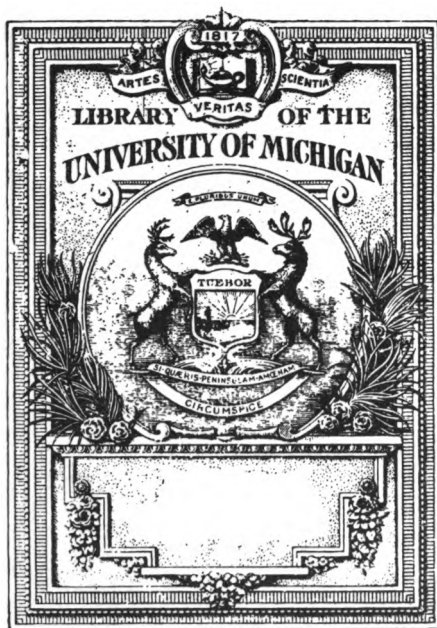


HALF-TOLD TALES

HENRY VAN DYKE





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Prof. Lewis G.
Vander Velde

BY HENRY VAN DYKE

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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

HALF-TOLD TALES



HALF-TOLD TALES

by
HENRY VAN DYKE

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1925

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TO
ARTHUR H. SCRIBNER
FORTY YEARS MY PUBLISHER
AND STILL MY FRIEND



PREFACE

FOR a long time I have had it in mind to write some tales shorter than the shortest short-stories—marginal notes on the pages of life.

The idea was not to reduce the size of the stories by “boiling down” (the method usually recommended by editors in their perfunctory way), but to leave the insignificant things out of the picture altogether, and to give as much room to the significant things as might suffice to make them clear.

Life means more than we can understand, much less describe. Symbols help us, fables and parables are illuminating, little incidents throw a far light.

From Æsop, the crippled Greek slave, and from Stevenson, the Scotch romantic, I have learned something. Yet the method of these shortest short-stories is my own.

For the style no merit can be claimed, except that it is clear, and that every word has been chosen for its associations as well as for its literal meaning.

This way of writing does not aim at popularity or praise. It has no relation to the moving-picture theatre. Its only reward is in itself.

With these new tales I have included a few older ones written in the same manner. They are but half-told, yet I hope truly told.

It grieves me to the heart to have to make a singular, and perhaps presumptuous, request of the readers of this book, if perchance it finds any.

Will you kindly do a bit of thinking while you read? Otherwise these Half-Told Tales will mean nothing to you.

The worth of a book depends on the reader as much as on the writer.

HENRY VAN DYKE.

SYLVANORA,

June 22, 1925.



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HALF-TOLD TALES



A TALE OF TRAVEL

THE summer visitors were assembling in flocks for their autumnal journey to the south.

Among the yellowing birches and poplars of the hill country, through the forests of pointed firs on the rocky seacoast, under the crimson copses of maple around the mountain lakes there was the creeping and fluttering and rustling and twittering of an innumerable host—visible only by brief glimpses, audible only to a fine ear, yet somehow making their presence felt as a vast throng.

But in a certain place near Boston, where the psychological motives of great movements are studied and discussed, a select company of these feathered bipeds earnestly debated the reason of the migration.

“It is a modern folly,” said Professor Owl, “no reason in it! I shall put on my winter clothes and stay here.”

“It is an ancient custom,” said Doctor Heron; “my family have always observed it. We must be true to the traditions of our forefathers.”

"It is the fashion," said Mrs. Hummingbird; "I'm crazy about it. I'd rather be dead than out of fashion."

"It is the joy of the journey," said Mr. Swallow. "The greatest pleasures in life are swift flight and sitting on a telegraph wire."

"It is an athletic stunt," said Captain Tern. "I fly farther than any of you—from the Arctic to the Antarctic—and think nothing of it."

"It is an economic necessity," said the Associated Blackbirds' Union. "Our population is increasing rapidly owing to the prohibition of blackbird-pie. Food is growing scarce here. We must go south and get it. We have a right to live."

"There's a fine chance for hold-ups on the way," said Old Shrike.

"Tut, tut, tut!" said Ruddy Robin. "I never kill birds. But I love worms, and I can't get them if the ground freezes."

"Now, we warblers," lisped Miss Blackburn, "like to see America first. Change of scene pleases us. We cannot be dull domestic drudges. We travel to improve our minds."

"H'i arsk you," said Tommy Starling, a recent

British immigrant of the lower social class, "wot do h'all this 'igh-brow tosh mean? Wot's trav-elin' but a nacherul h'instinc'? 'Ow can we 'elp it?"

Twitters of primitive approval ran through the migrant throng.

"Let's go!" they cried. And they went.

But the English sparrows stayed behind with the Owl—some of them within him.

TALE OF THE TWO RUNNERS

THE winner of the great race in the Vale of Argolis was Nicator. He and Cleon, his friend and rival, had run the course neck and neck—knees lifting high, breast thrust forward, head thrown back—twin images of splendid speed.

But as they neared the goal Cleon's sandal slipped. He staggered and regained his stride; but in that second the race was lost. Nicator was first, by a finger's breadth, at the goal.

None was warmer than Cleon in saluting and praising the victor. The prize was a crown of wild parsley—which fades quickly. The judges awarded this to both runners because they had run so close and so well—better than any before them. But in addition it was decreed that the victor should have his statue erected on the wall of the city among the imperishable memorials of her most famous sons.

Admitting outwardly that this was just, and lauding the decree, Cleon inwardly resented it as unfair. A statue of perdurable bronze won by

the slip of a sandal! The more he pondered it the more it irked and angered him and infected his mind with that poison which is called envy.

Harm to Nicator in person he would never have done. It would have shamed him. But why should that statue on the city wall, looking forever down the lovely Vale of Argolis, stand there in silent witness to a triumph that after all was only an accident? Was chance the Lord of all things? The crowns of wild parsley had already faded. Why should not the statue now fall?

Thus thinking, Cleon daily passed the city wall, disliking the statue more and more, and noting with careful eyes the structure of its pedestal and the possibility that a shiver of the earth or a violent tempest might throw it down into the rocky ravine below the city.

Pursuing this thought into its deepest crevice, he went forth one midnight with a coil of rope under his cloak and perilously climbed the wall on the outside. He cast the rope about the statue and pulled. The statue trembled. He pulled again. The statue rocked on its base. Fearing that it might drop into the city and be

set up again, Cleon pulled outward with all his might. The statue gave way, plunged upon him and fell with him into the dark gorge, where the man and the image were broken to pieces.

Thus Cleon was delivered from his envy. Nicator lived on, regretting the statue a little, but his friend much.

TALE OF THE CURSING OF CAPITAL

"DAMN all capitalists," remarked Vortex with that impropriety of speech which often connotes an ardent spirit.

"Sure," said Simplex, "but how is it going to be done?"

Simplex was an old Presbyterian plumber of the hit-or-miss type, a firm believer in predestination, who swore only in the language of the imprecatory Psalms. Vortex was a young Proletarian plumber's-helper who cursed freely by the names of things he professed not to believe in. His particular arduous labor was to hold the electric torch, or to saunter back to the shop to fetch forgotten tools, while his chief smoked a pipe in the bathroom at two dollars and a half per hour.

"Them capitalists made the big War," said Vortex, "just to get rich out of it."

"Sure," said Simplex, "that's when our pay went up. Selfish rascals! Let them be set in slippery places and cast down to destruction. But who is going to do it?"

"Us," cried Vortex, "the Perlitariat! Our toil and sufferin' is the cornerstone of them feller's yachts. A man ain't got no right to nothin' but what he makes with his hands. Ain't that so?"

"It seems so to me," answered Simplex, looking at his rolled-gold watch to see whether the hour to knock off work had not come.

"But say, old man," continued Vortex, "I wanna borra five hundred dollars. I gotta buy a Ford. You got money in the bank, aincer?"

"Sure," said Simplex complacently, "I've got about thirteen thousand in the bank. I'll loan you five hundred at seven per cent, with a mortgage on your house. Will that do?"

"Righto!" cried Vortex. "You're a good feller"—and he clapped the old man on the back.

"Well," said Simplex, "according to Scripture none of us is any better than he ought to be. But the people with capital are the worst of all. They are thieves and robbers, an abomination to the Lord. We sons of toil will get them and they shall go down into the pit."

TALE OF THE JEWELS

SOPHIA ALETHEA McNAMARA was excessively subject to violent conversions. Whenever a new doctrine appeared she promptly caught it in its most acute form, and followed it through its extreme sequelæ. As a New Buddhist she protested against the killing of mosquitoes because they might be reincarnations of some of her departed friends. As a Pure Pacifist she asseverated that no man should use force to protect her, even from outrageous assault and robbery. "The brigand," she maintained with that fervor which scorns grammar, "has as much and more right to the appeal to reason above force than I do." As a Complete Consecrationist she insisted that it was her duty to sell the McNamara family jewels (now hers) and to distribute the proceeds among the street-beggars.

Naturally, her brothers objected. "Give them to our wives," they said. "But they wouldn't pay me for them," argued Sophia Alethea. Finally it was agreed that she should submit her case of conscience to that old friend of the fam-

ily—the pious, plump, and prudent Bishop of South-Central Jersey.

“Dear Bishop,” cried Sophia Alethea, “I have been converted and resolved to sell all my jewels and distribute the proceeds to the beggars. I simply can’t keep these godless gauds while they, in rags, grind organs and sell lead-pencils.”

“But, my child,” said the Bishop, “these beautiful things of yours are not common merchandise. Most of them came to you from your sainted grandmother.”

“I don’t care,” replied Sophia Alethea, “they are not different than any other jewels. They are sinful indulgences, hanging round my neck like glittering millstones to drag me down to perdition. I must sell them or be lost.”

“But, my dear,” said the Bishop, with a slight twinkle in his eyes, “if you sell, other people must buy. Have you thought what will become of *them* when they get your jewellery? Would you help tie glittering millstones around *their* necks?”

“I never thought of that,” answered Sophia Alethea. And she went away considering whether she would give some of the jewels to her sisters-



in-law or run the risk of keeping them all herself.
“It would be a kind of consecration, after all,”
she thought—“facing a danger to save others.”

TALE OF A HABITATION FORFEITED

CYRIL BRAYNE was the acknowledged literary light of Bunceville on the Raritan. He had a pretty house, a pretty wife, and a pretty wit. He wrote iridescent essays and varicose verse on "Antiquities of the New Era," "The Collapse of the Classics," "Amours of Animals," and such like. By this and newspaper work he made a neat addition to the income from his modest patrimony, and lived in a style suited to that station in life to which it had pleased Providence to call him, and at peace with the world which he so delicately satirized.

Two days of every fortnight he spent in New York, to keep in touch with his publishers, as he said, and to enjoy the literary atmosphere of that incoherent burg. In an evil hour he met Isidor Huncken, the great critic, editor of *The Moon Dial, a Nocturnal of Progress*. One night as they breakfasted together at the Dandelion Coffee House, Isidor said in that condescending tone which was a mark of his affection:

"Why do you hide your one talent in a napkin of respectability? You have plenty of spleen—a touch of Aretino in your paunch. Let it out. Don't write like a Puritan prude. Write like a best-seller."

"But how shall I do it?" asked Cyril, at once humiliated and thrilled. "My experience is so limited. Where shall I get the material?"

"Experience?" scoffed Isidor. "Create it. Material? Look around you. Bunceville is full of it in solid chunks. I don't know a place that has more ridiculous, contemptible, and immoral things and people in it than that self-complacent little town. Show them up. Put them into a novel without curtains. Men are the most amorous and absurd of animals. Take the ones you know. Go for them!"

This was the origin of that enormously popular book "The Curves of the Curitan, a Novel without Curtains." Cyril had the delicacy, you see, to change the name of the river, but the town itself was unmistakable. All the absurd, mean, and naughty neighbors were in it, unprotected even by a mosquito-net, exaggerated by the omission of the people of a different kind. Bunce-

ville became a byword. The world chuckled over the book, discussed it, and bought it by the hundred thousand—for eighteen months. Cyril and his wife went to the Riviera to spend the royalty.

When they returned to their home they found that they no longer had one. The town where they had lived so comfortably had become impossible for them. The people who were left out of the book felt slighted, and the people who were in it were furious. Old friends said, "How-d'ye-do," as if they meant "Good-by"; and pleasant neighbors passed the Braynes with sour looks of unrecognition. Their children at school suffered the torments of the young. The pretty house they loved was like a camp in the enemy's country. Even the lot in the cemetery was not a place where Cyril could hope ever to rest in peace.

So they went away, somewhat sadly, to a strange house in another town—less pleasant and convenient but no less full of ridiculous, contemptible, and naughty things. About these, however, Cyril did not write. He liked travel but hated moving. So he turned his talent to wild-western romance, with which his wife helped him to a moderate success. And they lived fairly

happy ever after, forgetting Isidor and by Isidor forgot.

