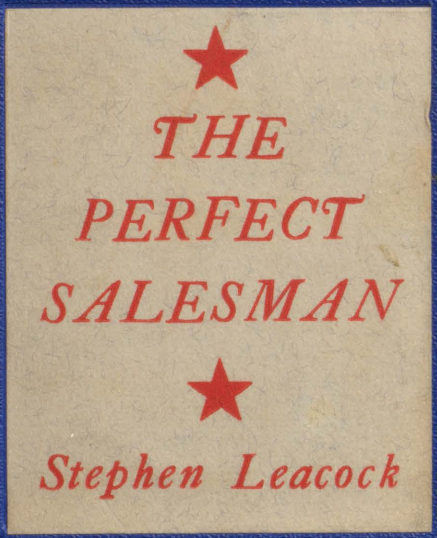
THE
PERFECT
SALESMAN
Stephen Leacock

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by Stephen Leacock

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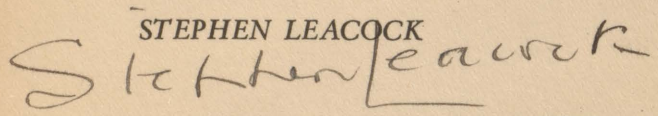
The Perfect Salesman

The
PERFECT SALESMAN

By

STEPHEN LEACOCK



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CONTENTS

I. THE SPLIT IN THE CABINET; OR, THE FATE OF ENGLAND

(A political novel of the days that were)

CHAPTER I

'THE fate of England hangs upon it,' murmured Sir John Elphinspoon, as he sank wearily into an armchair. For a moment, as he said 'England', the baronet's eye glistened and his ears lifted as if in defiance, but as soon as he stopped saying it his eye lost its brilliance and his ears dropped wearily at the sides of his head.

Lady Elphinspoon looked at her husband anxiously. She could not conceal from herself that his face, as he sank into his chair, seemed somehow ten years older than it had been ten years ago.

'You are home early, John?' she queried.

'The House rose early, my dear,' said the baronet.

'For the All England Ping-Pong match?'

'No, for the Dog Show. The Prime Minister felt that the Cabinet ought to attend. He said that their presence there would help to bind the colonies to us. I understand also that he has a pup in the show himself. He took the Cabinet with him.'

'And why not you?' asked Lady Elphinspoon.

'You forget, my dear,' said the baronet, 'as Foreign Secretary my presence at a Dog Show might be offensive to the Shah of Persia. Had it been a Cat Show——'

The baronet paused and shook his head in deep gloom.

'John,' said his wife, 'I feel that there is something more. Did anything happen at the House?'

Sir John nodded.

'A bad business,' he said. 'The Wazuchistan Boundary Bill was read this afternoon for the third time.'

No woman in England, so it was generally said, had a keener political insight than Lady Elphinspoon.

'The third time,' she repeated thoughtfully, 'and how many more will it have to go?'

Sir John turned his head aside and groaned.

'You are faint,' exclaimed Lady Elphinspoon, 'let me ring for tea.'

The baronet shook his head.

'An egg, John—let me beat you up an egg.'

'Yes, yes,' murmured Sir John, still abstracted 'beat it, yes, do beat it.'

Lady Elphinspoon, in spite of her elevated position as the wife of the Foreign Secretary of Great Britain, held it not beneath her to perform for her husband the plainest household service. She rang for an egg. The butler

broke it for her into a tall goblet filled with old sherry, and the noble lady, with her own hands, beat the stuff out of it. For the veteran politician, whose official duties rarely allowed him to eat, an egg was a sovereign remedy. Taken either in a goblet of sherry or in a mug of rum, or in half a pint of whisky, it never failed to revive his energies.

The effect of the egg was at once visible in the brightening of his eye and the lengthening of his ears.

'And now explain to me,' said his wife, 'what has happened. What *is* this Boundary Bill?'

'We never meant it to pass,' said Sir John. 'It was introduced only as a sop to public opinion. It delimits our frontier in such a way as to extend our suzerainty over the entire desert of El Skrub. The Wazoos have claimed that this is their desert. The hill tribes are restless. If we attempt to advance the Wazoos will rise. If we retire it deals a blow at our prestige.'

Lady Elphinspoon shuddered. Her long political training had taught her that nothing was so fatal to England as to be hit in the prestige.

'And on the other hand,' continued Sir John, 'if we move sideways, the Ohulîs, the mortal enemies of the Wazoos, will strike us in our rear.'

'In our rear!' exclaimed Lady Elphinspoon in a tone of pain. 'Oh, John, we must go forward. Take another egg.'

'We cannot,' groaned the Foreign Secretary. 'There are reasons which I cannot explain even to you, Caroline, reasons of State, which absolutely prevent us from advancing into Wazuchistan. Our hands are tied. Meantime if the Wazoos rise, it is all over with us. It will split the Cabinet.'

'Split the Cabinet!' repeated Lady Elphinspoon in alarm. She well knew that next to a blow in the prestige the splitting of the Cabinet was about the worst thing that could happen to Great Britain. 'Oh, John, they *must* be held together at all costs. Can nothing be done?'

'Everything is being done that can be. The Prime Minister has them at the Dog Show at this moment. To-night the Chancellor is taking them to moving pictures. And to-morrow—it is a State secret, my dear, but it will be very generally known in the morning—we have seats for them all at the circus. If we can hold them together all is well, but if they split we are undone. Meantime our difficulties increase. At the very passage of the Bill itself a question was asked by one of the new Labour members, a miner, my dear, a quite uneducated man——'

'Yes?' queried Lady Elphinspoon.

'He asked the Colonial Secretary'—Sir John shuddered—'to tell him where Wazuchistan is. Worse than that, my dear,' added Sir John, 'he defied him to tell him where it is.'

'What did you do? Surely he has no right to information of that sort?'

'It was a close shave. Luckily the Whips saved us. They got the Secretary out of the House and rushed him to the British Museum. When he got back he said that he would answer the question a month from Friday. We got a great burst of cheers, but it was a close thing. But stop, I must speak at once with Powers. My dispatch-box, yes, here it is. Now where is young Powers? There is work for him to do at once.

'Mr. Powers is in the conservatory with Angela,' said Lady Elphinspoon.

'With Angela!' exclaimed Sir John, while a slight shade of displeasure appeared upon his brow. 'With Angela again! Do you think it is quite proper, my dear, that Powers should be so constantly with Angela?'

'John,' said his wife, 'you forget, I think, who Mr. Powers is. I am sure that Angela knows too well what is due to her rank, and to herself, to consider Mr. Powers anything more than an instructive companion. And I notice that, since Mr. Powers has been your secretary, Angela's mind is much keener. Already the girl has a wonderful grasp on foreign policy. Only yesterday I heard her asking the Prime Minister at luncheon whether we intend to extend our Senegambian protectorate over the Fusees. He was delighted.'

'Oh, very well, very well,' said Sir John. Then he rang a bell for a manservant.

'Ask Mr. Powers,' he said, 'to be good enough to attend me in the library.'

CHAPTER II

Angela Elphinspoon stood with Perriton Powers among the begonias of the conservatory. The same news which had so agitated Sir John lay heavy on both their hearts.

'Will the Wazoo rise?' asked Angela, clasping her hands before her, while her great eyes sought the young man's face and found it. 'Oh, Mr. Powers! Tell me, will they rise? It seems too dreadful to contemplate. Do you think the Wazoo will rise?'

'It is only too likely,' said Powers. They stood looking into one another's eyes, their thoughts all on the Wazoo.

Angela Elphinspoon, as she stood there against the background of the begonias, made a picture that a painter, or even a plumber, would have loved. Tall and typically English in her fair beauty, her features, in repose, had something of the hauteur and distinction of her mother, and when in motion they recalled her father.

Perriton Powers was even taller than Angela. The splendid frame and stern features of Sir John's secretary made him a striking figure.

