denser every moment, and the hum of voices began to prove a serious rival to the softer harmonies of the band. Carriage after carriage—each containing a local celebrity—drove up to the door of the "White Hart", the windows and balcony of which famous hostelry commanded an excellent view of the market-place. The juvenile portion of the crowd made short work of two sweet-stuff and ice-cream stalls, whilst their elders gravitated towards the bar of the "White Hart", where, since the supply of glasses had failed, they drank benignly from jugs and bottles.

The clock struck twelve, and a cannon was fired from the Castle Hill. The headmistress made a sign to her schoolgirls
and they began to sing "Onward, Christian Soldiers", in
tones that were hearty but flat. A bandsman who was playing
"The Lost Chord" as a cornet solo at the far end of the
market-place wavered and quavered for another moment
and then gave up the struggle in despair. There was a note
of savage triumph in the voices of the little girls which showed
that they had observed his collapse, but their supremacy was
brief. Before they had reached the end of the third verse an
outburst of cheering drowned their hymn. A string of
carriages was descending the Castle Hill; in the first sat the
General, Lady Bing, and the Lord Lieutenant of the county,
and the others contained various resplendent persons—for
the most part brother officers of the General.

The carriages halted, the band played "See the Conquering
Hero Comes", the Mayor and Corporation advanced to
receive the hero, and Mr. Binns, who was observing the
proceedings from an upper window, kissed his hand gallantly
to Lady Bing, who marked him not. The General was in
full uniform, and bore himself with gravity; he contrasted
somewhat unfavourably with the Lord Lieutenant, a very
tall, handsome nobleman with a white beard. The six damsels
scattered rose-petals in the path of the warrior, and the Mayor's
little daughter, a forward minx who pretended quite success-
fully to be shy, presented Lady Bing with a large bouquet.
The crowd cheered vociferously and sang "For He's a Jolly
Good Fellow" in the local patois. It was indeed a memorable
and brilliant scene.

There were shouts for silence, and when the din had
ceased the Lord Lieutenant made a brief speech. The Lord
Lieutenant's private opinion of the ceremony was that it
was nonsense, and he had grave doubts whether the General
would deserve a statue even when he was dead. He did not
express this opinion, but made graceful allusions to the
everal exploits of the General and to the esteem which his
family had enjoyed in the county for so many generations.
The Lord Lieutenant's phrases were sober and his voice
quiet; it was left to the Mayor to improve the occasion with
the trumpet-tones of rhetoric. The Mayor was not backward.

"Well, my lord, ladies, gentlemen, and fellow-citizens,"
he said. "'Ere we are, met together on a very pleasant
piece of business. The hero is returned to his native place,
the war-weary veteran 'angs 'is sword on the laurels." (Cheers
and cries of "Not yet, heaps of fight in him still!") "I say, 'e 'angs 'is sword up, but does 'e 'ang it up because 'e's old, worn-out, finished? Not 'e, gentlemen; 'e does so because 'is country 'as 'earkened to the lies and slanders of 'is enemies—for every truly great man 'as enemies, my friends—and 'as said, 'You 'ave been faithful to me many years, Sir John, but they tell me you've made a mistake. I don't know if it's true, Sir John, but anyhow, you may go; I've no further use for you.' Gentlemen, you know I'm a loyal man, a true-blue Englishman, but when I 'eard of that I 'ad the most awful moment of my life. I went about for a week saying to myself, 'Oh, England, my England, don't let me be ashamed of you.' But I am ashamed, gentlemen; I feel that it's a foul and everlasting blot on my country's honour. Oh, my friends, we 'ave reason to be proud today, for by setting up this statue we are going to show England that though she may err and be blind, the men of Market Clayford see straight!

"The generations to come shall look on this great souljer in 'is habit as 'e lived, and perceive our names. (Have you got 'old of the string, George? Be ready and pull when I drop my right arm.) Yes, gentlemen, the time will come when the greatest soldier of our day will be recognized by 'istory, but little good'll that be to 'im, for 'e'll be dead, and 'is sword rusting above 'is grave. This is a proud thought, gentlemen, that we—alone of all Englishmen—we, the fellow-citizens and servants and friends of 'is ancient family—we, the people of Market Clayford, were able to prove 'im that we recognized 'is greatness whilst 'e was yet with us—and long may 'e remain, for a better landlord I nor none of you ever knew—and set up to 'im in this year of grace '19 owe 5 and this market-place of our famous old city—ready, George—this imposing and sumptuous monument—the exact portrait of 'im as 'e stood undismayed like a rock amid the foaming tide of war. Pull away, George."

When the cheers died away, George was still pulling, but the canvas did not move. An expectant silence fell on the multitude, and the brass band put their instruments to their lips in readiness to burst into a triumphant paean. George pulled and pulled but nothing happened; and at length he let go the rope and straightened himself, wiping the perspiration from his brow with the back of his hand. "Drat the old thing!" he said.
It was then that a stentorian cry, which appeared to descend from heaven, echoed across the market-place. "Pull both ropes at once and keep on pulling, you fool!" it said. In reality it emanated from the upper chamber where Mr. Binns was dancing with excitement. "Get your foot against the wood and pull!" cried the voice.

George moistened the palms of his hands and obeyed. His friends in the crowd encouraged him gaily. "Good on yer, Jarge!" they said. "Put your back into it! Now she moves!"

In fact, she moved. The canvas curtains descended a few inches, then became fixed again. George pulled heroically, deaf to the sudden shout of surprise that went up from the crowd.

"'Ullo! It ain't 'im!" "If it's 'im it ain't a good portrait, any'ow." "Looks gallus like an angel!" "P'raps 'e's down below and the angel's leanin' over 'im." The square hummed with excitement, and everyone stood on someone else's toes and craned their necks.

Then a strange and dreadful thing happened. George made a superhuman effort, and the canvas fell away from the statue as a wave recedes from a rock, revealing, not the portly presentment of the General, but first the head, then the lovely shoulders, then the slender flanks and dainty feet of the great Goddess of Love. She stood in the sun naked and unashamed, and smiled softly upon them, as if she were glad to be there. The multitude gazed upon her for a moment in stupefied silence. The bandsmen, with their mute instruments pressed to their mouths, stared at the goddess, the Mayor gasped, the General assumed the hue of a garnet. Then the great voice rose again and rang across the square. "Venus the Goddess of Love awaiting the return of Mars the God of War!" it cried, and was still. All eyes were turned in the direction whence it came. Some of them perceived a fat man with a shiny face bobbing up and down and gesticulating in a window. Lady Bing saw him and uttered a loud cry.

"It's that odious man!" she screamed. "He's done it! Arrest him, stop him! He's brought the wrong statue on purpose!"

By the time she had explained what had happened Mr. Binns had disappeared. A vast hubbub arose from the market-place,
a hubbub which gradually resolved itself into one enormous and continued outburst of laughter. Aloof from it all, Aphrodite stood and smiled, seeming only slightly interested in the tumult that surrounded her, yet glad, on the whole, to stand in the warm sunshine and to reveal her beauty once more to the eyes of men.
Eden Phillpotts abandoned insurance for literature in the nineties, and since then has been a prolific writer of novels, poems, stories, and plays, several of which, *The Farmer's Wife* in particular, have enjoyed very long runs. He lives on Dartmoor, which is the setting of many of his writings.
THE "BOLSOVER" PRIZE

I

There was once a chap at Dunston's, ages and ages ago, called Bolsover, who turned into a novelist afterwards; and he was so frightfully keen about other chaps turning into novelists too that he gave a prize for composition. It was a book worth a guinea, and Dr. Dunston had to choose it each year, and only the junior school was allowed to enter for it, according to the conditions made by the chap who gave it. Gideon calculated it out, and said that as twenty pounds is about good for one pound at simple interest in an ordinary way, the novelist chap must have handed twenty pounds over to Dr. Dunston; and Steggles said he rather doubted if the novelist chap would have much cared for the books that Dr. Dunston chose for the prizes; because they were not novels at all, but very improving books—chiefly natural history; which Steggles said was not good for trade from the novelist chap's point of view.

No doubt old Dunston ought to have bought stories; and Steggles went further and said that it would have been a sporting thing for Dr. Dunston to get the novelist chap's own books, of which he wrote a great many for a living. Steggles had read one once in the holidays, but he didn't tell me much about it, excepting that there was a man who appeared to have about four wives in it, and that it had three hundred and seventy-five pages and no pictures.

Anyway, the composition prize always interested us in the lower school, and it interested me especially once, because the subject was "Wild Flowers", and my cousin, Norman Tomkins, happened to be a frightful dab at them. When he heard about it, Tomkins went instantly to Gideon, who lends money at usury, being a Jew, and said, "Look here, Gid., I'll sell you the 'Bolsover' prize for ten shillings now on the spot. As it's
worth a pound, you’ll make fifty per cent. profit.” And Gideon said, “The profit would be about right, but where’s the prize?” And Tomkins said, “I’ve got to write for it on Monday week; but it’s as good as mine, because nobody in the lower school knows anything about wild flowers excepting me, and I can tell you the name of thirty-four right off the reel; so there’s an end of it, as far as I can see.” Which shows what a hopeful sort of chap Tomkins was.

But unfortunately Gideon knew the great hopefulness of Tomkins about everything, and also knew that it did not always come off. He said, “Who are in for the prize?” And I said, “First Tomkins, then Walters, then Smythe, and also Macmullen.”

“There you are,” said Tomkins. “Just take them one by one and ask yourself. If it was wild animals, or queer old customs, Smythe might run me close, or even beat me; but in the subject of wild flowers he is nothing. Then young Walters doesn’t know anything about anything, and his English is frightfully wild, owing to his having been born in India. Well, that only leaves Macmullen, and Macmullen’s strong point is machinery. He never looked at a flower in his life. When we went out of bounds on the railway embankment, he simply sat and watched the signals work, and took down the number of a goods engine that was new to him. And when he got up, I discovered that he’d actually been sitting on a bee orchis, one of the rarest flowers in the world! When I showed him what he’d done, he merely said, ‘A bee orchis? Lucky it don’t sting!’ So that shows he’s no use. In fact, when he hears the subject hasn’t got anything to do with steam power, I doubt if he’ll go in.”

But Gideon knew Macmullen better.

“He’ll go in,” he said. “His age is just right, and he won’t be able to try again. He’s not the chap to throw away the chance of getting a pound book just because the subject doesn’t happen to be steam power. Besides, there’s always time allowed to swot up the thing. I bet by Monday week Mac. will know as much about wild flowers as you do—perhaps more.”

“Of course, as a chum of his, you say that,” answered Tomkins. “But I’ve made a lifetime study of wild flowers, and it’s childish to think that Macmullen, or anybody else, is going to learn all I know in a week.”
"He can spell, anyway," said Gideon, "which is more than you can."

In fact, Gideon didn't seem so hopeful about Tomkins getting the prize as you might have thought, and it surprised Tomkins a good deal. Gideon had a right to speak, because in his time he'd won this prize himself. When he won it, the subject happened to be "Postage Stamps"; which was, of course, like giving the prize to Gideon, owing to his tremendous knowledge about money in every shape.

The time was July, and so next half-holiday Tomkins and me went into the country for a walk, for Tomkins to freshen up his ideas about the wild flowers.

He certainly knew a lot, but several things that I picked bothered him, and once or twice I think he was altogether wrong about them. He also picked a good many that he evidently didn't know at all, and carried them back to school to ask Mr. Briggs the names of them and anything worth mentioning about them.

Then coming back through Merivale, who should we see but Macmullen, with his nose flat against the window of an old bookshop there.

"Look here," he said, "there's a second-hand botany in here for sevenpence, and I've only got fivpence. I tried the man by showing him the fivpence all at once, but he wouldn't come down. Can one of you chaps lend me twopence till next week?"

He looked at the flowers Tomkins had picked as he spoke. "D'you know many of them?" said Tomkins, knowing well that Mac. wouldn't.

"Only that—that nettle," said Macmullen rather doubtfully. "It isn't a nettle," said Tomkins. But he was so pleased to see what a frightful duffer Macmullen really was that he lent him twopence on the spot.

I thought he was rather a fool to increase Macmullen's chances like this; but Tomkins said, in his large way, that a few facts out of a botany book wouldn't help Macmullen now, especially if he didn't know the difference between sage and nettles.

"By Jove, I don't believe he knows the difference between sage and onions, for that matter!" said Tomkins.

Then Mac. came out with the book, and we all went back together.
It was frightfully interesting to see the different ways those four chaps went about trying for the "Bolsover" prize. Tomkins got special leave off games, and spent his spare time in the lanes. He confessed to me that he was frightfully ignorant about grasses, and thought on the whole that it would be safer to leave them out of the essay. Macmullen told me that the whole subject bored him a good bit, but he thought he could learn enough about it to do something decent in a week, because a pound book was worth the fag. He was always pulling flowers to pieces, and talking about calyxes and corollas, and seed-cases, and stamens, and other wild things of that sort. I asked Tomkins if it promised well for Macmullen to learn about stamens and so on, and how to spell them; and Tomkins thought not.

Tomkins said, "Briggs may very likely favour him, as we know he has before, owing to his feeling for everything Scotch, from oatmeal downwards; but all the same, the subject is wild flowers, not botany. It's rather a poetical subject in a way, and that's no good to Macmullen. No, I don't think Mac. has any chance, though he did ask old Briggs to lend him the number of Encyclopaedia Britannica with 'Botany' in it, to read in playtime."

"I believe Briggs was pleased, though," I said, "for I heard him answer that Mac. was going the right way to work. Anyway, Mac. read quite half the article and copied some out on a bit of paper before he chucked it in despair."

Tomkins nodded, and I think he saw that it was rather a grave thing for Macmullen to have done.