"As a critic," said Cyril, "he is great, but as a literary adviser he lacks a sense of comparative values. We shall never again be as much at home as we were in Bunceville."

A PARABLE OF WEDLOCK

THAT famous representative of colonial aristocracy and breeder of prize cattle, the Prince of Bordentown, visiting Cape May, fell heavily in love with a gay, charming, young Princess of the Sea, and wooed her with such ardor that she consented to marry him, and they went to live in his ancestral mansion.

But in due time his ardor cooled down to the mean temperature of the region, and her gayness was touched by drouth and frost.

In the third summer, she met the young Duke of Seals at the shore, and yielding to his refreshing importunities very improperly went off to sea with him, and so disappeared.

The Prince of Bordentown, ardent once more but in a reverse fashion, besought the Bishop of South-Central Jersey to pronounce an annihilating anathema against the errant Princess.

"Softly, Sir," said the Bishop, crossing his plump right knee over his plump left knee, "this is a matter which demands consideration. Did



you make any promises to the recent Princess when you persuaded her to marry you?"

"Oh," said the Prince of Bordentown, "I suppose I did,—a man will promise anything at such a time to make his point,—a salt-water swimming pool lined with marble, an air-plane which could also be used as a submarine, unfailing devotion, and a gay time every day."

"Of course you kept these promises," said the Bishop, crossing his plump left knee over his plump right knee, and smiling benignly.

"Well, not literally and exactly," replied the Prince of Bordentown, "for I found that they were incompatible with my hereditary duties as a raiser of prize cattle and a strict churchman. I thought that the recent Princess ought to accommodate herself to the customs and traditions of Bordentown."

"H'm," said the Bishop, uncrossing his legs, and looking with level eyes at his petitioner. "You thought the contract had only one side; she must remain charmed and charming, while you were at liberty to become dull, morose, and neglectful. Let me tell you, Sir, that the word 'obey' in the marriage service, has no such tyran-

nical meaning. A divorce no doubt the State will grant you lawfully, for the lady has grievously transgressed. But an everlasting anathema the Church will hesitate to pronounce in a case of marriage under false pretences."

TALE OF LEARNING BY EXPERIENCE

"MASTER," said the Young Fisherman to the Compleat Angler, "pray tell me how I may learn to distinguish the fish which is called a Fluke from that which is called a Flounder."

"Both of them," said the Compleat Angler, "are flatfish; but the one is naturally flat and the other is temperamentally sharp. You can learn by experience to distinguish between them."

"But how shall this method be applied," asked the Young Fisherman, "and how may I know that my studies have been crowned with success?"

"Success," replied the Master, "is a comparative matter. But in this particular question, if you chance to catch a flatfish, you may explore his mouth with your finger. If he bites it off, you may be sure that he is a Fluke."

So the Young Fisherman caught a flatfish, and explored its mouth with his finger, and got the evidence that the fish was a Fluke.

"This is a certain way of learning," said he, nursing his hand, "but it is costly."

TALE OF THE EMBANKMENT

THE mad river had gone down; the land lay desolate. The sky was yet dark and lowering, and the people feared another deluge. Then said the Wise Men, "Let us build an embankment. It may not be impregnable; but it will safeguard us for a while; it will give us time before the waters overwhelm us. Let every man bear a hand."

But the Strong Man answered, "No! I am too busy. I must not be entangled. Besides, I am safe, for my house is on rising ground. Moreover your plan is foolish, and your safeguard too weak,—or too strong,—I know not which. I foretell that it will come to nothing!"

So the Strong Man withheld his hand. But the embankment was built. And the rains descended and the winds blew and beat upon it, and the waters rose and raged against it, but it stood, though shaken.

"I told them it would be a poor thing," said the Strong Man. "But now I wonder whether

it might not have been better if I had labored on it!"

So he sat watching the embankment, with fear and trembling in his heart, and half an inch of water in his cellar.

TALE OF TWO WOLVES

THE Wolf Pack had ravaged the towns and terrorized the region round about for four years. Then brave and decent folk got together and broke up the Pack and drove it out. But the wolf-leaders, Old Grizzle and Young Gray, escaped on blood-stained paws and took refuge in the grounds of a neutral and pious Small Neighbor, who was very particular about his legal rights.

To him came the Community Council, and said, "Give us up those two wolves, that we may deal with them according to the law."

"By no means," said the Small Neighbor. "I belong to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Criminals. My estate is a sacred asylum. Besides, look at these two poor creatures, how harmless and playful they are! They chase each other around like kittens, and if one nips the other nothing happens except an amusing yowl. They are converted and very religious. They afford innocent entertainment to many visitors, and bring me in some profit. I shall not

surrender them unless you force me, and that would do disgrace to your own principles."

The members of the Council, not being very subtle in these matters, looked at one another with Lloyd George eyes (the color of which is changeable) and doubted what to do.

"Very well," they said, "you shall keep your dangerous pets; but you must keep them securely. Remember, you are responsible."

"I am responsible," answered the Small Neighbor, adding under his breath, "so far as may be consistent with my duties as an innkeeper."

Meantime the garden gates were left unlatched. One morning at dawn it was told that Young Gray (who was a Werwolf), had slunk away to his native jungle. Old Grizzle, gritting his teeth and slavering, paced nervously up and down behind the hedge. Along the borders of the northern forest joyful yappings were heard, and wild ululations of the other wolves.

The Small Pious Neighbor sat on his stoop placidly smoking. "Remember," telephoned the President of the Community Council, "you said you would be responsible."

"Tell him," said the Small Neighbor to his

wife, "that responsibility has its limits for an innkeeper, and whatever happens we shall remain neutral."

So he reloaded his pipe,—and the Community Council, their guns.

THE JERICHO ROAD

IN the big, bare inn at the top of the Jericho Road three travellers were sitting around an open fire, for the night was cold. They were persons of some importance in their time, being rich, and their many followers—servants, guards, horses, and beasts of burden—crowded the alcoves around the courtyard of the khân.

One of the three was a Roman tax-gatherer from Jerusalem; the second was a Persian silk merchant from Ecbatana; the third was a Greek theatre director from the rich city of Gerasa, beyond the Jordan. They had often met before at the same khân, for their business frequently called them to traverse this dangerous road. They were always glad of a meeting and a friendly talk over a cup of mulled wine, no religion having yet been discovered to forbid such cheerful and warming fellowship. So they rested and told their stories, as travellers like to do.

"But where is our old companion, the good man from Samaria?" asked the Roman. "He is usually on the road at this season, with his

sacks of corn from Dothan and his skins of wine from Jezreel. There is a good market for them in Jerusalem now."

"Perhaps he is waiting," said the Persian, "for the market to rise a little more. He understands his business, that Samaritan. But he is kind, very kind—the blessing of Ahura-Mazda is upon him."

The Greek smiled.

"It is so," he said, "excessively so. He never loses a chance to perform a work of mercy, to bind up the wounded, to pour out money for the distressed. And I never knew a man to have so many chances. I will wager that even now he is picking up some poor wretch on the Jericho Road and taking care of him. That is what delays him. It has become a habit."

At that moment, as if a bell had called him, the Good Samaritan entered. He was dusty and a little out of breath, but he made the Oriental salutations of politeness as usual, and sat down with his friends by the fire.

"Another?" asked the Roman.

"Yes," replied the Samaritan, "another—in truth, several others."

"How many does that make," asked the Greek, "since we first met here?"

The Samaritan threw up his hands.

"I do not know. I have lost the count. Since I began to travel this road, some thirty years ago, it has been the same thing every year, sometimes twice a year. Always robbery, outrage, murder—people lying in their blood by the roadside, women violated, little children cut to pieces. This time it was a poor man of the sect called Nazarenes whom they beat till they thought he was dead. His wife they stabbed to death and two girl children they abused into madness. I and my servants did what we could for them and brought them here for safety."

"Such things ought not to be in the Empire," said the Roman, gravely. "Who is guilty of these offenses against justice and the Roman peace?"

"Always the same tribe," said the Samaritan. "They call it 'taking toll.' They say their religion authorizes it, and after they have done it they wash their hands and say their prayers. But the name of their god must be Satan, and the blood on their souls will not wash out."

"But this tribe must be subdued," said the Roman. "They must be taught and bound to keep the peace."

"Subdued is an easy word," said the Persian; "but in my country there are tigers which can not be changed into house-cats. You cannot trust them if they smell blood."

"It is so with this robber tribe," said the Samaritan. "Time and again one army after another has beaten them, and they have cringed and fawned and promised to be good. But when they are forgiven and the army withdraws they break out again to rob and rape, to butcher and burn. True, they let us pass because we are strong and well armed. But for the weak and helpless they have no mercy but torture, and no compassion but the grave. Year after year the same brutality, the same horror! My gorge rises at the bloodiness of the Jericho Road."

"But why," asked the Greek, very softly, "just why do you not go around by some other way? You would escape these sights that trouble you so deeply and cost you so much money in charity. It is none of your affair, after all. What

are the Jews to you, except as customers? Why not abandon the Jericho Road?"

The Samaritan looked at him, and then answered, sharply and firmly, as if he had often thought of the question and had the answer ready.

"For two reasons. The first is the same that brings you here. We all need that road in our business. It is the shortest and best way to Jerusalem. The second reason is one that perhaps you may not share. To avoid the Jericho Road would not deliver me from its horrors. I should still see them in my heart—the wounded, the outraged, the slaughtered—they would haunt me and cry for help. Are they not of the same flesh and blood as we are? God knows they have cost me enough. But I give it willingly. I only wish I could do more for them."

"You can," said a deep voice close behind the travellers. They looked up in surprise, and saw a man clothed in rough garments of camel's hair, with a leathern girdle round his loins. He had come in quietly and stood leaning on his long staff, gazing sternly into their faces.

"You can do much more, all of you. You

must do more if you would meet your duty. You are rich. You have power. Put a strong guard on this pathway of blood and shame. Make this tribe of robbers and murderers afraid, since they understand no other argument. It is even more merciful to prevent cruelty than to heal the wounded. It is even more righteous to protect the helpless than to comfort them in their misery. This ought ye to do, and not to leave the other undone. I charge you in the name of God. Patrol the Jericho Road!"

The four travellers looked at one another with wondering eyes, for the stranger spoke with authority. When they turned around again to question him, he was gone into the night.

TALE OF THE HITCHING-POST

IN front of the Old Inn stood the Hitching Post, quite content with himself and proud of his official position and duties.

Travellers were loth to pass the Old Inn in those brave times without halting to partake of the good cheer which it offered. When they halted there was the Hitching Post, ready to hold their horses and to magnify his own office in conversation with the transients.

One day there came a wagoner with a load of well-pruned young birch trees which he was transporting to a new plantation. While he went indoors for refreshment the Hitching Post fell into talk with the Young Trees.

"Look at me, children," he said, "and listen to me. You see me in the highest honor that a tree can attain. I represent the Static Force, the power that holds things where they are and prevents them from moving. I am the emblem of Normalcy and Permanence. Study and emulate my conduct and some day you may come to a similar honor."

The Young Trees listened politely and with

their rustling branches whispered something that sounded like this:

"But it seems to us, O venerable one, that you are rather dead. Now, *we* are alive. We want to grow. We are going to make a new plantation."

"Perhaps you will, you foolish youths," said the Post, "but probably you will not. At all events, you can never reach a higher position than mine is now. Why this desire of movement, this passion of growth? To stand still is safer and better. Most of what people call progress is merely a change from better to worse. Permanence is the——"

At this point in the conversation the wagoner, agreeably refreshed, came out of the Old Inn, unhitched his horses, and drove on his way with the Young Trees. The Post was left to repeat his oration to following travellers.

Many years after, the birch trees, grown tall in their new plantation and beautiful with bronze boughs, green leaves, and silver bark, used to whisper together about the talk the Hitching Post had given them, and wonder whether there was anything in it, and what the old fellow was doing now.

But meantime the horse-drawn wagons had disappeared from the road. The motor-cars were parked by the side door of the Old Inn. The Hitching Post still stood in his old position, proud as ever, but a small boy had taken his chain and hasp. The loss was not noticed.

TALE OF THE ONLY INFALLIBLE SOAP

"**C**LEAN hands," said the Emperor Manchukiang, Ruler of the Celestial Dominion, "are required of all who seek my presence and desire to dwell in my abode. Let the decree be proclaimed. None shall enter or inhabit my city without clean hands and a pure heart."

This edict caused commotion throughout the empire, and there arose great interest in methods of cleansing and purification. Men of learning engaged eagerly in the study of these matters. Where brains are busy money quickly follows. Companies were formed to promote different kinds of soap, for each of which it was claimed that it was the only kind that would infallibly secure immaculate hands and the right of admission to the celestial city.

