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Author: Irvin S. Cobb

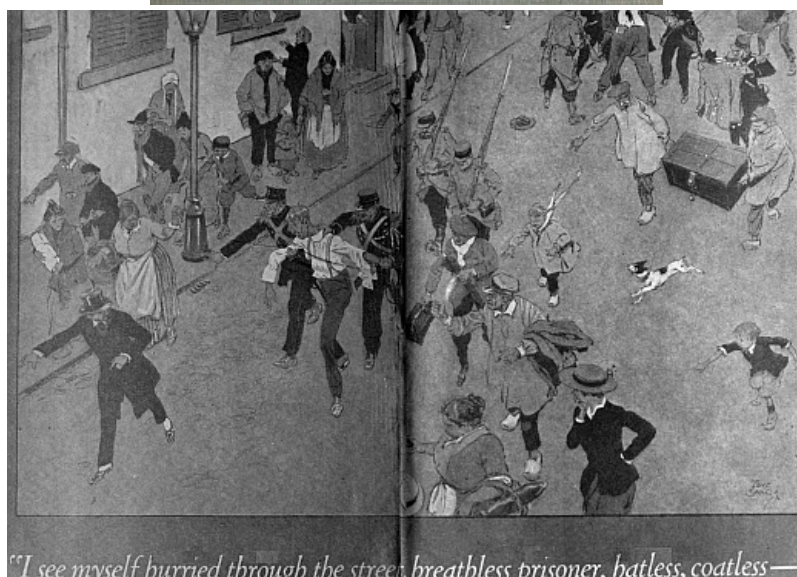
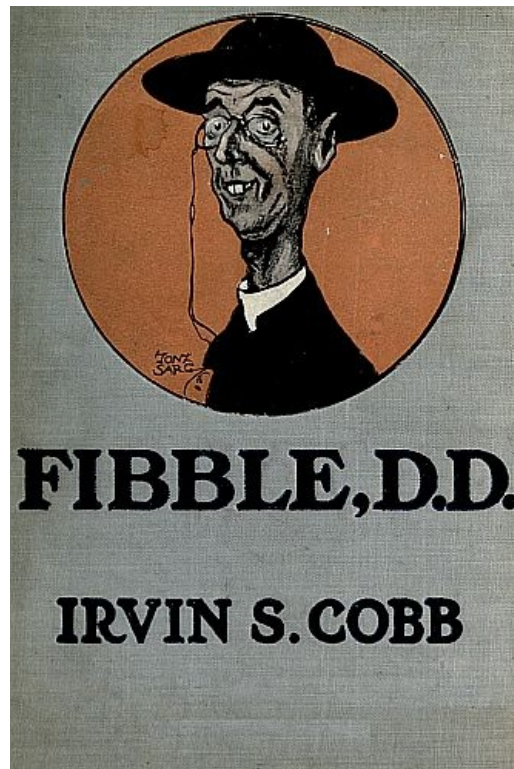
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FIBBLE, D.D ***



Fibble, D.D.

*Being Divers Episodes in the Life of a Certain Young Curate.
Subdivided, for Convenience, into Three Parts*

BY IRVIN S. COBB

FICTION

FIBBLE, D.D.
LOCAL COLOR
OLD JUDGE PRIEST
BACK HOME
THE ESCAPE OF MR. TRIMM

WIT AND HUMOR

"SPEAKING OF OPERATIONS——?"
EUROPE REVISED
ROUGHING IT DE LUXE
COBB'S BILL OF FARE
COBB'S ANATOMY

MISCELLANY

PATHS OF GLORY

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY
NEW YORK

[1]



**MOMENTARILY THE ARTICLES THAT FILLED MY
ARMS AND HUNG ON MY SHOULDERS AND BACK
GREW MORE CUMBERSOME AND BURDENSOME**

[2]

Fibble, D.D.

By

Irvin S. Cobb

Author of "Back Home," "Paths of Glory," etc.

[3]

Illustrated by Tony Sarg



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George H. Doran Company

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TO BOZEMAN BULGER, ESQ.

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PART ONE

***Being a Card to the Public from the Pen
of the Rev. Roscoe Titmarsh Fibble, D.D.***

Fibble, D.D.

The Young Nuts of America

IT is with a feeling of the utmost reluctance, amounting—if I may use so strong a word—to distress, that I take my pen in hand to indite the exceedingly painful account which follows; yet I feel I owe it not only to myself and the parishioners of St. Barnabas', but to the community at large, to explain in amplified detail why I have withdrawn suddenly, automatically as it were, from the organisation of youthful forest rangers of which I was, during its brief existence, the actuating spirit, and simultaneously have resigned my charge to seek a field of congenial endeavour elsewhere.

My first inclination was to remain silent; to treat with dignified silence the grossly exaggerated statements that lately obtained circulation, and, I fear me, credence, in some quarters, regarding the circumstances which have inspired me in taking the above steps. Inasmuch, however, as there has crept into the public prints hereabout a so-called item or article purporting to describe divers of my recent lamentable experiences—an item which I am constrained to believe the author thereof regarded as being of a humorous character, but in which no right-minded person could possibly see aught to provoke mirth—I have abandoned my original resolution and shall now lay bare the true facts. [14]

In part my motive for so doing is based on personal grounds, for I have indeed endured grievously both laceration of the tenderest sensibilities and anguish of the corporeal body; but I feel also that I have a public duty to perform. If this unhappy recital but serves to put others on their guard against a too-ready acceptance of certain specious literature dealing with the fancied delights—I say fancied advisedly and for greater emphasis repeat the whole phrase—against the fancied delights of life in the greenwood, then in such case my own poignant pangs shall not have entirely been in vain. [15]

With these introductory remarks, I shall now proceed to a calm, temperate and dispassionate narration of the various occurrences leading up to a climax that left me for a measurable space prone on the bed of affliction, and from which I have but newly risen, though still much shaken.

When I came to St. Barnabas' as assistant to the Reverend Doctor Tubley my personal inclination, I own, was for parish work among our female members. I felt that, both by natural leanings and by training, I was especially equipped to be of aid and comfort here. Instinctively, as it were, I have ever been drawn toward the other and gentler sex; but my superior felt that my best opportunities for service lay with the males of a tender and susceptible age.

He recommended that, for the time being at least, I devote my energies to the youthful masculine individuals within the parish fold; that I make myself as one with them if not one of them; that I take the lead in uniting them into helpful bands and associations. He felt that the youth of St. Barnabas' had been left rather too much to their own devices—which devices, though doubtlessly innocent enough in character, were hardly calculated to guide them into the higher pathways. I am endeavouring to repeat here the Reverend Doctor Tubley's words as exactly as may be. [16]

Continuing, he said he felt that our boys had been in a measure neglected by him. He had heard no complaint on this score from the lads themselves. Indeed, I gathered from the tenor of his remarks they had rather resented his efforts to get on a footing of comradeship with them. This, he thought, might be due to the natural diffidence of the adolescent youth, or perhaps to the disparity in age, he being then in his seventy-third year and they ranging in ages from nine to fifteen.

Nevertheless, his conscience had at times reproached him. With these words, or words to this effect, he committed the boys to my especial care, adding the suggestion that I begin my services by putting myself actively in touch with them in their various sports, pursuits and pastimes. [17]

In this connection the Boy Scout movement at once occurred to me, but promptly I put it from me. From a cursory investigation I gleaned that no distinctions of social caste were drawn among the Boy Scouts; that almost any boy of a given age, regardless of the social status of his parents, might aspire to membership, or even to office, providing he but complied with certain tests—in short, that the Boy Scouts as at present constituted were, as the saying goes, mixed.

Very naturally I desired to restrict my activities to boys coming from homes of the utmost culture and refinement, where principles of undoubted gentility were implanted from the cradle up. Yet it would seem that the germ of the thought touching on the Boy Scouts lingered within that marvellous human organism, the brain, resulting finally in consequences of an actually direful character. Of that, however, more anon in its proper place.

Pondering over the problem after evensong in the privacy of my study, I repaired on the day [18]

following to Doctor Tubley with a plan for a course of Nature Study for boys, to be prosecuted indoors. I made a point of the advantages to be derived by carrying on our investigations beside the student lamp during the long evenings of early spring, which were then on us. What, I said, could be more inspiring, more uplifting, more stimulating in its effects on the impressionable mind of a boy than at the knee of some older person to wile away the happy hours learning of the budding of the leaflet, the blossoming of the flowerlet, the upspringing of the shootlet, and, through the medium of informative volumes on the subject by qualified authorities, to make friends at first hand, so to speak, with the wild things—notably the birdling, the rabbit, the squirrel? Yes, even to make friends with the insects, particularly such insects as the bee and the ant—creatures the habits of industry of which have been frequently remarked—besides other insects too numerous to mention.

And, finally, what could better serve to round out an evening so replete with fruitful thought and gentle mental excitement than a reading by some member of the happy group of an appropriate selection culled from the works of one of our standard authors—Wordsworth, Longfellow or Tennyson, for example? What, indeed? [19]

To my surprise this plan, even though set forth with all the unstudied eloquence at my command, did not appear deeply to appeal to Doctor Tubley. I surmised that he had attempted some such undertaking at a previous period and had met with but indifferent success. He said that for some mysterious reason the nature of the growing boy seemed to demand action. My own observation subsequently was such as to confirm this judgment.

In passing I may say that this attribute remains to me one of the most unfathomable aspects of the complex juvenile mentality as commonly encountered at present. Though still a comparatively young man—thirty-eight on Michaelmas Day last past—I cannot conceive that as a lad I was ever animated with the restless, and I may even say mischievous, spirit that appears to dominate the waking hours of the youth of an oncoming generation. [20]

For proof of this assertion I would point to the fact that a great-aunt of mine, living at an advanced age in the city of Hartford, Connecticut, continues even now to treasure a handsomely illustrated and fitly inscribed copy of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," complete in one volume, which was publicly bestowed on me in my twelfth year for having committed to memory and correctly repeated two thousand separate quotations from the Old Testament—an achievement that brought on an attack resembling brain fever. I do not record this achievement in a spirit of boastfulness or vanity of the flesh, but merely to show that from a very early stage of my mundane existence I was by nature studious and ever mindful of the admonitions of my elders. Indeed, I do not recall a time when I did not prefer the companionship of cherished and helpful gift books to the boisterous and oftentimes rough sports of my youthful acquaintances.

But I digress; let us revert: Abandoning my scheme for a series of indoor Nature studies, since it did not meet with the approval of my superior, I set myself resolutely to the task of winning the undivided affection and admiration of the lads about me. On meeting one in the public highway or elsewhere I made a point of addressing him as "My fine fellow!" or "My bright lad!" of patting him on the head and gently ruffling his hair or twitching the lobe of his ear in a friendly way, and asking him, first, what his age might be, and, second, how he was doing at his books. [21]

These questions being satisfactorily answered in the order named, I would then say to him: "Ah, what a large sturdy lad we are becoming, to be sure!" or "Heigho, then, soon we shall be ready to don long trousers, shall we not?" And I would also be particular to enquire regarding the health and well-being of his parents, and so on, and to ascertain how many little brothers and little sisters he had, if any; usually coupling these passing pleasantries with some quotation aimed to inspire him to thoughtful reflections and worthy deeds. Yet to me it seemed that the lads actually sought to avoid these casual intercourses. [22]

Attributing this to the excusable timidity of the young, I persisted, being determined to put myself on a footing of complete understanding with them. I sought them out in their hours of relaxation, there being a large vacant lot or enclosure adjacent to the parish house where they were wont to meet and mingle freely in their customary physical exercises and recreations. Here again, from time to time, I proffered certain timely hints and admonitions for their better guidance.

For example, I sought to discourage the habit so prevalent among them of indulging in shrill, indiscriminate outcry when moved by the excitement of the moment. Repeatedly I advised them to practise in concert three hearty cheers, these to be immediately followed, should the exuberance of the occasion warrant, by a ringing tiger. This I recall was the invariable habit of the playfellows described in such works as "Sanford and Merton" and "Thomas Brown's Schooldays." I also urged on them the substitution of the fine old English game of cricket for baseball, to which I found them generally addicted. It is true I had never found either opportunity or inclination for perfecting myself in one or both of these games; but the pictured representations of cricket games, as depicted in books or prints, showing the participants dotted about over a smooth greensward, all attired in neat white flannels and all in graceful attitudes, convinced me it must be a much more orderly and consequently a more alluring pastime than the other. [23]

To me, if I may venture to say so, baseball has ever seemed most untidy. Personally I can imagine few things more unseemly than the act of sliding through the dust in order the more expeditiously to attain a given base or station; and even more objectionable, because so

exceedingly unhygienic, is the custom, common among these youthful devotees, of expectorating on the outer surface of the ball before delivering the same in the direction of the batsman.

I succeeded in inducing my young friends to allow me to drill them in the choral cheer. As I remarked repeatedly to them: "Why noise at all, young gentlemen? But if we must have noise let us have it in an orderly fashion and in accordance with the best traditions of the Anglo-Saxon race, from which all of us have or have not sprung as the case may be—to wit, as follows: Huzza! Huzza! Huzza! Tiger!" But, with the exception of one or two lads of a docile demeanour, I made no noticeable headway in my project for substituting cricket for baseball. [24]

Nor did my recommendation of the adoption of a uniform attire for all the lads attending the private school maintained by St. Barnabas' meet with any more favourable reception. Personally I was greatly attracted to the costume provided at Eton. It impressed me that the short, close-buttoned jacket, exposing the sturdy legs, and so forth, the neat linen collar and cuffs, and the becoming black tie, the whole being surmounted by the high hat, with its air of dignity, all combined to form ideal apparel for the growing lad. Some of the mothers to whom I broached the thought viewed it with considerable enthusiasm, but among the boys themselves an unaccountable opposition immediately developed. [25]

The male parents likewise were practically united in their objections. One husband and father, whose name I shall purposely withhold, actually sent me word he would swear out an injunction against me should I undertake to dress his innocent offspring up as a monkey-on-a-stick—the objectionable phraseology being his, not mine. In all charity I was constrained to believe that this gentleman's nature was of a coarse fibre. Had he, I asked myself dispassionately, had he no veneration for the hallowed memories and customs of a great English institution of learning? I was impelled to answer in the negative.

Thus time wore on until the beginning of the mid-year vacation drew near apace. It was at this juncture that the idea of an organisation similar in character to the Boy Scouts occurred to me. I decided to borrow the plan, with certain modifications, confining the membership exclusively to our best families. [26]

Accordingly, on the first Saturday afternoon in the month of May I called a chosen group of lads together and explained to them my purpose, finding to my gratification that they welcomed it with the utmost enthusiasm. Possibly my manner of setting forth the project of an outing appealed to them even more than the project itself. I recall that, in part, I spoke as follows:

"With me as your leader, your guide, your mentor, we shall go forth into the open, to seek out the bosky dell; to pierce the wildwood tangle; to penetrate the trackless wilderness. Our tents shall be spread alongside the purling brook, hard by some larger body of water. There, in my mind's eye, I see us as we practise archery and the use of the singlestick, both noble sports and much favoured by the early Britons. There we cull the flowers of the field and the forest glade, weaving them into garlands, building them into nosegays. By kindness and patience we tame the wild creatures. We learn to know the calls of the wildwood warblers, which I am credibly informed are many and varied in character; and by imitating those calls we charm the feathered minstrels to leave their accustomed haunts on the sheltering bough and to come and perch on our outstretched hands. [27]

"We lave our limbs in the pellucid waters of the lake or large body of water just referred to. We briskly project ourselves to and fro in a swing of Nature's own contriving, namely, the tendrils of the wild grapevine. We glean the coy berry from its hiding place beneath the sheltering leafage. We entice from their native element the finny denizens of the brawling stream and the murmuring brook. We go quickly hither and yon. We throb with health and energy. We become bronzed and hardy; our muscles harden to iron; our lungs expand freely and also contract with the same freedom, thus fulfilling their natural function.

"We find the day all too short, too fleeting. And by night about the crackling camp fire our happy voices, all united, are uplifted in song and roundelay. So, at length, wearied but happy, we seek repose in refreshing slumber until the rising sun or orb of day summons us to fresh delights, new discoveries, added experiences!" [28]

My imaginative picturing of the prospect had its desired results. Without loss of time all present, they being twelve in number, enrolled as members. From the minutes of this, our first meeting, as kept by me in a neatly lined book, which I had bethought me to provide for that purpose, I herewith enumerate the roster: Master Pope, Master Stickney, Master Worthington, Master MacMonnies, Master E. Smith and Master H. Smith—brothers, Master Odell, Master French, Master Horrigan, Master Ferguson, Master Dunworthy, and Master W. Smyth—nowise related to the foregoing Masters Smith, the name being spelled, as will be noted, with a y.

I was particularly pleased that Master Percival Pope should be included in our little band, for he was one to whom instinctively I had been attracted by reason of the gentle and almost seraphic expression of his mild blue eyes, his soft voice and his great politeness of manner. [29]

Next in order there arose for consideration two very important matters—the selection of a title or cognomen and the choice of a suitable costume. Charging myself with the working out of an appropriate costume design, I invited suggestions for a club name, at the same time proffering several ideas of my own. Among those that were tendered I recall the following: the Young Gentlemen Forest Rangers, the Chevalier Bayard Wildwood League, the Rollo Boys, the Juvenile Ivanhoes, the Buffalo Bill Kiddos, the Young Buffaloes of the Wild West, the Junior Scalp Hunters,

the Desperate Dozen, and the Johnnies-on-the-Spot.

I deem it well-nigh unnecessary to state that the first four suggestions emanated from my pen: the remaining five being fruitage of the inventive fancies of my young friends.

We spent some time canvassing over the proposed cognomens, rejecting this one for one reason, that one for another reason. None seemed to give general satisfaction. Those which especially pleased me—such, for instance, as the Rollo Boys—met with small approbation from my young compatriots, and vice versa. [30]

At length, in the interests of harmony, I proposed that each member should confer with his parents, his guardian or his kind teacher, with a view to striking on a suitable choice, always bearing in mind that the proposed name should carry with it a thought of the woody glade, the craggy slope, the pebbly beach—in short, should remind one of Nature's choicest offerings. As I said: "Not infrequently two heads are better than one; how much more desirable then to enlist the aid of a large number of heads?" So saying, I gave the signal for adjournment until the following Monday evening at the hour of eight-thirty of the clock.

Pursuant to adjournment we met at the appointed hour and speedily arrived at a solution of our problem. One of our group—which one I shall not state, since he was the son of that same gentleman who had used such unwarranted and inconsiderate language regarding my Eton suit plan—presented a slip of paper bearing a line in the handwriting of his father. I opened and read it. [31]

In brief the writer's idea was that we should call our organisation the Young Nuts of America, and that the leader, master or commander should be known as Chief Nut or Principal Nut. Coming from a gentleman who had expressed himself so adversely regarding a former project that had been close to my heart this manifestation of interest on his part touched me profoundly. Moreover, his suggestion appeared to my conceptions to be both timely and effective, carrying with it, as it did, a thought of the opening of the burs, of the descent of autumn on the vernal forest, of the rich meatiness of the kernel; a thought of the delectable filbert, the luscious pecan and the succulent walnut—the latter, however, having a tendency to produce cramping sensations when partaken of to excess.

These sentiments my youthful adherents appeared to share with me, for on my reading the paper aloud there followed an outburst of cheering, not unmingled with happy laughter. Checking them with a mild reminder that this was not a laughing matter, I put the proposition to a vote, and it was decided unanimously that we should be known as the Young Nuts of America and that my official title should be Chief Nut. [32]

Master Pope then moved, seconded by Master Horrigan, that for the time being we should keep the name of our club a secret among ourselves. To me there seemed no valid reason for this and I so stated; but appreciating their boyish fancy for creating an air of pleasant and innocent mystery about whatever undertaking in which they might be engaged, I soon waived my objection and it was so ordered by acclamation.

In this connection I desire to make a statement which may come as a surprise to many, and that is this: I have but lately—within the past few days, in fact—been informed that among persons addicted to the vice of slang the term nut is occasionally applied to other persons whom they suspect of being mentally incapable or, in short, deranged. [33]

Personally I see no possible connection between a nut, either of some wild species or of a domesticated variety, and one who, alas, is bereft of reason. I trust, furthermore, that I am not of a suspicious nature, and assuredly I am loath to impugn sinister motives to any fellow creature; but, in view of this, to me, astonishing disclosure, I am impelled to believe either that the gentleman in question was himself ignorant of the double meaning of the word or that he deliberately conspired within himself to cast ridicule not only on me but on the band of which his own son was a devoted adherent.

Be that as it may, our next meeting was set for that evening one week thence, at which time I promised my youthful followers I would appear before them with colour plates of the costume selected by me for wear on our outings; and also that I would bring all requisite information regarding the proper methods of marching, camping, and so on.

Herein I practised some small measure of deceit, for the costume itself was already fully designed and a copy of it, intended for my own use, was nearing completion in competent hands; but I purposely withheld that information, intending to come before them properly accoutred as a happy surprise, as it were. [34]

In my hours of leisure I had given no little thought to this matter, and finally enlisted the assistance of Miss Dorothea Peebles, who is well known as a member of our parish, and also does plain sewing and dressmaking. I called on Miss Peebles and explained to her the situation; and after an hour spent in conference we devised a garb that seemed to both of us eminently suited to the needs to which it would be put.

At the outset of our interview certain small differences of opinion asserted themselves. Miss Peebles' original suggestion of a modification of what she called the Little Lord Fauntleroy suit, to be constructed of black velvet with a flowing sash and lace cuffs, hardly seemed adapted to our purpose. I was also impelled gently to veto her next notion, which was for a replica of the

apparel commonly attributed to the personage known as Robin Hood and his deluded adherents. As I was at some pains to elucidate for her understanding, I could never countenance any recognition, however remote, of an individual of the type of Robin Hood, who, however noble and generous he may have been in certain aspects, was beyond peradventure a person of uncertain moral character.

[35]

Furthermore, the colour favoured by her—hunter's green—though of a harmonious tint as regards the prevalent tone of the forest glades wherein we counted on roaming in a care-free manner, was by reason of its very name inappropriate, since in a carnal sense we should not be hunters at all, meaning to woo the wild creatures by acts of kindness rather than to slay them with lethal weapons.

The costume finally agreed on combined a number of distinctive touches. The head-dress was a red Scotch cap—tam-o'-shanter I believe is its common appellation—to be ornamented with a feather or tuft of simple field flowers. There was to be a loose white blouse with a soft rolling collar such as sailors wear, marked on the sleeve with any desirable insignia, and joined or attached to the nether garments by means of a broad leather belt, set with a buckle. It was my own conception that the nether garments should be in hue blue, and should end just above the knees; also, that the stockings should be rolled down on the limbs, thus leaving the knees bare, after the custom followed by the hardy Tyrolese and the natives of the Highlands. We agreed that the matter of outer coats or woven jackets—I dislike the word sweater—for further protection in inclement atmospheric conditions, should be left to the dictates of the individual. I deplored this, however, as tending to mar the general effect.

[36]

All this having been arranged, Miss Peebles volunteered to construct a costume for me according to measurements that, for the sake of the proprieties, I made myself and sent to her by mail. With my mind relieved of this duty, I set diligently about the task of acquainting myself fully with the duties of my position. I procured a number of helpful works, including among others: "Who's Who Among the Plants, Flowers, Herbs and Shoots"; "How to Know the Poison Ivy—a Brochure"; "Archery in All Its Branches"; "The Complete Boy Camper," by a Mr. E. Hough; and an authoritative work on swimming and diving. To the last-named volume I applied myself with all intensity. I felt that a thorough knowledge of swimming was essential to my position as guide and instructor to these young minds.

[37]

In my youth I never learned to swim; in fact, I went swimming but once. On that occasion the water was unpleasantly chilly; and on my venturing out waist-deep there was a sensation—a delusion if you will—that all the important vital organs had become detached from their customary alignments and were crowding up into the throat, impeding utterance and distracting the thoughts from the work in hand.

Also, on emerging from the pool I found my young companions in a spirit of mistaken pleasantry had tied my garments into quite hard knots. This inconsiderate and thoughtless act so disturbed me that I did not repeat the experiment. Besides, on my returning home and repeating the entire incident in the family circle my mother admonished me that the downfall of countless youths properly dated from the day when they first went swimming with idle comrades without having previously procured the consent of their parents—a thing which from that hour forth I never thought of doing.

[38]

In order to acquire proficiency at swimming it was imperative on me, therefore, to start at the beginning. Fortunately the book on this subject was very explicit in text and contained many charts and diagrams showing the correct evolutions. With this book open before me at the proper place I lay prone on the floor, striking out with my arms and legs according to the printed instructions, and breathing deeply through the nostrils. It was while I was so engaged that my housekeeper, Mrs. Matilda Dorcas, came into my room without knocking; for a moment the situation became mutually embarrassing.

Thereafter when prosecuting my studies I took the precaution to lock my bedroom door, thus insuring privacy. The result was, within four days I could compliment myself with the reflection that I had completely mastered the art of swimming, being entirely familiar with the various strokes, including the breast stroke, the trudgeon stroke, the Australian crawl stroke, and others of an even quainter nomenclature.

[39]

To the best of my present recollection, it was on a Friday evening—Friday, the twenty-first ultimo—that Miss Peebles sent to me by messenger my completed uniform, done up in a paper parcel. Having by telephone notified the twelve charter members to attend a special called meeting that evening at the parish house, I repaired to my rooms immediately after tea and proceeded to attire myself in the costume, standing meantime before my mirror to study the effect. In the main, Miss Peebles had adhered to the original design, except that the nether garments or knickerbockers were of rather a light and conspicuous shade of blue—I believe this colour tone is known vernacularly as robin blue—and she had seen fit to garnish their outer seams and the cuffs of the blouse with rows of white buttons of a pearl-like material and rather augmented size, which added a decorative but perhaps unnecessary touch of adornment.

[40]

Also, if I may so express myself, there was a feeling of undue publicity about the throat, this being due to the open collar, and in the vicinity of the knees. I am somewhat slender of form, though not too slender, I take it, for my height, standing, as I do, five feet six inches in my half hose, and I trust I am free from the sin of personal vanity; but I confess that at the moment, contemplating my likeness in the mirror, I could have wished my knees had not been quite so

prominently conspicuous, and that the projection of the thyroid cartilage of the larynx, called vulgarly Adam's apple, had been perhaps a trifle less obtrusive.

To my slenderness I also attribute a feeling as though all was not well in the vicinity of the waistline, even though I tightened and retightened my belt so snugly as to cause some difficulty in respiring properly. From the time when I ceased to wear short trousers, which buttoned on, I have ever had recourse to braces or suspenders; and the lack of these useful but perhaps not beautiful adjuncts to a wardrobe gave a sensation of insecurity which, for the nonce, proved disconcerting in the extreme.