"I might read it myself," he said. "I'm a little foggy between genera and species, and varieties and natural orders, and so on. Not that all that stuff matters. What you want is really the name of the wild flowers themselves and their colours and ways. Do you happen to know any poetry about flowers of a sort easily learned by heart?"

I didn't; but young Smythe, who was there, answered that he did.

He said, "What you say about poetry is awfully interesting to me, Tomkins, because I had thought the same. And I know many rhymes of a queer sort, and I can make rhymes
rather well myself, and I had an idea I would try and do the
whole of my composition in rhyme."

"Like your cheek," said Tomkins. "My dear kid, it will
take you all your time to write prose. And what do you
know about flowers, anyway?"

"I do know something," said Smythe, "owing to my
father, who collects odd rhymes and things. It's called
folklore. It includes queer names of plants and animals;
also about remedies for warts, and the charms for curing
animals from witches, and overlooking, and suchlike. I know
some awfully funny things, anyway, that my governor has
told me, though they may not be true."

Tomkins was a good deal interested in this.

"Fancy a kid like you knowing anything at all about it!" he said.

There was only Walters left, but he was no good at all,
and he'd simply gone in for it because his people insisted
upon his doing so. I asked Walters if he knew much about
wild flowers, and he answered something about cucumber
sandwiches, which he had once eaten in large quantities owing
to being forgotten at a lawn-tennis party. He seemed to
think because a cucumber was a vegetable, and a flower was
a vegetable, that a cucumber was a flower. He said that was
all he knew about the subject, excepting that dogs ate grass
when not feeding well. So I told Tomkins he needn't bother
about Walters.

Tomkins, however, assured us that he wasn't bothering
about any of them. He said that facts were the things, and
not theories. So while Macmullen swotted away at his botany,
and Smythe collected rhymes and offered anybody three links
of a brass chain for a word that rhymed with toadflax, and
Walters merely waited for the day, and made no effort as far
as we could see, Tomkins poked about, and went one evening
out of bounds, with Freckles and young Corkey, into the
famous quarry at Merivale Great Wood. They were chased,
but escaped owing to the strategy of Freckles; and Tomkins
felt the "Bolsover" prize was now an absolute cert for him,
because in the preserves he had met with an exceedingly rare
flower—at least, he said so; and he believed that by men-
tioning it, and making a sketch of it in his paper, he would
easily distance Macmullen, who did not so much as know
there was such a flower.
As far as ages went, I must tell you that Tomkins was thirteen and two weeks, and Macmullen thirteen and seven months, while Smythe was ten, and Walters merely nine and a half.

All four put on a little side about it the Sunday before, and a good many other fellows wished they had gone in, because the papers had to be written in the Doctor's own study, and there are some magnificent pictures and marble statues in that room such as are very seldom seen by the lower school.

I asked each one after breakfast on the appointed day how he felt; and Tomkins said, "Hopeful"; and Macmullen said, "Much as usual"; and Smythe said, "Sleepy, because I've been awake nearly all night remembering rhymes I've heard my father say"; and Walters said he had a sort of rather horrid wish that his father had died the term before, because he didn't think his mother would ever have made him go in for a thing he hated so much as this.

III

Two hours were allowed for the essay, and by good luck I happened to meet the four chaps just as they came out. So I got their ideas fresh on what they'd done. Curiously enough, all four were hopeful. Tomkins, of course, I knew would be, and probably also Macmullen, but Smythe and even Walters seemed to fancy they had a chance too. This astonished me a good deal. So I said to Smythe:

"How the dickens d'you think any stuff you can have done would be near to what my cousin Tomkins has done?"

And he said:

"Because of the rhymes. I was quite astonished myself to find how they came; and I also remembered a charm for nettlerash, and some awfully peculiar sayings just at the right moment."

And Walters also declared he'd done better than he expected to do. He seemed rather flustered about it, and wouldn't give any details; but he was highly excited, and inked up to the eyes, as you might say. He gave me the idea of a chap who'd been cribbing.

Macmullen looked rather a pale-yellow colour, which
he always does look at moments of great excitement, especially just before his innings at cricket. He wouldn’t say a word to a soul until he’d gone to his botany book and read up a lot of stuff. Then he felt better.

As to Tomkins, he told me privately, as his cousin, that he had got in the names of no less than forty-five plants and seven grasses.

“That must settle it,” he said. And I said I thought so too.

Mr. Briggs corrected the essays that night, and prepared some notes upon them for the Doctor to read when the time of announcing the winner came. We all stared jolly hard at Briggs during prep. the next day, and Steggles, who has no fear of old Briggs, asked him who had won. But Briggs merely told him to mind his own business.

After prayers the next day the Doctor stopped in the chapel, which was also a schoolroom, and told everybody to remain in his place.

Then he whispered to Corkey major, and Corkey went off, and presently came back with a very swagger book bound in red leather and having a white back with gold letters upon it.

The Doctor dearly likes these occasions; and so do we, because it means missing at least one class for certain. When he once fairly begins talking, he keeps at it. Now he had the four essays on the desk in front of him, and the prize; and then he spoke to Briggs, and Briggs led up Macmullen and Tomkins and Smythe and Walters.

They knew this was coming, and had all prepared to a certain extent. I noticed that Smythe had borrowed a green tie from Webster, and that Mac. had turned his usual hue at times of excitement. Walters was still inky, despite pumice-stone.

“We have now, my boys, to make our annual award of the ‘Harold Bolsover’ prize for English composition,” began the Doctor. “Mr. Bolsover, whose name is now not unfavourably known to his countrymen as an ingenious fabricator of romance, was educated at this seminary. To me it fell to instruct his incipient intellect and lift the vacuity of his childish mind upwards and onwards into the light of knowledge and religion.

“The art of fiction, while it must not be considered a very
lofty or important pursuit, may yet be regarded as a permis-
sible career if the motives that guide the pen are elevated, and
a high morality is the author's first consideration. Lack of
leisure does not permit me to read story-books myself; but
I have little doubt that Mr. Bolsover's work is all that it should
be from the Christian standpoint, and I feel confident that
those lessons of charity, patience, loyalty, and honour, which
he learnt from my own lips, have borne worthy fruit in his
industrious brain.

"The work I have selected for the 'Bolsover' prize is
Gilpin on Forest Scenery—a book which leads us from Nature
to the contemplation of the Power above and behind
Nature; a book wherein the reverend author has excelled
himself and presented to our minds the loftiest thoughts, and
to our eyes the most noble scenes, that this observance could
record, and his skill compass within the space of a volume.

"For this notable reward four lads have entered in
competition, and their emulation was excited by the theme
of 'Wild Flowers', which your senior master, Mr. Briggs, very
happily selected. Wild flowers are the jewellery of our hedge-
rows, scattered lavishly by Nature's own generous hand to
gladden the dusty wayside—to bring a smile to the face of
the wanderer in the highway, and brightness to the eyes of the
weary traveller by flood and field. None of you can have
overlooked them. On your road to your sport—even in the
very grass whereon you pursue your pastimes—the wild
flowers abound. They deck the level sward; they smile at us
from the cricket-field; they help to gladden the hour of mimic
victory, or soften the bitter moment of failure, as we return
defeated to the silent throng at the pavilion rails.

"Now, I have before me the thoughts of Nicol Macmullen,
Norman Tomkins, Huxley Smythe, and Rupert Walters on
this subject; and I very much regret to say that not one of
them has produced anything which may be considered worthy
of Merivale, worthy of Mr. Bolsover, or worthy of themselves.
I do not overlook their tender years; I am not forgetting that
to a mind like my own or that of Mr. Briggs—richly stored
with all the best and most beautiful utterances on this subject
—the crudities of immaturity must come with the profound and
pitiful significance of contrast. No, no—I judge these four
achievements from no possible standard of perfection. I
know too well how little can be expected from the boy who is
but entering upon his teens—I am too familiar with the meagre attainments of the average lad of one decade to ask for impossible accuracy, for poetic thought, or pious sentiments; but certain qualities I have the right to expect—nay, demand—"

Here Steggles whispered to me:
"Blessed if I don't think he's going to cane them!"
"Certain qualities Mr. Harold Bolsover has also the right to expect and demand. Do we find them in these essays before us? Reluctantly I reply, we do not. But in order that you may judge whether your head-master is unreasonable, that you of the upper school may estimate the nature of the efforts upon which I base this adverse criticism, I propose to read brief extracts from each and from all of them.

"The initial error of the boy Nicol Macmullen appears to be a total misconception of the theme he was invited to illuminate. He begins his essay as follows."

The Doctor made a frightful rustling among Mac.'s papers, and everybody looked at Mac. He had not expected this, and his mouth worked very rummily, and his head went down between his shoulders, and he showed his under-teeth and stared in a frightfully fixed way at the boot of Smythe who sat next to him.

Then Dr. Dunston began:

"Wild Flowers.

"By Nicol Macmullen.

"The vegetable kingdom is a very large one. John Ray, a native of Sussex, did much to advance the study of it. He was born in 1628, and died in 1705. There was a history of plants written three hundred years before Christ. Linnaeus was the man who invented the sexual system—a very useful invention. It is a stepping-stone. He first mentioned it in 1736. Seaweeds are also part of the vegetable kingdom, but they have no flowers, and so may be dismissed without further mention. Also Algae. Of leaves, it may be said that some fall and some do not. At least, speaking strictly, all fall, and this is called a deciduous tree; but not all at once, and this is called an evergreen. Glands occur in the tissue of the leaves, and they also have hairs. Buds also have hairs. The organs of plants is almost the largest subject in the vegetable kingdom, but I have no time to mention more than one or two organs today. The root descends unto the soil, the stems rise
aloft, and the flowers bud out at the ends of them. Mistletoe and
broom-rape are called parasites, because they live on other trees,
instead of being on their own.

"Coming now to flowers, we find that they may be divided into
two main families: wild and garden. We shall dismiss garden
flowers, as they do not belong to our subject, but wild flowers are
the most beautiful things in the vegetable kingdom. Especially
honeysuckle and blackberries. Many others will occur to the
reader also. The flower is the *tout ensemble* of those organs which are
concerned in reproduction."

The Doctor stopped and put down Macmullen's essay.
For my part, I was simply amazed at the amount Mac. knew,
and I think everybody else was; but, strangely enough, the
Doctor didn't like it.

"From this point our author quotes *verbatim* out of the
pages of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*," continued Dr. Dunston.
"As an effort of memory the result is highly creditable, and
Macmullen will have acquired a great deal of botanical
knowledge which may possibly be of service to him in his
future career; but as an essayist on wild flowers he is exceed-
ingly evasive, and his effort fails radically and fundamentally.
The subject is obviously not one that appeals to him. There
is no sympathy, no love of his theme; above all, no moral
deductions. Macmullen's mind has not been uplifted. He
has, in fact, failed."

Mac. didn't seem to care as much as you would have
thought. He told me afterwards he felt so thankful when
the Doctor shut up about him and turned to Tomkins, that
he forgot everything else but relief.

Tomkins became red when the Doctor picked up his
essay; but it soon faded away—I mean the redness.

"Now here," said Dr. Dunston, "we are met by an attempt
of a very different character. The boy Tomkins appears to
think that there is nothing more to be said about the flowers
of the field than to utter their names. His prose lacks dignity;
there is a feverish desire to tell us what everything is called.
There is no poetry, no feeling. Vagueness, indeed, we have,
but vagueness is not poetry, though to uncritical minds it
may sometimes pass for such. This is how Tomkins approaches
the subject. There is a breathlessness, a feeling of haste, as if
somebody was chasing Tomkins along the road while he was
making his researches. This, unless Tomkins has been guilty
of trespass—an alternative I refuse to consider—is difficult to explain.”

The Doctor then gave us a bit out of Tomkins:

“As one walks down a country lane, one can often hardly see the leaves for the flowers. They burst upon the view in millions. The hedges are thronged with them; the scent is overpowering. Turn where you will, they greet the bewildered eye. They hang from the trees and spring from the earth; they twine also—as, for instance, briony and convolvuluses. At a single glance I take in dog-roses; campions of several sorts, including white; shepherd’s purse—a weed; strawberry, primroses, cuckoo-flower, violet, bugle, herb Robert, and also other wild geraniums of various kinds. They are in a crowded mass, all struggling for life. Stitchwort, nettle, archangel, cock’s-foot grass, clematis, dock, heath, furze, bog-moss, darnel, dandelions, daisies, buttercups of sorts, marshmallow, water-lilies, rushes and reeds, poppies and peppermint, also ferns—one sees them all at a glance. Then, as one hastens swiftly onwards—

“I gasp for breath,” said the Doctor; “I absolutely refuse to hasten swiftly onwards with Tomkins. At this breakneck pace he drags us through that portion of the British flora at his command. There is doubtless knowledge here; there is even reflection, as when he says, at the end of his paper, that wild flowers ought to make us thankful for our eyesight and for the lesser gift of smell. But, taken as a whole, we have no balance, absolutely no repose, no light, and no shade. There is too much hurry and bustle, too little feeling for the beauty attaching to English scenery or English prose; too eager a desire to display erudition in the empty matter of floral nomenclature.”

So that was the end of Tomkins. He was frightfully disappointed; but he felt so interested to know what wretched chaps like Smythe and Walters had done that was better, that he forgot even to be miserable about losing until afterwards.

Then the Doctor went for Smythe.

