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Author: Robert Cortes Holliday

Illustrator: Walter Jack Duncan

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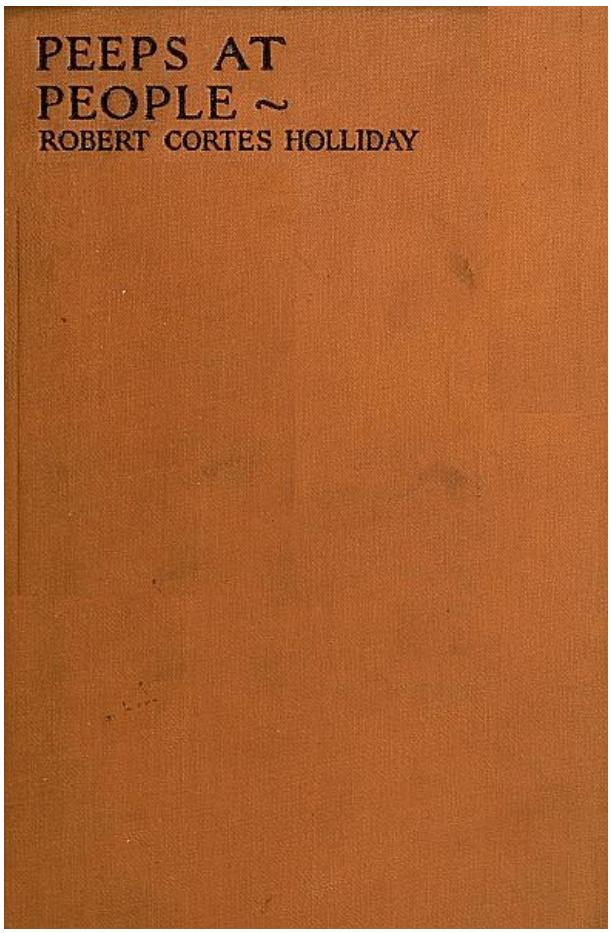

P E E P S A T P E O P L E

ROBERT CORTES HOLLIDAY

PEEPS AT PEOPLE

BY
ROBERT CORTES HOLLIDAY
AUTHOR OF "WALKING-STICK PAPERS," "BOOTH TARKINGTON," "JOYCE KILMER: A MEMOIR," "BROOME STREET STRAWS," ETC.

WITH PICTURES BY
WALTER JACK DUNCAN

NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

I WROTE A BOOK SOME TIME AGO WHICH WAS DEDICATED TO "THREE FINE MEN." THIS IS A SMALLER BOOK. THEREFORE, I DEDICATE IT TO TWO FINE MEN:

EUGENE F. SAXTON
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

These little what-you-call-'ems, with the exception of the opening one and the concluding ones, all appeared originally in the Saturday Magazine of the New York *Evening Post*. They are reprinted here by the courtesy of the editors of that otherwise estimable newspaper. For permission to reprint the opening paper *The Bookman* is to blame.

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PEEPS AT PEOPLE

EVEN SO! OR, AS YOU MAY SAY, A PREFACE

I KNEW a man who used to do some writing, more or less of it—articles and essays and little sketches and things like that—and he went to another man who was a publisher. (I know all of this because it was told to me not long ago at a club.) And he said (the first man) that he would like to have published a book of some of his pieces. He hadn't done much, if any, writing for a number of years. Matters had been going rather bad with him, and he had lost more than a little of his buoyancy. The spark had waned; in fact, it was not there. (This he did not say, but so the matter was.)

Anyhow, he did say that this collection of material had about it the rich glow of his prime, that it was living with the fullness of his life, that as a contributor to these papers and magazines he had (or had had) a personal following decent enough in size, that the book, by all reasoning, ought to go far, and so on. The volume was published. It was called—no, I have forgotten what it was called. However, I heard that it got a very fair press, and sold somewhat.

Then, in about a year or so, round came the man again to the publisher with another batch of little papers. He had aged perceptively within this time, and matters had been going with him rather worse than before. No, he hadn't been able to write anything lately. (For a moment a haunted look crossed his face, a look as though in some sad hidden secret he had been discovered.) But (brightening up again) here he had a better book than before; it was a much better book than before, as it was an earlier one. These things breathed the gusto of his young manhood. They were perhaps a bit miscellaneous in character, he had got them out of the files of various journals, but they had a verve, a fire, a flare for life, which he couldn't better now. A great deal more he said to this effect.

Times, however, change (as has frequently been observed). What is sauce for the goose is *not* always sauce for the

gander. That is to say, other days other ways. I do not know that I gathered (that evening at the club) what was the upshot of the matter in this instance between the man of whom I am speaking and the publisher. But it is to be feared that time had blown upon those things of his of other days as it had upon the temple of his soul and its inhabitant.

Well (so the story goes), the world went forward at a dizzy rate. There was flame and sword. Ministries rose and fell. Dynasties passed away. Customs handed down from antiquity, and honored among the ancients, were obliterated by mandate and statute. And man wrought things of many sorts in new ways.

On a Friday at about half past two (a pleasant day it was, in the Spring, with new buds coming out in the parks and a new generation of children all about) again in came our old friend to see his friend the publisher. Well, well, and how was he now, and what was new with him? Why, a rotten bad run of cards had been his ever since he had been round before: rheumatism and influenza, dentist and oculist, wife down and brother dead, nothing much accomplished. He sat for a moment and there was no light in him. No (you saw it now, quite), he was a lamp without oil.

He undid the package containing his manuscript. Here was a book (those yellow clippings), well, here was a book! This was a *younger* book than either of his others. On it was the gleaming dew of his youth. Perhaps a little scrappy, very brief, and, many of them, rather unequal in length—these things; and very light. Ah, that was the point, that was the point! The lightness, the freshness, the spontaneity, the gaiety of the springtime of life! One could not recapture that. It would be impossible, quite impossible, for him now to write such things as these. He did not now think the same way, feel, see the same way, work—the same way. No, no; there comes a hardening of the spiritual and intellectual arteries. This was a *younger* book, a *younger* book (and as he leaned forward with finger raised, a light, for an instant, flickered again in his eye) than any of his others.

* * * * *

There was a man at that club when this story was told who remarked: "It is said (is it not?) that Swift, re-reading 'Gulliver' many years after it was written, exclaimed: 'My God, what a genius I had at that time!'"

And another man there at the time reminded us of the place somewhere in the books of George Moore where it is observed that "anybody can have talent at twenty, the thing is to have talent at fifty."

R. C. H.

New York, 1919.

I

THE FORGETFUL TAILOR

HE is a tailor. His shop is down at the corner. When trousers are left with him to be pressed and to have suspender buttons sewed on he is always obligingly willing to promise them by the morrow; or if you are in somewhat of a hurry he will promise that the job shall be done this very night. He is the politest and most obliging of men. He will send those trousers up by a boy directly. He is such a cheerful man.

After the time for those trousers to appear has long gone by and no boy has arrived, it is possible that you may work yourself into a passion. You clap your hat upon your head, storm out of the house, and stride toward that tailor shop. You become a little cooled by the evening air, and you begin to wonder if you have not been a trifle hasty. Perhaps you yourself made some mistake concerning your address; things very similar have happened before now, when you have laid the blame upon another and eventually realized that the fault was your own. It would never do to place yourself in such a position with this tailor—a comparative stranger to you. So you will not become abusive to him until you discover who is in the wrong.

But if the fault is his, mind you, he shall learn your character; you are not a man to be trifled with. This fellow can have no sense of business, or anything else, you think. This shall be the last work he will ever get from you. Such a man should not have a business. You will speak to your friends about this; it will run him out of the neighborhood.

You have been walking rapidly and are tolerably heated again. You arrive at the shop expecting to find the tailor on the defensive, with some inane excuse prepared. But you have resolved that it won't go down. You are considerably surprised, therefore, to discover the tailor seated, comfortably reading a newspaper, by a genial fire.

He glances up at you as you open the door. His face is without expression at first. Then he recollects you, and your business flashes upon him. He smiles good-naturedly, then bursts into a hearty laugh. Well, of all things, if he hasn't forgotten all about those trousers until this very minute! It's such a joke, apparently, such a ridiculous situation. He so enters into the spirit of the thing and enjoys it so that you have not the heart to rebuke him. You even begin to appreciate the circumstance yourself.

It is so warm in the tailor-shop and the tailor is so jolly you become almost jovial. The tailor promises to send those trousers around the first thing in the morning. He would promise to have them ready for you in ten minutes if you so desired. Upon leaving, you are tempted to invite the tailor out to have a cigar with you. He is so droll, such a felicitous chap, such a funny dog, that forgetful tailor.

In the morning those trousers have not shown up. You pass the tailor shop on your way downtown. The tailor is standing in his doorway, smoking a cigar and looking altogether very bright and cheerful. When he sees you his face becomes still brighter; he apparently becomes brighter all over, in fact; and his eyes twinkle merrily. "Well! well!" he laughs, and slaps his thighs. He is the most forgetful man. He hardly knows what will become of him.

II

TALK AT THE POST OFFICE

THE attention of a little group within the dusk of the post office and general store was, apparently, still colored by an event which mutilated posters on a dilapidated wagon-shed wall, visible through the doorway in the hot light outside, had advertised. A "Wild Bill" show had lately moved through this part of the world. A large, loosely-constructed, earnest-looking man was speaking to several others, seriously, taking his time, allowing his words time to sink well in as he proceeded.