[41]

Emotions that at this moment I find it hard to interpret in words actuated me to leave the house in a quiet and unostentatious fashion—by the back door, in fact—and to proceed on my way to the parish house, two blocks distant, along a rather obscure side street. I was perhaps halfway there when through the falling dusk I discerned, approaching from the opposite direction, three of my parishioners—a Mr. G. W. Pottinger, whom from our first acquaintance I suspected of possessing an undue sense of humour, and his daughters, the Misses Mildred and Mabel Pottinger.

For the moment I was possessed by a mental condition I may define as being akin to embarrassment. Involuntarily I turned into the nearest doorway. My object was to avoid a meeting; I tell you this frankly. Immediately, however, I noted that the door I was about to enter was the door of a tobacco dealer's shop. As though frozen into marble, I halted with my hand on the latch. I have never had recourse to that noxious weed, tobacco, in any form whatsoever, except on one occasion when, in the absence of camphor, I employed it in a crumbled state for the purpose of protecting certain woolen undergarments from the ravages of the common moth.

[42]



MAY I ASK WHETHER YOU ARE GOING TO A FANCY DRESS PARTY SOMEWHERE?

Indeed, my attitude in regard to tobacco is as firm as that of the youth, Robert Reed, whose noble and inspiring words on this subject, embodied in verse form, I have frequently quoted to the growing youth about me. I realised instantly that to be seen in the apparent act of leaving or entering the establishment of a tobacconist would, in a sense, be compromising; so I retreated to the sidewalk just as Mr. Pottinger and the Misses Pottinger arrived at that precise point.

In the gloaming I fain would have passed them with dignified yet hurried movement; but they put themselves directly in my path, and as recognition was now inevitable, I halted, removing my cap with my right hand while with my left I continued, as I had been doing ever since leaving my lodgings, to retain a firm grasp on my waistline.

[43]

"Good evening!" I said. "Is it not a pleasant evening since the cool of evening set in? Good evening! Good-bye!" And so I would have continued on my way.

Mr. Pottinger somehow barred the way. I heard Miss Mildred Pottinger give voice to a species of gasp, while Miss Mabel, the younger sister, a young girl and much addicted, I fear, to levity, began uttering a gurgling, choking sound that somewhat to my subconscious

annoyance continued unabated during the interview which followed.

"Good evening!" said Mr. Pottinger, clearing his throat. "I beg your pardon, Doctor Fibble, but may I ask—Mabel, please be quiet!—may I ask whether you are going to a fancy-dress party somewhere?"

"By no means," I replied. "I am en route, sir, to attend a special or called meeting of our newly formed boys' outing club. These are the habiliments designed for club use."

[44]

"Oh!" he said. "Oh, I see! Mabel, child, kindly restrain yourself. Don't you see Doctor Fibble and I are talking? Ahem! And is any one besides yourself going to wear this—er—er—regalia in public?"

Having no sons of his own, Mr. Pottinger naturally would be unacquainted with the aims and objects of my present activities. Therefore I could well understand his ignorance.

"Oh, yes, indeed," was my answer; "all of our members are to wear it."

"What will you bet?" Such was his astonishing rejoinder—I say astonishing, because nothing had been said regarding a wager and certainly nothing had been farther from my own thoughts.

"What will I bet?" I echoed, for the instant nonplussed. Then consciousness of what I had just said came to me with a shock. Releasing my waistband I clasped both my hands before me in an attitude to which I am much given when desirous of signifying unwonted intensity of feeling. "Mr. Pottinger," I said gravely, "I never bet. I regard it as a reprehensible practice. I am bitterly opposed under all circumstances to the hazard of chance."

[45]

"All right! Excuse me," he said; "only it seems to me you're taking one now. Well, good evening, doctor, and good luck to you! Er—you don't mind my complimenting you on your gameness, do you?"

And so he departed, continuing as long as he remained in my hearing to reprehend his younger daughter concerning her unseemly and ill-timed outbursts.

This episode, trifling though it was, served rather to increase than to diminish my nervousness; but upon my entering the assembly hall, where my young friends were gathered together awaiting my coming, all sense of trepidation vanished, so spontaneous and uproarious was their greeting. The chorus of lusty young voices raised in instantaneous cheering was to me sufficient reward for all the pains to which I had been put. One and all, they manifested the deepest interest in the new uniform. [46]

At the request of Master Pope—he to whom I have already referred in terms of high praise—I, standing on the small raised platform, turned round and round slowly, in order that he and his fellows might better study the effect, the enthusiasm increasing all the time until the sound was really quite deafening in volume. It was, indeed, a refreshing experience, following so closely on the Pottinger incident; and I veritably believe that, had I not grown slightly dizzy, those brave boys would have kept me revolving there for an hour.

"Now, then, my fine fellows," I said, when the noise had died down, "I shall distribute among you twelve water-colour drawings, done by your leader's own hand, showing the general plan and colour scheme to be followed in executing this costume. Master Pope, will you kindly pass out these copies to your mates?"

This done and the members being warned to have their uniforms speedily ready, I announced that on the following Thursday we should embark on our first invasion of the forest primeval, going for a camping expedition of three days to the shores of Hatcher's Lake, a body of water situate, as I had previously ascertained, a distance of forty miles by rail from the city and four miles more from the station at Hatchersville, a small village. [47]

"We shall proceed to this obscure hamlet on the steam cars," I explained, "and thence to our appointed place afoot, bearing our camp baggage and other accoutrements with us."

With an uplifted hand I checked the outburst that was about to follow this announcement.

"Remember, please, the proprieties!" I said. "Now then, all together, after me: Huzza! Huzza! Huzza!—Tiger!"

As the echoes died away Master Horrigan spoke:

"How about tents?" he said.

"How about a cook?" This came from Master E. Smith, the stouter of the two Smiths with an i.

"How about cots?" This last speaker, as I recall, was Master MacMonnies. [48]

Other questions of a similar tenor volleyed on me from all quarters.

For a space of time measurable by minutes I was quite taken aback. So engrossed had I been with the costume, with acquiring skill at swimming, and with ordering from Boston a genuine English yew bow and a sheaf of arrows, that until this moment these lesser details had entirely escaped my attention; but at once my mind was at work on the situation.

I recalled that in the work by Mr. Hough, entitled, "The Complete Boy Camper," of which, as I have remarked before, I already had a copy by me, there was a chapter describing how a balmy couch, far superior to any ordinary bed, might be constructed of the boughs of the spruce, the hemlock, the cedar, or other evergreen growths indigenous to our latitude; and also a chapter describing methods of cooking without pots or pans over a wood fire. The author went so far as to say that bacon was never so delicious as when broiled on a pointed stick above the glowing coals in the open air, thus preserving the racy tang of the woods; while it was stated that the ideal manner of preparing any small game or fish for human consumption was to roll it in a ball of wet clay and then roast it in the glowing ashes. [49]

It was set forth that the person in charge of the cooking should never pluck or skin the game, or even open its interior for the purpose for which I believe such interiors are opened in similar cases; but that when the fire had died down and the ball had assumed a bricklike consistency, one had but to rake the latter forth, whereupon it would split apart; that the skin, feathers or scales, as the case might be, adhering to the inner surfaces of the dried clay, would be removed, so to speak, automatically; and that the innermost contents of the animal, bird or fish—I hesitate to use the word employed in the book—that the contents, as I shall call them, would then be found drawn up into a small, hard knot, leaving the meat ready to be eaten.

The author of the book went on to say that when in the woods he rarely prepared his food after any other fashion, and that so cooked, with the addition of a little salt, it was invariably deliciously flavoured—in short, a dish fit for a king. [50]

Recalling these things, I told the lads they need not concern themselves with such matters as cots and culinary utensils—that I would take those matters in hand. I realise now, in the light of subsequent events, that I spoke o'erhastily; but, inspired with confidence by my readings, I felt

no doubt whatever regarding my ability to master such emergencies as might arise.

As for tents, I said that with the aid of a small axe I could within a few minutes, by following certain directions given in "The Complete Boy Camper," construct commodious and comfortable lean-forwards. The work in question had spoken of these edifices as lean-tos, but I preferred the word lean-forwards as being more grammatical and more euphonious as well.

With a few parting admonitions from me concerning the costume, personal toilet appendages, the hour of leaving, and so on, the meeting then broke up, the boys scattering into the darkness with ringing halloos of unalloyed happiness, all very refreshing to hear, while I wended my homeward way filled with not unpleasing reflections of the prospect before me. [51]

However, these thoughts were soon dissipated, for the intervening days were so filled with labour that I preserve but an indistinct and blurred recollection of them. Just when I was sure that every imaginable contingency had been provided for, some other item, unforeseen until then, would crop up. I was kept busy revising and enlarging my list of needful articles and scurrying about here and there among tradespeople, finally staggering home at twilight laden with parcels and quite on the verge of exhaustion. Really it was very annoying.

Even with the coming of night there was no surcease, for such was my sense of my own responsibilities that my sleep was much broken. I would wake with a start from troubled slumber to remember something of importance that I had until that moment entirely forgotten. I developed a severe headache and became so distraught that to the simplest questions I made strangely incongruous answers. Once, at eventide, on Mrs. Dorcas' coming into my study to enquire what I would have for breakfast the ensuing morning, I mechanically answered, to the no small astonishment of that worthy person: "Spruce boughs!" [52]

Nevertheless, the day of departure found me quite prepared. At least I fancied I was amply prepared for all situations; but who can forestall the emergencies that may confront one when one, leaving one's accustomed mode of life, plunges one's self headlong into another sphere, of an entirely dissimilar aspect? Who, I repeat, can foretell these?

I had meant to proceed afoot to the station, carrying my impedimenta, as an example of hardihood and endurance for the benefit of my young adherents; but such was the number of parcels and their awkwardness of shape and bulk that at the final moment, after I had painfully strained my arms in an effort to raise the largest pack to my back, and after I had been repeatedly tripped by the handle of my woodsman's axe, which I wore in my belt, I suffered Mrs. Dorcas to summon a hired hack or conveyance. Seated on the rear seat of this vehicle, carrying some of my equipage in my lap and having the rest piled about me, I was conveyed to the station. [53]

Seemingly tidings of our excursion had spread, for an unusually large crowd was gathered on the platform as I drove up. Again, if I must own it, the old feeling of conspicuousness in regard to my throat and knees assailed me. Possibly this emotion was accentuated by a trifling circumstance that eventuated as I sought to alight from the hack. Hampered by my belongings, I stumbled on the handle of my axe, which persistently trailed between my limbs, and was thrown headlong between the wheels, while many of my dislodged parcels descended on me, retarding my efforts to regain my equilibrium.

Having been assisted to my feet by several bystanders, I lost no time in entering the waiting room, where, noting that I was apparently the object of some quite unnecessary curiosity on the part of those present, I remained in a corner surrounded by my bundles and with my handkerchief fanning my face, which felt quite warm, until the moment for departure drew near. Several times during this interval I caught myself regretting that I had arrived so early; half an hour or more elapsed before my young followers began to appear, straggling in one by one. [54]

To my great surprise and no less disappointment I discovered that of all our number I alone was properly clad and accoutred for this, our very first outing. In the main the members who appeared were attired merely in their customary garments. Each in turn explained that for various reasons he had been unable to secure his completed costume in proper time. Four of the lads, as I learned at secondhand, through the diligence of their mothers, had acquired the prescribed apparel; but all four, strange to say, had been taken ill that very morning and now sent their excuses, expressing deep regret at being unable to join us. Really, when I recall what was to occur in my own instance it would almost seem to one superstitiously inclined that a sort of fatality attached to the wearing of the garb. [55]

At the last moment Master Dunworthy, our youngest member, arrived in charge of his mother; and he, I was rejoiced to behold, was properly apparelled in the regulation red cap, white blouse and light blue nether garments. A diffidence, with which I could in a measure sympathise, induced Master Dunworthy to walk closely behind his mother; in fact it might almost be said he came forward unwillingly, impelled by the firm grip of the maternal hand on his collar. He was also sobbing audibly, presumably from homesickness.

With a view to assuaging his distress I made him colour bearer on the spot and conferred on him the compliment of bearing our flag—white, with a red border and a design of a large blue filbert in the centre—a banner of my own designing and worked out by Miss Peebles. I could have wished the filbert had looked more like a filbert and less like a melon; but the general effect, I flattered myself, was excellent. Yet the bestowal of this honour failed to revive the despondent spirits of Master Dunworthy. [56]

Up to the moment of leaving, I cherished the hope that some of the absentees would appear, but that was not to be. When with infinite difficulty I had marshalled my charges aboard the train, amid the friendly laughter and cheering of the crowd, I found that we were, all told, but seven in number; and but a moment after we were reduced to six, since Master Dunworthy unaccountably vanished, leaving the flag behind him.

So engaged was I in the task of bestowing our seemingly innumerable trappings properly that the train was actually in motion before I became cognisant of his disappearance. Convinced that he had been left behind by accident, I entreated the conductor to return for our colour bearer; but this the conductor refused to do, saying it was enough to be running a circus train without having to back up every time one of the animals got lost, strayed or stolen. This I took to be a veiled thrust at our little band and as such I treated it with dignified silence. [57]

We were presently rolling away through the peaceful, sunlit countryside at an exhilarating speed, and I, little dreaming of what was in store for me and believing all our troubles were now behind us, felt tempted to indulge myself in the luxury of drawing several deep breaths of relief. However, fresh distractions occurred. I was much annoyed to discern among the remaining lads a romping and disorderly spirit, which I was at pains to discourage, at first by shakes of the head and frowns, and ultimately by expressions of open reproof, such as "Tut! Tut!" and "Pray be done, young gentlemen! I beseech you to be done."

To me it appeared that certain of the adult passengers, by covert signs and sounds of approval, were actually abetting and encouraging the urchins in their misbehaviour. Master Pope, alone of all his fellows, maintained a suitable deportment. As he sat demurely behind me I observed him in the act of imitating my gestures of reproof to his less decorous comrades—a manifestation of the emulative spirit which gratified me no little. [58]

I own that I was much rejoiced to hear the verbal announcement of the conductor's assistant—known, I believe, as the brakeman—that Hatcher's Lake would be the next stopping place. True enough, the train, as though to confirm his words, stopped almost immediately. As we left the car, myself bringing up the rear and bearing the flag in addition to my other belongings, some slight delay was occasioned by the flagstaff getting crosswise in the door opening. As, with the brakeman's good offices, I succeeded in dislodging it from its horizontal position, a voice behind me called out, "Good-bye, little Tut-tut!" which offensive remark was at once caught up by others.

I framed a fitting and, I think, a crushing retort, but before I had entirely completed it in my own mind the cars had moved on and I found myself standing with my diminished troop on the platform, surrounded by a staring ring of rustics of all ages and conditions.

For some reason these persons appeared to labour under the impression that we constituted some sort of travelling amusement enterprise. One of them, a person of elderly aspect, asked me what kind of medicine I was selling, and a number of small boys requested me to shoot with my bow and arrows for their delectation. Disregarding these impertinences, I enquired of the elderly man how one might best reach Hatcher's Lake. [59]

"Straight down the main pike," he replied, pointing to a gravel-coated road winding away toward the top of an adjacent hill; "but it's better'n three miles, and if you're aimin' to give a free show and sell Injun Bitters or somethin' you'd a heap better stop right here, because you'd git a bigger crowd than you would up at the lake."

Rendered pettish, possibly irritable, by the display of an ignorance so dense and incomprehensible, I waved him aside without deigning to answer.

"Fall in!" I bade my followers in a military manner; and then, when they had gathered up their belongings: "Forward—march!" [60]

In his crude vernacular, which I have endeavoured to reproduce faithfully, the aged rustic had said Hatcher's Lake was better than three miles distant. I am convinced what he meant was not better but worse.

As we marched away over the brow of the hill the sun shone down with excessive and caloric fervour and the dust rose in thick clouds, coating our lineaments, which already were bedewed with perspiration. Momentarily the articles that filled my arms and hung on my shoulders and back grew more cumbersome and burdensome, and speedily I developed a blistered and feverish condition of the feet or pedal extremities.

I think it must have been at about this time I dropped my shaving outfit, a wash-rag and my toothbrush out of the breast pocket of my blouse, and lost, presumably from under my arm, the small parcel containing my bedroom slippers and a garment intended for nightwear exclusively. A vial of cold cream, all my spare pocket handkerchiefs, and the brochure on the peculiarities of the poison ivy also disappeared during the journey—but at exactly what point I know not and could not, with propriety, undertake to say. Throughout the march, however, though well-nigh spent and exhausted, I clung to the other burdens, holding in my hands and under my arms, among other things, the bow and arrows, the flag, the axe, a blanket, a cake of soap, and a small sofa pillow of pale pink which Mrs. Dorcas had insisted on my bringing with me. [61]

I have not at my command words proper to describe my profound relief when, after travelling what seemed a great distance, mainly uphill, we reached a point where, advised by a signpost, we turned off the main highway into a wooded bypath traversing aisles of majestic forest monarchs,

which seemed to extend for vast distances in every direction, and came at length to our destination.

How cool seemed the placid mirror of the lake, with its surface unruffled, or practically so! How inviting the mossy greensward! How grateful the dense shade! How cooling to parched lips the cool fluid bubbling from its spring or fountain! To complete enjoyment of this last named there was but one drawback. We had forgotten to bring any drinking cups. [62]

Master Horrigan contrived to fashion his hat into some manner of drinking receptacle, and after some passing reluctance I was induced to slake my thirst with the aid of this; but I am sure I should never care to drink regularly from a boy's hat.

Our thirst being sated, the lads manifested an inclination to remove their garments and dash headlong into the waters of the lake; but I said them nay.

"All things in order," quoth I, "and one thing at a time, if you please, my young comrades. First, we must, as the cant word goes, pitch our camp and prepare our temporary habitations; then shall we partake of suitable midday refreshment. After which, following a period devoted by me to helpful discourse and the exercise of the digestive processes on the part of all present, we may safely consider the advisability of disporting ourselves in yon convenient sheet or pool of water; but, in view of our arduous march just completed, I feel that we should be amply justified in reclining on the greensward for a brief passage of time." [63]

So saying, I set the example by throwing myself in a prone attitude on the turf; but not for long did I remain thus. Considering its mossy appearance, the earth seemed unduly hard and strangely unsuited to serve as a cushion for the recumbent human form. In addition, there was an amazing prevalence of insect life, all of it characterised by a restless and constant activity.

Ofttimes have I read verses by our most inspired poets telling of the delights of lying prostrate within the leafy fastnesses of the forest deep, but I am forced to believe these poets were elsewhere when engaged in inditing their immortal lines. On suitable occasions I have myself indulged in poesy; but I am quite certain I could not court the muse while ants were crawling on my limbs and even invading my garments, as in the present instance. Earwigs were also remarked.

So, rising, I cautioned my followers to withdraw themselves to a safe distance; and then, with the aid of the woodsman's axe—borrowed from our worthy hardware merchant, Mr. J. T. Harkness, to whom credit is due for his abundant kindness—I proceeded to fell or cause to fall the trees of which I proposed constructing our lean-forwards, two or more in number. [64]

My initial object of attack was a large tree; but, finding its fibres to be of a singularly hard and resistant nature, and the axe manifesting an unaccountable tendency to twist in my hands, causing the sides of the axe rather than its edged portion to strike against the tree, resulting in painful shocks to my arms and shoulders, I was soon induced to abandon it for a smaller tree.

In circumference of trunk this second tree was hardly more than a sapling, yet it required upward of half an hour of the most arduous and persistent labour, and several large water blisters appeared on the palms of my hands before it tottered, bent, cracked and finally fell quivering on the earth. In descending it perversely took the wrong direction, narrowly escaping striking me in its fall; indeed, one of its lower limbs severely scratched my left cheek. [65]

Nor did the severed trunk possess the neat and symmetrical appearance I have noted in the case of trees felled by professional woodsmen. Rather did it present the aspect of having been gnawed down by slow degrees, resembling, if I may use the simile, a very hard lead pencil, the point of which has been renewed with a very dull knife.

A hasty mental calculation now convinced me that at this rate of progress many hours or possibly days would elapse before I felled a sufficient number of trees to construct one or more lean-forwards of the dimensions I had in mind. Desiring opportunity to ponder over this, I suggested to the lads, who were seated in a row following my movements with every indication of lively interest, that we desist for the time from building operations and enjoy luncheon, which announcement was greeted with audible approval by all.

"Let us build a true woodsmen's camp fire," I said; "and over it I shall broil for your delectation succulent slices of crisp bacon." [66]

Almost immediately a cheery fire was burning on the shore of the lake. From the stock of supplies I brought forth a strip of bacon, finding it much greasier than I had anticipated; I may say I had never before handled this product in its raw state. I set about removing a suitable number of slices. Here an unanticipated contingency developed—in the press of other matters I had failed to provide a knife or other edged tool with which to slice it. One of the lads produced from his pocket a small knife; but, suspecting from the appearance of the blade the presence of lurking bacteria, I used the axe. This gave the slices a somewhat uneven and ragged appearance.

Affixing a suitable fragment of the meat on a forked stick, I fell to broiling it. The smoke from the fire proved most annoying. No matter in what position one placed oneself, or where one stood, this smoke invaded one's nostrils and eyes, causing choking and smarting sensations. Then, too, in the early stages of my cooking operations a caterpillar fell from a bough overhead down the back of my neck. [67]

I was taken quite unaware, I do assure you. I have ever entertained a distaste, amounting to aversion, for caterpillars, both in an active living state and when they have been crushed beneath the careless foot. With me this attained to a deep-rooted antipathy. Even at the sight of one progressing on a limb or leaf, by wrinkling up its back, I can with difficulty repress a visible shudder. How much greater the shock, then, to feel it descending one's spinal column?

I uttered a short, involuntary outcry and, stepping backward, I encountered some slippery object and was instantly precipitated with jarring force to the earth. It appeared that I had set my foot on the strip of bacon, which inadvertently I had left lying on the ground directly in my rear. An unsightly smear of grease on the reverse breadth of my blue knickerbockers was the consequence. I endeavoured, though, to pass off the incident with a pleasant smile, saying merely:

[68]

"Accidents will happen in the best-regulated families, will they not? Oh, yes, indeed!"

The first strip of bacon having fallen in the fire and been utterly destroyed, I prepared another; and, as Master Pope volunteered to stand vigilantly on guard behind me and prevent other caterpillars from descending on me, I resumed my task. Nevertheless, Master Pope's ministrations proved of small avail. During the course of the next few minutes no less than six separate and distinct caterpillars, besides a small black beetle or cockchafer of a most repellent aspect, fell down my back.

Once, turning my head suddenly, I found Master Pope holding a caterpillar extended between the thumb and forefinger of his right hand almost directly above the nape of my neck. He explained that he had plucked it out of midair as it was in the act of dropping from the leafage above. I admired his presence of mind greatly, but his courage yet more. I confess that except to save human life I should never have the fortitude to grasp a caterpillar with an ungloved hand.

[69]

Doubtlessly because of the nervousness occasioned by the prevalence of caterpillars, the bacon as broiled was not the unqualified success I had been led to expect from reading Mr. Hough's work. Personally, I could not grow rapturous over the wildwood tang of which so much has been said in a complimentary way by other and more experienced campers than myself. I am inclined to think the wildwood tang must be an acquired taste.

Altogether, I fear our noontide repast might have proved rather a failure had it not been that Master Horrigan's mother at the hour of his departure had bestowed on him a quantity of ham sandwiches and a large lemon-jelly cake of the layer variety. Eliminating broiled bacon from our menu we lunched, therefore, on sandwiches and a part of the cake, the latter in particular being quite agreeable to the palate though in a somewhat shaken and disturbed state from being transported beneath Master Horrigan's arm.

[70]

The immediate pangs of hunger being assuaged, I craved tea. Tea is the one stimulant in which I indulge. A cup of moderately strong Oolong, slightly weakened by the addition of a modicum of cream or hot milk, with three lumps of sugar in it, is to me a most refreshing drink and one to which I am strongly drawn. So I set about brewing myself a portion of tea.

Again backsets developed. I enumerate them: First, I knew nothing, except by the merest hearsay, of the art of brewing tea. Second, I had failed to provide myself with a teapot or similar vessel. Third, in the natural confusion of the moment I had left the tea on board the train. Fourth, there was no milk, neither was there cream or sugar. A sense of lassitude, with a slight headache, was the result of my having perforce to forego my customary cup.

I had meant to devote the hour following the meal to an enlivening discourse on the joys of outdoor life and communion with Nature in her devious moods, as the poet hath said, to be couched in language suitable for the understanding of my hearers. Accordingly, stretching myself prone on my blanket, with my pink sofa pillow beneath my head, I began an opening sentence.

[71]

Shortly thereafter I must have drifted off; for, on being wakened by the efforts of an ant to penetrate my inner ear, I discovered, somewhat to my disapproval since there had been no order to this effect, that the five youngsters had divested themselves of their outer garbings and were disporting themselves in the lake—some wading near shore, some diving headlong from a fallen log that protruded from the bank. A superficial scrutiny of their movements showed me that, though all were capable of sustaining themselves in the unstable element, scarce one of them made any pretence of following out the evolutions as laid down for guidance in the work entitled "Swimming in Twenty Easy Lessons."

Without loss of time I repaired to the shelter of a near-by thicket, where I removed my costume and folded it neatly, as is my wont, and swiftly attired myself in a new bathing suit. In another moment I had mounted the fallen log and was advancing toward the spot where they were splashing about.

[72]

"Hold, young gentlemen—hold!" I called out, at the same time halting them with a wave of my hand. "Kindly desist and give to me your undivided attention. The method employed by you in keeping your persons afloat is, as I note, faulty in the extreme. By actual demonstration I shall now instruct you in the rudiments of this graceful art."

With these words, I advanced another step and yet another. At this instant my foot slipped on the rounded surface of the recumbent tree, and before I could extend my limbs forth and arrange them in the proper attitude for making the first stroke, in fact before I had an opportunity for

taking any precautionary measures whatsoever, I was propelled outward and downward upon the bosom of the lake, striking with considerable violence on my lower diaphragm.

To my astonishment, I might even say to my most complete astonishment, I went under practically instantaneously. This immediately induced a sense of uneasiness, which increased to actual apprehension when I found it impossible to straighten myself on the water in the posture illustrated in Diagram A in the first lesson. [73]

Instinctively I felt all was not well with me!

With a view, therefore, to securing temporary assistance until I could collect myself and regain my customary calmness, I opened my mouth to utter certain words; but, instead of speech issuing forth, a considerable volume of water poured down my throat, producing a muffled, gurgling sound. From this point on my apprehension grew perceptibly until I grasped the helping hands that were extended to me and, after a few struggles, was, by the aid of those chivalrous youths, drawn in a weak and temporarily voiceless condition to safety on the bank.