“Huxley Smythe next challenges our attention,” he said. “Now, here we are confronted with a still more amazing misunderstanding. Smythe appears to know absolutely nothing whatever concerning wild flowers; but he has seized this occasion to display an extraordinary amount of peculiar
information upon other matters. He evidently imagines that this will answer his purpose equally well. Moreover, he endeavours to cast his work in a poetic form—with results that have bewildered even me, despite my half-century of knowledge of the genus puer. I do not say that rhyme is inadmissible. You shall not find me slow to encourage originality of thought even among the least of you; but Smythe trusts too little to himself and too much to other rhymesters—I will not call them poets. He has committed to memory many verses of a trivial and even offensive character. He has furnished me with a charm or incantation to remove warts. Elsewhere he commits himself to sentiments that may be described as flagrantly irreligious. It is true he glances obliquely at his subject from time to time; but not in a spirit which I can admire or commend. We have, for instance, these lines:

"Put yarrow under your pillow, they say,
You will see your true love the very next day.

For pain in the stomach an excellent thing
Is tea made of mint and sprigs of ling.

If you wash your clothes on Good Friday, someone
Will be certain to die ere the year is done.

"Whence Huxley Smythe has culled these pitiful superstitions I know not," continued the Doctor; "but he appears to be a veritable storehouse and compendium of them. They remind me only too painfully of a certain tiger’s tail, though that incident is closed, and I desire to make no further mention of it. Had our theme been folk-lore, or those crude, benighted and indecent fancies still prevailing among the bucolic population, Smythe must have conquered, and easily conquered. It is not so, however. He has chosen the occasion of the ‘Bolsover’ competition to reveal no little fantastic knowledge; but its lack of appropriate and apposite qualities effectually disposes of his claim. I will give you a last sample of his methods. Apropos of absolutely nothing, on page four of his dissertation, Smythe submits this impertinence. He appears suddenly to have recollected it and inserted it in the body of his work, without the least consideration for its significance or my feelings."
"There was an old man who lived in a wood
As you may plainly see,
And said he could do more work in a day
Than his wife could do in three."

The Doctor looked awfully stern at Smythe.
"This fragment—from some coarse old ballad, I suspect
—is thrust upon me, as one might brandish a club in the face
of an unoffending citizen. Smythe must chasten his taste and
study the rudiments of logic and propriety before again he
ventures to challenge our attention with original thoughts.
Silence! Silence!" thundered the Doctor in conclusion;
because Smythe's stuff made Steggles laugh out loud. Then
several other chaps laughed, and in trying not to laugh, Wolf
minor choked and made a noise like a football exploding,
that was far worse than laughter.

"There remains the effort of Rupert Walters," went on
Dr. Dunston. "He is the youngest of the competitors, and
I find but little to praise in his achievement; yet it indicates
a shadow of promise and a shade of imagination. Indeed,
Mr. Briggs at first suspected that Walters had availed himself
of secret and dishonest assistance; but this, I rejoice to know,
is not the case. Walters has yet to learn to control the dis-
charge of ink from his pen, and in matters of orthography
also there is much to be desired for him—a remark which
applies to all the competitors save Macmullen—but he possesses
a dim and misty nucleus of feeling for the dignity of his native
tongue. There is in his attempt a suggestion that at some
distant date, if he is spared, and if he labours assiduously in
the dead languages, Rupert Walters may control his living
speech with some approach to distinction. I select his most
pleasing passage."

The Doctor regarded young Walters over his spectacles
for a moment with a frightfully encouraging expression that
he sometimes puts on when things are going extra well. Then
he read the pleasing passage, as he called it.

"Often, walking in the country far from home, you may see
the briars falling over the sides of the lanes, and the may trees
white with bloom. They look lovely against the blue sky; and
a curious thing is that the distant trees also look blue, and not
green, by reason of distance. Near at hand, yellow and red
flowers may be dotted about; but when you look along the lane,
you only see haze, which is beautiful. If there is a river flowing near by, it is also very beautiful indeed, especially with water-lilies on it. And clouds are lovely too, if reflected in a sheet of water beside which yellow irises spring up, and their foliage looks rather bluish. If a trout rises, it makes white rings on the water.

"Now here," said the Doctor, "is a humble effort to set down what the eye of this tender boy has mirrored in the past. I need not tell you how he spells 'irises', or 'curious', or 'beautiful'. The fact remains that he has distanced his competitors and achieved the 'Bolsover' prize. Come hither, Rupert Walters. Let me shake your hand, my lad!"

So that was the end of it, and Walters seemed more frightened than anything. But he took his book, and the matter ended, and the four chaps had their essays back, with Briggs' red pencil remarks on them, to send home to their people.

The extraordinary truth only came to me three days later, when I happened to be having a talk with Walters and looking at his prize, which was duller even than most prizes. I said:

"How the dickens did you remember that trees looked blue seen a mile off?"

And he said:

"I didn't remember it. If you'll swear not to tell, I'll explain. I shall be rather glad to tell somebody."

So I swore. Then Walters said:

"I was just sitting biting my pen and drawing on the blotting-paper and casting my eyes about and wondering what on earth to say, when I saw right bang in front of me a great picture—a whacker—full of trees and a lane, and water and hills, and every mortal thing, even to the flowers dabbed about in front. Well—there you are! I just tried to put down what I saw. And I did it only too well, if anything. Of course, in a sort of way, it was cribbing; but then, of course, in another sort of way, it wasn't. Anyway, you've sworn not to tell—not even Tomkins; so of course you won't tell."

And of course I didn't.
GIBSON AND THE WAGER

DENIS MACKAIL
Denis Mackail comes of an artistic and literary family, being the son of a former Professor of Poetry at Oxford and grandson of Burne-Jones. His books are noted for their amusing and lifelike delineation of character, and the most popular of them are probably *Bill the Bachelor*, *The Flower Show*, and *Greenery Street*. 
I WONDER if you have ever paused to consider,” said Gibson, sinking back into the arm-chair next to mine, and crossing his legs, “what a debt you writers owe to the Savoy Hotel.

“No, no,” he added, as I was about to reply to this observation, “I’m not speaking in terms of money. So far as that goes, I agree with you that very few writers ever enter the Savoy at all—except as other people’s guests. But I was thinking of the indispensable part which that particular hotel has come to play in the opening scenes of what are generally known as ‘Shockers’. However successful rival establishments may be in other respects, the position of the Savoy as the one suitable setting for the beginning of this kind of story remains unassailable. I fancy that its closeness to the river may have something to do with this; for there seems a very general belief among authors of fiction that once you have got your characters on to the Thames Embankment all ordinary laws of probability are suspended. Curiously enough, I have noticed the same feeling in New York in connection with Riverside Drive. What is it, I wonder, about these waterside boulevards...”

He paused meditatively for a moment, and then continued:

“And yet, after all, there may be more in it than one would at first sight believe. There is no smoke without fire, you know. And, oddly enough, one of the strangest experiences in my own life had its origin in a dinner at the Café Parisien at the Savoy.”

I saw now where he had been leading me.

“Perhaps you will tell me about it?” I suggested.

“Nothing would give me greater pleasure,” he replied; and he began his story at once.

Although he has played many minor parts in his time (said
Gibson), it is quite likely that you have never heard of my friend John Freemantle, the actor. I certainly doubt whether I should ever have heard of him myself, but for the fact that in the distant past we were schoolfellows together. And even so, if we had not always kept up a fluctuating kind of acquaintanceship, his name would have meant nothing to me on a theatre programme; for until he left school and was given his first part—as one of twenty-five guests at a bigamous wedding—he had been known to the world more simply and less euphoniously as J. F. Snell.

Perhaps it was his experience of the temptation which he had thus afforded to the shafts of schoolboy wit which made him abandon his original surname and expand his initials; possibly there were family reasons of which he never told me; but in any case it was as John Freemantle that he assumed, with great satisfaction to himself, a series of more or less insignificant roles on the London and provincial boards. Fortunately for him, he was possessed of quite adequate private means, and so long as he could pass through a stage door about half past seven for six nights in a week, change his clothes, smear his face, exhibit the result to the public, and leave again about half past eleven, he was perfectly happy, and perfectly harmless. It was only in the intervals between his engagements that he would develop signs of a certain sensitiveness about his career and his profession which made him a little exhausting to the people whom he met. And as he was incapable in any circumstances of discussing any subject unconnected with the stage, I, at any rate, had come to take special pains only to see him when I was certain that he was in what he used to call a "shop".

But when, one day, I found a telephone message waiting for me which contained an invitation to dine with Mr. Freemantle at the Savoy Hotel—where he was then staying—at seven o'clock sharp, I had very little hesitation in accepting it. For not only did it seem incredible to me that anyone could wish to dine at such an hour unless they had some immediate and pressing reason, but I also remembered, as it happened, that I had read a notice of a new play, well within the last three weeks, in which John Freemantle's name had actually been mentioned. Of course it was a bit awkward that I had neither seen this entertainment nor, for the moment, could recall its title, but still, with less than an hour for our
dinner, there seemed to be considerable hope that a little tactful lying would enable me to conceal these facts.

I found him waiting for me when I arrived, and he seized my forearm affectionately with a sort of Shakespearean grip.

"Good lad," he said, throwing the words well off his chest. "Shall we to the banquet?"

"Oh, rather," I answered, shaking myself free. I got rid of my hat and coat, and we went through into the Café Parisien.

John Freemantle seemed to be well known to the waiters, and a group of them conducted us to a table by the wall. For some minutes all conversation was directed to the subject of food, but I knew that as soon as this had been settled I would be expected to talk about the stage; and as, after all, I was getting a very good dinner for nothing, I couched my preliminary observation in the form which I felt would make it easiest for my host to include also in his answer some reference to himself.

"Well, John," I said—I called him "John" more because he called me "Henry" than because we were really intimate—"Well, John, how's the show going?"

This seemed to me the very essence of tact. But to my surprise his face darkened, his brows descended, his lip curled, and his voice shook with passion.

"The show!" he snorted. "It came off on Saturday. Killed dead by the critics—curse their souls!"

I'm afraid my next remark escaped me before I could stop it.

"Then why on earth are we dining so early?" I asked.

Yet, as a matter of fact, I could hardly have said anything which would more quickly have restored John Freemantle's conceit. He looked round, gathered in the eyes of the nearest half-dozen diners, settled his tie with a flourish, and answered in a very loud voice: "The fact is, old man, that I'm so used to dining early before the theatre, that I quite forgot to make it later."

Again he looked at the neighbouring tables, collected his meed of imaginary applause, and attacked his consommé. I was left wondering, for the thousandth time, why it was that actors should, simply by virtue of their calling and quite irrespective of their merits or success in it, suffer under such an inexplicable delusion as to their importance in the eyes of the audience.
the general public. From the expression on John Freemantle's face one might have thought that he had just said, "I always dine early because it is my practice to qualify for the Royal Humane Society's medal immediately afterwards", or, "because it is my custom to spend the evening discovering the North Pole".

But, poor fellow, his complacency didn't last long. He entertained me during the fish and entrée with details of the alleged conspiracy which had resulted in his last engagement terminating so suddenly, and from then on he delivered a series of slashing attacks on all the most celebrated professionals of the day. This one was known to owe his success to Court influence, that one had never been sober for twenty-five years, and yet another had only escaped prosecution for the most unmentionable crimes by leaving hastily on a world tour. As for acting, of course they could none of them ever hope to act. They couldn't play gentlemen because they had all been brought up at reformatories, and they couldn't play character parts because they hadn't even troubled to master the elements of make-up; or if they had, then they were too conceited to risk spoiling their own beauty.

"But wait a minute," I said at this point. "Surely you'll admit that Dash"—I named a well-known tragedian who had recently become his own manager—"surely you'll admit that Dash knows how to make up? I shall never forget seeing him as the hump-backed negro in—in whatever the thing was called."

"Dash?" sneered John Freemantle, snapping his fingers; and then, a little inconsequentially as it seemed to me, he added: "Did you ever see me as the old grandfather in Mrs. Murgatroyd's Mistake?"

Strangely enough, I had. In the play in question John Freemantle had appeared on the stage for rather under two minutes, but on me at any rate he had made a deep and lasting impression. Never in my life had I seen anyone so incredibly ancient, so completely gone at the knees, so amazingly quaverling about the voice, or so incomparably unlike anything in heaven or earth. A very conservative estimate would have set this grandfather's age at two hundred and fifty years—and even at that no one could say that he had worn well.

"Do you know," pursued John, fixing me with his eyes,
“that it used to take me two hours to make up for that part every night, and another hour and a half to get it off again?”

“No!” I exclaimed. “Did it really?”

“It did, though,” he answered. “Why, at the dress rehearsal they nearly had me turned out of the theatre. No one had the least idea who I was. That was something like a make-up!”

“It was indeed,” I said fervently.

“But it isn’t only old men that I can manage so well,” he went on, smiling happily. “Why, I’d bet you five pounds that I could come up to you in any character that you like to mention, and until I told you, you’d never guess who it was.”

This, I thought, was going a bit far. Even such a masterpiece as the old grandfather must have aroused my suspicions anywhere but at a theatre.

“I’ll bet you ten pounds you couldn’t,” I retorted. “Why, of course I should know you.”

John Freemantle slapped the tablecloth with his hand.

“Done!” he exclaimed. “Now, look here. Ten pounds in even money that I come up and speak to you, and that you don’t know who I am until I tell you. Is it a go?”

“Oh, of course it is,” I said. “That tenner will suit me very well. But wait a second; we must have a time limit. I’m not going to go on looking out for you in one disguise after another for the rest of my life.”

“I’m only going to try it once,” said John, “because that will be quite enough. But to make it easier for you, I’ll give myself a time limit of three days. Now, then, we’ll start from when you leave the Savoy tonight. Is that all right?”

“Quite,” I said. “So I’ll begin spending the money at once.” And I called to the waiter to bring us some still bigger cigars.

“Help yourself,” I said to John. “No one can say that I’m not generous with my winnings.”

