

— 33 BEST ~ HUMOROUS SHORT STORIES



ИНОСТРАННЫЙ ЯЗЫК: УЧИМСЯ У КЛАССИКОВ

33 лучших юмористических рассказа на английском

ORIGINAL

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* JACK LONDON * BRET HARTE * SAKI * WASHINGTON IRVING
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33 лучших юмористических
рассказа на английском / 33
Best Humorous Short Stories
Серия «Иностранный
язык: учимся у классиков»

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=10315095

*33 лучших юмористических рассказа на английском = 33 Best Humorous
Short Stories: Эксмо; Москва; 2015
ISBN 978-5-699-77668-9*

Аннотация

«Иностранный язык: учимся у классиков» – это только оригинальные тексты лучших произведений мировой литературы. Эти книги станут эффективным и увлекательным пособием для изучающих иностранный язык на хорошем «продолжающем» и «продвинутом» уровне. Они помогут эффективно расширить словарный запас, подскажут, где и как правильно употреблять устойчивые выражения и грамматические конструкции, просто подарят радость от чтения. В конце книги дана краткая информация о культуроведческих,

страноведческих, исторических и географических реалиях описываемого периода, которая поможет лучше ориентироваться в тексте произведения.

Серия «Иностранный язык: учимся у классиков» адресована широкому кругу читателей, хорошо владеющих английским языком и стремящихся к его совершенствованию.

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John Kendrick Bangs

A Psychological Prank

I

Willis had met Miss Hollister but once, and that, for a certain purpose, was sufficient. He was smitten. She represented in every way his ideal, although until he had met her his ideal had been something radically different. She was not at all **Junoesque**, and the maiden of his dreams had been decidedly so. She had auburn hair, which hitherto Willis had detested. Indeed, if the same hirsute wealth had adorned some other woman's head, Willis would have called it red. This shows how completely he was smitten. She changed his point of view entirely. She shattered his old ideal and set herself up in its stead, and she did most of it with a smile.

There was something, however, about Miss Hollister's eyes that contributed to the smiting of Willis's heart. They were great round lustrous orbs, and deep. So deep were they and so penetrating that Willis's affections were away beyond their own depth the moment Miss Hollister's eyes looked into his, and at the same time he had a dim and slightly uncomfortable notion

that she could read every thought his mind held within its folds—or rather, that she could see how utterly devoid of thought that mind was upon this ecstatic occasion, for Willis's brain was set all agog by the sensations of the moment.

‘By Jove!’ he said to himself afterwards – for Willis, wise man that he could be on occasions, was his own confidant, to the exclusion of all others – ‘by Jove! I believe she can peer into my very soul; and if she can, my hopes are blasted, for she must be able to see that a soul like mine is no more worthy to become the affinity of one like hers than a mountain rill can hope to rival the Amazon.’

Nevertheless, Willis did hope.

‘Something may turn up, and perhaps – perhaps I can devise some scheme by means of which my imperfections can be hidden from her. Maybe I can put stained glass over the windows of my soul, and keep her from looking through them at my shortcomings. Smoked glasses, perhaps – and why not? If smoked glasses can be used by mortals gazing at the sun, why may they not be used by me when gazing into those scarcely less glorious orbs of hers?’

Alas for Willis! The fates were against him. A far-off tribe of fates were in league to blast his chances of success forever, and this was how it happened:

Willis had occasion one afternoon to come up town early. At the corner of Broadway and Astor Place he entered a Madison Avenue car, paid his fare, and sat down in one of the corner seats

at the rear end of the car. His mind was, as usual, intent upon the glorious Miss Hollister. Surely no one who had once met her could do otherwise than think of her constantly, he reflected; and the reflection made him a bit jealous. What business had others to think of her? Impertinent, grovelling mortals! No man was good enough to do that – no, not even himself. But he could change. He could at least try to be worthy of thinking about her, and he knew of no other man who could. He'd like to catch any one else doing so little as mentioning her name!

‘Impertinent, grovelling mortals!’ he repeated.

And then the car stopped at Seventeenth Street, and who should step on board but Miss Hollister herself!

‘The idea!’ thought Willis. ‘By Jove! there she is – on a horse-car, too! How atrocious! One might as well expect to see Minerva driving in a grocer’s wagon as Miss Hollister in a horse-car. Miserable, untactful world to compel Minerva to ride in a horse-cart, or rather Miss Hollister to ride in a grocer’s car! Absurdest of absurdities!’

Here he raised his hat, for Miss Hollister had bowed sweetly to him as she passed on to the far end of the car, where she stood hanging on to a strap.

‘I wonder why she doesn’t sit down?’ thought Willis; for as he looked about the car he observed that with the exception of the one he occupied all the seats were vacant. In fact, the only persons on board were Miss Hollister, the driver, the conductor, and himself.

‘I think I’ll go speak to her,’ he thought. And then he thought again: ‘No, I’d better not. She saw me when she entered, and if she had wished to speak to me she would have sat down here beside me, or opposite me perhaps. I shall show myself worthy of her by not thrusting my presence upon her. But I wonder why she stands? She looks tired enough.’

Here Miss Hollister indulged in a very singular performance. She bowed her head slightly at some one, apparently on the sidewalk, Willis thought, murmured something, the purport of which Willis could not catch, and sat down in the middle of the seat on the other side of the car, looking very much annoyed – in fact, almost unamiable.

Willis was more mystified than ever; but his mystification was as nothing compared to his anxiety when, on reaching Forty-second Street, Miss Hollister rose, and sweeping by him without a sign of recognition, left the car.

‘Cut, by thunder!’ ejaculated Willis, in consternation. ‘And why, I wonder? Most incomprehensible affair. Can she be a woman of whims – with eyes like those? Never. Impossible. And yet what else can be the matter?’

Try as he might, Willis could not solve the problem. It was utterly past solution as far as he was concerned.

‘I’ll find out, and I’ll find out like a brave man,’ he said, after racking his brains for an hour or two in a vain endeavor to get at the cause of Miss Hollister’s cut. ‘I’ll call upon her to-night and ask her.’

He was true to his first purpose, but not to his second. He called, but he did not ask her, for Miss Hollister did not give him the chance to do so. Upon receiving his card she sent down word that she was out. Two days later, meeting him face to face upon the street, she gazed coldly at him, and cut him once more. Six months later her engagement to a Boston man was announced, and in the autumn following Miss Hollister of New York became Mrs. Barrows of Boston. There were cards, but Willis did not receive one of them. The cut was indeed complete and final. But why? That had now become one of the great problems of Willis's life. What had he done to be so badly treated?

II

A year passed by, and Willis recovered from the dreadful blow to his hopes, but he often puzzled over Miss Hollister's singular behavior towards him. He had placed the matter before several of his friends, and, with the exception of one of them, none was more capable of solving his problem than he. This one had heard from his wife, a school friend and intimate acquaintance of Miss Hollister, now Mrs. Barrows, that Willis's ideal had once expressed herself to the effect that she had admired Willis very much until she had discovered that he was not always as courteous as he should be.

'Courteous? Not as courteous as I should be?' retorted Willis. 'When have I ever been anything else? Why, my dear Bronson,'

he added, 'you know what my attitude towards womankind – as well as mankind – has always been. If there is a creature in the world whose politeness is his weakness, I am that creature. I'm the most courteous man living. When I play poker in my own rooms I lose money, because I've made it a rule never to beat my guests in cards or anything else.'

'That isn't politeness,' said Bronson. 'That's idiocy.'

'It proves my point,' retorted Willis. 'I'm polite to the verge of insanity. Not as courteous as I should be! Great Scott! What did I ever do or say to give her that idea?'

'I don't know,' Bronson replied. 'Better ask her. Maybe you overdid your politeness. Overdone courtesy is often worse than boorishness. You may have been so polite on some occasion that you made Miss Hollister think you considered her an inferior person. You know what the poet insinuated. Sorosis holds no fury like a woman condescended to by a man.'

'I've half a mind to write to Mrs. Barrows and ask her what I did,' said Willis.

'That would be lovely,' said Bronson. 'Barrows would be pleased.'

'True. I never thought of that,' replied Willis.

'You are not a thoughtful thinker,' said Bronson, dryly. 'If I were you I'd bide my time, and some day you may get an explanation. Stranger things have happened; and my wife tells me that the Barrowses are to spend the coming winter in New York. You'll meet them out somewhere, no doubt.'

‘No; I shall decline to go where they are. No woman shall cut me a second time – not even Mrs. Barrows,’ said Willis, firmly.

‘Good! Stand by your colors,’ said Bronson, with an amused smile.

A week or two later Willis received an invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Bronson to dine with them informally. ‘I have some very clever friends I want you to meet,’ she wrote. ‘So be sure to come.’

Willis went. The clever friends were Mr. and Mrs. Barrows; and, to the surprise of Willis, he was received most effusively by the quondam Miss Hollister.

‘Why, Mr. Willis,’ she said, extending her hand to him. ‘How delightful to see you again!’

‘Thank you,’ said Willis, in some confusion. ‘I – er – I am sure it is a very pleasant surprise for me. I – er – had no idea —’

‘Nor I,’ returned Mrs. Barrows. ‘And really I should have been a little embarrassed, I think, had I known you were to be here. I – ha! ha! – it’s so very absurd that I almost hesitate to speak of it – but I feel I must. I’ve treated you very badly.’

‘Indeed!’ said Willis, with a smile. ‘How, pray?’

‘Well, it wasn’t my fault really,’ returned Mrs. Barrows; ‘but do you remember, a little over a year ago, my riding up-town on a horse-car – a Madison Avenue car – with you?’

‘H’m!’ said Willis, with an affectation of reflection. ‘Let me see; ah – yes – I think I do. We were the only ones on board, I believe, and – ah —’

Here Mrs. Barrows laughed outright. ‘You thought we were

the only ones on board, but – we weren't. The car was crowded,' she said.

'Then I don't remember it,' said Willis. 'The only time I ever rode on a horse-car with you to my knowledge was—'

'I know; this was the occasion,' interrupted Mrs. Barrows. 'You sat in a corner at the rear end of the car when I entered, and I was very much put out with you because it remained for a stranger, whom I had often seen and to whom I had, for reasons unknown even to myself, taken a deep aversion, to offer me his seat, and, what is more, compel me to take it.'

'I don't understand,' said Willis. 'We were alone on the car.'

'To your eyes we were, although at the time I did not know it. To my eyes when I boarded it the car was occupied by enough people to fill all the seats. You returned my bow as I entered, but did not offer me your seat. The stranger did, and while I tried to decline it, I was unable to do so. He was a man of about my own age, and he had a most remarkable pair of eyes. There was no resisting them. His offer was a command; and as I rode along and thought of your sitting motionless at the end of the car, compelling me to stand, and being indirectly responsible for my acceptance of courtesies from a total and disagreeable stranger, I became so very indignant with you that I passed you without recognition as soon as I could summon up courage to leave. I could not understand why you, who had seemed to me to be the soul of politeness, should upon this occasion have failed to do not what I should exact from any man, but what I had reason to

expect of you.'

'But, Mrs. Barrows,' remonstrated Willis, 'why should I give up a seat to a lady when there were twenty other seats unoccupied on the same car?'

'There is no reason in the world why you should,' replied Mrs. Barrows. 'But it was not until last winter that I discovered the trick that had been put upon us.'

'Ah?' said Willis. 'Trick?'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Barrows. 'It was a trick. The car was empty to your eyes, but crowded to mine with the astral bodies of the members of the Boston Theosophical Society.'

'Wha-a-at?' roared Willis.

'It is just as I have said,' replied Mrs. Barrows, with a silvery laugh. 'They are all great friends of my husband's, and one night last winter he dined them at our house, and who do you suppose walked in first?'

'**Madame Blavatsky's** ghost?' suggested Willis, with a grin.

'Not quite,' returned Mrs. Barrows. 'But the horrible stranger of the horse-car; and, do you know, he recalled the whole thing to my mind, assuring me that he and the others had projected their astral bodies over to New York for a week, and had a magnificent time unperceived by all save myself, who was unconsciously psychic, and so able to perceive them in their invisible forms.'

'It was a mean trick on me, Mrs. Barrows,' said Willis, ruefully, as soon as he had recovered sufficiently from his surprise to speak.

‘Oh no,’ she replied, with a repetition of her charming laugh, which rearoused in Willis’s breast all the regrets of a lost cause. ‘They didn’t intend it especially for you, anyhow.’

‘Well,’ said Willis, ‘I think they did. They were friends of your husband’s, and they wanted to ruin me.’

‘Ruin you? And why should the friends of Mr. Barrows have wished to do that?’ asked Mrs. Barrows, in astonishment.

‘Because,’ began Willis, slowly and softly – ‘because they probably knew that from the moment I met you, I – But that is a story with a disagreeable climax, Mrs. Barrows, so I shall not tell it. How do you like Boston?’

The Ghost Club

An unfortunate episode in the life of No. 5010

Number 5010 was at the time when I received the details of this story from his lips a stalwart man of thirty-eight, swart of hue, of pleasing address, and altogether the last person one would take for a convict serving a term for sneak-thieving. The only outer symptoms of his actual condition were the striped suit he wore, the style and cut of which are still in vogue at **Sing Sing** prison, and the closely cropped hair, which showed off the distinctly intellectual lines of his head to great advantage. He was engaged in making shoes when I first saw him, and so impressed was I with the contrast between his really refined features and grace of manner and those of his brutish-looking companions, that I asked my guide who he was, and what were the circumstances which had brought him to Sing Sing.

‘He pegs shoes like a gentleman,’ I said.

‘Yes,’ returned the keeper. ‘He’s werry troublesome that way. He thinks he’s too good for his position. We can’t never do nothing with the boots he makes.’

‘Why do you keep him at work in the shoe department?’ I queried.

‘We haven’t got no work to be done in his special line, so we

have to put him at whatever we can. He pegs shoes less badly than he does anything else.'

'What was his special line?'

'He was a gentleman of leisure travellin' for his health afore he got into the toils o' the law. His real name is Marmaduke Fitztappington De Wolfe, of Pelhamhurst-by-the-Sea, Warwickshire. He landed in this country of a Tuesday, took to collectin' souvenir spoons of a Friday, was jugged the same day, tried, convicted, and there he sets. In for two years more.'

'How interesting!' I said. 'Was the evidence against him conclusive?'

'Extremely. A half-dozen spoons was found on his person.'

'He pleaded guilty, I suppose?'

'Not him. He claimed to be as innocent as a new-born babe. Told a cock-and-bull story about havin' been deluded by spirits, but the judge and jury wasn't to be fooled. They gave him every chance, too. He even cabled himself, the judge did, to Pelhamhurst-by-the-Sea, Warwickshire, at his own expense, to see if the man was an impostor, but he never got no reply. There was them as said there wasn't no such place as Pelhamhurst-by-the-Sea in Warwickshire, but they never proved it.'

'I should like very much to interview him,' said I.

'It can't be done, sir,' said my guide. 'The rules is very strict.'

'You couldn't er – arrange an interview for me,' I asked, jingling a bunch of keys in my pocket.

He must have recognized the sound, for he colored and gruffly

replied, 'I has me orders, and I obeys 'em.'

'Just – er – add this to the pension fund,' I put in, handing him a five-dollar bill. 'An interview is impossible, eh?'

'I didn't say impossible,' he answered, with a grateful smile. 'I said against the rules, but we has been known to make exceptions. I think I can fix you up.'

Suffice it to say that he did 'fix me up,' and that two hours later 5010 and I sat down together in the cell of the former, a not too commodious stall, and had a pleasant chat, in the course of which he told me the story of his life, which, as I had surmised, was to me, at least, exceedingly interesting, and easily worth twice the amount of my contribution to the pension fund under the management of my guide of the morning.

'My real name,' said the unfortunate convict, 'as you may already have guessed, is not 5010. That is an alias forced upon me by the State authorities. My name is really Austin Merton Surrennes.'

'Ahem!' I said. 'Then my guide erred this morning when he told me that in reality you were Marmaduke Fitztappington De Wolfe, of Pelhamhurst-by-the-Sea, Warwickshire?'

Number 5010 laughed long and loud. 'Of course he erred. You don't suppose that I would give the authorities my real name, do you? Why, man, I am a nephew! I have an aged uncle – a rich millionaire uncle – whose heart and will it would break were he to hear of my present plight. Both the heart and will are in my favor, hence my tender solicitude for him. I am innocent,

of course – convicts always are, you know – but that wouldn't make any difference. He'd die of mortification just the same. It's one of our family traits, that. So I gave a false name to the authorities, and secretly informed my uncle that I was about to set out for a walking trip across the great American desert, requesting him not to worry if he did not hear from me for a number of years, America being in a state of semi-civilization, to which mails outside of certain districts are entirely unknown. My uncle being an Englishman and a conservative gentleman, addicted more to reading than to travel, accepts the information as veracious and suspects nothing, and when I am liberated I shall return to him, and at his death shall become a conservative man of wealth myself. See?"