Hence came much rivalry and dispute between the companies. The simple nature of the real test of worthiness to enter the city was forgotten, and the controversy between the soap-makers grew more complicated and bitter.

"Ours is the only infallible cleanser," cried the one side.

"Nothing can possibly purify you except our method," cried the other side.

So it followed that rival guards were set up in the region before the city gate, and from both sides arose the same challenge:

"Have you used *our* soap? Otherwise you cannot enter."

One day there came thither a poor, simple traveller who earnestly desired to behold the face of the King of Kings and to dwell in his abode. But this traveller, being a lowly man, was ignorant of the merits of the dispute between the rival guards and unable to give a clear answer to them.

Then as he stood confused and trembling in that place the gate of the celestial city opened and the Great Ruler appeared shining within the arch.

"Do you desire to come to me?" he asked.

The man fell on his knees and stretched out his hands entreating favor.

So the Great Ruler saw that the man's hands were white and clean, and discerned that his heart was pure.

"Come in, then," said the King, "for I have

promised this." So he led the man into the city.

But when the rival guards saw this they were greatly astonished, and presently they fell more bitterly than ever into their controversy concerning the only infallible soap, and which kind the man must have used, else he could never have entered.

A MAN PRAYING

A MAN saying his prayers in a quiet corner of the woods was disturbed by two voices disputing near at hand. As he felt unable to pray without giving his whole heart to it, he paused in his devotions, and went to see the disputants. He perceived that one of them was an obese Orator and the other a lean Scientist.

"Sir," said the Orator, "man is the noblest work of God. Look at me. Do I resemble an ape? Nature is a mystery. You are personally insulting and atheistic in endeavoring to unveil her secrets by what you call evolution."

"Sir," replied the lean Scientist, "I admit that your present resemblance to an ape is dubious, for your weight would forbid arboreal habits, though your manners are slightly simian. But will you tell me why you think I deny or dishonor my Maker by trying to understand the way in which He made me?"

"You are irreverent," shouted the Orator,

"you disregard Holy Scripture, which says that the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground."

"On the contrary," replied the Scientist, "I accept that statement absolutely, and seek to verify it by tracing the method of formation."

"You despise the oracles of God," cried the Orator.

"You seem to ignore the works of God," answered the Scientist.

"Was your grandmother a monkey?" roared the Orator.

"Certainly not," said the Scientist, "the latest evidence shows that monkeys were our ancestral foes. But permit me to inquire whether your grandfather was a mud doll set up against the fence to dry?"

"You know nothing about it," shouted the Fat One.

"Very little," answered the Thin One, "but I am trying to learn, whereas you make a boast of your ignorance." So they passed down the forest disputing.

"They seem quite angry," said the man, "and I think the thin one had rather the best of it."

But that is no reason why I should not go back to my quiet corner to finish my prayers, for I have many troubles; and then to work in my garden, for it is a hard year."

TALE OF THE SHAKY BRIDGE

THE Wild Ass of the Wilderness and the Elephant were travelling together, eager to escape from a land stricken of famine. Presently they came to a wide river and over it a wooden bridge.

"Behold," cried the Wild Ass, "Providence favors us. Peace and plenty are on the other shore. We have only to cross this bridge. Come on!"

"It looks to me very shaky," said the Elephant; and he began testing the bridge with his trunk and then with his right forefoot.

Meantime the Wild Ass, waving his tail, galloped over the tremulous bridge and fell to feeding on the rich verdure of the opposite bank. But the Elephant continued his scientific observations, during which time the river, knowing nothing about the matter, sent down a big wave that swept the bridge away.

"You see," shouted the Elephant, "I was right about that bridge. It was very unsafe. You were a fool to trust it."



"Na-a-ay!" brayed the Wild Ass. "I got over. You were an ass not to come with me while the coming was good."

So the dispute continued with some acerbity from bank to bank through two days. Then the river subsided and a safe ford appeared just below the broken bridge. The Elephant waded carefully over and fed beside his progressive companion.

"Here we are," said the Elephant. "You see the advantages of prudence. You hurried. I waited. But here we are together and it is good feeding."

"Yea-a-ay!" replied the Wild Ass, "but I beat you to it by eight-and-forty hours."

"Certainly," the Elephant grumbled, "life is easier for the light-waisted."

TALE OF THE PRISONER

FLEEING from an Enemy of incredible strength and malice, the Man stumbled on the edge of a precipice, slithered over, crashed through the branches of a yielding tree, and landed, much shaken but substantially unharmed, in a lovely green valley.

Looking about him the Man perceived that he was in a fair oasis, several miles in diameter, abundantly supplied with various kinds of fruit-bearing trees, well provided with game, and traversed by a little piscatorial river which entered by a high waterfall and left by an underground channel. But this Eden was completely encircled by an impassable wall of cliffs. On top of this wall the Enemy, in the form of a huge and ferocious Bear, paced to and fro watching the Man with small, malignant, relentless eyes, like an implacable jailor.

So the Man laughed and set to work to make himself comfortable. He built a shelter, and trapped, and fished, and gathered fruits, and was reasonably happy, while the hungry and hateful

Bear shambled around the top of the cliffs, watching his prey.

After some months came a rescue party seeking for the lost Man. They climbed up through the caverns by which the river flowed out of the oasis. They clapped him on the back and embraced him.

"At last," they cried, "we come to set the prisoner free!"

"What do you mean—prisoner?" asked the Man. "I'll go with you, though loth to leave this pleasant camp. But the real prisoner is still up yonder. See him pacing the wall. He can't escape from his hungry hatred."

TALE OF THE PHILOSOPHIC HUSBAND

I ADMIRE your wife extremely," said the Senior Statesman, who had a young heart between old shoulders.

"It is a proof of your good judgment," said the Philosophic Husband. "She is an admirable creature; she blooms like a rose."

"I have observed that," replied the other, "and I have also found her conversation most refreshing. I should like to see more of her if you do not object."

"My dear sir," protested the Philosophic Husband, "in this enlightened age how could I object to anything that expands her horizon? We shall both be honored and delighted, I assure you."

"And may I express my admiration?" pursued the other.

"By all means," said the Philosophic Husband. "She will be greatly pleased. You will find her in the long walk under the pine-trees at the far end of the orchard. She walks there daily about

this hour. What perfect weather! All nature seems inviting. A pleasant afternoon to you!"

So the Senior Statesman, forgetting his gout for a moment and swinging his gold-headed cane, passed through the garden with a jaunty step in the direction of the orchard. Five minutes later he limped back to the library where the Philosophic Husband was composing a chapter of his book on "The Taboos of Time."

"You return soon," he exclaimed. "I hope you found her?"

"I did," answered the other. "But I did not wish to interrupt her conversation."

"What do you mean, conversation?" cried the Philosophic Husband, springing out of his chair in excitement. "A young fellow—handsome—blond mustache—reciting poetry?"

"Pardon me," said the Senior Statesman, "but these are confidential communications, and in this enlightened age——"

"Oh, the devil," shouted the Philosophic Husband, "the villain, the scoundrel! Let me get at him!"

And picking up his heaviest stick, he ran toward the orchard.

A TALE OF PEACE

THE animals held a peace congress to decide upon the best way of abolishing the tribal wars which threatened to exterminate them all.

The first article proposed was this: "Every dispute among the tribes shall be submitted to an impartial tribunal before hostilities begin."

"Never," said the Grizzly Bear, "I will never agree to that. It puts the small animals on a level with the large ones. It is an abdication of sovereignty. It contradicts the natural supremacy of force."

The tiger, the lion, and other large beasts supported him. The polecat lay low, silently wagging his tail, and the rattlesnake added another ring to his coil.

"But," said the dog, "I thought that was what we were aiming at—to substitute reason for force."

"You are wrong," said the tiger, "you have been corrupted by your intimacy with man."

"I wish I could believe it," said the dog. And so the congress broke up.

A TALE OF MAN AND THE MACHINE

HAVING finished his latest invention, the Man knelt down to adore the work of his own hands.

"O wonderful machine," he cried, "you are supreme and perfect. You have exalted me above my forefathers, and by you I have the ancients beaten to a standstill. With you I can ascend to the heights and descend to the depths. Through you I can sow and reap and gather harvest as I will. You have enriched me, and loosed me from half my toil, so that I may have more time to worship you. All hail, almighty God in the machine!"

A thoughtful Pilgrim, having observed these vain oblations, asked politely, "Is your god living?"

"Nearly," answered the Man with a touch of pride.

"Can he think and feel?" asked the Pilgrim.

"Not quite yet," replied the Man doubtfully.

"Well," said the Pilgrim, "it is a strange

thing to adore one who can do less than you can. But I perceive that if you faithfully continue this adoration you will grow into the likeness of your god. So good day to you."

A TALE OF FRIENDS

A CERTAIN man said to his friend:
"You do not know enough to be a friend of mine. Our discourse is unequal."

"All the more reason," answered the friend, "why my ignorance should profit by your wisdom."

"But again," continued the man, "you are too poor to be a friend of mine. Our estates in life are different. We cannot exchange visits."

"Would you then," asked the friend, "condemn yourself to a life of monotony, and deny me the opportunity of sometimes admiring your treasures?"

"But again," said the man, "you are not distinguished enough to be a friend of mine. The circle in which I move is a lofty one."

"Your affection," answered the friend, "is distinction enough for me, and I shall hold up my head with the best."

"Well, then," concluded the man, "we belong to different parties, churches, and clubs; so the thing is impossible."

"So it is," replied the friend, "until one of us two shall fall into adversity, and the other learn what friendship means."

And with that he whistled to his dog and walked down the street.

THE KEY OF THE TOWER

SO the first knight came to the Tower. Now his name was *Casse-Tout*, because wherever he came there was much breaking of things that stood in his way. And when he saw that the door of the Tower was shut (for it was very early in the morning, and all the woods lay asleep in the shadow, and only the weather-cock on the uppermost gable of the roof was turning in the light wind of dawn), it seemed to him that the time favored a bold deed and a masterful entrance.

He laid hold of the door, therefore, and shook it; but the door would not give. Then he set his shoulder to it and thrust mightily; but the door did not so much as creak. Whereupon he began to hammer against it with his gloves of steel, and shouted with a voice as if the master were suddenly come home to his house and found it barred.

When he was quite out of breath, between his shoutings he was aware of a small, merry noise as of one laughing and singing. So he listened, and this is what he heard:

"Hark to the wind in the wood without!
I laugh in my bed while I hear him roar,
Blustering, bellowing, shout after shout,—
What do you want, O wind, at my door?"

Then he cried loudly: "No wind am I, but a mighty knight, and your door is shut. I must come in to you and that speedily!" But the singing voice answered:

"Blow your best, you can do no more;
Batter away, for my door is stout;
The more you threaten, I laugh the more—
Hark to the wind in the wood without!"

So he hammered a while longer at the oaken panels until he was wearifully wroth, and when the sun was rising he went his way with sore hands and a sullen face.

"No doubt," said he, "there is a she-devil in the Tower. I hate those who put their trust in brute strength."

It was mid-morn when there came a second knight to the Tower, whose name was *Parle-Doux*. And he was very gentle-spoken, and full of favorable ways, smiling always when he talked, but his eyes were cool and ever watchful. So he

made his horse prance delicately before the Tower, and looked up at the windows with a flattering face:

"Fair house," said he, "how well art thou fashioned, and with what beauty does the sunlight adorn thee! Here dwells the wonder of the world, the lady of all desires, the princess of my good fortune. Would that she might look upon me and see that the happy hour has come!"

Then there was a little sound at one of the upper windows, and the lattice clicked open. But the lady who stood there was closely covered with a jewelled veil, and nothing could be seen of her but her hand, with many rings upon it, holding a key.

"Marvel of splendor," said *Parle-Doux*, "moon of beauty, jewel of all ladies! I have won you to look upon me, now let fall the key."

"And then?" said the lady.

"Then, surely," said the knight, "I will open the door without delay, and spring up the stairs, winged with joy, and——"

But before he had finished speaking, with the smile on his face, the hand was drawn back, and the lattice clicked shut.

So the knight sang and talked very beautifully for about the space of three hours in front of the Tower. And when he rode away it was just as it had been before, only the afternoon shadows were falling.

A little before sunset came the third knight, and his name was *Fais-Brave*.

Now the cool of the day had called all the birds to their even-song, and the flowers in the garden were yielding up their sweetness to the air, and through the wood Twilight was walking with silent steps.

So the knight looked well at the Tower, and saw that all the windows were open, though the door was shut, and on the grass before it lay a jewelled veil. And after a while of looking and waiting and thinking and wondering, he got down from his horse, and took off the saddle and bridle, and let him go free to wander and browse in the wood. Then the knight sat down on a little green knoll before the Tower, and made himself comfortable, as one who had a thought of continuing in that place for a certain time.