He took his first at once, but so moody and abstracted had he suddenly become that it was fully five minutes before he remembered to light it; and from then onwards until I left him I could see that his whole mind was given up to considering exactly what form of disguise he should assume for my benefit. Such answers as he made to my observations showed clearly that his thoughts were anywhere but in the Café Parisien, and at last, shortly before ten, worn out by his
silence and preoccupation, I got up, and said I must be going. If I had stayed any longer, I should have begun to yawn in his face.

"Look here," he said, frowning ponderously; "about this bet. You'll promise not to say afterwards that you knew it was me all the time?"

"My dear John," I answered with dignity, "I am an Englishman and a sportsman. Of course, I shall be scrupulously honest over this business. If I don't answer you inside two minutes by saying 'Hullo, John!' then the money is yours. Is that good enough for you?"

"Oh, I don't want to make it as difficult for you as all that," he protested.

"You are at liberty to make it as difficult as ever you can," I said. And having thanked him again for my evening's entertainment, I saw him into the lift and turned to leave the hotel.

But at this moment, as chance would have it, I suddenly felt a slap on the back, and looking round saw a second cousin of mine, named Aubrey Wotherspoon, and his wife.

"Hullo," said Aubrey heartily. "The very man we want. Marjorie's dead keen on dancing, and I've twisted my hock." (He was a hunting man, as you may have gathered.) "Come along to the ballroom and give her a turn."

Of course I said I should be delighted; I couldn't very well say anything else; and for more than another hour Marjorie and I capered together over the parquet, while Aubrey sat beaming at us by the wall. I have never been a very good dancer, but my partner made it as easy for me as she could; and I was just getting properly into my stride, as it were, when some other friends of theirs came drifting in from a theatre and I found myself released. For another ten minutes or so I hung about, waiting to see if I should be wanted again. But Marjorie was now hard at work with a young man who dipped and plunged like a pro, and I realized that I had served my turn. I said good night to Aubrey, collected my hat and coat, and went out into the Strand.

The rain which had been falling when I arrived had now stopped, and after my evening in the well-heated hotel, I thought it would be pleasant to walk at any rate some of the way home towards Down Street, where I then lived. I set off at once at a steady pace.
I had reached the neighbourhood of Leicester Square without meeting with any adventures, but at this point my wandering thoughts were suddenly recalled to this world. A figure in a raincoat and a battered felt hat had come darting out of an archway, and before I could slip to one side or ward him off, he and I became involved in a kind of staggering embrace.

"Look out where you're going, sir," I said, shoving him away from me. And as I did so, the figure looked up at me cringingly. In the light from the nearest street lamp I saw a villainous, wrinkled, yellow face; the face, in fact, of an unmistakable Chinaman.

He stood there, showing his discoloured teeth in a grin of cowardly defiance, and at the same moment a sudden light burst upon me. I stepped forward again.

"Hullo, John," I said cheerily. "Where's my ten pounds?"

I just had time to see the look of horror and surprise which flashed into his countenance, when a heavy hand descended on my shoulder from behind.

"Now then, now then," said a gruff voice. "What about it?"

I looked round quickly, and found myself in the grip of an enormous police-constable. With his other hand he had already caught hold of the supposed Chinaman by the sleeve of his raincoat.

"Vine Street," said the policeman laconically. "Now come along like good boys."

I peered under his helmet. For the moment the thought had darted into my mind that it might be he, and not the Chinaman, who was really John Freemantle. But he was a good six inches too tall. I turned back again.


"None of that," the policeman broke in. "I seed what you was doing all right; and I 'eard what you said. You come along quiet."

"You don't understand, Sergeant," I said. "This gentleman is a friend of mine. We're doing this for a bet."

"You tell that to the superintendent," replied the policeman. "If you say anything else, I shall 'ave to report it. 'Ere," he added, raising his voice to a passing taxi-driver. The car slowed down and stopped by the kerb.

"In you get," said the policeman.
There seemed nothing for it but to obey. If John chose to carry his joke as far as the police-station, the only alternative was a free fight on the pavement.

"Vine Street," shouted the policeman out of the window, and off we went.

The next thing of which I became aware was that my fellow-prisoner was leaning heavily against me on the back seat; and as I tried to edge away from him, he seized my hand and, with a whispered word which I failed to catch, forced something into it that felt like an envelope. I supposed that this was the ten pounds; that John meant—for some reason which only an actor could understand—to carry his imposture through to the finish; and that this was his way of getting me to back him up. I slipped it quietly into my pocket, wondering what the deuce he was going to do when we reached the police-station.

But at this moment we swung into the brilliant lights of Piccadilly Circus. I turned my head to inspect, with the help of this illumination, the details of my friend's unexpectedly successful make-up; and I saw at once what you have probably already guessed. The man wasn't John Freemantle at all. No disguise on earth could have transformed my old schoolfellow's well-marked features into that flattened mask. I felt a brief sensation of indescribable nausea. And then, as the cab moved forward out of the block in which it had been waiting, I took a desperate resolution.

"Look here, Inspector," I said, addressing the policeman. "I give you my word that this thing's a mistake. I've never seen this man before in my life. Now, if five pounds—"

"That'll do," snapped the incorruptible official. "You'll be sorry you said that, my man."

"No, I won't," I said; and at the same moment I flung myself at the door of the cab, wrenched the handle back, fell heavily into the street, bounded up again, and was off as fast as I could possibly tear. From behind me I could hear a roar of baffled rage, but I never looked round for a second. I dodged in front of a motor-omnibus, scattered a group of pedestrians on the pavement, dived down the alley by the side of St. James's Church, swung across Jermyn Street and down York Street, and never stopped until I had reached the Wanderers' Club in St. James's Square. I hurtled through the glass doors.
“Is Mr. Smithson in the Club?” I asked breathlessly of the porter.

I had chosen the first name that had entered my head, for there was no time to stop and think, but to my surprise I seemed to have hit on a real one. I saw the porter hastily setting my dress clothes against my muddy and exhausted appearance, and deciding that they could be held to excuse the manner of my intrusion, and then he answered:

“I don’t think so, sir. But if you’ll wait in here, I’ll go and make sure.”

I found myself conducted into a little sort of waiting-room leading out of the hall, and there I did my best to regain my breath while the porter went on his search. In a couple of minutes he was back again.

“No, sir,” he informed me. “Mr. Smithson left half an hour ago.”

“Too bad,” I said. “Well, I must try and get him at home.” I crossed to the window and pulled back the curtain, as if to see whether it were still raining. There was no one in sight outside. My captor must, I thought, have decided to stick to his bird in the hand and to let me go. It seemed to me a very sensible decision.

“Well, good night,” I said. “I’m sorry to have troubled you. By the way, could you lend me a clothes-brush for a moment? I’ve been rather badly splashed by a taxi.”

“Certainly, sir,” said the porter, and he most obligingly detailed an underling to assist in removing the signs of my recent adventure. Again I expressed my thanks, and then, with a rapid glance from the porch which still revealed a deserted pavement, I turned up the collar of my coat and moved quickly away.

I had reached St. James’s Street without further molesta-
tion, and had just decided to treat myself to a cigarette when, in feeling in my pocket for my case, my hand lighted un-
expectedly on something else.

“By Jove!” I muttered, pulling out the envelope which was now my only souvenir of that brief but unpleasant cab ride. “I wonder what’s in it.”

I moved nearer to a lamp-post and examined the outside. The flap was gummed firmly down along its whole length, and apart from certain dirty smudges both sides were com-
pletely blank. As I pinched it thoughtfully between my finger
and thumb, its contents seemed to yield and shift beneath the pressure. "Well, why not?" I asked myself, and with a quick movement I tore off one of the corners.

It was half full of what looked, at first sight, like toothpowder. And yet was it likely that anyone with teeth like the ones I remembered in that Chinaman’s mouth could have any real use for such stuff? I thought of tasting it, but no, it might be some kind of poison. I thought of throwing it away, but this seemed rather unadventurous. Finally, I inserted a cautious finger, brought it out again with a little of the powder on the end, and—very gingerly—bent over it to discover how it smelt.

It was exactly at this moment that I heard a hoarse voice addressing me.

"Cheese it," said this voice in urgent tones. "Do you want the bulls after you?"

I spun round quickly. There was an outlandish-looking man standing by my side, with a black beard and a broad-brimmed hat—rather like a stage conspirator.

"Bulls?" I repeated. "What on earth do you mean?"

"You’ll see what I mean all right," he said huskily, "if you start sniffing snow on the middle of the pavement."

"Snow?" I echoed. "But this can’t be snow."

"Coke, then," he substituted.

"And still less is it coke," I added.

"Say," said the bearded man; "you’re pretty fresh, ain’t you?"

Again his meaning seemed to have escaped me. I peered questioningly into his face, and at the same instant something unnatural about the way that his beard joined his cheek connected itself suddenly with a thought which in the excitement of my escape had almost gone out of my head. How on earth John Freemantle had managed to shadow me all the evening without my noticing him I had no idea; but if I were quick, my ten pounds would still be safe.

"Hullo, John!" I said loudly. "You nearly had me then."

He looked at me in a kind of puzzled fury, but I wasn’t going to stand for any more bluff.

"Come on," I said encouragingly. "Off with the jolly old beard."

At once a venomous look came into his dark eyes. He made a quick feint with his left hand, and as I started back
he snatched the envelope from me, dealt me a savage kick on the leg, and the next moment was tearing away down the hill.

"Dash it all," I thought. "I must have made another mistake." And then, as a second wave of agony swept over my injured limb, I lifted up my voice.

"Hi!" I shouted. "Hi! Come here at once!"

He turned his head for an instant—I can only imagine to yell some parting defiance—and, as he did so, I saw a vast, tenebrous figure step out from the darkness of a shop entrance and lift him clean off his feet with one hand.

"Now then," said this apparition waringly, and then he too saw the envelope. "Ah, would you?" he growled, closing a gigantic fist over it. "Got you with the goods this time, Jack, eh?"

Although, I had, as you know, very special reasons just at the moment for avoiding all unnecessary dealings with the Metropolitan Police, and although there could be no shadow of doubt that this mammoth figure was a plain-clothes officer, my curiosity overcame me. I drew nearer to the little tableau.

"Are you coming quiet, now?" I heard the detective inquire, and even the unwelcome familiarity of his words hadn't the power to drive me away.

"None of your frame-ups," snarled the captive, wriggling impotently. "I was given that envelope by that guy over there. I ain't no more notion what's in it than nobody at all. And take your fist out of my windpipe," he added feebly.

The plain-clothes officer looked at me suspiciously, but it was too late to retire. I opened my overcoat, so that my dress-shirt should show to the best effect.

"What's that he says?" I asked haughtily.

The officer saluted with his free hand.

"Says you gave him this 'ere packet of dope," he announced. "I'm afraid I'll have to trouble you for your name and address, sir."

Once more I saw Vine Street looming before me. But there was no time for hedging.

"That's all right, Officer," I said. "Smithson's my name. The Wanderers' Club. I'm sorry I haven't got a card on me."

"And 'ave you ever seen this man before?" he asked, dangling his prisoner at me by the scruff of the neck.
“Yes,” I said, remembering that our whole interview must have been witnessed. “He came up and spoke to me just now, and for a second I mistook him for a friend. But I discovered at once that I was wrong.”

“And you didn’t give him nothing?”

“On the contrary,” I said. “He gave me a very vicious kick. But I think he’s in safe hands now, eh?”

Strangled noises were coming from the prisoner’s throat, but the detective paid no attention to them.

“Quite safe, sir,” he chuckled gruffly. “I don’t suppose we’ll have to trouble you about this again.”

“I’m very glad to hear it,” I said truthfully.

“I’ve got all the evidence I want in this little envelope,” explained the plain-clothes man. “We’ve been after him the best part of a week, but we’ve got him properly now. Smithson, did you say, sir? Thank you, sir. Good night to you, sir.”

I watched them marching off together, their back view presenting a very deceitful picture of the friendliness of their relations, and then, once again, I turned up towards Piccadilly. It struck me that what with the Chinaman, the Conspirator, and Mr. Smithson of the Wanderers’ Club, the detective force at Vine Street would find themselves presented with as pretty a problem as any that could have come their way for quite a considerable time. Yet it also occurred to me that it might be a good thing if I hurried on certain plans which I had at this time for paying a visit of some months to the Continent.

Meanwhile I was becoming increasingly aware of a painful stiffness in the leg which had been subjected to the double strain of my leap from the moving taxi-cab and of the alleged dope-fiend’s attack. By the time I reached the corner of my own street, I really could hardly walk; and between this corner and the door of my flat I should think that I must have stopped nearly a dozen times, while I clutched at the railings and relieved myself with a selection of groans and curses. But at length I dragged myself up my stairs and, taking out my latchkey, opened my own front door.

As I did so, I had a strange impression of a brief flash of light through the door of my sitting-room. It was gone as quickly as it had appeared, but as mine was a service flat, into which no one with any business to do so could be
expected to enter for another six or seven hours, I raised my voice and called out.

"Hullo," I said. "Is anyone there?"

Dead silence greeted this inquiry. After all, I thought, perhaps I imagined it, or perhaps it was a light from some vehicle in the street shining for a moment through the window. I slipped off my overcoat, dropped my hat on to a chair, and, crossing the hall, switched on the light in my bathroom.

At this point the telephone-bell in the sitting-room suddenly began to peal.

"Oh, curse the thing!" I muttered, and once again I limped out into the hall. Who on earth, I wondered, could want to ring me up at nearly one in the morning? Another of those infernal wrong numbers, most likely.

I put my hand on the switch just inside the sitting-room door, and turned on the light. The next moment both my arms had shot up in the air, in obedience to an irresistibly worded command. Standing in the middle of the room was a seedy-looking man with an uncommonly dirty face, and in his right hand, which was directed unwaveringly towards my waistcoat, was a horrible little black automatic pistol.