There for some time I was content to remain, permitting the water I had inadvertently swallowed to pour forth from my interior, the lads continuing to frolic about in the treacherous lake until I had entirely recovered. Thus some time passed. Finally, summoning them to me I stated that the first swimming lesson was herewith suspended until a more suitable moment, and gave the command for catching a number of finny beauties for our evening meal. This, however, was rendered impossible by reason of our having no fish-hooks or other suitable appurtenances for catching them. Really, it would seem that for the simplest outing an almost incalculable number and variety of accessories are needful! [74]

In view of this situation I promptly devised an altered plan of campaign. Inwardly I had already gained my own consent to abandon the project of building any lean-forwards for our use on this particular occasion. I now split our strength into parties of equal number and, detailing Masters Ferguson and Horrigan to aid me in constructing woodmen's couches, I assigned to Masters Pope, E. Smith and H. Smith the task of faring forth into the wilderness that encompassed us to seek the wild fruit and to kill, as painlessly as possible, sufficient wild game for our next repast. [75]

At the same time I warned them, above all things, to avoid destroying the feathered songsters. Under other circumstances I would have decried slaughtering any living creatures whatsoever; but in the existing emergency a certain amount of carnage appeared inevitable, for, as I said to them: "Must we not eat? Shall we not obey Nature's first law?"

To bring about this consummation I intrusted to Master Pope my bow and sheath of arrows, instructing him verbally, so far as I remembered it, in the knowledge of using these weapons, as contained in the manual on that subject, "Archery in All Its Branches."

With merry cries—for the spirits of these brave lads seemed unquenchable—the three huntsmen moved off through the trees; and at once their forms were lost to sight, while I gave myself over to superintending the labours of my chosen aides in the gathering of boughs of the fragrant evergreen, and in arranging this material at equidistant intervals about our camp-fire site so as to form six springy couches. As completed, these couches lacked that luxurious appearance I had been led to expect; but I consoled myself with the reflection: Pretty is as pretty does! [76]

We had barely concluded our labours when, with glad halloos, our returning comrades came into sight bearing the spoils of the chase, consisting of a brace of large birds, one being black in colour, the other white, and both quite dead. At once I was struck by the resemblance of these birds to ordinary barnyard fowls, but Master Pope explained that they were woodcock. His uncle, Mr. H. K. Pope, our local poultry dealer, frequently carried such woodcock in stock, he said; so I was reassured.

Nor was this all. The Masters Smith had picked a considerable quantity of wild strawberries. Theretofore I had always supposed that wild strawberries were small, but these berries were really quite large, some being as large as the adult human thumb. What especially attracted my attention was the receptacle in which Master E. Smith bore them, it being of rough, dark earthenware, circular in pattern and plainly of a primitive design. [77]

On Master Smith's telling me that he had come on this object buried in the woods, I reached the conclusion that it must be a relic of the early Mound Builders, those mysterious people who in prehistoric times inhabited this our continent.

A discovery so interesting at once induced a train of thought. Seating myself on my sofa pillow, I bade the boys gather about me, and I then gave an impromptu discourse on the subject of this vanished race, meantime holding in my hands the earthenware vessel and occasionally elevating it in illustration as I described the customs and habits of the Mound Builders so far as known.

Thus by easy stages I progressed onward and downward through the ages to their successors and inheritors, the red men, or copper-coloured aborigines, formerly so numerous encountered in this hemisphere, but now reduced to a diminishing remnant, sequestered mainly in the Far West, though with small reservations yet remaining, I believe, in certain of our Eastern States, notably New York and North Carolina. [78]

With his large blue eyes fixed on my face Master Pope listened with the utmost gravity and attention to my remarks, which behaviour was in contrast to that of his four associates, who

seemed to derive food for subdued laughter from what was being said. I am often at a loss to fathom the causes which originate outbursts of levity on the part of our growing youth; and so it was in this instance.

Carried on and on by the manifold reflections and absorbing interest attached to my theme, I was surprised to observe that the sun had declined far down the western horizon. Rising to my feet with some difficulty, for the unwonted exertions of the day had created a stiffness of the limbs, I said, in effect, this:

"And now, Young Nuts of America—for here in the remote depths of the woods, far remote from any human habitation, I feel that I may apply to one and all the secret appellation we chose for our private communions—now, my Young Nuts, playtime is over and worktime has come. See, the hour of evening draws on apace. Night impends, or will indubitably do so shortly. In anticipation of our first night spent beneath the starry stars, with only Heaven's blue vault for a canopy, let us forget the petty annoyances which have in a measure marred our first day. Did I say marred? No; not that—for these things should be but object lessons teaching us to profit by them, to perfect ourselves in woodcraft. So let us be merry, care-free and bright.

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"If you will but replenish our camp fire I, for my part, shall take one of these plump wild fowl, or woodcock, which have fallen before the prowess of our doughty huntsman and fellow member, Master Pope, and, without the use of pot or pan, shall prepare for you a true wildwood dish, of the most delicious and delicate character imaginable. So, fall to, Young Nuts of America—fall to with a will—and that right gladly!"

Leaving them to their employment, I repaired to the shore of the lake and, after mastering a somewhat natural repugnance, I made with my hands a mortar or paste of thick clay, in which I encased the black woodcock. Try as I might, though, I could not give to the object thus treated a graceful or finished appearance. Finally, despairing of producing in it an outward semblance of tidiness, I returned to the camp fire, placed the completed product in the heart of the flames, and retired a few feet to await its completion.

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In twenty minutes I judged the food should be quite done, but retaining withal its natural savours and juices: so at the expiration of that time, by using a stick I drew it forth from its fiery bed and, when the mass had sufficiently cooled, broke away the earthen covering, while about me my young compatriots clustered in eager anticipation.

For the reader's sake, and for my own as well, I shall pass hurriedly over the dénouement. Suffice it to say, either the clay used by me had not been of the proper consistency or this species of woodcock was not adapted by nature for being cooked after this fashion. None of us—not even Master E. Smith, in whom I had previously remarked an unfailing appetite—cared to indulge in the dish. Indeed, it was not until I had removed the unsightly and gruesome object—these are the only adjectives that properly describe it—to a point considerably remote from our camping place that I deemed myself to be sufficiently revived to join the others in a frugal supper consisting of the remaining sandwiches and a slice apiece of lemon-jelly cake.

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The meal, simple though it was, progressed slowly by reason of the frequent presence of ants in the viands—principally small black ants of a lively disposition, though some large black ants were also observed. Again, at the conclusion of the supper, my thoughts turned with intense longing to tea.

It had been contemplated that the evening should be spent in a ring about our camp fire, singing songs and glees and old familiar melodies; but the oncoming of darkness dispelled in me all desire to uplift the voice in melodious outpourings. The thickening of the shadows along the turf, the spectral gleaming of the lake between the trunks of the intervening trees, the multiplying of mysterious and disquieting night noises, the realisation that we were isolated in the depths of the forest—all these things had a dispiriting influence on my thoughts.

[82]

In addition, the mosquitoes proved exceedingly pernicious in their activities and in their numbers as well. The cool of the evening appeared but to give zest and alacrity to their onslaughts. Under their attacks my companions bore up blithely—in sooth, I have naught but admiration for the commendable fortitude displayed by those gallant youths throughout—but I suffered greatly in various parts of my anatomy, notably my face, neck, hands and knees.

In the absence of authoritative information on the subject I hesitate to commit myself firmly to the definite assertion, but I feel warranted in the assumption that there can be no mosquitoes in the Tyrol, else the Tyrolese, albeit a hardy race, would assuredly have modified their tribal dress in such a way so as to extend the stockings up higher or the trousers down lower.

[83]

Even at the risk of destroying the historical verities, I now regretted exceedingly that I had not of my own initiative altered my costume in such a way as to better protect the joints of the knees.

At a comparatively early hour I gave the signal for retiring and each one sought his couch of fragrant balsam. After exchanging boyish confidences in half-whispered undertones for some time, and occasionally breaking forth into smothered fits of laughter, my followers presently slept.

My own rest, however, was of a most broken and fragmentary character. A variety of reasons contributed to this: the chill; the sense of loneliness and, as it were, of aloofness; the mosquitoes, which continued to hold, as the saying goes, high carnival; the lack of suitable food; my

depression of spirit; and my bodily discomforts—to cite a few of the principal causes.

In addition to being racked in practically all of my various members, blistered as to hands and feet, and having a very painful scratch on my nose, I was exceedingly sun-burned. I failed to mention this detail earlier. I am naturally of a light, not to say fair, complexion, and the walk of the morning had caused my skin to redden and smart to a more excruciating extent than I remember to have ever been the case on any similar occasion.

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I am forced to the conclusion that the pleasure to be derived from sleeping on a bed of spruce or hemlock boughs has been greatly overestimated by those who have written and spoken with such enthusiasm on the topic. To me the prickly, scratchy sensation imparted by contact with the evergreen was such as to counterbalance the delights of inhaling its tonic and balsamic fragrance.

Likewise, until a late hour my blanket kept slipping or sliding off my recumbent form, exposing me to the rigors of the night wind. No sooner did I draw it snugly about my shivering form than it would crawl—crawl is exactly the word—it would crawl off again. Finally, in feeling about to ascertain if possible the reason for this, my fingers encountered a long string, which was securely affixed to a lower corner of my covering.

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In the morning, on my mentioning this curious circumstance, Master Pope spoke up and informed me that, being roused during the night and noting that I was experiencing great difficulty in keeping properly covered, he had quietly affixed a string to a lower corner of the blanket in the hope of anchoring it the more firmly in position. More than ever my soul went out to him in gratitude for the thoughtfulness of his act, even though it had failed of its desired effect.

Overborne and spent with sheer weariness I must have dropped off finally; probably I slept for some hours. Shortly before the dawning I wakened with a start and sat up, then instantly laid myself down again and at the same time placed my hands on my bosom to stay the rapid beating of my heart; for I had become instantly aware of the immediate proximity of some large creature. There was a rustling of the bushes, the sound drawing ever nearer and nearer; there was a sniffing noise, frequently increasing to a snort. With my eyes above the upper hem of my blanket I strained my vision in the direction from which the disturbance proceeded. To my agitation I perceived in the greyish gloom a large, slowly shifting black bulk, distant but a few paces from me. Naturally, I thought of bears.

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In this emergency I may say, in all modesty, that I retained my entire self-possession. Extending wide my arms in a threatening gesture I uttered the first exclamation that entered my mind. In a tense but intimidating tone of voice I said, "Shoo! Shoo!" repeating the ejaculation with emphasis until, to my relief, the creature moved off into the thickets and came no more, being daunted, doubtless, by my aggressive and determined mien.

For reasons I deemed amply sufficient I did not rise to hasten the retreat of the invading beast, nor did I waken my slumbering young companions. I reflected that, as their guide and protector, it was my duty to spare them all possible uneasiness. Inspired by this thought, therefore, I made no subsequent mention of the adventure; but on undertaking a private investigation some time after daylight I found the remaining wild strawberries were all gone; the receptacle that had contained them lay overturned and empty on the ground.

[87]

Recalling then that bears are reputed to be excessively fond of sweet things I put two and two together and by this deductive process I confirmed my earlier suspicions. It had indeed been a bear! And what, but for my presence of mind, might have been the dire results? I could with difficulty repress a shudder. But I anticipate myself by some hours. We will go back to the time of the nocturnal, or perhaps I should say prematutinal, visitation.

Made abnormally wakeful by that which had just occurred, I remained for a considerable time retired well down under the covering as regards my person, but with my eyes open and every sense on the alert. Eventually, however, my vigilance relaxed and I seemed to drift off; and I remained wrapped in fitful slumber until reawakened by a persistent pattering on my blanket. It would appear that for some time past rain had been falling. I was quite damp and my limbs were much chilled, and I had already begun to develop certain unfailing signs of a severe cold in the head—a malady to which I am subject.

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The rain soon ceased, however; and, beyond confirming the evidence of the bear's visit as just stated, nothing further marked our rising except my discovery that in tossing about during the night I had broken both the crystals of my eyeglasses.

Breakfast was far, oh! far from being a cheerful meal, consisting as it did of water from the lake and the crumbled, ant-ridden fragments of the lemon-jelly layer cake. Once more the thought of a steaming hot cup of tea came to me with compelling insistency, provoking an almost overpowering longing for the comforts of some roofed and walled domicile, howsoever humble. I shall not deny that at this moment the appurtenances and conveniences of modern civilisation appealed to me with an intensity hard to describe in language.

Moreover, I was forced to the conclusion that, because of circumstances over which we had no control, our outing thus far had in a number of its most material aspects been far from an unqualified triumph.

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Yet so well did I conceal my innermost sentiments from my juvenile companions that soon, in response to my smiling looks and apt remarks, they were crying out with laughter—indeed, responding with resounding guffaws to my every sally. When I tell you my countenance was quite covered over with blisters, where not disfigured by the welts inflicted by the venomous darts of the mosquitoes, you will perhaps more readily understand what these efforts to assume a buoyant bearing and a happy expression cost me.

Shortly after finishing the last of the lemon-jelly cake the five youngsters manifested an inclination to fare away into the forest on a joint journey of exploration. I did not seek to dissuade them—rather, I encouraged them and by all the means in my power expedited their departure; for, in truth, I longed for a time to be alone. I hoped, in the silence and solitude of these trackless wilds, to formulate suitable and reasonable excuses for cutting our outing short and returning before nightfall to the several places of our habitation, there at our leisure to plan another expedition under what, I fondly trusted, would be more favourable auspices.

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Furthermore, I sought an opportunity for taking in privacy an extensive swimming lesson. Since the afternoon before I had felt my technic in swimming was deficient, and I was determined to persevere in rehearsals of the various evolutions until I had become letter perfect. Lastly, I desired to give my cold a treatment in accordance with an expedient that had just occurred to me.

No sooner had the lads scampered away, making the vast grove ring amain to their acclaims, than I began my preparations. Ordinarily, when afflicted by a catarrhal visitation, it is my habit to use for alleviation cubeb cigarettes. Having none of these about me and having in some way mislaid my sole pocket handkerchief, I now hoped to check the streaming eyes—and nose—and soothe the other symptoms of the complaint by inhaling the aromatic smoke of burning balsam.

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I placed many sprigs of cedar on the camp fire. Immediately a thick, black cloud rose. A short distance away, on a flat stretch of turf, I spread my blanket, placing in the centre of it my pink sofa pillow. Midway between fire and blanket I deposited the earthen relic that had contained the wild strawberries, having previously filled it with water from the lake. I state these things circumstantially because all this has a bearing on what was shortly to ensue.

All things being arranged to my satisfaction, I proceeded to go through the following routine: First, stretching myself prostrate and face downward on the blanket, with the central portion of my person resting on the sofa pillow as a partial prop or support, I would count aloud "One—two—three—go!" and then perform the indicated movements of Swimming Lesson Number One, striking out simultaneously with my arms and lower limbs.

When wearied by these exertions I would rise, and visiting the fire would bend forward over it, inhaling the fumes and vapours until suffocation was imminent, anon returning to the blanket to resume my swimming exercises; but in going and in coming I would halt to lave my face, hands and knees in the cooling water contained in the receptacle.

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I imagine, without knowing definitely, that I had been engaged in these occupations for perhaps half an hour, and felt that I had made commendable progress in my swimming. At a moment when I was extended prone on the blanket, counting rapidly as I mastered the breast stroke, that subtle, subconscious instinct possessed by all higher and more sensitive organisms suddenly warned me that I was no longer alone—that alien eyes were bent on me.

Suspending my movements I reared myself on my knees and peered about me this way and that. Immediately an irrepressible tremor ran through my system. Directly behind me, armed with a dangerous pitchfork and maintaining an attitude combining at once defence and attack, was a large, elderly, whiskered man, roughly dressed and of a most disagreeable cast of countenance.

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At the same moment I observed, stealing softly on me from an opposite direction, a younger man of equally formidable aspect; and, to judge by certain of his facial attributes, the son of the first intruder. I shortly afterward ascertained that they were indeed father and offspring. The younger marauder bore a large, jagged club and carried a rope coiled over his arm.

I will not deny that trepidation beset me. What meant the presence of this menacing pair here in the heart of the forest? What meant their stealthy advance, their weapons, their wild looks, their uncouth appearance? Assuredly these boded ill. Perhaps they were robbers, outlaws, felons, contemplating overt acts on my life, limbs and property! Perhaps they were escaped maniacs! With a sinking of the heart I recalled having heard that the Branch State Asylum for the Insane was situate but a few short miles distant from Hatchersville!

It may have been that my cheeks paled, and when I spoke my voice perchance quivered; but I trust that in all other respects my demeanour in that trying moment was calm, cool and collected. I meant to temporise with these intruders—to soften their rough spirits by sweetness and gentleness of demeanour.

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"Good morning!" I said in an affable and friendly tone, bowing first to one and then to the other. "Is it not, on the whole, a pleasant morning after the refreshing showers that have fallen?"

Instead of responding in kind to my placating overtures, the attitude of the whiskered man became more threatening than ever. He took several steps forward, holding his pitchfork before him, tines presented, until he loomed almost above my kneeling form; and he then hailed his

accomplice, saying, as nearly as I recall his language:

"Come on, son! We've got him surrounded! He can't git away now! He's our meat!"

My heart now sank until it could sink no more. I was palpitant with apprehension, as who similarly placed would not have been? Their meat! The meaning of the sinister phrase was unmistakable. These must indeed be maniacs of a most dangerous type!

"Young feller," continued the elderly man, fixing his glaring eyes full on me, "before we go any farther with this little job, would you mind tellin' me, jest for curiosity, whut you was doin' jest now down on that there sofa pillow?"

In this matter, at least, I could have no wish or intent to deceive him.

"Sir, I was taking a swimming lesson," I said with simple courtesy.

"A which?" he said as though not hearing me aright.

"A swimming lesson," I repeated plainly, or as plainly as I could considering my agitation and the fact that the cold in my head had noticeably thickened my utterance, making it well-nigh impossible for me to give the proper inflection to certain of the aspirates and penultimates.

"Oh, yes," he said; "I see—a—a—swimming lesson. Well, that certainly is a mighty cute idee."

"I am glad you agree with me," I said. "And now, my good fellows, if you have any business of your own to attend to—elsewhere—I should be more than pleased if you proceeded on your way and left me undisturbed. I have much to engage my mind at present, as you may have noted."

"Oh, there ain't no hurry," he said. "I figger we'll all be goin' away from here purty soon."

At this moment the son checked his advance and, stooping, raised aloft the same earthenware vessel of which repeated mention has heretofore been made.

"Here she is, all right, dad!" was his cryptic statement. "I guess we never made no mistake in comin' here."

The father then addressed me.

"Mister," he said, "mout I enquire where you got that there crock?"

"That, my good sir," I informed him, "is not a crock. It is a Mound Builder's relic, unearthed but yesterday in the forest primeval."

"In the forest which?"

"The forest primeval," I enunciated with all the distinctness of which I was capable.

"And whut, if anythin', have you been doin' with it beside anointin' them features of yourn in it?" Again it was the father who spoke.

"It formerly contained wild strawberries," I answered, "some of which were consumed for food, and the rest of which were carried away under cover of nightfall by a bear."

He stared at me.

"A bear?" he reiterated blankly.

"Certainly," I said; "undoubtedly a bear—I myself saw it. A large, dark bear."

"And whut about this here?" he continued, now beholding for the first time the remaining woodcock, which hung from the limb of a low tree, and pointing toward it. "Is that there a Mound Builder's chicken?"

"Assuredly not," I said. "That is a white woodcock. There was also a black woodcock, presumably a mate of this one; but it—it has been disposed of. The pair were slain yesterday with bow and arrow in the adjacent depths of the woodland, which is their customary habitat."

You will note that I constantly refrained from mentioning my youthful compatriots. Did I dare reveal that I had companions, and by so doing expose those helpless lads to the unbridled fury of these maniacal beings, filled with the low cunning and insatiable curiosity of the insane? No; a thousand times, no! Rather would I perish first. At all hazards I would protect them—such was my instantaneous determination.

"I git you," replied the bearded man, his tone and manner changing abruptly from the truculent and threatening to the soothing. "You was takin' a private lesson in plain and fancy swimmin' on a pink sofa cushion; and that there ancient and honourable milk crock was willed to



UNTIL HE LOOMED ALMOST ABOVE MY KNEELING FORM

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you by the Mound-buildin' Aztecs; and a big bear come in the night and et up your wild strawberries—which was a great pity, too, seein' they're worth thirty cents a quart right this minute on the New York market; and you killed them two pedigreed Leghorn woodcocks with a bow and arrows in the forest—the forest whutever you jest now called it. Jest whut are you, anyway?"

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"By profession I am a clergyman," I answered.

"And do all the members of your persuasion wear them little sailor suits or is it confined to the preachers only?" he demanded.

I gathered that this coarse reference applied to my attire.

"This," I told him, "is the uniform or garb of an organisation known as the Young Nuts of America. I am the Chief Nut."

"I can't take issue with you here," he said with a raucous laugh. "And now, Chief, jest one thing more: Would you mind tellin' us whut your aim was in holdin' your nose over that there brush fire a bit ago?"

"My head has been giving me some trouble," I said. "I was curing myself with the aid of the smoke."

"One minute a nut and the next minute a ham," he murmured, half to himself. Dropping his pitchfork, he stretched his hands toward me. "I s'pose," he added, "it ain't no use to ask you when you got out?"

[100]

In a flash it came to me—I had often read that the victims of a certain form of mania imagined all others to be insane. My plain and straightforward answers to his vague and rambling interrogations had failed of the desired effect. Being themselves mad, they thought me mad. It was a horrifying situation.

I rose to my feet—I had been kneeling throughout this extraordinary interview—with a confused thought of eluding their clutches and fleeing from them. In imagination I already saw my murdered form hidden in the trackless wilds.

"No, you don't!" exclaimed the whiskered man, placing violent and detaining hands on me. "That's all right," he continued, as the son closed in on me: "I kin handle the little killdee by myself.... Now, sonny," he went on, again directing himself to me as I struggled and writhed, helpless in his grasp, "you come along with me!"

"Hold on!" called the son. "There's a lot of other stuff here—blankets and truck. He's been makin' quite a collection."

[101]

"Never mind," bade his parent, roughly turning me about and from behind propelling my resisting form violently forward. "I reckon they was gifts from the Mound Builders, too. We'll come back later on and sort out the plunder."

As I was shoved along I endeavoured to explain. I exclaimed; I cried out; I entreated them to stop and to hearken. My pleadings were of no avail and, I am constrained to believe, would have been of no avail even had not distress and agitation rendered me to an extent incoherent. My abductors only urged me onward through the woods at great speed.

"Gee! Hear him rave, dad!" I heard the son pant from behind me.

Merciful Providence! Now their warped and perverted mentalities translated my speech into ravings!

Almost immediately, as it seemed to me, we emerged from the forest into a ploughed field; and but a short distance away I beheld a human domicile—in short, a farmhouse. Filled with sudden relief when I realised that a civilised habitation stood in such hitherto unsuspected proximity to our late camping place, and instantly possessed with a great and uncontrollable craving to reach this haven of refuge and claim the protection of its inhabitants, I wrested myself free from the bearded man with one mighty effort, leaving my flowing collar in his hands, and at top speed set off across the field, crying out as I ran: "Help! Help! Succour! Assistance!" or words to that effect.

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My flight continued but a few yards. I was overtaken and felled to the earth, my captors thereupon taking steps to effectually restrain me in the free exercise of my limbs and bodily movements. This being one of the most acutely distressing features of the entire experience I shall forego further details, merely stating that they used a rope.

It was at this juncture that the powers of connected thought and lucid speech deserted me. I retain an indistinct recollection of being borne bodily into a farm dwelling, of being confronted by a gaunt female who, disregarding my frantic efforts to explain all, persisted in listening only to the rambling accounts of my abductors, and who, on hearing from them their confused version of what had transpired, retreated to a distance and refused to venture nearer until my bonds had been reinforced with a strap.

[103]

Following this I recall vaguely being given to drink of a glass containing milk—milk of a most peculiar odour and pungent taste. Plainly this milk had been drugged; for though in my then state of mind I was already bordering on delirium, yet an instant after swallowing the draught my

faculties were miraculously restored to me. I spoke rationally—indeed, convincingly; but, owing to an unaccountable swelling of my tongue, due no doubt to the effects of the drug, my remarks to the biased ears of those about me must have sounded inarticulate, not to say incoherent. However, I persisted in my efforts to be understood until dizziness and a great languor overcame me entirely.

A blank ensued—I must have swooned.

I shall now draw this painful narrative to a close, dismissing with merely a few lines those facts that in a garbled form have already reached the public eye through the medium of a ribald and disrespectful press—how my youthful companions, returning betimes to our camping place and finding me gone, and finding also abundant signs of a desperate struggle, hastened straightway to return home by the first train to spread the tidings that I had been kidnapped; how search was at once instituted; how, late that same evening, after running down various vain clues, my superior, the Reverend Doctor Tubley, arrived at Hatchersville aboard a special train, accompanied by a volunteer posse of his parishioners and other citizens and rescued me, semi-delirious and still fettered, as my captors were on the point of removing me, a close prisoner, to the Branch State Asylum for the Insane at Pottsburg, twenty miles distant, in the deluded expectation of securing a reward for my apprehension; of how explanations were vouchsafed, showing that while I, with utter justification, had regarded them as lunatics, they, in their ignorance and folly, had, on the other hand, regarded me as being mentally afflicted; and how finally, being removed by careful hands to my place of residence, I remained a constant invalid, in great mental and bodily distress, for a period of above a fortnight. [104]

As is well known, my first act on being restored to health was to resign the assistant rectorship of St. Barnabas'. And having meantime been offered the chair of history and astronomy at Fernbridge Seminary for Young Ladies at Lover's Leap in the State of New Jersey I have accepted and am departing on the morrow for my new post, trusting, in the classic shades and congenial atmosphere of that well-established academy of learning, to forget the unhappy memories now indissolubly associated in my mind with the first and last camping expedition of the Young Nuts of America. [105]

I close with an added word of gratitude and affection for those five gallant lads, Masters Horrigan, Pope, Ferguson, E. Smith and H. Smith—but particularly Master Pope, to whom I feel I indeed owe much. [106]

(Signed) Very respectfully,
ROSCOE TITMARSH FIBBLE, D.D.

PART TWO

 [107]

Being an Open Letter Addressed by Dr. Fibble to One Sitting in a High Place.

Elsewhere in France

 [108]

*To His Excellency the Honourable Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States of America,
White House, Washington, D. C., U. S. A.*

RESPECTED SIR: Ever since my return from the zone of hostilities it has been my constant and abiding intention to take pen in hand for the purpose of acquainting Your Excellency with the facts concerning the harassing experiences undergone by the undersigned before, during and immediately subsequent to the outbreak of war on the other, or Eastern, hemisphere of this world. As you will observe, I now do so.

Until this time I have been deterred from setting forth my complaint by a variety of good and sufficient reasons, which I enumerate: [110]

Firstly—To me it appeared inevitable that this open letter, on its reaching your hands, would result in a breach between Your Excellency and your late Secretary of State, Mr. William Jennings Bryan. I purposely refrained, therefore, from approaching you on the subject while he remained a member of your official family. In this connection I may state that I would be the last to hamper and embarrass the National Administration. I feel the force of this remark will be all the more deeply appreciated when I tell you that, though never actively concerned in politics, I have invariably voted the Republican ticket on each and every occasion when the fact that election day had arrived was directed to my attention.

