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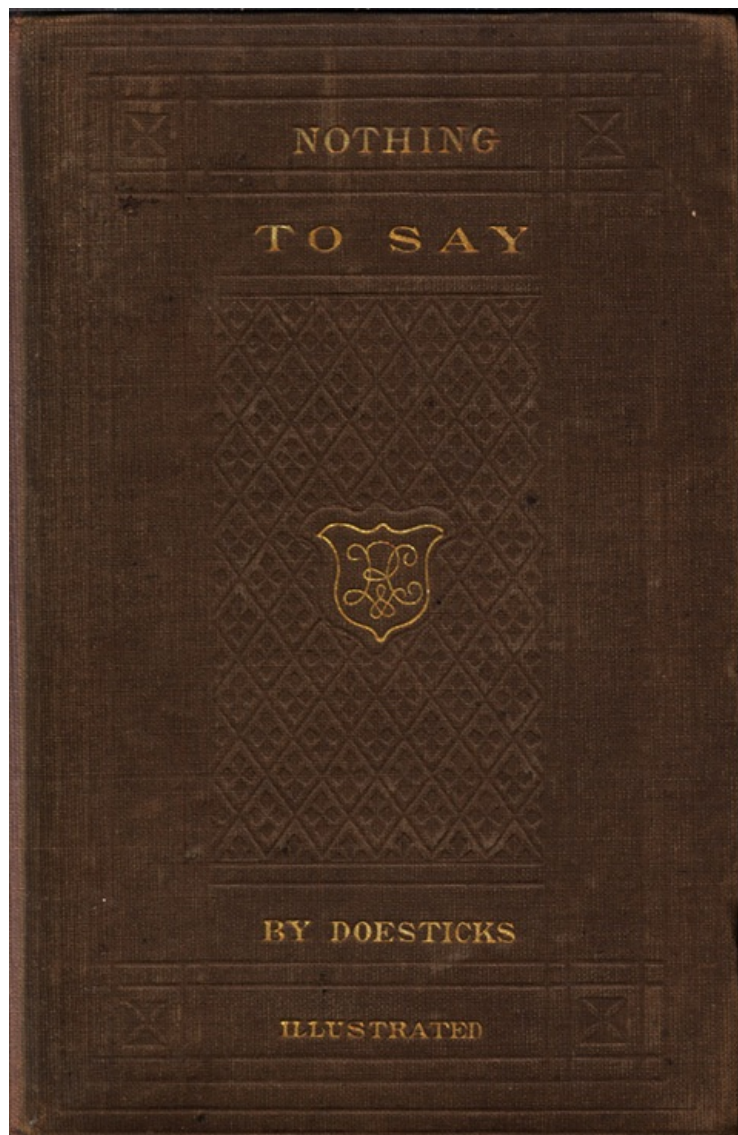
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WHICH HAS

“NOTHING TO Do” with “NOTHING TO WEAR.”

BY
Q. K. PHILANDER DOESTICKS, P.B.

“My verdict for the white rose side.”

1 HENRY VII. ii. 4.

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7
NOTHING TO SAY.

I, Q. K. P. DOESTICKS, of No Hall, Nowhere;
No Castle, no Villa, no Place, Court, or Terrace;
Who didn’t write “Junius,” or “Nothing to Wear,”
Who never have visited London or Paris;
8 Who am not a phantom, a myth, or a mystery,
But a “homo,” as solid as any of history;
As real as Antony, Cæsar, or Brutus,—
A wide-awake Yankee, so “tarnation ‘cute” as
To always write Nothings, while Nothings will pay,
Am the author of this Nothing—Nothing to Say.

9 I mention this fact in advance, that Miss P***
May not strive to embezzle the laurels from me.

That her Reverend friend may attend to his Litany,
And leave me my fame, if perchance I shall get any.
I deemed it best, to set at rest,
This question before it was started, lest
Some terrible girl from the far *coun-tree*,
Without proper regard to *veracitee*,
Should haste to town, to drag me down
From my envied post of poetic renown.
Miss P***, I've a favor to ask.—If 'tis true,
That "Nothing to Wear," and "Nothing to Do,"
And "Nothing to Eat," were all written by you,—
Let those three Nothings content you I pray,
Say nothing yourself; leave me "Nothing to Say."