"And keep 'em up," added this alarming vision, taking a step towards me.

"This," I thought, "is quite unmistakably my unlucky evening. I wonder what happens next." But I said nothing; I only reflected on the extreme annoyance which it would cause me should that automatic pistol accidentally go off.

"Nah, then," said the seedy-looking man. "Wot are you doing 'ere?"

But for the presence of that pistol my retort would have been obvious. For the moment, however, the *in quoque* struck me as a very much over-rated form of repartee.

"Dash it all," I protested. "This is my flat."

"Wot?" said the seedy-looking man. "But you're not the Honourable Wokingham?"

Nothing exasperates me more than the misuse by the lower orders of courtesy titles.

"Mr. Wokingham," I said with great emphasis, "lives upstairs."

"Blimey!" exclaimed the seedy-looking man. "I've been and cracked the wrong crib!"

All this time the telephone-bell had continued to ring, but
at this point it stopped abruptly, and with the cessation of sound a sudden idea came flashing into my mind. Did bona fide burglars, I asked myself, ever really say "Blimey"? Wasn't there something a little stagey about that reference to cracking a crib? And what was more, didn't John Freemantle know perfectly well that I lived in the same block of flats as Fred Wokingham? I dropped my hands and opened my mouth.

"Hullo, John," I said. "You nearly——"

Bang went the automatic pistol; there was a shivering of glass just to the left of my head, where the "Monarch of the Glen" hung; and my arms went up again like a jack-in-the-box.

"Look out, you fool——" I began, but my words were cut short at once.

"You blooming well do wot you're told," said the intruder. "And don't you start calling me names. I shan't miss you next time. See?"

I saw only too well that that unlucky wager had landed me for the third time that night in a hideous misunderstanding, and that on this occasion it had nearly cost me my life. But what could I do, except continue to stand there on my aching leg, with my arms becoming stiffer and more uncomfortable every second?

Meanwhile, in the burglar's countenance there appeared a convulsive spasm, which seemed to register the birth of a fresh thought.

"Look 'ere," he said, again taking a step towards me. "'Oo told you as I was called 'John', eh?"

I tried to laugh.

"Nobody," I said. "At least, it's no use trying to explain. You wouldn't believe me if I told you."

"No," said the burglar, with the utmost vehemence. "I would not. And do you know why, mister blinking boiled shirt? Cos, if you arst me, you ain't got no more business in this flat than wot I 'aven't. Tried to kid me I'd come to the wrong address, did yer? D'yer think I don't see your little game?"

I could only gape at these mysterious suggestions.

"Ho, yuss," added the burglar, his eyes now rolling with fury and the muzzle of his automatic wobbling wildly all over my person. "D'yer think I'm such a mug I don't see wot you're after? Why, you ruddy swell, I 'eard that limp of
yours the minute you come inside the door. Gentleman Jenkins of Portland Gaol, that's your number. But I'll learn yer to come 'ere, doing an honest cove out of a job. Them Wokingham sparklers is mine, d'yer see? And when I've got 'em, I'm going to leave you 'ere for the cops. Nah then, wot abaht it?"

"I assure you——" I began, expostulating, and at these words the telephone-bell started ringing again. Without thinking, I made a movement towards it, but I was stopped at once by a yell of rage.

"None of that," barked my visitor. "You stay where you are. I'll attend to this for yer." And still covering me with his pistol, he crossed to my writing-table and lifted the receiver from the instrument.

"'Ullo," he said; and the next moment he had dropped the receiver like a hot coal, and clapped his hand over the mouthpiece.

"'Ere; wot's the game?" he asked, a look of terror spreading over his really uncommonly dirty face.

"Game?" I repeated, completely mystified.

"'Ere's Vine Street on the line," he croaked. "Asking for a Mr. Gibson. Is this another of your little tricks, or wot is it?"

"Vine Street!" I gasped. This was the last straw. By some appalling and inexplicable accident my identity must have been discovered by one of those two police-officers, and if ever I escaped from the present horrible situation I saw that it would only be to find myself in the dock—charged with heaven alone knew what. Forgetting everything else, I dashed towards the telephone.

"Let me speak to them," I shouted.

"It's a plant!" shrieked the burglar. "Keep back, you fool, or, by gum, I'll——"

Crack! went the pistol again, but without waiting to see if I were dead or alive, I flung myself on to him. There was a brief but violent struggle, another explosion from the automatic, a reeking, stifling smell of gunpowder and whisky, and then with a sudden, sickening vision of a million brightly coloured stars the whole world went roaring away from me into a black mist.

When I came to myself (Gibson proceeded), after pausing
for a moment to let the effect of this brilliant piece of description sink in), I found that I was lying in my bed. I was aching all over in every portion of my body, but nowhere more violently than in my head, which, as I could tell without attempting the impossible feat of moving my hands, was heavily bandaged. Presently there was a sound of the door opening, and the service-valet came in.

"Pull down the blind, for heaven's sake," I groaned. "And tell me, how many bullet holes have I got in me?"

"None, sir," said the valet. "Only that crack on the head, sir. And the doctor says you'll soon get over that. I'm afraid he got right away though, sir."

"The doctor, do you mean?" I asked wearily.

"No, sir. The burglar. But I can't find as he's taken anything. Only smashed up your sitting-room a bit. Would you like some breakfast, sir?"

"No," I said, shuddering.

The vision of the valet faded away, and I passed off into an uncomfortable mixture of sleep and unconsciousness, with an intermittent nightmare of police and handcuffs. After what might have been minutes or months—I had no idea which—I heard the door opening again.

"Get out," I said.

"I say," answered a voice, "I'm awfully sorry about this, old chap, I——"

I opened my eyes. For a moment I thought I was seeing my own ghost. A figure with its arm in a sling and its face heavily decorated with sticking plaster was standing at the foot of the bed. Then I suddenly recognized it.

"Well," I said, "I can't say that in the circumstances I think your disguise is in very good taste. But you've lost your bet, old man. I know who you are perfectly well."

"Bet!" shouted John Freemantle, while a sharp stab of agony made me gasp for breath. "I've come to tell you that infernal bet is off. I wish to heaven I'd never been such a thundering ass as to take it on."

"What?" I exclaimed, trying to sit up, and falling back with another groan. "Well, you don't wish it any more than I do. But what's made you change your mind?"

"I thought it would be a jolly good idea," said John, "to dress up as a woman and come round here last night and see if you'd let me into the flat."

“Did you?” I asked, shutting my eyes again.

“Yes,” said John Freemantle. “I borrowed some things from a girl I met at the Savoy, and I had a wig that I’d bought when I played Mercutio at Blackpool. Bobbed hair, you know. I dare say it would have been all right if I’d come round in a cab; but like a silly idiot I thought it would be fun to walk. I only got half-way up the Haymarket when I saw that I was being followed by a policeman. I tried to dodge him, but it was no use. Then I got the wind up and started to run, but with those infernal skirts round my legs I hadn’t a dog’s chance. He caught me in a blind alley off Jermyn Street, and though I put up a bit of a fight, the brute got me down with some kind of jiu-jitsu. He dragged me off to Vine Street, with a crowd of beastly people jeering at me all the way and my face bleeding like a butcher’s shop where I’d hit the pavement. I did my best to explain that it was only a joke, and that I was doing it for a bet; I even got the inspector to try and ring up your flat, because I thought you might back me up or bail me out; but he couldn’t get any answer.”

“No,” I said. “That’s quite right. He couldn’t.”

“Well,” continued John, “I spent the night in the cells, and this morning I was had up before the beak and charged with masquerading in female costume and assaulting a police-constable in the execution of his duty. I suppose I was dashed lucky to get off with a fine—the beak said I was, anyhow. And I had the sense to give them my real name, so it won’t hurt me professionally if it gets in the papers. But look here, old chap,” he added, “what I really came round for was to pay you that tenner. You win all right, because I’m not going on. I’ve had about enough of it. But if it hadn’t been for that infernal policeman I’d have shown you something.”

“Keep your filthy lucre,” I replied. “I’m not going to make my living out of blood-money. Moreover,” I added impressively, “little as you may know it, you have already shown me all and more than I could ever possibly wish to see.”

And with these words I turned my face to the wall, and burst into a horrible peal of hideous laughter.
THE UNREST-CURE

"SAKI"
Héctor Munro was a prolific contributor to many papers of humorous sketches under the signature of "Saki", and his brilliant work, according to one critic, contained elements of the child, the buffoon, the satirist, the eclectic, the aristocrat and the elegant man of the world."
THE UNREST-CURE

ON the rack in the railway carriage immediately opposite Clovis was a solidly wrought travelling-bag, with a carefully written label, on which was inscribed, "J. P. Huddle, The Warren, Tilfield, near Slowborough". Immediately below the rack sat the human embodiment of the label, a solid, sedate individual, sedately dressed, sedately conversational. Even without his conversation (which was addressed to a friend seated by his side, and touched chiefly on such topics as the backwardness of Roman hyacinths and the prevalence of measles at the Rectory), one could have gauged fairly accurately the temperament and mental outlook of the travelling-bag's owner. But he seemed unwilling to leave anything to the imagination of a casual observer, and his talk grew presently personal and introspective.

"I don't know how it is," he told his friend, "I'm not much over forty, but I seem to have settled down into a deep groove of elderly middle-age. My sister shows the same tendency. We like everything to be exactly in its accustomed place; we like things to happen exactly at their appointed times; we like everything to be usual, orderly, punctual, methodical, to a hair's breadth, to a minute. It distresses and upsets us if it is not so. For instance, to take a very trifling matter, a thrush has built its nest year after year in the catkin tree on the lawn; this year, for no obvious reason, it is building in the ivy on the garden wall. We have said very little about it, but I think we both feel that the change is unnecessary, and just a little irritating."

"Perhaps," said the friend, "it is a different thrush."

"We have suspected that," said J. P. Huddle, "and I think it gives us even more cause for annoyance. We don't feel that we want a change of thrush at our time of life; and yet, as I have said, we have scarcely reached an age when these things should make themselves seriously felt."
“What you want,” said the friend, “is an Unrest-cure.”

“An Unrest-cure? I’ve never heard of such a thing.”

“You’ve heard of Rest-cures for people who’ve broken down under stress of too much worry and strenuous living; well, you’re suffering from overmuch repose and placidity, and you need the opposite kind of treatment.”

“But where would one go for such a thing?”

“Well, you might stand as an Orange candidate for Kilkenny, or do a course of district-visiting in one of the Apache quarters of Paris, or give lectures in Berlin to prove that most of Wagner’s music was written by Gambetta; and there’s always the interior of Morocco to travel in. But, to be really effective, the Unrest-cure ought to be tried in the home. How you would do it I haven’t the faintest idea.”

It was at this point in the conversation that Clovis became galvanized into alert attention. After all, his two days’ visit to an elderly relative at Slowborough did not promise much excitement. Before the train had stopped he had decorated his sinister shirt-cuff with the inscription, “J. P. Huddle, The Warren, Tilfield, near Slowborough”.

Two mornings later Mr. Huddle broke in on his sister’s privacy as she sat reading Country Life in the morning-room. It was her day and hour and place for reading Country Life, and the intrusion was absolutely irregular; but he bore in his hand a telegram, and in that household telegrams were recognized as happening by the hand of God. This particular telegram partook of the nature of a thunderbolt.

_Bishop examining confirmation class in neighbourhood unable to stay at Rectory on account of measles invokes your hospitality sending a very urgent message_.

“I scarcely know the Bishop; I’ve only spoken to him once!” exclaimed J. P. Huddle, with the exculpating air of one who realizes too late the indiscretion of speaking to strange bishops. Miss Huddle was the first to rally; she disliked thunderbolts as fervently as her brother did, but the womanly instinct in her told her that thunderbolts must be fed.

“We can curry the cold duck,” she said. It was not the appointed day for curry, but the little orange envelope involved...
a certain departure from rule and custom. Her brother said nothing, but his eyes thanked her for being brave.

"A young gentleman to see you," announced the parlourmaid.

"The secretary!" murmured the Huddles in unison; they instantly stiffened into a demeanour which proclaimed that, though they held all strangers to be guilty, they were willing to hear anything they might have to say in their defence. The young gentleman, who came into the room with a certain elegant haughtiness, was not at all Huddle's idea of a bishop's secretary; he had not supposed that the episcopal establishment could have afforded such an expensively upholstered article when there were so many other claims on its resources. The face was fleetingly familiar; if he had bestowed more attention on the fellow-traveller sitting opposite him in the railway carriage two days before he might have recognized Clovis in his present visitor.

"You are the Bishop's secretary?" asked Huddle, becoming consciously deferential.

"His confidential secretary," answered Clovis. "You may call me Stanislaus; my other name doesn't matter. The Bishop and Colonel Alberti may be here to lunch. I shall be here in any case."

It sounded rather like the programme of a royal visit.

"The Bishop is examining a confirmation class in the neighbourhood, isn't he?" asked Miss Huddle.

"Ostensibly," was the dark reply, followed by a request for a large-scale map of the locality.

Clovis was still immersed in a seemingly profound study of the map when another telegram arrived. It was addressed to "Prince Stanislaus, care of Huddle, The Warren", etc. Clovis glanced at the contents and announced: "The Bishop and Alberti won't be here till late in the afternoon." Then he returned to his scrutiny of the map.

The luncheon was not a very festive function. The princely secretary ate and drank with fair appetite, but severely discouraged conversation. At the finish of the meal he broke suddenly into a radiant smile, thanked his hostess for a charming repast, and kissed her hand with deferential rapture. Miss Huddle was unable to decide in her mind whether the action savoured of Louis Quatorzian courtliness or the reprehensible Roman attitude towards the Sabine women.
“S A K I”

It was not her day for having a headache, but she felt that the circumstances excused her, and retired to her room to have as much headache as was possible before the Bishop’s arrival. Clovis, having asked the way to the nearest telegraph office, disappeared presently down the carriage drive. Mr. Huddle met him in the hall some two hours later, and asked when the Bishop would arrive.