Secondly—Through similar motives of consideration I studiously refrained from bringing this recital of events before you during your correspondence with a certain foreign Power—to wit, Germany—touching on the course and conduct of hostilities on the high seas. With myself I frequently reasoned, saying, in substance, this: "Who am I that I should intrude my own [111]

grievances, considerable though they may be, on our President at this crucial hour when he is harassed by issues of even greater moment? In the unsettled and feverish state of the public mind, who can foretell what new complications may ensue should I thrust my own affairs forward? Shall I do this? No, no; a thousand times no! I shall restrain myself. I shall stay my hand. I shall wait." You will understand that I did not go so far as audibly to utter these sentiments. I merely thought them.

Thirdly—No little difficulty has been experienced in ascertaining the exact whereabouts of my chief fellow sufferer and co-witness; also in ferreting out the identities of the principal offenders against us. In these matters I am able to report progress, but not entirely satisfactory results. Zeno the Great, it would appear, is a person of unsettled habitation, being found now here, now there, now elsewhere. At last accounts he was connected with a travelling aggregation known as De Garmo Brothers' Ten-Million-Dollar Railroad Show; but since that organisation fell into the hands of the sheriff at Red Oak Junction, Iowa, I have been unsuccessful in tracing his movements. Nor can I at this time furnish you with the names and exact addresses of the bearded ruffian in the long blue blouse, the porter of the hotel, the warder of the dungeons, or the others implicated in those culminating outrages of which I was the innocent victim. Repeatedly have I written the mayor of the town of Abbeville, to the general commanding the French military forces, and to the President of the Republic of France, demanding the desired information; but—believe it or not, Mister President—to date I have had not a single word in reply.

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Accordingly, until this moment, I have contained myself with all due restraint; but feeling, as I do feel, that patience has finally ceased to be a virtue, I am now constrained to address you in the first person singular, being further emboldened by the reflection that already a bond of sympathy and understanding exists between us, you for years having been connected with one of our largest educational institutions and fonts of learning, namely, Princeton, New Jersey, while I for some eighteen months have occupied the chair of astronomy and ancient and modern history at Fernbridge Seminary for Young Ladies, an institution that in all modesty I may say is also well and favourably known.

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If you find opportunity in the press of your undoubtedly extensive and exacting duties for occasional perusal of the lay-press I think it but fair to assume that you are more or less familiar with the causes which actuated me in resigning my place as assistant rector of the parish of St. Barnabas' at Springhaven and accepting the position which I now occupy.

I regret to inform you that a number of newspaper editors in a mood of mistaken and ill-advised jocularly saw fit at the time to comment upon what was to me a serious and most painful memory. However, I mention this circumstance only in passing, preferring by my dignified silence to relegate the authors of these screeds to the obscurity which their attitude so richly merits. Suffice it to state that having left Saint Barnabas', within the short scope of one week thereafter I assumed the duties which I have since continued to discharge to the best of my talents, finding in the refined, the cultured and the peaceful precincts of Fernbridge Seminary for Young Ladies that soothing restfulness of atmosphere which is so essential to one of my temperament.

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In such employment I busied myself, giving my days to the classroom and my evenings to the congenial company of the Victorian poets and to my botanical collection, until the summer solstice of 1914 impended, when, in an unthinking moment, I was moved by attractive considerations to accept the post of travelling companion, guide and mentor to a group of eight of our young lady seniors desirous of rounding out their acquaintance with the classics, languages, arts and history of the Olden World by a short tour on an adjacent continent. I need hardly add that I refer to the continent of Europe.

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Having long cherished a secret longing to visit foreign parts, I the more gladly entertained the suggestion when our principal, Miss Waddleton, broached it to me. As outlined by Miss Waddleton, the prospect at first blush seemed an inviting one—one might even venture so far as to call it an alluring one. All my actual travelling expenses were to be paid; the itinerary would be pursued in accordance with a plan previously laid out, and finally, I was to have for my aide, for my chief of staff as it were, Miss Charlotte Primleigh, a member of our faculty of long standing and a lady in whom firmness of character is agreeably united with indubitable qualities of the mind, particularly in the fields of algebra, geometry and trigonometry. Miss Primleigh is our mathematics teacher.

Though gratified and flattered by the trust imposed in me, and welcoming the opportunity for helpful service in a new and as yet untried realm, I, nevertheless, strove to comply with such conventionalities as are ordained by organised society. Indeed, I trust that a fitting and proper sense of propriety is never entirely banished from my mind at any time whatsoever.

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To Miss Waddleton I said:

"But, my dear lady, I pray you, have thought for these cardinal points—I myself am unmarried; Miss Primleigh is herself unmarried; the young lady students contemplating embarkation on this expedition are each and every one of them unmarried also. In view of these facts—which are incontrovertible and not to be gainsaid—do you deem it entirely proper that I, a member of the opposite sex, should be suffered to accompany them throughout the course of their sojourn on alien shores, far, far from home and the restraining influences of the home circle?"

"I shouldn't worry myself about that part of it if I were you, Doctor Fibble," replied Miss

Waddleton in the direct and forcible manner so typical of her. "There isn't a father alive who would hesitate about letting his daughter travel in your company if he had ever met you—or even if he had ever seen you."

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I cite this rejoinder as added proof of the confidence with which I am regarded by one well qualified through daily association and frequent observation to know the true merits of my character and disposition.

Touched no little by such an expression of sentiment from the lips of Miss Waddleton, I promptly accepted the obligation without further demur and at once set about my needful preparations for the voyage. So engrossed was I with these matters that almost at once, it seemed to me, the date of sailing was at hand.

Accompanied by my travelling belongings, I repaired by train to New York, Miss Primleigh following a few hours later with our charges. It was agreed that we should meet upon the dock at ten of the clock on the following forenoon, the hour of sailing being eleven, upon the good ship *Dolly Madison*, and the destination Liverpool, England. Such of the student-group as resided within easy distance of the port of departure expected members of their several families and possibly friends as well would be present to wish them the customary *bon voyage*. As for me, I was quite alone, having no closer relative than a great-aunt of advanced years residing in the city of Hartford, Connecticut, who, being debarred by articular rheumatism and other infirmities to which all flesh is heir, from coming in person to bid her beloved nephew adieu, sent me by parcels post a farewell present consisting of a pair of embroidered bedroom slippers, pink in colour, with a design of moss roses done in green and yellow upon the respective toes, all being her own handiwork.

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I come now to the actual leave-taking from this, our native clime. Filled with a pleasurable fluttering sensation engendered doubtlessly by the novelty of the impending undertaking and at the same time beset by a nervous apprehension lest I fail to embark in proper season, due either to an unexpected change in the hour of sailing or perchance to some unforeseen delay encountered in transit from my hotel to the water front, and pestered finally by a haunting dread lest the cabman confuse the address in his own mind and deposit me at the wrong pier, there being many piers in New York and all of such similarity of outward appearance, I must confess that I slept but poorly the night. Betimes, upon the morn of the all-momentous day I arose, and with some difficulty mastering an inclination toward tremors, I performed the customary ablutions. Then after a brief and hurried breakfast—in fact a breakfast so hurried as to occasion a subsequent touch of dyspepsia—I engaged a taxicab with the aid of a minor member of the hotel menage, known as the porter.

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Upon this menial, who impressed me as being both kindly and obliging albeit somewhat officious, I pressed a coin of the denomination of five cents. I believe it must have been the manner of bestowal which impressed him rather than the size of the *pourboire* itself, for he examined it with lively marks of interest and appreciation and then told me, with rather a waggish air, I thought, that he did not intend to fritter it away upon riotous living but would take it home and show it to his little ones. To which I responded in all seriousness that I was glad he did not contemplate expending it upon strong drink, such as grog or rum. As though instantly sobered by my tone, he promised me that whatever be the purpose to which he might ultimately devote it, he would never use my gift for the purchasing of ardent spirits. I do not undertake here to reproduce his exact phraseology but only the sense of what he sought to convey to my understanding.

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So saying, we parted. Snugly ensconced in my taxicab, being entirely surrounded and in part quite covered up or obscured from the casual gaze by my many articles of luggage, I proceeded to the pier, meanwhile subconsciously marvelling at the multitudinous life and activity displayed upon the thoroughfares of our national metropolis at even so early an hour as seven-forty-five to eight-fifteen A. M. In numbers amounting to a vast multitude the dwellers of this great beehive of industry were already abroad, moving hither and yon, intent each one upon his or her affairs, as the case might be. Especially was I impressed by the engrossed faces and the hurried bodily movements of the component atoms of the throng as viewed through the handles of my small black leather valise, which with other impedimenta I held upon my knees, balancing it so that the leather loops were practically upon a level with my range of vision.

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To me, humanity in the mass has ever presented a most absorbing study notwithstanding that almost invariably I find myself in a flurried, not to say confused, state of mind upon being thrust physically into the crowded throng. However, affairs of a more pressing and a more personal nature as well soon claimed me. Upon reaching the appointed destination, my attention was directed to the fact that the metre-device attached to the taxicab registered no less a total than two dollars and seventy-five cents.

A search of my patent coin purse revealed that I did not have about me the exact amount requisite to discharge this obligation. Accordingly I handed the driver a ten-dollar national bank note. Immediately he wheeled his equipage about and drove rapidly away, promising to return with all speed and diligence so soon as he had succeeded in changing the bill. For some time I waited in one of the doorways of the pier, but he did not return. So far as I have been able to ascertain, he has never returned; this assertion is based upon my best knowledge and belief. I am therefore constrained to believe the unfortunate young man—for indeed he was but little more than a youth in years—met with some serious bodily hurt while intent upon this mission. Nor do I hold myself entirely blameless for this, since had I but bethought me to stock my purse with a

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suitable amount of small silver, he might have escaped the injury that doubtlessly befell him in the press of wagons, wains, vans and motor-drawn vehicles into which he so impetuously darted. Regarding his probable fate I have many times pondered, giving myself no little concern.

My position as I lingered at the entrance to the pier was not free from petty discomforts and annoyances. I was torn between two inclinations: one to secure the seven dollars and twenty-five cents yet due me, and the other to be safely embarked in the event that the vagaries of the tide or other actuating causes should prompt the steamer's master to depart in advance of the scheduled time without due notice to the public at large; for this fear of being left behind which had first found lodgment in my thoughts the evening previous still persisted without cessation or abatement. [123]

Indeed, the near proximity of the steamer itself, the apparent air of bustle and haste displayed everywhere in the vicinity, the hoarse cries betokening haste and perplexity which arose upon all sides, had the effect of heightening rather than diminishing my apprehensions. Moreover, persons drawn from all walks of life were constantly coming into abrupt and violent contact with me as they passed into the pier carrying objects of varying bulk and shape. Others, with almost equal frequency, stumbled over my hand-luggage which I had taken pains to dispose about me in neatly piled array. To top all, I was repeatedly approached by unkempt individuals offering their services in transporting my portable equipment aboard ship. I found it quite absolutely necessary to maintain a vigilant guard against their importunities, one elderly person of a very unprepossessing exterior aspect even going so far as to lay hands upon the black leather valise, thus requiring me to engage in a decidedly unseemly struggle with him for its possession. I believe I may safely assert that I am not of an unduly suspicious nature but assuredly the appearance of this man and his fellows was such as to create doubt as to the honesty of their ultimate motives. What between turning this way to wave off a particularly persistent applicant and turning that way again to beg the pardon of strangers who found themselves in actual collision with me and my belongings, I was rendered quite dizzy, besides sustaining several painful bruises upon the nether limbs. [124]

At length I felt I could no longer endure the strain; already my nerves seemed stretched to the breaking point. After some minutes, I succeeded, by dint of spoken appeals and gestures, in engaging the ear of a police officer who appeared to be on duty at a point nearby. To him I gave my name and calling, and furnished him also with a personal description of the strangely missing taxicab driver, charging him, the police officer, to bid the driver to seek me out in my quarters aboard ship when he, the driver, should reappear with my change. [125]

This matter disposed of, I gathered up my luggage as best I could and laden like unto a veritable beast of burden wended my way adown the interior of the long, barn-like structure, pausing at intervals, more or less annoying in their frequency, to re-collect and readjust certain small parcels which persistently slipped from beneath my arms or out of my fingers. The weather being warm, I was presently aglow and in fact quite moistly suffused with particles of perspiration.

All was noise and excitement. So great was the confusion, so disconcerting the uproar about me, that I preserve but an indistinct recollection of my chance meeting with Miss Primleigh and our joint charges, whom I encountered en masse at a point approximately, I should judge, midway of the pier. As it developed, they had entered by another door, thus escaping my notice. I remember pausing to ask whether any of them had seen and recognised my steamer trunk which on the night before I had reluctantly entrusted to the custody of a licensed transfer agency and regarding which I felt some excusable misgivings. It seemed that none had seen it; so leaving the young ladies in Miss Primleigh's care, I resumed my difficult and hampered journey in the general direction of the so-called gangway. [126]

Here persons in fustian who claimed to be connected with the steamship line in a pseudo-official capacity sought to relieve me of a part of my baggage, but despite all such assurances of good faith I declined their proffered aid. For how many travellers—thus I inwardly reasoned—how many travellers in times past have been deceived by specious impostors to their own undoing? Ah, who with any degree of accuracy can actually say how many? Certainly, though, a very great number. I for one meant to hazard no single chance. Politely yet firmly I requested these persons to be off. Then, heavily encumbered as I was, I ascended unassisted up the steep incline of a canvas-walled stage-plank extending from the pier to an opening opportunely placed in the lofty side of the good ship *Dolly Madison*. [127]

Once aboard, I exhaled a deep sigh of relief. At last I felt her staunch timbers beneath my feet. She could not depart without me. But my troubles were not yet at an end—far from it. For I must find my stateroom and deposit therein my possessions and this was to prove a matter indeed vexatious. Upon the steamship proper, the crush of prospective travellers, of their friends and relatives and of others who presumably had been drawn by mere curiosity, was terrific. I, a being grown to man's full stature, was jammed forcibly against a balustrade or railing and for some moments remained an unwilling prisoner there, being unable to extricate myself from the press or even to behold my surroundings with distinctness by reason of having my face and particularly my nose forced into the folds of a steamer rug which with divers other objects I held clutched to my breast. When at length after being well-nigh suffocated, I was able to use my eyes, I discerned persons flitting to and fro in the multitude, wearing a garb which stamped them as officers, or, at least, as members of the crew. After several vain attempts, I succeeded in detaining one of these persons momentarily. To him I put a question regarding the whereabouts of my stateroom, giving [128]

him, as I supposed, its proper number. He replied in the briefest manner possible and instantly vanished.

Endeavouring to follow his directions, I wedged my way as gently as I might through a doorway into a corridor or hall-space which proved to be almost as crowded as the deck had been, and being all the while jostled and buffeted about, I descended by staircases deep into the entrails of this mighty craft where in narrow passageways I wandered about interminably, now stumbling over some inanimate object, now forcibly encountering some living obstacle such as another bewildered shipmate or stewardess. To be upon the safe side, I made a point of murmuring, "I beg your pardon," at the moment of each collision and then proceeding onward. It seemed to me that hours had passed, although I presume the passage of time was really of much shorter duration than that, before I came opposite a stateroom door bearing upon its panels the sign *C-34*.

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Much to my joy the key was in the lock, as I ascertained by feeling, and the door itself stood ajar slightly. Without further ado I pushed into the narrow confines of the room, but even as I crossed the threshold was halted by a voice, speaking in thickened accents. By elevating my head and stretching my neck to its uttermost length, my chin meanwhile resting upon the top tier or layer of my belongings, I was able to perceive the form of a large male, in a recumbent attitude upon a berth with his face turned from me.

"All ri," came the voice, which seemed to be muffled in the pillows, "all ri", steward, set 'em down anywhere!"

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"Sit what down?" I enquired, at a loss to grasp his meaning.

"Why, the drinks, of course," quoth the other.

At the risk of dropping some of my luggage, I drew myself up to my full height.

"Sir," I said, "I do not drink—I have never touched strong drink in all my life."

"Is it pozz'ble?" said this person (I endeavour for the sake of accuracy to reproduce his exact phrasing). "Why, what've you been doin' with your spare time all thesh years?"

He raised a face, red and swollen, and peered at me in seeming astonishment. I now apprehended that he was a victim of over-indulgence. So intensely was I shocked that I could but stare back at him, without speaking.

"Well," he continued, "it's never too late to learn—that's one con—conso—consolach——" Plainly the word he strove to utter was the noun *consolation*.

In a flash it came to me that be the consequences what they might, I could not endure to share the cribbed and cabined quarters provided aboard ship with a person of such habits and such trend of thought as this person so patently betrayed. Nor was it necessary. For, having quit his presence without further parley, I deposited a part of my burden in a nearby cross-hall and examined my ticket. By so doing I re-established a fact which in the stress of the prevalent excitement had escaped my attention and this was that the stateroom to which I had been assigned was not *C-34*, but *B-34*.

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If this were C-deck, the deck immediately above must perforce be B-deck? Thus I reasoned, and thus was I correct, as speedily transpired. Pausing only to gather up my effects and to make my excuses to sundry impatient and grumbling voyagers who had packed themselves in the cross-hall beyond, while I was consulting my ticket, I journeyed upward to B-deck. Upon coming to No. 34, and again finding the key in the door and the door unlatched, I entered as before.



This time it was a female voice which brought me to an instantaneous standstill. For the instant I could not see the owner of the voice—the previously-mentioned steamer rug being in the way—but the challenge conveyed by her tone was unmistakable.

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"Who are you and what do you want?" Thus was I addressed.

Before replying, I sought to comply with the conventionalities of the occasion by doffing my hat. The difficulties of removing a hat with a hand which holds at the moment an umbrella and a small portmanteau can only be appreciated by one who has attempted the experiment. I succeeded, it is true, in baring my head, but knocked off my glasses and precipitated my steamer rug and a package of books to the floor, where my hat had already fallen. Lacking the aid of my glasses, my vision is defective, but I was able to make out the form of a lady of mature years, and plainly habited, who confronted me at a distance of but a pace or two.

"Pray forgive me," I said hastily, "pray forgive me, Madam. I was under the impression that this was

"I," SHE SAID "AM MAJOR JONES"

"It is," she answered in a manner which but served to increase my perturbation. "What of it?" [133]

"Nothing," I said, "nothing—except that there must be some mistake. I was given to understand that I was to occupy B-34, sharing it with a Major Jones, a military gentleman, I assume."

"I," she said, "am Major Jones."

To a statement so astounding I could only respond by confusedly saying, "Oh, Madam! Oh, Madam!"

"Major Maggie J. Jones, of the Salvation Army," she continued. "Probably I made the original mistake by not letting the steamship people know that a Major may be a woman."

"Madam," I said, "I beseech you to remain calm and make no outcry. I shall at once withdraw."

This I accordingly did, she obligingly passing out to me through a slit in the door my hat, my glasses, my steamer rug, my packages of books and one or two other articles of my outfit. My mind was in a whirl; for the time I was utterly unable to collect my thoughts. Making a mound of my luggage in a convenient open space, I sat myself down upon the perch or seat thus improvised to await a period when the excitement aboard had perceptibly lessened before seeking out the captain and requesting a readjustment in regard to my accommodations on his ship. It was due to this delay that I failed to witness the drawing-out of the ship into midstream and also missed seeing any of the party entrusted to my care until after we had passed the Statue of Liberty upon our way to the open sea. Eventually, by dint of zealous enquiry, I ascertained that the purser was the person charged with the assignment of berths and staterooms. Upon my finding him and explaining the situation in language couched in all possible delicacy, he made suitable apologies and I presently found myself established in a stateroom which had no other occupant. [134]

I shall dismiss the early part of the journey with a brief line. For three days the weather continued pleasant, the surface of the ocean placid and the voyage without any incident of more than passing moment. Upon the third evening a ship's concert was given. On being approached that day after luncheon by the purser, who had assumed charge of the plans, I readily consented to assist in adding to the pleasure of the entertainment, especially since the proceeds, as he assured me, were to be devoted to a most worthy and laudable cause. I told him I would favour the company with a display of my elocutionary abilities, but purposely withheld the title of the selection which I meant to recite, meaning at the proper time to surprise my hearers. [135]

During the course of the afternoon the breeze freshened perceptibly, as evidenced by a slight rolling movement of the ship. As I was freshening my garb shortly before the dining hour I experienced a slight sensation as of dizziness, coupled with a pressure across the forehead, but attributed this to nothing more serious than a passing touch of indigestion, to which I am occasionally subject. Besides, I had been irritated no little upon discovering that in printing the programme of events the typesetter was guilty of a typographical error as a result of which my name was set down as Dr. Fiddle. A trifle, it is true, but an annoying one. When I permit myself to be annoyed a slight headache almost invariably ensues. [136]

The concert began at the appointed hour. When the chairman announced me, I advanced to the place reserved for those taking part and faced an expectant and smiling assemblage. It was my intention to deliver the well known address of Spartacus to the Gladiators. From the best information on the subject we glean that Spartacus was in figure tall, with a voice appreciably deep. I am not tall, nor burly, although of suitable height for my breadth of frame. Nor can I, without vocal strain, attain the rumbling bass tones so favoured by many elocutionists. But I have been led to believe that a sonorousness of delivery and a nice use of gesticulation and modulation compensate in me for a lack of bulk, creating as it were an illusion of physical impressiveness, of brawn, of thew and sinew. I bowed to the chairman, and to the assemblage, cleared my throat and began. [137]

You will recall, Mr. President, the dramatic opening phrase of this recitation: "Ye call me chief and ye do well to call me chief." I had reached the words, "and ye do well to call me chief—" when I became aware of a startling manifestation upon the part of the flooring beneath my feet. It was as though the solid planks heaved amain, causing the carpeting to rise and fall in billows. I do not mean that this phenomenon really occurred but only that it seemed to occur. I paused to collect myself and began afresh, but now I progressed no further than, "Ye call me chief—"

At this precise juncture I realised that I was rapidly becoming acutely unwell. I could actually feel myself turning pale. I endeavoured to utter a hurried word or two of explanation, but so swift was the progress of my indisposition that already I found myself bereft of the powers of sustained and coherent speech. I reeled where I stood. A great and o'ermastering desire came upon me to go far away from there, to be entirely alone, to have solitude, to cease for a time to look upon any human face. Pressing the hem of a handkerchief to my lips, I turned and blindly fled. Outside upon the deserted deck I was met by a steward who ministered to me until such a time as I was able to leave the rail and with his help to drag my exhausted frame to the privacy of my stateroom where I remained in a state of semi-collapse, and quite supine, for the greater part of the ensuing forty-eight hours. [138]

I did not feel myself to be entirely myself until we entered St. George's Channel. We were well

within sight of land, the land in this instance being the shore of Albion, before I deemed it wise and expedient to leave my couch and venture into the open air. Once there, however, I experienced a speedy recovery from the malady that had so nearly undone me and I may safely affirm that none in all the company aboard that great floating caravansary evinced a blither spirit than the undersigned at the moment of debarking upon terra firma.

At the risk of perhaps boring Your Excellency, I have been thus explicit in detailing these episodes in our easterly voyage, but if you have patiently borne with me thus far, I feel assured that ere now your trained mind has divined my purport. For throughout these pages my constant intent has been to give you an insight into my true self, to the end that hereafter you may the more readily understand my motives and my actions when unforeseen contingencies arose and disaster impended. In any event, I would set you right upon one point. It is undeniably true that among some of my fellow passengers a scandalous report obtained circulation to the effect that upon the day of sailing I had forced my way into the stateroom of a strange female and was by that female forcibly expelled from her presence. I beseech you, Mr. President, to give no credence to this scandalous perversion of the truth should it by chance reach your ear. I have here detailed the exact circumstances with regard to the meeting with Major Maggie J. Jones of the Salvation Army, withholding nothing, explaining everything.

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After this brief digression, I shall now proceed to deal briefly with the continuation of our journey. Soon we had complied with the trifling regularities incident to our passage through the Plymouth Customs Office; soon, ensconced aboard a well-appointed railway carriage, we were traversing the peaceful English landscape, bound at a high rate of speed for the great city of London; and soon did I find myself developing a warm admiration for various traits of the British character as disclosed to me during our first hours on the soil of the British Empire. The docility of the serving classes as everywhere encountered, the civility of the lesser officials, the orderly and well-kempt aspect of the countryside, the excellence of the steaming hot tea served en route on His Majesty's railroad trains—all these impressed me deeply; and especially the last named. A proneness to overindulgence in the agreeably soothing decoction produced by an infusion of tea leaves is, I confess, my chief besetting vice.

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As I look back on it all with the eye of fond retrospection, and contrast it with the horrifying situation into which we, all unwittingly and all unsuspectingly, were so shortly to be plunged, our sojourn in England is to me as a fleeting, happy dream.

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Within the vast recesses of Westminster Abbey I lost myself. This statement is literal as well as figurative; for, having become separated from the others, I did indeed remain adrift in a maze of galleries for upward of an hour. At the Tower of London I gave way for a space of hours to audible musings on the historic scenes enacted on that most-storied spot. In contemplation of the architectural glories of St. Paul's, I became so engrossed that naught, I am convinced, save the timely intervention of a uniformed constable, who put forth his hand and plucked me out of the path of danger in the middle of the road where I had involuntarily halted, saved me from being precipitated beneath the wheels of a passing omnibus. As for my emotions when I paused at the graveside of William Shakspeare—ah, sir, a more gifted pen than mine were required to describe my sensations at this hallowed moment.

Constantly I strove to impress on our eight young-lady seniors the tremendous value, for future conversational purposes, of the sights, the associations and the memories with which we were now thrown in such intimate contact. At every opportunity I directed their attention to this or that object of interest, pointing out to them that since their indulgent parents or guardians, as the case might be, had seen fit to afford them this opportunity for enriching their minds and increasing their funds of information, it should be alike their duty and their privilege to study, to speculate, to ponder, to reflect, to contemplate, to amass knowledge, to look, to see, to think. Yet, inconceivable though it may appear, I discerned in the majority of them, after the first few days, a growing inclination to shirk the intellectual obligations of the hour for things of infinitely lesser moment.

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Despite my frequent admonitions and my gentle chidings, shops and theatres engrossed them substantially to the exclusion of all else. My suggestion that our first evening in London should be spent in suitable readings of English history in order to prepare our minds for the impressions of the morrow was voted down, practically unanimously.

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One entire afternoon, which I had intended should be devoted to the National Art Gallery, was wasted—I use the word *wasted* deliberately—in idle and purposeless contemplation of the show windows in a retail merchandising resort known as the Burlington Arcade. Toward the close of our ever memorable day at Stratford-upon-Avon, as I was discoursing at length on the life and works of the Immortal Bard, I was shocked to hear Miss Henrietta Marble, of Rising Sun, Indiana, remark, *sotto voce*, that she, for one, had had about enough of Bardie—I quote her exact language—and wished to enquire if the rest did not think it was nearly time to go somewhere and buy a few souvenirs.