"But if you are innocent and he rich and influential, why did you not appeal to him to save you?" I asked.

"Because I was afraid that he, like the rest of the world, would decline to believe my defence," sighed 5010. "It was a good defence, if the judge had only known it, and I'm proud of it."

"But ineffectual," I put in. "And so, not good."

"Alas, yes! This is an incredulous age. People, particularly judges, are hard-headed practical men of affairs. My defence was suited more for an age of mystical tendencies. Why, will you believe it, sir, my own lawyer, the man to whom I paid eighteen dollars and seventy-five cents for championing my cause, told me the defence was rubbish, devoid even of literary merit. What chance could a man have if his lawyer even didn't believe in him?"

‘None,’ I answered, sadly. ‘And you had no chance at all, though innocent?’

‘Yes, I had one, and I chose not to take it. I might have proved myself *non compos mentis*; but that involved my making a fool of myself in public before a jury, and I have too much dignity for that, I can tell you. I told my lawyer that I should prefer a felon’s cell to the richly furnished flat of a wealthy lunatic, to which he replied, ‘Then all is lost!’ And so it was. I read my defence in court. The judge laughed, the jury whispered, and I was convicted instanter of stealing spoons, when murder itself was no further from my thoughts than theft.’

‘But they tell me you were caught red-handed,’ said I. ‘Were not a half-dozen spoons found upon your person?’

‘In my hand,’ returned the prisoner. ‘The spoons were in my hand when I was arrested, and they were seen there by the owner, by the police, and by the usual crowd of small boys that congregate at such embarrassing moments, springing up out of sidewalks, dropping down from the heavens, swarming in from everywhere. I had no idea there were so many small boys in the world until I was arrested, and found myself the cynosure of a million or more innocent blue eyes.’

‘Were they all blue-eyed?’ I queried, thinking the point interesting from a scientific point of view, hoping to discover that curiosity of a morbid character was always found in connection with eyes of a specified hue.

‘Oh no; I fancy not,’ returned my host. ‘But to a man with a

load of another fellow's spoons in his possession, and a pair of handcuffs on his wrists, everything looks blue.'

'I don't doubt it,' I replied. 'But – er – just how, now, could you defend yourself when every bit of evidence, and – you will excuse me for saying so – conclusive evidence at that, pointed to your guilt?'

'The spoons were a gift,' he answered.

'But the owner denied that.'

'I know it; that's where the beastly part of it all came in. They were not given to me by the owner, but by a lot of mean, low-down, practical-joke-loving ghosts.'

Number 5010's anger as he spoke these words was terrible to witness, and as he strode up and down the floor of his cell and dashed his arms right and left, I wished for a moment that I was elsewhere. I should not have flown, however, even had the cell door been open and my way clear, for his suggestion of a supernatural agency in connection with his crime whetted my curiosity until it was more keen than ever, and I made up my mind to hear the story to the end, if I had to commit a crime and get myself sentenced to confinement in that prison for life to do so.

Fortunately, extreme measures of this nature were unnecessary, for after a few moments Surrennes calmed down, and seating himself beside me on the cot, drained his water-pitcher to the dregs, and began.

'Excuse me for not offering you a drink,' he said, 'but the wine

they serve here while moist is hardly what a connoisseur would choose except for bathing purposes, and I compliment you by assuming that you do not wish to taste it.'

'Thank you,' I said. 'I do not like to take water straight, exactly. I always dilute it, in fact, with a little of this.'

Here I extracted a small flask from my pocket and handed it to him.

'Ah!' he said, smacking his lips as he took a long pull at its contents, 'that puts spirit into a man.'

'Yes, it does,' I replied, ruefully, as I noted that he had left me very little but the flask; 'but I don't think it was necessary for you to deprive me of all mine.'

'No; that is, you can't appreciate the necessity unless you – er – you have suffered in your life as I am suffering. You were never sent up yourself?'

I gave him a glance which was all indignation. 'I guess not,' I said. 'I have led a life that is above reproach.'

'Good!' he replied. 'And what a satisfaction that is, eh? I don't believe I'd be able to stand this jail life if it wasn't for my conscience, which is as clear and clean as it would be if I'd never used it.'

'Would you mind telling me what your defence was?' I asked. 'Certainly not,' said he, cheerfully. 'I'd be very glad to give it to you. But you must remember one thing – it is copyrighted.'

'Fire ahead!' I said, with a smile. 'I'll respect your copyright. I'll give you a **royalty** on what I get for the story.'

‘Very good,’ he answered. ‘It was like this. To begin, I must tell you that when I was a boy preparing for college I had for a chum a brilliant fun-loving fellow named Hawley Hicks, concerning whose future various prophecies had been made. His mother often asserted that he would be a great poet; his father thought he was born to be a great general; our head-master at the Scarberry Institute for Young Gentlemen prophesied the gallows. They were all wrong; though, for myself, I think that if he had lived long enough almost any one of the prophecies might have come true. The trouble was that Hawley died at the age of twenty-three. Fifteen years elapsed. I was graduated with high honors at **Brazenose**, lived a life of elegant leisure, and at the age of thirty-seven broke down in health. That was about a year ago. My uncle, whose heir and constant companion I was, gave me a liberal allowance, and sent me off to travel. I came to America, landed in New York early in September, and set about winning back the color which had departed from my cheeks by an assiduous devotion to such pleasures as New York affords. Two days after my arrival, I set out for an airing at Coney Island, leaving my hotel at four in the afternoon. On my way down Broadway I was suddenly startled at hearing my name spoken from behind me, and appalled, on turning, to see standing with outstretched hands no less a person than my defunct chum, Hawley Hicks.’

‘Impossible,’ said I.

‘Exactly my remark,’ returned Number 5010. ‘To which I added, “Hawley Hicks, it can’t be you”!’

“But it is me,” he replied.

‘And then I was convinced, for Hawley never was good on his grammar. I looked at him a minute, and then I said, “But, Hawley, I thought you were dead.”

“I am,” he answered. “But why should a little thing like that stand between friends?”

“It shouldn’t, Hawley,” I answered, meekly; “but it’s condemnedly unusual, you know, for a man to associate even with his best friends fifteen years after they’ve died and been buried.”

“Do you mean to say, Austin, that just because I was weak enough once to succumb to a bad cold, you, the dearest friend of my youth, the closest companion of my school-days, the partner of my childish joys, intend to go back on me here in a strange city?”

“Hawley,” I answered, huskily, “not a bit of it. My letter of credit, my room at the hotel, my dress suit, even my ticket to Coney Island, are at your disposal; but I think the partner of your childish joys ought first to be let in on the ground-floor of this enterprise, and informed how the deuce you manage to turn up in New York fifteen years subsequent to your obsequies. Is New York the hereafter for boys of your kind, or is this some freak of my imagination?”

‘That was an eminently proper question,’ I put in, just to show that while the story I was hearing terrified me, I was not altogether speechless.

‘It was, indeed,’ said 5010; ‘and Hawley recognized it as such, for he replied at once.

“Neither,” said he. “Your imagination is all right, and New York is neither heaven nor the other place. The fact is, I’m spooking, and I can tell you, Austin, it’s just about the finest kind of work there is. If you could manage to shuffle off your mortal coil and get in with a lot of ghosts, the way I have, you’d be playing in great luck.”

“Thanks for the hint, Hawley,” I said, with a grateful smile; “but, to tell you the truth, I do not find that life is entirely bad. I get my three meals a day, keep my pocket full of coin, and sleep eight hours every night on a couch that couldn’t be more desirable if it were studded with jewels and had mineral springs.”

“That’s your mortal ignorance, Austin,” he retorted. “I lived long enough to appreciate the necessity of being ignorant, but your style of existence is really not to be mentioned in the same cycle with mine. You talk about three meals a day, as if that were an ideal; you forget that with the eating your labor is just begun; those meals have to be digested, every one of ’em, and if you could only understand it, it would appall you to see what a fearful wear and tear that act of digestion is. In my life you are feasting all the time, but with no need for digestion. You speak of money in your pockets; well, I have none, yet am I the richer of the two. I don’t need money. The world is mine. If I chose to I could pour the contents of that jeweller’s window into your lap in five seconds, but *cui bono*? The gems delight my eye quite as

well where they are; and as for travel, Austin, of which you have always been fond, the spectral method beats all. Just watch me!"

'I watched him as well as I could for a minute,' said 5010; 'and then he disappeared. In another minute he was before me again.

"Well," I said, "I suppose you've been around the block in that time, eh?"

'He roared with laughter. "Around the block?" he ejaculated. "I have done the Continent of Europe, taken a run through China, haunted the Emperor of Japan, and sailed around the Horn since I left you a minute ago."

'He was a truthful boy in spite of his peculiarities, Hawley was,' said Surrennes, quietly, 'so I had to believe what he said. He abhorred lies.'

'That was pretty fast travelling, though,' said I. 'He'd make a fine messenger-boy.'

'That's so. I wish I'd suggested it to him,' smiled my host. 'But I can tell you, sir, I was astonished. "Hawley," I said, "you always were a fast youth, but I never thought you would develop into this. I wonder you're not out of breath after such a journey."

"Another point, my dear Austin, in favor of my mode of existence. We spooks have no breath to begin with. Consequently, to get out of it is no deprivation. But, I say," he added, "whither are you bound?"

"To Coney Island to see the sights," I replied. "Won't you join me?"

"Not I," he replied. "Coney Island is tame. When I first joined

the spectre band, it seemed to me that nothing could delight me more than an eternal round of gayety like that; but, Austin, I have changed. I have developed a good deal since you and I were parted at the grave.”

“I should say you had,” I answered. “I doubt if many of your old friends would know you.”

“You seem to have had difficulty in so doing yourself, Austin,” he replied, regretfully; “but see here, old chap, give up Coney Island, and spend the evening with me at the club. You’ll have a good time, I can assure you.”

“The club?” I said. “You don’t mean to say you visions have a club?”

“I do indeed; the Ghost Club is the most flourishing association of choice spirits in the world. We have rooms in every city in creation; and the finest part of it is there are no dues to be paid. The membership list holds some of the finest names in history – Shakespeare, Milton, Chaucer, Napoleon Bonaparte, Caesar, George Washington, Mozart, Frederick the Great, Marc Antony – Cassius **was black-balled** on Caesar’s account – Galileo, Confucius.”

“You admit the Chinese, eh?” I queried.

“Not always,” he replied. “But Con was such a good fellow they hadn’t the heart to keep him out; but you see, Austin, what a lot of fine fellows there are in it.”

“Yes, it’s a magnificent list, and I should say they made a pretty interesting set of fellows to hear talk,” I put in.

“Well, rather,” Hawley replied. “I wish you could have heard a debate between Shakespeare and Caesar on the resolution, ‘The Pen is mightier than the Sword;’ it was immense.”

“I should think it might have been,” I said. “Which won?”

“The sword party. They were the best fighters; though on the merits of the argument Shakespeare was ’way ahead.”

“If I thought I’d stand a chance of seeing spooks like that, I think I’d give up Coney Island and go with you,” I said.

“Well,” replied Hawley, “that’s just the kind of a chance you do stand. They’ll all be there to-night, and as this is ladies’ day, you might meet Lucretia Borgia, Cleopatra, and a few other feminine apparitions of considerable note.”

“That settles it. I am yours for the rest of the day,” I said, and so we adjourned to the rooms of the Ghost Club.

These rooms were in a beautiful house on Fifth Avenue; the number of the house you will find on consulting the court records. I have forgotten it. It was a large, broad, brown-stone structure, and must have been over one hundred and fifty feet in depth. Such fittings I never saw before; everything was in the height of luxury, and I am quite certain that among beings to whom money is a measure of possibility no such magnificence is attainable. The paintings on the walls were by the most famous artists of our own and other days. The rugs on the superbly polished floors were worth fortunes, not only for their exquisite beauty, but also for their extreme rarity. In keeping with these were the furniture and bric-a-brac. In short, my dear

sir, I had never dreamed of anything so dazzlingly, so superbly magnificent as that apartment into which I was ushered by the ghost of my quondam friend Hawley Hicks.

‘At first I was speechless with wonder, which seemed to amuse Hicks very much.

“Pretty fine, eh?” he said, with a short laugh.

“Well,” I replied, in a moment, “considering that you can get along without money, and that all the resources of the world are at your disposal, it is not more than half bad. Have you a library?”

‘I was always fond of books,’ explained 5010 in parenthesis to me, ‘and so was quite anxious to see what the club of ghosts could show in the way of literary treasures. Imagine my surprise when Hawley informed me that the club had no collection of the sort to appeal to the bibliophile.

“No,” he answered, “we have no library.”

“Rather strange,” I said, “that a club to which men like Shakespeare, Milton, Edgar Allan Poe, and other deceased literati belong should be deficient in that respect.”

“Not at all,” said he. “Why should we want books when we have the men themselves to tell their tales to us? Would you give a rap to possess a set of Shakespeare if William himself would sit down and rattle off the whole business to you any time you chose to ask him to do it? Would you follow Scott’s printed narratives through their devious and tedious periods if Sir Walter in spirit would come to you on demand, and tell you all the old stories over again in a tenth part of the time it would take you to read

the introduction to one of them?”

“I fancy not,” I said. “Are you in such luck?”

“I am,” said Hawley; “only personally I never send for Scott or Shakespeare. I prefer something lighter than either – **Douglas Jerrold** or **Marryat**. But best of all, I like to sit down and hear Noah swap animal stories with **Davy Crockett**. Noah’s the brightest man of his age in the club. Adam’s kind of slow.”

“How about Solomon?” I asked, more to be flippant than with any desire for information. I was much amused to hear Hawley speak of these great spirits as if he and they were chums of long standing.

“Solomon has resigned from the club,” he said, with a sad sigh. “He was a good fellow, Solomon was, but he thought he knew it all until **old Doctor Johnson** got hold of him, and then he knuckled under. It’s rather rough for a man to get firmly established in his belief that he is the wisest creature going, and then, after a couple of thousand years, have an Englishman come along and tell him things he never knew before, especially the way Sam Johnson delivers himself of his opinions. Johnson never cared whom he hurt, you know, and when he got after Solomon, he did it with all his might.”

‘I wonder if **Boswell** was there?’ I ventured, interrupting 5010 in his extraordinary narrative for an instant.

‘Yes, he was there,’ returned the prisoner. ‘I met him later in the evening; but he isn’t the spook he might be. He never had much spirit anyhow, and when he died he had to leave his nose

behind him, and that settled him.'

'Of course,' I answered. 'Boswell with no nose to stick into other people's affairs would have been like *Othello* with Desdemona left out. But go on. What did you do next?'

'Well,' 5010 resumed, 'after I'd looked about me, and drunk my fill of the magnificence on every hand, Hawley took me into the music-room, and introduced me to Mozart and Wagner and a few other great composers. In response to my request, Wagner played an impromptu version of "Daisy Bell" on the organ. It was great; not much like "Daisy Bell," of course; more like a collision between a cyclone and a simoom in a tin-plate mining camp, in fact, but, nevertheless, marvellous. I tried to remember it afterwards, and jotted down a few notes, but I found the first bar took up seven sheets of fool's-cap, and so gave it up. Then Mozart tried his hand on a banjo for my amusement, Mendelssohn sang a half-dozen of his songs without words, and then **Gottschalk** played one of Poe's weird stories on the piano.

'Then **Carlyle** came in, and Hawley introduced me to him. He was a gruff old gentleman, and seemingly anxious to have **Froude** become an eligible, and I judged from the rather fierce manner in which he handled a club he had in his hand, that there were one or two other men of prominence still living he was anxious to meet. Dickens, too, was desirous of a two-minute interview with certain of his at present purely mortal critics; and, between you and me, if the wink that Bacon gave Shakespeare when I spoke of **Ignatius Donnelly** meant anything, the famous

cryptogrammarian will do well to drink a bottle of the elixir of life every morning before breakfast, and stave off dissolution as long as he can. There's no getting around the fact, sir,' Surrennes added, with a significant shake of the head, 'that the present leaders of literary thought with critical tendencies are going to have the hardest kind of a time when they cross the river and apply for admission to the Ghost Club. *I* don't ask for any better fun than that of watching from a safe distance the initiation ceremonies of the next dozen who go over. And as an Englishman, sir, who thoroughly believes in and admires **Lord Wolseley**, if I were out of jail and able to do it, I'd write him a letter, and warn him that he would better revise his estimates of certain famous soldiers no longer living if he desires to find rest in that mysterious other world whither he must eventually betake himself. They've got their swords sharpened for him, and he'll discover an instance when he gets over there in which the sword is mightier than the pen.