"Now I have a brother," he was saying, "who I can produce," he added impressively (one realizes that it would be hard to get around this sort of evidence)—"who I can produce, who will take bullet cartridges—Buffalo Bill don't use bullet cartridges—Annie Oakley don't use bullet cartridges—and who will sit right here in this chair—sit right here in this chair where I am now—and show you," he nodded once to each listener, "something about shootin'," concluding, one who reports him felt, somewhat more vaguely than his start had led one to expect.

"Well, Pawnee," began another of the group (from which sobriquet it will be seen that the large man was a personage in matters of shooting), but Pawnee stopped him. It seems he had not finished.

"And if there is anybody that would like to shoot *shot* with the *Old Man*," he continued, breathing the two last words loud and strong, "*I*," said Pawnee, with extreme emphasis on the personal pronoun, "would like to see them, that's all!"

An odd figure a trifle removed from the group had attracted the notice of one reporting these proceedings, by a propensity which he evinced, perceived by a kind of mental telepathy, to have some remarks directed to him. One felt all through one, so to speak, the near presence of a disposition eminently social. As one's sight became more accustomed to the interior light this figure defined itself into that of an elderly man, somewhat angular, slightly stooped, and wearing a ministerial sort of straw hat, with a large rolling brim, considerably frayed; a man very kindly in effect, and suggesting to a contemplative observer of humanity a character whose walk in life is cutting grass for people.

This gentleman (there was something very gentlemanly about him, not in haberdashery, but, as one read him, in

spirit) showed, as was said, a decided inclination to, as less gentlemanly folks say, "butt in."

"Here is a thing now," spoke up this old fellow, looking up from his newspaper, over his iron-rimmed spectacles in a more determined manner than heretofore, at one who reports him, and speaking in that tone in which it is the habit of genial men traveling in railroad trains to open a conversation with their seat-fellow for the journey, "that draws my attention." In the racing term, he was "off."

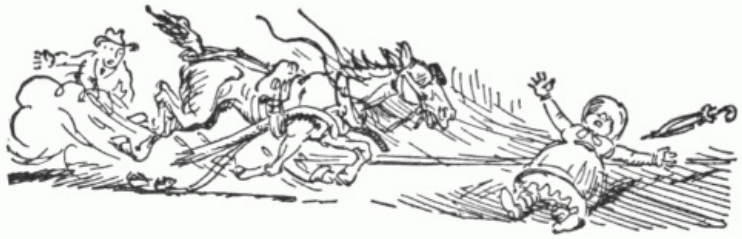
"You know there is a strict law against swearing over the telephone," he paused for acquiescence. "Well, there *is*," he stated, very seriously, drawing a little nearer as the acquaintance got on—"a strict law. Now they say they can't stop it. It's a queer thing they can't stop it. They know who's at the other end; or at least they know who owns the 'phone. They know that. A fine of fifty dollars," he declared, "would stop it." It strikes one that this kindly character is almost ferocious on the side of morality.

"Now," he continued, "there is no use in that. Say what you have to say, that's all that's necessary. What's the good of all those ad-*ject*-ives?" He pronounced the last word in three syllables with a very decided accent on the second. "That is done, now," he concluded, "by people who are, well—abrupt. Ain't that right, now? It's abrupt, that's what it is; it's abrupt.

"Most assuredly," he said, answering himself.

III

AS TO OFFICE BOYS



MR. MACCRARY is in the real estate business. It is incident to Mr. MacCrary's business that he has to employ an office boy. This position as factotum in the office of Mr. MacCrary is subject to much vicissitude.

The first of the interesting line of boys successively employed by Mr. MacCrary was an office boy by profession; by natural talent and inclination he was a liar. He was a gifted liar, a brilliant and a versatile liar; a liar of resource, of imagination. He was a liar of something very near to genius. He lied for the love of lying. With him a lie was a thing of art. An artist for art's sake, he, and for art's sake alone. Like an amateur in short, a distinguished amateur, who is too proud to sell his lies, but willingly gives one away, now and then to some highly valued and much admiring friend. This boy would start with a little lie, then, as he progressed in his story, the wonderful possibilities of the thing would open up before him; he would grasp them and contort them, twist them into shape, and produce, create, a thing magnificent, stupendous, a thing which fairly made one gasp. He, a mere boy! It was wonderful.

On the last day he came into the office and said: "Runaway down the street, Mr. MacCrary."

"Is that so?" said Mr. MacCrary.

"Yes," said the boy, "ran over a woman, killed her dead."

"You don't say!" exclaimed Mr. MacCrary.

"I should say so," said the boy; "killed the baby in her arms, too."

"What!" cried Mr. MacCrary, "did she have a baby in her arms?"

"And that ain't all," continued the boy, "ran on down the street and into a trolley car."

"And killed all the passengers!" exclaimed Mr. MacCrary.

"And the conductor," added the boy, "broke all the horse's legs, smashed the wagon, driver went insane from scare. They're shootin' the horse now," said the boy.

Mr. MacCrary dismissed this boy that he might find a sphere more suited to his ability than the real estate business, which, to tell the truth, was evidently a little bourgeoise for his genius.

The next boy was not particularly gifted in any direction, but he was mysterious. Upon a client's coming into the office during Mr. MacCrary's absence he, the client, was sure to be impressed by two circumstances: First, that there was no one in the office until he entered; secondly, that the boy had strangely appeared from nowhere in particular, and was following in close upon his heels. This consistently illustrates the whole course of this boy's conduct throughout the time he remained with Mr. MacCrary.

The third boy, that is the present one, is not exactly mysterious, but he is peculiar. He attends strictly to his own business. He believes himself to be here for that purpose, apparently. He does not meddle with Mr. MacCrary's business. That is no concern of his. He is imbued with the good old adage: "If you want a thing well done, do it yourself." He follows this excellent principle himself, and believes others should do likewise. This boy is very sapient, and a wonderful student. His nature is more receptive than creative. He procures heavy sheep-skin-bound volumes from the circulating library, and his taste in literature, for one of his age, is unique. These books generally relate to primitive man, and contain exciting engravings of his stone hatchets and cooking utensils. He is also fond of perusing horticulture journals, these being the only magazines which he enjoys. When the first of these appeared about the office, Mr. MacCrary picked up one and inquired:

"What is this, James?"

"Oh!" exclaimed James, "there's some fine pictures of berries in there." James is too scholarly for real estate, and will soon, no doubt, follow in the way of his earlier predecessor to the intellectual life.

IV

A CONQUEROR'S ATTACK

ON the post-office store porch an old brindled Dane dog, town loafer, was asleep on his back. Chickens wallowed in the road. A baby crawled from behind a barrel at the post-office store door. A quorum was met on the hotel porch across the way. The butcher and the cobbler came forth from dove-cot shops to pass the time of day. The villagers come in ones and twos to get their mail. One, a fair, freckled milk-maid, as it would seem, from some old story, stands on the sidewalk path, waiting for the mail to be "sorted." A willowy lass, one would say a "summer boarder," pokes her parasol musingly through a knot-hole in the porch floor. The shop next door is a "dry goods and notions" store; butter and peaches and cherries and roses and cream in the shape of a feminine clerk leans beneath the low lintel, and, one can guess, like the old dog, dreams. The one of brave days of the past, perchance; the other, perchance, of conquests to come.

A fat fly buzzes leisurely about the door, then suddenly takes a straight line a considerable distance down the straggling street, pauses, circles about, returns, now through the early sunshine, now through the shadow of a venerable tree, back to the shelter of the porch, hums around again, poises absolutely stationary, tacks away another time over the same course, and returns as before.

Suddenly appearing, briskly advancing upon the scene, walking rapidly up from the direction of the railroad station, scintillating punctuality, dispatch, succinctness, assurance, commercial agility, comes an apparition from, without manner of doubt, the hurrying ways, the collision of the busy marts of men. The chickens scatter from the road, making for picketless gaps in the picket fence; the old dog opens an eye and limply raises a limb; and the rapid, confident "traveling man" (it can be none but he), resplendent in the very latest "gent's furnishing," with a neat grip and a bundle of what apparently are rolled calendars, springs nimbly upon the porch of the Chappaqua general store. Genial, pushing, the hurrying "good fellow," though sociability is his bent as well as business, he has not much time. It evidently is his habit to snatch a brief moment of pleasant acquaintanceship as he passes. As to this, he has as quick an eye for the sex as for commerce, and, as will be seen, as successful a manner with them as in the other.

"Attacking," said another conqueror, Barry Lyndon, "is the only secret. That is my way of fascinating women." Quickly, as with a practiced eye, this gallant looks over the ground. Chappaqua apparently is rich in human flowers. A man of poorer mettle would be satisfied with one. That is not the way with your conquerors. Smugly, flashingly, he thrusts his grinning, big-prowed countenance forward, and with one killing glance that fair, freckled milk-maid is undone. So much for number one. Quick as a terrier that leaps from rat to rat, and with a single brilliant crunch breaks each rodent's back, our high-stepping man leaps his glance upon the dreaming butter and peaches and cream; her rich lashes fall, but she does not frown. No; she does not frown. But be bold enough, and you will not fail.

He has stepped through the doorway, set his grip down. Brightly he turns and does for the summer boarder. She springs open her parasol before her pleased confusion, and retreats, very slowly. He has turned to business; whips out his watch, snaps it shut, replaces it, unrolls a calendar. He "makes" the next town in so many hours.

