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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A BOOK WITHOUT A TITLE \*\*\*

### Transcriber's note

Minor punctuation errors have been changed without notice. Printer errors have been changed, and they are indicated with a mouse-hover and listed at the [end of this book](#). All other inconsistencies are as in the original.

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### BY THE SAME AUTHOR

**Another Book on the Theater**

**Europe After 8.15 (*in collaboration  
with H. L. Mencken*)**

**Bottoms Up**

**Mr. George Jean Nathan Presents**

*In Preparation:*

**The Democratic Theatre**

**I Love You: A Reminiscence**

---

# A BOOK WITHOUT A TITLE

BY

GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

PHILIP GOODMAN COMPANY  
NEW YORK NINETEEN EIGHTEEN

Titles of books: Decoys to catch purchasers—*Chatfield*.

---

À

Mademoiselle Ex

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## I

[7]

### THE ATHEIST

"I worship no one," cried the atheist. "Divinities are senseless, useless, barriers to progress and ambition, a curse to man. Gods, fetiches, graven images, idols—faugh!"

On the atheist's work-table stood the photograph of a beautiful girl.

---

## II

[8]

### ALLIES

The Devil, finishing his seidel of Würzburger, eyed the young man quizzically.

"What would you of me?" he said.

"I would ask," bade the young man, "how one may know the women who serve you as allies?"

"Find those who smile at themselves in their mirrors," said the Devil.

---

## III

[9]

### VIEWPOINT

In a rapidly ascending balloon were two men.

One watched the earth getting farther and farther away.

One watched the stars getting nearer and nearer.

---

## IV

[10]

### THE MISTAKE

He was the happiest man in the world, and the most successful in all things. In his eyes was ever a smile; on his lips ever a song.

For the gods had made an awful mistake when they bore him into the world. They had placed his heart in his head, where his brain should have been, and his brain in his bosom, where his heart should have been.

---

## V

[11]

### TEMPORA MUTANTUR

They couldn't understand why he married her, but the ironic little gods who have such matters in hand knew it was because she had a little way of swallowing before speaking, because she had a little way, when she came to him and saw him standing there with arms open to clasp her tight and kiss her, of sweeping her hat off and sailing it across the room, because she had a way of twining her little fingers in his.

They couldn't understand why he divorced her, but the ironic little gods who have such matters in hand knew it was because she had a little way of swallowing before speaking, because....

---

## VI

[12]

### LOVE

They showed her a nest swarming with impostures, deceits, lies, affectations, bitternesses, low desires, simulations, suspicions, distrusting, cheatings, hates, delusions, distortions, evasions. And she shrank from the sight of it as she looked close. But presently, when she turned from a distance of a dozen paces and looked back, she saw a brilliant-hued, beautiful bird soar from the nest and alight among the flowers.

"What is that gorgeous bird?" she asked.

"Love," they told her.

---

## VII

[13]

### FLIPPANCY

The scholar spoke to the mob in his own language and the mob heard him not.

The scholar, that he might make himself understood to the mob, expressed himself then in rune and jingle.

"A wise man and one who speaks the truth," quoth the mob, "but it is a pity he is so flippant."

---

## VIII

[14]

### THE GIFT

All women avoided him; no woman loved him.

The mischievous gods had given him, as the one gift they give at birth to each child on earth, great eloquence.

---

## IX

[15]

"Everyone likes me," said the man.

"That is Popularity," whispered the little star.

"Everyone likes me and envies me," said the man, a year later.

"That is Fame," whispered the little star.

"Everyone despises me," said the man, a year later still.

"That is Time," whispered the little star.

---

**X**

[16]

**THE INTRUDER**

It was moonlight in the court yard where languished among the flowers a lover and his mistress.

The lover, presently, and for the first time since he had known his fair lady, felt Wit flying close to his lips.

The little god of Love who had dwelt with the lovers in the court yard since first they had come there, sensing the flutter of the intruder's wings, took to his heels and slid between the bars of the great bronze gate into a neighbouring garden.