'After that, Hawley took me up-stairs and introduced me to the spirit of Napoleon Bonaparte, with whom I passed about twenty-five minutes talking over his victories and defeats. He told me he never could understand how a man like Wellington came to defeat him at Waterloo, and added that he had sounded **the Iron Duke** on the subject, and found him equally ignorant.

'So the afternoon and evening passed. I met quite a number of famous ladies – **Catherine, Marie Louise, Josephine, Queen Elizabeth**, and others. Talked architecture with **Queen Anne**,

and was surprised to learn that she never saw a Queen Anne cottage. I took **Peg Woffington** down to supper, and altogether had a fine time of it.’

‘But, my dear Surrennes,’ I put in at this point, ‘I fail to see what this has to do with your defence in your trial for stealing spoons.’

‘I am coming to that,’ said 5010, sadly. ‘I dwell on the moments passed at the club because they were the happiest of my life, and am loath to speak of what followed, but I suppose I must. It was all due to **Queen Isabella** that I got into trouble. Peg Woffington presented me to Queen Isabella in the supper-room, and while her majesty and I were talking, I spoke of how beautiful everything in the club was, and admired especially a half-dozen old Spanish spoons upon the side-board. When I had done this, the Queen called to Ferdinand, who was chatting with Columbus on the other side of the room, to come to her, which he did with alacrity. I was presented to the King, and then my troubles began.

“Mr. Surrennes admires our spoons, Ferdinand,” said the Queen.

‘The King smiled, and turning to me observed, “Sir, they are yours. Er – waiter, just do these spoons up and give them to Mr. Surrennes.”

‘Of course,’ said 5010, ‘I protested against this; whereupon the King looked displeased.

“It is a rule of our club, sir, as well as an old Spanish custom, for us to present to our guests anything that they may happen

openly to admire. You are surely sufficiently well acquainted with the etiquette of club life to know that guests may not with propriety decline to be governed by the regulations of the club whose hospitality they are enjoying.”

“I certainly am aware of that, my dear King,” I replied, “and of course I accept the spoons with exceeding deep gratitude. My remonstrance was prompted solely by my desire to explain to you that I was unaware of any such regulation, and to assure you that when I ventured to inform your good wife that the spoons had excited my sincerest admiration, I was not hinting that it would please me greatly to be accounted their possessor.”

“Your courtly speech, sir,” returned the King, with a low bow, “is ample assurance of your sincerity, and I beg that you will put the spoons in your pocket and say no more. They are yours. *Verb. sap.*”

I thanked the great Spaniard and said no more, pocketing the spoons with no little exultation, because, having always been a lover of the quaint and beautiful, I was glad to possess such treasures, though I must confess to some misgivings as to the possibility of their being unreal. Shortly after this episode I looked at my watch and discovered that it was getting well on towards eleven o'clock, and I sought out Hawley for the purpose of thanking him for a delightful evening and of taking my leave. I met him in the hall talking to Euripides on the subject of the amateur stage in the United States. What they said I did not stop to hear, but offering my hand to Hawley informed him of my

intention to depart.

“Well, old chap,” he said, affectionately, “I’m glad you came. It’s always a pleasure to see you, and I hope we may meet again some time soon.” And then, catching sight of my bundle, he asked, “What have you there?”

I informed him of the episode in the supper-room, and fancied I perceived a look of annoyance on his countenance.

“I didn’t want to take them, Hawley,” I said; “but Ferdinand insisted.”

“Oh, it’s all right!” returned Hawley. “Only I’m sorry! You’d better get along home with them as quickly as you can and say nothing; and, above all, don’t try to sell them.”

“But why?” I asked. “I’d much prefer to leave them here if there is any question of the propriety of my —”

‘Here,’ continued 5010, ‘Hawley seemed to grow impatient, for he stamped his foot angrily, and bade me go at once or there might be trouble. I proceeded to obey him, and left the house instantaneously, slamming the door somewhat angrily behind me. Hawley’s unceremonious way of speeding his parting guest did not seem to me to be exactly what I had a right to expect at the time. I see now what his object was, and acquit him of any intention to be rude, though I must say if I ever catch him again, I’ll wring an explanation from him for having introduced me into such bad company.’

‘As I walked down the steps,’ said 5010, ‘the chimes of the neighboring church were clanging out the hour of eleven.’

I stopped on the last step to look for a possible hansom-cab, when a portly gentleman accompanied by a lady started to mount the stoop. The man eyed me narrowly for a moment, and then, sending the lady up the steps, he turned to me and said,

“What are you doing here?”

“I’ve just left the club” I answered. “It’s all right. I was Hawley Hicks’s guest. Whose ghost are you?”

“What the deuce are you talking about?” he asked, rather gruffly, much to my surprise and discomfort.

“I tried to give you a civil answer to your question,” I returned, indignantly.

“I guess you’re crazy – or a thief,” he rejoined.

“See here, friend,” I put in, rather impressively, “just remember one thing. You are talking to a gentleman, and I don’t take remarks of that sort from anybody, spook or otherwise. I don’t care if you are the ghost of the Emperor Nero, if you give me any more of your impudence I’ll dissipate you to the four quarters of the universe – see?”

Then he grabbed me and shouted for the police, and I was painfully surprised to find that instead of coping with a mysterious being from another world, I had two hundred and ten pounds of flesh and blood to handle. The populace began to gather. The million and a half of small boys of whom I have already spoken – mostly street gamins, owing to the lateness of the hour – sprang up from all about us. Hansom-cab drivers, attracted by the noise of our altercation, drew up to the sidewalk

to watch developments, and then, after the usual fifteen or twenty minutes, the blue-coat emissary of justice appeared.

“Phat’s dthis?” he asked.

“I have detected this man leaving my house in a suspicious manner,” said my adversary. “I have reason to suspect him of thieving.”

“*Your* house!” I ejaculated, with fine scorn. “I’ve got you there; this is the house of the New York Branch of the Ghost Club. If you want it proved,” I added, turning to the policeman, “ring the bell, and ask.”

“Oi t’ink dthat’s a fair propohosition,” observed the policeman. “Is the motion siconded?”

“Oh, come now!” cried my captor. “Stop this nonsense, or I’ll report you to the department. This is my house, and has been for twenty years. I want this man searched.”

“Oi hov no warrant permithin’ me to invistigate the contints ov dthe gintlemon’s clothes,” returned the intelligent member of the force. “But av yez ‘ll take yer solemn **alibi** dthat yez hov rayson t’ belave the gintlemon has worked ony **habeas corpush** business on yure propherty, oi’ll **jug dthe blag-yard.**’

“I’ll be responsible,” said the alleged owner of the house. “Take him to the station.”

“I refuse to move,” I said.

“Oi’ll not carry yez,” said the policeman, “and oi’d advise ye to furnish yure own locomotion. Av ye don’t, oi’ll use me club. Dthat’s th’ ounly waa yez ‘ll git dthe ambulanch.”

“Oh, well, if you insist,” I replied, “of course I’ll go. I have nothing to fear.”

‘You see,’ added 5010 to me, in parenthesis, ‘the thought suddenly flashed across my mind that if all was as my captor said, if the house was really his and not the Ghost Club’s, and if the whole thing was only my fancy, the spoons themselves would turn out to be entirely fanciful; so I was all right – or at least I thought I was. So we trotted along to the police station. On the way I told the policeman the whole story, which impressed him so that he crossed himself a half-dozen times, and uttered numerous ejaculatory prayers – “**Maa dthe shaints presharve us,**” and “**Hivin hov mershy,**” and others of a like import.

“Waz dthe ghosht ov **Dan O’Connell** dthere?” he asked.

“Yes,” I replied. “I shook hands with it.”

“Let me shaak dthot hand,” he said, his voice trembling with emotion, and then he whispered in my ear: “Oi belave yez to be innoshunt; but av yez ain’t, for the love of Dan, oi’ll let yez eshcape.”

“Thanks, old fellow,” I replied. “But I am innocent of wrongdoing, as I can prove.”

‘Alas!’ sighed the convict, ‘it was not to be so. When I arrived at the station-house, I was dumfounded to learn that the spoons were all too real. I told my story to the sergeant, and pointed to the monogram, “G.C.,” on the spoons as evidence that my story was correct; but even that told against me, for the alleged owner’s initials were G.C. – his name I withhold – and the monogram

only served to substantiate his claim to the spoons. Worst of all, he claimed that he had been robbed on several occasions before this, and by midnight I found myself locked up in a dirty cell to await trial.

‘I got a lawyer, and, as I said before, even he declined to believe my story, and suggested the insanity dodge. Of course I wouldn’t agree to that. I tried to get him to subpoena Ferdinand and Isabella and Euripides and Hawley Hicks in my behalf, and all he’d do was to sit there and shake his head at me. Then I suggested going up to the Metropolitan Opera-house some fearful night as the clock struck twelve, and try to serve papers on Wagner’s spook – all of which he treated as unworthy of a moment’s consideration. Then I was tried, convicted, and sentenced to live in this beastly hole; but I have one strong hope to buoy me up, and if that is realized, I’ll be free to-morrow morning.’

‘What is that?’ I asked.

‘Why,’ he answered, with a sigh, as the bell rang summoning him to his supper – ‘why, the whole horrid business has been so weird and uncanny that I’m beginning to believe it’s all a dream. If it is, why, I’ll wake up, and find myself at home in bed; that’s all. I’ve clung to that hope for nearly a year now, but it’s getting weaker every minute.’

‘Yes, 5010,’ I answered, rising and shaking him by the hand in parting; ‘that’s a mighty forlorn hope, because I’m pretty wide awake myself at this moment, and can’t be a part of your dream.’

The great pity is you didn't try the insanity dodge.'

'Tut!' he answered. 'That is the last resource of a weak mind.'

Ambrose Bierce

Curried Cow

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

Her kicks, too, were as admirable in quality as inexhaustible in quantity. They were incomparably superior to those of the untutored kine that had not made the art a life study – mere amateurs that kicked ‘by ear,’ as they say in music. I saw her once

standing in the road, professedly fast asleep, and mechanically munching her cud with a sort of Sunday morning lassitude, as one munches one's cud in a dream. Snouting about at her side, blissfully unconscious of impending danger and wrapped up in thoughts of his sweetheart, was a gigantic black hog – a hog of about the size and general appearance of a yearling rhinoceros. Suddenly, while I looked – without a visible movement on the part of the cow – with never a perceptible tremor of her frame, nor a lapse in the placid regularity of her chewing – that hog had gone away from there – had utterly taken his leave. But away toward the pale horizon a minute black speck was traversing the empyrean with the speed of a meteor, and in a moment had disappeared, without audible report, beyond the distant hills. It may have been that hog.

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

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

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

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

Since that time my Aunt Patience had not been in the matrimonial market; the love of that cow had usurped in her heart

the place of a more natural and profitable affection. But when she saw her seeds unsown, her harvests ungarnered, her fences overtopped with rank brambles and her meadows gorgeous with the towering Canada thistle she thought it best to take a partner.

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

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

Aside from his unconscionable length, the Rev. Berosus Huggins was not so bad a fellow, and was nobody's fool. He was, I suppose, the most ill-favored mortal, however, in the whole northern half of America – thin, angular, cadaverous of visage and solemn out of all reason. He commonly wore a low-

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

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

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

'Mrs. Huggins,' interrupted her solemn spouse, 'I shall hope to

be the means, under Providence, of effecting all needful reforms in the husbandry of this farm. But the sister you mention (I trust she is not of the world's people) – have I the pleasure of knowing her? The name, indeed, sounds familiar, but' —

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

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

'Whyyy, youuu ooold, foool!' replied my aunt, spreading her eyes with unbounded amazement, 'Phœbe is a *cow*!'

'In that case,' said the husband, with unruffled composure, 'it will, of course, devolve upon me to see that her carnal welfare is properly attended to; and I shall be happy to bestow upon her legs such time as I may, without sin, snatch from my strife with Satan and the Canadian thistles.'

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

Now, it is necessary to explain that he had known from the first who Phœbe was, and was familiar, from hearsay, with all her

sinful traits. Moreover, he had already done himself the honor of making her a visit, remaining in the vicinity of her person, just out of range, for more than an hour and permitting her to survey him at her leisure from every point of the compass. In short, he and Phœbe had mutually reconnoitered and prepared for action.

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

The preliminaries completed, the good man carefully closed the gate of the barnyard, knowing that as soon as Phœbe, who was campaigning in the kitchen garden, should note the precaution she would come and jump in to frustrate it, which eventually she did. Her master, meanwhile, had laid himself, coatless and hatless, along the outside of the close board fence,

where he put in the time pleasantly, catching his death of cold and peering through a knot-hole.

At first, and for some time, the animal pretended not to see the figure on the platform. Indeed she had turned her back upon it directly she arrived, affecting a light sleep. Finding that this stratagem did not achieve the success that she had expected, she abandoned it and stood for several minutes irresolute, munching her cud in a half-hearted way, but obviously thinking very hard. Then she began nosing along the ground as if wholly absorbed in a search for something that she had lost, tacking about hither and thither, but all the time drawing nearer to the object of her wicked intention. Arrived within speaking distance, she stood for a little while confronting the fraudulent figure, then put out her nose toward it, as if to be caressed, trying to create the impression that fondling and dalliance were more to her than wealth, power and the plaudits of the populace – that she had been accustomed to them all her sweet young life and could not get on without them. Then she approached a little nearer, as if to shake hands, all the while maintaining the most amiable expression of countenance and executing all manner of seductive nods and winks and smiles. Suddenly she wheeled about and with the rapidity of lightning dealt out a terrible kick – a kick of inconceivable force and fury, comparable to nothing in nature but a stroke of paralysis out of a clear sky!

The effect was magical! Cows kick, not backward but sidewise. The impact which was intended to project the

counterfeit theologian into the middle of the succeeding conference week reacted upon the animal herself, and it and the pain together set her spinning like a top. Such was the velocity of her revolution that she looked like a dim, circular cow, surrounded by a continuous ring like that of the planet Saturn – the white tuft at the extremity of her sweeping tail! Presently, as the sustaining centrifugal force lessened and failed, she began to sway and wobble from side to side, and finally, toppling over on her side, rolled convulsively on her back and lay motionless with all her feet in the air, honestly believing that the world had somehow got atop of her and she was supporting it at a great sacrifice of personal comfort. Then she fainted.

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

For several weeks Phoebe’s right hind leg was swollen to a monstrous growth, but by a season of judicious nursing she was ‘brought round all right,’ as her sympathetic and puzzled mistress phrased it, or ‘made whole,’ as the reticent man of God preferred to say. She was now as tractable and inoffensive ‘in her daily walk and conversation’ (Huggins) as a little child. Her new master used

to take her ailing leg trustfully into his lap, and for that matter, might have taken it into his mouth if he had so desired. Her entire character appeared to be radically changed – so altered that one day my Aunt Patience, who, fondly as she loved her, had never before so much as ventured to touch the hem of her garment, as it were, went confidently up to her to soothe her with a pan of turnips. Gad! how thinly she spread out that good old lady upon the face of an adjacent stone wall! You could not have done it so evenly with a trowel.

The Widower Turmore

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

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

My incumbency of the Chair of Cats in the Graymaulkin University had not, of course, been marked by any instance of mean industry. There had never, at any one time, been more than

two students of the Noble Science, and by merely repeating the manuscript lectures of my predecessor, which I had found among his effects (he died at sea on his way to Malta) I could sufficiently sate their famine for knowledge without really earning even the distinction which served in place of salary.

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

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

In this emergency I decided to consult the Turmore archives, a priceless collection of documents, comprising the records of the family from the time of its founder in the seventh century of our era. I knew that among these sacred muniments I should find detailed accounts of all the principal murders committed by my sainted ancestors for forty generations. From that mass of papers I could hardly fail to derive the most valuable suggestions.

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

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

To this thesaurus of the soul, redolent of sentiment and

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

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

My plan of action was soon formed, and procuring a stout cord I entered my wife's bedroom finding her, as I expected, in a sound sleep. Before she was awake, I had her bound fast, hand and foot. She was greatly surprised and pained, but heedless of her remonstrances, delivered in a high key, I carried her into the now rifled strong-room, which I had never suffered her to enter, and of whose treasures I had not apprised her. Seating her, still bound, in an angle of the wall, I passed the next two days and nights in conveying bricks and mortar to the spot, and on the morning of the third day had her securely walled in, from

floor to ceiling. All this time I gave no further heed to her pleas for mercy than (on her assurance of non-resistance, which I am bound to say she honorably observed) to grant her the freedom of her limbs. The space allowed her was about four feet by six. As I inserted the last bricks of the top course, in contact with the ceiling of the strong-room, she bade me farewell with what I deemed the composure of despair, and I rested from my work, feeling that I had faithfully observed the traditions of an ancient and illustrious family. My only bitter reflection, so far as my own conduct was concerned, came of the consciousness that in the performance of my design I had labored; but this no living soul would ever know.