So the days flitted by one by one, as is their wont; and all too soon, for me, the date appointed for our departure to the Continent drew nigh. It came; we journeyed to Paris, the chief city of the French.

Upon the eve of our departure Miss Primleigh fell ill, so since the tour was circumscribed as to time, our four weeks' itinerary upon the Continent including France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Austria and Italy, it became necessary to leave her behind us temporarily while we continued our

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travels. Impressed with an added sense of responsibility, since I now had eight young ladies under my sole tutelage, I crossed the Channel with them on the following day and at eventide we found ourselves in no less a place than the French capital.

In Paris, as in London, my heart, my hands and my brain were most constantly occupied by my obligations to my charges, who, despite all admonitions to the contrary, continued, one regrets to say, to exhibit an indifference toward those inspiring and uplifting pursuits to which a tour of this sort should be entirely devoted. For example, I recall that on a certain day—the third day, I think, of our sojourn in Paris, or possibly it might have been the fourth—I was escorting them through the art galleries of that famous structure, the Louvre.

At the outset we had had with us a courier specially engaged for the occasion; but, detecting in him an inclination to slur important details in relation to the lives and works of the Old Masters whose handicraft greeted us murally on every side, I soon dispensed with his services and took over his task. Whereas he had been content to dismiss this or that artist with but a perfunctory line, I preferred to give dates, data and all important facts. [145]

I had moved with the young ladies through several galleries, now consulting the guidebook, which I carried in my right hand, now pointing with my left to this or that conspicuous example of the genius of a Rubens, a Rembrandt or a Titian, and, I presume, had been thus engaged for the better part of two hours, when a sudden subconscious instinct subtly warned me that I was alone. Astonished, I spun on my heel. My youthful companions were no longer with me. Five minutes before they had been at my skirts; of that I was sure; in fact, it seemed but a few moments since I had heard the prattle of their voices, yet now the whole train had vanished, as it were, into thin air, leaving no trace behind them. [146]

I shall not deny that I was alarmed. I hurried this way and that, seeking them—even calling their names aloud. All was in vain. My agitated and rapid movements but served to attract the attention of a considerable number of idlers of various nationalities, many of whom persistently followed me about until a functionary in uniform interfered, thus bringing my search to an end for the time being. Whether my helpless charges, deprived now of the guiding hand and brain of a responsible and vigilant protector, were yet wandering about, without leadership, without guardianship, in the complex and mystifying ramifications of that vast pile, or, worse still, were lost in the great city, I had no way of knowing. I could but fear the worst. My brain became a prey to increasing dread.

In great distress of spirit, I hurried from the edifice and set out afoot for our hotel, meaning on my arrival there to enlist the aid of the proprietor in notifying the police department and inaugurating a general search for those poor young ladies through the proper channels. However, owing to a striking similarity in the appearance of the various streets of the town, I myself became slightly confused. I must have wandered on and on for miles. The shades of night were falling when at last, footsore, despondent and exhausted, I reached my goal. [147]

To my inexpressible relief, I found all eight gathered at the hotel dining table, discussing the various viands provided for their delectation, and chattering as gaily as though nothing untoward had occurred. I came to a halt in the doorway, panting. Explanations followed. It would appear that, having been seized with a simultaneous desire to visit a near-by glove shop, which some among them had noted in passing at the moment of our entry into the Louvre, they had returned to examine and purchase of its wares; and so great was their haste, so impetuous their decision that, one and all, they had neglected to inform me of their purpose, each vowing she thought the others had addressed me on the subject and obtained my consent. [148]

Think of it, Mister President, I ask you! Here were eight rational beings, all standing at the threshold of life, all at a most impressionable age, who valued the chance to acquire such minor and inconsequential chattels as kid gloves above a period of pleasurable instruction in a magnificent treasure trove of the Old Masters. In my then spent condition the admission, so frankly vouchsafed, left me well-nigh speechless. I could only murmur: "Young ladies, you pain me, you grieve me, you hurt me, you astound me! But you are so young, and I forgive you." I then withdrew to my own apartment and rang for an attendant to bring a basin of hot water in which I might lave my blistered pedal extremities. Later, arnica was also required.

The following day, on returning from a small errand in the neighbourhood, as I entered the *rue* or street on which our hostel fronted I was startled out of all composure to behold Miss Flora Canbee, of Louisville, Kentucky, and Miss Hilda Slicker, of Seattle, Washington, in animated conversation with two young men, one of whom was tall and dark and the other slight and fair, but both apparelled in the habiliments peculiar to officers in the French Army. [149]

For a moment I could scarcely believe my eyes. I think I paused to readjust the glasses I wear, fearing my trusty lenses might have played me false; but it was true. As I hurriedly advanced, with amazement and displeasure writ large on my countenance, Miss Canbee proceeded to disarm my mounting suspicions by informing me that the two officers were her first cousins, and then introduced them to me. They responded to my cordial salutation in excellent English, Miss Canbee casually adding, as though to make conversation:

"Of course you remember, Doctor Fibble, my having told you several times that my mother was French?" [148]

To this I could only reply in all sincerity that the fact of her having told me so had entirely escaped my mind, which was quite true. Yet ordinarily my memory for trifles is excellent, and I

can only attribute to press of other cares my failure now to recall the circumstance.

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I could well understand why Miss Canbee felt constrained to obtain permission to spend the afternoon in converse with her cousins in preference to joining the rest of us in a long walk in the warm, bright sunshine along the quays of the River Seine, this being an excursion I had planned at luncheon; but why—as I repeatedly asked myself—why should Miss Hilda Slicker manifest pique to a marked degree when I insisted on her accompanying us? She, surely, could feel no personal interest in two young French officers whose acquaintance she had just formed and who were in no degree related to her by ties of blood-kinship.

Such happenings as the two I have just narrated went far to convince me that even the refining and elevating influences of foreign travel, when prosecuted under the most agreeable and congenial of auspices, might not suffice in all instances to curb the naturally frivolous and unheeding tendencies of growing young persons of the opposite sex, between the given ages of seventeen and twenty.

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I may also state that the task of mastering the idiomatic eccentricities of the French language gave me some small inconvenience. With Greek, with Latin, with Hebrew, I am on terms of more or less familiarity; but until this present occasion the use of modern tongues other than our own have never impressed me as an accomplishment worthy to be undertaken by one who is busied with the more serious acquirements of learning. However, some days before sailing I had secured a work entitled "French in Thirty Lessons," the author being our teacher of modern languages at Fernbridge, Miss McGillicuddy by name, and at spare intervals had diligently applied myself to its contents.

On reaching France, however, I found the jargon or patois spoken generally by the natives to differ so materially from the purer forms as set forth in this work that perforce I had recourse to a small manual containing, in parallel columns, sentences in English and their Gallic equivalents, and thereafter never ventured abroad without carrying this volume in my pocket. Even so, no matter how careful my enunciation, I frequently encountered difficulty in making my intent clear to the understanding of the ordinary gendarme or cab driver, or what not. Nor will I deny that in other essential regards Paris was to me disappointing. The life pursued by many of the inhabitants after nightfall impressed me as frivolous in the extreme and not to be countenanced by right-thinking people; in the public highways automobiles and other vehicles manoeuvred with disconcerting recklessness and abandon; and, after England, the tea seemed inferior.

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Until this time no intimation of impending war had intruded on our thoughts. To be sure, some days before our departure from Fernbridge I had perused accounts in the public prints of the assassination of the Heir Apparent of Austria-Hungary and his lady somewhere in the Balkans, but I for one regarded this deplorable event as a thing liable to occur in any unsettled foreign community where the inhabitants speak in strange tongues and follow strange customs. Never for one moment did I dream that this crime might have an effect on the peace of the world at large.

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Presently, however, I began to note an air of feverish activity among the denizens of Paris; and one morning toward the end of our first week's sojourn in their midst I discerned a large body of troops moving along one of the principal boulevards, accompanied by cheering throngs. Still I felt no alarm, my explanation to my young ladies for this patriotic exhibition being that undoubtedly these abnormal and emotional people were merely celebrating one of their national gala or fête days.

In fancied security, therefore, we continued to visit cemeteries, cathedrals, art galleries, tombs, and so on, until, almost like a bolt from the sky, came tidings that certain neighbouring states had interchanged declarations of war and the French forces were preparing to mobilise. Simultaneously one realised that American visitors were departing elsewhere in considerable numbers.

I was not frightened, but I shall not deny that I felt concern. I was a man, and a man must face with fortitude and resolution whatever vicissitudes the immediate future may bring forth—else he is no man; but what of these tender and immature young females who had been entrusted to my keeping? I must act, and act at once. I summoned them to my presence; and after begging them to remain calm and to refrain from tears, I disclosed to them the facts that had come to my notice. Continuing, I informed them that though the rumours of prospective hostilities were doubtlessly exaggerated and perhaps largely unfounded, nevertheless I deemed it the part of wisdom to return without delay to England, there to remain until conditions on the Continent assumed a more pacific aspect.

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Enormously to my surprise, my wards, with one voice, demurred to the suggestion. Miss Canbee spoke up, saying—I reproduce her words almost literally—that a really-truly war would be a perfect lark and that she thought it would be just dear if they all volunteered as nurses, or daughters of the regiment, or something. She announced, furthermore, that she meant to wire that night to her father for permission to enlist and pick out her uniform the very first thing in the morning. Strangely, her deluded companions greeted this remarkable statement with seeming approbation. All speaking at once, they began discussing details of costume, and so on. I was thunderstruck! It required outright sternness of demeanour and utterance on my part to check their exuberant outbursts of misguided enthusiasm.

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Nevertheless, another twenty-four hours was to ensue before I felt that their spirits had been

sufficiently curbed to permit of my making preparations for our departure. Judge of my feelings when I found that no travelling accommodations could be procured, every departing train for the coast being crowded far beyond its customary capacity!

Ah, Mister President, could I but depict for you the scenes that now succeeded—the congestion at the booking offices; the intense confusion prevalent at all the railroad stations; the increasing popular apprehension everywhere displayed; the martial yet disconcerting sound of troops on the march through the streets; the inability to procure suitable means of vehicular transportation about the city. In those hours my nervous system sustained a succession of shocks from which, I fear me, I shall never entirely recover.

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Yet I would not have you believe that I lost my intellectual poise and composure. Without, I may have appeared distraught; within, my brain continued its ordained functions. Indeed, my mind operated with a most unwonted celerity. Scarcely a minute passed that some new expedient did not flash into my thoughts; and only the inability to carry them out, due to the prevalent conditions and the obstinacy of railroad employés and others to whom I appealed, prevented the immediate execution of a considerable number of my plans.

Never for one instant was my mind or my body inactive. I would not undertake to compute the number of miles I travelled on foot that day in going from place to place—from consular office to ambassadorial headquarters, always to find each place densely thronged with assemblages of my harassed and frenzied fellow country people; from railroad terminal to booking office and back again, or vice versa, as the case might be and frequently was; from money changer's to tourist agency; from tourist agency to hotel, there to offer hurried words of comfort to my eight charges; and then to dart forth again, hither and yon, on some well-intentioned but entirely fruitless errand.

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To my ministrations I ascribe the cheerfulness and light-heartedness the young ladies continued to evince throughout this trying period. From their demeanour one actually might have imagined that they lacked totally in appreciation of the gravity of the situation.

Not soon, if ever, shall I cease to recall my inward misgivings when, late in the afternoon of this distracting day, I returned from my third or fourth unsuccessful call at the booking office to learn they had disobeyed my express admonition that they remain securely indoors during my absences. The manager led me to the door of his establishment and pointed to a spot on the sidewalk some number of paces distant. There I beheld all eight of them standing at the curbing, giving vent to signs and sounds of approval as a column of troops passed along the boulevard. I started toward them, being minded to chide them severely for their foolhardiness in venturing forth from the confines of the hotel without male protection; but, at this juncture, I was caught unawares in a dense mass of boisterous and excited resident Parisians, who swept up suddenly from behind, enveloping me in their midst.

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Thus entangled and surrounded, I was borne on and onward, protesting as I went and endeavouring by every polite means within my power to extricate myself from the press. Yet, so far as one might observe, none paid the slightest heed to one's request for room and air until suddenly the crowd parted, with cheers, and through the opening my wards appeared led by the Misses Flora Canbee and Evelyn Maud Peacher, the latter of Peoria, Illinois. These two accepted my outstretched hands and, with their aid and the aid of the remaining six, I managed to attain the comparatively safe refuge of a near-by shop doorway, but in a sadly jostled state as to one's nerves and much disordered as to one's wardrobe. Hearing my voice uplifted in entreaty as I was carried by them, they had nobly responded; and, because of the impulse of the throng, which accorded to frail maidenhood what was denied to stalwart masculinity, they had succeeded in reaching my side.

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So great was my relief at being rescued, I forbore altogether from scolding them; and, besides, my thoughts were distracted into other and even more perturbing channels when a search of my person revealed to me that unknown persons had taken advantage of the excitement of the moment to invade my pockets and make away with such minor belongings as a silver watch, a fountain pen, a spectacle case, a slightly used handkerchief, an unused one carried for emergencies, and the neat patent-clasp purse in which I customarily kept an amount of small change for casual purchases. I lost no time in getting my charges indoors, for it was quite plain that there must be thieves about.

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In the midst of all this I despatched the first of a series of cablegrams to Mr. William Jennings Bryan. I realise now that I should have addressed you direct, but at the moment it seemed to me fitting that the head of our State Department should be advised of our situation.

From memory I am able to reproduce the language of this first message. It ran:

Am detained here, with eight young lady students of Fernbridge Seminary. Have absolutely no desire to become personally involved in present European crisis. Kindly notify American Ambassador to have French Government provide special train for our immediate use. Pressing and urgent!

Having signed this with my full name, and with my temporary address added, I hastened with it to the nearest cable office. The official to whom I tendered it apparently knew no English, but from his manner I gathered that he felt disinclined to accept and transmit it. I was in no mood to be thwarted by petty technicalities, however, and on my pressing into his hand a considerable amount of money in five-franc notes he took both currency and cablegram, with a shrug of his

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shoulders, signifying acquiescence.

It was because I tarried on and on amid tumultuous scenes for another twenty-four hours, awaiting the taking of proper steps by Mr. Bryan, that more precious time was lost. Hour after hour, within the refuge of our hotel parlour, itself a most depressing chamber, I sat, my hands clasped, my charges clustered about me, our trunks packed, our lesser belongings bestowed for travel, awaiting word from him. None came. I am loath to make the accusation direct, but I must tell you that I never had from Mr. Bryan any acknowledgment of this original cablegram or of the other and even more insistently appealing telegrams I filed in rapid sequence; nor, so far as I have been able to ascertain, did he in the least bestir himself on behalf of Fernbridge Seminary for Young Ladies.

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Regarding this callous indifference, this official slothfulness, this inability to rise to the needs of a most pressing emergency, I refrain absolutely from comment, leaving it for you, sir, to judge. It would be of no avail for Mr. Bryan to deny having received my messages, because in each and every instance I insisted on leaving the money to pay for transmission.

I shall not harrow your sensibilities by a complete and detailed recital of the nerve-racking adventures that immediately succeeded. I may only liken my state of mind to that so graphically described in the well-known and popular story of the uxoricide, Bluebeard, wherein it is told how the vigilant Anne stood on the outer ramparts straining her eyes in the direction whither succour might reasonably be expected to materialise, being deceived at least once by the dust cloud created by a flock of sheep, and tortured meantime by the melancholy accents of her sister, the present wife of the monster, who continually entreated to be told whether she, Anne, saw any one coming.

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The tale is probably imaginary in character to a very considerable degree, though based, I believe, on fact; but assuredly the author depicted my own emotions in this interim. One moment I felt as one of the sisters must have felt, the next as the other sister must have felt; and, again, I shared the composite emotions of both at once, not to mention the feelings probably inherent in the shepherd of the flock, since my wards might well be likened, I thought, to helpless young sheep. By this comparison I mean no disrespect; the simile is employed because of its aptness and for no other reason. It would ill become me, of all men, to refer slightly to any of our student-body, we at Fernbridge making it our policy ever to receive only the daughters of families having undoubted social standing in their respective communities. I trust this explanation is entirely satisfactory to all concerned.

Let us go forward, Mister President, to the moment when, after many false alarms, many alternations of hope, of doubt, of despair, then hope again, we finally found ourselves aboard a train ostensibly destined for Boulogne or Calais; albeit a train of the most inferior accommodations conceivable and crowded to the utmost by unhappy travellers, among whom fleeing Americans vastly predominated. Our heavy luggage was left behind us, abandoned to unsympathetic hands. Of food seemly to allay the natural cravings of the human appetite there was little or none to be had, even at augmented prices. Actually one might not procure so small a thing as a cup of tea.

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My trunk, my neatly strapped steamer rug, my large yellow valise, and sundry smaller articles, were gone, I knew not whither. I did but know they had vanished utterly; wherefore I adhered with the clutch of desperation to my umbrella and my small black portmanteau. Even my collection of assorted souvenir postcards of European views, whereof I had contemplated making an albumed gift to my Great-Aunt Paulina, on my return to my beloved native land, was irretrievably lost to me forever.

Still, we moved—haltingly and slowly, it is true, and with frequent stoppages. None the less, we moved; progress was definitely being made in the direction of the seaboard, and in contemplation of this fact one found an infinitesimal measure of consolation, gleaming, so to speak, against a dark cloud of forebodings, like one lone starry orb in a storm-envisaged firmament. During the early part of our journey I could not fail to give heed to the amazing attitude maintained by the young ladies. Repeatedly, as we paused on a siding to permit the passage of a laden troop train, I detected them in the act of waving hand or kerchief at the soldiery.

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And once I actually overheard Miss Marble remark to Miss Canbee that she, for one, was sorry we were going away from hostilities rather than toward them. One could scarce credit one's ears! Could it be true, as students of psychology have repeatedly affirmed, that the spirit of youth is unquenchable, even in the presence of impending peril? Or, had my own precept and example stimulated these young women into a display of seeming light-heartedness? Perhaps both—certainly the latter. As for me, my one consuming thought now was to bid farewell forever to the shores of a land where war is permitted to eventuate with such abruptness and with so little consideration for visiting noncombatants. To those about me I made no secret of my desire in this regard, speaking with such intensity as to produce a quavering of the voice.

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Certain decided views, entirely in accordance with my own, were so succinctly expressed by a gentleman who shared the compartment into which I was huddled with some eight or nine others that I cannot forbear from repeating them here.

This gentleman, a Mr. John K. Botts, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and evidently a person of much wealth and no small importance in his home city, said things had come to a pretty pass

when a freeborn American citizen who had been coming to Europe every summer for years, always spending his money like water and never asking the price of anything in advance, but just planking down whatever the grafters wanted for it, should have his motor car confiscated and his trunks held up on him and his plans all disarranged, just because a lot of these foreigners thought they wanted to fight one another over something. He said that he had actually been threatened with arrest by a measly army captain whom he, Mr. Botts, could buy and sell a hundred times over without ever feeling it. He was strongly in favour of wiring our Government to order the warring nations to suspend hostilities until all the Americans in Europe could get back home, and mentioned thirty days as a suitable time for this purpose.

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With regard to this last suggestion I heartily concurred; and my second cablegram to Mr. Bryan, filed while en route, embodied the thought, for which I now wish to give Mr. John K. Botts due credit as its creator. To insure prompt delivery into Mr. Bryan's hands, I sent the message in duplicate, one copy being addressed to him at the State Department, in Washington, and the other in care of the Silvery Bells Lecture and Chautauqua Bureau, in the event that he might be on the platform rather than at his desk.

I should have asked Mr. Botts to sign the cablegrams with me jointly but for the fact that after the first two hours of travel he was no longer with us. He left the train at a way station a few miles from Paris, with a view, as he announced, to chartering a special train from the military forces to convey him, regardless of expense, to his destination, and failed to return. Days elapsed before I learned through roundabout sources that he had been detained in quasi custody because of a groundless suspicion on the part of the native authorities that he was mildly demented, though how such a theory could have been harboured by any one is, I admit, entirely beyond my comprehension.

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Nightfall loomed imminent when we reached the town of Abbeville, a place of approximately twenty thousand inhabitants. In happier and less chaotic times one might have spent a pleasant and profitable day, or perhaps two days, in Abbeville, for here, so the guidebook informed me, was to be found a Gothic cathedral of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, an ancient fortress, and a natural history collection; but now my ambition was to pass Abbeville by with the greatest possible despatch.

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Yet, what was one to do when soldiers in uniform and led by officers entered the train and required the passengers to vacate forthwith, on the excuse that the coaches were required for the transportation of troops? Protests were presented, but all to no avail, the officers remaining obdurate in the face of entreaties, objurgations, and even offers of money by a number of individuals hailing from various sections of the United States and elsewhere. We detrained; there was, in fact, no other course left to us.

Pausing at the station long enough to indite and leave behind a cablegram acquainting Mr. Bryan with this newest outrage, I set forth, with my eight clustering wards, to find suitable quarters for the night. We visited hotel after hotel, to be met everywhere with the statement that each already was full to overflowing with refugees. At last, spent and discouraged, I obtained shelter for my little expedition beneath the roof of a small and emphatically untidy establishment on the shores of that turbid stream, the River Somme. For the accommodation of the young ladies two small rooms were available, but to my profound distaste I was informed that I must sleep through the night on—hear this, Mister President!—on a billiard table!

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I had never slept on a billiard table before. Willingly, I shall never do so again. Moreover, I was not permitted to have an entire billiard table to myself. I was compelled to share it with two other persons, both total strangers to me.

I must qualify that last assertion; for one of my bedfellows—or table-fellows, to employ exact language—lost no time in informing me regarding himself and his history. Despite the hardness of my improvised couch, I fain would have relinquished myself to Nature's sweet restorer—that is, slumber—for I was greatly awearied by the exertions of the day; but this gentleman, who was of enormous physical proportions, evinced so strong an inclination to have converse with me that I felt it the part of discretion, and of politeness as well, to give ear.

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Speaking in a quaint and at times almost incomprehensible vernacular, he began by telling me as we reclined side by side beneath the same coverlid that he was no other than Zeno the Great. He then paused, as though to allow me time in which to recover from any astonishment I might feel. In sooth, I had never before heard of any person wearing so singular an appellation; but, realising instinctively that some response from me was expected, I murmured, "Ah, indeed! How very interesting!" and begged him to proceed.

This he straightway did, paying no heed to the muttered complaints of our third companion, who reclined on the other side from me, I being in the middle. Since our fortunes were thereafter to be so strangely intertwined, I deem it best to detail in effect the disclosures then and there made to me by this gentleman, Zeno the Great.

His name, it developed, was not Zeno, but Finnigan, the more sonorous cognomen having been adopted for professional purposes. He had begun life humbly, as a blacksmith's assistant in a hamlet in Michigan, later attaching himself to a travelling circus. Here his duties mainly consisted in lending assistance in the elevating and lowering of the tent. Possessing great bodily strength and activity, however, he had in spare time perfected himself in the art of lifting, balancing and juggling objects of enormous weight, such as steel bars, iron balls, and so on, with

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the gratifying result that he presently became a duly qualified performer, appearing for a term of years before large and enthusiastic audiences, and everywhere with the most marked success imaginable; in fact, he was now without a peer in his chosen vocation, as he himself freely conceded. He expressed himself as being exceedingly sorry not to have with him a scrapbook containing a great number of press clippings laudatory of his achievements, adding that he would have been glad to lend me the book in order that I might read its entire contents at my leisure.

At length his fame, having first spread the length and breadth of our own country, reached foreign shores. After spirited bidding on the part of practically all the leading Continental managers he accepted an engagement at a princely salary to perform before the crowned heads of Europe, and others, as the principal attraction of a vaudeville company contemplating a tour of Europe. I recall that he specifically mentioned crowned heads. Feeling that the importance of the event justified a lavishness in the matter of personal garb, he said that before sailing he had visited the establishment of a famous costumer located on the Bowery, in the city of New York, and there had purchased attire suitable to be worn on the occasion of his public appearances abroad.

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This apparel, he admitted, had undergone some wear, as the property of a previous owner, being, in fact, what is known as second-handed; but, because of its effectiveness of design and the fortunate circumstance of its being a perfect fit, he had not hesitated to purchase it. I ask you, Mister President, to mark well this detail, for it, too, has a profoundly significant bearing on future events.

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Continuing, my new acquaintance stated that he had reached France but a day or two before the mobilisation and, like myself, had been hurled unexpectedly into a very vortex of chaos and confusion. He had lost a collection of photographs of himself, and his treasured scrapbook—losses that he regretted exceedingly; but he had clung fast to his stage attire and to his juggling appliances, bearing them away with him by hand from Paris. He was now endeavouring to make his way back to England, intending to return thence to America without loss of time.

This narration consumed, I presume, the greater part of two hours, I, meantime, endeavouring to conceal any signs of increasing drowsiness. He was, I think, nearing the conclusion of his tale when the porter of the hotel appeared before us in the semi-gloom in which the billiard room was shrouded. Observing that we were yet awake, he gave vent to an extended statement, ejaculating with great volubility and many gesticulations of eyebrow, hand and shoulder. The French in which he declaimed was of so corrupted a form that one could not understand him; and, since one of my neighbours was now soundly asleep and the other knew no French, we were at a loss to get on until the porter had recourse to an improvised sign language.

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Producing a watch he pointed to the Roman numeral VII on its face and then, emitting a hissing sound from between his front teeth, he imparted to his hands a rapid circular motion, as though imitating the stirring of some mixture. At once we agreed between our two selves that this strange demonstration had reference, firstly to the hour when breakfast would be served on the following morning, and, secondly, to the articles of drink and food which would be available for our consumption at that time.



FROM ITS DEPTHS I EXTRACTED THE PARTING
GIFTS BESTOWED UPON ME BY MY GREAT-AUNT
PAULINA

Accordingly I nodded, saying: "*Oui, oui; je comprends.*" And at that, seemingly satisfied, the worthy fellow withdrew, all smiles. Shortly thereafter we drifted off to sleep and I knew no more until I was roused by the brilliant rays of the August sun shining in my face and rose to a sitting attitude, to find that the third man had already departed, leaving to Zeno the Great and myself the complete occupancy of the billiard table.

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As I straightened to my full stature, with my limbs aching and my whole corporeal frame much stiffened by enforced contact during a period of hours with the comparatively unyielding surface of the billiard table, I made another discovery, highly disconcerting in its nature. Ere retiring to rest I had placed my shoes side by side beneath the table. It was now evident that while I slept some person or persons unknown to me had removed them. I hypothesised this deduction from the fact that they were quite utterly gone. A thorough scrutiny of my surroundings, which I conducted with the aid of my late sleeping companion, merely served to confirm this belief, the search being bootless. I have no intention of making a pun here. Puns are to me vulgar, and hence odious. I mean bootless in the proper sense of the word.