Yet he was, quite frankly, sprung from the people, and made no secret of it. His father had been simply a well-to-do London surgeon, who had been knighted for some mere discoveries in science. His grandfather, so it was whispered, had been nothing more than a successful banker who had amassed a fortune simply by successful banking. Yet at Oxford young Powers had carried all before him. He had occupied a seat, a front seat, in one of the boats, had got his blue and his pink, and had taken a double final in Sanscrit and Arithmetic.

He had already travelled widely in the East, spoke Urdu and Hoodoo with facility, while as secretary to Sir John Elphinspoon, with a seat in the House in prospect, he had his foot upon the ladder of success.

'Yes,' repeated Powers thoughtfully, 'they may rise. Our confidential dispatches tell us that for some time they have been secretly passing round packets of yeast. The whole tribe is in a ferment.'

'But our sphere of influence is at stake,' exclaimed Angela.

'It is,' said Powers. 'As a matter of fact, for over a year we have been living on a mere *modus vivendi*.'

'Oh, Mr. Powers,' cried Angela, 'what a way to live.'

'We have tried everything,' said the secretary.

'We offered the Wazoo a condominium over the desert of El Skrub. They refused it.'

'But it's our desert,' said Angela proudly.

"It is. But what can we do? The best we can hope is that El Boob will acquiesce in the *status quo*.'

At that moment a manservant appeared in the doorway of the conservatory.

'Mr. Powers, sir,' he said, 'Sir John desires your attendance, sir, in the library, sir.'

Powers turned to Angela, a new seriousness upon his face.

'Miss Elphinspoon,' he said, 'I think I know what is coming. Will you wait for me here? I shall be back in half an hour.'

'I will wait,' said the girl. She sat down and waited among the begonias, her mind still on the Wazoo, her whole intense nature strung to the highest pitch. 'Can the *modus vivendi* hold?' she murmured.

In half an hour Powers returned. He was wearing now his hat and light overcoat, and carried on a strap round his neck a tin box with a white painted label, '*British Foreign Office. Confidential Dispatches. This Side Up With Care.*'

'Miss Elphinspoon,' he said, and there was a new note in his voice, 'Angela, I leave England to-night——'

'To-night?' gasped Angela.

'On a confidential mission.'

'To Wazuchistan!' exclaimed the girl.

Powers paused a moment. 'To Wazuchistan,' he said, 'yes. But it must not be known. I shall return in a month—or never. If I fail'—he spoke with an assumed lightness—'it is only one more grave among the hills. If I succeed, the Cabinet is saved, and with it the destiny of England.'

'Oh, Mr. Powers,' cried Angela, rising and advancing towards him, 'how splendid! How noble! No reward will be too great for you.'

'My reward,' said Powers, and as he spoke he reached out and clasped both of the girl's hands in his own, 'yes, my reward. May I come and claim it here?'

For a moment he looked straight into her eyes. In the next he was gone, and Angela was alone.

'His reward!' she murmured. 'What could he have meant? His reward that he is to claim. What can it be?'

But she could not divine it. She admitted to herself that she had not the faintest idea.

CHAPTER III

In the days that followed all England was thrilled to its base as the news spread that the Wazoo might rise at any moment.

'Will the Wazoos rise?' was the question upon every lip.

In London men went to their offices with a sense of gloom. At lunch they could hardly eat. A feeling of impending disaster pervaded all ranks.

Sir John as he passed to and fro to the House was freely accosted in the streets.

'Will the Wazoos rise, sir?' asked an honest labourer. 'Lord help us all, sir, if they do.'

Sir John, deeply touched, dropped a shilling in the honest fellow's hat, by accident.

At No. 10 Downing Street, women of the working class, with children in their arms, stood waiting for news.

On the Exchange all was excitement. Consols fell two points in twenty-four hours. Even raising the Bank rate and shutting the door brought only a temporary relief.

Lord Glump, the greatest financial expert in London, was reported as saying that if the Wazoos rose England would be bankrupt in forty-eight hours.

Meanwhile, to the consternation of the whole nation, the Government did nothing. The Cabinet seemed to be paralysed.

On the other hand the Press became all the more clamorous. The London *Times* urged that an expedition should be sent at once. Twenty-five thousand household troops, it argued, should be sent up the Euphrates or up the Ganges or up something without delay. If they were taken in flat boats, carried over

the mountains on mules, and lifted across the rivers in slings, they could then be carried over the desert on jackasses. They could reach Wazuchistan in two years. Other papers counselled moderation. The *Manchester Guardian* recalled the fact that the Wazoos were a Christian people. Their leader, El Boob, so it was said, had accepted Christianity with childlike simplicity and had asked if there was any more of it. The *Spectator* claimed that the Wazoos, or more properly the Wazi, were probably the descendants of an Iranic or perhaps Urgumic stock. It suggested the award of a Rhodes Scholarship. It looked forward to the days when there would be Wazoos at Oxford. Even the presence of a single Wazoo, or, more accurately, a single Wooz, would help.

With each day the news became more ominous. It was reported in the Press that a Wazoo, inflamed apparently with *ghee*, or perhaps with *bhong*, had rushed up to the hills and refused to come down. It was said that the Shriek-ul-Foozlum, the religious head of the tribe, had torn off his suspenders and sent them to Mecca.

That same day the *Illustrated London News* published a drawing 'Wazoo Warriors Crossing a River and Shouting, Ho!' and the general consternation reached its height.

Meantime, for Sir John and his colleagues,

the question of the hour became, 'Could the Cabinet be held together?' Every effort was made. The news that the Cabinet had all been seen together at the circus, for a moment reassured the nation. But the rumour spread that the First Lord of the Admiralty had said that the clowns were a bum lot. The Radical Press claimed that if he thought so he ought to resign.

On the fatal Friday the question already referred to was scheduled for its answer. The friends of the Government counted on the answer to restore confidence. To the consternation of all, the expected answer was not forthcoming. The Colonial Secretary rose in his place, visibly nervous. Ministers, he said, had been asked where Wazuchistan was. They were not prepared, at the present delicate stage of negotiations, to say. More hung upon the answer than Ministers were entitled to divulge. They could only appeal to the patriotism of the nation. He could only say this, that *wherever* it was, and he used the word *wherever* with all the emphasis of which he was capable, the Government would accept the full responsibility for its being where it was.

The House adjourned in something like confusion.

Among those seated behind the grating of the Ladies' Gallery was Lady Elphinspoon. Her quick instinct told her the truth. Driving

home, she found her husband seated, crushed, in his library.

'John,' she said, falling on her knees and taking her husband's hands in hers, 'is this true? Is this the dreadful truth?'

'I see you have divined it, Caroline,' said the statesman sadly. 'It is the truth. We don't know where Wazuchistan is.'

For a moment there was silence.

'But, John, how could it have happened?'

'We thought the Colonial Office knew. We were confident that they knew. The Colonial Secretary had stated that he had been there. Later on it turned out that he meant Saskatchewan. Of course they thought *we* knew. And we both thought that the Exchequer must know. We understood that they had collected a hut tax for ten years.'

'And hadn't they?'

'Not a penny. The Wazoos live in tents.'

'But, surely,' pleaded Lady Elphinspoon, 'you could find out. Had you no maps?'

Sir John shook his head.

'We thought of that at once, my dear. We've looked all through the British Museum. Once we thought we had succeeded. But it turned out to be Wisconsin.'

'But the map in *The Times?* Everybody saw it.'

Again the baronet shook his head. 'Lord Southcliff had it made in the office,' he said.

'It appears that he always does. Otherwise the physical features might not suit him.'

'But could you not send some one to see?'

'We did. We sent Perriton Powers to find out where it was. We had a month to the good. It was barely time, just time. Powers has failed and we are lost. To-morrow all England will guess the truth and the Government falls.'

CHAPTER IV

The crowd outside of No. 10 Downing Street that evening was so dense that all traffic was at a standstill. But within the historic room where the Cabinet were seated about the long table all was calm. Few could have guessed from the quiet demeanour of the group of statesmen that the fate of an Empire hung by a thread.