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

Some six months after these events strange rumors reached me that the ghost of my deceased wife had been seen in several places about the country, but always at a considerable distance

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

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

of valuable jewels from my safe and leave the country.

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

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

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

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

Through that opening she had at several times abstracted the entire collection, which doubtless she had succeeded in converting into coin of the realm. When with an unconscious justice which deprives me of all satisfaction in the memory I decided to build her into the wall, by some malign fatality I selected that part of it in which were these movable stones, and doubtless before I had fairly finished my bricklaying she had removed them and, slipping through into the wine cellar, replaced them as they were originally laid. From the cellar she had easily escaped unobserved, to enjoy her infamous gains in distant parts. I have endeavored to procure a warrant, but the Lord High Baron of the Court of Indictment and Conviction reminds me that she is legally dead, and says my only course is to go before the Master in Cadavery and move for a writ of disinterment and constructive revival. So it looks as if I must suffer without redress this great wrong at the hands of a woman devoid alike of principle and shame.

Bret Harte

The Stolen Cigar Case

I found Hemlock Jones in the old Brook Street lodgings, musing before the fire. With the freedom of an old friend I at once threw myself in my usual familiar attitude at his feet, and gently caressed his boot. I was induced to do this for two reasons: one, that it enabled me to get a good look at his bent, concentrated face, and the other, that it seemed to indicate my reverence for his superhuman insight. So absorbed was he even then, in tracking some mysterious clue, that he did not seem to notice me. But therein I was wrong – as I always was in my attempt to understand that powerful intellect.

‘It is raining,’ he said, without lifting his head.

‘You have been out, then?’ I said quickly.

‘No. But I see that your umbrella is wet, and that your overcoat has drops of water on it.’

I sat aghast at his penetration. After a pause he said carelessly, as if dismissing the subject: ‘Besides, I hear the rain on the window. Listen.’

I listened. I could scarcely credit my ears, but there was the soft pattering of drops on the panes. It was evident there was no deceiving this man!

‘Have you been busy lately?’ I asked, changing the subject. ‘What new problem – given up by Scotland Yard as inscrutable – has occupied that gigantic intellect?’

He drew back his foot slightly, and seemed to hesitate ere he returned it to its original position. Then he answered wearily. ‘Mere trifles – nothing to speak of. The Prince Kupoli has been here to get my advice regarding the disappearance of certain rubies from the Kremlin; the Rajah of Pootibad, after vainly beheading his entire bodyguard, has been obliged to seek my assistance to recover a jeweled sword. The Grand Duchess of Pretzel-Brauntswig is desirous of discovering where her husband was on the night of February 14; and last night’ – he lowered his voice slightly – ‘a lodger in this very house, meeting me on the stairs, wanted to know why they didn’t answer his bell.’

I could not help smiling – until I saw a frown gathering on his inscrutable forehead.

‘Pray remember,’ he said coldly, ‘that it was through such an apparently trivial question that I found out Why Paul Ferroll Killed His Wife, and What Happened to Jones!’

I became dumb at once. He paused for a moment, and then suddenly changing back to his usual pitiless, analytical style, he said: ‘When I say these are trifles, they are so in comparison to an affair that is now before me. A crime has been committed, – and, singularly enough, against myself. You start,’ he said. ‘You wonder who would have dared to attempt it. So did I; nevertheless, it has been done. I have been **ROBBED!**’

‘YOU robbed! You, Hemlock Jones, the Terror of Peculators!’ I gasped in amazement, arising and gripping the table as I faced him.

‘Yes! Listen. I would confess it to no other. But YOU who have followed my career, who know my methods; you, for whom I have partly lifted the veil that conceals my plans from ordinary humanity, – you, who have for years rapturously accepted my confidences, passionately admired my inductions and inferences, placed yourself at my beck and call, become my slave, groveled at my feet, given up your practice except those few unremunerative and rapidly decreasing patients to whom, in moments of abstraction over MY problems, you have administered strychnine for quinine and arsenic for Epsom salts; you, who have sacrificed anything and everybody to me, – YOU I make my confidant!’

I arose and embraced him warmly, yet he was already so engrossed in thought that at the same moment he mechanically placed his hand upon his watch chain as if to consult the time. ‘Sit down,’ he said. ‘Have a cigar?’

‘I have given up cigar smoking,’ I said.

‘Why?’ he asked.

I hesitated, and perhaps colored. I had really given it up because, with my diminished practice, it was too expensive. I could afford only a pipe. ‘I prefer a pipe,’ I said laughingly. ‘But tell me of this robbery. What have you lost?’

He arose, and planting himself before the fire with his hands

under his coattails, looked down upon me reflectively for a moment. 'Do you remember the cigar case presented to me by the Turkish Ambassador for discovering the missing favorite of the Grand Vizier in the fifth chorus girl at the Hilarity Theatre? It was that one. I mean the cigar case. It was incrustated with diamonds.'

'And the largest one had been supplanted by paste,' I said.

'Ah,' he said, with a reflective smile, 'you know that?'

'You told me yourself. I remember considering it a proof of your extraordinary perception. But, by Jove, you don't mean to say you have lost it?'

He was silent for a moment. 'No; it has been stolen, it is true, but I shall still find it. And by myself alone! In your profession, my dear fellow, when a member is seriously ill, he does not prescribe for himself, but calls in a brother doctor. Therein we differ. I shall take this matter in my own hands.'

'And where could you find better?' I said enthusiastically. 'I should say the cigar case is as good as recovered already.'

'I shall remind you of that again,' he said lightly. 'And now, to show you my confidence in your judgment, in spite of my determination to pursue this alone, I am willing to listen to any suggestions from you.'

He drew a memorandum book from his pocket and, with a grave smile, took up his pencil.

I could scarcely believe my senses. He, the great Hemlock Jones, accepting suggestions from a humble individual like

myself! I kissed his hand reverently, and began in a joyous tone:

‘First, I should advertise, offering a reward; I should give the same intimation in hand-bills, distributed at the ‘pubs’ and the pastry-cooks’. I should next visit the different pawnbrokers; I should give notice at the police station. I should examine the servants. I should thoroughly search the house and my own pockets. I speak relatively,’ I added, with a laugh. ‘Of course I mean YOUR own.’

He gravely made an entry of these details.

‘Perhaps,’ I added, ‘you have already done this?’

‘Perhaps,’ he returned enigmatically. ‘Now, my dear friend,’ he continued, putting the note-book in his pocket and rising, ‘would you excuse me for a few moments? Make yourself perfectly at home until I return; there may be some things,’ he added with a sweep of his hand toward his heterogeneously filled shelves, ‘that may interest you and while away the time. There are pipes and tobacco in that corner.’

Then nodding to me with the same inscrutable face he left the room. I was too well accustomed to his methods to think much of his unceremonious withdrawal, and made no doubt he was off to investigate some clue which had suddenly occurred to his active intelligence.

Left to myself I cast a cursory glance over his shelves. There were a number of small glass jars containing earthy substances, labeled ‘Pavement and Road Sweepings,’ from the principal thoroughfares and suburbs of London, with the sub-directions

‘for identifying foot-tracks.’ There were several other jars, labeled ‘Fluff from Omnibus and Road Car Seats,’ ‘Cocoanut Fibre and Rope Strands from Matting in Public Places,’ ‘Cigarette Stumps and Match Ends from Floor of Palace Theatre, Row A, 1 to 50.’ Everywhere were evidences of this wonderful man’s system and perspicacity.

I was thus engaged when I heard the slight creaking of a door, and I looked up as a stranger entered. He was a rough-looking man, with a shabby overcoat and a still more disreputable muffler around his throat and the lower part of his face. Considerably annoyed at his intrusion, I turned upon him rather sharply, when, with a mumbled, growling apology for mistaking the room, he shuffled out again and closed the door. I followed him quickly to the landing and saw that he disappeared down the stairs. With my mind full of the robbery, the incident made a singular impression upon me. I knew my friend’s habit of hasty absences from his room in his moments of deep inspiration; it was only too probable that, with his powerful intellect and magnificent perceptive genius concentrated on one subject, he should be careless of his own belongings, and no doubt even forget to take the ordinary precaution of locking up his drawers. I tried one or two and found that I was right, although for some reason I was unable to open one to its fullest extent. The handles were sticky, as if some one had opened them with dirty fingers. Knowing Hemlock’s fastidious cleanliness, I resolved to inform him of this circumstance, but I forgot it, alas! until – but I am anticipating

my story.

His absence was strangely prolonged. I at last seated myself by the fire, and lulled by warmth and the patter of the rain on the window, I fell asleep. I may have dreamt, for during my sleep I had a vague semi-consciousness as of hands being softly pressed on my pockets – no doubt induced by the story of the robbery. When I came fully to my senses, I found Hemlock Jones sitting on the other side of the hearth, his deeply concentrated gaze fixed on the fire.

‘I found you so comfortably asleep that I could not bear to awaken you,’ he said, with a smile.

I rubbed my eyes. ‘And what news?’ I asked. ‘How have you succeeded?’

‘Better than I expected,’ he said, ‘and I think,’ he added, tapping his note-book, ‘I owe much to YOU.’

Deeply gratified, I awaited more. But in vain. I ought to have remembered that in his moods Hemlock Jones was reticence itself. I told him simply of the strange intrusion, but he only laughed.

Later, when I arose to go, he looked at me playfully. ‘If you were a married man,’ he said, ‘I would advise you not to go home until you had brushed your sleeve. There are a few short brown sealskin hairs on the inner side of your forearm, just where they would have adhered if your arm had encircled a seal-skin coat with some pressure!’

‘For once you are at fault,’ I said triumphantly; ‘the hair is

my own, as you will perceive; I have just had it cut at the hairdresser's, and no doubt this arm projected beyond the apron.'

He frowned slightly, yet, nevertheless, on my turning to go he embraced me warmly – a rare exhibition in that man of ice. He even helped me on with my overcoat and pulled out and smoothed down the flaps of my pockets. He was particular, too, in fitting my arm in my overcoat sleeve, shaking the sleeve down from the armhole to the cuff with his deft fingers. 'Come again soon!' he said, clapping me on the back.

'At any and all times,' I said enthusiastically; 'I only ask ten minutes twice a day to eat a crust at my office, and four hours' sleep at night, and the rest of my time is devoted to you always, as you know.'

'It is indeed,' he said, with his impenetrable smile.

Nevertheless, I did not find him at home when I next called. One afternoon, when nearing my own home, I met him in one of his favorite disguises, – a long blue swallow-tailed coat, striped cotton trousers, large turn-over collar, blacked face, and white hat, carrying a tambourine. Of course to others the disguise was perfect, although it was known to myself, and I passed him – according to an old understanding between us – without the slightest recognition, trusting to a later explanation. At another time, as I was making a professional visit to the wife of a publican at the East End, I saw him, in the disguise of a broken-down artisan, looking into the window of an adjacent pawnshop. I was delighted to see that he was evidently following my suggestions,

and in my joy I ventured to tip him a wink; it was abstractedly returned.

Two days later I received a note appointing a meeting at his lodgings that night. That meeting, alas! was the one memorable occurrence of my life, and the last meeting I ever had with Hemlock Jones! I will try to set it down calmly, though my pulses still throb with the recollection of it.

I found him standing before the fire, with that look upon his face which I had seen only once or twice in our acquaintance – a look which I may call an absolute concatenation of inductive and deductive ratiocination – from which all that was human, tender, or sympathetic was absolutely discharged. He was simply an icy algebraic symbol! Indeed, his whole being was concentrated to that extent that his clothes fitted loosely, and his head was absolutely so much reduced in size by his mental compression that his hat tipped back from his forehead and literally hung on his massive ears.

After I had entered he locked the doors, fastened the windows, and even placed a chair before the chimney. As I watched these significant precautions with absorbing interest, he suddenly drew a revolver and, presenting it to my temple, said in low, icy tones: ‘Hand over that cigar case!’

Even in my bewilderment my reply was truthful, spontaneous, and involuntary. ‘I haven’t got it,’ I said.

He smiled bitterly, and threw down his revolver. ‘I expected that reply! Then let me now confront you with something more

awful, more deadly, more relentless and convincing than that mere lethal weapon, – the damning inductive and deductive proofs of your guilt!’ He drew from his pocket a roll of paper and a note-book.

‘But surely,’ I gasped, ‘you are joking! You could not for a moment believe’ —

‘Silence! Sit down!’ I obeyed.

‘You have condemned yourself,’ he went on pitilessly. ‘Condemned yourself on my processes, – processes familiar to you, applauded by you, accepted by you for years! We will go back to the time when you first saw the cigar case. Your expressions,’ he said in cold, deliberate tones, consulting his paper, ‘were, “How beautiful! I wish it were mine.” This was your first step in crime – and my first indication. From “I WISH it were mine” to “I WILL have it mine,” and the mere detail, “HOW CAN I make it mine?” the advance was obvious. Silence! But as in my methods it was necessary that there should be an overwhelming inducement to the crime, that unholy admiration of yours for the mere trinket itself was not enough. You are a smoker of cigars.’

‘But,’ I burst out passionately, ‘I told you I had given up smoking cigars.’

‘Fool!’ he said coldly, ‘that is the SECOND time you have committed yourself. Of course you told me! What more natural than for you to blazon forth that prepared and unsolicited statement to PREVENT accusation. Yet, as I said before, even

that wretched attempt to cover up your tracks was not enough. I still had to find that overwhelming, impelling motive necessary to affect a man like you. That motive I found in the strongest of all impulses – Love, I suppose you would call it,’ he added bitterly, ‘that night you called! You had brought the most conclusive proofs of it on your sleeve.’

‘But —’ I almost screamed.

‘Silence!’ he thundered. ‘I know what you would say. You would say that even if you had embraced some Young Person in a sealskin coat, what had that to do with the robbery? Let me tell you, then, that that sealskin coat represented the quality and character of your fatal entanglement! You bartered your honor for it – that stolen cigar case was the purchaser of the sealskin coat!

‘Silence! Having thoroughly established your motive, I now proceed to the commission of the crime itself. Ordinary people would have begun with that – with an attempt to discover the whereabouts of the missing object. These are not MY methods.’

So overpowering was his penetration that, although I knew myself innocent, I licked my lips with avidity to hear the further details of this lucid exposition of my crime.

‘You committed that theft the night I showed you the cigar case, and after I had carelessly thrown it in that drawer. You were sitting in that chair, and I had arisen to take something from that shelf. In that instant you secured your booty without rising. Silence! Do you remember when I helped you on with

your overcoat the other night? I was particular about fitting your arm in. While doing so I measured your arm with a spring tape measure, from the shoulder to the cuff. A later visit to your tailor confirmed that measurement. It proved to be THE EXACT DISTANCE BETWEEN YOUR CHAIR AND THAT DRAWER!’

I sat stunned.

‘The rest are mere corroborative details! You were again tampering with the drawer when I discovered you doing so! Do not start! The stranger that blundered into the room with a muffler on – was myself! More, I had placed a little soap on the drawer handles when I purposely left you alone. The soap was on your hand when I shook it at parting. I softly felt your pockets, when you were asleep, for further developments. I embraced you when you left – that I might feel if you had the cigar case or any other articles hidden on your body. This confirmed me in the belief that you had already disposed of it in the manner and for the purpose I have shown you. As I still believed you capable of remorse and confession, I twice allowed you to see I was on your track: once in the garb of an itinerant negro minstrel, and the second time as a workman looking in the window of the pawnshop where you pledged your booty.’

‘But,’ I burst out, ‘if you had asked the pawnbroker, you would have seen how unjust’ —

‘Fool!’ he hissed, ‘that was one of YOUR suggestions – to search the pawnshops! Do you suppose I followed any of your

suggestions, the suggestions of the thief? On the contrary, they told me what to avoid.'

'And I suppose,' I said bitterly, 'you have not even searched your drawer?'

'No,' he said calmly.

I was for the first time really vexed. I went to the nearest drawer and pulled it out sharply. It stuck as it had before, leaving a part of the drawer unopened. By working it, however, I discovered that it was impeded by some obstacle that had slipped to the upper part of the drawer, and held it firmly fast. Inserting my hand, I pulled out the impeding object. It was the missing cigar case! I turned to him with a cry of joy.