And after the sun was set, when the longest shadows flowed into dusk, the lady came walk-

ing out of the wood toward the Tower. She was lightly singing to herself a song of dreams. Her face was uncovered, and the gold of her hair was clear as the little floating clouds high in the West, and her eyes were like stars. When the knight saw her he stood up and could say nothing. But all the more he looked at her, and wondered, and his thoughts were written in his face as if they stood in an open book.

Long time they looked at each other thus; and then the lady held out her hand with a key in it.

"What will you do with this key?" said she, "if I give it to you?"

"Is it the key of your Tower?" said he.

"Ay!" said she.

"I will give it back to you," said he, "until it pleases you to open the door."

"It is yours," said she.

THE KING'S JEWEL

THERE was an outcry at the door of the king's great hall, and suddenly a confusion arose. The guards ran thither swiftly, and the people were crowded together, pushing and thrusting as if to withhold some intruder. Out of the tumult came a strong voice shouting, "I will come in! I must see the false king!" But other voices cried, "Not so—you are mad—you shall not come in thus!"

Then the king said, "Let him come in as he will!"

So the confusion fell apart, and the hall was very still, and a man in battered armor stumbled through the silence and stood in front of the throne. He was breathing hard, for he was weary and angry and afraid, and the sobbing of his breath shook him from head to foot. But his anger was stronger than his weariness and his fear, so he lifted his eyes hardily and looked the king in the face.

It was like the face of a mountain, very calm and very high, but not unkind. When the man saw it clearly he knew that he was looking at



the true king; but his anger was not quenched, and he stood stiff, with drawn brows, until the king said, "Speak!"

For answer the man drew from his breast a golden chain, at the end of which was a jewel set with a great blue stone. He looked at it for a moment with scorn, as one who had a grievance. Then he threw it down on the steps of the throne, and turned on his heel to go.

"Stay," said the king. "Whose is this jewel?"

"I thought it to be yours," said the man.

"Where did you get it?" asked the king.

"From an old servant of yours," answered the man. "He gave it to me when I was but a lad, and told me it came from the king—it was the blue stone of the Truth, perfect and priceless. Therefore I must keep it as the apple of mine eye, and bring it back to the king perfect and unbroken."

"And you have done this?" said the king.

"Yes and no," answered the man.

"Divide your answer," said the king. "First, the yes."

The man delayed a moment before he spoke. Then his words came slow and firm as if they were measured and weighed in his mind.

"All that man could do, O king, have I done to keep this jewel of the Truth. Against open foes and secret robbers I have defended it, with faithful watching and hard fighting. Through storm and peril, through darkness and sorrow, through the temptation of pleasure and the bewilderment of riches, I have never parted from it. Gold could not buy it; passion could not force it; nor man nor woman could wile or win it away. Glad or sorry, well or wounded, at home or in exile, I have given my life to keep the jewel. This is the meaning of the *yes*."

"It is right," said the king. "And now the *no*."

The man answered quickly and with heat.

"The *no* also is right, O king! But not by my fault. The jewel is not untarnished, not perfect. It never was. There is a flaw in the stone. I saw it first when I entered the light of your palace-gate. Look, it is marred and imperfect, a thing of little value. It is not the crystal of Truth. I have been deceived. You have claimed my life for a fool's errand, a thing of naught; no jewel, but a bauble. Take it. It is yours."

The king looked not at the gold chain and the

blue stone, but at the face of the man. He looked quietly and kindly and steadily into the eyes full of pain and wounded loyalty, until they fell before his look. Then he spoke gently.

"Will you give me my jewel?"

The man lifted his eyes in wonder.

"It is there," he cried, "at your feet!"

"I spoke not of that," said the king, "but of your life, yourself."

"My life," said the man faltering, "what is that? Is it not ended?"

"It is begun," said the king. "Your life—yourself, what of that?"

"I had not thought of that," said the man, "only of the jewel, not of myself, my life."

"Think of it now," said the king, "and think clearly. Have you not learned courage and hardness? Have not your labors brought you strength; your perils, wisdom; your wounds, patience? Has not your task broken chains for you, and lifted you out of sloth and above fear? Do you say that the stone that has done this for you is false, a thing of naught?"

"Is this true?" said the man, trembling and sinking on his knee.

"It is true," answered the king, "as God lives, it is true. Come, stand at my right hand. My jewels that I seek are not dead, but alive. But the stone which led you here—look! has it a flaw?"

He stooped and lifted the jewel. The light of his face fell upon it. And in the blue depths of the sapphire the man saw a star.

THE RIPENING OF THE FRUIT

THE righteousness of Puramitra was notorious, and it was evident to all that he had immense faith in his gods. He was as strict in the performance of his devotions as in the payment of his debts, nor was there any altar, whether of Brahma, or of Vishnu, or of Shiva, at which he failed to offer both prayers and gifts. He observed the rules of religion and of business with admirable regularity, and enjoyed the reputation of one whose conduct was above reproach.

But, being a self-contained man, he had not the love of the little children of the village, to whom he often gave sweetmeats and toys; and being a very prosperous man, he was not without rivals and detractors, who liked his prosperity the less the more they marvelled at it. This was displeasing to Puramitra, though he thought it beneath him to show it.

"If all were known!" said some people, wagging their heads sagely, as if they were full of secret and discreditable information.

"If we only had his luck," said others, sighing.

But when Puramitra heard of these things he said, "The fruits of earth ripen by the will of Heaven and the harvest is on the lap of the gods."

So saying, he made the sign of reverence, and went his way calmly to a certain place in his garden, where he was accustomed to practise the virtue of meditation and to review his inmost thoughts.

Now the inmost thoughts of Puramitra were in the shape of wishes and strong desires; for which reason, being a religious man, he often called them prayers. They were concerned chiefly with himself. And next to that, with two others: Indranu, his friend, and Vishnamorsu, his enemy.

But the motions of friendship are quiet and slow, and much the same from day to day; whereas the motions of hatred are quick and stirring, and changeful as the colors on a serpent. So Puramitra came to think less and less of his friend, and more and more of his enemy. Every day he returned at sundown to the retired place in the garden, where an orange-tree shaded his favorite seat with thick, glossy leaves,

and surrendered himself to those meditations in which his desires were laid bare to his gods.

At first he gave a thought to Indranu, who had helped him, and served him, and always spoken well of him; and this thought he called love. Then he gave many thoughts to Vishnamorsu, who had opposed him, and thwarted him, and mocked him with bitter words and laughter; and these thoughts he called just indignation. He reflected upon the many misdeeds and offences of his enemy with a grave and serious passion. He considered curiously the various punishments which these misdemeanors must merit at the hand of Heaven, such as poverty and pain and disgrace and death, and, after that, all the thirty-nine degrees of damnation; he turned them over in his mind like a hollow ball with rings carved within it, and they played one into another smoothly and intricately, and at the centre of the rings a little black figure with the face of Vishnamorsu writhed and twisted.

While Puramitra meditated thus upon the justice of the gods and the ill-deserts of his enemy, the tree grew and flourished above him from week to month and from month to year, spread-

ing out its arms to hide and befriend his devotees. The white flowers bloomed and faded with heavy fragrance. The pale-green fruits formed and fell from the tree before their time. But of all their many promises only one persisted, clinging to the lowest bough, rounding and ripening among the dark leaves with strange flame and lustre—a fiery globe, intense and perfect as Puramitra's thought of his enemy.

"You meditate much, my son," said a Brahman who knew him well and sometimes visited his garden.

"Holy one," he answered, "I pray."

"For what?" asked the Brahman.

"That the divine will may be done in all ways and upon all things," replied Puramitra.

"Then why have you been at pains to poison your tree?" asked the Brahman.

"I did not know," said the man, "that I had done anything to the tree."

"Look," said the Brahman, and he touched the fruit with the end of his staff. A drop oozed from the saffron globe, red as blood; and where it fell the grass withered as if a flame had scorched it. Then the heart of Puramitra leaped up

within him, for he knew that his inmost thoughts had passed into the course of nature and fructified upon the tree.

"Most excellent Brahman," said he, with great humility, "the fruits of earth ripen by the will of Heaven."

"For whom is this one intended?" asked the Brahman.

"Holiness," said Puramitra, "it is on the lap of the gods."

So the Brahman pursued his way, and Puramitra his meditations.

The next day he ordered an open path made through his gardens for the pleasure and comfort of the neighbors. The glistening fruit hung above the path, ripe and ruddy.

"It is on the lap of the gods," thought Puramitra; "if the evil-doer stretches forth his hand to it, the justice of Heaven will appear." So he hid among the bushes at nightfall, and expected the event.

A man crept slowly along the path and stayed beneath the tree. His face was concealed by a cloak; but the watcher said, "I shall know him by his actions, for my enemy will not respect

that which is mine." Now the man was thinking shame and scorn of the rich owner of the garden, and despising the prosperity of wiles and wickedness. So he hated and contemned the fruit, saying to himself, "God forbid that I should touch anything that belongs to the wretch Puramitra." And the path grew darker.

Soon after came another man, walking with uncovered head, but his face could not be discerned because of the shadow. And the watcher said: "Now we shall see what the gods intend." The man went freely and easily, without a care, and when he came to the fruit he put out his hand and took it, saying to himself, "The benevolent Puramitra will be glad that I should have this, for he is good to all his friends." So he ate of the fruit, and fell at the foot of the tree.

Then Puramitra came running, and lifted up the dead man, and looked upon his face. And it was the face of his friend, the well-beloved Indranu.

So Puramitra wept aloud, and tore his hair, and his heart went black within him. And Vishnamorsu, returning through the garden by another path, heard the lamentable noise, and came

near, and laughed. But the Brahman, passing homeward, looked upon the three, and said, "The ways of the gods are secret; but the happiest of these three is Indranu."

AN OLD GAME

THREE men were taking a walk together, as they said, just to while away the time.

The first man intended to go Somewhere, to look at a piece of property which he was considering. The second man was ready to go Anywhere, since he expected to be happy by the way. The third man thought he was going Nowhere, because he was a philosopher and held that time and space are only mental forms.

Therefore the third man walked in silence, reflecting upon the vanity of whiling away an hour which did not exist, and upon the futility of going when staying was the same thing. But the other men, being more simple, were playing the oldest game in the world and giving names to the things that they saw as they travelled.

"Mutton," said the Somewhere Man, as he looked over a stone wall.

"A flock of sheep," said the Anywhere Man, gazing upon the pasture, where the fleecy ewes were nipping grass between the rocks and the eager lambs nuzzled their mothers.



But the Nowhere Man meditated on the foolish habit of eating, and said nothing.

"An ant-hill," said the Anywhere Man, looking at a mound beside the path; "see how busy the citizens are!"

"Pismires," said the Somewhere Man, kicking the mound; "they sting like the devil."

But the Nowhere Man, being certain that the devil is a myth, said nothing.

"Briars," said the Somewhere Man, as they passed through a coppice.

"Blackberries," said the Anywhere Man; "they will blossom next month and ripen in August."

But the Nowhere Man, to whom they referred the settlement of the first round of the game, decided that both had lost because they spoke only of accidental phenomena.

With the next round they came into a little forest on a sandy hill. The oak-trees were still bare, and the fir-trees were rusty green, and the maple-trees were in rosy bud. On these things the travellers were agreed.

But among the withered foliage on the ground a vine trailed far and wide with verdant leaves, thick and heavy, and under the leaves were clus-

ters of rosy stars, breathing a wonderful sweetness, so that the travellers could not but smell it.

"Rough-leaf," said the Somewhere Man; "gravel-weed we call it in our country, because it marks the poorest soil."

"Trailing arbutus," said the Anywhere Man; "May-flowers we call them in our country."

"But why?" asked the Nowhere Man. "May has not yet come."

"She is coming," answered the other; "she will be here before these are gone."

On the other side of the wood they entered a meadow where a little bird was bubbling over with music in the air.

"Skunk-blackbird," said the Somewhere Man; "colors the same as a skunk."

"Bobolink," said the Anywhere Man; "spills his song while he flies."

"It is a silly name," said the Nowhere Man. "Where did you find it?"

"I don't know," answered the other; "it just sounds to me like the bird."

By this time it was clear that the two men did not play the game by the same rules, but they went on playing, just as other people do.

They saw a little thatched house beside the brook. "Beastly hovel," said the first man. "Pretty cottage," said the second.

A woman was tossing and fondling her child, with kiss-words. "Sickly sentiment," said the first man. "Mother love," said the second.

They passed a youth sleeping on the grass under a tree. "Lazy hound!" said the first man. "Happy dog!" said the second.

Now the third man, remembering that he was a philosopher, concluded that he was wasting his imaginary time in hearing this endless old game.