From time immemorial, people of fashion
Have been the target of poets and penny wits,
And been lampooned without stint or compassion,
From Dan to Beersheba—from Dublin to Dennevitz;
And our now-a-day rhymsters, taking the cue,
Have aimed all their shots at the Fifth Avenue,
Till the clever author of "Nothing to Wear,"
Fired his broadside at Madison Square.
Now *I* don't consider this sort of thing personal,
I'm not a bit of a dandy or fop;
But the seed it is constantly sowing, is worse than all
Others, and bears a most plentiful crop;
For it all goes to strengthen the popular fallacy
That, because a man lives in a "brown stone palace" he
Must be a miser, a rogue and a knave,
Without soul enough to condemn or to save—



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15

That a broadcloth coat argues sin, if not felony;
 If a man has the tact in the world to get well on, he
 Cannot be else than a thorough-paced scamp;
 That the "villanous rich" wear a cloak and a mask, all,
 And the greater the riches, the greater the rascal.

16

That the cardinal virtues only endure,
 In the atmosphere with the "virtuous poor;"
 That nowhere are found the true Christian graces,
 Save closely allied to the dirtiest faces.

17

I shall not contradict this delightful tradition,
 But beg—No, I won't, I will take it—permission,
 To state, that I think there's a word to be said,
 From a different text, on the opposite head.
 And so I'll invent, as well as I'm able,
 A new home-made, allegorical fable;
 And my honest purpose shall be, to see
 If the scoundrel rich have not borne a part
 In those noble charities, which are
 The pride of this jolly old city's heart.
 And if I shall find that the virtuous mob
 Have ever been known one farthing to pay,
 Without hoping a hundred-fold profit to make:
 Where the "rich man," the "miser," "aristocrat," "snob,"
 Has poured out his thousands for Charity's sake,
 I'll lay down my pen, and have "Nothing to Say."

18

I shall not describe the SPIRIT OF CANT,
Of popular humbug, and vulgar rant,
And tell how he looks in a tangible form,
And give the length of his horns and claws,
The spread of his wings, the width of his jaws,
And detail the other proportions grim,
Which belong to a powerful demon like him.
Go and look at the melodramatic stage,
When a "spectacle" piece is all the rage;
And there, in the midst of some "property" storm,
While the sheet-iron thunder is rattling its best,
And the rosin lightning, and all the rest
Of the elements are, for some tragedy-reason,
Making the "awfulest gale of the season—"
See, at the sound of the prompter's tap,
The fiend come up through the "Vampyre trap;"
Take a mental photograph then, and there,
Of that imp, with his "fixins" all complete—
The elfish grin, the tangled hair,
The dragon wings and the scaly feet—
And you'll have a notion of him I mean,
The demon of this, my opening scene.
I might go to Milton, and steal, bit by bit,
A description to suit my Spirit of Cant,
A second-hand suit, but a "shplendid fit,"
As a Jew would assure me—but then I sha'nt.
His work is to preach the humbug which passes
For gospel among the "down-trodden masses;"
And to prate of the "wrongs and indignities," which
Are heaped on their heads by the "cold-hearted rich."

This Spirit was busy at work one day,
Amongst a crowd of Bowery boys,
When CHARITY happened to come that way;
And she stopped to listen—though, sooth to say,
She seldom is fond of clamor and noise.

"Now, pray, Mr. Author, wait just a minute,
Stop!
Drop



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25

Your subject, and don't again begin it
 Till you tell us: What did Charity wear?
 Was her dress of *moire antique*, or satin;
 Or was it plain muslin—just like that in
 Which love-lorn maidens on the stage
 Go raving crazy?—and had she a page?
 Did she wear hoops? and what sort of a bonnet?
 And tell us, what kind of trimming was on it?

26

What—" Stop, stop, dear ladies, it isn't fair
 To question thus closely a modest young man.