But I was appalled at his expression. A look of contempt was now added to his acute, penetrating gaze. 'I have been mistaken,' he said slowly; 'I had not allowed for your weakness and cowardice! I thought too highly of you even in your guilt! But I see now why you tampered with that drawer the other night. By some inexplicable means – possibly another theft – you took the cigar case out of pawn and, like a whipped hound, restored it to me in this feeble, clumsy fashion. You thought to deceive me, Hemlock Jones! More, you thought to destroy my infallibility. Go! I give you your liberty. I shall not summon the three policemen who wait in the adjoining room – but out of my sight forever!'

As I stood once more dazed and petrified, he took me firmly by the ear and led me into the hall, closing the door behind him.

This reopened presently, wide enough to permit him to thrust out my hat, overcoat, umbrella, and overshoes, and then closed against me forever!

I never saw him again. I am bound to say, however, that thereafter my business increased, I recovered much of my old practice, and a few of my patients recovered also. I became rich. I had a brougham and a house in the West End. But I often wondered, pondering on that wonderful man's penetration and insight, if, in some lapse of consciousness, I had not really stolen his cigar case!

Miss Mix

BY CH – L – TTE BR – NTE.

Chapter I

My earliest impressions are of a huge, misshapen rock, against which the hoarse waves beat unceasingly. On this rock three pelicans are standing in a defiant attitude. A dark sky lowers in the background, while two sea-gulls and a gigantic cormorant eye with extreme disfavor the floating corpse of a drowned woman in the foreground. A few bracelets, coral necklaces, and other articles of jewelry, scattered around loosely, complete this remarkable picture.

It is one which, in some vague, unconscious way, symbolizes, to my fancy, the character of a man. I have never been able to explain exactly why. I think I must have seen the picture in some illustrated volume, when a baby, or my mother may have dreamed it before I was born.

As a child I was not handsome. When I consulted the triangular bit of looking-glass which I always carried with me, it showed a pale, sandy, and freckled face, shaded by locks like the color of seaweed when the sun strikes it in deep water. My eyes were said to be indistinctive; they were a faint, ashen gray; but

above them rose – my only beauty – a high, massive, domelike forehead, with polished temples, like door-knobs of the purest porcelain.

Our family was a family of governesses. My mother had been one, and my sisters had the same occupation. Consequently, when, at the age of thirteen, my eldest sister handed me the advertisement of Mr. Rawjester, clipped from that day's 'Times,' I accepted it as my destiny. Nevertheless, a mysterious presentiment of an indefinite future haunted me in my dreams that night, as I lay upon my little snow-white bed. The next morning, with two bandboxes tied up in silk handkerchiefs, and a hair trunk, I turned my back upon Minerva Cottage forever.

Chapter II

Blunderbore Hall, the seat of James Rawjester, Esq., was encompassed by dark pines and funereal hemlocks on all sides. The wind sang weirdly in the turrets and moaned through the long-drawn avenues of the park. As I approached the house I saw several mysterious figures flit before the windows, and a yell of demoniac laughter answered my summons at the

bell. While I strove to repress my gloomy forebodings, the housekeeper, a timid, scared-looking old woman, showed me into the library.

I entered, overcome with conflicting emotions. I was dressed in a narrow gown of dark serge, trimmed with black bugles. A

thick green shawl was pinned across my breast. My hands were encased with black half-mittens worked with steel beads; on my feet were large pattens, originally the property of my deceased grandmother. I carried a blue cotton umbrella. As I passed before a mirror, I could not help glancing at it, nor could I disguise from myself the fact that I was not handsome.

Drawing a chair into a recess, I sat down with folded hands, calmly awaiting the arrival of my master. Once or twice a fearful yell rang through the house, or the rattling of chains, and curses uttered in a deep, manly voice, broke upon the oppressive stillness. I began to feel my soul rising with the emergency of the moment.

‘You look alarmed, miss. You don’t hear anything, my dear, do you?’ asked the housekeeper nervously.

‘Nothing whatever,’ I remarked calmly, as a terrific scream, followed by the dragging of chairs and tables in the room above, drowned for a moment my reply. It is the silence, on the contrary, which has made me foolishly nervous.’

The housekeeper looked at me approvingly, and instantly made some tea for me.

I drank seven cups; as I was beginning the eighth, I heard a crash, and the next moment a man leaped into the room through the broken window.

Chapter III

The crash startled me from my self-control. The housekeeper bent toward me and whispered: —

‘Don’t be excited. It’s Mr. Rawjester, — he prefers to come in sometimes in this way. It’s his playfulness, ha! ha! ha!’

‘I perceive,’ I said calmly. ‘It’s the unfettered impulse of a lofty soul breaking the tyrannizing bonds of custom.’ And I turned toward him.

He had never once looked at me. He stood with his back to the fire, which set off the herculean breadth of his shoulders. His face was dark and expressive; his under jaw squarely formed, and remarkably heavy. was struck with his remarkable likeness to a Gorilla.

As he absently tied the poker into hard knots with his nervous fingers, I watched him with some interest. Suddenly he turned toward me: —

‘Do you think I’m handsome, young woman?’

‘Not classically beautiful,’ I returned calmly; ‘but you have, if I may so express myself, an abstract manliness, — a sincere and wholesome barbarity which, involving as it does the naturalness —’ But I stopped, for he yawned at that moment, — an action which singularly developed the immense breadth of his lower jaw, — and I saw he had forgotten me. Presently he turned to the housekeeper: —

‘Leave us.’

The old woman withdrew with a courtesy.

Mr. Rawjester deliberately turned his back upon me and remained silent for twenty minutes. I drew my shawl the more closely around my shoulders and closed my eyes.

‘You are the governess?’ at length he said.

‘I am, sir.’

‘A creature who teaches geography, arithmetic, and the use of the globes – ha! – a wretched remnant of femininity, – a skimp pattern of girlhood with a premature flavor of tea-leaves and morality. Ugh!’

I bowed my head silently.

‘Listen to me, girl!’ he said sternly; ‘this child you have come to teach – my ward – is not legitimate. She is the offspring of my mistress, – a common harlot. Ah! Miss Mix, what do you think of me now?’

‘I admire,’ I replied calmly, ‘your sincerity. A mawkish regard for delicacy might have kept this disclosure to yourself. I only recognize in your frankness that perfect community of thought and sentiment which should exist between original natures.’

I looked up; he had already forgotten my presence, and was engaged in pulling off his boots and coat. This done, he sank down in an arm-chair before the fire, and ran the poker wearily through his hair.

I could not help pitying him.

The wind howled dismally without, and the rain beat furiously

against the windows. I crept toward him and seated myself on a low stool beside his chair.

Presently he turned, without seeing me, and placed his foot absently in my lap. I affected not to notice it. But he started and looked down.

‘You here yet – Carrothead? Ah, I forgot. Do you speak French?’

‘Oui, Monsieur.’

‘Taisez-vous!’ he said sharply, with singular purity of accent. I complied. The wind moaned fearfully in the chimney, and the light burned dimly. I shuddered in spite of myself. ‘Ah, you tremble, girl!’

‘It is a fearful night.’

‘Fearful! Call you this fearful, ha! ha! ha! Look! you wretched little atom, look!’ and he dashed forward, and, leaping out of the window, stood like a statue in the pelting storm, with folded arms. He did not stay long, but in a few minutes returned by way of the hall chimney. I saw from the way that he wiped his feet on my dress that he had again forgotten my presence.

‘You are a governess. What can you teach?’ he asked, suddenly and fiercely thrusting his face in mine.

‘Manners!’ I replied, calmly.

‘Ha! teach ME!’

‘You mistake yourself,’ I said, adjusting my mittens. ‘Your manners require not the artificial restraint of society. You are radically polite; this impetuosity and ferociousness is simply the

sincerity which is the basis of a proper deportment. Your instincts are moral; your better nature, I see, is religious. As St. Paul justly remarks – see chap. 6, 8, 9, and 10 —’

He seized a heavy candlestick, and threw it at me. I dodged it submissively but firmly.

‘Excuse me,’ he remarked, as his under jaw slowly relaxed. ‘Excuse me, Miss Mix – but I can’t stand St. Paul! Enough – you are engaged.’

Chapter IV

I followed the housekeeper as she led the way timidly to my room. As we passed into a dark hall in the wing, I noticed that it was closed by an iron gate with a grating. Three of the doors on the corridor were likewise grated. A strange noise, as of shuffling feet and the howling of infuriated animals, rang through the hall. Bidding the housekeeper good night, and taking the candle, I entered my bedchamber.

I took off my dress, and, putting on a yellow flannel nightgown, which I could not help feeling did not agree with my complexion, I composed myself to rest by reading Blair’s Rhetoric and Paley’s Moral Philosophy. I had just put out the light, when I heard voices in the corridor. I listened attentively. I recognized Mr. Rawjester’s stern tones.

‘Have you fed No. 1?’ he asked.

‘Yes, sir,’ said a gruff voice, apparently belonging to a

domestic.

‘How’s No. 2?’

‘She’s a little off her feed, just now, but will pick up in a day or two!’

‘And No. 3?’

‘Perfectly furious, sir. Her tantrums are ungovernable.’

‘Hush!’

The voices died away, and I sank into a fitful slumber.

I dreamed that I was wandering through a tropical forest. Suddenly I saw the figure of a gorilla approaching me. As it neared me, I recognized the features of Mr. Rawjester. He held his hand to his side as if in pain. I saw that he had been wounded. He recognized me and called me by name, but at the same moment the vision changed to an Ashantee village, where, around the fire, a group of negroes were dancing and participating in some wild Obi festival. I awoke with the strain still ringing in my ears.

‘Hokee-pokee wokee fum!’

Good Heavens! could I be dreaming? I heard the voice distinctly on the floor below, and smelt something burning. I arose, with an indistinct presentiment of evil, and hastily putting some cotton in my ears and tying a towel about my head, I wrapped myself in a shawl and rushed down stairs. The door of Mr. Rawjester’s room was open. I entered.

Mr. Rawjester lay apparently in a deep slumber, from which even the clouds of smoke that came from the burning curtains

of his bed could not rouse him. Around the room a large and powerful negress, scantily attired, with her head adorned with feathers, was dancing wildly, accompanying herself with bone castanets. It looked like some terrible fetich.

I did not lose my calmness. After firmly emptying the pitcher, basin, and slop-jar on the burning bed, I proceeded cautiously to the garden, and, returning with the garden-engine, I directed a small stream at Mr. Rawjester.

At my entrance the gigantic negress fled. Mr. Rawjester yawned and woke. I explained to him, as he rose dripping from the bed, the reason of my presence. He did not seem to be excited, alarmed, or discomposed. He gazed at me curiously.

‘So you risked your life to save mine, eh? you canary-colored teacher of infants.’

I blushed modestly, and drew my shawl tightly over my yellow flannel nightgown.

‘You love me, Mary Jane, – don’t deny it! This trembling shows it!’ He drew me closely toward him, and said, with his deep voice tenderly modulated: —

‘How’s her pooty tootens, – did she get her ‘ittle tootens wet, – bess her?’

I understood his allusion to my feet. I glanced down and saw that in my hurry I had put on a pair of his old india-rubbers. My feet were not small or pretty, and the addition did not add to their beauty.

‘Let me go, sir,’ I remarked quietly. ‘This is entirely improper;

it sets a bad example for your child.’ And I firmly but gently extricated myself from his grasp. I approached the door. He seemed for a moment buried in deep thought.

‘You say this was a negress?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Humph, No. 1, I suppose?’

‘Who is Number One, sir?’

‘My FIRST,’ he remarked, with a significant and sarcastic smile. Then, relapsing into his old manner, he threw his boots at my head, and bade me begone. I withdrew calmly.

Chapter V

My pupil was a bright little girl, who spoke French with a perfect accent. Her mother had been a French ballet-dancer, which probably accounted for it. Although she was only six years old, it was easy to perceive that she had been several times in love. She once said to me: —

‘Miss Mix, did you ever have the grande passion? Did you ever feel a fluttering here?’ and she placed her hand upon her small chest, and sighed quaintly, ‘a kind of distaste for bonbons and caromels, when the world seemed as tasteless and hollow as a broken cordial drop.’

‘Then you have felt it, Nina?’ I said quietly. ‘O dear, yes. There was Buttons, — that was our page, you know, — I loved him dearly, but papa sent him away. Then there was Dick, the groom, but

he laughed at me, and I suffered misery!’ and she struck a tragic French attitude. ‘There is to be company here to-morrow,’ she added, rattling on with childish naiveté, ‘and papa’s sweetheart – Blanche Marabout – is to be here. You know they say she is to be my mamma.’

What thrill was this shot through me? But I rose calmly, and, administering a slight correction to the child, left the apartment.

Blunderbore House, for the next week, was the scene of gayety and merriment. That portion of the mansion closed with a grating was walled up, and the midnight shrieks no longer troubled me.

But I felt more keenly the degradation of my situation. I was obliged to help Lady Blanche at her toilet and help her to look beautiful. For what? To captivate him? O – no, no, – but why this sudden thrill and faintness? Did he really love her? I had seen him pinch and swear at her. But I reflected that he had thrown a candlestick at my head, and my foolish heart was reassured.

It was a night of festivity, when a sudden message obliged Mr. Rawjester to leave his guests for a few hours. ‘Make yourselves merry, idiots,’ he added, under his breath, as he passed me. The door closed and he was gone.

An half-hour passed. In the midst of the dancing a shriek was heard, and out of the swaying crowd of fainting women and excited men a wild figure strode into the room. One glance showed it to be a highwayman, heavily armed, holding a pistol in each hand.

‘Let no one pass out of this room!’ he said, in a voice of

thunder. 'The house is surrounded and you cannot escape. The first one who crosses yonder threshold will be shot like a dog. Gentlemen, I'll trouble you to approach in single file, and hand me your purses and watches.'

Finding resistance useless, the order was ungraciously obeyed.

'Now, ladies, please to pass up your jewelry and trinkets.'

This order was still more ungraciously complied with. As Blanche handed to the bandit captain her bracelet, she endeavored to conceal a diamond necklace, the gift of Mr. Rawjester, in her bosom. But, with a demoniac grin, the powerful brute tore it from its concealment, and, administering a hearty box on the ear of the young girl, flung her aside.

It was now my turn. With a beating heart I made my way to the robber chieftain, and sank at his feet. 'O sir, I am nothing but a poor governess, pray let me go.'

'O ho! A governess? Give me your last month's wages, then. Give me what you have stolen from your master!' and he laughed fiendishly.

I gazed at him quietly, and said, in a low voice: 'I have stolen nothing from you, Mr. Rawjester!'

'Ah, discovered! Hush! listen, girl!' he hissed, in a fiercer whisper, 'utter a syllable to frustrate my plans and you die; aid me, and —' But he was gone.

In a few moments the party, with the exception of myself, were gagged and locked in the cellar. The next moment torches were applied to the rich hangings, and the house was in flames. I

felt a strong hand seize me, and bear me out in the open air and place me upon the hillside, where I could overlook the burning mansion. It was Mr. Rawjester.

‘Burn!’ he said, as he shook his fist at the flames. Then sinking on his knees before me, he said hurriedly: —

‘Mary Jane, I love you; the obstacles to our union are or will be soon removed. In yonder mansion were confined my three crazy wives. One of them, as you know, attempted to kill me! Ha! this is vengeance! But will you be mine?’

I fell, without a word, upon his neck.

Washington Irving

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,
Forever 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 murmur enough to lull one to repose; and the occasional whistle of a quail or tapping of a woodpecker is almost the only sound that ever breaks in upon the uniform tranquillity.

I recollect that, when a stripling, my first exploit in squirrel-shooting was in a grove of tall walnut-trees that shades one side of the valley. I had wandered into it at noontime, when all nature is peculiarly quiet, and was startled by the roar of my own gun, as it broke the Sabbath stillness around and was prolonged and reverberated by the angry echoes. If ever I should wish for a retreat whither I might steal from the world and its distractions, and dream quietly away the remnant of a troubled life, I know of none more promising than this little valley.

From the listless repose of the place, and the peculiar character of its inhabitants, who are descendants from the original Dutch settlers, this sequestered glen has long been known by the name of *Sleepy Hollow*, and its rustic lads are called the Sleepy Hollow Boys throughout all the neighboring country. A drowsy, dreamy influence seems to hang over the land, and to pervade the very atmosphere. Some say that the place was bewitched by a High German doctor, during the early days of the settlement; others, that an old Indian chief, the prophet or wizard of his tribe, held his powwows there before the country

was discovered by Master Hendrick Hudson. Certain it is, the place still continues under the sway of some witching power, that holds a spell over the minds of the good people, causing them to walk in a continual reverie. They are given to all kinds of marvellous beliefs, are subject to trances and visions, and frequently see strange sights, and hear music and voices in the air. The whole neighborhood abounds with local tales, haunted spots, and twilight superstitions; stars shoot and meteors glare oftener across the valley than in any other part of the country, and the nightmare, with her whole ninefold, seems to make it the favorite scene of her gambols.