"I must bid you good-day, gentlemen," said he, "for it seems to me that you are disputing only about appearances, and are not likely to arrive Somewhere or Anywhere. But I am seeking *das Ding an sich*."

So he left them, and went on his way No-where. And I know not which of the others won the game, but I think the second man had more pleasure in playing it.

A CHANGE OF AIR

THERE were three neighbors who lived side by side in a certain village. They were bound together by the contiguousness of their back yards and front porches, and by a community of interest in taxes and water-rates and the high cost of living. They were separated by their religious opinions; for one of them was a Mystic, and the second was a Sceptic, and the other was a suppressed Dyspeptic who called himself an Asthmatic.

These differences were very dear to them, and laid the foundations of a lasting friendship in a nervous habit of interminable argument on all possible subjects. Their wives did not share in these disputations because they were resolved to be neighborly, and they could not conceive a difference of opinion without a personal application. So they called one another Clara and Caroline and Katharine, and kissed audibly whenever they met, but they were careful to confine their conversation to topics upon which they had only one mind, such as the ingratitude of domestic servants.

The husbands, however, as often as they could get together without the mollifying influence of the feminine presence, continued their debates with delightful ferocity, finding matter in each event of life, though clear, and especially in those which had not yet occurred. So they had a very happy time, and their friendship deepened from day to day.

"I can see your point of view," one of them would say, after an apparently harmless proposition had been advanced. "Perhaps so," the other would reply, clinging desperately to the advantage of the first service in definitions, "but you certainly do not understand it."

Whereupon the third had the pleasure of showing that neither of the others knew what he was talking about. This invariably resulted in their combining against him, and usually to his gain, because he was able to profit by the inconsistencies of their double play.

But of all earthly pleasures, as Sancho Panza said, there cometh in the end satiety. The neighbors, after several years of refreshing colloquial combat, felt an alarming decline of virility and the approach of an anæmic peace. Their argu-

ments grew monotonous, remote, repetitious, amounting to little more than a bald statement of position: "Here I stand"—"There you stand"—"There he stands,"—"What is the use of talking about it?" The salt and pepper had vanished from their table of conversation, and as each man silently chewed his own favorite cereal, they all felt as if the banqueting-days were ended and each must say to the others:

"Grow old apart from me,
The worst is yet to be."

One night as they were about to separate, long before midnight, without a single spirited controversy, they looked at one another sadly, as men who felt the approach of a common misfortune.

"The trouble is," said the Mystic, who disliked nothing so much as solitude, "we do not meditate enough, and so the springs of our inspiration from the Oversoul are running dry."

"The trouble is," said the Sceptic, whose doubts were more dogmatic than dogmas, "that our fixed ideas are choking the feed-pipes of our minds."

"The trouble is," wheezed the Asthmatic, whose suppressed dyspepsia gave him an enormous appetite, "modern life is demoralized, especially in domestic service. In the last month my wife has had five cooks, and she whom she now has is not a cook. Hygiene is the basis of sound thinking."

This sudden and unexpected renewal of the joy of disputation cheered them greatly, and they discussed it for several hours, arriving, as usual, at the same practical conclusions from the most diverse premises.

They all agreed that the trouble *was*.

To cure it nothing could be better than a change of air. So they resolved to make a little journey together.

They went first to New York, and the size of it impressed them immensely. The Sceptic was delighted with the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, because, as he said, it was so unmistakably human. The Mystic was delighted with the theatres, because, as he said, most of the plays seemed so superhuman. The Asthmatic was delighted with the subway, because, as he said, the ventilation was so satisfactory. It was like eating

bread-pudding on a steam-boat; you knew exactly what you were getting; all the microbes were blended, and they neutralized one another.

Their next point of visitation was Chicago, where they had heard that a new Literary School was arising with a noise like thunder out of the lake. They attended many club-meetings, and revolved rapidly in the highest literary circles, coming around invariably to the point from which they had started.

"This is tiresome," said the Mystic; "the Oversoul is not in it."

"It is narrowing," said the Sceptic; "these people are the most bigoted unbelievers I ever saw."

"It is unwholesome," said the Asthmatic, "but I think I could digest the stuff if I could only breathe more easily. This wind is too strong for me."

So they agreed to go to Philadelphia for a rest. The clerk in the colonial hotel to which they repaired assured them that the house was crowded—he had only one room, a parlor, which he could fit up with three beds if they would accept it.

The room was large and old-fashioned. A tall bookcase with glass doors stood against the wall. The three beds were arranged, side by side, in the middle of the room. "This is like home," cried the neighbors, and they lay until midnight in a sweet ferocity of dispute over the moral character of Benjamin Franklin.

A couple of hours later the Asthmatic was awakened from a sound sleep by a terrible attack of short breathing.

"Open the window," he gasped; "I am choking to death."

The Mystic sprang from bed and groped along the wall for the electric-light button, but could not find it. Then he groped for the window and his hand touched the glass.

"It is fastened," he cried; "I can't find the catch. It will not move up or down."

"I shall die," groaned the Asthmatic, "unless I have air. Break the window-pane!"

So the Mystic felt for the footstool, over which he had just stubbed his toes, and used the corner of it to smash the glass.

"Ah," said the Asthmatic, with a long sigh of relief, "I am better. There is nothing like fresh air."

Then they all went to sleep again.

The morning roused them slowly, and they lay on their backs looking around the room. The windows were closed and the shades drawn.

But the glass door of the bookcase had a great hole in it!

"You see!" said the Mystic. "It was the faith cure. The Oversoul cured you."

"Not at all," said the Sceptic. "It was the doubt cure. The way to get rid of a thing is to doubt it."

"I think," said the Asthmatic, "that it was the nightmare, and that miscellaneous cooking is the cause of human misery. We have travelled enough, and yet we have found no better air than we left at home."

So they went back to the certain village and continued their disputations very happily for the rest of their lives.

BEGGARS UNDER THE BUSH

AS I came round the bush I was aware of four beggars in the shade of it, counting their spoils.

They sat at their ease, with food and a flagon of wine before them and silver cups, for all the world like gentlefolk on a picnic, only happier. But I knew them for beggars by the boldness of their asking eyes and the crook in their fingers.

They looked at me curiously, as if to say, "What do you bring us?"

"Nothing, gentlemen," I answered, "I am only seeking information."

At this they moved uneasily, and glanced at one another with a crafty look of alarm. Their crooked fingers closed around the cups.

"Are you a collector of taxes?" cried the first beggar.

"Certainly not," I replied with heat, "but a payer of them!"

"Come, come," said the beggar, with a wink at his comrades, "no insult intended! Only a prudent habit of ours in these days of mixed society. But you are evidently poor and honest.

Take a chair on the grass. Honesty we love, and to poverty we have no objection—in fact, we admire it—in others.”

So I sat down beside them in the shade of the bush and lit my pipe to listen.

In the hot field below, a man was ploughing in the glare of the sun. The reins hung about his neck like a halter, and he clung to the jerking handles of the plough while the furrows of red earth turned and fell behind him like welts on the flank of the hill.

“A hard life,” said the second beggar, draining his cup, “but healthy! And very useful! The world must have bread.”

“Plenty of it,” said the third beggar, “else what would become of that?”

He nodded down the valley, where tall spires pointed toward the blue and taller chimneys veiled it with black. The huddled city seemed to move and strain and quiver under the dusky curtain, and the fumes of its toil hung over it like steam from a sweating horse.

“It is a sad sight,” said the fourth beggar, waving his hand with the gesture of an orator. “Shakespeare was right when he said ‘God made

the country and man made the town.' Admit for the present that cities are necessary evils. The time is coming when every man must have his country-place. Meanwhile let us cultivate the rural virtues."

He smacked his lips and lifted the flagon.

"Right," said the first beggar, "a toast! To the simple life!"

So the four quaffed a cupful of wine—and I a puff of smoke—to the simple life.

In the bush was a bird, very busy catching flies. He perched on a branch, darted into the air, caught his fly, and fluttered to another branch. Between flies he chirped and twittered cheerfully.

"Beautiful bird," said the first beggar, leaning back, "a model of cheerful industry! What do they call him?"

"A warbler," said I, "because he has so little voice."

"He might sing better," observed the second beggar, "if he did not work so hard catching flies."

But the fourth beggar sighed and wiped the corner of his left eye, for he was a tender-hearted man on one side.

"I am thinking," said he, "of the poor flies!"

"Bet you a hundred to ten he doesn't catch the next one," said the third beggar.

"Done," cried the others, but before the stakes were counted out, the bird had flown.

"Tell me, sirs," I began, when they had stripped the gilded bands from their cigars and lighted them, "what it is that makes you all so innocently merry and contented in this troublous world?"

"It is a professional secret," said the first beggar. "If we tell it, you will give it away."

"Never," I answered. "I only want to put it into a poem."

The beggars looked at one another and laughed heartily. "That will do no harm," said they, "our secret will be safe there."

"Well, then," said the first beggar gravely, "it is religion. We approve the conduct of Providence. It must be all right. The Lord is on our side. It would be wicked to ask why. We practise the grace of resignation, and find peace."

"No," said the second beggar smiling, "religion is an old wives' tale. It is philosophy that makes us contented. Nothing could be unless it

was, and nothing is different from what it has to be. Evolution goes on evolving all the time. So here we are, you see, in the best world possible at the present moment. Why not make the most of it? Pass me the flagon."

"Not at all," interrupted the fourth beggar loudly, "I will have none of your selfish religion or your immoral philosophy. I am a Reformer. This is the worst world possible, and that is why I enjoy it. It gives me my chance to make orations about reform. Philanthropy is the secret of happiness."

"Piffle!" said the third beggar, tossing a gold coin in the air. "You talk as if people heard you. The secret of happiness—religion, philosophy, philanthropy?—poppycock! It is luck, sheer luck. Life is a game of chance. Heads I win, tails you lose. Will you match me, Master Poet?"

"You will have to excuse me," I said, "I have only a penny in my pocket. But I am still puzzled by your answers. You seem of many minds, but of one spirit. You are all equally contented. How is this?"

The eyes of the beggars turned to the piles of

booty in front of them, and they all nodded their heads wisely as if to say, "you can see."

A packet of papers lay before the first beggar and his look lingered on them with love.

"How came you by these?" I asked.

"An old gentleman gave them to me," he answered. "He said he was my grandfather. He was an unpleasant old fellow, but God rest his soul! These are all gilt-edged."

The second beggar was playing with a heap of jewels. He was a handsome fellow with fine hands.

"How did you get these pretty things?" said I.

"By consenting to be married," he replied. "It was easy enough. She squints, and her grammar is defective, but she is a good little thing."

The third beggar ran his fingers through the pile of gold before him, and took up a coin, now and then, to flip it in the air.

"How did you earn this?" I asked.

"Earn it!" said he scornfully, "do you take me for a laboring man? These fellows here lent me something, and I bet on how much corn that fellow down there with the plough would raise—

and the rest—why, the rest was luck, sheer luck!”

“And you?” I turned to the fourth beggar who had a huge bag beside him, so full of silver that the dimes and quarters ran from the mouth of it.

“I,” said he loftily, “am a Reformer. The people love me and give me whatever I want, because I tell them that these other beggars have no right to their money. I am going to be President.”

At this they all burst into shouts of laughter and rolled on the grass. Even the Reformer chuckled a little.

While they were laughing, the ploughman came up with an axe and began to chop at the bush.

“What are you doing to our bush?” cried the beggars.

“Chopping it down,” said the ploughman.

“But why?” cried they.

“I must plough this field,” said he.

So the beggars grabbed their spoils and scuttled away to other countries, and I went on over the hill.

STRONGHOLD

IT rose upon the rock like a growth of nature; secure, commanding, imperturbable; mantled with ivy and crowned with towers; a castle of the olden time, called Stronghold.

Below it, the houses of the town clung to the hillside, creeping up close to the castle wall and clustering in its shadow as if to claim protection. In truth, for many a day it had been their warden against freebooter and foreign foe, gathering the habitations of the humble as a hen gathers her chickens beneath her wings to defend them from the wandering hawk.

But those times of disorder and danger were long past. The roaming tribes had settled down in their conquered regions. The children of the desert had learned to irrigate their dusty fields. The robber chiefs had sobered into merchants and money-lenders. The old town by the river had a season of peace, laboring and making merry and sleeping and bringing forth children and burying its dead in tranquillity, protected by forts far away and guarded by ships on distant waters.



Yet Stronghold still throned upon the rock, proudly dominant; and the houses full of manifold life were huddled at its foot; and the voices of men and women, and little children, talking or laughing or singing or sobbing or cursing or praying, went up around it like smoke.