Seated at the head of the table, the Prime Minister was quietly looking over a book of butterflies, while waiting for the conference to begin. Beside him the Secretary for Ireland was fixing trout flies, while the Chancellor of the Exchequer kept his serene face bent over upon his needlework. At the Prime Minister's right, Sir John Elphinspoon, no longer agitated, but sustained and dignified by the responsibility of his office, was playing spillikins.

The little clock on the mantel chimed eight.

The Premier closed his book of butterflies.

'Well, gentlemen,' he said, 'I fear our meeting will not be a protracted one. It seems we are hopelessly at variance. You, Sir Charles,' he continued, turning to the First Sea Lord, who was in attendance, 'are still in favour of a naval expedition?'

'Send it up at once,' said Sir Charles.

'Up where?' asked the Premier.

'Up anything,' answered the Old Sea Dog, 'it will get there.'

Voices of dissent were raised in undertones around the table.

'I strongly deprecate any expedition,' said the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 'I favour a convention with the Shriek. Let the Shriek sign a convention recognizing the existence of a supreme being and receiving from us a million sterling in acknowledgment.'

'And where will you *find* the Shriek?' said the Prime Minister. 'Come, come, gentlemen, I fear that we can play this comedy no longer. The truth is,' he added with characteristic nonchalance, 'we don't know where the bally place is. We can't meet the House to-morrow. We are hopelessly split. Our existence as a Government is at an end.'

But, at that very moment, a great noise of shouting and clamour rose from the street without. The Prime Minister lifted his hand for silence. 'Listen,' he said. One of the

Ministers went to the window and opened it, and the cries outside became audible. 'A King's Messenger! Make way for the King's Messenger!'

The Premier turned quietly to Sir John.

'Perriton Powers,' he said.

In another moment Perriton Powers stood before the Ministers.

Bronzed by the tropic sun, his face was recognizable only by the assured glance of his eye. An Afghan *bernous* was thrown back from his head and shoulders, while his commanding figure was draped in a long *chibouk*. A pair of pistols and a curved *yasmak* were in his belt.

'So you got to Wazuchistan all right,' said the Premier quietly.

'I went in by way of the Barooda,' said Powers. 'For many days I was unable to cross it. The waters of the river were wild and swollen with rains. To cross it seemed certain death——'

'But at last you got over,' said the Premier, 'and then——'

'I struck out over the Fahuri desert. For days and days, blinded by the sun, and almost buried in sand, I despaired.'

'But you got through it all right. And after that?'

'My first care was to disguise myself. Staining myself from head to foot with betel nut——'

'To look like a beetle,' said the Premier. 'Exactly. And so you got to Wazuchistan. Where is it and what is it?'

'My lord,' said Powers, drawing himself up and speaking with emphasis, 'I got to where it was thought to be. There is no such place!'

The whole Cabinet gave a start of astonishment.

'No such place!' they repeated.

'What about El Boob?' asked the Chancellor.

'There is no such person.'

'And the Shriek-el-Foozlum?'

Powers shook his head.

'But do you mean to say,' said the Premier in astonishment, 'that there are no Wazoos? There you *must* be wrong. True we don't just know where they are. But our dispatches have shown too many signs of active trouble traced directly to the Wazoos to disbelieve in them. There are Wazoos somewhere, there—there *must* be.'

'The Wazoos,' said Powers, 'are there. But they are Irish! So are the Ohulîs. They are both Irish.'

'But how the devil did they get out there?' questioned the Premier. 'And why did they make the trouble?'

'The Irish, my lord,' interrupted the Chief Secretary for Ireland, 'are everywhere, and it is their business to make trouble.'

'Some years ago,' continued Powers, 'a few

Irish families settled out there. The Ohulîs should be properly called the O'Hooleys. The word Wazoo is simply the Urdu for McGinnis. El Boob is the Urdu for the Arabic El Papa, the Pope. It was my knowledge of Urdu, itself an agglutinative language——'

'Precisely,' said the Premier. Then he turned to his Cabinet. 'Well, gentlemen, our task is now simplified. If they are Irish, I think we know exactly what to do. I suppose,' he continued, turning to Powers, 'that they want some kind of Home Rule.'

'They do,' said Powers.

'Separating, of course, the Ohulî countries from the Wazoo?'

'Yes,' said Powers.

'Precisely; the thing is simplicity itself. And what contribution will they make to the Imperial Exchequer?'

'None.'

'And will they pay their own expenses?'

'They refuse to.'

'Exactly. All this is plain sailing. Of course they must have a constabulary. Lord Edward,' continued the Premier, turning now to the Secretary of War, 'how long will it take to send in a couple of hundred constabulary? I think they'll expect it, you know. It's their right.'

'Let me see,' said Lord Edward, calculating quickly, with military precision, 'sending them over the Barooda in buckets and then over the

mountains in baskets—I think in about two weeks.'

'Good,' said the Premier. 'Gentlemen, we shall meet the House to-morrow. Sir John, will you meantime draft us an annexation bill? And you, young man, what you have done is really not half bad. His Majesty will see you to-morrow. I am glad that you are safe.'

'On my way home,' said Powers, with quiet modesty, 'I was attacked by a lion——'

'But you beat it off,' said the Premier. 'Exactly. Good night.'

CHAPTER V

It was on the following afternoon that Sir John Elphinspoon presented the Wazoo Annexation Bill to a crowded and breathless House.

Those who know the House of Commons know that it has its moods. At times it is grave, earnest, thoughtful. At other times it is swept with emotion which comes at it in waves. Or at times, again, it just seems to sit there as if it were stuffed.

But all agreed that they had never seen the House so hushed as when Sir John Elphinspoon presented his Bill for the Annexation of Wazuchistan. And when at the close of a splendid peroration he turned to pay a graceful compliment to the man who had saved the

nation, and thundered forth to the delighted ears of his listeners—

Arma virumque cano Wazoo qui primus ab oris,

and then, with the words 'England, England' still on his lips, fell over backwards and was carried out on a stretcher, the House broke into wild and unrestrained applause.

CHAPTER VI

The next day Sir Perriton Powers—for the King had knighted him after breakfast—stood again in the conservatory of the house in Carlton Terrace.

'I have come for my reward,' he said. 'Do I get it?'

'You do,' said Angela.

Sir Perriton clasped her in his arms.

'On my way home,' he said, 'I was attacked by a lion. I tried to beat it——'

'Hush, dearest,' she whispered, 'let me take you to father.'

II. BROKEN BARRIERS; OR, RED LOVE ON A BLUE ISLAND

IT was on a bright August afternoon that I stepped on board the steamer *Patagonia* at Southampton, outward bound for the West Indies and the Port of New Orleans.

I had at the time no presentiment of disaster. I remember remarking to the ship's purser, as my things were being carried to my state-room, that I had never in all my travels entered upon any voyage with so little premonition of accident. 'Very good, Mr. Borus,' he answered. 'You will find your state-room in the starboard aisle on the right.' I distinctly recall remarking to the captain that I had never, in any of my numerous seafarings, seen the sea of a more limpid blue. He agreed with me so entirely, as I recollect it, that he did not even trouble to answer.

Had anyone told me on that bright summer afternoon that our ship would within a week be wrecked among the Dry Tortugas, I should have laughed. Had anyone informed me that I should find myself alone on a raft in the Caribbean Sea, I should have gone into hysterics.

We had hardly entered the waters of the Caribbean when a storm of unprecedented

violence broke upon us. Even the captain had never, so he said, seen anything to compare with it. For two days and nights we encountered and endured the full fury of the sea. Our soup-plates were secured with racks and covered with lids. In the smoking-room our glasses had to be set in brackets, and as our steward came and went, we were from moment to moment in imminent danger of seeing him washed overboard.