V

THE CASE OF MR. WOOLEN

THEY stopped at a bright little house with a neat little grass plot before it, fronting on the railroad. A border of very white, white-washed stones led up each side of the little path to the little porch before the door. On the porch, in the shade of the neat, screening vines, sat an old fellow, a stranger to them. "Is Mrs. Woolen at home?" one of the two inquired politely, as he thought. But this manner of putting the matter, it appeared, was not happy, for it was taken by the old fellow as implying that Mrs. Woolen was thought to be the one there superior in authority. He eyed the couple before him a moment as if in doubt whether to pay any attention to them; then, tapping himself on the chest, "*I* am Mrs. Woolen," he said sternly. As this was unmistakenly a manner of saying, "You may state your business here if you have any," one come for the washing humbly put the case in words as well chosen as possible. The old fellow was mollified; he had merely desired recognition, that was all. Mrs. Woolen was not at home; "the woman," he said, had gone "to Quarterly Meetin' over at the Quaker Church." But it was "all right," he said, which was understood to mean that the washing was ready here.

"You'll find that washing first-class," said Mr. Woolen. "There's nothing crooked about her; she's a good, honest woman."

Asked concerning when Mrs. Woolen would be likely to return, Mr. Woolen replied in a very business-like manner, "Six o'clock, six o'clock sharp this evening."

"Not till six o'clock?" He was asked when she had departed.

"Eight o'clock, eight o'clock this morning," he said. He then furnished the information that Quarterly Meeting lasted several days, and that Mrs. Woolen was on deck, to put it so, throughout.

From this point Mr. Woolen drifted into personal reminiscence of the surrender at Appomattox, in proof of his having been present at which, without his assertion having been questioned, he rather defiantly offered to exhibit "the papers," as he called them, which he said were "right there framed in the parlor." Though Mr. Woolen had been on the conquering side at the historic surrender, he rather suggested the idea of his having surrendered, in a more personal and figurative sense, at about that time also; that is to say, he did not impress one as having, for an able-bodied man, put up a very good fight since.

He was recalled to the matter of the washing, and, rising, led the way into the house to procure it. But directly the party had entered, Mr. Woolen fell back, obviously in amazement, upon the toes of those following him. He cried that it was "gone!"

"It was right there on that chair," he said, "in the corner. There's where she left it this morning. There's where she left it. Done up it was in newspaper. She said to me, 'There it is; now don't you let that go out of the house until you get your money for it.' That's what she said."

He was prevailed on to make a search through the house, though he contended obstinately that it was right there in the corner, and no other place, that that which they were seeking had been "left." He almost offered the presence there of the chair as evidence. A search of the house, however, was not exhausting nor impracticable, as there were but two rooms to it, these very snug, no closets, and an economy of furniture behind which the bundle might be.

Mr. Woolen's perturbation was too genuine for suspicion of his having made away with the package. But this very honesty of emotion, in conjunction with the circumstance of the absence of the washing, and divers indications in breath and manner, noticeable from the first, aided in making out a case against him. A jury would reasonably have inferred that Mr. Woolen had a frailty, known and provided against by his wife, that, specifically, he had a weakness which, though not uncommonly associated with the most amiable characters, is not compatible with being left to receive money for washing.

Mr. Woolen was decidedly provoked at the situation. "I can do a man's work," he said, stumbling restlessly about the room, "but not a woman's. I can lay brick, lay brick; that's my work, that's what I do, but I can't keep the house in order." It was not to be expected of him. Coming, in his movements, plump upon the door of the kitchen, he disappeared through it, and could be heard going about out of view, ostensibly still at the search, testily kicking the furniture and mumbling concerning "her being away with a lot of her cronies."

VI

WHEN THE TRAIN COMES IN

A BUSY railroad station is a grand child's picture-book, for him who observes it. All the child has to do is to look; the leaves are turned before him. There, in all the colors of the rainbow, are countless pictures to cram himself with. And what is a rather curious fact is, that a railroad station may freely be classed among humorous picture-books. Other picture-books, such as church, theater, Broadway, Fifth Avenue, political meeting, ball game, and so forth, have, of course, many funny pictures. But, whether it is that almost all absurd people constantly travel, and those with no touch of the motley do but seldom, or whether, as here, nothing else goes forward seriously to occupy the attention, one's mind is left more free to be struck by the ridiculousness of all mankind, so it is that perhaps as humorous a place as one may find is a busy railroad station. And one must be very blasé who no longer feels an enjoyable stimulation at the approach of an expected train at the station.

The psychology of the arrival of a railroad train at the station belongs to the proper study of mankind, and could be made into an interesting little monograph. As the train becomes due one feels but half a mind on the conversation, supposing one to be conversing; the other half is waiting for the train. One has, too, a feeling, faint at first, looming stronger within one, against continuing to sit quietly inside (supposing one to have gone within), where one is. An impelling to go see if the train is not coming numbs one's brain. A like contagious restlessness breathes through the waiting-room. People begin to stand up by their grips. Some go without on the search. They can be seen through the doors and windows, pacing the platform; they return, some of them, and one scans their expressions eagerly—they are discouragingly blank. After a bit, they go out again, or others do, and return as before; wholly unfitted now, one can see, for any concentration of thought.

The train is late. There is an alarm or two. At last, an unmistakable elasticity impregnates the place. A distant whistle is heard; it stirs one like the tap of a drum. The train is coming! One's pulse beats high as one moves into the press toward the doorway. The whistle is heard much nearer. Then again and again! Then with a whirl that turns one a somersault inside, a long dark, heavy mass rushes across the light before one. When one comes again on one's feet, speaking figuratively, the train is standing there, and one hurries aboard to get a seat. But, first, one is stopped until arriving passengers get off.

VII

AN OLD FOGY

MR. DEATS, senior, is an old fogy. There is no doubt about that. In early life Mr. Deats, sr., had a pretty hard time. He was denied the advantages of any particular schooling. In consequence of this, Mr. Deats now occasionally uses very mortifying English. At an early age—somewhere about the age of ten—he entered trade. A ridiculous combination of adverse circumstances made it impossible for Mr. Deats to go much into polite society. In consequence of this, he unfortunately lacks polish. For a great number of years the world was not kind to him. It may have been trouble that destroyed his beauty. At any rate, Mr. Deats is not a handsome man. Not being able to do anything better, he confined his attention to doing his duty; that is not a very brilliant employment, it is true, but it was good enough for Mr. Deats.

In the course of time, Mr. Deats took to himself a wife; and, in the course of time again, this wife bore Mr. Deats a son—and died simultaneously. Well, Mr. Deats was left with a boy, and this boy must have something to start him on in life. "How can a boy start life with nothing?" thought Mr. Deats; and very rightly, too. One can't feed, clothe, and educate a boy on nothing. So Mr. Deats did his duty harder than ever; and he built up a business. Building up a business doesn't require culture or intelligence; but it does take some time. Mr. Deats has grown a trifle old in the building; but it is a good business. It has been said that Mr. Deats' business is one of the best in the city. And Mr. Deats has a fine son. After the manner of his class, Mr. Deats believed that all the things that were denied him were the very best things for his son. His son should not have to work as his father did—and he doesn't.

Mr. Deats, jr., has had advantages; he is a college graduate, a member of clubs, and one of the prominent young men of the city socially. Of course, being much cleverer, young Deats sees many of the mistakes his father made in life. He sees, for one thing, what an old fogy is Mr. Deats, sr. He sees how much better the business could be run. Mr. Deats, sr., does not know how to run a business; he is not modern enough. Still, he thinks he knows it all—that is the way with these bull-headed old codgers—and won't let young Deats conduct the business as it should be conducted. This, naturally, is very irritating to young Deats. No man enjoys seeing his own business go to rack and ruin. But the old man can't be kicked plump out into the street. He has no home but with young Deats. And, in a way, he is useful about the office; though even were he not, he must be humored. After all, he is the father of young Deats, and blood is thicker than water.

VIII

HAIR THAT IS SCENERY

MR. WIGGER, Mrs. Wigger's husband (the writer boards with Mrs. Wigger), is an iceman. It is not his business, however, with which this study is concerned; it is with his hair. Perhaps it is a great assumption of talent to attempt to describe Mr. Wigger's hair. Oh, Muse! as John Milton says, lend a hand here! Mr. Wigger's abundant hair, first, is a deep, lusterful black, and extremely curly. From his ears straight upward to the crown of his head (from the three-quarters view of him studied here only one full ear is visible, and just barely the tip of the other one) an oblong block of close curls is attached to the side of his head, like a pannier. Leftward from this, to a point directly over the beginning of his eyebrow, a broad, bare strip extends up to a black, undulating band of hair which marks the top of his head. Thence leftward to the part in the middle of his head is a plot of hair like a little black lawn, extending well down to his forehead and neatly rounded at the corner away from the part. Now, from the part onward the hair in a great mass sweeps upward in a towering concave wave, the high ridge of which, though it folds ever slightly inward, culminates at the top in a sharp, soaring point. Over the far temple the hair falls from the great waves in little swirling wavelets. Mr. Wigger's mustache, a great, glossy, oily, inky black, against a sallow background, with tall upward ends, is a worthy companion to his hair. His neck, to continue the portrait, takes a long dive into his collar, which is very much too big, with the fullness protruding in front. His shoulders are steeply sloping, and his waistcoat is cut extremely low, like one for full dress, his shirt front bulging when, as for this portrait, he is seated. In this man romance lives on. A prosaic age has not marred him. You can readily see how a woman would become infatuated with such a one. He is a man not tonsorially decadent.

IX

A NICE MAN

THE clerk of the store (dry goods and gentlemen's furnishings) is what is known as a nice man. He is known as such among his neighbors. He is known as such by his customers. People, wives sometimes to their husbands, refer to him as a nice man. Motherly old ladies say, "He is such a nice man!" Younger ladies exclaim, "What a nice man!" You cannot look at him and fail to know that he is a nice man. You cannot look at him and fail to know that his life has been blameless. He is very clean, tidy, and very, fresh-faced. His cheeks are round and rosy; his eyes are bright; his mustache is silken. He is in perfect health; his expression is pleasant; his disposition agreeable; and his manners are perfect. His name is Will (certainly).