“He is in the library with Alberti,” was the reply.

“But why wasn’t I told? I never knew he had come!” exclaimed Huddle.

“No one knows he is here,” said Clovis; “the quieter we can keep matters the better. And on no account disturb him in the library. Those are his orders.”

“But what is all this mystery about? And who is Alberti? And isn’t the Bishop going to have tea?”

“The Bishop is out for blood, not tea.”

“Blood!” gasped Huddle, who did not find that the thunderbolt improved on acquaintance.

“Tonight is going to be a great night in the history of Christendom,” said Clovis. “We are going to massacre every Jew in the neighbourhood.”

“To massacre the Jews!” said Huddle indignantly. “Do you mean to tell me there’s a general rising against them?”

“No, it’s the Bishop’s own idea. He’s in there arranging all the details now.”

“But—the Bishop is such a tolerant, humane man.”

“That is precisely what will heighten the effect of his action. The sensation will be enormous.”

That at least Huddle could believe.

“He will be hanged!” he exclaimed with conviction.

“A motor is waiting to carry him to the coast, where a steam-yacht is in readiness.”

“But there aren’t thirty Jews in the whole neighbourhood,” protested Huddle, whose brain, under the repeated shocks of the day, was operating with the uncertainty of a telegraph wire during earthquake disturbances.

“We have twenty-six on our list,” said Clovis, referring to a bundle of notes. “We shall be able to deal with them all the more thoroughly.”

“Do you mean to tell me that you are meditating violence against a man like Sir Leon Birberry?” stammered Huddle.

“He’s one of the most respected men in the country.”
"He's down on our list," said Clovis carelessly. "After all, we've got men we can trust to do our job, so we shan't have to rely on local assistance. And we've got some Boy Scouts helping us as auxiliaries."

"Boy Scouts!"

"Yes; when they understood there was real killing to be done they were even keener than the men."

"This thing will be a blot on the twentieth century!"

"And your house will be the blotting-pad. Have you realized that half the papers of Europe and the United States will publish pictures of it? By the way, I've sent some photographs of you and your sister, that I found in the library, to the Matin and Die Woche; I hope you don't mind. Also a sketch of the staircase; most of the killing will probably be done on the staircase."

The emotions that were surging in J. P. Huddle's brain were almost too intense to be disclosed in speech, but he managed to gasp out: "There aren't any Jews in this house."

"Not at present," said Clovis.

"I shall go to the police," shouted Huddle with sudden energy.

"In the shrubbery," said Clovis, "are posted ten men, who have orders to fire on anyone who leaves the house without my signal of permission. Another armed picquet is in ambush near the front gate. The Boy Scouts watch the back premises."

At this moment the cheerful hoot of a motor-horn was heard from the drive. Huddle rushed to the hall door with the feeling of a man half-awakened from a nightmare, and beheld Sir Leon Birberry, who had driven himself over in his car. "I got your telegram," he said. "What's up?"

Telegram? It seemed to be a day of telegrams.

Come here at once. Urgent. James Huddle, was the purport of the message displayed before Huddle's bewildered eyes.

"I see it all!" he exclaimed suddenly in a voice shaken with agitation, and with a look of agony in the direction of the shrubbery he hauled the astonished Birberry into the house. Tea had just been laid in the hall, but the now thoroughly panic-stricken Huddle dragged his protesting guest upstairs, and in a few minutes' time the entire household had been
summoned to that region of momentary safety. Clovis alone
gaced the tea-table with his presence; the fanatics in the
library were evidently too immersed in their monstrous
machinations to dally with the solace of teacup and hot toast.
Once the youth rose, in answer to the summons of the front-
door bell, and admitted Mr. Paul Isaacs, shoemaker and parish
councillor, who had also received a pressing invitation to
The Warren. With an atrocious assumption of courtesy,
which a Borgia could hardly have outdone, the secretary
escorted this new captive of his net to the head of the stairway,
where his involuntary host awaited him.

And then ensued a long, ghastly vigil of watching and
waiting. Once or twice Clovis left the house to stroll across
to the shrubbery, returning always to the library, for the
purpose evidently of making a brief report. Once he took in
the letters from the evening postman, and brought them to the
top of the stairs with punctilious politeness. After his next
absence he came half-way up the stairs to make an announce-
ment.

"The Boy Scouts mistook my signal, and have killed the
postman. I've had very little practice in this sort of thing,
you see. Another time I shall do better."

The housemaid, who was engaged to be married to the
evening postman, gave way to clamorous grief.

"Remember that your mistress has a headache," said J. P.
Huddle. (Miss Huddle's headache was worse.)

Clovis hastened downstairs, and after a short visit to the
library returned with another message:

"The Bishop is sorry to hear that Miss Huddle has a
headache. He is issuing orders that as far as possible no
firearms shall be used near the house; any killing that is
necessary on the premises will be done with cold steel. The
Bishop does not see why a man should not be a gentleman as
well as a Christian."

That was the last they saw of Clovis; it was nearly seven
o'clock, and his elderly relative liked him to dress for dinner.
But, though he had left them for ever, the lurking suggestion
of his presence haunted the lower regions of the house during
the long hours of the wakeful night, and every creak of the
stairway, every rustle of wind through the shrubbery, was
fraught with horrible meaning. At about seven next
morning the gardener's boy and the early postman finlay
 convinced the watchers that the Twentieth Century was still unblotted.

"I don't suppose," mused Clovis, as an early train bore him townwards, "that they will be in the least grateful for the Unrest-cure."
"All hunting stories are the same," said Clovis; "just as all Turf stories are the same, and all—"

"My hunting story isn’t a bit like any you’ve ever heard," said the Baroness. "It happened quite a while ago, when I was about twenty-three. I wasn’t living apart from my husband then; you see, neither of us could afford to make the other a separate allowance. In spite of everything that proverbs may say, poverty keeps together more homes than it breaks up. But we always hunted with different packs. All this has nothing to do with the story."

"We haven’t arrived at the meet yet. I suppose there was a meet," said Clovis.

"Of course there was a meet," said the Baroness; "all the usual crowd were there, especially Constance Broddle. Constance is one of those strapping florid girls that go so well with autumn scenery or Christmas decorations in church. ‘I feel a presentiment that something dreadful is going to happen,’ she said to me. ‘Am I looking pale?’

“She was looking about as pale as a beetroot that has suddenly heard bad news.

“You’re looking nicer than usual,” I said, ‘but that’s so easy for you.’ Before she had got the right bearings of this remark we had settled down to business; hounds had found a fox lying out in some gorse-bushes.”

“I knew it," said Clovis; "in every fox-hunting story that I’ve ever heard there’s been a fox and some gorse-bushes."

“Constance and I were well mounted," continued the Baroness serenely, "and we had no difficulty in keeping ourselves in the first flight, though it was a fairly stiff run. Towards the finish, however, we must have held rather too independent a line, for we lost the hounds, and found ourselves plodding aimlessly along miles away from anywhere. It was fairly exasperating, and my temper was beginning to
let itself go by inches, when on pushing our way through an accommodating hedge we were gladdened by the sight of hounds in full cry in a hollow just beneath us.

"There they go," cried Constance, and then added in a gasp, "In heaven's name, what are they hunting?"

"It was certainly no mortal fox. It stood more than twice as high, had a short, ugly head and an enormous thick neck.

"It's a hyena," I cried; "it must have escaped from Lord Pabham's Park."

"At that moment the hunted beast turned and faced its pursuers, and the hounds (there were only about six couple of them) stood round in a half-circle and looked foolish. Evidently they had broken away from the rest of the pack on the trail of this alien scent, and were not quite sure how to treat their quarry now they had got him.

"The hyena hailed our approach with unmistakable relief and demonstrations of friendliness. It had probably been accustomed to uniform kindness from humans, while its first experience of a pack of hounds had left a bad impression. The hounds looked more than ever embarrassed as their quarry paraded its sudden intimacy with us, and the faint toot of a horn in the distance was seized on as a welcome signal for unobtrusive departure. Constance and I and the hyena were left alone in the gathering twilight.

"What are we to do?" asked Constance.

"What a person you are for questions!" I said.

"Well, we can't stay here all night with a hyena," she retorted.

"I don't know what your ideas of comfort are," I said; "but I shouldn't think of staying here all night even without a hyena. My home may be an unhappy one, but at least it has hot and cold water laid on, and domestic service, and other conveniences which we shouldn't find here. We had better make for that ridge of trees to the right; I imagine the Crowley road is just beyond."

"We trotted off slowly along a faintly marked cart-track, with the beast following cheerfully at our heels.

"What on earth are we to do with the hyena?" came the inevitable question.

"What does one generally do with hyenas?" I asked crossly.
"'I've never had anything to do with one before,' said Constance.

"'Well, neither have I. If we even knew its sex we might give it a name. Perhaps we might call it Esmé. That would do in either case.'

"There was still sufficient daylight for us to distinguish wayside objects, and our listless spirits gave an upward perk as we came upon a small, half-naked gipsy brat picking blackberries from a low-growing bush. The sudden apparition of two horsewomen and a hyena set it off crying, and in any case we should scarcely have gleaned any useful geographical information from that source; but there was a probability that we might strike a gipsy encampment somewhere along our route. We rode on hopefully but uneventfully for another mile or so.

"'I wonder what that child was doing there,' said Constance presently.

"'Picking blackberries. Obviously.'

"'I don't like the way it cried,' pursued Constance; 'somehow its wail keeps ringing in my ears.'

"I did not chide Constance for her morbid fancies; as a matter of fact the same sensation, of being pursued by a persistent fretful wail, had been forcing itself on my rather over-tired nerves. For company's sake I hulloed to Esmé, who had lagged somewhat behind. With a few springy bounds he drew up level, and then shot past us.

"The wailing accompaniment was explained. The gipsy child was firmly, and I expect painfully, held in his jaws.

"'Merciful heaven!' screamed Constance. 'What on earth shall we do? What are we to do?'

"'I am perfectly certain that at the Last Judgment Constance will ask more questions than any of the examining Seraphs.

"'Can't we do something?' she persisted tearfully, as Esmé cantered easily along in front of our tired horses.

"Personally I was doing everything that occurred to me at the moment. I stormed and scolded and coaxed in English and French and gamekeeper language; I made absurd, ineffectual cuts in the air with my thongless hunting-crop; I hurled my sandwich-case at the brute; in fact, I really don't know what more I could have done. And still we lumbered on through the deepening dusk, with that dark, uncouth shape lumbering ahead of us, and a drone of
lugubrious music floating in our ears. Suddenly Esmé bounded aside into some thick bushes, where we could not follow; the wail rose to a shriek and then stopped altogether. This part of the story I always hurry over, because it is really rather horrible. When the beast joined us again, after an absence of a few minutes, there was an air of patient understanding about him, as though he knew that he had done something of which we disapproved, but which he felt to be thoroughly justifiable.

"‘How can you let that ravening beast trot by your side?’ asked Constance. She was looking more than ever like an albino beetroot.

"‘In the first place, I can’t prevent it,’ I said; ‘and in the second place, whatever else he may be, I doubt if he’s ravening at the present moment.’

"Constance shuddered. ‘Do you think the poor little thing suffered much?’ came another of her futile questions.

"‘The indications were all that way,’ I said; ‘on the other hand, of course, it may have been crying from sheer temper. Children sometimes do.’

"It was nearly pitch-dark when we emerged suddenly into the high road. A flash of lights and the whir of a motor went past us at the same moment at uncomfortably close quarters. A thud and a sharp screeching yell followed a second later. The car drew up, and when I had ridden back to the spot I found a young man bending over a dark, motionless mass lying by the roadside.

"‘You have killed my Esmé!’ I exclaimed bitterly.

"‘I’m so awfully sorry,’ said the young man; ‘I keep dogs myself, so I know what you must feel about it. I’ll do anything I can in reparation.’

"‘Please bury him at once,’ I said; ‘that much I think I may ask of you.’

"‘Bring the spade, William,’ he called to the chauffeur. Evidently hasty roadside interments were contingencies that had been provided against.

"The digging of a sufficiently large grave took some little time. ‘I say, what a magnificent fellow!’ said the motorist as the corpse was rolled over into the trench. ‘I’m afraid he must have been rather a valuable animal.’

"‘He took second in the puppy class at Birmingham last year,’ I said resolutely.
"Constance snorted loudly.

"'Don't cry, dear,' I said brokenly; 'it was all over in a moment. He couldn't have suffered much.'

"'Look here,' said the young fellow desperately, 'you simply must let me do something by way of reparation.'

"I refused sweetly, but as he persisted I let him have my address.

"Of course, we kept our own counsel as to the earlier episodes of the evening. Lord Pabham never advertised the loss of his hyena; when a strictly fruit-eating animal strayed from his park a year or two previously he was called upon to give compensation in eleven cases of sheep-worrying and practically to restock his neighbours' poultry yards, and an escaped hyena would have mounted up to something on the scale of a Government grant. The gipsies were equally unobtrusive over their missing offspring; I don't suppose in large encampments they really know to a child or two how many they've got."