On the third morning just after daybreak the ship collided with something, probably either a floating rock or one of the Dry Tortugas. She blew out her four funnels, the bowsprit dropped out of its place, and the propeller came right off. The captain, after a brief consultation, decided to abandon her. The boats were lowered, and, the sea being now quite calm, the passengers were emptied into them.

By what accident I was left behind I cannot tell. I had been talking to the second mate and telling him of a rather similar experience of mine in the China Sea, and holding him by the coat as I did so, when quite suddenly he took me by the shoulders, and rushing me into the deserted smoking-room said, 'Sit there, Mr. Borus, till I come back for you.' The fellow spoke in such a menacing way that I thought it wiser to comply.

When I came out they were all gone. By

good fortune I found one of the ship's rafts still lying on the deck. I gathered together such articles as might be of use and contrived, though how I do not know, to launch it into the sea.

On my second morning on my raft I was sitting quietly polishing my boots and talking to myself when I became aware of an object floating in the sea close beside the raft. Judge of my feelings when I realized it to be the inanimate body of a girl. Hastily finishing my boots and stopping talking to myself, I made shift as best I could to draw the unhappy girl towards me with a hook.

After several ineffectual attempts I at last managed to obtain a hold of the girl's clothing, and drew her on to the raft.

She was still unconscious. The heavy life-belt round her person must (so I divined) have kept her afloat after the wreck. Her clothes were sodden, so I reasoned, with the sea-water.

On a handkerchief which was still sticking into the belt of her dress, I could see letters embroidered. Realizing that this was no time for hesitation, and that the girl's life might depend on my reading her name, I plucked it forth. It was Edith Croyden.

As vigorously as I could I now set to work to rub her hands. My idea was (partly) to restore her circulation. I next removed her boots, which were now rendered useless, as I

argued, by the sea-water, and began to rub her feet.

I was just considering what to remove next, when the girl opened her eyes. 'Stop rubbing my feet,' she said.

'Miss Croyden,' I said, 'you mistake me.'

I rose, with a sense of pique which I did not trouble to conceal, and walked to the other end of the raft. I turned my back upon the girl and stood looking out upon the leaden waters of the Caribbean Sea. The ocean was now calm. There was nothing in sight.

I was still searching the horizon when I heard a soft footstep on the raft behind me, and a light hand was laid upon my shoulder. 'Forgive me,' said the girl's voice.

I turned about. Miss Croyden was standing behind me. She had, so I argued, removed her stockings and was standing in her bare feet. There is something, I am free to confess, about a woman in her bare feet which hits me where I live. With instinctive feminine taste the girl had twined a piece of seaweed in her hair. Seaweed, as a rule, gets me every time. But I checked myself.

'Miss Croyden,' I said, 'there is nothing to forgive.'

At the mention of her name the girl blushed for a moment and seemed about to say something, but stopped.

'Where are we?' she queried presently.

'I don't know,' I answered, as cheerily as I could, 'but I am going to find out.'

'How brave you are!' Miss Croyden exclaimed.

'Not at all,' I said, putting as much heartiness into my voice as I was able to.

The girl watched my preparations with interest.

With the aid of a bent pin hoisted on a long pole I had no difficulty in ascertaining our latitude.

'Miss Croyden,' I said, 'I am now about to ascertain our longitude. To do this I must lower myself down into the sea. Pray do not be alarmed or anxious. I shall soon be back.'

With the help of a long line I lowered myself deep down into the sea until I was enabled to ascertain, approximately at any rate, our longitude. A fierce thrill went through me at the thought that this longitude was our longitude, hers and mine. On the way up, hand over hand, I observed a long shark looking at me. Realizing that the fellow if voracious might prove dangerous, I lost but little time—indeed, I may say I lost absolutely no time—in coming up the rope.

The girl was waiting for me.

'Oh, I am so glad you have come back,' she exclaimed, clasping her hands.

'It was nothing,' I said, wiping the water

from my ears, and speaking as melodiously as I could.

'Have you found our whereabouts?' she asked.

'Yes,' I answered. 'Our latitude is normal, but our longitude is, I fear, at least three degrees out of the plumb. I am afraid, Miss Croyden,' I added, speaking as mournfully as I knew how, 'that you must reconcile your mind to spending a few days with me on this raft.'

'Is it as bad as that?' she murmured, her eyes upon the sea.

In the long day that followed, I busied myself as much as I could with my work upon the raft, so as to leave the girl as far as possible to herself. It was, so I argued, absolutely necessary to let her feel that she was safe in my keeping. Otherwise she might jump off the raft and I should lose her.

I sorted out my various cans and tins, tested the oil in my chronometer, arranged in neat order my various ropes and apparatus, and got my frying-pan into readiness for any emergency. Of food we had for the present no lack.

With the approach of night I realized that it was necessary to make arrangements for the girl's comfort. With the aid of a couple of upright poles I stretched a grey blanket across the raft so as to make a complete partition.

'Miss Croyden,' I said, 'this end of the raft is yours. Here you may sleep in peace.'

'How kind you are,' the girl murmured.

'You will be quite safe from interference,' I added. 'I give you my word that I will not obtrude upon you in any way.'

'How chivalrous you are,' she said.

'Not at all,' I answered, as musically as I could. 'Understand me, I am now putting my head over this partition for the last time. If there is anything you want, say so now.

'Nothing,' she answered.

'There is a candle and matches beside you. If there is anything that you want in the night, call me instantly. Remember, at any hour, I shall be here. I promise it.'

'Good night,' she murmured. In a few minutes her soft regular breathing told me that she was asleep.

I went forward and seated myself in a tar-bucket, with my head against the mast, to get what sleep I could.

But for some time—why, I do not know—sleep would not come.

The image of Edith Croyden filled my mind. In vain I told myself that she was a stranger to me: that—beyond her longitude—I knew nothing of her. In some strange way this girl had seized hold of me and dominated my senses.

The night was very calm and still, with great

stars in a velvet sky. In the darkness I could hear the water lapping the edge of the raft.

I remained thus in deep thought, sinking farther and farther into the tar-bucket. By the time I reached the bottom of it I realized that I was in love with Edith Croyden.

Then the thought of my wife occurred to me and perplexed me. Our unhappy marriage had taken place three years before. We brought to one another youth, wealth and position. Yet our marriage was a failure. My wife—for what reason I cannot guess—seemed to find my society irksome. In vain I tried to interest her with narratives of my travels. They seemed—in some way that I could not divine—to fatigue her. 'Leave me for a little, Harold,' she would say (I forgot to mention that my name is Harold Borus), 'I have a pain in my neck.' At her own suggestion I had taken a trip around the world. On my return she urged me to go round again. I was going round for the third time when the wrecking of the steamer had interrupted my trip.

On my own part, too, I am free to confess that my wife's attitude had aroused in me a sense of pique, not to say injustice. I am not in any way a vain man. Yet her attitude wounded me. I would no sooner begin, 'When I was in the Himalayas hunting the humpo or humped buffalo,' than she would

interrupt and say, 'Oh, Harold, would you mind going down to the billiard-room and seeing if I left my cigarettes under the billiard-table?' When I returned, she was gone.

By agreement we had arranged for a divorce. On my completion of my third voyage we were to meet in New Orleans. Clara was to go there on a separate ship, giving me the choice of oceans.

Had I met Edith Croyden three months later I should have been a man free to woo and win her. As it was I was bound. I must put a clasp of iron on my feelings. I must wear a mask. Cheerful, helpful, and full of narrative, I must yet let fall no word of love to this defenceless girl.

After a great struggle I rose at last from the tar-bucket, feeling, if not a brighter, at least a cleaner man.

Dawn was already breaking. I looked about me. As the sudden beams of the tropic sun illumined the placid sea, I saw immediately before me, only a hundred yards away, an island. A sandy beach sloped back to a rocky eminence, broken with scrub and jungle. I could see a little stream leaping among the rocks. With eager haste I paddled the raft close to the shore till it ground in about ten inches of water.

I leaped into the water.