The dominant spirit, however, that haunts this enchanted region, and seems to be commander-in-chief of all the powers of the air, is the apparition of a figure on horseback, without a head. It is said by some to be the ghost of a **Hessian trooper**, whose head had been carried away by a cannon-ball, in some nameless battle during **the Revolutionary War**, and who is ever and anon seen by the country folk hurrying along in the gloom of night, as if on the 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 every one who resides there for a time. However wide awake they may have been before they entered that sleepy region, they are sure, in a little time, to inhale the 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 embosomed in the great State of New York, that population, manners, and customs remain fixed, while the great torrent of migration and improvement, which is making such incessant changes in other parts of this restless country, sweeps by them unobserved. They are like those little nooks of still water, which border a rapid stream, where we may see the straw and bubble riding quietly at anchor, or slowly revolving in their mimic harbor, undisturbed by the rush of the passing current. Though many years have elapsed since I trod the drowsy shades of Sleepy Hollow, yet I question whether I should not 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 supplies the Union with pioneers for the mind as well as for the forest, and sends forth yearly its legions of frontier woodmen and country schoolmasters. The cognomen of Crane was not inapplicable to his person. He was tall, but exceedingly lank, with narrow shoulders, long arms and legs, hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, feet that might have served for shovels, and his whole frame most loosely hung together. His head was small, and flat at top, with huge ears, large green glassy eyes, and a long snipe nose, so that it looked like a 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 copybooks. It was most ingeniously secured at vacant hours, by a withe twisted in the handle of the door, and stakes set against the window shutters; so that though a thief might get in with perfect ease, he would find some

embarrassment in getting out, – an idea most probably borrowed by the architect, Yost Van Houten, from the mystery of an eelpot. The 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 in 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 behooved 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 neighborhood, with all his worldly effects tied up in a cotton handkerchief.

That all this might not be too onerous on the purses of his rustic patrons, who are apt to consider the costs of schooling a grievous burden, and schoolmasters as mere drones, he had various ways of rendering himself both useful and agreeable. He assisted the farmers occasionally in the lighter labors of their farms, helped to make hay, mended the fences, took the horses to water, drove the cows from pasture, and cut wood for the winter fire. He laid aside, too, all the dominant dignity and absolute sway with which he lorded it in his little empire, the school, and became wonderfully gentle and ingratiating. He

found favor in the eyes of the mothers by petting the children, particularly the 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 neighborhood, and picked up many bright shillings by instructing the young folks in psalmody. It was a matter of no little vanity to him on Sundays, to take his station in front of the church gallery, with a band of chosen singers; where, in his own mind, he completely carried away the palm from the parson. Certain it is, his voice resounded far above all the rest of the congregation; and there are peculiar quavers still to be heard in that church, and which may even be heard half a mile off, quite to the opposite side of the millpond, on a still Sunday morning, which are said to be legitimately descended from the nose of Ichabod Crane. Thus, by divers little makeshifts, in that ingenious way which is commonly denominated *'by hook and by crook,'* the worthy pedagogue got on tolerably enough, and was thought, by all who understood nothing of the labor of headwork, to have a wonderfully easy life of it.

The schoolmaster is generally a man of some importance in the female circle of a rural neighborhood; being considered a kind of idle, gentlemanlike personage, of vastly superior taste and accomplishments to the rough country swains, and, indeed, inferior in learning only to the parson. His appearance, therefore,

is apt to occasion some little stir at the tea-table of a farmhouse, and the addition of a supernumerary dish of cakes or sweetmeats, or, peradventure, the parade of a silver teapot. Our man of letters, therefore, was peculiarly happy in the smiles of all the country damsels. How he would figure among them in the churchyard, between services on Sundays; 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 millpond; 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 evening made the printed page a mere mist before his eyes. Then, as he wended his way by swamp and stream and awful woodland, to the farmhouse where he happened to be quartered, every sound of nature, at that witching hour, fluttered his excited imagination, – the moan of the whip-poor-will from the hillside, the boding cry of the tree toad, that harbinger of storm, the dreary hooting of the screech owl, or the sudden rustling in the thicket of birds frightened from their roost. The fireflies, 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 blockhead of a beetle came winging his blundering flight against him, the poor varlet was ready to give up the ghost, with the idea that he was struck with a witch's token. His only resource on such occasions, either to drown thought or drive away evil spirits, was to sing psalm tunes and the good people of Sleepy Hollow, as they sat by their doors of an evening, were often filled with awe at hearing his nasal melody, *in linked sweetness long drawn out*, floating from the distant hill, or along the dusky road.

Another of his sources of fearful pleasure was to pass long winter evenings with the old Dutch wives, as they sat spinning by the fire, with a row of apples roasting and 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 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, phantoms

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 daylight put an end to all these evils; and he would have passed a pleasant life of it, in despite of the Devil and all his works, if his path had not been crossed by a being that causes more perplexity to mortal man than ghosts, goblins, and the whole race of witches put together, and that was – a woman.

Among the musical disciples who assembled, one evening in each week, to receive his instructions in psalmody, was Katrina Van Tassel, the daughter and only child of a substantial Dutch farmer. She was a blooming lass of fresh eighteen; plump as a partridge; ripe and melting and rosy-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 favor in his eyes, more especially after he had visited her in her paternal mansion. Old Baltus Van Tassel was a perfect picture

of a thriving, contented, liberal-hearted farmer. He seldom, it is true, sent either his eyes or his thoughts beyond the boundaries of his own farm; but within 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 neighboring brook, that babbled along among alders and dwarf willows. Hard by the farmhouse 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, from 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

farmyard, and Guinea fowls fretting about it, like ill-tempered housewives, with their peevish, discontented cry. Before the barn door strutted the gallant cock, that pattern of a husband, a warrior and a fine gentleman, clapping his burnished wings and crowing in the pride and gladness of his heart, – sometimes tearing up the earth with his feet, and then generously calling his ever-hungry family of wives and children to enjoy the rich morsel which he had discovered.

The pedagogue's mouth watered as he looked upon this sumptuous promise of luxurious winter fare. In his devouring mind's eye, he pictured to himself every roasting-pig running about with a pudding in 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 savory sausages; and even bright chanticleer himself lay sprawling on his back, in a side dish, with uplifted claws, as if craving that quarter which his chivalrous spirit disdained to ask while living.

As the enraptured Ichabod fancied all this, and as he rolled his great green eyes over the fat meadow lands, the rich fields of wheat, of rye, of buckwheat, and Indian corn, and the orchards

burdened with ruddy fruit, which surrounded the warm tenement of Van Tassel, his heart yearned after the damsel who was to inherit these domains, and his imagination expanded with the idea, how they might 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 wagon loaded with household trumpery, with pots and kettles dangling beneath; and he beheld himself bestriding a pacing mare, with a colt at her heels, setting out for Kentucky, Tennessee, – or the Lord knows where!

When he entered the house, the conquest of his heart was complete. It was one of those spacious farmhouses, 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 neighboring river. Benches were built along the sides for summer use; and a great spinning-wheel at one end, and a churn at the other, showed the various uses to which this important porch might be devoted. From this piazza the 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 walls, mingled with the gaud of red peppers; and a door left ajar gave him a peep into the best parlor, where the claw-footed chairs and dark mahogany tables shone like mirrors; andirons, with their accompanying shovel and tongs, glistened from their covert of asparagus tops; mock— oranges and conch-shells decorated the mantelpiece; strings of various-colored birds eggs were suspended above it; a great ostrich egg was hung from the centre of the room, and a corner cupboard, knowingly left open, displayed immense treasures of old silver and well-mended china.

From the moment Ichabod laid his eyes upon these regions of delight, the peace of his mind was at an end, and his only study was how to gain the affections of the peerless daughter of Van Tassel. In this enterprise, however, he had more real difficulties than generally fell to the lot of a knight-errant of yore, who seldom had anything but giants, enchanters, fiery dragons, and such like easily conquered adversaries, to contend with and had to make his way merely through gates of iron and brass, and walls of adamant to the castle keep, where the lady of his heart was confined; all which he achieved as easily as a man would carve his way to the 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, roystering 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 always acquires in rustic life, was the umpire in all disputes, setting his hat on one side, and giving his decisions with an air and tone that admitted of no gainsay or appeal. He was always ready for either a fight or a frolic; but had more mischief than ill-will in his composition; and with all his overbearing roughness, there was a strong dash of waggish good humor at bottom. He had three or four boon companions, who regarded him as their model, and at the head of whom he scoured the country, attending every scene of feud or merriment for miles 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 farmhouses at midnight, with whoop and halloo, like a troop of Don Cossacks; and the old dames, startled out of their sleep, would listen for a moment till the hurry-scurry had clattered by, and then exclaim, 'Ay, *there goes Brom Bones and his gang!*' The neighbors looked upon him with a mixture of awe, admiration, and good-will; and, when any madcap prank or rustic brawl occurred in the vicinity, always shook their heads, and warranted Brom Bones was at the bottom of it.

This rantipole hero had for some time singled out the blooming Katrina for the object of his uncouth 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, '*sparking*,' within, all other suitors passed by in despair, and carried the war into other quarters.

Such was the formidable rival with whom Ichabod Crane had to contend, and, considering all things, a stouter man than he would have shrunk from the competition, and a wiser man would

have despaired. He had, however, a happy mixture of pliability and perseverance in his nature; he was in form and spirit like a supple-jack – yielding, but tough; though he bent, he never broke; and though he bowed beneath the slightest pressure, yet, the moment it was away – jerk! – he was as erect, and carried his head as high as ever.

To have taken the field openly against his rival would have been madness; for he was not a man to be thwarted in his amours, any more than that stormy lover, Achilles. Ichabod, therefore, made his advances in a quiet and gently insinuating manner. Under cover of his character of singing-master, he made frequent visits at the farmhouse; 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 mean time, Ichabod would carry on

his suit with the daughter by the side of the spring under the great elm, or sauntering along in the twilight, that hour so favorable to the lover's eloquence.

I profess not to know how women's hearts are wooed and won. To me they have always been matters of riddle and admiration. Some seem to have but one vulnerable point, or door of access; while others have a thousand avenues, and may be captured in a thousand different ways. It is a great triumph of skill to gain the former, but a still greater proof of generalship to maintain possession of the latter, for 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 to 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 wagghery 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 its formidable fastenings of withe and window stakes, and turned everything topsy-turvy, so that the poor schoolmaster began to think all the witches in the country held their meetings there. But what was still more annoying, Brom took all opportunities of turning him into ridicule in presence of his mistress, and had a scoundrel dog whom he taught to whine in the most ludicrous manner, and introduced as a rival of Ichabod's, to instruct her in psalmody.

In this way matters went on for some time, without producing any material effect on the relative situations of the contending powers. On a fine autumnal afternoon, Ichabod, in pensive mood, sat enthroned on the lofty stool from whence he usually watched all the concerns of his 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, popguns, whirligigs, fly-cages, and whole legions of rampant little paper gamecocks. 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 the appearance of a negro in tow-cloth jacket and trowsers, a round-crowned fragment of a hat, like the cap of Mercury, and mounted on the back of a ragged, wild, half-broken colt, which he managed with a rope by way of halter. He came clattering up to the school door with an invitation to Ichabod to attend a merry-making or '*quilting frolic*,' to be held that evening at Mynheer Van Tassel's; and having delivered his message with that air of importance, and effort at fine language, which a negro is apt to display on petty embassies of the kind, he dashed over the brook, and was seen scampering away up the hollow, full of the importance and hurry of his mission.

All was now bustle and hubbub in the late quiet schoolroom. The scholars were hurried through their lessons without stopping at trifles; those who were nimble skipped over half with impunity, and those who were tardy had a smart application now and then in the rear, to quicken their speed or help them over a tall word. Books were flung aside without being put away on the shelves, inkstands were overturned, benches thrown down, and the whole school was turned loose an hour before the usual time,

bursting forth like a legion of young imps, yelping and racketing about the green in joy at their early emancipation.

The gallant Ichabod now spent at least an extra half hour at his toilet, brushing and furbishing up his best, and indeed only suit of rusty black, and arranging his locks by a bit of broken looking-glass that hung up in the schoolhouse. That he might make his appearance before his mistress in the true style of a cavalier, he borrowed a horse from the farmer with whom he was domiciliated, a choleric old Dutchman of the name of Hans Van Ripper, and, thus gallantly mounted, issued forth like a knight-errant in quest of adventures. But it is meet I should, in the true spirit of romantic story, give some account of the looks and equipments of my hero and his steed. The animal he bestrode was a broken-down plow-horse, that had outlived almost everything but its viciousness. He was gaunt and shagged, with a ewe neck, and a head like a hammer; his rusty mane and tail were tangled and knotted with burs; one eye had lost its pupil, and was glaring and spectral, but the other had the gleam of a genuine devil in it. Still he must have had fire and mettle in his day, if we may judge from the name he bore of Gunpowder. He had, in fact, been a favorite steed of his master's, the choleric Van Ripper, who was a furious rider, and had infused, very probably, some of his own spirit into the animal; for, old and broken-down as he looked, there was more of the lurking devil in him than in any young filly in the country.

Ichabod was a suitable figure for such a steed. He rode with

short stirrups, which brought his knees nearly up to the pommel of the saddle; his sharp elbows stuck out like grasshoppers'; he carried his whip perpendicularly in his hand, like a sceptre, and as his horse jogged on, the motion of his arms was not unlike the flapping of a pair of wings. A small wool hat rested on the top of his nose, for so his scanty strip of forehead might be called, and the skirts of his black coat fluttered out almost to the horses tail. Such was the appearance of Ichabod and his steed as they shambled out of the gate of Hans Van Ripper, and it was altogether such an apparition as is seldom to be met with in broad daylight.

It was, as I have said, a fine autumnal day; the sky was clear and serene, and nature wore that rich and golden livery which we always associate with the idea of abundance. The forests had put on their sober brown and yellow, while some trees of the tenderer kind had been nipped by the frosts into brilliant dyes of orange, purple, and scarlet. Streaming files of wild ducks began to make their appearance high in the air; the bark of the squirrel might be heard from the groves of beech and hickory—nuts, and the pensive whistle of the quail at intervals from the neighboring stubble field.

The small birds were taking their farewell banquets. In the fullness of their revelry, they fluttered, chirping and frolicking from bush to bush, and tree to tree, capricious from the very profusion and variety around them. There was the honest cock robin, the favorite game of stripling sportsmen, with its loud

querulous note; and the twittering blackbirds flying in sable clouds; and the golden-winged woodpecker with his crimson crest, his broad black gorget, and splendid plumage; and the cedar bird, with its red-tipt wings and yellow-tipt tail and its little monteiro cap of feathers; and the blue jay, that noisy coxcomb, in his gay light blue coat and white underclothes, screaming and chattering, nodding and bobbing and bowing, and pretending to be on good terms with every songster of the grove.

As Ichabod jogged slowly on his way, his eye, ever open to every symptom of culinary abundance, ranged with delight over the treasures of jolly autumn. On all sides he beheld vast store of apples; some hanging in oppressive opulence on the trees; some gathered into baskets and barrels for the market; others heaped up in rich piles for the cider-press. Farther on he beheld great fields of Indian corn, with its golden ears peeping from their leafy coverts, and holding out the promise of cakes and hasty-pudding; and the yellow pumpkins lying beneath them, turning up their fair round bellies to the sun, and giving ample prospects of the most luxurious of pies; and anon he passed the fragrant buckwheat fields breathing the odor of the beehive, and as he beheld them, soft anticipations stole over his mind of dainty slapjacks, well buttered, and garnished with honey or treacle, by the delicate little dimpled hand of Katrina Van Tassel.

Thus feeding his mind with many sweet thoughts and '*sugared suppositions*,' he journeyed along the sides of a range of hills which look out upon some of the goodliest scenes of the mighty

Hudson. The sun gradually wheeled his broad disk down in the west. The wide bosom of the Tappan Zee lay motionless and glassy, excepting that here and there a gentle undulation waved and prolonged the blue shadow of the distant mountain. A few amber clouds floated in the sky, without a breath of air to move them. The horizon was of a fine golden tint, changing gradually into a pure apple green, and from that into the deep blue of the mid—heaven. A slanting ray lingered on the woody crests of the precipices that overhung some parts of the river, giving greater depth to the dark gray and purple of their rocky sides. A sloop was loitering in the distance, dropping slowly down with the tide, her sail hanging uselessly against the mast; and as the reflection of the sky gleamed along the still water, it seemed as if the vessel was suspended in the air.