Now the late lord of the castle, in the last age of romance, had carried off a beautiful peasant girl with dove's eyes, whom he married on her death-bed where she gave birth to their son. The blood of his father and of his mother met in the boy's body, and in his soul their spirits were mingled, so that he was by times haughty and gentle, and by turns fierce and tender, and he grew up a dreamer with sudden impulses to strong action. To him, at his father's death, fell the lordship of the castle; and he was both proud and thoughtful; and he considered the splendor of his ancient dwelling and the duties of his high station.

The doors of Stronghold, at this time, were always open, not only for the going out of the many retainers and servants on their errands of business and mercy and pleasure in the town, but also for the citizens and the poor folk who came

seeking employment, or demanding justice, or asking relief for their necessities. The lord of the castle had ordered that none should be denied, and that a special welcome should be given to those who came with words of enlightenment and counsel, to interpret the splendor of Stronghold and help its master to learn the duties of his high station.

So there came many men with various words. Some told him of the days when Stronghold was the defence of the land and the foreign foe was broken against it. Some walked with him in the long hall of portraits and narrated the brave deeds of his ancestors. Some explained to him the history of the heirlooms, and showed him how each vessel of silver and great carved chair and richly faded tapestry had a meaning which made it precious.

Other men talked to him of the future and of the things that he ought to do. They set forth new schemes of industry by which the castle should be changed into a central power-house or a silk-mill. They unfolded new plans of bounty by which the hungry should be clad, and the naked fed, and the sick given an education. They

told him that if he would do these things, in the course of a hundred years or so all would be well.

But the trouble was that their counsels were contradictory, and their promises were distant, and the lord of the castle was impatient and bewildered in mind. For meantime the manifold voices of the town went up around him like smoke, and he knew that underneath it some fires of trouble and sorrow must be burning.

Then came two barefaced and masterful men who told him bluntly that the first duty of his high station was to abandon it.

"What shall I do then?" he asked.

"Work for your living," they shouted.

"What do you do for your living?" he inquired.

"We tell other men what to do," replied they.

"And do you think," said he, "that your job is any harder than mine, or that you work more than I do?" So he gave order that they should have a good supper and be escorted from the castle, for he had no time to waste upon mummers.

But the confusion in his mind continued, be-

cause the spirits of his father and his mother were working within him, and the impulse to sudden action gathered force beneath his dreams. So he was glad when the next visitor came bearing the marks of evident sincerity and a great purpose.

His beard was untrimmed, his garb was rude, his feet were bare, like an ancient prophet. His voice was fiercely quiet, and his eyes burned while he talked, as if he saw to the root of all things. He called himself John the Nothingarian.

The lord of the castle related some of the plans which his counsellors had made for his greater usefulness.

"They are puerile," said the Nothingarian, "futile, because they do not go to the root."

Then the young lord spoke of the legends of his forefathers and the history of Stronghold.

"They are dusty tales," said the Nothingarian, "false, because they do not go to the root."

"How shall we get to the root?" asked the young lord, trembling with a new eagerness.

"There is only one way," answered the prophet. "Come with me."

As they went through the outer passageway the

old man pressed hard with his hands against one of the stones in the wall, and a little door slid open.

"The secret stair," said he, "by which your fathers brought in their stolen women. Your Stronghold is honeycombed with lies."

The young lord's face was red as fire. "I never knew of it," he murmured.

In the vaulted crypt beneath the castle the old man found a lantern and a pickaxe. He went to an alcove walled with plaster and picked at it with the axe. The plaster fell away. On the floor of the alcove lay two crumpled bodies of men long dead; the clothes were rotting upon the bones and a dagger stuck fast in each back.

"They were stabbed as they sat at meat," said the old man, "for the gain of their gold. Your Stronghold is cemented with blood."

The young lord's face grew dark as night. "I never knew of it," he muttered.

"Come," said the other, "I see we must go a little deeper before you know where you stand."

So he led the way through the long vaults, where the cobwebs trailed like rags and the drip-

ping pendules of lime hung from the arches like dirty icicles, until he came to the foundation of the great tower. There he set down the lantern and began to dig, fiercely and silently, close to the corner-stone, throwing out the rubble with his bare hands. At last the pick broke through into a hollow niche. At the bottom of it was the skeleton of a child about five years old, and the cords that bound her little hands and feet lay in white dust upon the sunken bones.

"You see!" said the old man, wiping his torn hands on his robe. "The corner-stones were laid for safety on the body of a murdered innocent. Your Stronghold is founded on cruelty. This is the root."

The young lord's face went white as death. "Horrible!" he cried. "But what to do?"

"Do away with it!" said the Nothingarian. "That is the only thing. Come!"

He went out into the night and the young lord followed him, the sudden impulse to strong action leaping in his heart and pounding in his temples and ringing in his ears, like a madness.

They passed around behind the great tower,

where it stood close to the last pinnacle of the rock and rose above it, bolted to the high crest of stone by an iron bar.

"Here is the clutch of your Stronghold," said the old man urgently. "Break that and all goes down. Dare you strike to the root?"

"I dare," he cried, "for I must. A thing built on cruelty, cemented with blood, and worm-eaten with lies is hateful to me as to God."

He lifted the pick and struck. Once! and the castle trembled to its base and the servants ran out at the doors. Twice! and the tower swayed and a cry of fear arose. Thrice! and the huge walls of Stronghold rocked and crashed and thundered down upon the sleeping town, burying it in wild ruin!

Dead silence for an instant—and then, through the cloud of dust that hung above the flattened houses, came a lamentable tumult. Voices of men and women and little children, shrieking in fear, groaning with pain, whimpering for pity, moaning in mortal anguish, rose like smoke from the pit beneath the wreck of Stronghold.

The young lord listened, dizzy and sick with horror. Then he looked at the Nothingarian

whose eyes glittered wildly. He swung up the pickaxe again.

"Curse you," he cried, "why didn't you warn me of this?" And he split his head down to the beard.

THE RETURN OF THE CHARM

I

"**N**OR I," cried John Harcourt, pulling up in the moon-silvered mist and clapping his hand to his pocket, "not a groat! Stay, here is a crooked sixpence of King James that none but a fool would take. The merry robbers left me that for luck."

Dick Barton growled as he turned in his saddle. "We must ride on, then, till we find a cousin to loan us a few pounds. Sir Empty-purse fares ill at an inn."

"By my sore seat," laughed Harcourt, "we'll ride no farther to-night. Here we 'light, at the sign of the Magpie in the Moon. The rogues of Farborough Cross have trimmed us well; the honest folk of Market Farborough shall feed us better!"

"For a crooked sixpence!" grumbled Barton. "Will you beg our entertainment like a pair of landlopers, or will you take it by force like our late friends on the road?"

"Neither," said Harcourt, "but in the fashion that befits gentlemen—with a bold face, a gay tongue, and a fine coat well carried. Remember, Dick, look up, and no snivelling! Tell your ill-fortune and you bid for more. 'Tis Monsieur Debonair who always owns the tavern."

Their lusty shouts brought the hostler on the trot to take their steaming horses, and the landlord stood in the open door, his broad face a welcome to such handsome guests. They entered as if the place belonged to them, and called for the best it contained as if it were just good enough. The whole house was awake and astir with their coming. The smiling maids ran to and fro; the rustics in the long room stared and admired: the table was spread with a fair cloth and loaded with a smoking supper; and afterward there were pots of ale for all the company, and a song with a chorus. The landlord, with his thumbs in the arm-holes of his waistcoat, patted himself to see his business go so merrily. But the landlady came to the door, now and then, and looked in with anxious eyes.

"Mark the mistress," whispered Barton; "she has her suspicions."

"She has her troubles," answered Harcourt,

"and that I relish not. I will have all happy around me, else my spirit sinks and the game is lost. I'll talk with her."

He beckoned her to his side with a courteous gesture.

"A famous supper, Mistress," said he, "but your face is too downcast for the maker of such a masterpiece. What is it that ails you?"

"It is my child," she answered; "kind sir, my little Faith is ill of fever, and the physician has been called away. He has left her a draught, but she grows worse, and the fever holds her from sleep. It may be that you know something of the healing art."

"As much as any man," said Harcourt, confidently. "You see in me, despite my youth, a practitioner of the oldest school in the world, a disciple of Galen's grandfather. Let me go with you to look at the child."

The little girl lay in a close room. Her curls were tangled on the pillow and her thin, brown arms tossed on the hot counterpane. By her side was a glass of some dark medicine, and her black eyes held more of rebellion than of fever as she gazed at the stranger.

He leaned over her with a smile, smoothing her

wrists lightly, with slow, downward touches, and whispering in her ear. The sound of the singing below came through the door ajar, and the child listened to her visitor as if he were telling her a wonderful tale.

"Open the window," he said, after a while to the mother, pulling the sheet softly over the child's shoulders, "the air to-night is full of silver threads which draw away the fever."

Then he threw the black draught out of the window. And the child, watching him, laughed a little.

"It is the wrong medicine," said he. "Bring me paper and pen."

He wrote by the light of the flickering candle, hiding the words with his other hand: *Fortune favor Faith.*

Then he slipped the crooked sixpence into the paper, folded it carefully, tucking the ends one into the other, and marked it with a cross.

"Hold it tight," he said to the child, closing the fingers of her right hand upon the little packet. "It will let you into the Garden of Good Dreams. And now your carriage is ready, and now your horses are trotting, gently, gently,

quickly, softly along the white moon-road to the Land of Nod. Will you go—are you going—are you gone?”

Her eyelids drooped and fell, and she turned on her right side with a sigh, thrusting her brown fist under the pillow. Harcourt drew the mother to the door.

“Hush,” he whispered; “leave the window wide. Your Faith holds an ancient potent charm, thousands of years old, better than all medicines. Do not speak of it to any one. If you open it, you will lose it. Let her sleep with it so, and bring it me on the morrow.”

In the morning, when the landlord had served breakfast with his own hands, Harcourt called boldly for the bill; and Barton stared at him, but the landlord was confused.

“My wife,” he stammered—“you must excuse her, gentlemen, nothing will do but she must speak with you herself about the reckoning. I’ll go call her.”

She came with a wonder of gladness in her face, and the little girl clinging to a fold of her mother’s dress by the left hand and pressing the other brown fist close to her neck.

"You see," said the mother. "She is well! Run, Faith, and kiss the gentleman's hand. Oh, sir, there can be no talk of payment between us—we are deep in your debt; but if my child might keep this ancient potent charm?"

The question hung in her voice. Harcourt delayed a moment, as if in doubt, before he answered, smiling:

"I am loath to part from it," he said at last, "but since she has proved it, let her keep it and believe in it for good—never for evil. Come, little Faith, kiss me good-by—no, not on the hand!"

When they were alone together, Barton turned upon his companion with reproachful looks.

"What is this charm?" he asked.

"A secret," answered the other curtly.

"I like it not," said Barton, shaking his head; "you go too far, Jack. You put a deception on these simple folk."

"Who knows?" laughed Harcourt. "At least I have done them no harm. We leave them happy and ride on. How far to your nearest cousin?"

II

"The next case is a strange one," said Sir Richard Barton, Justice of the Peace, sitting on the bench by his friend, the famous Judge who was holding court for Market Farborough.

"How is it strange?" asked the Judge, whose face showed ruddy and strong beneath his white wig.

"It is an accusation of witchcraft," answered Sir Richard, "and that is a serious thing in these days. Yet it seems the woman has a good heart and harms nobody."

"Beneficent witchcraft!" said the Judge—"that is a rarity indeed. What do you make of it?"

"I am against all superstition," said Sir Richard solemnly; "it brings disorder. For religion we have the clergy, and for justice the lawyers, and for health the doctors. All outside of that partakes of license and unreason."

"Yet outside of that," mused the Judge, "there are things that neither clergy nor lawyers nor doctors can explain. Tell me, what do people think concerning this witch?"

"The strict and godly folk," answered Sir Richard, "reckon her a scandal to the town and an enemy of religion. They are of opinion that she should be put away, whether by hanging or drowning, or by shutting her in a madhouse. But many poor people have an affection for her, because she has helped them."

"And you?" asked the Judge.

Sir Richard looked at him keenly. "I can better tell," said he, "when you have seen her yourself and heard her story."

"That is plainly my duty," said the Judge. "Clerk, call the next case."

As the clerk read the name of the accused and the charge against her, the eyes of the Judge were fixed curiously upon the prisoner at the bar, as if he sought for something forgotten.

Tall and dark, with sunburned face and fearless eyes, she stood quietly while her way of life was told; her dwelling, since the death of her parents, in a cottage on the heath beyond the town; her comings and goings among the neighbors; her wonderful cures of sick animals and strange diseases, but especially of little children. There were some who testified that she was wil-

ful and malicious; yet it appeared they could only allege she had withheld her cure, saying that it was beyond her power. The doctor was bitter against her, as an unlawful person; and the parson condemned her, though she came often to church; "for," said he, "the Scripture commands us, 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.'"