With the aid of a stout line, I soon made

the raft fast to a rock. Then as I turned I saw that Miss Croyden was standing upon the raft, fully dressed, and gazing at me. The morning sunlight played in her hair, and her deep blue eyes were as soft as the Caribbean Sea itself.

'Don't attempt to wade ashore, Miss Croyden,' I cried in agitation. 'Pray do nothing rash. The waters are simply infested with bacilli.'

'But how can I get ashore?' she asked, with a smile which showed all, or nearly all, of her pearl-like teeth.

'Miss Croyden,' I said, 'there is only one way. I must carry you.'

In another moment I had walked back to the raft and lifted her as tenderly and reverently as if she had been my sister—indeed more so—in my arms.

Her weight seemed nothing. When I get a girl like that in my arms I simply don't feel it. Just for one moment as I clasped her thus in my arms, a fierce thrill ran through me. But I let it run.

When I had carried her well up the sand close to the little stream, I set her down. To my surprise, she sank down in a limp heap.

The girl had fainted.

I knew that it was no time for hesitation.

Running to the stream, I filled my hat with water and dashed it in her face. Then I took

up a handful of mud and threw it at her with all my force. After that I beat her with my hat.

At length she opened her eyes and sat up.

'I must have fainted,' she said, with a little shiver. 'I am cold. Oh, if we could only have a fire.'

'I will do my best to make one, Miss Croyden,' I replied, speaking as gymnastically as I could. 'I will see what I can do with two dry sticks.'

'With dry sticks?' queried the girl. 'Can you light a fire with that? How wonderful you are!'

'I have often seen it done,' I replied thoughtfully; 'when I was hunting the humpo, or humped buffalo, in the Himalayas, it was our usual method.'

'Have you really hunted the humpo?' she asked, her eyes large with interest.

'I have indeed,' I said, 'but you must rest; later on I will tell you about it.'

'I wish you could tell me now,' she said with a little moan.

Meantime I had managed to select from the driftwood on the beach two sticks that seemed absolutely dry. Placing them carefully together, in Indian fashion, I then struck a match and found no difficulty in setting them on fire.

In a few moments the girl was warming herself beside a generous fire.

Together we breakfasted upon the beach beside the fire, discussing our plans like comrades.

Our meal over, I rose.

'I will leave you here a little,' I said, 'while I explore.'

With no great difficulty I made my way through the scrub and climbed the eminence of tumbled rocks that shut in the view.

On my return Miss Croyden was still seated by the fire, her head in her hands.

'Miss Croyden,' I said, 'we are on an island.'

'Is it inhabited?' she asked.

'Once perhaps, but not now. It is one of the many keys of the West Indies. Here, in old buccaneering days, the pirates landed and careened their ships.'

'How did they do that?' she asked, fascinated.

' I am not sure,' I answered. 'I think with white-wash. At any rate, they gave them a good careening. But since then these solitudes are only the home of the sea-gull, the sea-mew, and the albatross."

The girl shuddered.

'How lonely!' she said.

'Lonely or not,' I said with a laugh (luckily I can speak with a laugh when I want to), 'I must get to work.'

I set myself to work to haul up and arrange our effects. With a few stones I made a rude

table and seats. I took care to laugh and sing as much as possible while at my work. The close of the day found me still busy with my labours.

'Miss Croyden,' I said, 'I must now arrange a place for you to sleep.'

With the aid of four stakes driven deeply into the ground and with blankets strung upon them, I managed to fashion a sort of rude tent, roofless, but otherwise quite sheltered.

'Miss Croyden,' I said when all was done, 'go in there.'

Then, with little straps which I had fastened to the blankets, I buckled her in reverently.

'Good night, Miss Croyden,' I said.

'But you,' she exclaimed, 'where will you sleep?'

'Oh, I,' I answered, speaking as exuberantly as I could, 'I shall do very well on the ground. But be sure to call me at the slightest sound.'

Then I went out and lay down in a patch of cactus plants.

. . . . .

I need not dwell in detail upon the busy and arduous days that followed our landing upon the island. I had much to do. Each morning I took our latitude and longitude. By this I then set my watch, cooked porridge, and picked flowers till Miss Croyden appeared.

With every day the girl came forth from

her habitation as a new surprise in her radiant beauty. One morning she had bound a cluster of wild arbutus about her brow. Another day she had twisted a band of convolvulus around her waist. On a third she had wound herself up in a mat of bulrushes.

With her bare feet and wild bulrushes all around her, she looked as a cave woman might have looked, her eyes radiant with the Caribbean dawn. My whole frame thrilled at the sight of her. At times it was all I could do not to tear the bulrushes off her and beat her with the heads of them. But I schooled myself to restraint, and handed her a rock to sit upon, and passed her her porridge on the end of a shovel with the calm politeness of a friend.

Our breakfast over, my more serious labours of the day began. I busied myself with hauling rocks or boulders along the sand to build us a house against the rainy season. With some tackle from the raft I had made myself a set of harness, by means of which I hitched myself to a boulder. By getting Miss Croyden to beat me over the back with a stick, I found that I made fair progress.

But even as I worked thus for our common comfort, my mind was fiercely filled with the thought of Edith Croyden. I knew that if once the barriers broke everything would be swept away. Heaven alone knows the effort that it cost me. At times nothing but the

sternest resolution could hold my fierce impulses in check. Once I came upon the girl writing in the sand with a stick. I looked to see what she had written. I read my own name 'Harold.' With a wild cry I leapt into the sea and dived to the bottom of it. When I came up I was calmer. Edith came towards me; all dripping as I was, she placed her hands upon my shoulders. 'How grand you are!' she said. 'I am,' I answered; then I added, 'Miss Croyden, for Heaven's sake don't touch me on the ear. I can't stand it.' I turned from her and looked out over the sea. Presently I heard something like a groan behind me. The girl had thrown herself on the sand and was coiled up in a hoop. 'Miss Croyden,' I said, 'for God's sake don't coil up in a hoop.'

I rushed to the beach and rubbed gravel on my face.

With such activities, alternated with wild bursts of restraint, our life on the island passed as rapidly as in a dream. Had I not taken care to notch the days upon a stick and then cover the stick with tar, I could not have known the passage of the time. The wearing out of our clothing had threatened a serious difficulty. But by good fortune I had seen a large black and white goat wandering among the rocks and had chased it to a standstill. From its skin, leaving the fur still on, Edith had fashioned us clothes. Our boots we had replaced with

alligator hide. I had, by a lucky chance, found an alligator upon the beach, and attaching a string to the fellow's neck I had led him to our camp. I had then poisoned the fellow with tinned salmon and removed his hide.

Our costume was now brought into harmony with our surroundings. For myself, garbed in goatskin with the hair outside, with alligator sandals on my feet and with whiskers at least six inches long, I have no doubt that I resembled the beau idéal of a cave man. With the open-air life a new agility seemed to have come into my limbs. With a single leap in my alligator sandals I was enabled to spring into a cocoanut tree.

As for Edith Croyden, I can only say that as she stood beside me on the beach in her suit of black goatskin (she had chosen the black spots) there were times when I felt like seizing her in the frenzy of my passion and hurling her into the sea. Fur always acts on me just like that.

It was at the opening of the fifth week of our life upon the island that a new and more surprising turn was given to our adventure. It arose out of a certain curiosity, harmless enough, on Edith Croyden's part. 'Mr. Borus,' she said one morning, 'I should like so much to see the rest of our island. Can we?'

'Alas, Miss Croyden,' I said, 'I fear that there is but little to see. Our island, so far as

I can judge, is merely one of the uninhabited keys of the West Indies. It is nothing but rock and sand and scrub. There is no life upon it. I fear,' I added, speaking as jauntily as I could, 'that unless we are taken off it we are destined to stay on it.'

'Still I should like to see it,' she persisted.

'Come on, then,' I answered, 'if you are good for a climb we can take a look over the ridge of rocks where I went up on the first day.'

We made our way across the sand of the beach, among the rocks and through the close matted scrub, beyond which an eminence of rugged boulders shut out the further view.