Balancing myself on the marge or verge of the billiard table—for the tiled surface of the floor had imparted a sense of chill to my half-soled feet and already I was beginning to repress incipient sneezes—I called aloud, and yet again I called. There was no response. A sense of the undignifiedness of my attitude came to me. I opened my remaining portmanteau, which had served me as a pillow—and such a pillow! From its depths I extracted the parting gifts bestowed

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upon me by my Great-Aunt Paulina and adjusted them to my chilled extremities. Ah, little had she recked, as her deft fingers wove the several skeins of wool into the finished fabric, that under such circumstances as these, in such a place as this, and almost within sound of war's dread alarms, I should now wear them!

I was reminded that I craved food and I mentioned the thought to Mr. Finnigan—or, as I shall call him, Zeno the Great. It appeared that he, too, was experiencing a similar natural longing, for his manner instantly became exuberantly cordial. For all his massiveness of contour and boisterous manner of speech, I felt that this new-made friend of mine had a warm heart. He dealt me an unnecessarily violent but affectionate blow between the shoulders, and as I reeled from the shock, gasping for breath, he cried out in his uncouth but kindly way:

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"Little one, that's a swell idea—let's you and me go to it!" Note—By *it*, he undoubtedly meant breakfast.

With these words he lifted his luggage consisting of a large black box securely bound with straps and padlocked as to the hasp, telling me at the same time that he doubted whether any human being in the world save himself could stir it from the floor; for, as he vouchsafed, it contained not only his costume but also a set of juggling devices of solid iron, weighing in the aggregate an incredible number of pounds. I have forgotten the exact figures, but my recollection is that he said upward of a thousand pounds net. As he shouldered this mighty burden he remarked to me over his shoulder:

"I guess I'm bad—eh?"

However, as I have just explained and now reiterate, I am convinced he was not bad at all, but good at bottom; so I contented myself by saying:

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"No, no; quite the contrary, I am sure."

As we emerged from the billiard room into the small entrance hall or lobby that adjoined it, I was struck with the air of silence which prevailed. The proprietor was not visible; no other person was visible. Once more I called out, saying: "Hello, my good man! Where are you?" or words to that effect; but only echo answered. I fared to the dining room, but not a living soul was in sight there. Beset by a sudden dread suspicion I hastily ascended the stairs to the upper floor and sped through an empty corridor to the two rooms wherein my eight wards had been lodged. The doors of both chambers stood open; but the interiors, though showing signs of recent occupancy, were deserted. I even explored the closets—no one there, either! Conjecture was succeeded by alarm and alarm by outright distress.

Where had they gone? Where had everybody gone? Unbidden and unanswered, these questions leaped to my bewildered brain, firing it with horrible forebodings.

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Sounds of loud and excited outcry came reverberatively to me from below. With all possible speed I retraced my steps to the entrance hall. There I beheld the proprietor in close physical contact with Zeno the Great, striving with all his powers to restrain the infuriated latter from committing a bodily assault on the frightened porter, who apparently had just entered by the street door and was cowering in a corner in an attitude of supplication, loudly appealing for mercy, while the landlord in broken English was all the time pleading with the giant to remain tranquil.

Into the midst of the struggle I interposed myself, and when a measure of calm had been re-established I learned the lamentable and stunning truth. Stupefied, dazed and, for the nonce, speechless, I stared from one to the other, unwilling to credit my own sense of hearing.

At seven of the clock a special train had steamed away for Calais, bearing the refugees. The proprietor and his minion had but just returned from the station, whence the train had departed a short half hour before. Aboard it were the Americans who had been stranded in Abbeville on the evening previous. My eight young lady seniors were aboard it, doubtlessly assuming, in the haste and confusion of the start, that I had found lodgment in some other compartment than the one occupied by them.

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All the recent guests of this hotel were aboard it—with two exceptions. One was Zeno the Great; the other the author of this distressing narrative.

With one voice we demanded to know why we, too, had not been advised in advance. The proprietor excitedly declared that he had sent the porter to make the rounds of the house during the night and that the porter returning to him, reported that, either by word of mouth or by signs, he had duly informed all of the plans afoot for the ensuing morning.

"He tell me zat ze billiard-table gentlemans do not understand ze French," proclaimed the landlord; "and zat zen he make wit' 'is mouth and 'is hands ze representation of ze *chemin de fer*—what you call ze locomoteef; and zen you say to him: 'Yes, yes—all is well; we comprehend fully.'"

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With a low, poignant moan I pressed my hands, palms inward, to my throbbing temples and staggered for support against the nearermost wall. I saw it all now. When the porter had emitted those hissing sounds from between his teeth we very naturally interpreted them as an effort on his part to simulate the sound produced by steaming-hot breakfast coffee. When, in a circular fashion, he rotated his hand we thought he meant scrambled eggs. Between wonder at the

incredible stupidity of the porter and horror at the situation of my eight unprotected and defenceless young lady seniors, now separated from me by intervening and rapidly increasing miles, I was rent by conflicting emotions until reason tottered on her throne.

Anon I recovered myself, and the intellectual activity habitual to the trained mind succeeded the coma of shock. I asked this: "When will there be another train for the coast?" With many shrugs the landlord answered that conditions were unsettled—as we knew; schedules were disarranged. There might be a train to-night, to-morrow, or the day after—who could say? Meantime he felt that it was his duty to warn us to prepare for a visit by a joint representation of the civic and military authorities. Rumours of the presence of spies in the employ of the Germans filled the town. It was believed that one miscreant was even then in the place seeking an opportunity to destroy the public buildings and the railroad terminal with bombs or other devilish machines. Excitement was intense. Aliens were to be put under surveillance and domiciliary search had been ordered. It was even possible that all strangers might be arrested on suspicion and detained for further investigation. [183]

Arrested! Detained! His words sent a cold chill into the very marrow of my being. Innocent of all evil intent though I was, I now recalled that on the day before, while in mixed company, I had spoken openly—perhaps bitterly—of the temperamental shortcomings of the French. What if my language should be distorted, my motives misconstrued? In the present roused and frenzied state of a proverbially excitable race the most frightful mistakes were possible. [184]

There was but one thing to do: I must wire our Secretary of State, apprising him of the exact situation in Abbeville with particular reference to my own plight, and strongly urging on him the advisability of instantly ordering a fleet of American battleships to the coast of France, there to make a demonstration in force. With me, to think has ever been to act. I begged the landlord for pen and ink and cable blanks and, sitting down at a convenient table, I began. However, I cannot ask that Mr. Bryan be called to account for his failure to respond to this particular recommendation from me, inasmuch as the cablegram was never despatched; in fact, it was never completed, owing to a succession of circumstances I shall next describe.

Because of an agitation that I ascribe to the intense earnestness now dominating me I encountered some slight difficulty in framing the message in intelligible language and a legible chirography. I had torn up the first half-completed draft and was engaged on the opening paragraph of the second when the clamour of a fresh altercation fell on my ear, causing me to glance up from my task. The porter, it appeared, had laid hands on Zeno the Great's black box, possibly with a view to shifting it from where it lay on the floor directly in the doorway; whereupon its owner became seized with a veritable berserk rage. Uttering loud cries and denunciations he fell on the porter and wrested the box from his grasp; following which the porter fled into the street, being immediately lost from view in the distance. [185]

Turning to me, Zeno the Great was in the midst of saying that, though bereft of his scrapbook of clippings and his set of photographs, he hoped to be eternally consigned to perdition—his meaning if not his exact phraseology—if anybody got away with the even more precious belongings yet remaining to him, when nearing sounds of hurrying feet and many shrill voices from without caused him to break off. [186]

In apprehension, more or less successfully concealed from casual scrutiny, I rose to my feet. At the same instant the porter precipitately re-entered, closely followed by six gendarmes, eight foot soldiers, a personage in a high hat, whom I afterward ascertained to be the mayor, and a mixed assemblage of citizens of both sexes and all ages, amounting in the aggregate to a multitude of not inconsiderable proportions. Agitating his arms with inconceivable activity and crying out words of unknown purport at the top of his lungs, the porter pointed accusingly at Zeno, at the locked box, at me!

For the moment I was left unmolested. With loud and infuriated cries the gendarmes threw themselves on the black box. The foot soldiers hurled themselves on Zeno the Great, precipitating him to the floor, and quite covering him up beneath a quivering and straining mass of human forms. The mayor tripped over a stool and fell prone. The populace gave vent to shrill outcries. In short and in fine, I may affirm, without fear of successful contradiction, that chaos reigned supreme. [187]

One felt that the time had come to assert one's sovereign position as an American citizen and, if need be, as a member of a family able to trace its genealogy in an unbroken line to the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers at or near Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts. I drew forth from my pocket the small translating manual, previously described as containing English and French sentences of similar purport arranged in parallel columns, and, holding it in one hand, I endeavoured to advance to the centre of the turmoil, with my free arm meantime uplifted in a gesture calling for silence and attention; but a variety of causes coincidentally transpired to impede seriously my efforts to be heard.

To begin with, the uproar was positively deafening in volume, and my voice is one which in moments of declamation is inclined to verge on the tenor. In addition to this, the complete freedom of my movements was considerably impaired by a burly whiskered creature, in a long blouse such as is worn in these parts by butchers and other tradespeople, who, coming on me from behind, fixed a firm grasp in the back of my garments at the same instant when one of his fellows possessed himself of my umbrella and my small portmanteau. [188]

Finally, I could not locate in the book the exact phrases I meant to utter. Beneath my eyes, as the printed leaves fluttered back and forth, there flashed paragraphs dealing with food, with prices of various articles, with the state of the weather, with cab fares, with conjectures touching on the whereabouts of imaginary relatives, with questions and answers in regard to the arrival and departure of trains, but nothing at all concerning unfounded suspicions directed against private individuals; nothing at all concerning the inherent rights of strangers travelling abroad; nothing at all concerning the procedure presumed to obtain among civilised peoples as to the inviolate sacredness of one's personal property from sumptuary and violent search at the hands of unauthorised persons—in short, nothing at all that would have the slightest bearing on, or be of the slightest value in explaining, the present acute situation. Given a modicum of leisure for painstaking search among the pages and a lessening of tensivity in the state of the popular excitement, I should undoubtedly have succeeded in finding that which I sought; but such was destined not to be.

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Of a sudden a chorus of exultant shrieks, louder than any of the cries that until then had arisen, caused all and sundry to face a spot near the door. The gendarmes had forced open the black box so highly prized by Zeno the Great and now bared its contents to the common gaze.

Mister President, think of the result on the minds of the mob already inflamed by stories of spies and infernal devices. The box contained six cannon balls and a German captain's uniform!

Ah, sir, how many times since then, dreaming in my peaceful bed of the things that immediately ensued, have I wakened to find my extremities icy cold and my body bathed in an icy moisture! Yet, in my waking hours, when'er I seek mentally to reconstruct those hideous scenes I marvel that I should preserve so confused, so inchoate a recollection of it all, though from the picture certain episodes stand out in all their original and terrifying vividness.

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Again do I hear the maledictions of the frenzied populace; again do I behold their menacing faces, their threatening gestures. Again, with pitying and sympathetic eyes, do I see myself hurried through the streets, a breathless prisoner, hatless, coatless—for my coat came away in the hands of the whiskered wretch in the blouse—deprived through forcible confiscation of my translating manual, by means of which I might yet have made all clear to my accusers, and still wearing on my sorely trampled feet the parting gift of Great-Aunt Paulina. Again am I carried for arraignment before a mixed tribunal in a crowded room of some large building devoted in ordinary times, I presume, to civic purposes.

The trial scene—how clearly do I envisage that! Come with me, Your Excellency, and look on it: Zeno the Great is there, writhing impotently in the grasp of his captors and, at such intervals as his voice can be heard, hoarsely importuning me to make all clear. The gendarmes are there. The troopers are there in full panoply of lethal equipment and carnage-dealing implements of war. The mayor is there, as before, but has lost his high hat. Hundreds of the vociferating citizens are there. And finally I—Roscoe T. Fibble—am there also, still preserving, I may fondly trust, such dignity, such poise, such an air of conscious rectitude as is possible, considering gyves on one's wrists, no covering for one's head, and a pair of embroidered bedroom slippers on one's feet.

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The porter, with circumstantial particularity, re-enacts his attempt to remove the damning black box and his encounter with my hapless companion. The mayor publicly embraces him. The chief of the gendarmes proves by actual demonstration that the German captain's uniform is a perfect fit for Zeno the Great. The mayor kisses him on both cheeks. The commanding officer of the military squad makes the discovery that the six cannon balls are but thin hollow metal shells containing cavities or recesses, into which presumably fulminating explosives might be introduced. The mayor kisses him on both cheeks and on the forehead.

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It is one's own turn; at the prospect one involuntarily shudders! One's self is hedged about by impassioned inquisitionists. On every side one is confronted by waving beards, condemning eyes, denouncing faces, clenched hands and pointing fingers. From full twenty throats at once one is beset by shrill interrogations; but, owing to the universal rapidity of utterance and the shrillness of enunciation, one is quite unable, in the present state of one's mind, to distinguish a single intelligible syllable.

Lacking my translating manual to aid me in framing suitable responses, I had resort to an expedient which at the moment seemed little short of an inspiration, but which I have since ascertained to have been technically an error, inasmuch as thereby I was put in the attitude of pleading guilty to being a spy in the employ of the enemy, of being an accomplice of Zeno the Great in nefarious plots against the lives and property of the French people, and of having conspired with him to wreck all public and many private edifices in the town by means of deadly agencies.

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The mistake I made, Mr. President, was this: To all questions of whatsoever nature, I answered by saying, "*Oui, oui.*"

Almost instantaneously—so it seemed—I found myself transported to a place of durance vile, deep down in the intricate confines of the noisome cellars beneath the building where the inquisition had taken place. There in lonely solitude did I languish; and at intervals I heard through the thick walls, from the adjoining keep, the dismal, despairing accents of my ill-starred fellow countryman bewailingly uplifted. True, he had wilfully deceived me. Most certainly he told me those cannon balls were solid iron.

Yet this was neither the time nor the place for vain recriminations; for, indeed, all seemed lost.

Doom impended—earthly destruction; mundane annihilation! One pictured a gallows tree; and, turning from that image, one pictured a firing squad at sunrise. I was only deterred from committing to writing my expiring message to Mr. Bryan and the world at large by two insurmountable considerations: One was that I had no writing materials of whatsoever nature, and the other was that my mental perturbation precluded all possibility of inducing a consecutive and lucid train of thought.

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Constantly there recurred to me the words of a popular yet melancholy ballad I had once heard reproduced on a talking machine which dealt with the tragic and untimely fate of a noble youth who, through misapprehension and no discernible fault of his own, perished at the hands of a drum-head court-martial in time of hostilities, the refrain being: "The pardon came too late!"

Nevermore should I see my peaceful study at Fernbridge Seminary for Young Ladies, with its cozy armchair, its comforting stool, or rest, for the slippered feet, its neatly arranged tea table! Nevermore should I spend the tranquil evening hours with Wordsworth and with Tennyson! Nevermore should my eyes rest on my portfolio of pressed autumn leaves, my carefully preserved wild flowers, my complete collection of the flora of Western New Jersey!

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In such despairing contemplations very many hours passed—or at least, so I believed at the time. Eventually footsteps sounded without in the paved corridor; the lock of my cell turned; the hinges grated; metal clanged. Had another day dawned? Had the executioners come to lead me forth? Nay; not so! The sickly light that streamed into my dungeon cell was not the beaming of another sunrise but the suffused radiance of the present afternoon; in fact, the hour was approximately one o'clock P. M., as I learned later.

Enframed in the door opening stood the form of my gaoler, and beside him was one of the cousins of my charge, Miss Canbee. It was the tall brunette cousin—not the slight blonde one. I was saved! I was saved!

He—the cousin in question—had been one of the officers in charge of the train which bore my charges away that morning. Meeting him on board soon after discovering that I was not included among the passengers, Miss Canbee begged him to hasten back to Abbeville to make search for me. He had consented; he had returned posthaste. He knew me for what I was, not for what, to the misguided perceptions of these excited citizens, I seemed, in sooth, to be.

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And in this same connection I wish to add that I have ever refused to credit the malicious rumours originating among some of Miss Canbee's seminary mates, and coming to my ears after my safe arrival at Fernbridge, to the effect that this young gentleman was not Miss Canbee's cousin and nowise related to her; for, as I clearly pointed out to Miss Waddleton on the occasion when she recounted the story to me, if he were not her cousin, how could she have known him when they met in Paris and why should he have been willing to act on her intercessions? He was her cousin—I reaffirm it!

He had come. He was now here. I repeat the former declaratory exclamation—I was saved!

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Mister President, the story is done. You now know all—or nearly all. With a line I dispose of the release from custody of the writer and of Zeno the Great, following suitable explanations carried on with the aid of Miss Canbee's cousin. With another line—to wit, this one—I pass over my affecting reunion that night at Calais with my eight young-lady charges; as also the details of our return to England's friendly shores, of our meeting with Miss Primleigh, of our immediate departure by steamer for our own dear land, and finally of our reception at Fernbridge, in which I was unable to participate in person by reason of the shattered state of my nerves.

And now, sir, having placed before you the facts, with all the determination of which I am capable I reiterate my earlier expressed demand for condign official retribution on the heads of the persons culpably blamable for my harrowing misadventures, whoever and wherever those persons may be. If you feel moved, also, to take up the matter with Mr. Bryan personally, you have my permission to do so.

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Before concluding, I might add that a day or two since, as I casually perused the editorial columns of a daily journal published at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, I chanced on a delineation of Mr. Bryan, depicting him in sweeping white robes, with a broad smile on his face, and holding in one outstretched hand a brimming cup, flagon or beaker, labelled as containing a purely nonalcoholic beverage; while on his shoulder nestled a dove, signifying Peace. I have taken the liberty of forwarding a copy of this communication to the artist responsible for that pictured tribute, in order that he, too, may know our former Secretary of State in his true light, and in the hope that he—the artist—shall in future cease to employ his talents in extolling one who so signally failed to give heed to one's appeals in the most critical period of one's existence.

I remain, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

ROSCOE T. FIBBLE, D.D.

P. S.: Since penning the above, my attention has been directed to the fact that the picture in the aforesaid Philadelphia paper was intended for a caricature—or, as the cant phrase goes, a cartoon—its intent being to cast gentle ridicule on the policies of the man Bryan. I have, therefore, addressed a supplementary line to the artist, complimenting and commending him in the highest terms.

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FIBBLE.

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PART THREE

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Being a Series of Extracts Culled from the Diary of Dr. Fibble.

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Lover's Leap

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APRIL THE THIRD.—Good morning, Friend Quarto! The foregoing line, which I have but this moment inscribed in a fair hand upon the first ruled page immediately succeeding the flyleaf of this neat russet-clad volume, marks the beginning of a new and—what I trust me shall prove—a congenial enterprise. This, therefore, is in the nature of a dedication, none the less significant because privately conducted. I am to-day inaugurating a diary or, as some would say, a journal of my daily life.

For long I have contemplated such an undertaking, but in the press of other matters delayed making a start, as so often one will. Procrastination—ah, what a graceless rogue are you! But upon the eve of yesterday, shortly before evensong, as I was passing adown the main street of this quaint and quiet village of Lover's Leap, situate in the western part of the state of New Jersey, I chanced to pause before the shop of the Messrs. Bumpass Brothers, a merchandising establishment for the purveying of stationery, sweetmeats, souvenirs and such like commodities and much in favour among the student body of our beloved Fernbridge Seminary for Young Ladies. In the show window, displayed in company with other articles of varied character and description, I beheld this book, which seemed so exactly suited and devised to my purposes. Without delay, therefore, I entered in and from Mr. Selim Bumpass, the younger member of this firm of tradeworthy tradesmen, I procured it at a cost of ninety cents, and here and now I devote you, little bookling, to your future usages.

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I count this an auspicious occasion, ushering, as it does, into the placid currents of my existence what at once shall be a new pleasure and a new duty. Nightly when the toils of the hour are done and darkness has drawn her curtains about the world I, seated in the cloistered seclusion of my rooms, shall enter herein a more or less complete summary of the principal events of the day that is done.

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When this volume is quite filled up I shall purchase yet another, and thus it shall be in the years to come that in leisure moments I may take down from my shelves one of my accumulated store of diaries and, opening it at random, refresh the wearied faculties with memories of bygone events, past trials, half-forgotten triumphs, et cetera, et cetera. In fancy I behold myself, with the light of retrospection beaming in my eye, glancing up from the written leaf and to myself murmuring: "Fibble, upon such a date in the long ago you did thus and so, you visited this or that spot of interest, you had profitable converse with such and such a person." How inspiring the prospect; how profitable may be the outcome of the labour required!

With this brief foreword I now put you aside, little diary, meaning to seek your company again ere the hour of retiring has arrived. So be of good cheer and grow not impatient through the long hours, for anon I shall return.

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Ten-forty-five P. M. of even date; to wit, April the third.—True to my promise, here I am, pen in hand and finger at brow. It augurs well that I should have launched this undertaking upon this particular day. For scarce had I left my study this morning when an occurrence came to pass which I deem to have been of more than passing interest and proper, therefore, to be set forth in some amplitude of detail. At faculty meeting, following chapel, our principal and president, Miss Waddleton, announced to us that a new member had been added to our little band. Continuing in this strain, she explained that a young person, until now a stranger to us all, had been engaged for the position of athletic instructor made vacant by the recent and regrettable resignation of Miss Eleanor Scuppers. With these words she presented Miss Scuppers' successor in the person of a Miss Hildegarde Hamm. Mutual introductions followed.

During the ceremonial I had abundant opportunity to observe this Miss Hamm with a polite but searching scrutiny. I cannot deny that she is rather of a personable aspect, but, in all charity and forbearance of final judgment, I foresee she may prove a discordant factor, a disturbing element in our little circle. I go further than that. If I may permit myself to indulge in language verging almost upon the indelicate, when employed with reference to the other or gentler sex, she has about her a certain air of hoydenish and robustious buoyancy which, I fear me, will but ill conform to the traditions of dear Fernbridge and the soothed and refining spirit ever maintained by the instructor body of our beloved seminary.

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Subconsciously I felt wincingly the grasp of her hand as I exchanged with her the customary salutations the while I murmured a few words of perfunctory welcome. Her clasp was almost masculine in its firmness and pressure—much more vehement than the one which I myself exert upon occasions of greeting. But since I, as occupant of the chair of astronomy and ancient and modern history, shall probably be thrown in direct contact with our new coworker but little, I

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anticipate no personal embarrassments, albeit I shall endeavour to hold her at a distance, ever and always maintaining between us a barrier of courteous aloofness. It is the effect upon our institution as a whole that I regard with forebodings.

In a brief period of speech with Miss Primleigh, our mathematics teacher, which ensued in a corridor subsequent to Miss Hamm's induction into the faculty, I gathered that Miss Primleigh, who is of a most discerning turn of mind, shared with me these apprehensions. Also I gleaned from Miss Primleigh certain salient facts concerning our youthful confrère. It would seem Miss Hamm is a person of independent means. Being quite completely orphaned as a direct consequence of the death of both of her immediate parents, she resides in the household of her uncle, a Mr. Hector Hamm, who recently moved into the community from the state of Maryland. Likewise being addicted to physical exertions in their more ardent form, she has associated herself with us rather for the opportunity of exercising her tastes in this direction than for the sake of any financial honorarium or, as some would put it, remuneration of salary. At least such was Miss Primleigh's information, she volunteering the added statement that in her opinion Miss Hamm was a forward piece. From the inflection of Miss Primleigh's voice at this juncture, coupled with her manner, I am constrained to believe this term of designation is not to be taken as implying a compliment, but, on the contrary, the approximate reverse.

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Good night, diary. I shall now retire.

APRIL THE SEVENTH.—A certain salubriousness was to-day manifest in the air, indicative of the passing of winter and the on-coming of spring. After some cogitation of the subject, I decided this morning upon arising to doff my heavier undervestments—that is, union suitings—for garments of less irksome weight and texture. This I did.

I recall nothing else of importance transpiring upon this date which is worthy of being recorded, except that, in the course of a short walk this afternoon, I came upon a half unfolded specimen of *Viola cucullata*—or, to use the vulgar appellation, common blue violet—pushing its way through the leafy mould and mildew of the winter's accumulation. I made this discovery in a spinney, or copse, near a small tarn some half mile to the eastward of Fernbridge's precincts. I am aware that the resident populace hereabout customarily refer to this spot as the wet woods back of Whitney's Bog, but I infinitely prefer the English phraseology as more euphonious and at the same time more poetic. With all due gentleness I uprooted *Viola cucullata* from its place in the bosage and, after it has been suitably pressed, I mean to add it to my collection of the fauna indigenous to the soil of Western New Jersey, not because of its rarity, for it is, poor thing, but a common enough growth, but because of its having been the first tender harbinger of the budding year which has come directly to my attention. I shall botanize extensively this year. For with me to botanize is one of the dearest of pursuits, amounting to a veritable passion.

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APRIL THE EIGHTH.—Blank; no entries.

APRIL THE NINTH.—Also blank.

APRIL THE TENTH.—It is illness and not a disinclination to pursue my self-appointed task of preserving this repository of my thoughts and deeds which for the past two days has kept me from you, friend diary. As a consequence of venturing abroad upon the seventh instant without my heavy undergarments and likewise without galoshes, having been deceived into committing these indiscretions by a false and treacherous mildness of atmospheric conditions leading to the assumption that the vernal season had come or was impending—a circumstance already described some paragraphs back—I found myself upon the morn following to be the victim of a severe cold, complicated with quinsy or sore throat. I have ever since been confined to my room, if not to my couch, in an acutely indisposed state, endeavouring to rid myself of these impairments by recourse to a great variety of panaceas applied both internally and otherwise. Not until the present moment have I felt qualified, either mentally or bodily, to address myself to the labour of literary composition. Indeed, what with trying this vaunted cure or that—now a gargle, now a foot bath in water heated well nigh to boiling, now a hot lemonade, and again a bolus, a lotion or a liniment—I have had no time for writing, even if so inclined.

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I am struck by the interesting fact that when one is ill of a cold practically every one with whom one comes in contact has a favourite suggestion for relieving one of one's symptoms. Scarce a member of the faculty these two days but has prescribed this or that thing, each in turn extolling the virtues of her own remedy and at the same time vigorously decrying the merits of all others whatsoever. To avoid showing favouritism and to guard against giving offence in any quarter, for such is my nature, I have faithfully endeavoured to accept the advice and obey the injunction of each and every well wisher, with one exception. I shall refer to that exception in another moment.

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To-night I am greatly improved, although weakened. In fact, I should almost entirely be my former self were it not for a blistered condition of the throat, a pronounced tenderness of the

feet, and an inflamed area of the cutaneous covering of the bosom—the first due, I think, to swallowing an overhot lemonade, the second to the constancy with which I resorted to foot bathing, while the third indubitably may be ascribed to the after effects of an oil of great potency and pronounced odour which Miss Waddleton with her own hands bestowed upon me and with which I anointed that particular portion of my anatomy at half-hourly intervals.