---

**XI**

[17]

**MEMORY**

Memory, wandering back over the great highway of the years, paused by the wayside to gather some of the flowers that embroidered the road. While Memory so bent himself, there confronted him suddenly a young woman, and Memory saw there were tears in her eyes. "Who are you?" asked Memory, for though about the young woman there was something vaguely he knew, he could not recall her.

Through her tears the young woman looked at him and said, "Of all of us you knew, me alone you have forgotten and do not remember. I am the woman who truly loved you."

---

**XII**

[18]

**MAXIM**

The young man, sitting at the feet of a philosopher, noticed a cynic smile tugging at the silence of the philosopher's lips.

"I was thinking," observed with an alas presently the philosopher, "that one is always a woman's second lover."

---

**XIII**

[19]

**THE GREATER LOVE**

"I love you," said the wife to her husband, looking up from the book she was reading, "because you are a successful man."

"I love you," said she to her lover, drawing his head close to hers, "because—because you are a failure."

---

**XIV**

[20]

## THE PUBLIC TASTE

A number of jackasses were sent to pasture in a meadow that was all green grass and dandelions and buttercups and daisies. At the far end of the meadow was a large billboard upon which was pasted the flaming lithograph of a moving-picture actor standing on his head on the top of an upright piano. The jackasses, immediately they entered the meadow, made a bee-line for billboard and began omnivorously to pasture off the lithograph.

---

### XV

[21]

#### THE FUTURE

Time snatched the roses from the girdle of a man's Past and tore her gown of silvered chiffon and brought her thus before him.

"And who is this, pray?" bade the man.

"This," replied Time, "is your Future."

---

### XVI

[22]

#### SIC PASSIM

"For what qualities in a man," asked the youth, "does a woman most ardently love him?"

"For those qualities in him," replied the old tutor, "which his mother most ardently hates."

---

### XVII

[23]

#### THE SEVERER SENTENCE

He had done a great wrong to a good woman, and the congress of the gods sat upon his punishment.

"Be it decreed by us," spoke the god at the far end of the table, "that he be compelled to walk, with the pace of a tortoise, through Hell."

"Be it decreed rather by us," spoke the god at the head of the table—and all the gods, hearing him, nodded grimly their approval—"that he be compelled to race, with the pace of a hare, through Paradise."

---

### XVIII

[24]

#### RACHE

"I hate my enemy with a hate as bitter as the hate he bears me, and I would do that to him that would for all time weaken both him and his power against me," muttered the man.

"That is easy," whispered Revenge in the man's ear. "Flatter him extravagantly for the qualities he knows he doesn't possess."

---

### XIX

[25]

#### SIC SEMPER TYRANNIS

An anarchist threw a bomb at the equipage of a king, and missed him.

A dancer threw a kiss to his box....

---

**RESPECT**

The mistress of the man on trial for bigamy was in tears.

"What is it, dear?" the man asked of her, tenderly.

The woman's frame shook under her sobs. "You don't respect me," she wailed. "Because if you did, you'd marry me."

---

**XXI**

[27]

**TEMPERAMENT**

The rage of the artiste knew no bounds. That she should be thus annoyed just before her appearance in the great scene! She stamped about her dressing-room; she threw her arms heavenward; she brushed the vase of roses from her table; she slapped her maid for venturing at such a moment to speak to her; she sank exhausted into an armchair, a bottle of salts pressed to her nostril.

It was full fifteen minutes before she recovered.

Then she went out upon the stage and began her famous interpretation of the great scene in which she chloroforms the detective, breaks open the safe, shoots the policeman who attempts to handcuff her, smashes the glass in the window with the piano stool and makes her getaway by sliding down the railing of the fire-escape.

---

**XXII**

[28]

**IMMORTALITY**

The little son of the reverend man of God stood at his father's knee and bade him speak to him of immortality.

And the reverend man of God, his father, spoke to him of immortality, eloquently, impressively, convincingly.