Making our way to the top of this we obtained a wide look over the sea. The island stretched away to a considerable distance to the eastward, widening as it went, the complete view of it being shut off by similar and higher ridges of rock.

But it was the nearer view, the foreground that at once arrested our attention. Edith seized my arm. 'Look, oh, look!' she said.

Down just below us on the right hand was a similar beach to the one that we had left. A rude hut had been erected on it and various articles lay strewn about.

Seated on a rock with their backs towards us were a man and a woman. The man was dressed in goatskins, and his whiskers, so I

inferred from what I could see of them from the side, were at least as exuberant as mine. The woman was in white fur with a fillet of seaweed round her head. They were sitting close together as if in earnest colloquy.

'Cave people,' whispered Edith, 'aborigines of the island.'

But I answered nothing. Something in the tall outline of the seated woman held my eye. A cruel presentiment stabbed me to the heart.

In my agitation my foot overset a stone, which rolled noisily down the rocks. The noise attracted the attention of the two seated below us. They turned and looked searchingly towards the place where we were concealed. Their faces were in plain sight. As I looked at that of the woman I felt my heart cease beating and the colour leave my face.

I looked into Edith's face. It was as pale as mine.

'What does it mean?' she whispered.

'Miss Croyden,' I answered, 'Edith—it means this. I have never found the courage to tell you. I am a married man. The woman seated there is my wife. And I love you.'

Edith put out her arms with a low cry and clasped me about the neck. 'Harold,' she murmured, 'My Harold.'

'Have I done wrong?' I whispered.

'Only what I have done too,' she answered.

'I, too, am married, Harold, and the man sitting there below, John Croyden, is my husband.'

With a wild cry such as a cave man might have uttered, I had leapt to my feet.

'Your husband!' I shouted. 'Then, by the living God, he or I shall never leave this place alive.'

He saw me coming as I bounded down the rocks. In an instant he had sprung to his feet. He gave no cry. He asked no question. He stood erect as a cave man would, waiting for his enemy.

And there upon the sands beside the sea we fought, barehanded and weaponless. We fought as cave men fight.

For a while we circled round one another, growling. We circled four times, each watching for an opportunity. Then I picked up a great handful of sand and threw it flap into his face. He grabbed a coco-nut and hit me with it in the stomach. Then I seized a twisted strand of wet seaweed and landed him with it behind the ear. For a moment he staggered. Before he could recover I jumped forward, seized him by the hair, slapped his face twice and then leaped behind a rock. Looking from the side I could see that Croyden, though half dazed, was feeling round for something to throw. To my horror I saw a great stone lying ready to his hand. Beside me was

nothing. I gave myself up for lost, when at that very moment I heard Edith's voice behind me saying, 'The shovel, quick, the shovel!' The noble girl had rushed back to our encampment and had fetched me the shovel. 'Swat him with that,' she cried. I seized the shovel, and with the roar of a wounded bull—or as near as I could make it—I rushed out from the rock, the shovel swung over my head.

But the fight was all out of Croyden.

'Don't strike,' he said, 'I'm all in. I couldn't stand a crack with that kind of thing.'

He sat down upon the sand, limp. Seen thus, he somehow seemed to be quite a small man, not a cave man at all. His goatskin suit shrunk in on him. I could hear his pants as he sat.

'I surrender,' he said. 'Take both the women. They are yours.'

I stood over him leaning upon the shovel. The two women had closed in near to us.

'I suppose you are *her* husband, are you?' Croyden went on.

I nodded.

'I thought you were. Take her.'

Meantime Clara had drawn nearer to me. She looked somehow very beautiful with her golden hair in the sunlight, and the white furs draped about her.

'Harold!' she exclaimed. 'Harold, is it you? How strange and masterful you look. I didn't know you were so strong.'

I turned sternly towards her.

'When I was alone,' I said, 'on the Himalayas hunting the humpo or humped buffalo——'

Clara clasped her hands, looking into my face.

'Yes,' she said, 'tell me about it.'

Meantime I could see that Edith had gone over to John Croyden.

'John,' she said, 'you shouldn't sit on the wet sand like that. You will get a chill. Let me help you to get up.'

I looked at Clara and at Croyden.

'How has this happened?' I asked. 'Tell me.'

'We were on the same ship,' Croyden said. 'There came a great storm. Even the captain had never seen——'

'I know,' I interrupted, 'so had ours.'

'The ship struck a rock, and blew out her four funnels——'

'Ours did too,' I nodded.

'The bowsprit was broken, and the steward's pantry was carried away. The captain gave orders to leave the ship——'

'It is enough, Croyden,' I said, 'I see it all now. You were left behind when the boats cleared, by what accident you don't know——'

'I don't,' said Croyden.

'As best you could, you constructed a raft, and with such haste as you might you placed on it such few things——'

'Exactly,' he said, 'a chronometer, a sextant——'

'I know,' I continued, 'two quadrants, a bucket of water, and a lightning rod. I presume you picked up Clara floating in the sea.'

'I did,' Croyden said; 'she was unconscious when I got her, but by rubbing——'

'Croyden,' I said, raising the shovel again, 'cut that out.'

'I'm sorry,' he said.

'It's all right. But you needn't go on. I see all the rest of your adventures plainly enough.'

'Well, I'm done with it all anyway,' said Croyden gloomily. 'You can do what you like. As for me, I've got a decent suit back there at our camp, and I've got it dried and pressed and I'm going to put it on.'

He rose wearily, Edith standing beside him.

'What's more, Borus,' he said, 'I'll tell you something. This island is not uninhabited at all.'

'Not uninhabited!' exclaimed Clara and Edith together. I saw each of them give a rapid look at her goatskin suit.

'Nonsense, Croyden,' I said, 'this island is one of the West Indian keys. On such a key as this the pirates used to land. Here they careened their ships——'

'Did what to them?' asked Croyden.

'Careened them all over from one end to the

other,' I said. 'Here they got water and buried treasure; but beyond that the island was, and remained, only the home of the wild gull and the sea-mews——'

'All right,' said Croyden, 'only it doesn't happen to be that kind of key. It's a West Indian island all right, but there's a summer hotel on the other end of it not two miles away.'

'A summer hotel!' we exclaimed.

'Yes, a hotel. I suspected it all along. I picked up a tennis racket on the beach the first day; and after that I walked over the ridge and through the jungle and I could see the roof of the hotel. Only,' he added rather shamefacedly, 'I didn't like to tell her.'

'Oh, you coward!' cried Clara. 'I could slap you.'

'Don't you dare,' said Edith. 'I'm sure you knew it as well as he did. And anyway, I was certain of it myself. I picked up a copy of last week's paper in a lunch-basket on the beach, and hid it from Mr. Borus. I didn't want to hurt his feelings.'

At that moment Croyden pointed with a cry towards the sea.

'Look,' he said, 'for heaven's sake, look!'

He turned.

Less than a quarter of a mile away we could see a large white motor launch coming round the corner. The deck was gay with awnings and bright dresses and parasols.

'Great heavens!' said Croyden. 'I know that launch. It's the Appin-Joneses'.'

'The Appin-Joneses'!' cried Clara. 'Why, we know them too. Don't you remember, Harold, the Sunday we spent with them on the Hudson?'

Instinctively we had all jumped for cover, behind the rocks.

'Whatever shall we do?' I exclaimed.

'We must get our things,' said Edith Croyden. 'Jack, if your suit is ready run and get it and stop the launch. Mrs. Borus and Mr. Borus and I can get our things straightened up while you keep them talking. My suit is nearly ready anyway; I thought some one might come. Mr. Borus, would you mind running and fetching me my things, they're all in a parcel together? And perhaps if you have a looking-glass and some pins, Mrs. Borus, I could come over and dress with you.'

. . . . .