To-night these quarters are quite oppressively redolent of the commingled scents of drugs, unguents and ointments. But in view of the sharpness of the evening I shall for the time forbear to air my chambers. Nor, as I do now most solemnly pledge myself, shall I again venture forth unless suitably fortified and safeguarded against the uncertainties of our northern climate, until the springtime is well advanced and a reasonable continuation of balmy conditions is assured. [214]

The exception to which I referred in a preceding paragraph was none other than Miss Hamm, the newest member of our faculty. Actuated, I hope, by kindly motives, she called this afternoon, finding me in dressing gown and slippers, prone upon the couch in my study, at my side a table laden with bottles and in my hand an atomiser, with which at every convenient pause in the conversation I assiduously sprayed the more remote recesses of the throat and the nose. Upon entering she was good enough to enquire regarding my progress toward recovery and I, replying, launched upon a somewhat lengthy description of the nature of the malady, meaning in time to come to an enumeration of the various succeeding stages of convalescence. In the midst of this she cut me short with the brusque and abrupt remark that if I threw all the medicines out of the window and put on my things and went for a long walk I should feel a lot better in less than no time at all—such substantially being her language as I recall it. [215]

Between inhalations of the fluid contents of the atomiser I replied, stating in effect that the fact of my having taken a walk was responsible in no small measure for my present depleted state. Naturally I made no mention of a certain contributory factor—namely, the unwise and hasty step taken by me with regard to undergarments. I went on to say that in no event, even though so inclined—a thing in itself inconceivable—would I harbour the impulse to cast from my casements the accumulation of vials, pill boxes, et cetera, with which I had been provided by my friends, since inevitably the result would be to litter the lawn without, thereby detracting from the kempt and seemly aspect of our beloved institution, of which we who have learned to venerate and cherish Fernbridge Seminary are justly so proud. Upon this point I spoke with especial firmness. Perhaps it was the manner of my administering this gentle but deserved rebuke—or possibly the words in which I couched my chidings—at any rate she endeavoured to conceal the discomfiture she must have felt beneath an outburst of laughter ere she withdrew, leaving me to welcome solitude and my throat douche. [216]

How different was the attitude of Miss Primleigh when she came to offer her ministrations—all sympathy, all understanding, all solicitude! It is to Miss Primleigh that I stand at this hour indebted for the loan of the atomiser. She assures me that she has ever found it most efficacious, and I, too, have found it so, although I admit the use of it tends to produce a tickling sensation to membranes already made sensitive by other applications.

APRIL THE ELEVENTH.—Am entirely restored to normal well being except for a stoppage of the upper nasal region which at times proves annoying—I might even say vexatious. The inflammation of the throat having subsided, I derived much comfort this afternoon from imbibing tea; being the first time, in the scope of half a week, when tea has had its proper zest and flavour. [217]

APRIL THE TWELFTH.—Returned to classroom duties, taking up, in the history course, the life and works of Marcus Aurelius, a character for whom I have ever entertained the liveliest sentiments of regard and respect, for did he not, in an age of licentiousness and loose living, deport himself with such rectitude as to entitle him to the encomiums and the plaudits of all right-thinking persons forever thereafter?

Otherwise, nothing noteworthy upon this day and date.

APRIL THE THIRTEENTH.—I went abroad to-day for the first time since my recent indisposition, taking the precaution first to well muffle myself as to throat, wrists and pedal extremities. For my associate in the pleasures of pedestrianism I had Miss Primleigh, from whose company I have ever derived a certain calm and philosophic enjoyment. In a way, one might say Miss Primleigh is almost purely intellect. The qualities of her mind shine forth, as it were, through her earthly tenement; rendering her in truth a most admirable companion. [218]

In the progress of our peregrinations over hill and vale, I gathered several desirable specimens for my botanical collection. Miss Primleigh, whose turn of thought even in her lighter moments is essentially mathematical, as befitting one of her chosen calling in life, spent some time pleasantly, and I dare say profitably, in calculating by mental arithmetic the number of cubic yards of earth in the hillock known as Potts' Ridge. A delightful and congenial outing was jointly shared.

Sauntering slowly along, we had wended our meandering course homeward, or perhaps I

should say schoolward, and had reached a small byway, known locally as Locust Lane, when there came to our ears a sound of joyous voices and a clattering of nimble hoofs mingling together. Almost instantly a merry cavalcade swept into view round a turn in the path. It was composed of a number, perhaps six in all, of our young lady students, taking a lesson in horseback riding under the tutelage of Miss Hamm, the young person previously mentioned in these chronicles. She—I speak now with reference to Miss Hamm—led the procession, mounted upon a mettlesome steed and attired in a costume including a short coat, boots, and bifurcated garments of a close-fitting nature. Her hair, beneath a stiff hat such as I myself customarily wear, was braided in heavy coils. As might be expected, she rode, as the saying goes, astride, evincing great adeptness for this form of exercise, which has been described to me as being healthful in the extreme, although I should denominate it as bordering upon the dangerous, unless the equine one chose for one's use was more docile than so frequently appears to be the case.

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As the party dashed by us with appropriate salutations, to which I replied in kind, I was suddenly impressed by a grace of movement—or shall I call it a jaunty abandon?—in Miss Hamm's bearing, aspect and general demeanour. To the casual eye the effect of this was far from being displeasing. I was about to venture as much to Miss Primleigh and had, in fact, cleared my throat as a preliminary to making the statement, when she broke in, speaking in a tone of severity. I quote her:

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"You needn't say it, Doctor Fibble—I know exactly how you feel, before you speak a word. And I agree with you perfectly in all that you think. Didn't I tell you that creature was a forward piece? Did you see how the little minx was dressed? Did you see how she carried herself? If we both live to be a thousand years old you'll never catch me wearing such clothes!"

I nodded in a noncommittal fashion, not caring at the moment to take issue with Miss Primleigh. Arguments I detest. If she chose to misinterpret my sentiments, so be it then. I shall, however, add here that while my own opinion of the matter was not absolutely in accord with the burden of Miss Primleigh's criticisms, there was one point brought out by her in her remarks upon which I could not conscientiously take issue with her. To paraphrase her own words, I believe I should not care ever to catch Miss Primleigh costumed as Miss Hamm was. In confidence I may confide to my diary that I do not believe the former would appear to the best advantage in such habiliments as I have briefly touched upon, she being of a somewhat angular physical conformation, although not until now do I recall having been cognisant of this fact.

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To-night, sitting here, the picture of Miss Hamm upon horseback persists in the retina of my brain as a far from unseemly vision. One is moved to wonder that a circumstance so trivial should linger in one's mind. How truly has it been said that the vagaries of the human imagination are past divining.

APRIL THE SEVENTEENTH.—Shortly after three P. M. of this day, following the dismissal of my class in astronomy, I accidentally stepped into the gymnasium hall. I cannot account for so doing, unless it be upon the ground that my thoughts still dwelt upon those heavenly bodies with whose wonders I had for hours been concerned to the exclusion of all other considerations of whatsoever nature. In this state of absent-mindedness I discovered myself standing outside the door of the large room devoted to the physical exercises. My hand, obeying a mechanical impulse, turned the knob; pausing upon the threshold I beheld the spectacle of Miss Hamm, directing a group of our juniors in dumb-bell manipulation, all present—instructor and students alike—being costumed in the prescribed uniform of loose blouses and those garments technically known, I believe, as bloomers.

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The sight of so many young persons, their faces intent, their minds engrossed with each succeeding evolution of gesticulation, their bodies swaying in unison, was an agreeable one. Entirely in a subconscious way I observed that Miss Hamm's hair was not plaited up and confined to the head with ribands, pins or other appliances in vogue among her sex, but depended in loose and luxuriant masses about her face; I remarked its colour—a chestnut brown—and a tendency upon its part to form into ringlets when unconfined, the resultant effect being somewhat attractive. At the moment of my entrance her side face was presented to me; a piquant and comely profile I should term it, without professing in the least to have judgment in such matters.

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Presently discovering that an intruder had appeared upon the scene, she paused in her work of directing her class and, turning toward me, inquired whether there was anything I desired. Having no excuse to account for my presence, I stated that I had mistaken the door and, briefly begging her pardon for having interrupted her, I withdrew. Later I found myself striving with a vague and unaccountable desire to return and witness more of the dumb-bell evolutions.

APRIL THE EIGHTEENTH.—A strange lassitude besets me. I first discerned it this forenoon soon after the burden of the school day was taken up. A marked disinclination for the prescribed routine of classroom and study hall appears to be one of its most pronounced manifestations. I am strangely distraught; preoccupied with truant and wandering thoughts having no bearing upon the task in hand.

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Seeking to throw off these distractions, I quite casually dropped into the gymnasium. It was empty. Upon finding it so, a small sense of disappointment beset me. I then went for a walk,

trusting to the soft and gentle influences of out-of-doors to dispel the meaningless vapourings which beset my consciousness. My wandering feet automatically carried me to Locust Lane, where for some time I lingered in idleness.

The class in horseback riding did not pass, as once before. Presumably our young equestriennes, if abroad, had taken some other direction. In pensive thought not untinged with a fleeting depression, I returned at dusk, hoping with books to cure myself of the bewilderments of this day.

An hour ago I took up a volume of Tasso. Than Tasso in the original Latin, I know of no writer whose works are better fitted for perusal during an hour of relaxation. But Tasso was dull to-night. The printed page was before my eyes, but my thoughts sped off in tangents to dwell upon the birds, the trees, the flowers. The thought of flowers suggested my botanical collection and to it I turned. But it, too, had lost its zest. [225]

It must be that this mental preoccupation has a physical side. Beyond peradventure the lassitude of spring is upon me. I shall take a tonic compounded according to a formula popular for many generations in my family and much favoured by my sole surviving relative, Great-Aunt Paulina, now residing at an advanced age, but with faculties unimpaired, in the city of Hartford, Connecticut. Haply I have a bottle of this sovereign concoction by me, Great-Aunt Paulina having sent it by parcel post no longer ago than last week. I shall take it as designated by her in the letter accompanying the timely gift—a large dessert-spoonful three times daily before meals.

APRIL THE TWENTY-FIRST.—Have been taking my tonic regularly but apparently without deriving beneficial results. Its especial purpose is for the thinning of the blood. Assuredly though, if my blood has been appreciably thinned my mental attitude remains unchanged. Perversely I continue to be the subject of contradictory and conflicting moods impossible to understand and difficult to describe. Certainly I have never been in this state before. Query: Can it be I am upon the verge of a serious disorder? Temporary exaltation succeeds melancholy, and vice versa. On two separate occasions to-day I was aware of this phenomenon—a passing sense of exuberance and cheerfulness, shortly afterward followed by a morbid and gloom-tinged longing for I know not what. [226]

This serves to remind me that twice to-day I had conversations of brief duration with Miss Hamm. The first meeting was by chance, we merely exchanging commonplaces touching upon our respective fields of activity here at Fernbridge; but the second eventuated through deliberate intent on my part. With premeditation I put myself in her path. My motive for so doing was, I trust, based upon unselfishness entirely. I had formed an early and perhaps a hasty estimate of this young woman's nature. I wished either to convince myself absolutely upon these points or to disabuse my mind of all prejudice. [227]

I am glad I took this step. For I am constrained now to admit that my first impression of Miss Hamm's personality may have done her an injustice. With what care should one guard oneself against o'erready appraisals of the characters of one's fellow beings!

It is not to be gainsaid that Miss Hamm lends to our institution a picturesqueness of outward aspect as well as a light-heartedness and a buoyancy of viewpoint which heretofore has been quite utterly lacking among our instructor corps. Despite a pronounced tendency betrayed by her to give to serious subjects a perplexingly light and roguish twist, an inclination, as it were, to make chaff, to banter, to indulge in idle whimsicalities, I think I discern in her indubitable qualities of mind which, properly guided and directed by some older person having her best interests at heart, may be productive in time of development and expansion into higher realms of thought. [228]

I feel within me a desire to assist in the blossoming forth of what I plainly discover to be this young person's real self. I shall not count as wasted the hours I may devote to this altruistic and disinterested endeavour. My payment shall be the consciousness of a duty well performed—that and nothing more. Indeed, at this moment, as I indite this pledge, speculation as to its outcome engenders in me an uplifting of the spirit which bodes well for the future fruitage of my ambition.

In such mood was I when, shortly having quitted the company of Miss Hamm, I met Miss Primleigh. She suggested another excursion into the wildwood. Upon plea of a slight indisposition, but without explaining its symptoms, I excused myself and continued upon my way. I felt that I should prefer for the nonce to be alone. I shall ever value my friendship with Miss Primleigh as a great privilege, for in truth she is one of deep culture and profound mental attainments, but during the last few days I have several times detected myself in the act of wishing that she were not quite so statistical in her point of view and that her thoughts upon occasion might take a lighter trend than she evinces. I have even found myself desiring that to the eye she might present a plumper aspect, so to speak. For, in all charity, it is not to be denied that Miss Primleigh is what the world is pleased to call angular—painfully angular, I am afraid. Only to-day I noticed that her feet were large, or at least the shoes she wore lent a suggestion as of largeness. One owes it to oneself to make the best of one's personal appearance; this reflection came to me as I was turning away from Miss Primleigh. Possibly it is because she has failed to do so that I have found her company, in a measure, palling upon me here of late. Or can it be that spiritually I am outgrowing Miss Primleigh? I know not. I do but state the actual fact. Yet always I shall esteem her most highly. [229]

To-night a sense of loneliness, a desire for the companionship of my kind, assails me. I can only opine that my blood is not thinning with the desired celerity. Beginning to-morrow I shall take a large tablespoonful of the tonic before meals instead of a dessert-spoonful.

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A telephone was to-day installed in my study. Heretofore Fernbridge has been connected with the outer world only by a single telephone placed in the reception hall of our main building, but now, by Miss Waddleton's direction, each member of the faculty will hereafter enjoy the use of a separate instrument. Thus, without the surrender of any of its traditions, does Fernbridge keep abreast of the movements of this workaday world.

I think of nothing else of moment. I seek repose.

APRIL THE TWENTY-SECOND.—A most annoying incident has marred the day. As I think back upon it, adding deduction to deduction, superimposing surmise upon suspicion and suspicion in turn upon premise and fact, I am forced, against my very will, to conclude that, forgetting the dignity due one in my position, some person or persons to me unknown made a partially successful attempt to enact a practical joke of the most unpardonable character, having for a chosen victim none other than myself. I say partially successful, because at the moment when the plot approached its climax a subtle inner sense warned me to have a care and I refused to proceed farther, thus robbing the perpetrator or perpetrators of the anticipated laugh at my expense.

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I shall set down the history of the entire affair. On yesterday, as I have stated, a telephone was duly installed within the precincts of my study. This forenoon I chanced to mention the matter to Miss Hamm whom, by a coincidence, I encountered as she was entering the seminary grounds. Indeed as I recall, I spoke upon the topic to a number of persons, including fellow instructors and students, remarking upon the added opportunities thus afforded for broadened intercourse through the medium of a device which has grown well-nigh indispensable to the conduct of our daily affairs. Some one—Miss Hamm as I remember, although it may have been another—was moved in this connection to ask me whether the inspection department of the local exchange had made the customary tests of the instrument in my study, to which I replied in the negative.

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But at five of the clock or thereabout, as I sat here enjoying the refreshing solace of tea and basking in the mild spring air wafted to me through my opened windows, the telephone bell rang. Arising promptly, I went to where the instrument is affixed to the wall and responded to the call in the conventional manner by placing the receiver to my ear, applying my lips to the transmitter and uttering the word "Halloa!" twice, or possibly thrice repeated. Over the wire then a female voice spoke, enquiring if this were Doctor Fibble? Upon my stating that such was the case, the voice said:

"Doctor, this is the inspection department. We wish to test your telephone. Will you be so kind as to help us?"

To which I responded:

"Willingly, if it lies within my power to render such assistance."

"Thank you," said the other. "Are you ready to begin?"

"Quite ready," I said.

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"Very well then," bade the voice. "Kindly stand back two feet from the mouthpiece and say coo-coo three times, with a rising inflection on the final coo."

The request appeared reasonable; accordingly I complied.

"Splendid," praised the unknown when I had concluded. "Now put your mouth close up to the transmitter and do the same thing all over again, but slightly louder."

No sooner requested than done.

"Now stand two feet to the left of the phone and repeat."

I repeated.

"Now two feet to the right, please."

Once more I obeyed.

Then came this message:

"Doctor, have you a chair handy?"

I said a chair was at the moment within arm's reach of me.

"Excellent," said this person who professed to be in charge of the test. "Please draw the chair close up to the wall, climb upon it and, standing on tiptoe, say coo-coo clearly and distinctly and keep on saying it until I call out 'Enough.'"

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Marvelling that such a prolonged test should be deemed necessary, I nevertheless obliged by acting as instructed. I had repeated the word for what seemed to me an interminable space of time and was rapidly becoming wearied by the exertion of

maintaining the position required when the voice said "Enough." I lost no time in dismounting to *terra firma*, or rather the floor.

"Thank you so much," stated the unknown. "Just one more little test, doctor, and we'll be through. Have you a good singing voice?"

In proper modesty but with a due regard for the truth, I admitted that although I never enjoyed the advantages of vocal culture, friends had more than once commented upon the quality of my voice when uplifted in song.

"I sing tenor," I amplified, for as yet I suspected nothing.

"Very well then," bade the stranger; "are you holding the receiver to your ear?"

"I am."

"Keep it there. And now stand on your head and sing 'Just as I am Without One Plea.'"

I started back astounded. Instantly I divined, in a lightning flash of intuition, that apparently an effort was being made to perpetrate a hoax. In the same moment I arrived at the definite conclusion that the object of that hoax could be none other than myself. For a fleeting period my natural indignation was such that language almost failed me.

Simultaneously I became aware of a sound as of suppressed laughter outside my study window. Releasing my hold upon the receiver which, until then, mechanically I had retained in my grasp, I stepped to my casement and peered out, first looking this way, then that. No one was in sight; I must have fancied I heard something.

When I had in part recovered myself I lost no time in calling up the manager of the exchange, my intent being to explain the entire circumstance to him, with a view to demanding condign punishment of the person in his inspection department, whoever she might be, who with wilful design had sought to debase the organisation of his office to purposes of ill-timed merrymaking. He cut me short to say he had no such testing department whatsoever. From his tone I was impelled to accept his statement as a truthful one, all of which but served to confirm my suspicions without in the least explaining the mystery which at this hour remains unsolved. I am puzzled—nay, more, I am nettled, and did I not possess the power of holding my emotions under a well-nigh perfect control, I would go so far as to say that I have been outright irritated.

APRIL THE TWENTY-THIRD.—My earlier suspicions stand confirmed. To-day, as I was passing through a corridor of the main building, I twice heard the word "coo-coo" repeated in a sibilant undertone. Spinning upon my heel, I detected a group of our seniors who with difficulty stifled their merriment; and I saw, too, Miss Hamm, her face illumined by a smile, with one hand upraised as though in gentle admonition of them. This helped to explain much. The raillery could not have been intended for me, since already I had passed on. Moreover, none here knows of the experience through which I passed, and the *contretemps* averted by my own presence of mind. Therefore, it is quite plain that the would-be joker has been playing similar pranks upon others at Fernbridge.

I wonder whether Miss Hamm herself could have been a victim of such outrageous imposition?

Botanized alone this afternoon, feeling strongly the desire for congenial companionship. Why does this longing so frequently beset me when I go forth to commune with Nature in her gentler moods? I know not, unless it be the influence of the vernal season.

Secured several desirable specimens. Returning through the gloaming I felt a desire to indulge in poetic composition, and did in fact compose several well-balanced lines, being finally balked by an inability to recall a word which would rhyme with a certain female name I had in mind.

In its entirety a disappointing day, albeit not without its moments of what I may term a softly soothing melancholy.

APRIL THE TWENTY-SIXTH.—Word came this morning that Miss Hamm was confined to her home in an ailing condition. As a member of the faculty and because of the interest I take in the prospective development of this young woman's character, I felt it my bounden duty to send her a short note expressing my regret that she should be indisposed and my sincere hope that she may soon be restored to her customary health. Did so. Upon finishing the note an impulse to accompany it with a small nosegay culled from my window box came upon me. Obeyed the impulse, note and nosegay being despatched by special messenger to the home of her uncle.



"SAY COO-COO CLEARLY AND DISTINCTLY
AND KEEP ON SAYING IT UNTIL I CALL OUT
'ENOUGH'"

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APRIL THE TWENTY-SEVENTH.—Miss Hamm still absent from her post and no answer forthcoming from my note of yesterday.

Altogether a dismal and dispiriting day, several members of my history class evincing great stupidity during the lesson periods. [239]

To-night a threat of rain in the firmament, with clouds gathering and a murky twilight. Being of a nature more or less sensitive to atmospheric influences, I feel a corresponding gloominess.

APRIL THE TWENTY-EIGHTH.—A line of thanks in Miss Hamm's handwriting received; short but couched attractively, methought. Was particularly struck by one-line phrase: "So very good of you to think of me!"

Weather clearing and promising!

APRIL THE THIRTIETH.—Miss Hamm returned to her work betimes to-day, a slight but becoming pallor in her cheeks. Took occasion to congratulate her upon so speedy a recuperation, incidentally exchanging with her comment upon contemporaneous events, not only within the scope of our seminary life but in the great world at large.

Rarely, if ever, do I recall a more beautiful sunset than the one of current date. Merely to behold the orb of day descending beyond the western horizon in all its magnificence of prismatic colouring was sufficient to awaken within one's bosom the desire to burst into song. [240]

Am reminded that the morrow will be May Day when, in the olden days in Merrie England, the happy populace were wont to frolic about the May pole, to indulge in morris dances, to witness mummeries and mystery plays. How great the pity that such pleasant customs should have fallen into misuse! I would they were revived here at Fernbridge! Fain would I myself lend my energies and talents to such an undertaking. At least so do I feel at this moment.

Eleven-thirty-eight P. M.—Have arisen from my couch to jot down several rhythmic lines which came to me subsequent to retirement; a continuation in spirit and theme of the verses which I began some days ago. However, the work still remains incomplete, for after much pondering I am unable to find a word rhyming to the word with which I had intended to conclude the composition. [241]

How euphonious to the ear and yet how unusual is the name Hildegarde! I imagine that the difficulty of suitably rhyming it is the very reason for my having chosen it.

MAY THE SEVENTH.—To-day at faculty meeting Miss Primleigh evinced toward me a marked coolness of demeanour and shortness of speech, for which I am totally unable to account. I cannot recall having given offence either by word or deed. Indeed, for a fortnight past I have been so engrossed with other matters that barely have I spoken ten words to Miss Primleigh.

To-night reread "A Dream of Fair Women," by the late Lord Tennyson, finding everywhere in it new beauties, new meanings, which upon the occasion of earlier readings had entirely escaped me.

Found opportunity this afternoon to pay another of my little visits to the gymnasium hall. Complimented Miss Hamm upon the indubitable progress made by her disciples. I find these small casual calls upon various departments of our work form agreeable interludes in the monotony of the day. [242]

Her hair is not chestnut brown; I was wrong there. It is of a rich, golden-reddish tint, a shade to which I am quite partial, especially when observed in conjunction with large hazel eyes, as in the present instance.

MAY THE EIGHTH.—To-night, being minded to seek relaxation in literature, I picked up my Tasso, but, soon tiring of the Latin, I exchanged it for Shakspeare's "Romeo and Juliet." I am gratified that I made this second choice, for from it has sprung an inspiration which may prove fruitful. Hardly had I opened the latter volume when the idea, darting forth, so to speak, from the typed page, found congenial lodgment in my intelligence.

It is our custom, upon the occasion of our annual commencement in June, to present a scene selected from the realms of classic drama, with members of the faculty and of the student body enacting the characters. Last year, by mine own suggestion, we presented an act of one of the old Greek tragedies, I, as sponsor for the conception, rehearsing the performers beforehand and upon the final day personally superintending the performance; stage managing it, as the cant term runs. Although I gave great pains and care to the production, it did not prove in all essential regards an unqualified success. The audience, made up of friends and patrons of Fernbridge and [243]

of townspeople, manifested toward the last a regrettable lack of interest. Some betrayed impatience, some fitfully slumbered in their seats, some even laughed outright at periods fraught with solemn meaning. One could but feel that one's efforts went unappreciated. But scarce an hour ago, as I read sundry immortal passages of the Bard, I said to myself:

"Why not offer this year, as our dramatic *pièce de resistance*, the balcony scene from Romeo and Juliet? Happy thought! Why not indeed? And now tentatively to cast it?"

As one well qualified for the part, I naturally pictured myself as Romeo, clad appropriately in doublet, hose and feathered cap, but without my glasses. Casting about in my mind for a suitable Juliet, the name of Miss Hamm occurred to me. [244]

Reading from the book I proceeded to enact this most touching scene, alternately speaking in my own voice as Romeo and then imparting to Juliet's line a more dulcet tone and a softened inflection such as my copartner in the rendition would employ. Carried away by the beauty of the thought, I had progressed as far as those exquisite lines—Juliet's lines in this instance:

*O, swear not by the moon, th' inconstant moon,
That monthly changes in her circled orb,
Lest that thy love prove likewise variable—*

when I became cognisant that for some moments past an insistent rapping against the outer door of my rooms had been in progress, and then as I came to a pause I heard through the keyhole the voice of Miss Tupper, our matron, inquiring whether anything serious was the matter.

"I thought I heard somebody carrying on in there as though they might be raving or something?" she added in her inept fashion of speech. [245]

Much annoyed, I answered with some acerbity, bidding her kindly to be gone. She withdrew, grumbling as she went. When I had assured myself, by a glance out of my door, that she had entirely departed, I undertook to proceed with the scene, but as a consequence of this untoward interruption was quite out of spirit with the thing.

However, I am still greatly attracted to the idea, and on the morrow I mean to take advantage of suitable opportunity to address Miss Hamm upon the project with a view to enlisting her sympathies and co-operation, as no doubt I shall succeed in doing. My powers of persuasion frequently have been the subject of compliment.

Finished the bottle of Great-Aunt Paulina's blood tonic this evening. Shall not have the prescription renewed as originally contemplated. Diverting thoughts appear to be succeeding where herbs and simples failed.

MAY THE NINTH.—This forenoon upon my broaching the topic of our prospective coappearance in the annual commencement entertainment, subject, of course, to Miss Waddleton's approval, I found, as I had anticipated would be the case, that Miss Hamm was quite thoroughly in accord with the proposition. However, at the outset she misunderstood one point. Plainly it was her idea that she, in mediæval masculine attire, was to essay the rôle of Romeo. She asked who was to be Juliet to her Romeo. When I had corrected her in this error, explaining the proposed bestowal of the rôles—she as Juliet upon the balcony, I as Romeo upon the stage below—she seemed quite overcome with gratification, managing, however, in part to cloak her feelings beneath smiles and laughter. [246]

I then voiced the suggestion that I should be very glad indeed to call upon her some evening in the near future at her home, there to outline the plans more fully. Pleased that she should so freely welcome this advance upon my part, I was moved to suggest the present evening as a suitable time for calling. But she, it appeared, had an engagement for this evening, and we then fixed upon to-morrow evening at eight o'clock. [247]

To-night I find myself looking forward with pleasurable anticipation, not unmixed with impatience, to this hour twenty-four hours hence. I shall wear a new suit which this day, by a fortunate chance, came from my tailor. It is of a light grey tone, a deviation from the black which uniformly I have worn for some years past.