But what he spoke to him of immortality we need not here repeat, for the while he spoke out of the romantic eloquence of his heart, his matter-of-fact mind kept incorrigibly whispering to him that immortality is the theory that life is a rough ocean voyage and the soul a club breakfast.

---

**XXIII**

[29]

**INSPIRATION**

A poet, searching for Inspiration, looked into the hearts of all the women he knew. But all the hearts of these were empty and he found it not. And then, presently, in the heart of one woman whom he had forgotten, at the edge of a deep forest, he found what he sought for. For the heart of this woman was full. And as he looked at this heart, it seemed to him strangely familiar, as if, long ago, he had seen it before. And as he looked, the truth dawned fair upon him. The heart was his own.

---

**XXIV**

[30]

**RECIPÉ**

A young fellow, with something of the climber to him, took himself to the arbiter of manners and urged the latter instruct him how best he might learn effectively to pass himself off for a gentleman.

"Practise insulting persons in such wise that they shall not feel insulted," the arbiter of manners advised him.

**TRANSMIGRATION**

A great love faded and died.

Its soul passed into the body of a cobra.

---

**XXVI****THE SAVANT**

There lived in B[oe]otia a lout who was even more empty-headed than his most empty-headed neighbour and who yet, throughout the domain, was looked on as a shrewd and wise and sapient fellow.

Whenever any one spoke to him of a thing he did not understand, he vouchsafed no reply, but merely smiled a bit, and winked.

---

**XXVII****COMPANION**

Modesty left his mistress to fare forth into the world alone. But, turning in his flight, he saw someone at his heels.

In despair, Modesty sought still another mistress and this mistress one night he likewise left to fare forth into the world alone. But, turning in his flight, he saw again someone at his heels.

Modesty, sitting sadly on a rock by the wayside, realized then that his wish for a lonely adventure was never to be fulfilled. For he must always, when he sallied forth from his mistress, take with him his mistress' lover.

---

**XXVIII****THE GOOD FAIRY**

A fairy, in the form of a beautiful woman, came to a young man and whispered, "One wish will I grant you."

The young man gazed into the deep eyes of the beautiful woman and, with thoughts playing upon her rare loveliness, breathed, "I wish for perfect happiness for all time!"

And the fairy in the form of the beautiful woman granted him his wish.

She left him.

---

**XXIX****THE EXTERNAL FEMININE**

As the blonde young woman stepped from the swimming pool of the Turkish Bath, the attendant thought that never had she seen so fair and golden and beautiful a creature. Unable to contain her admiration, she spoke her thought. The beautiful blonde thanked her and said, "But you should have seen me at the Mi-Carême Ball as an African slave girl!"

---



## FRATERNITÉ

A woman, lying in the arms of her lover and who until now had spoken of many things but never of her husband, presently mentioned his name, and jested of him, and laughed.

Her lover, who adored her, laughed with her and bending to her, kissed her passionately—hating her.

---

## XXXI

[37]

### REPUTATION

The famous comedienne, suffering a sudden cramp, made a face.

"How wonderfully she expresses the feeling of homesickness," observed the gentleman seated in E 10.

"How wonderfully she expresses the feeling of wanderlust," observed the gentleman seated in M 7.

---

## XXXII

[38]

### THE LARIAT

A lonely dreamer, dreaming under the poplars of a far hill, saw Love dancing in the bright valley and casting promiscuously about her a lariat of silk and roses. That he, too, might feel the soft caress of the lariat about him, the dreamer clambered down into the gay valley and there made eyes at Love. And Love, seeing, whirled her lariat high above her and deftly twirled it 'round the dreamer. And as in Love's hand the lariat of silk and roses fell about him and drew tighter and tighter about his arms and legs, the dreamer saw it slowly turn before his eyes into a band of solid steel.

---

## XXXIII

[39]

### THE ANALYST

A little girl loved her doll dearly: it was to her very real and very human.

One day a little girl living next door told her the doll was only filled with cotton. And the little girl cried.

When the other little girl had gone, the little girl got out a scissors and determined to find out if her doll was, after all, not real and human, but only filled with cotton, as the little neighbour girl had said.