That same evening we found ourselves all comfortably gathered on the piazza of the Hotel Christopher Columbus. Appin-Jones insisted on making himself our host, and the story of our adventures was related again and again to an admiring audience, with the accompaniment of cigars and iced champagne. Only one detail was suppressed, by common instinct. Both Clara and I felt that it would only raise

needless comment to explain that Mr. and Mrs. Croyden had occupied separate encampments.

Nor is it necessary to relate our safe and easy return to New York.

Both Clara and I found Mr. and Mrs. Croyden delightful travelling companions, though perhaps we were not sorry when the moment came to say good-bye.

'The word "good-bye",' I remarked to Clara, as we drove away, 'is always a painful one. Oddly enough, when I was hunting the humpo, or humped buffalo, of the Himalayas——'

'Do tell me about it, darling,' whispered Clara, as she nestled beside me in the cab.

III. BACK FROM THE LAND

I HAVE just come back—now with the closing in of autumn—to the city. I have hung up my hoe in my study; my spade is put away behind the piano. I have with me seven pounds of Paris Green that I had over. Anybody who wants it may have it. I didn't like to bury it for fear of its poisoning the ground. I didn't like to throw it away for fear of its destroying cattle. I was afraid to leave it in my summer place for fear that it might poison the tramps who generally break in in November. I have it with me now. I move it from room to room, as I hate to turn my back upon it. Anybody who wants it, I repeat, can have it.

I should like also to give away, either to the Red Cross or to anything else, ten packets of radish seed (the early curled variety, I think), fifteen packets of cucumber seed (the long succulent variety, I believe it says), and twenty packets of onion seed (the Yellow Danvers, distinguished, I understand, for its edible flavour and its nutritious properties). It is not likely that I shall ever, on this side of the grave, plant onion seed again. All these things I have with me. My vegetables are to come after me by freight. They are booked from Simcoe County to Montreal; at present they are, I

believe, passing through Schenectady. But they will arrive later all right. They were seen going through Detroit last week, moving west. It is the first time that I ever sent anything by freight anywhere. I never understood before the wonderful organization of the railroads. But they tell me that there is a bad congestion of freight down South this month. If my vegetables get tangled up in that there is no telling when they will arrive.

In other words, I am one of the legion of men—quiet, determined, resolute men—who went out last spring to plant the land, and who are now back.

With me—and I am sure that I speak for all the others as well—it was not a question of mere pleasure; it was no love of gardening for its ownsake that inspired us. It was a plain national duty. What we said to ourselves was: 'This war has got to stop. The men in the trenches thus far have failed to stop it. Now let *us* try. The whole thing,' we argued, 'is a plain matter of food production.'

'If we raise enough food the Germans are bound to starve. Very good. Let us kill them.'

I suppose there was never a more grimly determined set of men went out from the cities than those who went out last May, as I did, to conquer the food problem. I don't mean to say that each and every one of us actually left the city. But we all 'went forth' in the

metaphorical sense. Some of the men cultivated back gardens; others took vacant lots; some went out into the suburbs; and others, like myself, went right out into the country.

We are now back. Each of us has with him his Paris Green, his hoe and the rest of his radish seed.

The time has, therefore, come for a plain, clear statement of our experience. We have, as everybody knows, failed. We have been beaten back all along the line. Our potatoes are buried in a jungle of autumn burdocks. Our radishes stand seven feet high, uneatable. Our tomatoes, when last seen, were greener than they were at the beginning of August, and getting greener every week. Our celery looked as delicate as a maidenhair fern. Our Indian corn was nine feet high with a tall feathery spike on top of that, but no sign of anything eatable about it from top to bottom.

I look back with a sigh of regret at those bright, early days in April when we were all buying hoes, and talking soil and waiting for the snow to be off the ground. The street cars, as we went up and down to our offices, were a busy babel of garden talk. There was a sort of farmer-like geniality in the air. One spoke freely to strangers. Every man with a hoe was a friend. Men chewed straws in their offices, and kept looking out of windows to pretend to themselves that they were afraid it might blow

up rain. 'Got your tomatoes in?' one man would ask another as they went up in the elevator. 'Yes, I got mine in yesterday,' the other would answer, 'But I'm just a little afraid that this east wind may blow up a little frost. What we need now is growing weather.' And the two men would drift off together from the elevator door along the corridor, their heads together in friendly colloquy.

I have always regarded a lawyer as a man without a soul. There is one who lives next door to me to whom I have not spoken in five years. Yet when I saw him one day last spring heading for the suburbs in a pair of old trousers with a hoe in one hand and a box of celery plants in the other I felt that I loved the man. I used to think that stock-brokers were mere sordid calculating machines. Now that I have seen whole firms of them busy at the hoe, wearing old trousers that reached to their armpits and were tied about the waist with a polka dot necktie, I know that they are men. I know that there are warm hearts beating behind those trousers.

Old trousers, I say. Where on earth did they all come from in such a sudden fashion last spring? Everybody had them. Who would suspect that a man drawing a salary of ten thousand a year was keeping in reserve a pair of pepper-and-salt breeches, four sizes too large

for him, just in case a war should break out against Germany! Talk of German mobilization! I doubt whether the organizing power was all on their side after all. At any rate it is estimated that fifty thousand pairs of old trousers were mobilized in Montreal in one week.

But perhaps it was not a case of mobilization, or deliberate preparedness. It was rather an illustration of the primitive instinct that is in all of us and that will out in 'war time'. Any man worth the name would wear old breeches all the time if the world would let him. Any man will wind a polka dot tie round his waist in preference to wearing patent braces. The makers of the ties know this. That is why they make the tie four feet long. And in the same way if any manufacturer of hats will put on the market an old fedora, with a limp rim and a mark where the ribbon used to be but is not—a hat guaranteed to be six years old, well weathered, well rained on, and certified to have been walked over by a herd of cattle—that man will make and deserve a fortune.

These at least were the fashions of last May. Alas, where are they now? The men that wore them have relapsed again into tailor-made tweeds. They have put on hard new hats. They are shining their boots again. They are shaving again, not merely on Saturday night, but every day. They are sinking back into civilization.

Yet those were bright times and I cannot forbear to linger on them. Not the least pleasant feature was our rediscovery of the morning. My neighbour on the right was always up at five. My neighbour on the left was out and about by four. With the earliest light of day, little columns of smoke rose along our street from the kitchen ranges where our wives were making coffee for us before the servants got up. By six o'clock the street was alive and busy with friendly salutations. The milkman seemed a late comer, a poor, sluggish fellow who failed to appreciate the early hours of the day. A man, we found, might live through quite a little Iliad of adventure before going to his nine o'clock office.

'How will you possibly get time to put in a garden?' I asked of one of my neighbours during this glad period of early spring just before I left for the country. 'Time!' he exclaimed. 'Why, my dear fellow, I don't have to be down at the warehouse till eight-thirty.'

Later in the summer I saw the wreck of his garden, choked with weeds. 'Your garden,' I said, 'is in poor shape.' 'Garden!' he said indignantly. 'How on earth can I find time for a garden? Do you realize that I have to be down at the warehouse at eight-thirty?'

When I look back to our bright beginnings our failure seems hard indeed to understand. It is only when I survey the whole garden

movement in melancholy retrospect that I am able to see some of the reasons for it.

The principal one, I think, is the question of the season. It appears that the right time to begin gardening is last year. For many things it is well to begin the year before last. For good results one must begin even sooner. Here, for example, are the directions, as I interpret them, for growing asparagus. Having secured a suitable piece of ground, preferably a deep friable loam rich in nitrogen, go out three years ago and plough or dig deeply. Remain a year inactive, thinking. Two years ago pulverize the soil thoroughly. Wait a year. As soon as last year comes set out the young shoots. Then spend a quiet winter doing nothing. The asparagus will then be ready to work at *this* year.