The face of the Judge was troubled. "Tell me," he said, leaning forward and speaking gravely, "are you a witch?"

"Not for evil, my Lord," answered the woman simply, "but I have a healing gift."

"How do you work your cures?" he asked. "What do you to the children?"

"I open the windows of the room where they lie," she answered.

The face of the Judge relaxed, and his eyes twinkled kindly. "And then?" said he.

"I throw the black draught out of the window and tell the children a tale of the Garden of Good Dreams."

"Is that all?" said the Judge, shading his face with his hand.

"No, my Lord," replied the woman. "When

the children are near to sleep, I put my charm in their hands."

"Whence had you this charm?" he said. "And what is it?"

"I pray your Lordship," cried the woman, "ask me not, for I can never tell."

"Let me see it," said the Judge, with a smile.

So the woman, trembling and reluctant, drew a dark-red ribbon from her breast, and at the end of it a packet of fine linen bound closely with white silk. She laid it before the Judge. He broke the silken thread and unrolled the linen, fold after fold, until he came to a yellow piece of paper with writing on it, and in the paper a crooked sixpence of King James.

The coin and the scrap of paper lay in his hand as he looked up and met the shrewd questioning eyes of Sir Richard.

"Yes," answered the Baron Harcourt in a low voice, "you have seen the coin before, and now you may read what is written on the paper."

"Now I know," said Sir Richard, shaking his head, "what charm you gave to the woman and her child forty years ago. Was I not right? It was a deception."

"Who knows?" said the Baron Harcourt cheerfully. "It has not failed to-day. Fortune has favored Faith."

He turned to the clerk. "Make record that this case is dismissed for want of evidence against the accused. The woman has done no harm. The court is adjourned."

"And my charm," said the woman eagerly—"oh, my Lord, you will give me back my charm?"

"That I must keep for you," he said with kindness, as to a child. "But you may still open the windows, and throw out the black draught, and tell the children of the Garden of Good Dreams. Trust me, that will work wonders."

IN THE ODOR OF SANCTITY

Mortem suscepit cantando.

LAST of all, the crouching plague leaped upon the Count Angelo (whose women and boon companions already lay dead around him in his castle of Montefeltro), and dragged him from the banquet-hall of many delights into the dim alley of the grave. There he looked, as it were through a door half open, into the shapeless horror of the face of Death, which turns all desires into stone. But even while he looked, the teeth of the black beast that gripped him were loosened, and he crept back into life as one returning from a far country.

His castle was empty save for the few terror-stricken servants who lingered because they knew not whither to flee. In the garden withered the rose and the lily, untended and unplucked. The chairs and couches where he had seen the faces of his friends were vacant. On the pillows of his great bed there were no curls of tangled gold, nor plaited tresses of long black spread out beside him in the morning light.

The world in which he had revelled away his

youth was void; and in the unknown world, from whose threshold he had painfully escaped, but whither he knew he must one day return, there dwelt only a horrible fear and a certain looking for of judgment.

So Count Angelo came to life again. But all desires and passions which had hitherto warmed or burned him were like dead embers. For the flame of them all had gone into one desire—the longing to die in the odor of sanctity, and so to pass into Paradise safe and unafraid.

Therefore he put aside the fine garments which his trembling servants brought, and clad himself in sackcloth with a girdle of rope about his loins. Thus apparelled he climbed on foot to the holy mountain of La Verna, above the Val d'Arno, which mountain the Count Rolando of Montefeltro had given, many years before, to St. Francis the minstrel of God and his poor little disciples of the cross, for a refuge and a sanctuary near the sky. At the door of the Friary built upon the land of his forefathers the Count Angelo knocked humbly as a beggar.

"Who is there?" said the door-keeper from his loophole.

"A poor sinner," answered Angelo, "who has no wish left in life but to die in the odor of sanctity."

At this the door-keeper opened grudgingly, supposing he had to do with some outcast seeking the house of religion as a last resort. But when he saw the stranger he knew that it was the rich and generous Count of Montefeltro.

"May it please your lordship to enter," he cried; "the guest-chamber awaits you, and the friars minor of St. Francis will rejoice in the presence of their patron."

"Not so," replied Angelo; "but in the meanest of your cells will I lodge. For I am come not to bestow, but to beg, and my request is the lowest place among the little servants of poverty."

Whereupon the door-keeper was greatly astonished, and led Angelo to the Warden, to whom he unfolded his purpose to strip himself of all worldly gear and possessions and give his remnant of life solely to the preparation of a saintly death. This proposal the Warden and the other brethren duly considered, not without satisfaction, and Angelo was received as a penitent and a novice.

The first year of his probation he passed as a

servant of the cattle and the beasts of burden, cleansing their stables and conversing only with them. "For," said he, "the ox and the ass knew their Lord in the manger, but I in my castle was deaf to his voice."

The second year of his probation he labored in the kitchen, washing the dishes and preparing the food for the friars, but he himself ate sparingly and only of the crusts and crumbs which the others had despised. "For," said he, "I am less worthy than that lad who brought the few loaves and small fishes to feed the multitude, and for me it is enough to eat of the fragments that remain."

In all this he was so diligently humble and self-denying that in the third year he was admitted fully to the order and given the honorable office of sweeping and cleansing the sacred places.

In this duty Angelo showed an extraordinary devotion. Not content with this, he soon began to practise upon himself particular and extreme asperities and macerations. He slept only upon the ground and never beyond an hour at one space, rising four and twenty times a day to his prayers. He fasted thrice in the week from

matins to matins, and observed the rule of silence every six days, speaking only on the seventh. He wore next to his naked skin a breastplate of iron, and a small leather band with sharp points about his loins, and rings of iron under his arms, whereby his flesh was wasted and frayed from his bones like a worn garment with holes in it, and he bled secretly. By reason of these things his face fell away into a dolorous sadness, and the fame of his afflictions spread through the Friary and to other houses where the little brothers of St. Francis were assembled.

But the inward gladness of Angelo did not increase in measure with his outward sadness and the renown of his piety. For the ray and the flame of divine Consolation were diminished within him, and he no longer felt that joy which he had formerly in the cleansing of the stables, in the washing of the dishes, and in the sweeping of the holy places, from which he was now relieved by reason of bodily weakness. He was tormented with the fear that his penances might not sufficiently atone for the sinful pleasures of his past life, of which he had a vivid and growing remembrance. The thought was ever present

with him that he might not be predestined to die in the odor of sanctity.

In this anguish of heart he went forth one day into the wood which lies on the top of the mountain of La Verna, beyond the Friary, and ran up and down, stumbling among the roots of the trees and calling aloud with sighs and tears, "Little wretch, thou art lost! Abominable sinner Angelo, how shalt thou find a holy death?"

To him, in this distraction, comes the Warden with three of the older friars and asks him what has befallen him.

"The fear of dying in my sins," cries Angelo.

"You have the comfort of the Gospel, my son," says the Warden.

"It is not enough for me," sobs Angelo, beating his wounded breast. "You know not how great were my pleasures in the world!"

With that he starts away again to wander through the wood, but the Warden restrains him, and soothes him, and speaks comfortably to him; and at last Angelo makes his request that he may have a certain cave in the woods for his dwelling and be enclosed there as a recluse to await the coming of a holy death.

"But, my son," objects the Warden, "what will the Friary do without the example of your devotion and your service?"

"I will pray for you all," says Angelo; "night and day I will give myself to intercession for the order of friars minor."

So the Warden consents, and Angelo, for the time, is satisfied.

Now, the top of the mountain of La Verna is full of rude clefts and caverns, with broken and jagged rocks. Truly, it were a frightful place to behold but for the tall trees that have grown up among the rocks, clasping them with their roots, and the trailing vines and gentle wild flowers and green ferns that spring abundantly around them as if in token of kindness and good-will and bounty.

All these were much beloved of St. Francis, who heard every creature cry aloud, saying "God made me for thee, O man." So great was his affection for them that he would not have his little friars cut down a whole tree for firewood, but bade them only lop the branches and let the tree live in joy. And he taught them to make no garden of pot-herbs only, but to leave room

always for the flowers, for love of One who was called "the rose of Sharon," and "the lily of the valley."

But this was not the mind of Angelo, who stumbled to his reclusery blindly, intent only on the thought of his death, and never marking the fine lace-work of the ferns that were broken by his passing nor the sweet fragrance of the flowers crushed beneath his feet.

The cave which he had chosen lay a little beyond that most sacred cavern where St. Francis had fasted and where the falcon had visited him every morning, beating her wings and singing to rouse him softly to matins, and where at last he had received in his body the marks of the holy Cross.

It was on the side of the mountain looking toward the west, and in front of it was a narrow, deep, and terrible chasm, which could only be crossed by a log laid in the manner of a bridge. But the cave itself looked out beyond into the wide and fruitful Val d'Arno, with the stream of silver coiling through it, and on the other side the wooded mountains of Valombrosa and Pratomagno.

Of this Angelo saw nothing, as he passed by the log bridge into the cave. The three friars who went with him walled up the entrance with stones, except for an opening at the height of a man's breast; and they returned, taking away the log at his request and casting it down the cliff. After that the food of Angelo was thrown across the chasm into the opening of the cave, and to drink he had a small spring of water trickling among the rocks a drop at a time, and he lived as a recluse considering only how to make a saintly end.

His thoughts were thus fixed and centred upon his own great concern, to a degree that made the world turn to nothing around him. Even the Friary seemed to lie at an infinite distance, and the prayers which he had promised to offer for it were more in word than in desire. There was no warmth in them, for all the fire of his soul had burned into one thought which consumed him. Day and night he cried, "O wicked life, let me go into a holy death!"

But he came no nearer to his goal, nor could he find any assurance that he was elect and chosen to attain it. On the contrary his anxiety

increased and misery became his companion. For this reason: in his dreams he dwelt continually upon the most sinful pleasures of his past life, and they grew upon him; but in his waking hours he considered and measured the greatness of his penances, yet without ever arriving at the certainty that they balanced his offenses.

Now, you are not to suppose that the past life of Angelo, though vain and worldly and streaked with evil, had been altogether woven of black threads. For he had been of an open and kindly heart, ready to share with others in the joy of living, greatly pleased to do a good turn to his neighbors, compassionate and gentle-natured, a lover of music and of little children. So there were many things in his youth of which he had no need to be ashamed, since they were both innocent and merry, and the white and golden threads of a pure and grateful happiness were not wanting in the fabric of his loom.

But of these he would not think, being set upon recalling only the sinful hours that needed repentance. And of these he thought so constantly that in the visions of the night they lived again, his former lights o'love twining their limbs about

him and pressing their burning lips upon his. But when he awoke he was filled with terror, and fell to counting the severities and privations which he had endured for an atonement. So it came to pass that he was strangely and dreadfully merry dreaming, but strangely and desperately sad waking. And between the two he found no peace, nor ever escaped from the trouble and anguish of himself.

After a twelvemonth or more of this life, very early in the morning he awoke from a hot dream with horror, and groaned aloud, "If I die, I am damned."

"How so, little sheep of God," said a voice near at hand; "who has led thee into the wilderness?"

Fra Angelo lifted his head and looked at the opening of the cave, but there was no one there. Then he looked behind him, and on both sides, but he saw no one. Yet so clear and certain was the sound of the voice that he could not rest, but went to the entrance and thrust out his head.

On the shelf of the rock in front of the cave he saw a short and spare brother dressed in the habit of a friar minor, with a thin black beard,

and dark simple eyes, kindled with gentle flames. In his right hand he held a stick of wood, as it were the bow of a viol, and this he drew across his left arm, singing the while in French a hymn of joy for the sun, his brother, and for the wind, his companion, and for the water, his sister, and for the earth, his mother.

At this Fra Angelo was astonished and confused, for these songs had not been heard in the Friary since many years, and it seemed as if some foreign brother must have come from France with strange customs. But when he looked more closely he saw that the long and delicate hands of the little brother were pierced in the palm, and his feet were wounded as if a nail had passed through them. Then he knew that he saw St. Francis, and he was so ashamed and afraid that he clung to the rocks and could not speak.

Then the little brother turned from looking out upon the morning in Val d'Arno and looked at Fra Angelo. After a long while he said, very softly, "What doest thou here in the cave, dearest?"

"Blessed father," stammered the recluse, "I dwell in solitude, to atone for my worldly life and find a holy death."

"That is for thyself," said the little brother in the sun; "but for others what doest thou?"

Angelo thought a moment and answered, humbly, "I give them an ensample of penitence."

"They need more," said the little brother smiling, "and thou must give it."

"Blessed father," cried Angelo, "command me and I will obey thee, for thou comest from heaven and I am near to hell."