If I *could* tell the items, I would, I declare;
 For I always oblige you whenever I can.
 I know that of dresses she has a variety,
 Though vanity's not her predominant passion,
 She was costumed, no doubt, with the greatest propriety,
 In the very extreme of the reigning fashion.

27

Well! she stopped to listen, a minute or more,
 To the fellow's mischievous harangue, before
 She resolved what to do; then she stepped to the door
 Of an Astor Place car, and beckoned to him,
 And he followed at once, while his audience scattered;
 To tell the truth, he felt quite flattered,

28

And he smiled a smile most heavy and grim,
 For he thought he'd awakened a tender passion
 In the heart of a belle, a lady of fashion.
 And they sat side by side, this curious pair,

While they rode up to Eighth street—and she paid the fare.

They stepped from the car, and stood before,
The "COOPER INSTITUTE'S" new-painted door—

29 "Who hath done this?" asked Charity then;
"Who hath done this for his fellow-men?
Hath builded this house, that all may come—
The poor most welcome—to Learning's treasure,
And drink their fill without stint or measure?
Who hath so nobly used his thrift,
And bestowed on the world this priceless gift,
Free to all, whoever may come?
30 Was this noble work built up by the 'masses,'
Or by one of the 'miserly, upper classes'?"

To the Spirit, this speech was quite unexpected,
And he stood in a sort of stupid dismay;
And before his few scattered thoughts were collected,
31 She rightly concluded—he'd Nothing to Say.
Then she lifted her skirts with a masterly hand,
And out of the puddles and ruts kept them well up,—
Thus showed that she had the most perfect command
Of the crinoline mysteries of her envelope,
'Twas done with the daintiest grace all the while,
And discovered the daintiest possible gaiter,—
Then she turned to her friend with a nod and a smile,
32 And told him to follow—he straightway obeyed her.
As they hurried along, she kept ever before him,
And he kept his eye on the tempting prunella,
Secretly hoping there'd come such a shower
As would make a new Flood in half-an-hour—
That she, with a womanly care for her bonnet,
Which would "spot," with the least drop of water upon it,



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35

Might become condescending, and humbly implore him
 To come along-side with his cotton umbrella.
 But the shower didn't come, and without a disaster,
 They reached the huge Library—christened of Astor.
 Then she shook down her skirts to their natural latitude—
 Ahem'd once or twice—struck *out* a nice attitude—
 And then she struck *into* this little oration,
 Though I'm sure *I* don't know where she learned
 declamation.

36

“Spirit, behold! these bending shelves
 Are groaning 'neath the gathered store
 Of every nation's varied lore.

Most welcome are the poor themselves
 To freely turn these countless pages,
 And gather from the words of sages
 All the light of former ages.
 Whoever wills is here a guest,
 The *poorest* are the welcomest.
 Who hath done this? your virtuous mob,
 Or a 'cold-hearted miser,' a 'pampered snob'?”

37

Here her Companion began to perceive
That her feminine tongue would have its own way;
That the cleverest thing *he* could do was to leave
The talking to her, and have Nothing to Say.
38 The lady had now been chattering so long,
She felt that her voice was beginning to fail her;
A punch would, she felt, be a blessing and boon,
The “dientical” thing with which to regale her,
So they pushed their way through the gathering throng,
And hurried away to Taylor’s Saloon.

39 They seated themselves at the table together,—
The customers “staring their eyes out,” to see
Who this queer-looking couple could possibly be,—
Asking each other in whispers, whether,
It wasn’t the likeliest thing that she,
Was a Western Actress, and he an Editor;
And some were terribly frightened, because
They couldn’t help thinking there certainly was,
40 The Old Nick to pay, and that he was their creditor.

But the strangers composedly sat, never heeding
These stupid remarks, or taking offence,
And they quietly kept on their drinking and feeding,
Without the slightest regard to expense.
If an appetite sharp is a thing so delightful,
41 Charity had no occasion to sigh at hers;
Boarding-house keepers would say it was frightful,
And ruinous too, to the hotel proprietors.

They were sated at last, and turned from the door;
He, wondering whither she now would go—
And well he might—in an instant more
He was over shoes in the frozen snow;
42 While she coolly remarked, with a Camille cough,
That the North Pole was only a half a mile off.