The nice man has a little wife, who is almost as nice as he. She is interested in Sunday schools. The nice man and his wife have a little baby that looks just like its father. On Sundays they walk in the park, pushing the baby-cab before them. On great days of celebration they go together into the country, on picnics; and return home at night tired out. On these trips to the country the little wife brings home chestnut burrs to hang from the chandelier in the parlor. She made some pussy-willow buds to look like little cats on a stick. These are on the mantel. When Will got the job he now has his wife turned to the store's advertisement the first thing in the newspaper every evening to read it. She had always known that Will had it in him to be something, and so she had always told him. When the nice men gets a raise in salary he and his wife will put away so much a week and soon have a home of their own somewhere in the suburbs. Already, the baby has a savings-bank account of its own, and by the time it has developed into the grown image of the nice man, its father, it will have a sum of money.

X

NO SNOB

LET us walk down the street with Muldoon.

Muldoon is always a bit shabby, and never well shaved. To be well groomed is the mark of a snob. Muldoon walks with a brisk step and somewhat defiantly. He carries his shoulders well back and a trifle raised. He wears a cap; and a fine rakish thing is the way he wears it. There is in his manner of wearing a cap a suggestion of the country fair gambling game of ring-a-cane. His appearance gives the impression that some one had tossed a cap at him and failed to ring him squarely, but had landed it insecurely, and left it liable to fall off at any moment, decidedly on one side of his head, and that then Muldoon had walked off without giving the slightest thought to the matter.

Professionally, Muldoon's greatest virtue is that he is a champion "mixer" and "butter-in"; his greatest failing, that he is not reliable. Still he is spoken of among his confrérie as "a good man," and is never without employment. He has served upon a great multitude of newspapers in sundry and divers cities, towns, and hamlets, though never upon any one for a greater period than several months. His is a nature that requires constant change and variety. In distant places he has been editor—sporting editor, we believe he says—though in his own city—we should hardly say that he had a city but that he always comes back again—he serves in the capacity of police reporter. Thus we see that a rolling stone is not without honor, save in his own country.

Muldoon's classics in literature are "Down the Line with John Henry" and "Fables in Slang," with a good appreciation of "Chimmy Fadden." He one time wrote a book himself which was distinguished chiefly for spirit and the odd circumstance that most of the lady characters were named Flossie, and which was a failure financially.

We were one day in company of Muldoon when he visited Hudson Street, in the neighborhood of his childhood days, and where he met again some of the friends of his youth. These meetings were affecting to witness. "Hi, Pat Muldoon!" cried a fine stocky lad who immediately fell into the attitude of pugilistic encounter. Muldoon, too, put up his fists. "Hi, Owen Heely!" he cried; and they circled about, working their arms in and out and grinning an affectionate greeting upon each other.

We walk down the street with Muldoon; we pass an acquaintance (of Muldoon's). "How 'do, Pat!" says the acquaintance. "Hullo, Tom!" (or Dick, or Harry, as the case may be), cries Muldoon, then, as if in afterthought, "Hold on, just a minute, Tom." Muldoon leaves us for a moment—we had got quite past the acquaintance—goes back and engages him in earnest conversation, inaudible to us. The acquaintance's head is bent forward and while giving ear he gazes fixedly at the ground. Then he slowly shakes his head, and, straightening up, says (we hear), "I would if I had it, Pat. But I haven't got it with me." "All right," cries Muldoon, in perfect good humor. "So long," and he returns to us.

We continue down the street, and Muldoon beguiles the way with tales of his checkered experience. Muldoon's duties as a representative of the press require him to spend considerable of his time at the police station. One time there came a great hurry-up call for the ambulance when the ambulance surgeon was nowhere to be found. (This city hospital was next door to the police station.) The horses were hitched, and stomping and waiting. Again and again the call was repeated. A man, no doubt, lay dying. Still no ambulance surgeon. Muldoon fretted and waited. At length he could stand it no longer. He leaped into the seat, jerked the reins in his hand, clanged the gong, and dashed full tilt to the rescue. It was madness. What could he do when he got there? "Clang! Clang!" went the gong. Reeling, plunging, staggering, now on two wheels, now on one, now on none at all—on and on and on, around corners, across tracks, between vehicles, past poles, dashed the ambulance. "Clang! Clang!" Just missing a pedestrian here, who saves himself only by a hair's-breadth, grazing a wheel there, on, on! until he drew up by a knot of people along the curb. This drive was afterward reckoned the fastest run in the history of the service.

A laborer, swinging a mighty sledge, had dropped it on and mashed his great toe. He was in acute pain. The man refused to budge until his wound has been attended to. What was to be done? Muldoon had picked up a trifling knowledge of surgery about the hospital. He whipped out the surgical kit and took off the fellow's toe, neat as you please, by the grace of heaven. We are now come to a public-house. Muldoon marches in (we follow). He puts his foot on the rail, a dime, a ten-cent piece, on the bar, turns to us, and says, "What'll you have?" We look at the dime and say, "Beer." Now, Muldoon enters into conversation with the barman (who has addressed him as "Pat"), and recounts to him the details of his late illness, which are most astonishing.

When we resume our journey, which Muldoon does with some reluctance, he tells us the dream of his life. On the street where Muldoon spent his boyhood live a great number of gossiping old cats, who, in so far as they were able, made that boyhood miserable, who bore false witness to one another, to his family, and to others, against Muldoon, and who predicted that he (Muldoon) would come to a bad end. On the occasion of his coming into any great sum of money, he intends to wind up a tremendous bacchanalian orgy on that street. He will drive up it in a cab in broad daylight, howling and singing, and with his feet out the windows. On the roof of his equipage will be a great array of bottles, and the cabman will be drunk and screaming. We believe Muldoon sees in this mental picture a Brobdignagian placard on the back of the vehicle reading, "This is Muldoon!!!" That will give 'em something to talk about. It will be a fine revenge.

XI

EVERY INCH A MAN

IF there is a finer fellow in the world than Chester Kirk we have never seen him. As he himself so often says, the finest things are done up in small packages. (There was Napoleon, for instance, as we have heard him say, and General Grant, and, at the moment, we do not remember who all.)

When in eyeshot of ladies, especially when he is unknown to them, he is grand. He takes his gloves from his pocket and holds them in his left hand. He searches himself for a cigar, which, when found, he holds before him, unlighted, in his right hand, on a level with his chest, his elbow crooked. He stands very firmly, with one leg bending backward in a line of virile, graceful curve. His back is taut. His other knee is bent forward, relaxed. Or he strides up and down, with something of a fine strut, like a fighting cock. So, he reminds us of Alan Breck.

When, in this stimulating position, he has on a long coat, he swings its skirt from side to side. He feels, undoubtedly so brave and strong. He laughs, when there is opportunity for it, in a deep, manly voice, and often. He sometimes pulls back his head so that he has a double chin. He is every inch a man.

As is quite fitting and proper, he is one of the most photographed of men. This is a family trait. He has ever just had a new photograph taken to send to his people, or his people have just sent some new ones to him, which he shows about with great gusto to his friends. His room is littered with likenesses of the Kirks, a very remarkable family. Here is a photograph of his brother.

"Notice that chest," says Kirk. "He's got an expansion on him like the front of a house. Why, in his freshman year he had the biggest expansion in his class. Athlete! That boy's a boxer." Kirk points the stem of his pipe at you and continues: "He stood up before the huskiest man in Seattle (and there are no huskier men than in Seattle), a big brute of a fireman, a regular giant, with a reputation as a whirlwind slugger. Yes. Why, it's all I can do to hold that boy myself. This," exhibiting another picture, "is my father. See that pair of shoulders? He is a little under the medium height, but the way he carries himself he doesn't look it. He looks to be a rather big man. He has an air. He came West a poor man, but one that could see chances, take them, and hold on to them. He took them and hung on. He built up that business, I think I have a right to say that it's the biggest on the Pacific Slope, in an incredibly short time. Business he was from the word go. He could handle men! An entertainer he is, too; he makes friends wherever he goes; everybody likes him. Here's my sister. 'Sis' is the society woman of the younger set at home. That's my other brother. He's a hunter."

Next to pictures of himself and family, and their pets and live stock, there is nothing Kirk revels in so much as snapshots of his native country, "greatest country in the world." He has these pasted into several volumes: each print is labeled, as "Mt. Ranier, looking north," "Puget Sound, low tide," and so forth. Each new acquaintance Kirk takes through the lot and explains the circumstances under which each picture was taken.

As Kirk himself remarks, his handwriting is very strong. It is that strong that it has only about three, sometimes four, short words to a line, with good strong spaces in between. The descending loops of letters on one line often come down and lariat small letters on the line below. The sense goes at a splendid break-neck speed, and takes pauses and stops as though they were hurdles. The whole is penned in somewhat that fashion in which express clerks make out receipts.

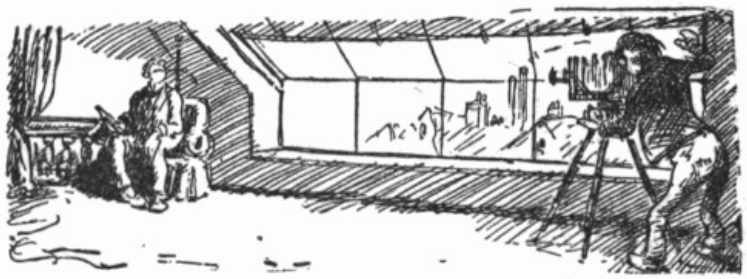
That reminds us. We one time went with Kirk into an express office to send a package. We ignorantly considered this to be a thing of little moment. That was because we do not know how to handle men. A pale young man, with a high, bald forehead, who had the appearance of an excellent assistant to some one in an office, was standing at the counter. He witnessed the entrance of the two without remarking it as an impressive ceremony. Indeed, the clerk was quite apathetic. In an instant all this was changed.