It was toward evening that Ichabod arrived at the castle of the Heer Van Tassel, which he found thronged with the pride and flower of the adjacent country. Old farmers, a spare leathern-faced race, in homespun coats and breeches, blue stockings, huge shoes, and magnificent pewter buckles. Their brisk, withered little dames, in close-crimped caps, long-waisted short gowns, homespun petticoats, with scissors and pincushions, and gay calico pockets hanging on the outside. Buxom lasses, almost as antiquated as their mothers, excepting where a straw hat, a fine ribbon, or perhaps a white frock, gave symptoms of city innovation. The sons, in short square-skirted coats, with rows of stupendous brass buttons, and their hair generally queued in the

fashion of the times, especially if they could procure an eel-skin for the purpose, it being esteemed throughout the country as a potent nourisher and strengthener of the hair.

Brom Bones, however, was the hero of the scene, having come to the gathering on his favorite steed Daredevil, a creature, like himself, full of mettle and mischief, and which no one but himself could manage. He was, in fact, noted for preferring vicious animals, given to all kinds of tricks which kept the rider in constant risk of his neck, for he held a tractable, well-broken horse as unworthy of a lad of spirit.

Fain would I pause to dwell upon the world of charms that burst upon the enraptured gaze of my hero, as he entered the state parlor of Van Tassel's mansion. Not those of the bevy of buxom lasses, with their luxurious display of red and white; but the ample charms of a genuine Dutch country tea-table, in the sumptuous time of autumn. Such heaped up platters of cakes of various and almost indescribable kinds, known only to experienced Dutch housewives! There was the doughty doughnut, the tender oly koek, and the crisp and crumbling cruller; sweet cakes and short cakes, ginger cakes and honey cakes, and the whole family of cakes. And then there were apple pies, and peach pies, and pumpkin pies; besides slices of ham and smoked beef; and moreover delectable dishes of preserved plums, and peaches, and pears, and quinces; not to mention broiled shad and roasted chickens; together with bowls of milk and cream, all mingled higgledy-piggledy, pretty much as I have

enumerated them, with the motherly teapot sending up its clouds of vapor from the midst – Heaven bless the mark! I want breath and time to discuss this banquet as it deserves, and am too eager to get on with my story. Happily, Ichabod Crane was not in so great a hurry as his historian, but did ample justice to every dainty.

He was a kind and thankful creature, whose heart dilated in proportion as his skin was filled with good cheer, and whose spirits rose with eating, as some men's do with drink. He could not help, too, rolling his large eyes round him as he ate, and chuckling with the possibility that he might one day be lord of all this scene of almost unimaginable luxury and splendor. Then, he thought, how soon he'd turn his back upon the old schoolhouse; snap his fingers in the face of Hans Van Ripper, and every other niggardly patron, and kick any itinerant pedagogue out of doors that should dare to call him comrade!

Old Baltus Van Tassel moved about among his guests with a face dilated with content and good humor, round and jolly as the harvest moon. His hospitable attentions were brief, but expressive, being confined to a shake of the hand, a slap on the shoulder, a loud laugh, and a pressing invitation to *'fall to, and help themselves.'*

And now the sound of the music from the common room, or hall, summoned to the dance. The musician was an old gray-headed negro, who had been the itinerant orchestra of the neighborhood for more than half a century. His instrument was

as old and battered as himself. The greater part of the time he scraped on two or three strings, accompanying every movement of the bow with a motion of the head; bowing almost to the ground, and stamping with his foot whenever a fresh couple were to start.

Ichabod prided himself upon his dancing as much as upon his vocal powers. Not a limb, not a fibre about him was idle; and to have seen his loosely hung frame in full motion, and clattering about the room, you would have thought St. Vitus himself, that blessed patron of the dance, was figuring before you in person. He was the admiration of all the negroes; who, having gathered, of all ages and sizes, from the farm and the neighborhood, stood forming a pyramid of shining black faces at every door and window, gazing with delight at the scene, rolling their white eyeballs, and showing grinning rows of ivory from ear to ear. How could the flogger of urchins be otherwise than animated and joyous? The lady of his heart was his partner in the dance, and smiling graciously in reply to all his amorous oglings; while Brom Bones, sorely smitten with love and jealousy, sat brooding by himself in one corner.

When the dance was at an end, Ichabod was attracted to a knot of the sager folks, who, with Old Van Tassel, sat smoking at one end of the piazza, gossiping over former times, and drawing out long stories about the war.

This neighborhood, at the time of which I am speaking, was one of those highly favored places which abound with

chronicle and great men. The British and American line had run near it during the war; it had, therefore, been the scene of marauding and infested with refugees, cowboys, and all kinds of border chivalry. Just sufficient time had elapsed to enable each storyteller to dress up his tale with a little becoming fiction, and, in the indistinctness of his recollection, to make himself the hero of every exploit.

There was the story of Doffue Martling, a large blue-bearded Dutchman, who had nearly taken a British frigate with an old iron nine-pounder from a mud breastwork only that his gun burst at the sixth discharge. And there was an old gentleman who shall be nameless, being too rich a mynheer to be lightly mentioned, who, in **the battle of White Plains**, being an excellent master of defence, parried a musket-ball with a small sword, insomuch that he absolutely felt it whiz round the blade, and glance off at the hilt; in proof of which he was ready at any time to show the sword, with the hilt a little bent. There were several more that had been equally great in the field, not one of whom but was persuaded that he had a considerable hand in bringing the war to a happy termination.

But all these were nothing to the tales of ghosts and apparitions that succeeded. The neighborhood is rich in legendary treasures of the kind. Local tales and superstitions thrive best in these sheltered, long-settled retreats; but are trampled under foot by the shifting throng that forms the population of most of our country places. Besides, there is no

encouragement for ghosts in most of our villages, for they have scarcely had time to finish their first nap and turn themselves in their graves, before their surviving friends have travelled away from the neighborhood; so that when they turn out at night to walk their rounds, they have no acquaintance left to call upon. This is perhaps the reason why we so seldom hear of ghosts except in our long-established Dutch communities.

The immediate cause, however, of the prevalence of supernatural stories in these parts, was doubtless owing to the vicinity of Sleepy Hollow. There was a contagion in the very air that blew from that haunted region; it breathed forth an atmosphere of dreams and fancies infecting all the land. Several of the Sleepy Hollow people were present at Van Tassel's, and, as usual, were doling out their wild and wonderful legends. Many dismal tales were told about funeral trains, and mourning cries and wailings heard and seen about the great tree where the unfortunate **Major Andr ** was taken, and which stood in the neighborhood. Some mention was made also of the woman in white, that haunted the dark glen at Raven Rock, and was often heard to shriek on winter nights before a storm, having perished there in the snow. The chief part of the stories, however, turned upon the favorite spectre of Sleepy Hollow, the Headless Horseman, who had been heard several times of late, patrolling the country; and, it was said, tethered his horse nightly among the graves in the churchyard.

The sequestered situation of this church seems always to have

made it a favorite haunt of troubled spirits. It stands on a knoll, surrounded by locust-trees and lofty elms, from among which its decent, whitewashed walls shine modestly forth, like Christian purity beaming through the shades of retirement. A gentle slope descends from it to a silver sheet of water, bordered by high trees, between which, peeps may be caught at the blue hills of the Hudson. To look upon its grass-grown yard, where the sunbeams seem to sleep so quietly, one would think that there at least the dead might rest in peace. On one side of the church extends a wide woody dell, along which raves a large brook among broken rocks and trunks of fallen trees. Over a deep black part of the stream, not far from the church, was formerly thrown a wooden bridge; the road that led to it, and the bridge itself, were thickly shaded by overhanging trees, which cast a gloom about it, even in the daytime; but occasioned a fearful darkness at night. Such was one of the favorite haunts of the Headless Horseman, and the place where he was most frequently encountered. The tale was told of old Brouwer, a most heretical disbeliever in ghosts, how he met the Horseman returning from his foray into Sleepy Hollow, and was obliged to get up behind him; how they galloped over bush and brake, over hill and swamp, until they reached the bridge; when the Horseman suddenly turned into a skeleton, threw old Brouwer into the brook, and sprang away over the tree-tops with a clap of thunder.

This story was immediately matched by a thrice marvellous adventure of Brom Bones, who made light of the Galloping

Hessian as an arrant jockey. He affirmed that on returning one night from the neighboring village of Sing Sing, he had been overtaken by this midnight trooper; that he had offered to race with him for a bowl of punch, and should have won it too, for Daredevil beat the goblin horse all hollow, but just as they came to the church bridge, the Hessian bolted, and vanished in a flash of fire.

All these tales, told in that drowsy undertone with which men talk in the dark, the countenances of the listeners only now and then receiving a casual gleam from the glare of a pipe, sank deep in the mind of Ichabod. He repaid them in kind with large extracts from his invaluable author, Cotton Mather, and added many marvellous events that had taken place in his native State of Connecticut, and fearful sights which he had seen in his nightly walks about Sleepy Hollow.

The revel now gradually broke up. The old farmers gathered together their families in their wagons, and were heard for some time rattling along the hollow roads, and over the distant hills. Some of the damsels mounted on pillions behind their favorite swains, and their light-hearted laughter, mingling with the clatter of hoofs, echoed along the silent woodlands, sounding fainter and fainter, until they gradually died away, – and the late scene of noise and frolic was all silent and deserted. Ichabod only lingered behind, according to the custom of country lovers, to have a *tête-à-tête* with the heiress; fully convinced that he was now on the high road to success. What passed at this interview

I will not pretend to say, for in fact I do not know. Something, however, I fear me, must have gone wrong, for he certainly sallied forth, after no very great interval, with an air quite desolate and chapfallen. Oh, these women! these women! Could that girl have been playing off any of her coquettish tricks? Was her encouragement of the poor pedagogue all a mere sham to secure her conquest of his rival? Heaven only knows, not I! Let it suffice to say, Ichabod stole forth with the air of one who had been sacking a henroost, rather than a fair lady's heart. Without looking to the right or left to notice the scene of rural wealth, on which he had so often gloated, he went straight to the stable, and with several hearty cuffs and kicks roused his steed most uncourteously from the comfortable quarters in which he was soundly sleeping, dreaming of mountains of corn and oats, and whole valleys of timothy and clover.

It was the very witching time of night that Ichabod, heavy-hearted and crestfallen, pursued his travels homewards, along the sides of the lofty hills which rise above Tarry Town, and which he had traversed so cheerily in the afternoon. The hour was as dismal as himself. Far below him the Tappan Zee spread its dusky and indistinct waste of waters, with here and there the tall mast of a sloop, riding quietly at anchor under the land. In the dead hush of midnight, he could even hear the barking of the watchdog from the opposite shore of the Hudson; but it was so vague and faint as only to give an idea of his distance from this faithful companion of man. Now and then, too, the long-drawn

crowding of a cock, accidentally awakened, would sound far, far off, from some farmhouse away among the hills – but it was like a dreaming sound in his ear. No signs of life occurred near him, but occasionally the melancholy chirp of a cricket, or perhaps the guttural twang of a bullfrog from a neighboring marsh, as if sleeping uncomfortably and turning suddenly in his bed.

All the stories of ghosts and goblins that he had heard in the afternoon now came crowding upon his recollection. The night grew darker and darker; the stars seemed to sink deeper in the sky, and driving clouds occasionally hid them from his sight. He had never felt so lonely and dismal. He was, moreover, approaching the very place where many of the scenes of the ghost stories had been laid. In the centre of the road stood an enormous tulip-tree, which towered like a giant above all the other trees of the neighborhood, and formed a kind of landmark. Its limbs were gnarled and fantastic, large enough to form trunks for ordinary trees, twisting down almost to the earth, and rising again into the air. It was connected with the tragical story of the unfortunate André, who had been taken prisoner hard by; and was universally known by the name of Major André's tree. The common people regarded it with a mixture of respect and superstition, partly out of sympathy for the fate of its ill-starred namesake, and partly from the tales of strange sights, and doleful lamentations, told concerning it.

As Ichabod approached this fearful tree, he began to whistle; he thought his whistle was answered; it was but a blast sweeping

sharply through the dry branches. As he approached a little nearer, he thought he saw something white, hanging in the midst of the tree: he paused and ceased whistling but, on looking more narrowly, perceived that it was a place where the tree had been scathed by lightning, and the white wood laid bare. Suddenly he heard a groan – his teeth chattered, and his knees smote against the saddle: it was but the rubbing of one huge bough upon another, as they were swayed about by the breeze. He passed the tree in safety, but new perils lay before him.

About two hundred yards from the tree, a small brook crossed the road, and ran into a marshy and thickly-wooded glen, known by the name of Wiley's Swamp. A few rough logs, laid side by side, served for a bridge over this stream. On that side of the road where the brook entered the wood, a group of oaks and chestnuts, matted thick with wild grape-vines, threw a cavernous gloom over it. To pass this bridge was the severest trial. It was at this identical spot that the unfortunate Andriy was captured, and under the covert of those chestnuts and vines were the sturdy yeomen concealed who surprised him. This has ever since been considered a haunted stream, and fearful are the feelings of the schoolboy who has to pass it alone after dark.

As he approached the stream, his heart began to thump; he summoned up, however, all his resolution, gave his horse half a score of kicks in the ribs, and attempted to dash briskly across the bridge; but instead of starting forward, the perverse old animal made a lateral movement, and ran broadside against the fence.

Ichabod, whose fears increased with the delay, jerked the reins on the other side, and kicked lustily with the contrary foot: it was all in vain; his steed started, it is true, but it was only to plunge to the opposite side of the road into a thicket of brambles and alder bushes. The schoolmaster now bestowed both whip and heel upon the starveling ribs of old Gunpowder, who dashed forward, snuffling and snorting, but came to a stand just by the bridge, with a suddenness that had nearly sent his rider sprawling over his head. Just at this moment a plashy tramp by the side of the bridge caught the sensitive ear of Ichabod. In the dark shadow of the grove, on the margin of the brook, he beheld something huge, misshapen and towering. It stirred not, but seemed gathered up in the gloom, like some gigantic monster ready to spring upon the traveller.

The hair of the affrighted pedagogue rose upon his head with terror. What was to be done? To turn and fly was now too late; and besides, what chance was there of escaping ghost or goblin, if such it was, which could ride upon the wings of the wind? Summoning up, therefore, a show of courage, he demanded in stammering accents, *'Who are you?'* He received no reply. He repeated his demand in a still more agitated voice. Still there was no answer. Once more he cudgelled the sides of the inflexible Gunpowder, and, shutting his eyes, broke forth with involuntary fervor into a psalm tune. Just then the shadowy object of alarm put itself in motion, and with a scramble and a bound stood at once in the middle of the road. Though the night was dark

and dismal, yet the form of the unknown might now in some degree be ascertained. He appeared to be a horseman of large dimensions, and mounted on a black horse of powerful frame. He made no offer of molestation or sociability, but kept aloof on one side of the road, jogging along on the blind side of old Gunpowder, who had now got over his fright and waywardness.

Ichabod, who had no relish for this strange midnight companion, and bethought himself of the adventure of Brom Bones with the Galloping Hessian, now quickened his steed in hopes of leaving him behind. The stranger, however, quickened his horse to an equal pace. Ichabod pulled up, and fell into a walk, thinking to lag behind, – the other did the same. His heart began to sink within him; he endeavored to resume his psalm tune, but his parched tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and he could not utter a stave. There was something in the moody and dogged silence of this pertinacious companion that was mysterious and appalling. It was soon fearfully accounted for. On mounting a rising ground, which brought the figure of his fellow-traveller in relief against the sky, gigantic in height, and muffled in a cloak, Ichabod was horror-struck on perceiving that he was headless! – but his horror was still more increased on observing that the head, which should have rested on his shoulders, was carried before him on the pommel of his saddle! His terror rose to desperation; he rained a shower of kicks and blows upon Gunpowder, hoping by a sudden movement to give his companion the slip; but the spectre started full jump with him. Away, then, they dashed

through thick and thin; stones flying and sparks flashing at every bound. Ichabod's flimsy garments fluttered in the air, as he stretched his long lank body away over his horse's head, in the eagerness of his flight.

They had now reached the road which turns off to Sleepy Hollow; but Gunpowder, who seemed possessed with a demon, instead of keeping up it, made an opposite turn, and plunged headlong downhill to the left. This road leads through a sandy hollow shaded by trees for about a quarter of a mile, where it crosses the bridge famous in goblin story; and just beyond swells the green knoll on which stands the whitewashed church.

As yet the panic of the steed had given his unskilful rider an apparent advantage in the chase, but just as he had got half way through the hollow, the girths of the saddle gave way, and he felt it slipping from under him. He seized it by the pommel, and endeavored to hold it firm, but in vain; and had just time to save himself by clasping old Gunpowder round the neck, when the saddle fell to the earth, and he heard it trampled under foot by his pursuer. For a moment the terror of Hans Van Ripper's wrath passed across his mind, – for it was his Sunday saddle; but this was no time for petty fears; the goblin was hard on his haunches; and (unskilful rider that he was!) he had much ado to maintain his seat; sometimes slipping on one side, sometimes on another, and sometimes jolted on the high ridge of his horse's backbone, with a violence that he verily feared would cleave him asunder.