The little girl cut her doll open, and found that it was filled with sawdust.

---

## XXXIV

[40]

### COUPLET

Again Mephisto chuckled in anticipation.

Somewhere, a little country girl, for the first time, was powdering her nose.

---

## XXXV

[41]

### THE PHILOSOPHER

They had quarrelled.

Suddenly, her eyes flashing, she turned on him. "You think you are sure of me, don't you?" she cried. And in her tone at once were defiance and irony.

But the man vouchsafed nothing in reply. For he well enough knew that when a woman flings that question at a man, the woman herself already knows deep in her heart that the man is—perfectly.

---

## XXXVI

[42]

### ROSEMARY

In the still of the late December twilight, the old bachelor fumbled his way to the far corner of the great attic and from an old trunk drew falteringly forth a packet of letters. And pressing the letters tenderly in his hands, sighed. For, anyway, *she* had loved him in those years ago, the years when youth was at its noontide and the stars seemed always near. Memory, sweet and faithful mistress....

The old bachelor fumbled for his spectacles. Alas, he had left them below. And without them he could not read the words she had written. But he kissed the little packet ... and sighed.

He could not see it was his little nephew's school trunk he had opened by mistake, and that the packet which he held reverently in his reminiscent clasp was merely a bundle of blank, empty envelopes.

---

## XXXVII

[43]

### STRATEGY

One woman read up on everything and put on silks and jewels and perfumes and dimmed the lamps and set liqueurs and cigarettes upon the tabourette and caused the flames to dance low in the open hearth.

And one woman merely put a bit of soft lace about her throat and every once in a while prefaced a word with a sudden little intake of breath.

---

## XXXVIII

[44]

### A WORK OF ART

A poet, unknown and unsung, wrote a beautiful play. Those who read the play felt strange tears creep into their eyes and odd little pullings at the strings of their hearts.

"This," they said, "is art."

And the news of the poet's beautiful play spread far. And it came in time to be produced upon the great highway of a city with a company of actors the very least of whom received as weekly emolument some nuggets nine hundred and more. And citizens traveled from ulterior Haarlm and the far reaches of Brukkelhyn and counties beyond the Duchy of Nhuyohrk to see the costly actors play the poet's work. And the citizens looked at one another sorely perplexed, for they felt no strange tears creep into their eyes nor odd pullings at the strings of their hearts.

"Art hell!" they said.

---

## XXXIX

[45]

### OFFSPRING

Egotism and Carnality married and gave birth to a child.

They named it Love.

---

## XL

[46]

## V. C.

The child, entering the dark room at night, hummed a tune to hide his fear and frightened a mouse who was playing in a far corner. The mouse ran blindly under the child's foot and the child, believing the mouse was his grandmother's ball of wool, gave it a vigorous kick and killed it.

---

### **XLI**

[47]

#### **BUT—**

"But——" interposed the young woman.

A gleam came into the eyes of the man who coveted and who had long and vainly laid subtle siege against her.

He appreciated now that it was merely a matter of time.

---

### **XLII**

[48]

#### **CONJECTURE**

The pretty girl looked up at the stars, wondering....

The stars looked down at the pretty girl, wondering....

---

### **XLIII**

[49]

#### **THE JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON**

To his court spake Solomon: "I seek another woman for wife. But I have at length learned wisdom in these matters. So go you bring before me fifty or more you deem most suitable. And from these I shall select with deliberation and care and wisdom that one that will best be fitted for my throne-side and the bearing of children." And they went forth into the kingdom and brought before Solomon women who were strong and women who were wise and women who were gentle and women who were serious with the grave problems of life—the pick of the women of all the great kingdom who best were suited to the king.... Solomon, weighing studiously the merits of each and pondering the one whom he might most appropriately take unto him as best fitted for wife and mother, suddenly caught sight, on the far edge of the crowd, of a little flower girl with a cunning dimple in her ear....

---

### **XLIV**

[50]

#### **THE SUPERNATURAL**

"What is my name?" asked August Kraut of the Ouija board, as his hands guided the apparatus hither and thither.