"Let me have your pencil," Kirk demanded. It was the voice of the man born to command, the man that moves an army of subordinates this way or that, as he wills, like chessmen. He took the pencil, hoisted his package onto the counter with a flourish, tilted his cigar upward in one corner of his mouth by a movement of his jaws, and fell into so fine an attitude that the pale young man became interested and leaned over to see what important name would appear in the address. In his strongest hand Kirk addressed it. It was a package worth two dollars Kirk was sending to his brother, who needed it. "Send collect," cried Kirk. And the entire company, Kirk included, and ourself, who also knew the contents of the package, felt, it was evident, that a transaction very important to the interests of business had been accomplished.

Kirk was one time playing checkers when we entered. "Well, how are you coming out?" we inquired. "Are you being beaten, Chester?" He flared up like a flash. "I can beat you!" he cried. We had never seen the man so beautiful. (He had never in his life seen us play checkers.) He looked to be invincible; though he wasn't; for he had lost every game.

XII

HIS BUSINESS IS GOOD



"HULLO there, Bill! I'm glad to see you. How're you getting along? Do you know, I didn't know you when you first came in. Let me see, it's been a couple—no, four years since I saw you before. I was pretty much down and out then, ha! ha! Just bummed my way to New York, you know. Well, how are things with you? You know, I sat there looking an' a looking at you—couldn't make up my mind whether it was you or not. I says to myself, 'I'll risk it,' I says. 'If it's Bill, we'll have a time,' I says. Ha! Ha! I came over to take a bath—there's a fine bath place across the street, where I always go. I'm in the photograph business, you know, over in Brooklyn. Yes, doing well now; I'm manager of the place; I'll take you over to see it. Been in the business three years, same place; first two years work, work all the time, no pay at all, so to speak. But I knew I was learning the business, and I liked the job and liked the boss; we were busted together, you know. I was head musher in a mushhouse at Coney, you know, when I first met him; then I lost the job; we bummed around together awhile. Then I went back to Indiana—by freight—to see my folks.

"Yes, the old man's well; Dora's married, you know; married a Sunday school superintendent, church where she taught Sunday school. Nothing doing in Indiana. Laid around awhile, then I got a letter from this feller. He had come into money, set up a photograph shop, told me to come back and take a job with him. I went to my sister, Dora, you know, and got railroad fare here. I says to her, 'If you can get me the money, I'll pay you as soon as I can, which won't be long,' I says. 'I've got a good job there,' I says. I says, 'Of course, I can bum my way back, but it will take me four or five days, maybe a week,' I says. 'If I have railroad fare I can get on a train here one day and get off there the next,' I says. She got me the money from her husband—sixteen dollars; she's been awful good to me; and I came in a passenger train. First time, you know, ha! ha! Second-class, though; just as good as first, though. I got on at Indianapolis one day, you know, and got off in New York the next day. Twenty-four hours, you know.

"First thing, I went to the feller's place, but he had moved. Didn't leave any address, where he had gone, you know; nobody around there knew anything about him. I was in a deuce of a fix. Didn't have a cent of money—wasn't the first time, though. We used to write to each other sometimes through the General Delivery, so I went there, and sure enough there was a letter for me; but there was some postage due on it somehow. I says to the man, I says, 'I haven't got any money; I can't pay it'; there was a feller standing behind me in the line; he ups and says, 'Here, I'll pay it,' he says; 'it's only two cents' he says. So I got the letter and set right out for the address; the feller had moved to a better place.

"Well, Bill, business has been good; we do a corking business on Saturdays and Sundays, and the feller owns two or three galleries now. He goes around tending to all of them and I have charge of one; there's my card. I'm thinking about quitting, though, and going out West again; business is too good, that's the trouble. No excitement; I'm getting discouraged. Too much responsibility. Lord, Bill, I'm a *tramp*; I am; yes, sir, that's what I am. I was raised that way. I like the life. The man across the street from me owns a restaurant, where I eat; offered to loan me a couple of hundred dollars to buy the gallery where I am. Ha! Ha! That's a good one, isn't it?

"Girls, Bill! you ought to see the girls that come to my place, Bill, yes, sir, to get their pictures taken. They all call me 'Jack.' Yes, everybody around here calls me 'Jack.' I used to be 'John,' you know, at home, where we were boys together; great days those, yes, sir; I never will forget those days.

"Why, you know, I could have been married, Bill; yes, sir, ha! ha! Me, a tramp. A fine girl, too, a regular lady, the real article, yes, sir, rich too, yes, sir. Why I went over there one day, and their dog—a blame little black dog—was sick; you ought to have seen the case of medicine they had for that dog. A whole blame box full of bottles of medicine; good medicine, too, yes, sir; why, I would have liked to have had some of that medicine myself.

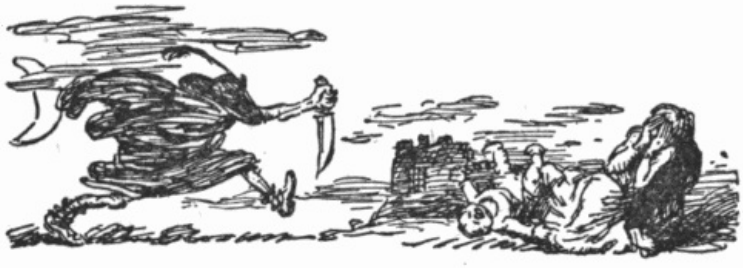
"I'll take you over and introduce you to some of those girls; here's a picture I took of one; she's a daisy. I took her to the theater last Saturday night. You know, it does a feller good to see good shows at the theater. This theater—it's a little place right near my gallery—I go there every once in awhile; they have better shows there than they do at the Opera House; I like 'em better. This was a fine show, 'His Mother's Son.' Yes, sir, it does a feller good to go to the theater.

"What's the matter with your coming over and staying with me to-night? But no, I haven't a room now; you'd have to bunk in the gallery. That's where I sleep now. I did have a room, you know, blame fine room, running water, hot and cold, and all that sort of thing, three dollars a week. But I got tired of it. Yes, too comfortable, bed all made up for me every day, and everything else. It made me sick. I like to make my own bed. I like to rough it like I'm used to doing, yes, so I gave it up and sleep in the gallery now where I belong. I feel at home there, and there's plenty of room.

"Say, Bill, how are you fixed? Need any money? I've got more'n I want. Don't know what to do with it all, you know. Not used to it, just blow it in. Well, all right, we'll take and spend it then. Drink up, Bill, and let's go some other place."

XIII

A NICE TASTE IN MURDERS



WE are much interested in the picturesque character of Caroline. Caroline is twelve. She is like a buxom, rosy apple. Her dress is a "Peter Thompson." Her physical sports are running like the wind, and, in summer, fishing. Our concern, however, is more with her mind. Caroline is a voracious reader. We are somewhat bookish ourselves, and the conversations between us are often frankly literary. Caroline's taste in this matter, for one of her sex, is rather startling.

"Oh, you ought to read the 'Pit and the Pendulum,'" says Caroline. "Is it good?" we ask. "Fine!" Caroline replies. "It's at the time of the Inquisition, you know," she explains. "They take a man and torture him. It's fine," declares Caroline. "The demon's eyes grow brighter and brighter" (phrases we recall from her synopsis of the tale), "the pendulum comes nearer and nearer—but I think he deserved to escape," says Caroline, "because he tried so hard." Now that is really a deep moral observation, "because he tried so hard," and a sound questioning of the philosophical verity of a work of art.

"There's a good murder in here," says Caroline.

"I like Sherlock Holmes," Caroline says.

She reads the "Mark of the Beast" and the "Black Cat" with great satisfaction. For comedy or for psychological moments she does not care, but there is nobody, we believe, with greater capacity for enjoyment of terrible murder in horrible dark places in the land of fiction.

Night after night we heard her voice reading aloud to her visitor Emily after the two had retired, until we fell asleep; and in the morning we saw that the relish of horror was still upon her.

Emily had gone. Caroline had retired alone. We read by the lamp in the living-room. We were startled and mystified to hear suddenly mingle with the sound of the night rain all around, a long, uncertain wailing, a melancholy, haunting, sinking, rising, halting, gruesome sound, uncannily redolent of weird Gothic tales; the "Castle of Otranto" came into our mind. This apparently proceeded from an "upper chamber," as would be said in the type of story mentioned.

"That," said brother Henry, in replying doubtless to a blank face, "is Caroline playing the flute."

No one alive, of course, has not in his head a picture of another that in the still hours sought solace in and loved a flute, Mr. Richard Swiveler propped up in bed, his nightcap raked, fluting out the sad thoughts in his bosom. So in the night and the storm, does another bizarre soul, Caroline, speak with the elements.

XIV

IDA'S AMAZING SURPRISE

IN "Bleak House," I think it is, that Poor Joe keeps "movin' along." One of the atoms of London, he passes his whole life in the midst of thousands upon thousands of signs. Printed letters, painted letters, carved letters, words, words, words, blaze upon him all about. Yet not a syllable of them all speaks to him; seen but all unheard by him they clothe his path. Poor Joe cannot read. How must he regard these strange, unmeaning signs? What is it goes on in this head which so little can enter? What has filtered in where the great main avenue of approach remains, as far from the

first, black and unopened? What does this mind, sitting there far off in the dark, looking out, comprehend of the pageant? And how does it strike him? Some such a mysterious mind looks out from Ida's eyes.