Before retiring I shall again rehearse the balcony scene, but this time, in a low key, to preclude eavesdropping.

I wonder what the nature of Miss Hamm's engagement for the current evening may be?

MAY THE TENTH.—The hour is eleven and I have but just returned from a visit of several hours' duration to the home of Miss Hamm's uncle, of which domicile she seems to be the light and the joy. Excluding herself—and this I would be the last to do—the only member of the household, save and except domestic servants, is her uncle and guardian, Mr. Hector Hamm, a widower by reason of death's ravages and a retired business man of apparent affluent circumstances. This gentleman, it developed, is much given to the sports of the chase. His study, into which I was first introduced upon arriving at his domicile shortly before seven-forty-five, abounds in trophies of his marksmanship, the walls upon every hand being adorned with the stuffed forms and mounted [248]

heads of birds and animals, testifying not only to his prowess afield but to the art preservative as exercised by the skilled taxidermist. Miss Hamm, in her quaint way, spoke of the uncle as an old dear, but accused him of wasting all his money in the buying of new firearms. It would appear that no sooner does he behold an advertisement touching upon a new and improved variety of fowling piece than he is actuated by an overmastering desire to become its possessor. Strange fancy!

Mr. Hamm is likewise the owner of a number of members of the canine kingdom, all of them, I should assume, being docile beasts and well meaning enough, but with an unpleasant habit of sniffing at the calves of the legs of strangers the while emitting low ominous growling sounds. Possibly detecting in me some natural apprehension consequent upon the stealthy approach of one of these pets, Mr. Hamm hastened to inform me that they rarely bit any one unless they took an instinctive dislike to him at the moment of meeting. As I drew my limbs well under me, since it seemed it was my legs which especially aggravated the creature, meanwhile uttering such soothing remarks as "Good doggie" and "Nice old Ponto," I could scarce refrain from remarking that if one felt the desire for the presence of dumb creatures about one, why did not one choose a cat, of which at least it may be said that its habits are restful and its customary mien without menace to the humans with whom it may be thrown in contact?

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Presently the uncle withdrew from our society, to my relief taking with him his pack, whereupon Miss Hamm and I repaired to the parlour adjacent, where a most delightful evening was had. Miss Hamm's conversation, even though marked by a levity not at all times in keeping with the nature of the subject under discussion, is, I find, sprightly and diverting in the extreme. All in all, time passed most swiftly. A suitable hour of departure had arrived before I remembered that I had altogether failed to bring up the topic which was the occasion of my visit—to wit, our prospective part in the commencement entertainment.

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Accordingly I arranged to call again to-morrow evening.

MAY THE SIXTEENTH.—As per my custom of late I spent the evening at the residence of Mr. Hamm; the time being devoted to the pleasures of conversation, riddles, anagrams—at which I am adept—interchange of views upon current events, et cetera, et cetera.

Reviewing recent events here in my study as the hour of midnight draws on apace, I own frankly to an ever-deepening interest in this young woman. There are moments when I feel strangely drawn to her; moments when her society exhilarates me as does nothing else.

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How marvellous, how incomprehensible are the workings of the manifestations of the human imagination! Consider the differences in our modes of life, our fashions of speech, our habits! I refer of course to Miss Hamm and myself. I am sedentary in nature and utterly without sentimental leanings—I use the word sentimental in its most respectful sense—toward members of the opposite sex; I am wedded to my profession, devoted to the life of a scholar, while she, upon the other hand, is ardent and exuberant in temperament, frolicsome, blithe, at times almost frivolous in conversation, given to all forms of outdoor sport, filled with youthful dreams. Consider, too, the disparity in our respective ages, she being, as I am informed by her in a burst of youthful confidence, still in her twenty-second year, while I shall be forty upon my next birthday, come Michaelmas.

Yet, despite all this, the fact remains that frequently I feel a longing, amounting almost to a yearning, for her company. Undoubtedly the explanation lies in my increasing desire to develop, by precept, by proverb and by admonition, the higher side of her nature. Moreover, it is to me evident that this intercourse must prove mutually helpful. Quite aside from the beneficial results to her, I myself derive, from these friendly and purely altruistic endeavours of mine, a glow of intense satisfaction. How true it is that a worthy deed oftentimes carries with it its own reward!

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MAY THE SEVENTEENTH.—I have decided to take up horseback riding. Miss Hamm is fond of horseback riding.

However, I have not informed her of the decision at which I have arrived. It is my intention to prosecute my lessons in private at the establishment of the village liveryman and then, when I have fully mastered the art, I shall some day appear before her, properly accoutred and attired, bestriding a mettlesome charger. I picture her astonishment and her delight at thus beholding me in my new rôle of a finished and adept equestrian. In order to confer a pleasant surprise upon one's friends, I feel that I would go farther even than this. Indeed, a desire to do valiant and heroic deeds, to rescue imperilled ones from burning buildings or from floods, to perform acts of foolhardiness and daring upon the field of carnage, has often stirred within me here of late. I struggle with these impulses, which heretofore have been foreign to my being, yet at the same time would welcome opportunity to vent them. However, all things in their proper order and one thing at a time. I shall begin by becoming an accomplished horseman.

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In anticipation of such an achievement I feel, as it were, youthful—in fact, almost boyish. After all, what matters a few years' difference in age as between friends? Is not one as young as one feels?

MAY THE EIGHTEENTH.—Spent the evening at the Hamm residence as usual.

A perfect day and a perfect evening, barring one small disappointment. Miss Waddleton vetoed my plans for the rendition of the balcony scene at commencement next month. Yet I do not count as wasted the time spent in private rehearsals of the rôle of Romeo, but have, on the contrary, derived much joy from repeated conning of the speeches attributed to him by the Bard. At a time not far distant "Lear" was my favourite among Shakespeare's plays. Now I marvel that I should ever have preferred any of his works to "Romeo and Juliet."

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MAY THE TWENTY-SECOND.—After reflection extending over a period of days, I have abandoned my perhaps o'erhasty intention of taking up horseback riding, my preliminary experiences in that direction having been rather disagreeable as to the physical side. Even now, forty-eight hours after the initial lesson, I am still much bruised about the limbs and elsewhere and, because of a certain corporeal stiffness due to repeated jarrings, I walk with painful difficulty.

Either I shall acquire the rudiments of this accomplishment from standard works upon the subject, or I shall bide my time until I may avail myself of the services of an animal of a more docile nature than those available at the local liveryman's. His horses, it would appear, are subject to queer vagaries of conduct when under saddle, betraying an idiosyncrasy as to movement and a pronounced tendency to break into rapid gait without the approval or indeed the consent of the rider.

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My thoughts recur to the recreation of botanizing, which for a period lost some of its savour for me. At least, botany is fraught with no personal discomforts.

Called as usual this evening. Nightly our acquaintance ripens toward a perfect mutual understanding.

This has indeed been a lovely spring!

MAY THE TWENTY-THIRD.—It is with a sensation of more than passing annoyance that I record the events of this evening. At seven-fifteen, immediately after tea, I set forth for the Hamm residence, carrying under my arm a book of verses intended for bestowal upon the young chatelaine of that happy home, and much buoyed and uplifted by prospects of a period of agreeable divertisement spent in her society. But such was not to be.

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To begin with, the uncle consumed much valuable time in an interminable dissertation upon the merits of a new fowling piece which he contemplates purchasing. One was thoroughly wearied of the subject before he had the good taste to depart to his own special domain in the room adjoining the parlour. Thereafter for a few minutes all passed well. Miss Hamm accepted the gift of the book with expressions of deep gratitude. Her mood was one of whimsicality, into the spirit of which I found my self entering with hearty accord. Being a most capable mimic, she gave a spirited and life-like imitation of Miss Primleigh in the act of reprimanding a delinquent student. One could not well restrain one's laughter at the aptitude with which she reproduced Miss Primleigh's severity of expression and somewhat acid quality of voice. One gathered also, from chance remarks let fall, that Miss Primleigh had lately treated Miss Hamm with marked aversion bordering upon actual discourtesy. How any one, thrown in contact with her, could regard Miss Hamm with any feelings save those of admiration and respect is quite beyond my comprehension.

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However, I contented myself by saying that Miss Primleigh had likewise displayed a coolness to me for some weeks past. "I wonder," I said, continuing in this strain, "why this should be and why she should likewise single you out as a recipient of her disapproval—or let us say her disfavour?"

"Can't you guess?" said Miss Hamm, with an arch expression and a peculiar inflection in her words. Puzzled, I shook my head.

At this juncture another interruption occurred. A caller in the person of a Mr. Pomeroy was announced by the maidservant. I had heard Miss Hamm refer to this person on divers preceding occasions and from the outset had taken a dislike to the sound of his name. It would appear that he resides in the city of Baltimore, Maryland, and that he knew Miss Hamm and her uncle ere their removal to these parts. It would appear also that he arrived here this afternoon with the avowed intention of remaining several days in our peaceful community—why, though, I know not, unless it be that perversely he would inflict himself upon a young lady who conceivably cannot possibly be interested in his society or in the idle vapourings of his mind.

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Almost immediately this Mr. Pomeroy was ushered into our presence. His appearance, his demeanour, his entire ensemble, were such as to confirm in me the prejudice engendered against him e'en before I beheld him in the flesh. His dress was of an extravagant and exaggerated style, and his overly effusive manner of greeting Miss Hamm extremely distasteful, while his attitude toward me was one of flamboyant familiarity; altogether I should say a young man of forward tendencies, shallow, flippant, utterly lacking in the deeper and finer sensibilities which ever

distinguish those of true culture, and utterly disregardful of the proper and ordained conventionalities. In conversation he is addicted to vain follies and meaningless witticisms, and his laughter, in which he is prone to indulge without due cause so far as I can note, has a most grating sound upon the ear. In short, I do not care for this young man; freely and frankly I confess it here.

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I had meant to stay on until he had betaken himself away, being minded to have a few words in private with Miss Hamm touching upon Miss Primleigh's peculiar and inexplicable attitude toward us, but since he persisted in remaining on and on, I, having a proper regard for the proprieties, was constrained shortly after eleven o'clock to depart. As I was upon the point of going, he halted me, saying in effect:

"Doctor, you're a college professor—I want to ask you a scientific question and see if you can give me a scientific answer."

"Pray proceed," I said, smiling gently in Miss Hamm's direction.

"Why," he said, "is a mouse that spins?"

He then paused as though awaiting my reply, and when I confessed myself unable to hazard an answer, or even to understand so peculiar a problem, with a great discordant guffaw he said:

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"Why, the higher, the fewer!"

Upon coming here I cogitated the matter deeply, but I am as yet far from a solution. Why is a mouse that spins? And if so, what does it spin? Patently the query is incomplete. And what possible bearing can comparative altitude as contrasted with the comparative infrequency of a species have upon the peculiarities of a mouse addicted to spinning?

I shall now to bed, dismissing all thoughts of a certain boorish individual from my mind.

MAY THE TWENTY-FOURTH.—He lingers on—the person Pomeroy. It developed this forenoon that he had succeeded in extorting from Miss Hamm a promise to permit him to call this evening. I can only assume that through goodness of heart and a desire to avoid wounding any one she again consented to receive him at her home.

This afternoon, in thoughtful mood not untinged with vague repinings, my footsteps carried me, unwittingly as it were, to that beetling promontory from which our peaceful hamlet derives its name. For long I stood upon the crest of that craggy eminence wherefrom, so tradition tells us, a noble young chieftain of the aborigines who once populated this locality, being despairful of winning the hand of a fair maid of a neighbouring but hostile tribe, flung himself in suicidal frenzy adown the cliff to be dashed into minute fragments upon the cruel rocks below. Meditating upon the fate of this ill-starred red man, I communed with mine own inner consciousness. I asked myself the question: "Did you, Fibble, emulate the example of that despondent Indian youth and leap headlong from this peak, who in all this careless world other than your Great-Aunt Paulina would bemoan your piteous end? Who would come to place with reverent, sorrowing hands the tribute of a floral design such as a Broken Column or a Gate Ajar upon your lowly bier? Ah, who indeed?"

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It was with difficulty that I tore myself away from a spot whose history so well accorded with the dismal trend of my thoughts. Presently, passing through a leafy lane leading back to the village, I espied at some distance in advance of me a couple walking together and apparently engaged in engrossing conversation. A second glance served to inform me that one of the pair was Miss Hamm and the other the insufferable Pomeroy. In a fit of petulance for which I am unable to account, unless it be due to my displeasure that he should continue to press his unwelcome attentions upon a young woman so immeasurably his superior, I dashed my eyeglasses upon the earth, thereby breaking the right lens. Yet I count the damage as naught, nor do I regret giving way to so violent an exhibition of temper.

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To-night, finding the seclusion of my study dispiriting, I went forth upon a long and purposeless walk beneath the stars. Through chance I found myself, at or about eleven o'clock, in the vicinity of Mr. Hector Hamm's place of residence. Aimlessly lingering here in the shadow of the trees, I soon espied Pomeroy issuing from the gate of the residence and making off, whistling gaily as he went. He disappeared in the darkness, still whistling in a loud and vulgar manner. I could almost wish he might be choked by his own whistling. As for myself, I never whistle.

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In this mood I have returned here to pen these lines. I fear me I shall sleep but ill the night, for distracting and gloomy thoughts race through my brain. I feel myself not to be myself. I wonder why?

MAY THE TWENTY-FIFTH.—The odious Pomeroy has betaken himself hence. Quite by accident I happened to drop into our local hostelry, the Briggs House, this morning and ascertained by a purely cursory glance at the register that he had paid his account and departed. I may only add that I trust he sees his way clear to remaining away indefinitely or, better still, permanently.

This is Sunday and I shall be engaged with our services. But upon to-morrow night, when it is

my intention to resume my friendly visits to the Hamm home, I mean to take an important step. For long I have been cogitating it and my mind is now firmly made up. As yet I have not fully memorised the language in which I shall frame my request, but I have convinced myself that our acquaintanceship has now advanced to a point where the liberty I would take is amply justified. I shall formally ask Miss Hamm that in our hours of private communion together, if not in public, she call me Roscoe, while in return I mean, with her consent, to address her as Hildegarde.

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None need know of this excepting ourselves. It will be, as I conceive, a secret between us, a bond, a tie, as it were.

Good night, small russet-clad confidante. Prithee be of good cheer! When next we meet perchance I may have happy news for you.

MAY THE TWENTY-SIXTH.—No entry.

MAY THE TWENTY-SEVENTH.—No entry.

MAY THE TWENTY-EIGHTH.—A terrible, a hideous, an inconceivable catastrophe has descended upon the devoted head of Fibble!

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With a fevered, tremulous hand, with one leg—to wit, the right one—enclosed in a plaster cast, with a soul racked by remorse, by vain regrets and by direst apprehensions, I pen the above words. My brain seethes with incoherent thoughts, my very frame quivers with suffering and with frightful forebodings. 'Tis with the utmost difficulty that I manage to inscribe these piteous lines. Yet inscribe them I must and shall. Should the worst befall, should the dread hand of violence strike me down ere I have succeeded in fleeing this perilous spot, this confession shall remain behind, a testimonial, to tell the world and *her* that I perished a martyr upon the altars of unrequited affection and to explain the innate purity of my motives, however far I may have fallen, in one rash moment of uncontrollable impulse, from the lofty pinnacles of honour. Though I lie weltering in my gore, my lips forever closed, my hand forever stilled, the record shall endure to show that I, the disgraced and the deceased Fibble, would, from the confines of the silent tomb, beg forgiveness for my criminal indiscretion. I shall write all! My tears descending as I write bedew the sheet, and beneath my swimming eyes the lines waver, but in haste I write on, lest the slayer find me before my final task be done.

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We were alone together. We were side by side. Upon a couch we sat in close juxtaposition. The hour was approximately nine-thirty; the time two nights agone. I bent toward her, half whispering my words. With all the fervour of which I am capable I told her I had a request to make of her; told her that compliance with this request would have a bearing upon all our future communions, bringing us nearer to each other, forming a link between us. My executors will understand, after a perusal of the paragraphs immediately preceding, that I meant to ask her to call me Roscoe and in return to vouchsafe to me the boon and the privilege of calling her Hildegarde.

Bending her head, she said, with that simple directness so characteristic of her, "Go right ahead." Suddenly I found her hand intertwined in mine. I do not attempt to explain this phenomenon; indeed, I was not conscious of having sought to encompass her hand within my own; I merely state it a verity. Her fingers pressed against mine—or so to me it seemed.

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"Go right ahead, doctor," she repeated. "I'm listening."

The touch of her hand laid a spell upon me. Instantaneously all my forces of self-reserve were swept away. With the startling abruptness of a bolt from the blue, realisation of a thing which I had never before suspected came full upon me, and for the first time I knew that for Hildegarde Hamm I entertained a sentiment deeper than that of mere friendship—yes, far, far deeper. I knew that I cared for her; in short, I knew that I loved her.

Madness was upon me—a delicious, an all-consuming fire burned within me. I forgot that I was a guest beneath her roof, enjoying the hospitality of her beloved and revered relative. I forgot the meed of respect I owed to her, forgot the responsibilities imposed upon me. I forgot all else except that I, Roscoe T. Fibble, loved Hildegarde Hamm.

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I became as the caveman, who by brute force would win his mate. I obeyed a primeval impulse. Without a word of warning, without excuse, without prefatory remark of any nature whatsoever, I acted:

I kissed her. To be exact, I kissed at her.

For, in this moment fraught with such consequences to all concerned, she averted her head at yet a greater angle. The implant of the osculation was destined for her cheek. It reached her nose—the tip of her nose only.

I do not plead this circumstance in partial extenuation. The intent had been plain, the deed was consummated. I had practically kissed her.



TO BE EXACT, I KISSED AT HER

She leaped to her feet, as I to mine. Her eyes, alight with an inscrutable expression, looked into mine; her cheeks became diffused with the crimsoned glow of righteous indignation; her form was convulsed; she quivered from head to feet. For a moment this scene endured. Then ere my lips, but lately contracted for the chaste but unbidden salute, could frame the first stammered syllable of an apology, she buried her ensanguined face in her hands, and hysteria assailed her—a hysteria so acute and so violent that not tears but an outburst resembling laughter—laughter wild, startling and most distressing to hear—came from her. She turned and dashed from the room.

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My heart paused in its quick beating. In one mad moment of indiscretion I had destroyed her confidence in me, had brought down in crashing ruins my hopes, my dreams, my new-found joy.

I felt that I must go hence—that I must quit that domicile forever, and the sooner the better. With my brain in a whirl, I looked about me for my hat and my umbrella.

A loud and a compelling voice spoke behind me. I faced about. In the doorway through which she had just fled stood a fearsome apparition. It was her uncle, that man so given to carnage among the beasts and birds of the field, that unerring, that unfailing marksman. He was in his shirt sleeves, his arms bared to his elbows. Upon his face was a fixed grin of demoniac determination—the look of one who smiles even as he slays his prey. And in his hands—ah, dreadful final detail of this dreadful picture—he held outstretched, extended and presented in my general direction, a double-barrelled fowling piece, enormous in size and glittering with metal ornamentation.

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"Young man," he cried out, "have one look at this!"

In times of the most extreme peril the thoughts clarify with inconceivable rapidity. In a flash I comprehended all. She had told him of the insult to her maidenly modesty, and for it he meant to have my heart's blood. I was about to become an extinct and bleeding corpse. But before he could raise the hideous instrument of death to his shoulder an expedient occurred to me. I would save myself from slaughter and coincidentally save him from the crime of dyeing his hands with the gore of a fellow being. A low window at the west side of the room, immediately adjacent to the couch whereon I had been seated, providentially stood open. I would leap from it and flee. Without a moment's hesitation I did so.

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In such emergencies one does not choose with care one's means of exit. One departs by the egress most convenient to one. As I plunged through the opening I remembered that a considerable distance intervened between the window I had chosen and the sward below. Even as I bounded forth into space I thought of this. But when one is in mid-air one does not turn back; a law of physics involving the relation of solid bodies to the attraction of gravitation prevents. Nor did I indeed desire to turn back. My one desire was to go. I dropped and dropped, as though for miles. I struck with terrific force upon a grass-covered but hard and unyielding surface. A pang of agony, poignant in its intensity, darted in an upward direction through my lower right limb and I dropped prostrate upon the earth.

But now in the window above stood my would-be destroyer, a wild gleam in his wide open eyes and that awful lethal object still in his grasp. His eyes roved this way and that into the darkness without, seeking to find the victim. The light from behind shone full upon him. Thwarted for the moment tho' he had been, his purpose was all too plainly revealed.

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Heedless of the pain, I leaped to my feet and darted away into the sheltering night. Somehow, I know not how, I scaled the fence. There was a gate, but what time had I to seek out gates? I staggered adown the street. I reached the corner below and there I fell, unable to proceed another rod be the consequences what they might. Merciful unconsciousness succeeded. I knew no more.

When after a lapse I recovered my senses familiar objects surrounded me, and faces well known to me yet for the time wearing a strange aspect, bent over me. I remember my first words.

"Where am I?" I uttered feebly, and would have started up had not those close at hand restrained me with gentle force.

I was in my own room. While my swoon continued Samaritans had borne me hither. Gentle hands soothed my brow; a physician was preparing wrappings for the injured limb, my right ankle being in a severely sprained state. I learned that I had been discovered lying mute and insensible upon the public highway. My lineaments had been recognised; assistance had been summoned; I had been removed to my quarters; friends now ministered to me. One and all, they assumed that, walking in the darkness, I had encountered some obstacle and, being thus injured, had fallen unconscious. Weak as I was and incoherent though my thoughts, I did not undeceive

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them. Nor have I yet done so.

I sought to know more, but the physician bade me be silent. His task completed, he administered a sleeping draught and anon I sank into deep slumber.

That was the night of the day before yesterday. Upon yesterday and again this morning I made fervent inquiry of my nurse as to whether any person other than those connected with Fernbridge had called. Each time I was told that Mr. Hector Hamm had come to enquire regarding my condition and to express a desire to have private conversation with me at the very earliest moment when I might receive visitors. Therefore, it is plain that he has been here at least twice, but each time—oh, fortunate circumstance—has been turned away from the door. 'Tis I and I alone who know his implacable object. His lust for vengeance is not assuaged. He will accept no defence, will pause not to hearken to my prayers for mercy. Even now he may be lurking without seeking opportunity to destroy me utterly.

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Infirmity chains me to my couch, but when the injured limb may bear my weight I shall flee, even as the hind before the huntsman. Should I escape I shall, in different surroundings far, far from here, take up anew the shattered threads of my existence, a broken-hearted wretch, seeking by good deeds done under an assumed name to atone for this, the one blot upon the fair escutcheon of my life. Should I fall before his fatal aim this confession, written during the temporary absence of my nurse from the chamber of invalidism, will be found among my belongings.

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Even though as I pen this, perchance my last declaration, I am strangely torn between two all-consuming wishes. I desire above all things to be gone ere it is too late. And yet above all things, I desire to look again upon the face of my adored one. But alas, that may not be! 'Twould be folly multiplied upon folly to dare attempt it. I cannot think upon her. I must think upon her uncle.

Hildegarde, farewell, a long, a last, a fond farewell! I have sorely sinned, but 'twas for love of you! Adieu, adieu, all that I hold dear.

THREE HOURS LATER.—Oh, Little Diary! O Great Joy!

In a transport of delight I add this postscript. She has been here—Hildegarde—my Hildegarde. All is explained, all is atoned for.

But an hour ago she came. She burst in upon me. Heedless of the presence of others, she threw herself upon my breast. I found her arms entwined about me, my arms entwined about her. With her head hidden upon my bosom, in sweet confusion, and with tears of thanksgiving coursing adown her cheek, she made it clear to my understanding—oh, so sweetly clear—that I, most woefully, had been misled. As yet my delighted intellect can scarce grasp the purport of her disclosures, but from the rest these salient, these soothing, these beautiful facts stand out:

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I was deceived. The kiss I would have impressed upon her countenance was not to her displeasing. Rather it was the circumstance of its being misdirected which caused her to be overcome, not with the hysteria of indignation but with mirth. Why mirth at such a moment, I know not. But are not the ways of a maiden past finding out?

Hurrying from my presence to stifle her laughter, she entered the adjoining room, to come upon her uncle engaged in the, to him, congenial occupation of oiling a newly purchased firearm of augmented calibre. A waggish inspiration leaped into her mind. It would appear by her own admissions that she has oft been given to the practice of practical joking; but because of the glorious consequences I find it in my heart to forgive her.

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"Uncle," she said, "Doctor Fibble wants to see your new gun!"

With no murderous desires in his heart and actuated only by gratification and friendliness, he entered. Yet under the circumstances, how natural, how inevitable, that I should misread his expression and his gesture, misinterpret his motives. I saw the window near by, offering a possible avenue of escape. I leaped. You, diary, and you alone, know what has ensued from that moment until now.

But there is more to tell. She believed my limb was shattered—in fact, broken. She blamed me not at all; it was herself she blamed. Until she could bear the separation no longer, she remained away. Then impetuously, remorsefully, lovingly she came. She loves me—she herself has told me so—Hildegarde loves me. And stranger still, she has known for weeks that I loved her, even though I myself remained in complete ignorance of being in that enraptured state. How wonderful is woman's intuition!

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She has foresworn practical joking. We have exchanged vows. We have plighted our troth. She is mine and I am hers. She has gone from me to win her uncle's consent and to invoke his blessing upon our banns. Soon she will return to me.

In her absence I fondly dwell upon her words. "Dearest," she said, "you need some one to take care of you. And I am going to take the job."

Sweet child! In her confusion she twisted her meaning. She meant of course that she had need of me to care for her.

"And now," she said a moment later, "and now I'm going to teach you how to kiss a girl."

Under this head I shall say naught, except that she has taught me. There are things too sacred, too beautiful to be described in detail in the written word. Suffice it to say she has taught me!

And then she called me Fibbey. Oh, precious diminutive! Evermore I shall be her Fibbey!

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With one final statement I close this recital of the crowning chapter of my life. Our union is to be consummated at an early date in this dear spot.

O well-named town of Lover's Leap, New Jersey.

For I, too, have taken the lover's leap, not to death upon the cruel rocks but to happiness everlasting.

Her Fibbey!

My Hildegarde!

Transcriber's Notes:

Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

Varied spelling of Shakespeare-Shakepere was retained.

The remaining corrections made are indicated by dotted lines under the corrections. Scroll the mouse over the word and the original text will appear.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FIBBLE, D.D ***

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