"August Kraut," responded the Ouija board.

---

### **XLV**

[51]

#### **CURIOSITY**

A young woman, not content with delighting in the exquisite beauty of a magnolia bloom at a distance, came close to it and, coming close, touched it to make certain of its reality and, touching it, turned its fragile white petals to an ugly brown.

A young woman decided to analyze her lover's affections....

---

## XLVI

[52]

### THE MIRROR

In a great lonely house on a far lonely roadway lived in seclusion among her waxen flowers and cracking walls and faded relics of a far yesterday, a hateful and withered and bitter old woman. To the lonely house on the lonely roadway came one day out of the world to live with the old woman her young and beautiful and very lovely granddaughter. And one day—it was not so long afterward—the very lovely girl, rummaging about the great house, came upon a tall mirror, the mirror that the withered and bitter old woman had long been wont to use and that for all these many lonely years had seen and reflected naught but acrimony and decay and despair and ugliness. And the very lovely girl looked into the mirror—and suddenly cried out. For what the mirror reflected was not her very lovely self, but something hateful and withered and bitter....

---

## XLVII

[53]

### PATRIA

The young man lay dying on the field of battle. "Tell them I am proud to have died for my glorious country!" he breathed to the comrade who bent beside him.

They printed the young man's noble last words in all the leading papers of the country, conspicuously, where all the nation might see and read and therefrom take pride and inspiration, right next to the cartoons of the Katzenjammer Kids.

---

## XLVIII

[54]

### THE LOVER

"Three brilliant men are my suitors," said the beautiful young woman. "And I would marry the one who loves me most. Tell me how I may know that one."

"Pick the one who, when he is with you, is the most stupid," replied her old nurse.

---

## XLIX

[55]

### THE PUBLIC

The hurdy-gurdy man's monkey, cap in hand, clambered to the sill of the mediocre artist's window. And the mediocre artist tossed into his cap a peanut. The monkey, putting the peanut in his mouth, swallowed it, and grinned.

The hurdy-gurdy man's monkey, cap in hand, clambered to the neighbouring sill of the great artist's window. And the great artist tossed into his cap a sou. The monkey, putting the sou in his mouth, swallowed it, and grinned. But presently a great discomfort instituted itself in the monkey's abdomen. Whereupon the monkey immediately concluded that the sou was a counterfeit.

---

## L

[56]

### THE SCHOLAR

The scholar laid in solemn reverence a wreath upon the tomb of Beethoven.

"I place this wreath not upon the tomb of Beethoven," he exclaimed, "but upon the grave of music."

But no one heard what he said, because the robins were singing too loudly.

---

**GROTESQUERIE**

The small boy's ambition was to grow up and be an iceman.

The small boy grew up and became a famous vaudeville clog dancer.

The great man now often thinks back and smiles to himself at the grotesque absurdity of a small boy's idea of a career.

---

**CONTRETEMPS**

An artist, wandering along the highway of a city, with his eyes on the stars, tripped over something, fell and was crippled.

It was a purse of gold.

---

**DRAMATIC CRITICISM**

Two gentlemen of the assizes met one evening upon the highway with a dog. The dog, a friendly creature, barked amiably at the gentlemen, whereupon the twain smiled and bent to pat the dog. Stooping thus, one of the gentlemen issued suddenly a cry of alarm.

"Fie!" he cried to his colleague, "I see upon the creature's hide a flea!"

The other adjusted his glass and scrutinized the beast closely.

"That," he observed, with the mien of one not to be contradicted, "that, sir, is not a flea. That is a louse!"

---

**NEPENTHE**

"I think I'll take a few drinks to make me forget my troubles," said the poor man.

The drinks made the poor man forget his troubles and filled him instead with delightful visions of sunny lands and blue skies and red poppies and fair women and languorous luxury.

And the poor man, now unhappier than before, had to expend his last three sous for spirits of ammonia wherewith to recapture the nepenthe of his first troubles.