Ida is "colored." It is my belief that though she is grown and well formed a little child dwells in her head. I know that when I ask her to bring me another cup of coffee and she pauses, slightly bends forward, her lips a trifle parted, and fastens her clear, utterly innocent, curious eyes upon me, waiting to hear repeated what she has already heard, she sees me as a sort of toy balloon on a string, whose incomprehensible movements excite a pleasurable wonder. As regularly as the dinner hour comes around Ida asks, with that same amazingly unsophisticated, interested look, if each of us will have soup. If it were our custom occasionally not to take soup, if we had declined soup a couple of times even, a good while ago, if even we had declined soup once—but, as Mr. MacKeene says, what could have put it into her head that we might not take soup? It is the same with dessert, with cereal at breakfast. I hardly know why it is not the same with having our beds made.

It is easy to give Ida pleasure. She has not been satiated, perhaps, with pleasure. A very little quite overjoys her. I turn about in my chair to reach a book, and discover Ida silently dusting the furniture. "Why! I didn't know you were in here," I say to Ida. Ida breaks into great light at this highly entertaining situation. "Didin you know I was in here! Didin you!" Her eyebrows go up with delight. Her pose might be the original of Miss Rogson's "Merely Mary Ann."

XV

NOT GULLIBLE, NOT HE

"SIR," said Doctor Johnson, "a fallible being will fail somewhere," So far as penetration, at least, is concerned, this is not true of Dean. He is never caught without his grains of salt.

Dean believes nothing that he reads in newspapers. He is not caught, for one thing, believing anecdotes of celebrated persons. These anecdotes are pretty stories yearned for by a sentimental public. The public is amusing, composed as it is of simple, guileless people who know nothing of the world. Newspapers are concoctions of press agents, for the most part—bait for the gullible. A citizen of the word is Dean, and he has, alas! lost his innocence. This pleases him. You can't impose on Dean's credulity. He hasn't got any credulity. In this respect he has much the same effect upon his company as the Mark Twain dog that didn't have any hind legs had upon the mind of his antagonist. That dog was hardly a pleasure to his opponent. He was baffling.

It is perhaps a man's misfortune that he should be so without delusions. Dean has found out there is no Santa Claus, in a manner of speaking, while the rest of us are yet humbugged. So while we may be pleased with our callings or our hobby-horses, our coins, or our cockle-shells, our drums, our fiddles, our pictures, our talents, our maggots and our butterflies, he can only shrug his shoulders and depreciate them to the best of his ability, saying that they are very poor cockle-shells, to be sure, though no man more than he deplores it that this is so. Though no doubt it must be a melancholy thing to feel so severely the failings of all, Dean's cavilings are cheerfully made always, and they come to us filtered through a humorous nature. And to do him justice, he is whimsically aware of his own idiosyncrasies, and readily acknowledges them as he sees them, which is in a mellow, kindly light. "Now I could never make money," he says humorously, as it were. But that is not the sum of life, he knows perhaps too well.

He sees the vanity of it all, does Dean. He sees the vanity of all useful endeavor. He sees the vanity most of all perhaps, of success. What is this success we see around us, after all? What is the fame of this man, this Mr. So-and-So, but sensationalism? Of what the success of that other, but cheap notoriety, and a rich wife? They are both of them, very probably, at heart as miserable as Dean. Ah me! 'tis a profitless world, and there's no satisfaction in it anywhere. "Though probably you are hardly of an age to see it yet," says Dean, and he smiles at the juvenility of ambition. You will see it, however, when you too have failed.

"In this age when every man you meet is a genius," says Dean—it amuses him that he is not of the many—"I have really seen only one really great man, and I have been compelled to know a good many of the geniuses too." This remarkable, unique gentleman, it appears, was an old sou'easter sawbuck of a codger up in the backwoods of Maine, where he lived hermit-wise in a shanty, being a squatter. When Dean met him there he felt instinctively that here he was before a *man*. Uncle Eli was old: he was a trifle filthy; he was addicted to drink; and not what you would call much good in any way. He was uncouth; a man with the bark on; one of nature's noblemen. He lacked culture, and education, and intelligence; but he had eye-teeth. Lord! He wasn't polite; he wasn't learned; but when it came to downright bull-headed horse-sense he knocked the socks of all of them. He was a philosopher, this old B'gosh half-

idiot wreck. By George, he was, and a great one. He reminded Dean of Lincoln. Some of his philosophical splinters from the old rail, rough they were but ready, rather laid over the wisdom of Hercules himself. "Ef 'n ol' hoss wus a Billygoat mighty few Christians there be 'ud git to Heaven." That hits the nail on the head, Dean reckons.

XVI

CRAMIS, PATRON OF ART

"HAVE you got any tobacco?" I inquired of Cramis.

"Sure," he replied, "I'm never without it."

He is a slave to the weed, a hopeless smoker. He hands me his pouch; the tobacco is a little old and mildewed. When Cramis comes to visit me he always brings a most disreputable looking pipe along in his mouth, charred and cold. This he calls attention to, musingly, as it were, by remarking that "that looks natural."

"I shouldn't have known you without it," I answer. Then we are the best of friends. An old Swede, an engineer of some rare sort, a whimsical fellow, quite a character—Cramis is greatly interested in characters—was much addicted to his pipe (so runs Cramis's story). It was a limb of his body. He was one of those inveterate smokers that you find here and there about the world. One day placards announcing that smoking was prohibited among employees in the building were posted at conspicuous places in the mill where Olie was employed. Olie went on smoking. The manager came through; he paused at Olie.

"Look-a-here," he said, "don't you see that sign? No smoking among employees in this building." Olie slowly took the pipe from his mouth, regarding it thoughtfully in his out-stretched hand as he blew a great cloud of blue smoke.

"Where my pipe goes," he said, replacing it between his teeth, "I goes." You may notice it: there is something of the same idiosyncrasy between that picturesque character and Cramis.

For all the idler and the dilettante that he is, no man ever more conscientiously attended to business than Cramis. He is at it early and late. He is very successful. Yet he knows himself to be an impractical cuss, a dreamer, an æsthetic visionary. No man so thoroughly reliable was ever before so irresponsible.

On his visits at my place, Cramis writes a great quantity of letters. All globe trotters do this, I suppose, whether it is necessary or not. It is only natural. If Cramis did not, many of his friends would not, no doubt, be aware that he was in Connecticut, or, indeed, that he ever got off the island of Manhattan.

Though Cramis is by nature shrewd, saving, and methodically economical, he is very careless about money. He has no more idea of the value of it than Oliver Goldsmith. It is pitiful—yet lovable.

Among Cramis's curious circle of acquaintances—his collection of acquaintances is a regular menagerie, as he so often says—was a painter, a fellow twenty-four years old and with nobody to support him. Cramis believed, after carefully inquiring, that the fellow had talent and might amount to something. He loaned him money. The scoundrel squandered it, probably; at any rate, he bought no fame with it. That was a year ago, and Cramis is eight dollars out of pocket. Still, his heart is a brother to genius. He consulted me on the question of the very least amount upon which a man could live, the length of time at the smallest estimate wherein he could reasonably be expected to attain greatness, and was for setting the fellow up in a studio elsewhere. I pointed out to Cramis that it might possibly be years before the hungry man became famous, and he abandoned the idea. It was too great a risk.

XVII

BARBER SHOPS AWESOME

TO patronize barbers' shops is a trying affair. Nothing but a crying need of services obtained there can drive one who knows them well into one of them. When you enter a barber shop, a long row of barber's chairs, like a line of guns down the deck of a man-o'-war, stretching away in perspective, confronts you. Three barbers, say, are engaged with patrons; and they go calmly on. They are unaware of your existence. The rest have been enjoying newspapers and leisure. You interrupt them; and they spring, as one man, each to the head of his chair, and stand at attention. To find such a company of well-fed, well-groomed, better-men than-you-are suddenly at your service is disturbing; to have to insult all the others in your selection of one is an uncomfortable thought. They are all equally friendly toward you; but it is impossible for them all to shave you; you must turn against some of them. There is no retreat for you; you cannot turn around and go out. You choose the nearest man, as the only solution: and the others show their displeasure by returning to their seats. A fiend is in this man whom you have chosen; his suavity was a diabolical mask. He gloats in publicly humiliating you. He forces you to confess there before his "gang" that you do not want anything but a shave. You have brought this man from his newspaper simply to shave you! Now the number of things the barber manages to do to you against your desire is a measure of the resistant force of your character. You deny that you need a shampoo. There is no denying that your hair is falling out. There is no denying that you sometimes shave yourself. You need try to conceal nothing from this man. He sees quite through you. (You recall a certain Roundabout Paper.) He has Found You Out! All you ask is to be allowed to go. He washes your face for you and turns you out of the chair. You pass into the hands of a boy, the same boy you denied to polish your shoes, a boy that has his opinions, who plays the tune of "Yankee Doodle" on you with a whisk-broom very much as if he snapped his fingers in your face; and you may go.

XVIII

MUCH MARRIED STRATFORD

WHAT an excellent thing it is that Stratford is comfortably married. He is built for marriage. That is the life for him; a nice, quiet, wholesome, unexciting life of home comforts. Mr. and Mrs. Stratford dwell happily in a little nest called a cottage. Here they are surrounded by all the sundry and divers chattels and effects incident to the life they follow.