The Baroness paused reflectively, and then continued:

"There was a sequel to the adventure, though. I got through the post a charming little diamond brooch, with the name Esmé set in a sprig of rosemary. Incidentally, too, I lost the friendship of Constance Broddle. You see, when I sold the brooch I quite properly refused to give her any share of the proceeds. I pointed out that the Esmé part of the affair was my own invention, and the hyena part of it belonged to Lord Pabham, if it really was his hyena, of which, of course, I've no proof."
THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW

WASHINGTON IRVING
WASHINGTON IRVING was an American by birth, though he lived for many years in England, where he wrote much of his Sketchbook. This contains among other charming pieces the immortal tale of The Legend of Sleepy Hollow. Of his longer works the most popular is The Alhambra.
THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW

FOUND AMONG THE PAPERS OF THE LATE
DIEDRICH KNICKERBOCKER

A pleasing land of drowsy head it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye;
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
For ever flushing round a summer sky.
“CASTLE OF INDOLENCE.”

IN the bosom of one of those spacious coves which indent
the eastern shore of the Hudson, at that broad expansion of
the river denominated by the ancient Dutch navigators the
Tappan Zee, and where they always prudently shortened sail,
and implored the protection of St. Nicholas when they crossed,
there lies a small market-town or rural port, which by some is
called Greensburgh, but which is more generally and properly
known by the name of Tarry Town. This name was given,
we are told, in former days, by the good housewives of the
adjacent country, from the inveterate propensity of their
husbands to linger about the village tavern on market days.
Be that as it may, I do not vouch for the fact, but merely
advert to it, for the sake of being precise and authentic. Not
far from this village, perhaps about two miles, there is a little
valley, or rather lap of land, among high hills, which is one of
the quietest places in the whole world. A small brook glides
through it, with just murmure enough to lull one to repose;
and the occasional whistle of a quail or tapping of a wood-
pecker is almost the only sound that ever breaks in upon the
uniform tranquility.

I recollect that, when a stripling, my first exploit in squirrels-
shooting was in a grove of tall walnut trees that shades one
side of the valley. I had wandered into it at noon time, when
all nature is peculiarly quiet, and was startled by the roar of my
own gun, as it broke the Sabbath stillness around, and was

707
prolonged and reverberated by the angry echoes. If ever I should wish for a retreat, whither I might steal from the world and its distractions, and dream quietly away the remnant of a troubled life, I know of none more promising than this little valley.

From the listless repose of the place, and the peculiar character of its inhabitants, who are descendants from the original Dutch settlers, this sequestered glen has long been known by the name of Sleepy Hollow, and its rustic lads are called the Sleepy Hollow Boys throughout all the neighbouring country. A drowsy dreamy influence seems to hang over the land, and to pervade the very atmosphere. Some say that the place was bewitched by a high German doctor during the early days of the settlement; others, that an old Indian chief, the prophet or wizard of his tribe, held his pow-wows there before the country was discovered by Master Hendrick Hudson. Certain it is, the place still continues under the sway of some witching power, that holds a spell over the minds of the good people, causing them to walk in a continual reverie. They are given to all kinds of marvellous beliefs; are subject to trances and visions; and frequently see strange sights, and hear music and voices in the air. The whole neighbourhood abounds with local tales, haunted spots, and twilight superstitions; stars shoot and meteors glare oftener across the valley than in any other part of the country, and the nightmare, with her whole nine fold, seems to make it the favourite scene of her gambols.

The dominant spirit, however, that haunts this enchanted region, and seems to be commander-in-chief of all the powers of the air, is the apparition of a figure on horseback without a head. It is said by some to be the ghost of a Hessian trooper, whose head had been carried away by a cannon-ball, in some nameless battle during the revolutionary war; and who is ever and anon seen by the country folk, hurrying along in the gloom of night, as if on the wings of the wind. His haunts are not confined to the valley, but extend at times to the adjacent roads, and especially to the vicinity of a church at no great distance. Indeed, certain of the most authentic historians of those parts, who have been careful in collecting and collating the floating facts concerning this spectre, allege that the body of the trooper, having been buried in the churchyard, the ghost rides forth to the scene of battle in nightly
quest of his head; and that the rushing speed with which he
sometimes passes along the Hollow, like a midnight blast,
is owing to his being belated, and in a hurry to get back to the
churchyard before daybreak.

Such is the general purport of this legendary superstition,
which has furnished materials for many a wild story in that
region of shadows; and the spectre is known at all the country
firesides by the name of the Headless Horseman of Sleepy
Hollow.

It is remarkable that the visionary propensity I have
mentioned is not confined to the native inhabitants of the
valley, but is unconsciously imbibed by everyone who resides
there for a time. However wide awake they may have been
before they entered that sleepy region, they are sure, in a little
time, to inhale the witching influence of the air, and begin to
grow imaginative—to dream dreams, and see apparitions.

I mention this peaceful spot with all possible laud; for it
is in such little retired Dutch valleys, found here and there
embroned in the great state of New York, that population,
manners, and customs remain fixed; while the great torrent
of migration and improvement, which is making such incessant
changes in other parts of this restless country, sweeps by them
unobserved. They are like those little nooks of still water
which border a rapid stream; where we may see the straw
and bubble riding quietly at anchor, or slowly revolving in
their mimic harbour, undisturbed by the rush of the passing
current. Though many years have elapsed since I trod the
drowsy shades of Sleepy Hollow, yet I question whether I
should not still find the same trees and the same families
vegetating in its sheltered bosom.

In this by-place of nature there abode, in a remote period
of American history, that is to say, some thirty years since, a
worthy wight of the name of Ichabod Crane; who sojourned,
or, as he expressed it, “tarried”, in Sleepy Hollow, for the
purpose of instructing the children of the vicinity. He was
a native of Connecticut, a state which supplied the Union
with pioneers for the mind as well as for the forest, and sends
forth yearly its legions of frontier woodmen and country
schoolmasters. The cognomen of Crane was not inapplicable
to his person. He was tall, but exceedingly lank, with narrow
shoulders, long arms and legs, hands that dangled a mile
out of his sleeves, feet that might have served for shovels,
and his whole frame most loosely hung together. His head was small, and flat at top, with huge ears, large green glassy eyes, and a long snipe nose, so that it looked like a weather-cock, perched upon his spindle neck, to tell which way the wind blew. To see him striding along the profile of a hill on a windy day, with his clothes bagging and fluttering about him, one might have mistaken him for the genius of famine descending upon the earth, or some scarecrow eloped from a cornfield.

His schoolhouse was a low building of one large room rudely constructed of logs; the windows partly glazed, and partly patched with leaves of old copy-books. It was most ingeniously secured at vacant hours by a withe twisted in the handle of the door, and stakes set against the window-shutters; so that, though a thief might get in with perfect ease, he would find some embarrassment in getting out; an idea most probably borrowed by the architect, Yost Van Houten, from the mystery of an eel-pot. The schoolhouse stood in a rather lonely but pleasant situation, just at the foot of a woody hill, with a brook running close by, and a formidable birch tree growing at one end of it. From hence the low murmur of his pupils’ voices, conning over their lessons, might be heard on a drowsy summer’s day, like the hum of a beehive; interrupted now and then by the authoritative voice of the master, in the tone of menace or command; or, peradventure, by the appalling sound of the birch, as he urged some tardy loiterer along the flowery path of knowledge. Truth to say, he was a conscientious man, and ever bore in mind the golden maxim, “Spare the rod and spoil the child”. Ichabod Crane’s scholars certainly were not spoiled.

I would not have it imagined, however, that he was one of those cruel potentates of the school who joy in the smart of their subjects; on the contrary, he administered justice with discrimination rather than severity; taking the burden off the backs of the weak and laying it on those of the strong. Your mere puny stripling, that winced at the least flourish of the rod, was passed by with indulgence; but the claims of justice were satisfied by inflicting a double portion on some little tough, wrong-headed, broad-skirted Dutch urchin, who sulked and swelled and grew dogged and sullen beneath the birch. All this he called “doing his duty by their parents”; and he never inflicted a chastisement without following it by
the assurance, so consolatory to the smarting urchin, that “he would remember it and thank him for it the longest day he had to live”.

When school-hours were over, he was even the companion and playmate of the larger boys; and on holiday afternoons would convoy some of the smaller ones home, who happened to have pretty sisters, or good housewives for mothers, noted for the comforts of the cupboard. Indeed, it behoved him to keep on good terms with his pupils. The revenue arising from his school was small, and would have been scarcely sufficient to furnish him with daily bread, for he was a huge feeder, and, though lank, had the dilating powers of an anaconda; but to help out his maintenance, he was, according to country custom in those parts, boarded and lodged at the houses of the farmers, whose children he instructed. With these he lived successively a week at a time; thus going the rounds of the neighbourhood, with all his worldly effects tied up in a cotton handkerchief.

That all this might not be too onerous on the purses of his rustic patrons, who are apt to consider the costs of schooling a grievous burden, and schoolmasters as mere drones, he had various ways of rendering himself both useful and agreeable. He assisted the farmers occasionally in the lighter labours of their farms; helped to make hay; mended the fences; took the horses to water; drove the cows from pasture; and cut wood for the winter fire. He laid aside, too, all the dominant dignity and absolute sway with which he lorded it in his little empire, the school, and became wonderfully gentle and ingratiating. He found favour in the eyes of the mothers by petting the children, particularly the youngest; and like the lion bold, which whilom so magnanimously the lamb did hold, he would sit with a child on one knee, and rock a cradle with his foot for whole hours together.

In addition to his other vocations, he was the singing-master of the neighbourhood, and picked up many bright shillings by instructing the young folks in psalmody. It was a matter of no little vanity to him, on Sundays, to take his station in front of the church gallery, with a band of chosen singers; where, in his own mind, he completely carried away the palm from the parson. Certain it is, his voice resounded far above all the rest of the congregation; and there are peculiar quavers still to be heard in that church, and which may even be heard
half a mile off, quite to the opposite side of the mill-pond, on a still Sunday morning, which are said to be legitimately descended from the nose of Ichabod Crane. Thus, by divers little makeshifts, in that ingenious way which is commonly denominated "by hook and by crook", the worthy pedagogue got on tolerably enough, and was thought, by all who understand nothing of the labour of head-work, to have a wonderfully easy life of it.

The schoolmaster is generally a man of some importance in the female circle of a rural neighbourhood; being considered a kind of idle gentleman-like personage, of vastly superior taste and accomplishments to the rough country swains, and, indeed, inferior in learning only to the parson. His appearance, therefore, is apt to occasion some little stir at the tea-table of a farm-house and the addition of a supernumerary dish of cakes or sweetmeats, or peradventure the parade of a silver tea-pot. Our man of letters, therefore, was peculiarly happy in the smiles of all the country damsel. How he would figure among them in the churchyard between services on Sundays! Gathering grapes for them from the wild vines that overran the surrounding trees; reciting for their amusement all the epitaphs on the tombstones; or sauntering with a whole bevy of them along the banks of the adjacent mill-pond; while the more bashful country bumpkins hung sheepishly back, envying his superior elegance and address.

From his half itinerant life, also, he was a kind of travelling gazette, carrying the whole budget of local gossip from house to house; so that his appearance was always greeted with satisfaction. He was, moreover, esteemed by the women as a man of great erudition, for he had read several books quite through, and was a perfect master of Cotton Mather’s History of New England Witchcraft, in which, by the way, he most firmly and potently believed.

He was, in fact, an odd mixture of small shrewdness and simple credulity. His appetite for the marvellous, and his powers of digesting it, were equally extraordinary; and both had been increased by his residence in this spell-bound region. No tale was too gross or monstrous for his capacious swallow. It was often his delight, after his school was dismissed in the afternoon, to stretch himself on the rich bed of clover bordering the little brook that whimpered by his schoolhouse, and there con over old Mather’s direful tales, until the gathering
dusk of the evening made the printed page a mere mist before his eyes. Then, as he wended his way by swamp and stream and awful woodland, to the farm-house where he happened to be quartered, every sound of nature, at that witching hour, fluttered his excited imagination: the moan of the whip-poor-will\(^1\) from the hill-side; the boding cry of the tree-toad, that harbinger of storm; the dreary hooting of the screech-owl, or the sudden rustling in the thicket of birds frightened from their roost. The fire-flies, too, which sparkled most vividly in the darkest places, now and then startled him, as one of uncommon brightness would stream across his path; and if by chance a huge blackhead of a beetle came winging his blundering flight against him, the poor varlet was ready to give up the ghost, with the idea that he was struck with a witch’s token. His only resource on such occasions, either to drown thought or drive away evil spirits, was to sing psalm tunes; and the good people of Sleepy Hollow, as they sat by their doors of an evening, were often filled with awe at hearing his nasal melody, “in linked sweetness long drawn out”, floating from the distant hill, or along the dusky road.

Another of his sources of fearful pleasure was to pass long winter evenings with the old Dutch wives, as they sat spinning by the fire, with a row of apples roasting and spluttering along the hearth, and listen to their marvellous tales of ghosts and goblins, and haunted fields, and haunted brooks, and haunted bridges, and haunted houses, and particularly of the headless horseman, or Galloping Hessian of the Hollow, as they sometimes called him. He would delight them equally by his anecdotes of witchcraft, and of the direful omens and portentous sights and sounds in the air, which prevailed in the earlier times of Connecticut; and would frighten them woefully with speculations upon comets and shooting stars; and with the alarming fact that the world did absolutely turn round, and that they were half the time topsy-turvy!

But if there was a pleasure in all this, while snugly cuddling in the chimney-corner of a chamber that was all of a ruddy glow from the crackling wood fire, and where, of course, no spectre dared to show its face, it was dearly purchased by the terrors of his subsequent walk homewards. What fearful shapes and shadows beset his path amidst the dim and ghastly

\(^1\) The whip-poor-will is a bird which is only heard at night. It receives its name from its note, which is thought to resemble those words.
glare of a snowy night! With what wistful look did he eye
every trembling ray of light streaming across the waste fields
from some distant window! How often was he appalled by
some shrub covered with snow, which, like a sheeted spectre,
beset his very path! How often did he shrink with curdling
awe at the sound of his own steps on the frosty crust beneath
his feet—and dread to look over his shoulder, lest he should
behold some uncouth being tramping close behind him! And
how often was he thrown into complete dismay by some
rushing blast, howling among the trees, in the idea that it was
the Galloping Hessian on one of his nightly scourings!