How it was they got to their present location,
I’m sure I don’t know, and it’s not my vocation
To give the details of their quick locomotion.
Electricity may have done it, or steam;



Page 46.

45

But motive powers are not my theme.
My heroes were there, near the frozen ocean.

46

The man had too much of "cold without,"
And the lady sighed for her tippet and muff;
For though they had come by a summary route,
The weather, they found, was wintry enough.
When they climbed an iceberg's loftiest height,
To the imminent danger of dresses and hoops,
Of ribbons and pins, and laces and loops,
The GRINNELL EXPEDITION was in sight.

47

Now the lady had been prepared to preach,
Or rather, to make a nice serious speech;
But it might as well have been written in Dutch for her,
For the wind and the weather, conspiring together,
Turned out to be, altogether too much for her;
One half she forgot, and she bungled the rest of it,
Though I finally managed to pick out the best of it.
She asked her companion, who stood in the lee of her,

For the wind spread her skirts to the bigness of three of
her,

“Who sent these ships to the rescue of those,
Who have perilled their lives in these Northern snows?
Did he spring from the mob, the benevolent ‘masses,’
Or from the detestable ‘upper classes?’”

With a great deal more to the same effect,

Which I couldn’t exactly make out the sense of,
For I know that her sentences “failed to connect;”

And I suppose that her chattering teeth bit the ends off;
But ’twas very conclusive, whatever she said.

He never disputed her; never said nay,
But only hung down his discomfited head;

And whatever he thought, he had Nothing to Say.

Chilled to the heart with the terrible cold,

Both to get back were most truly-solicitous,
Never before was the saying old,

“As cold as charity,” half so felicitous.

They hastened back to Broadway, when she said,

That one more journey that night she’d lead him,
Before she’d let him go home to bed.

And he, not caring to quibble or question,

At once fell in with the lady’s suggestion,

Not thinking she’d “one more” lecture to read him.

This time they took a course rectilinear
Southward, and landed in Norfolk, Virginia.

Pestilence there was doing its worst,

Hundreds were dying, and hundreds were dead.

Many who should have been bravest, the first

Had deserted their trust, and shamelessly fled.

But men from the Northern cities were there,

Nursing the sick with the tenderest care,

Whose kindred had fled to less dangerous lands,

Leaving the dying to strangers’ hands.



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55

While the two stood quiet beside the bed
Of a patient sufferer, Charity said:

“Who hath sent these strangers here,
These dying men to soothe and cheer?
To do what mortal skill may do
To lighten their burdens of grief and woe;
To shrive these dying souls of blame,
To bid them hope in Heaven above.
Who hath sent these in my dear name
To do this holiest work of love?
Hath the treasure here given been paid by those
Whose ‘wrongs’ are so earnestly plead by you?
Or hath it been done by their ‘natural foes,’
The wealthy, the rich, the opulent few
Of Madison Square and the Fifth Avenue?”

56

57

During this lengthy interrogation
The Spirit had been pretending to doze,
But he waked himself up at the peroration,
And most ungallantly turned up his nose,

And turned on his heel, and turned him away,—
Sulkily saying, he'd Nothing to Say.

58

Dear Readers, I'll ask one question of you—
Don't you think it may possibly chance to be true,
That Charity, really, not merely in fables,
May apparel herself in satins and sables,
And costliest ribbons, and fragilest laces,
Like the daintiest beauties of Madison Square,
And may take up a home in the loftiest places,
With those who've, satirically, Nothing to Wear?

59

And in that blissful realm above,
Where the poor and the rich meet in meekness and love:
Where the works of each heart are unveiled to the light,
And Humbug and Cant yield to Truth and to Right—
Where the trickster lays off his mask of deceit,
And the cloak of the hypocrite drops to his feet,
And Honor is given, where Honor is due—
We *may* see that some from the Fifth Avenue,
Most nobly will speak in that great reckoning day,
While their earthly detractors have Nothing to Say.

60

Finis.

Transcriber's Note: Minor punctuation errors have been repaired. Spelling was left as found.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK NOTHING TO SAY ***

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