In order that he may be properly protected against the elements, Stratford is plentifully supplied with overshoes, earbobs, Storm King chest protectors, mufflers, and umbrellas. He arms himself with these instruments according to the precise demand of each different occasion. Going out into the weather is an undertaking, and an adventure, accompanied by hazardous risks. With Stratford, preparation for it is a system and a science. Sometimes, however, Stratford's judgment errs in the matter of precaution. One day last week Stratford went downtown. Yielding to his vanity on that day, he recklessly wore kid gloves instead of his mittens, which were so much more suited to the then prevailing inclement weather. Now he suffers from it. He has a cough, and is compelled to keep his breast goose-greased.

Few people realize the importance of health, and the relation of diet to health. Pork is not wholesome. New potatoes are very hard to digest. Cream should never be eaten with peaches. This pernicious combination curdles. Stratford knows much more about these things than does the writer, which is fortunate for Stratford; the writer has only attempted to point out and warn you against a few of the most important, which he learned from Stratford. Stratford learned all this from experience. Last evening at dinner Stratford drank two cups of coffee. He did not sleep a wink all the night in consequence. Coffee is very bad for the nerves, very bad.

It may be that there are many persons like the writer in not knowing how to serve coffee. The cream should always be put in the cup first, then the coffee poured on. Though you may not be aware of the fact, it absolutely ruins coffee to serve it any other way. It is better to put sugar on oatmeal after the cream is on. The writer does not know why; but it is better.

Though one would hardly suspect it, in his youth Stratford was considerable of a rake. He often tells the story. It appears that in a spirit of reckless dare-deviltry on an occasion Stratford partook of some spirituous liquor. Now Stratford has a tolerably strong head. But this wine—or was it cocktail?—proved almost too much for him. Ah, well! those wild and lawless days are past and gone. Stratford has reformed, and will not fill a drunkard's grave. No one, we hope, respects Stratford the less for having been a little wild. We all hate a milksop, you will agree.

XIX

A HUMAN CASH REGISTER

ACROSS the table from a lodger sits Mr. Fife. Mr. Fife is a clerk. This statement comprises, not inadequately, his memoirs.

When a man speaks to you of the useful piece of mechanism called a cash register, you comprehend him perfectly. You know what a cash register is, for what purpose it was designed, how it looks, how much approximately it is worth, what it will perform, and what it will remain—a cash register. A cash register could not have been born a toy balloon, spent its youth as a bicycle, been educated as a pulpit, have imprudently married a footlight, been forced to obtain employment as a cash register, but cherishes a secret ambition to be a typewriter and solace itself in turn as a violin, a mug of ale, and a tobacco pipe. A lodger does not say that Mr. Fife is no better in any way than a cash register. A mother nursed him at her breast, watched him as he slept; he was somebody's baby. A grown man was strangely moved, probably, when he was born. He played somewhere as a child. Dirty little brothers and sisters, perhaps, were his. He was spanked and had diseases and suffered and was frightened and rejoiced. Hearts have been glad when he was near. One or two little girls, no doubt, have admired him very much. Some woman, probably somewhere, admires him still. A lodger does not say that Mr. Fife has no inner life. He does not say that the forces of existence constantly, ceaselessly beating in on this man (or rather clerk) are not here slowly, inevitably shaping a moral character, this way or that. But as this human life sits here at Mrs. Wigger's board a clerk is here, with his past and his future.

Mr. Fife has a "furnished room" somewhere around on the next street, and only takes his meals at Mrs. Wigger's.

XX

IT STANDS TO REASON

ON the hotel porch a large, earnest man was delivering the argument. He poised his pipe in his hand; and, moving forward from period to period with judicial deliberation, choosing his words with care, building his sentences with a nice regard for precision, he constructed his exposition in logical sequence. He had time at his command; and, so he gripped his audience, was in no fear of interruption. "For instance, we will take, for instance, just for instance, do you understand? the little town of New York to represent the whole country. Well, here we have the little town of New York. Now, it stands to reason——" One who chanced to overhear passed beyond range.

But what of the disquisition had been caught gave rise to an important reflection. When you examine the subject you find there are three fundamental phrases in arguing, in the dexterous use of which is largely constituted the talent of the born arguer. These home-driving phrases, which are his stock in trade, are: "It stands to reason," "between man and man," and "that's human nature." With these, strongly used, one can do almost anything. "Does capital meet labor?" says the born arguer. "No; what is the consequence? It stands to reason. Labor goes to the wall." Or, again: "You take the generations we have now, the young people." He smokes a while in silence. "It's human nature," comes the philosophical conclusion. And when the arguer addresses his audience "as between man and man," when in this direct, blunt way all the frangipani of class and convention is cleared aside, and only their manhood stands between them, he has got at the bed-rock of argument.

XXI

A THREE-RINGED CIRCUS

OUR friend MacKeene is a very interesting person. One of his most pronounced characteristics is an assiduous striving on his part to increase his vocabulary. We are always made aware of any of his new acquisitions in this direction by its frequent repetition during a conversation, the loving way in which he appears to dwell upon it, to hug it to his heart, allow it gradually to mount to his throat, roll it in his mouth to suck its flavor, to send it forth at length, to watch it tenderly and admiringly (like a fine ring of tobacco smoke) until it loses itself in the flow of speech that comes after it. We relish this new word ourselves. It is like a play; it thrills our soul, and we sigh when it is gone —but we know it will come again many times before the night is passed.

It has never been our fortune to see a man that enjoyed the show of life more than does MacKeene. He reads newspapers with a relish that is positively amazing; he smacks his lips over them; their contents are to him the headiest romance. MacKeene goes to the finest theater in the world every evening when he reads his penny paper. The anxiety with which he awaits the account of each new murder, swindle, election, disaster, marriage, or divorce of a special publicity, the mental agility with which he pounces upon it, the astonishing variety of points of view he can take of the thing, and the application with which he follows through successive installments the story to the very end, are delightful to behold.

He invariably winds up his observations upon life with the comment that "it is a funny world; such funny people in it."

True, or, rare MacKeene! It *is* a funny world, and there *are* such funny people in it! Everybody is queer but thee and us.

The other evening, after he had devoured his newspaper and sat staring at the wall, we started him going by the remark:

"Well, what's in the paper to-night, MacKeene?"

"What's in the paper to-night?" cried he.

"Everything is in the paper, everything—worlds of it—plays, skits, comedies, farces, tragedies, burlesques: material for the student, the historian, the author, the poet, the moralist, the humorist, much matter to be fast applauded for its slapstick good nature, and some bowed with leaden-eyed despair, some replete with rosy schemes, some of waxing hopes and sweet, unprofitable pipe dreams, some of many moneys, births, deaths, marriages and giving in marriages, loves, hatreds, wisdoms, follies, crimes, vices and virtues, heroisms, hypocrisies, arts, commercialism, surprises, bacchanals, hard exigencies, and poor resorts and petty contrivances. *Life*—ah! that's the boy—life and all its train of consequences, ringing in my ears, dancing before my eyes, crowding on the senses, a three-ringed circus in full blast, a roary, noisy, bloomin' spectacle, a mammoth aggregation of prodigious eye-openers and unparalleled splendors, with gorgeous hippodrome under perfect subjection, and a Casino Wonderland

Musée of queer, peculiar, wild, domestic, instructing, funny, beautiful, horrible, and revolting curios and monstrosities of land, air, and sea."

XXII

SNAPSHOTS IN X-RAY

WHAT a terrible thing is the X-ray!

Terrible?

Listen. Contemplate the prospect of this invention's being brought into popular use, so that, say, anybody might have such an attachment to his kodak. In such case, science, which has been so powerful a force in refining the civilization of man, would by one stroke lay waste the whole of her handiwork. Civilized society would collapse.

A German professor at one time went pretty well into the subject of clothes and the philosophy thereof, and reasoned among other things that society would instantly dissolve without them. Nothing could more vividly bear out this gentleman than contemplation of the possibilities of the Roentgen ray. It is an exciting prospect. A press of the button, and there would be Herr Teufelsdrockh's "straddling Parliament." But a thousand times more grotesque: gentlemen stripped not only of the tailored habiliment of the bodies, the symbols of their gentility, as it were, but of the fleshly garments of their frame, laying bare their mortality. And humorously, witheringly, for among the other distinctions man is said to possess above his brethren the beasts, being the only animal that laughs, and so forth, it is certainly true that of all creation he has the funniest skeleton. It would be the end. No candidate for public office would dare to come forth upon the platform. What stout lady could give a party?

Unless, indeed, as would probably result, for the preservation of society the use and carrying of kodaks would be regulated, like the carrying of revolvers, by statute. To photograph a gentleman or lady on the street would be a criminal deed carrying a penalty of twenty years' imprisonment. For though ladies blessed by nature might not, in this lingerie-less, tube-skirt age, shrink from further perception of their loveliness, it is doubtful if any man could make love to a woman after having seen an effigy of her skeleton. To snap the President would be equivalent, in the eyes of the law, to assassinating him. To take an X-ray photograph of a fashionable assembly would be, like discharging a dynamite bomb in the midst, punishable with death.

XXIII

BACHELOR REMINISCENCES

SOMETIMES my thoughts carry me away from my solitary strife with the world; back to my boyhood, when all men were not thieves and scoundrels, as they are now; back to my old home and my family, where we loved one another and did not, lynx-eyed, watch for a grip upon our neighbors' throats nor count our every friend as a possibility of our own advancement, and every favor we did another a business investment.

In one such mood as this, on an evening, I was pleased, upon answering the knock at my door, to usher in my

neighboring lodger Harrison. In reminiscence we would renew our youth; and to that purpose I started him off upon the desired track.

Harrison poses as something of a philosopher, and he began with some of his customary rot.