An opening in the trees now cheered him with the hopes that

the church bridge was at hand. The wavering reflection of a silver star in the bosom of the brook told him that he was not mistaken. He saw the walls of the church dimly glaring under the trees beyond. He recollected the place where Brom Bones's ghostly competitor had disappeared. *'If I can but reach that bridge,'* thought Ichabod, *'I am safe.'* Just then he heard the black steed panting and blowing close behind him; he even fancied that he felt his hot breath. Another convulsive kick in the ribs, and old Gunpowder sprang upon the bridge; he thundered over the resounding planks; he gained the opposite side; and now Ichabod cast a look behind to see if his pursuer should vanish, according to rule, in a flash of fire and brimstone. Just then he saw the goblin rising in his stirrups, and in the very act of hurling his head at him. Ichabod endeavored to dodge the horrible missile, but too late. It encountered his cranium with a tremendous crash, – he was tumbled headlong into the dust, and Gunpowder, the black steed, and the goblin rider, passed by like a whirlwind.

The next morning the old horse was found without his saddle, and with the bridle under his feet, soberly cropping the grass at his master's gate. Ichabod did not make his appearance at breakfast; dinner-hour came, but no Ichabod. The boys assembled at the schoolhouse, and strolled idly about the banks of the brook; but no schoolmaster. Hans Van Ripper now began to feel some uneasiness about the fate of poor Ichabod, and his saddle. An inquiry was set on foot, and after diligent investigation they came upon his traces. In one part of the road leading to the

church was found the saddle trampled in the dirt; the tracks of horses' hoofs deeply dented in the road, and evidently at furious speed, were traced to the bridge, beyond which, on the bank of a broad part of the brook, where the water ran deep and black, was found the hat of the unfortunate Ichabod, and close beside it a shattered pumpkin.

The brook was searched, but the body of the schoolmaster was not to be discovered. Hans Van Ripper as executor of his estate, examined the bundle which contained all his worldly effects. They consisted of two shirts and a half; two stocks for the neck; a pair or two of worsted stockings; an old pair of corduroy small-clothes; a rusty razor; a book of psalm tunes full of dog's-ears; and a broken pitch-pipe. As to the books and furniture of the schoolhouse, they belonged to the community, excepting Cotton Mather's *History of Witchcraft*, a *New England Almanac*, and a book of dreams and fortune-telling; in which last was a sheet of foolscap much scribbled and blotted in several fruitless attempts to make a copy of verses in honor of the heiress of Van Tassel. These magic books and the poetic scrawl were forthwith consigned to the flames by Hans Van Ripper; who, from that time forward, determined to send his children no more to school, observing that he never knew any good come of this same reading and writing. Whatever money the schoolmaster possessed, and he had received his quarter's pay but a day or two before, he must have had about his person at the time of his disappearance.

The mysterious event caused much speculation at the church

on the following Sunday. Knots of gazers and gossips were collected in the churchyard, at the bridge, and at the spot where the hat and pumpkin had been found. The stories of Brouwer, of Bones, and a whole budget of others were called to mind; and when they had diligently considered them all, and compared them with the symptoms of the present case, they shook their heads, and came to the conclusion that Ichabod had been carried off by the Galloping Hessian. As he was a bachelor, and in nobody's debt, nobody troubled his head any more about him; the school was removed to a different quarter of the hollow, and another pedagogue reigned in his stead.

It is true, an old farmer, who had been down to New York on a visit several years after, and from whom this account of the ghostly adventure was received, brought home the intelligence that Ichabod Crane was still alive; that he had left the neighborhood partly through fear of the goblin and Hans Van Ripper, and partly in mortification at having been suddenly dismissed by the heiress; that he had changed his quarters to a distant part of the country; had kept school and studied law at the same time; had been admitted to the bar; turned politician; electioneered; written for the newspapers; and finally had been made a justice of the Ten Pound Court. Brom Bones, too, who, shortly after his rival's disappearance conducted the blooming Katrina in triumph to the altar, was observed to look exceedingly knowing whenever the story of Ichabod was related, and always burst into a hearty laugh at the mention of the pumpkin; which

led some to suspect that he knew more about the matter than he chose to tell.

The old country wives, however, who are the best judges of these matters, maintain to this day that Ichabod was spirited away by supernatural means; and it is a favorite story often told about the neighborhood round the winter evening fire. The bridge became more than ever an object of superstitious awe; and that may be the reason why the road has been altered of late years, so as to approach the church by the border of the millpond. The schoolhouse being deserted soon fell to decay, and was reported to be haunted by the ghost of the unfortunate pedagogue and the plowboy, loitering homeward of a still summer evening, has often fancied his voice at a distance, chanting a melancholy psalm tune among the tranquil solitudes of Sleepy Hollow.

Stephen Leacock

Nonsense Novels

Maddened by Mystery: or, The Defective Detective

The great detective sat in his office. He wore a long green gown and half a dozen secret badges pinned to the outside of it.

Three or four pairs of false whiskers hung on a whisker-stand beside him.

Goggles, blue spectacles and motor glasses lay within easy reach.

He could completely disguise himself at a second's notice.

Half a bucket of cocaine and a dipper stood on a chair at his elbow.

His face was absolutely impenetrable.

A pile of cryptograms lay on the desk. The Great Detective hastily tore them open one after the other, solved them, and threw them down the cryptogram-shute at his side.

There was a rap at the door.

The Great Detective hurriedly wrapped himself in a pink

domino, adjusted a pair of false black whiskers and cried,
‘Come in.’

His secretary entered. ‘Ha,’ said the detective, ‘it is you!’
He laid aside his disguise.

‘Sir,’ said the young man in intense excitement, ‘a mystery has
been committed!’

‘Ha!’ said the Great Detective, his eye kindling, ‘is it such as
to completely baffle the police of the entire continent?’

‘They are so completely baffled with it,’ said the secretary,
‘that they are lying collapsed in heaps; many of them have
committed suicide.’

‘So,’ said the detective, ‘and is the mystery one that is
absolutely unparalleled in the whole recorded annals of the
London police?’

‘It is.’

‘And I suppose,’ said the detective, ‘that it involves names
which you would scarcely dare to breathe, at least without first
using some kind of atomiser or throat-gargle.’

‘Exactly.’

‘And it is connected, I presume, with the highest diplomatic
consequences, so that if we fail to solve it England will be at war
with the whole world in sixteen minutes?’

His secretary, still quivering with excitement, again answered
yes.

‘And finally,’ said the Great Detective, ‘I presume that it was
committed in broad daylight, in some such place as the entrance

of the Bank of England, or in the cloak-room of the House of Commons, and under the very eyes of the police?"

'Those,' said the secretary, 'are the very conditions of the mystery.'

'Good,' said the Great Detective, 'now wrap yourself in this disguise, put on these brown whiskers and tell me what it is.'

The secretary wrapped himself in a blue domino with lace insertions, then, bending over, he whispered in the ear of the Great Detective:

'The Prince of Wurttemberg has been kidnapped.'

The Great Detective bounded from his chair as if he had been kicked from below.

A prince stolen! Evidently a Bourbon! The scion of one of the oldest families in Europe kidnapped. Here was a mystery indeed worthy of his analytical brain.

His mind began to move like lightning.

'Stop!' he said, 'how do you know this?'

The secretary handed him a telegram. It was from the Prefect of Police of Paris. It read: 'The Prince of Wurttemberg stolen. Probably forwarded to London. Must have him here for the opening day of Exhibition. 1,000 pounds reward.'

So! The Prince had been kidnapped out of Paris at the very time when his appearance at the International Exposition would have been a political event of the first magnitude.

With the Great Detective to think was to act, and to act was to think.

Frequently he could do both together.

‘Wire to Paris for a description of the Prince.’

The secretary bowed and left.

At the same moment there was slight scratching at the door.

A visitor entered. He crawled stealthily on his hands and knees. A hearthrug thrown over his head and shoulders disguised his identity.

He crawled to the middle of the room.

Then he rose.

Great Heaven!

It was the Prime Minister of England.

‘You!’ said the detective.

‘Me,’ said the Prime Minister.

‘You have come in regard the kidnapping of the Prince of Wurttemberg?’

The Prime Minister started.

‘How do you know?’ he said.

The Great Detective smiled his inscrutable smile.

‘Yes,’ said the Prime Minister. ‘I will use no concealment. I am interested, deeply interested. Find the Prince of Wurttemberg, get him safe back to Paris and I will add 500 pounds to the reward already offered. But listen,’ he said impressively as he left the room, ‘see to it that no attempt is made to alter the marking of the prince, or to clip his tail.’

So! To clip the Prince’s tail! The brain of the Great Detective reeled. So! a gang of miscreants had conspired to – but no! the

thing was not possible.

There was another rap at the door.

A second visitor was seen. He wormed his way in, lying almost prone upon his stomach, and wriggling across the floor. He was enveloped in a long purple cloak. He stood up and peeped over the top of it.

Great Heaven!

It was the Archbishop of Canterbury!

‘Your Grace!’ exclaimed the detective in amazement – ‘pray do not stand, I beg you. Sit down, lie down, anything rather than stand.’

The Archbishop took off his mitre and laid it wearily on the whisker-stand.

‘You are here in regard to the Prince of Wurttemberg.’

The Archbishop started and crossed himself. Was the man a magician?

‘Yes,’ he said, ‘much depends on getting him back. But I have only come to say this: my sister is desirous of seeing you. She is coming here. She has been extremely indiscreet and her fortune hangs upon the Prince. Get him back to Paris or I fear she will be ruined.’

The Archbishop regained his mitre, uncrossed himself, wrapped his cloak about him, and crawled stealthily out on his hands and knees, purring like a cat.

The face of the Great Detective showed the most profound sympathy. It ran up and down in furrows. ‘So,’ he muttered,

‘the sister of the Archbishop, the Countess of Dashleigh!’ Accustomed as he was to the life of the aristocracy, even the Great Detective felt that there was here intrigue of more than customary complexity.

There was a loud rapping at the door.

There entered the Countess of Dashleigh. She was all in furs. She was the most beautiful woman in England. She strode imperiously into the room. She seized a chair imperiously and seated herself on it, imperial side up.

She took off her tiara of diamonds and put it on the tiara-holder beside her and uncoiled her boa of pearls and put it on the pearl-stand.

‘You have come,’ said the Great Detective, ‘about the Prince of Wurttemberg.’

‘Wretched little pup!’ said the Countess of Dashleigh in disgust.

So! A further complication! Far from being in love with the Prince, the Countess denounced the young Bourbon as a pup!

‘You are interested in him, I believe.’

‘Interested!’ said the Countess. ‘I should rather say so. Why, I bred him!’

‘You which?’ gasped the Great Detective, his usually impassive features suffused with a carmine blush.

‘I bred him,’ said the Countess, ‘and I’ve got 10,000 pounds upon his chances, so no wonder I want him back in Paris. Only listen,’ she said, ‘if they’ve got hold of the Prince and cut his tail

or spoiled the markings of his stomach it would be far better to have him quietly put out of the way here.'

The Great Detective reeled and leaned up against the side of the room. So! The cold-blooded admission of the beautiful woman for the moment took away his breath! Herself the mother of the young Bourbon, misallied with one of the greatest families of Europe, staking her fortune on a Royalist plot, and yet with so instinctive a knowledge of European politics as to know that any removal of the hereditary birth-marks of the Prince would forfeit for him the sympathy of the French populace.

The Countess resumed her tiara.

She left.

The secretary re-entered.

'I have three telegrams from Paris,' he said, 'they are completely baffling.'

He handed over the first telegram.

It read:

'The Prince of Wurttemberg has a long, wet snout, broad ears, very long body, and short hind legs.'

The Great Detective looked puzzled.

He read the second telegram.

'The Prince of Wurttemberg is easily recognised by his deep bark.'

And then the third.

'The Prince of Wurttemberg can be recognised by a patch of white hair across the centre of his back.'

The two men looked at one another. The mystery was maddening, impenetrable.

The Great Detective spoke.

‘Give me my domino,’ he said. ‘These clues must be followed up,’ then pausing, while his quick brain analysed and summed up the evidence before him – ‘a young man,’ he muttered, ‘evidently young since described as a “pup,” with a long, wet snout (ha! addicted obviously to drinking), a streak of white hair across his back (a first sign of the results of his abandoned life) – yes, yes,’ he continued, ‘with this clue I shall find him easily.’

The Great Detective rose.

He wrapped himself in a long black cloak with white whiskers and blue spectacles attached.

Completely disguised, he issued forth.

He began the search.

For four days he visited every corner of London.

He entered every saloon in the city. In each of them he drank a glass of rum. In some of them he assumed the disguise of a sailor. In others he entered as a soldier. Into others he penetrated as a clergyman. His disguise was perfect. Nobody paid any attention to him as long as he had the price of a drink.

The search proved fruitless.

Two young men were arrested under suspicion of being the Prince, only to be released.

The identification was incomplete in each case.

One had a long wet snout but no hair on his back.

The other had hair on his back but couldn't bark.

Neither of them was the young Bourbon.

The Great Detective continued his search.

He stopped at nothing.

Secretly, after nightfall, he visited the home of the Prime Minister. He examined it from top to bottom. He measured all the doors and windows. He took up the flooring. He inspected the plumbing. He examined the furniture. He found nothing.

With equal secrecy he penetrated into the palace of the Archbishop. He examined it from top to bottom. Disguised as a choir-boy he took part in the offices of the church. He found nothing.

Still undismayed, the Great Detective made his way into the home of the Countess of Dashleigh. Disguised as a housemaid, he entered the service of the Countess.

Then at last a clue came which gave him a solution of the mystery.

On the wall of the Countess's boudoir was a large framed engraving.

It was a portrait.

Under it was a printed legend:

THE PRINCE OF WURTTENBERG

The portrait was that of a Dachshund.

The long body, the broad ears, the unclipped tail, the short hind legs – all was there.

In a fraction of a second the lightning mind of the Great

Detective had penetrated the whole mystery.

THE PRINCE WAS A DOG!!!!

Hastily throwing a domino over his housemaid's dress, he rushed to the street. He summoned a passing hansom, and in a few moments was at his house.

'I have it,' he gasped to his secretary. 'The mystery is solved. I have pieced it together. By sheer analysis I have reasoned it out.'

Listen – hind legs, hair on back, wet snout, pup – eh, what? does that suggest nothing to you?

'Nothing,' said the secretary; 'it seems perfectly hopeless.'

The Great Detective, now recovered from his excitement, smiled faintly.

'It means simply this, my dear fellow. The Prince of Wurttemberg is a dog, a prize Dachshund. The Countess of Dashleigh bred him, and he is worth some 25,000 pounds in addition to the prize of 10,000 pounds offered at the Paris dog show. Can you wonder that —'

At that moment the Great Detective was interrupted by the scream of a woman.

'Great Heaven!'

The Countess of Dashleigh dashed into the room.

Her face was wild.

Her tiara was in disorder.

Her pearls were dripping all over the place.

She wrung her hands and moaned.

‘They have cut his tail,’ she gasped, ‘and taken all the hair off his back. What can I do? I am undone!!’

‘Madame,’ said the Great Detective, calm as bronze, ‘do yourself up. I can save you yet.’

‘You!’

‘Me!’

‘How?’

‘Listen. This is how. The Prince was to have been shown at Paris.’

The Countess nodded.

‘Your fortune was staked on him?’

The Countess nodded again.

‘The dog was stolen, carried to London, his tail cut and his marks disfigured.’

Amazed at the quiet penetration of the Great Detective, the Countess kept on nodding and nodding.

‘And you are ruined?’

‘I am,’ she gasped, and sank to the floor in a heap of pearls.

‘Madame,’ said the Great Detective, ‘all is not lost.’

He straightened himself up to his full height. A look of inflexible unflexibility flickered over his features.

The honour of England, the fortune of the most beautiful woman in England was at stake.

‘I will do it,’ he murmured.

‘Rise dear lady,’ he continued. ‘Fear nothing. I WILL IMPERSONATE THE DOG!!!’

That night the Great Detective might have been seen on the deck of the Calais packet boat with his secretary. He was on his hands and knees in a long black cloak, and his secretary had him on a short chain.

He barked at the waves exultingly and licked the secretary's hand.

'What a beautiful dog,' said the passengers.

The disguise was absolutely complete.

The Great Detective had been coated over with mucilage to which dog hairs had been applied. The markings on his back were perfect. His tail, adjusted with an automatic coupler, moved up and down responsive to every thought. His deep eyes were full of intelligence.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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