---

**ECCE HOMO**

A homely woman smiled at a man. And the man, puzzled and speculating what was wrong with him, slouched on.

A pretty woman smiled at a man. And the man, with the mien of a cock, threw out his chest and strutted on.

---

**THE ACTOR**

A poet, poor and neglected, lived up under the dusty eaves, with for sole companion a parrot. One day, the poet evolved a particularly lovely line and, in his happiness, repeated it to himself aloud, and time upon time.

A week later, some portly persons, passing beneath the lofty window, espied the parrot perched upon the sill and heard it speak the poet's line. Breathless with amazement, they stopped and cried out: "What a *wonderful* bird!"

---

## LVII

[63]

### VADE MECUM

An infatuated young man sought counsel at the bazaar of an ancient and prayed the ancient tell him how he might learn of his fair lady's faults.

"Go forth among her women friends," spake the venerable one, "and praise her in their hearing."

---

## LVIII

[64]

### BUTTERFLIES

A man beheld a butterfly and, catching her, held her in his hands and feasted his eyes upon her prettiness. But as he held her so, the pollen rubbed off her wings and she fluttered, a pitiable thing, weakly from his grasp.

A man beheld a butterfly and, catching her, held her in his arms and feasted his eyes upon her prettiness. But as he held her so, the powder rubbed off her nose and....

---

## LIX

[65]

### BOOMERANG

There was a critic—a sincere and art-loving man—who flouted the mob's taste, who inveighed against the popular, who protested vigorously against the low, mean art form that in dramatic shape packed nightly the playhouses of the great city with the unesthetic, artistically depraved and vulgar bourgeoisie. That things should come to so unholy a pass, he sighed.

The critic never stopped to consider that the journal which he graced had in the great city a daily circulation of half a million.

---

## LX

[66]

### ADVICE

"Beware," warned the Mind, solemnly.

The Heart, whistling a gay tune, cocked its hat upon one ear, gave a twist to its cravat, and kicked the old savant down stairs.

---

## LXI

[67]

### PASTEL

"If only I had his youth!" sighed the old gentleman looking out of the window of his halted limousine at the young man standing in the roadway.

"If only I had his experience!" sighed the young man standing in the crowded roadway looking at the old gentleman through the window of the halted limousine.

"If only they'd get a move on and let a man do his work!" said the middle-aged street-sweep, smacking his lips over the fine flavour of his chewing tobacco and taking a deep breath of the

## LXII

[68]

### IMITATIONS

Resplendent in silks and furs and a marvelous necklace of diamonds, she sat with superior mien in an opera box. Now and again, with an air of infinite ennui and disdain, she glanced coolly aloft through her lorgnette at the eager poor in the steep, high altitudes of the galleries.

The people in the great opera house whispered to one another that the marvelous necklace of diamonds was unquestionably an imitation. "Somehow," they said, "it looks like one." But they were wrong. The necklace of diamonds was quite genuine. It was not the necklace of diamonds, but the lady that was the imitation.

---

## LXIII

[69]

### THE COQUETTE

A rose, an orchid and a little white clover were pressed between the leaves of a coquette's diary.

"She loves me more than she loves either of you," cried the rose, "because I am the first flower my master ever gave her!"

"She loves me more than she loves either of you," protested the orchid, "because I am the last flower *my* master ever gave her!"

The little white clover smiled to itself and said nothing. For the little white clover knew that its mistress had picked it herself.

---

## LXIV

[70]

### MOONLIGHT

It was in the late Springtime. And they were very young.

The young man sighed, "Ah, if the night were only fair, that we might sit close together, you and I, in the moonlight."

It was in the late Springtime. And they were very young.

The young moth sighed, "Ah, if the night were only fair, that they might go out into the moonlight and leave the screen doors open that we might play close together, you and I, in the gaslight."

---

## LXV

[71]

### THE ETERNAL MASCULINE

"Whatever happens, wherever I go, wherever I am, I shall think of you," he said as he drew her to him and kissed her goodbye.