"Listen, then, thou lost sheep," said the little brother, "and I will show thee the way. Climb over the wall. Lay aside the breastplate and rings of iron—they hinder thee. Come near and sit beside me. In a certain city there is a poor widow whose child is sick even unto death. Go unto her with this box of electuary, and give it to the child that he may recover. I command thee by Obedience."

So saying he laid in the hand of Angelo a box of olive-wood, filled with an electuary so sweet that the fragrance of it went through the wood. But Angelo was confused.

"How shall I know the way," said he, "when I know not the city?"

"Stand up," answered the little brother with

the wounded hands, "and close thine eyes firmly. Now turn round and round as children do, until I bid thee stop."

So Fra Angelo, fearing a little because the shelf of rock was narrow, shut tight his eyes and, stretching out his arms, turned round and round until he was dizzy. Then he fell to the ground, and when he looked up the little brother of the sun was gone.

But the head of Fra Angelo lay toward the city of Poppi on the other side of the valley, so he knew that this was the way, and he went down from the mountain.

As he went, his bodily weakness departed and the pains of his worn flesh left him, and he rejoiced in the brightness of the world. The linnets and blackbirds that sang in the thickets were the children of those that had been brothers of the air to St. Francis, and the larks that bubbled up from the fields wore the same sad-colored garments and chanted the same joyous music that he had commended. The primroses and the violets and the cyclamens had not forgotten to bloom because of sin, and the pure incense of their breath went forth unto gladness.

So Fra Angelo made his journey with a light heart, quickly, and came to the city of Poppi. There he found the poor widow with her child sick unto death, and he gave them the olive-wood box. The child took the electuary eagerly, for it was pleasant to the taste, and it did him good more than if it had been bitter. So presently the fever left him, and the mother rejoiced and blessed St. Francis and Fra Angelo. And he said, "I must be going."

Now, as he went and returned toward La Verna, he passed through a village, and in the field at the side of it he saw many children quarrelling.

"Why do you fight," said Angelo, laying hands on two of them, "when you might be playing?"

"Because we know not what to play," they answered; and some shouted one thing and some another.

"Let the older ones play at Fox and Geese," said Angelo; "and look, here is a plank! We will put it over this great stone and I will play at seesaw with the little ones."

Then the children all laughed when they saw a friar playing at seesaw; but he went up and

down merrily, and they were all glad together. After a while they grew weary of the games, and Angelo asked what they would do next.

"Dance," cried the children; "dance and sing!"

"But where is the music?" said Angelo.

So one of the boys ran away to a house in the village and came back presently with an old viol and a bow. Angelo fingered the instrument, and tuned it, for he had been a skilful musician.

"Now I will teach you," said he, "a very sweet music that I heard this morning. And do you all sing as I teach you, and between the songs take hands and dance around."

Then he sat down upon a grassy hillock, with the children in a circle about him, and he taught them the songs that were sung by the little brother of the sun and of the wind and of the water and of the birds—even by that minstrel of God who came to the cave with the morning light. Between the verses the children, holding hands, danced in a ring around Fra Angelo, while he played upon the old viol.

As he played thus, he was aware of a hand upon his shoulder, and supposed it to be one of the children.

"Go back," he said, "go back to your place, dearest naughty one; the song is not finished."

"It is finished," said a voice behind him. "This is the right ending of the song."

And Angelo, looking up in amazement, saw the face of an angel, and the bow dropped from his fingers.

When the music ceased, the children broke their ring and ran to Angelo where he lay upon the grass. They wondered to see him so still and pale, yet because his face was smiling they were not afraid.

"He is weary," they cried; "the good friar has fallen asleep—perhaps he has fainted. Let us run and call help for him."

But they did not understand that the messenger of Holy Death had passed among them and called Angelo in the odor of sanctity.

THE PRIMITIVE AND HIS SANDALS

"I AM sick of all this," said the Great Author, sweeping his hand over the silver-laden dinner-table. He seemed to include in his gesture the whole house and the broad estate surrounding it. "It bores me, and I don't believe it can be right."

His wife, at the other end of the table, shining in her low-necked dress with diamonds on her breast and in her hair, leaned forward anxiously, knowing her husband's temperament.

"But, Nicholas," she said, "what do you mean? You have earned all this by your work as a writer. You are the greatest man in the country. You are entitled to a fine house and a large estate."

He gravely nodded his big head with its flamboyant locks, and lit a fresh cigarette.

"Quite right, my dear," said he, "you are always right on practical affairs. But, you see, this is an artistic affair. My books are realistic and radical. They teach the doctrine of the universal level, that no man can be above other men. They

have made poverty, perhaps not exactly popular, but at least romantic. My villains are always rich and my heroes poor. The people like this; but it is rather a strain to believe it and keep on believing it. If my work is to hold the public it must have illustrations—moving pictures, you know! Something in character! Nobody else can do that as well as I can. It will be better than many advertisements. I am going to become a virtuous peasant, a son of the soil, a primitive.”

His wife laughed, with a slight nervous tremor in her voice. She knew her husband’s temperament, to be sure, but she never knew just how far it would carry him.

“I think you must be a little crazy, Nicholas,” she said.

“Thank you, Alexandra,” he answered, “thank you for the temperate flattery. Evidently you have heard the old proverb about genius and madness. But why not make the compliment complete and say ‘absolutely crazy’?”

“Well,” she replied, “because I do not understand just what you propose to do. Are you going to impoverish yourself and the whole family?”



Are you thinking of turning over your farms to these stupid peasants who will let them go to rack and ruin? Will you give your property to the village council who will drink it up in a month? You know how much money Peter needs; he is a member of twelve first-class clubs. And Olga's husband is not earning much. Are you going to starve your children and grandchildren for the sake of an idea of consistency in art?"

The Great Author was now standing in front of the fireplace, warming himself and filling a pipe. The flames behind him made an aureole in his extravagant white hair and beard. He smiled and puffed slowly at his pipe. At last he answered.

"My dear, you go too fast and too far. You know I am enthusiastic, but have you ever known me to be silly? It would be wrong to make you and the children suffer. I have no right to do that."

She nodded her head emphatically, and a look of comprehension spread over her face.

"Suppose," he continued, "suppose that I should make over the real estate and farms to

you—you are an excellent manager. And suppose that I should put the personal estate, including copyrights, into a trust, the income to be paid to you and the children. You would take care of me while I became a primitive, wouldn't you?"

"I would," she answered, "you know I would. But think how uncomfortable it will be for you. While we are living in luxury, you——"

"Don't worry about that," he interrupted with a laugh. "I shall have all the luxury I want: flannel shirts, loose around the neck, instead of these infernal stiff collars; velveteen trousers and jacket instead of this waiter's uniform; and I shall go barefoot when the weather is suitable—do you understand? Barefoot in the summer grass—it will be immense."

"But your food," she asked, "how will you manage that on a primitive basis?"

"You will manage it," he replied, "you know I have always preferred beefsteak and onions to any French dish. Champagne does not agree with me. I'd rather have a glass of the straight stuff, without any gas in it."

"But your sleeping arrangements," she mur-

mured, "are you going to leave the house? Our bedroom is not exactly primitive."

"No fear of it," he answered. "There is a little room beyond your bathroom. Put an iron cot in there, with a soft mattress, linen sheets, and light blankets. I'll do my morning wash at the pump in the yard, for the sake of the picture. When I want a bath you'll leave the door of the room open if you are not actually in the tub."

"Nicholas," she said, with a Mona Lisa smile, "for an author you have a very clever way of putting things. But suppose we have guests at the house, you can't come to dinner in dirty clothes and with bare feet."

"Certainly not," he answered. "I shall put on clean flannels, clean velveteens, and sandals."

"Sandals," she murmured, "sandals at dinner are simply wonderful. Do you think I could——"

"Not at all, my dear," said the Great Author firmly. "Your present style of dress becomes you amazingly. I am the only one who has to do the primitive."

So the arrangements were completed. The interviewers who came to the house described the Great Author in his loose flannels and velveteens,

with bare feet, returning from labor in the fields. The moving pictures were full of him. But the lady did not appear in sandals. There were no flashlights permitted at the part-primitive dinner-table.

THE HERO AND TIN SOLDIERS

ON December 25, 1918, that little white house in the park was certainly the happiest dwelling in Calvinton. It was simply running over with Christmas.

You see, there had come to it a most wonderful present, a surprise full of tears and laughter. Captain Walter Mayne reached home on Christmas Eve.

For a while they had thought that he would never come back at all. News had been received that he was grievously wounded in France—shot to pieces, in effect, leading his men near Château-Thierry. His life hung on the ragged edge of those wounds. But his wife Katharine always believed that he would pull through. So he did. But he was lacking a leg, his right arm was knocked out of commission for the present, and various other *souvenirs de la grande guerre* were inscribed upon his body.

Then word arrived that he was coming back on a transport, with other wounded, to be patched up in a hospital on Staten Island. So his wife

Katharine smiled her way through innumerable entanglements of red tape and went to nurse him. Then she set her steady hand to pull all the wires necessary to get him discharged and sent home. Christmas was in her heart and she would not be denied. So it came to pass that the one-legged Hero was in his own house on the happy day, and joy was bubbling all around him.

When the old Pastor entered, late in the afternoon, the Christmas-tree was twinkling with lights, the children swarming and buzzing all over the place, so that he was dazed for a moment. There were Walter's mother and his aunt and his sisters-in-law, boys and girls of various sizes, and a jubilant and entrancing baby. The Pastor took it all in, and was glad of it, but his mind was on the Hero.

Katharine, who always understood everything, whispered softly: "Walter is waiting to see you, Doctor. He is in his study, just across the hall."

Waiting? Well, what can a man whose right leg has been cut off above the knee, and who has not yet been able to get an artificial one—what can he do but wait?

The room was rather dimly lighted; brilliance is not good for the eyes of the wounded. Walter was in a long chair in the corner; his face was bronzed, drawn and lined a little by suffering, but steady and cheerful as ever, with the eager look which had made his students listen to him when he talked to them about English literature.

"My dear Walter," said the Pastor, "my dear boy, we are so glad to have you home with us again. We are very proud of you. You are our Hero."

"Thank you," said Walter, "it is mighty good to be home again. But there is no hero business about it. I only did what all the other Americans who went over there did—fought my—excuse me, my best, against the beastly Germans."

"But your leg," said the Pastor impulsively, "it is gone. Aren't you angry about that?"

Walter was silent for a moment. Then he answered.

"No, I don't think angry is the right word. You remember that story about Nathan Hale in the Revolution—'I only regret that I have but one life to give to my country.' Well, I'm glad that I had two legs to give for my country, and

particularly glad that she only needed one of them."

"Tell me a bit about the fighting," said the Pastor, "I want to know what it was like—the hero-touch—you understand?"

"Not for me," said Walter, "and certainly not now. Later on I can tell you something, perhaps. But this is Christmas Day. And war? Well, Doctor, believe me, war is a horrible thing, full of grime and pain, madness, agony, hell—a thing that ought not to be. I have fought alongside of the other fellows to put an end to it, and now——"

The door swung open, and Sammy, the eldest son of the house, pranced in.

"Look, Daddy," he cried, "see what Aunt Emily has sent me for Christmas—a big box of tin soldiers!"

Mayne smiled as the little boy carefully laid the box on his knee; but there was a shadow of pain in his eyes, and he closed them for a few seconds, as if his mind were going back, somewhere, far away. Then he spoke, tenderly, but with a grave voice.

"That's fine, sonny—all those tin soldiers. But don't you think they ought to belong to me?"

You have lots of other toys, you know. Would you give the soldiers to me?"

The child looked up at him, puzzled for a moment; then a flash of comprehension passed over his face, and he nodded valiantly.

"Sure, Father," he said, "you're the Captain. Keep the soldiers. I'll play with the other toys," and he skipped out of the room.

Mayne's look followed him with love. Then he turned to the old Pastor and a strange expression came into his face, half whimsical and half grim.

"Doctor," he said, "will you do me a favor? Poke up that fire till it blazes. That's right. Now lay this box in the hottest part of the flames. That's right. It will soon be gone."

The elder man did what was asked, with an air of slight bewilderment, as one humors the fancies of an invalid. He wondered whether Mayne's fever had quite left him. He watched the fire bulging the lid and catching round the edges of the box. Then he heard Mayne's voice behind him, speaking very quietly.

"If ever I find my little boy *playing with tin soldiers*, I shall spank him well. No, that wouldn't be quite fair, would it? But I shall tell him

why he must not do it, and *I shall make him understand that it's an impossible thing.*"

Then the old Pastor comprehended. There was no touch of fever. The one-legged Hero had come home from the wars completely well and sound in mind. So the two men sat together in love by the Christmas fire, and saw the tin soldiers melt away.

7
THE UNIVERSITY