All these, however, were mere terrors of the night, phan-
toms of the mind that walk in darkness; and though he had
seen many spectres in his time, and been more than once beset
by Satan in divers shapes, in his lonely perambulations, yet day-
light put an end to all these evils; and he would have passed
a pleasant life of it, in despite of the devil and all his works, if
his path had not been crossed by a being that causes more
perplexity to mortal man than ghosts, goblins, and the whole
race of witches put together, and that was—a woman.

Among the musical disciples who assembled one evening
in each week to receive his instructions in psalmody was
Katrina Van Tassel, the daughter and only child of a substan-
tial Dutch farmer. She was a blooming lass of fresh eighteen;
plump as a partridge; ripe and melting and rosy-cheeked as
one of her father’s peaches, and universally famed, not merely
for her beauty, but her vast expectations. She was, withal, a
little of a coquette, as might be perceived even in her dress,
which was a mixture of ancient and modern fashions, as most
suited to set off her charms. She wore the ornaments of pure
yellow gold which her great-great-grandmother had brought
over from Saardam; the tempting stomacher of the olden
time; and withal a provokingly short petticoat, to display the
prettiest foot and ankle in the country round.

Ichabod Crane had a soft and foolish heart towards the sex,
and it is not to be wondered at that so tempting a morsel soon
found favour in his eyes, more especially after he had visited
her in her paternal mansion. Old Baltus Van Tassel was a
perfect picture of a thriving, contented, liberal-hearted farmer.
He seldom, it is true, sent either his eyes or his thoughts
beyond the boundaries of his own farm; but within those,
everything was snug, happy, and well-conditioned. He was
satisfied with his wealth, but not proud of it; and piqued himself upon the hearty abundance, rather than the style, in which he lived. His stronghold was situated on the banks of the Hudson, in one of those green, sheltered, fertile nooks, in which the Dutch farmers are so fond of nestling. A great elm tree spread its broad branches over it, at the foot of which bubbled up a spring of the softest and sweetest water, in a little well formed of a barrel, and then stole sparkling away through the grass to a neighbouring brook that bubbled along among alders and dwarf willows.

Hard by the farm-house was a vast barn that might have served for a church, every window and crevice of which seemed bursting forth with the treasures of the farm; the flail was busily resounding within it from morning to night; swallows and martins skimmed twittering about the eaves; and rows of pigeons, some with one eye turned up, as if watching the weather, some with their heads under their wings, or buried in their bosoms, and others swelling, and cooing, and bowing about their dames, were enjoying the sunshine on the roof.

Sleek unwieldy porkers were grunting in the repose and abundance of their pens, whence sallied forth now and then troops of sucking-pigs, as if to snuff the air. A stately squadron of snowy geese were riding in an adjoining pond, convoying whole fleets of ducks; regiments of turkeys were gobbling through the farm-yard, and guinea-fowls fretting about it, like the ill-tempered housewives, with their peevish, discontented cry. Before the barn door strutted the gallant cock, that pattern of a husband, a warrior, and a fine gentleman, clapping his burnished wings, and crowing in the pride and gladness of his heart—sometimes tearing up the earth with his feet, and then generously calling his ever-hungry family of wives and children to enjoy the rich morsel which he had discovered.

The pedagogue's mouth watered as he looked upon his sumptuous promise of luxurious winter fare. In his devouring mind's eye he pictured to himself every roasting-pig running about with a pudding in his belly, and an apple in his mouth; the pigeons were snugly put to bed in a comfortable pie, and tucked in with a coverlet of crust; the geese were swimming in their own gravy; and the ducks pairing cosily in dishes, like snug married couples, with a decent competency of onion
sauce. In the porkers he saw carved out the future sleek side of bacon and juicy relishing ham; not a turkey but he beheld daintily trussed-up, with its gizzard under its wing, and, peradventure, a necklace of savoury sausages; and even bright chanticlere himself lay sprawling on his back in a side dish, with uplifted claws, as if craving that quarter which his chivalrous spirit disdained to ask while living.

As the enraptured Ichabod fancied all this, and as he rolled his great green eyes over the fat meadow-lands, the rich fields of wheat, of rye, of buckwheat, and Indian corn, and the orchards burthened with ruddy fruit, which surrounded the warm tenement of Van Tassell, his heart yearned after the damsel who was to inherit these domains, and his imagination expanded with the idea, how they might be readily turned into cash, and the money invested in immense tracts of wild land, and shingle palaces in the wilderness. Nay, his busy fancy already realized his hopes, and presented to him the blooming Katrina, with a whole family of children, mounted on the top of a waggon loaded with household trumpery, with pots and kettles dangling beneath; and he beheld himself bestriding a pacing mare, with a colt at her heels, setting out for Kentucky, Tennessee, or the Lord knows where.

When he entered the house, the conquest of his heart was complete. It was one of those spacious farm-houses, with high-ridged, but lowly-sloping roofs, built in the style handed down from the first Dutch settlers; the low projecting eaves forming a piazza along the front, capable of being closed up in bad weather. Under this were hung flails, harness, various utensils of husbandry, and nets for fishing in the neighbouring river. Benches were built along the sides for summer use; and a great spinning-wheel at one end, and a churn at the other, showed the various uses to which this important porch might be devoted.

From this piazza the wondering Ichabod entered the hall, which formed the centre of the mansion and the place of usual residence. Here rows of resplendent pewter, ranged on a long dresser, dazzled his eyes. In one corner stood a huge bag of wool ready to be spun; in another, a quantity of linsey-woolsey just from the loom; ears of Indian corn, and strings of dried apples and peaches, hung in gay festoons along the wall, mingled with the gaud of red peppers; and a door left ajar gave him a peep into the best parlour, where the claw-
footed chairs and dark mahogany tables shone like mirrors; and irons, with their accompanying shovel and tongs, glistened from their covert of asparagus tops; mock oranges and conch-shells decorated the mantelpiece; strings of various coloured birds' eggs were suspended above it; a great ostrich egg was hung from the centre of the room; and a corner-cupboard, knowingly left open, displayed immense treasures of old silver and well-mended china.

From the moment Ichabod laid his eyes upon these regions of delight the peace of his mind was at an end, and his only study was how to gain the affections of the peerless daughter of Van Tassel. In this enterprise, however, he had more real difficulties than generally fell to the lot of a knight-errant of yore, who seldom had anything but giants, enchanters, fiery dragons, and such like easily conquered adversaries, to contend with; and had to make his way merely through gates of iron and brass, and walls of adamant, to the castle keep, where the lady of his heart was confined; all of which he achieved as easily as a man would carve his way to the centre of a Christmas pie, and then the lady gave him her hand as a matter of course. Ichabod, on the contrary, had to win his way to the heart of a country coquette, beset with a labyrinth of whims and caprices, which were forever presenting new difficulties and impediments; and he had to encounter a host of fearful adversaries of real flesh and blood, the numerous rustic admirers who beset every portal to her heart, keeping a watchful and angry eye upon each other, but ready to fly out in the common cause against any new competitor.

Among these the most formidable was a burly, roaring, roistering blade, of the name of Abraham, or, according to the Dutch abbreviation, Brom Van Brunt, the hero of the country round, which rang with his feats of strength and hardihood. He was broad-shouldered and double-jointed, with short curly black hair, and a bluff but not unpleasant countenance, having a mingled air of fun and arrogance. From his Herculean frame and great powers of limb, he had received the nickname of Brom Bones, by which he was universally known. He was famed for great knowledge and skill in horsemanship, being as dexterous on horseback as a Tartar. He was foremost at all races and cock-fights, and, with the ascendancy which bodily strength acquires in rustic life, was the umpire in all disputes, setting his hat on one side, and
giving his decisions with an air and tone admitting of no gainsay or appeal. He was always ready for either a fight or frolic, but had more mischief than ill-will in his composition; and, with all his overbearing roughness, there was a strong dash of waggish good humour at bottom. He had three or four boon companions, who regarded him as their model, and at the head of whom he scourged the country, attending every scene of feud or merriment for miles round.

In cold weather he was distinguished by a fur cap, surmounted with a flaunting fox's tail; and when the folks at a country gathering descried this well-known crest at a distance, whisking about among a squad of hard riders, they always stood by for a squall. Sometimes his crew would be heard dashing along past the farm-houses at midnight, with whoop and halloo, like a troop of Don Cossacks, and the old dames, startled out of their sleep, would listen for a moment, till the hurry-scurry had clattered by, and then exclaim, "Ay, there goes Brom Bones and his gang!" The neighbours looked upon him with a mixture of awe, admiration, and goodwill; and when any madcap prank or rustic brawl occurred in the vicinity, always shook their heads and warranted Brom Bones was at the bottom of it.

This rantipole hero had for some time singled out the blooming Katrina for the object of his uncouth gallantries, and though his amorous toyings were something like the gentle caresses and endearments of a bear, yet it was whispered that she did not altogether discourage his hopes. Certain it is, his advances were signals for rival candidates to retire, who felt no inclination to cross a lion in his amours; insomuch that when his horse was seen tied to Van Tassel's paling on a Sunday night, a sure sign that his master was courting, or, as it is termed, "sparkling", within, all other suitors passed by in despair, and carried the war into other quarters.

Such was the formidable rival with whom Ichabod Crane had to contend, and, considering all things, a stouter man than he would have shrank from the competition, and a wiser man would have despaired. He had, however, a happy mixture of pliability and perseverance in his nature; he was in form and spirit like a supple-jack—yielding, but tough; though he bent, he never broke; and though he bowed beneath the slightest pressure, yet, the moment it was away—jerk! he was as erect, and carried his head as high as ever.
To have taken the field openly against his rival would have been madness; for he was not a man to be thwarted in his amours, any more than that stormy lover, Achilles. Ichabod, therefore, made his advances in a quiet and gently-insinuating manner. Under cover of his character of singing-master, he made frequent visits at the farm-house; not that he had anything to apprehend from the meddlesome interference of parents, which is so often a stumbling-block in the path of lovers.

Balt Van Tassel was an easy, indulgent soul; he loved his daughter better even than his pipe, and, like a reasonable man and an excellent father, let her have her way in everything. His notable little wife, too, had enough to do to attend to her housekeeping, and manage her poultry; for, as she sagely observed, ducks and geese are foolish things, and must be looked after, but girls can take care of themselves. Thus, while the busy dame bustled about the house, or plied her spinning-wheel at one end of the piazza, honest Balt would sit smoking his evening pipe at the other, watching the achievements of a little wooden warrior, who, armed with a sword in each hand, was most valiantly fighting the wind on the pinnacle of the barn. In the meantime, Ichabod would carry on his suit with the daughter by the side of the spring under the great elm, or sauntering along in the twilight, that hour so favourable to the lover’s eloquence.

I profess not to know how women’s hearts are wooed and won. To me they have always been matters of riddle and admiration. Some seem to have but one vulnerable point, or door of access; while others have a thousand avenues, and may be captured in a thousand different ways. It is a great triumph of skill to gain the former, but a still greater proof of generalship to maintain possession of the latter, for a man must battle for his fortress at every door and window. He who wins a thousand common hearts is therefore entitled to some renown; but he who keeps undisputed sway over the heart of a coquette is indeed a hero. Certain it is, this was not the case with the redoubtable Brom Bones; and from the moment Ichabod Crane made his advances, the interests of the former evidently declined; his horse was no longer seen tied at the palings on Sunday nights, and a deadly feud gradually arose between him and the preceptor of Sleepy Hollow,
Brom, who had a degree of rough chivalry in his nature, would fain have carried matters to open warfare, and have settled their pretensions to the lady according to the mode of those most concise and simple reasoners, the knights-errant of yore—by single combat; but Ichabod was too conscious of the superior might of his adversary to enter the lists against him; he had overheard a boast of Bones, that he "would double the schoolmaster up, and lay him on a shelf of his own schoolhouse"; and he was too wary to give him an opportunity. There was something extremely provoking in this obstinately pacific system; it left Brom no alternative but to draw upon the funds of rustic waggery in his disposition, and to play off boorish practical jokes upon his rival.

Ichabod became the object of whimsical persecution to Bones and his gang of rough-riders. They harried his hitherto peaceful domains; smoked out his singing-school by stopping up the chimney; broke into the schoolhouse at night, in spite of his formidable fastenings of withe and window stakes, and turned everything topsy-turvy; so that the poor schoolmaster began to think all the witches in the country held their meetings there. But what was still more annoying, Brom took all opportunities of turning him into ridicule in presence of his mistress, and had a scoundrel dog whom he taught to whine in the most ludicrous manner, and introduced as a rival of Ichabod’s to instruct her in psalmody.

In this way matters went on for some time, without producing any material effect on the relative situation of the contending powers. On a fine autumnal afternoon, Ichabod, in pensive mood, sat enthroned on the lofty stool whence he usually watched all the concerns of his little literary realm. In his hand he swayed a ferule, that sceptre of despotic power; the birch of justice reposed on three nails behind the throne, a constant terror to evil-doers; while on the desk before him might be seen sundry contraband articles and prohibited weapons, detected upon the persons of idle urchins; such as half-munched apples, pop-guns, whirligigs, fly-cages, and whole legions of rampant little paper game-cocks.

Apparently there had been some appalling act of justice recently inflicted, for his scholars were all busily intent upon their books, or slyly whispering behind them with one eye kept upon the master; and a kind of buzzing stillness reigned throughout the schoolroom. It was suddenly interrupted by