Three days out at sea he met another. And that night on the silver hurricane deck, under shelter of the life boats, true to his word and promise, he thought of her. He thought how cold her kisses were compared with those of this lovely creature.

---

## LXVI

[72]

### SATIRE

The new battleship trembled in the ways, ready to glide into the sea.

The girl cracked a bottle of champagne over its bow and said in measured and serious tones: "I

## LXVII

[73]

### GLORY

The young private, dreaming dreams of valour and glory, awaited eagerly his chance.

The enemy was daily coming nearer, nearer, and the dreams of the young private grew vivid and rosier still.

One morning, before dawn, the General telegraphed the Lieutenant-General to telegraph the Brigadier-General to telegraph the Colonel to telegraph the Lieutenant-Colonel to telegraph the Major to heliograph the Captain to telephone the First-Lieutenant to telephone the Second-Lieutenant to signal the Sergeant to tell the Corporal to command the private to charge!

The young private, at the order, dashed forward and was among the thousands who fell, still adream, in the capture of the hill that won for the General his nineteenth successive imperial cross.

---

## LXVIII

[74]

### ROMANCE

There were many ardent suitors for her hand. And they sent her orchids and violets and lilies and roses. All save one, a poor young fellow, who sent her but a simple little bunch of daisies.

She married the man who sent orchids.

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## LXIX

[75]

### THE SPIDER AND THE FLY

"Won't you come into my parlour?" said the spider to the fly.

"What nice hair you have," said the woman to the man.

---

## LXX

[76]

### VERITAS

The king was desirous of obtaining the most truthful man of his court for Lord of the domain's Exchequer. One by one the king had tested the aspirants and one by one had consigned each in his turn to the headsman; for they had all proved themselves liars. Three, and three only, remained.

Said the king to the first of these, "Have, you ever in all your life written, or tried to write, a poem?"

"No, your majesty," replied the fellow.

Whereupon the king signaled promptly the headsman.

Said the king to the second of these, "Can you sit in a rocking-chair without rocking?"

"Yes, your majesty," replied the fellow.

Whereupon the king signaled promptly the headsman.

Said the king to the third of these, "Have you ever used a hair tonic of any kind?"

"No, your majesty, never!" replied the fellow.

[77]

Whereupon the king signaled promptly the headsman.

And to this day the post of Lord of the Exchequer is vacant.



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**THE REFORMER**

The Great Uplifter died and stood before Saint Peter.

"Alas," said Saint Peter, "I cannot let you in."

"But why?" demanded the Great Uplifter. "For surely I have been a good and striving man."

"Just so," answered Saint Peter. "You have been a good and striving man and you must be rewarded with happiness. Here, where all are happy, you would be unhappy, for here would be no work for your hands to do."

And that is how the Great Uplifter happened to go to hell.

---

**FATALISM**

The stock-broker's wife, mother of six children and portly, was a fatalist. "Why worry?" she was wont to say. "When the time comes for me to die, it will come properly enough, and that's all there is to it."

That afternoon, she was run over by a brewery wagon while on her way to see a singing teacher about having her voice cultivated.

---

**TECHNIQUE**

The star actor, unable to restrain his mirth at the astounding satin décolleté worn by his leading woman in the scene where she, a street waif, pleads with him to give her a farthing that she and her widowed mother may not starve, turned his back to the audience. So uncontrollable were his chuckles that his shoulders heaved up and down, and his head shook, and his neck got red, and his eyes watered.

"A master of the acting technique," thought the audience. "How wonderfully he expresses the emotional outburst of grief!"

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**FINIS**

Somewhere, a funeral bell was tolling.

Somewhere, a thousand and one miles away, a woman was asking her lover for the third time in five minutes if he really loved her.

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**Transcriber's note**

The following changes have been made to the text:

Page 5: "Immorality" changed to "[Immortality](#)".

Page 6: "Scholar" changed to "[The Scholar](#)".

Page 6: "Grotesqueries" changed to "[Grotesquerie](#)".

Page 78: "stood be fore" changed to "stood [before](#)".

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