"Well," said he, "I have never known a man that talked at all upon the subject who did not follow a calling which was the most trying of all those at which men labor in this world, who did not have a most remarkably hard time in early life, and who did not fondly imagine that he was a very bad boy in his youth. These, I take it, are the three most familiar hallucinations in life. I am a victim to them myself. But I shall not regale you with them to-night. I was thinking of my own boyhood, the wickedness of it, and the happiness. Ah! boyhood, that is the happy time; girlhood may be, too—but I doubt it.

"These many years have I been like poor Joe in 'Bleak House,' I must keep moving along; but when I was a boy I had a home. A strange word it is to me now. I am reminded of the old vaudeville 'stunt': Any old place I hang my hat is home, sweet home, to me. I follow a trunk about the world, and a devil of a globe-trotter of a trunk it is.

"But when I was a boy," continued Harrison, the lines in his face softened—and he somehow just now looked very like a boy—"I had a home; there the board was always paid." The lines came back in his face for an instant, then faded away again. "There in the winter it was always warm," he said, looking very hard at my small fire. "There we had great feasting and drinking." I could not but notice how spare he was now. "There were noise and romping," and the softness of his voice now emphasized the extreme desertedness of my chambers. "There were brothers and sisters. Did you ever have a brother?" he asked me rather suddenly.

I replied that I never did.

"Or a sister?" he inquired.

I said "No."

He looked at me with a sort of annoying pity.

"I hope," he said rather irritatedly, "that you had a mother?"

I replied that I had had, but I did not see why we should fight about it.

"Now, don't lose your temper, old man," said Harrison. "You're such an incorrigible old dope, you know, such a cynical, confirmed old bachelor of a bohemian, I mean; so contented with this lonesome, vagabond life, that I hardly think you ever had a real, happy, wholesome boyhood home. By the way, did you ever have a boyhood?" he asked with something very near to a sneer.

"Now, look here," I said, "if you had such an insufferable home, why didn't you stay there and make your own family miserable instead of wandering about the world bemoaning your fate, wishing yourself back there, and insulting people who are not moved by ties of relationship to be tolerant with your spleen? And who won't be," I added, rising.

"You're a fool," said Harrison, as he banged the door.

XXIV

A TESTIMONIAL

FOR years I was a great sufferer from insomnia. At one time this dread scourge had so fastened its terrible fangs upon me that I could scarcely walk. My body became one mass of sleeplessness; I tried many remedies, but without avail, and my friends had all given me up for dead when by chance from a mere acquaintance I heard of this great

cure which I would recommend to all who are afflicted as I was.

I remember with horror the tortures I used to endure in agony as I tossed to and fro on the hot pillow, going over in my fevered mind interminably the formulas of the so-called reliefs from this peerless disease. An unconscionable number of times I numbered a round of sheep over a stile. I counted up to ten, over and over again; and then up to fifteen, and then twenty, twenty-five, thirty, fifty, only to craze myself with the thought of the futility of this lunacy. I heard my dollar watch tick on the dresser, until in madness I arose and placed it on the restraining pad of a clothes-brush. I heard the clock in the next room relentlessly tell the passing hours; I heard a neighboring public clock follow it through the watches of the night. I heard my happy neighbor snore. I heard the sound of rats near by, and the creaking of floors, and the voice of the wind. I tried bathing my feet before going to bed. I tried eating a light lunch. I tried intoxicating liquors. But always I stared through the blackness of the fearful night until an eerie color tinged my window, and then the dawn came up like thunder across the bay.

It was when my spirit had become worn through my body like elbows through the sleeve of an old coat that I heard the remarkable recipe for insomnia: Think of the top of your head. That is what I was told to do. "Think of the top of your head," I said to myself with some disdain in the awful grip of the night; "now how in thunder do you think of the top of your head?"

"Do you think of your hair?" I asked, turning my eyeballs upward in their sockets. "Do you think of that lightly hidden baldness?" striving to put my mind, so to say, on the top of my head. "How the Dickens-can-you-think-of——" but a drowsy numbness pained my sense as though of hemlock I had drunk, or emptied some dull opiate to the drains one minute past, and Lethewards had sunk. And I dreamed that quite plainly, as though it were some other fellow's, I saw the top of my head.

XXV

FRAGRANT WITH PERFUME

MR. DUFF is the tenant of the second floor front. His wife has been away. Mr. Duff himself may be encountered about in the halls. He is a large man with a considerable girth and a face that one knows to be youthful for his age; he cannot be under thirty.

Recently the second floor hall became fragrant with the odor of perfume. Mrs. Duff, presumably, had returned. Yes, Mrs. Duff was at the telephone. She calls, "Hello!" very sweetly, in two syllables. Mr. Duff's first name, it appears, is Walter, pronounced by his doting wife also in two syllables, "Wal-ter." Mrs. Duff bleats, it seems, in two syllables. Mr. Duff's middle name evidently is "Hon-ey."

Mrs. Duff said over the telephone that she "had been ba-ad." She said it, or, so sweetly. She had, she said, taken a little walk and had stayed "too long" and she had been away when he had called her up. But she had had the "best little time." She was going to work now, "oh! so ha-rd." She was going to clean out the bureau drawers and "that little box," and unpack her trunk and put away her things. No, she would be careful not to overwork herself. She would see him, Walter Honey Duff, when he came home from work. "Good-by, little boy," she said.

Then she called up a creamery. She wanted the creamery to send her, please, a pint of milk, and the smallest jar it had of cream cheese. How soon could those be sent, please? Oh-h! not till then? Well, she supposed she would have to wait.

The second floor hall is fragrant with the odor of perfume.

XXVI

WOULDN'T LOOK AT HIM

"THEY say," remarked the portly man with several double chins on the back of his neck, "that the Duke is over in the Library."

"I wouldn't walk across the street to see him," said a shabby individual, helping himself to a cracker.

"He's no better than any other man," said the bar-boy.

"I wouldn't look at him if they brought him in to me," announced an aggressive-looking character.

Now this was a remark rich in pictorial suggestion. It was eloquent with dramatic evocation. One instantly imagines the striking scene; the duke is dragged in; the aggressive-looking character is called upon to look at him; this he refuses to do.

"He breathes the same kind of air we do, don't he?" pointedly inquired the shabby individual.

"I guess that's right enough, too!" exclaimed the bar-boy.

XXVII

CONNUBIAL FELICITY

I'VE got a fine wife, too. I tell you, Bob, there's nothin' better can happen to a feller than to get the right woman. I don't care for battin' around any more now. Nothin' I like any better than to go home to my flat at night, take off my shoes and put on my slippers, and listen to my wife play the piano. My wife is musical, vocal and instrumental. Her vocal is on a par with her instrumental. I like music. I always said if ever I got married I'd marry, a wife that was musical. I ain't educated in music, exactly, but I've an ear. A feller told me,—Doc. Hoff, a mighty smart man, I'd like you to know him, his talk sometimes it would take a college professor to understand it,—he says to me, "I'm no phrenologist but I can see you've got an ear for music."

My wife is an aristocrat. When I married her, Thunder! I had no polish, that is to speak of. You know that, Bob. My talk was the vernacular. My wife's an Episcopalian. She asked me if I had any objection to the Episcopal ceremony for marrying. I said I didn't have no religion; anything would suit me so long as it was legal. I had fifteen hundred dollars to the good. I don't know how I come to have it. I oughtn't to have, by rights. Some of these book makers ought to have had it, accordin' to the life I led. But I did have it, anyhow. I took three hundred dollars and got a sweet of drawing room furniture—Louie fourteenth, or fifteenth, they call it, I forget which. Then I got a mahogany table, solid parts through, for our dining room, and some what they call Chippendale chairs. I got a darn good library up there, too.

My wife don't say "and so forth"; she says "and caetera."

XXVIII

A FRIEND, INDEED

HE was a sturdy-looking little man, with a square, honest face, and an upright manner, to put it so. He seemed to be a Swede. His companion had something the look of Mr. Heep, and he wore a cap.

"Yes, sir, Will," said his companion, "I'd like to see you own that piece of property. I would. If you owned that piece of property, Will, then you see you'd have something. You'd have something, Will. Something you could always call your own, Will."

"Do you think it's good land?" said Will.

"Oh, yes," said his companion; "that's a very fine piece of land, Will. I know every bit of it. I've worked up there, Will."

"Rocky?" asked Will.

"Oh, no, Will; there's hardly a rock on it."

"How far now does it come down this way?" inquired Will musingly.

"Down the hill, Will?" asked his companion, with great attention.

"Yes," said Will.

"Well, now as to that," said the other, casting his face upward in thought, "I couldn't just exactly say."

"Down to the oak tree, don't it?" said Will.

"That's right, Will!" exclaimed the other, in delighted recognition of the fact. "Down to the oak tree, Will. You're right, Will."

"And how far would you say," asked Will thoughtfully, "does it run back in?"

"Run back in, Will?" said the other as though in surprise. "Well, now you know, Will," shaking his head in doubt, "it's been some time since I was up there, Will."

"It goes back as far as the big rock, don't you think?" said Will, thinking hard.

"Back to the big rock, Will!" cried the other eagerly. "That's right, Will. You're right! Back to the big rock, Will!"

"What's the name of those people who own the land just this way?" Will asked, looking hard into his mind.

"Well, now, Will, I can't just bring to mind the name of those people," answered the other, looking equally hard, apparently, into his own mind.

"Smithers, ain't it?" said Will, gropingly.

"Smithers is the name!" ejaculated the other. "You're right, Will! That's it! Smithers! You're right, Will! Nice people, too, Will!"

"Well, I don't think though that I'll get that land, after all," said Will, in the manner of a man who has at length arrived at a decision.

"Well, of course, Will," said his companion, nodding his head up and down, "property is a great care. I don't know that you're not right, Will. Property's a great care, Will; you're right about that, Will. You can do better, Will. You're right about that!"

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