This is the rock on which we were wrecked. Few of us were men of sufficient means to spend several years in quiet thought waiting to begin gardening. Yet that is, it seems, the only way to begin. Asparagus demands a preparation of four years. To fit oneself to grow strawberries requires three years. Even for such humble things as peas, beans and lettuce the instructions inevitably read, 'plough the soil deeply in the preceding autumn'. This sets up a dilemma. *Which* is the preceding autumn? If a man begins gardening in the spring he is too late for last autumn and too

early for this. On the other hand if he begins in the autumn he is again too late; he has missed this summer's crop. It is, therefore, ridiculous to begin in the autumn and impossible to begin in the spring.

This was our first difficulty. But the second arose from the question of the soil itself. All the books and instructions insist that the selection of the soil is the most important part of gardening. No doubt it is. But, if a man has already selected his own backyard before he opens the book, what remedy is there? All the books lay stress on the need of 'a deep, friable loam full of nitrogen.' This I have never seen. My own plot of land I found on examination to contain nothing but earth. I could see no trace of nitrogen. I do not deny the existence of loam. There may be such a thing. But I am admitting now in all humility of mind that I don't know what loam is. Last spring my fellow gardeners and I all talked freely of the desirability of 'a loam'. My own opinion is that none of them had any clearer ideas about it than I had. Speaking from experience, I should say that the only soils are earth mud, and dirt. There are no others.

But I leave out the soil. In any case we were mostly forced to disregard it. Perhaps a more fruitful source of failure even than the lack of loam was the attempt to apply calculation and mathematics to gardening. Thus, if

one cabbage will grow in one square foot of ground, how many cabbages will grow in ten square feet of ground? Ten? Not at all. The answer is *one*. You will find as a matter of practical experience that however many cabbages you plant in a garden plot there will be only *one* that will really grow. This you will presently come to speak of as *the* cabbage. Beside it all the others (till the caterpillars finally finish their existence) will look but poor, lean things. But *the* cabbage will be a source of pride and an object of display to visitors; in fact it would ultimately have grown to be a *real* cabbage, such as you buy for ten cents at any market, were it not that you inevitably cut it and eat it when it is still only half-grown.

This always happens to the one cabbage that is of decent size, and to the one tomato that shows signs of turning red (it is really a feeble green-pink), and to the only melon that might have lived to ripen. They get eaten. No one but a practised professional gardener can live and sleep beside a melon three-quarters ripe and a cabbage two-thirds grown without going out and tearing it off the stem.

Even at that it is not a bad plan to eat the stuff while you can. The most peculiar thing about gardening is that all of a sudden everything is too old to eat. Radishes change overnight from delicate young shoots not large enough to put on the table into huge plants

seven feet high with a root like an Irish shillelagh. If you take your eyes off a lettuce bed for a week the lettuces, not ready to eat when you last looked at them, have changed into a tall jungle of hollyhocks. Green peas are only really green for about two hours. Before that they are young peas; after that they are old peas. Cucumbers are the worst case of all. They change overnight from delicate little bulbs obviously too slight and dainty to pick, to old cases of yellow leather filled with seeds.

If I were ever to garden again, a thing which is out of the bounds of possibility, I should wait until a certain day and hour when all the plants were ripe, and then go out with a gun and shoot them all dead, so that they could grow no more.

But calculation, I repeat, is the bane of gardening. I knew, among our group of food producers, a party of young engineers, college men, who took an empty farm north of the city as the scene of their summer operations. They took their coats off and applied college methods. They ran out, first, a base line AB, and measured off from it lateral spurs MN, OP, QR, and so on. From these they took side angles with a theodolite so as to get the edges of each of the separate plots of their land absolutely correct. I saw them working at it all through one Saturday afternoon in May. They talked as they did it of the peculiar ignorance of the

so-called practical farmer. He never—so they agreed—uses his head. He never—I think I have their phrase correct—stops to think. In laying out his ground for use, it never occurs to him to try to get the maximum result from a given space. If a farmer would only realize that the contents of a circle represent the maximum of space enclosable in a given perimeter, and that a circle is merely a function of its own radius, what a lot of time he would save.

These young men that I speak of laid out their field engineer-fashion with little white posts at even distances. They made a blueprint of the whole thing as they planted it. Every corner of it was charted out. The yield was calculated to a nicety. They had allowed for the fact that some of the stuff might fail to grow by introducing what they called 'a coefficient of error'. By means of this and by reducing the variation of autumn prices to a mathematical curve, those men not only knew already in the middle of May the exact yield of their farm to within half a bushel (they allowed, they said, a variation of half a bushel per fifty acres), but they knew beforehand within a few cents the market value that they would receive. The figures, as I remember them, were simply amazing. It seemed incredible that fifty acres could produce so much. Yet there were the plain facts in front of one, calculated out. The thing amounted practically

to a revolution in farming. At least it ought to have. And it would have if those young men had come again to hoe their field. But it turned out, most unfortunately, that they were busy. To their great regret they were too busy to come. They had been working under a free-and-easy arrangement. Each man was to give what time he could every Saturday. It was left to every man's honour to do what he could. There was no compulsion. Each man trusted the others to be there. In fact the thing was not only an experiment in food production, it was also a new departure in social co-operation. The first Saturday that those young men worked there were, so I have been told, seventy-five of them driving in white stakes and running lines. The next Saturday there were fifteen of them planting potatoes. The rest were busy. The week after that there was one man hoeing weeds. After that silence fell upon the deserted garden, broken only by the cry of the chick-a-dee and the choo-choo feeding on the waving heads of the thistles.

But I have indicated only two or three of the ways of failing at food production. There are ever so many more. What amazes me, in returning to the city, is to find the enormous quantities of produce of all sorts offered for sale in the markets. It is an odd thing that last spring, by a queer oversight, we never thought, any of us, of this process of increasing the

supply. If every patriotic man would simply take a large basket and go to the market every day and buy all that he could carry away there need be no further fear of a food famine.

And, meantime, my own vegetables are on their way. They are in a soap box with bars across the top, coming by freight. They weigh forty-six pounds, including the box. They represent the result of four months' arduous toil in sun, wind, and storm. Yet it is pleasant to think that I shall be able to feed with them some poor family of refugees during the rigour of the winter. Either that or give them to the hens. I certainly won't eat the rotten things myself.

IV. THE SORROWS OF A SUMMER GUEST

LET me admit, as I start to write, that the whole thing is my own fault. I should never have come. I knew better. I have known better for years. I have known that it is sheer madness to go and pay visits in other people's houses.

Yet in a moment of insanity I have let myself in for it and here I am. There is no hope, no outlet now till the first of September when my visit is to terminate. Either that or death. I do not greatly care which.

I write this, where no human eye can see me, down by the pond—they call it the lake—at the foot of Beverly-Jones's estate. It is six o'clock in the morning. No one is up. For a brief hour or so there is peace. But presently Miss Larkspur—the jolly English girl who arrived last week—will throw open her casement window and call across the lawn, 'Hullo everybody! What a ripping morning!' And young Poppleton will call back in a Swiss yodel from somewhere in the shrubbery, and Beverly-Jones will appear on the piazza with big towels round his neck and shout, 'Who's coming for an early dip?' And so the day's fun and jollity—heaven help me—will begin again.

Presently they will all come trooping in to

breakfast, in coloured blazers and fancy blouses, laughing and grabbing at the food with mimic rudeness and bursts of hilarity. And to think that I might have been breakfasting at my club with the morning paper propped against the coffee-pot, in a silent room in the quiet of the city.

I repeat that it is my own fault that I am here.

For many years it had been a principle of my life to visit nobody. I had long since learned that visiting only brings misery. If I got a card or telegram that said, 'Won't you run up to the Adirondacks and spend the week-end with us?' I sent back word: 'No, not unless the Adirondacks can run faster than I can,' or words to that effect. If the owner of a country house wrote to me: 'Our man will meet you with a trap any afternoon that you care to name,' I answered, in spirit at least: 'No, he won't, not unless he has a bear-trap or one of those traps in which they catch wild antelope.' If any fashionable lady friend wrote to me in the peculiar jargon that they use: 'Can you give us from July the twelfth at half-after-three till the fourteenth at four?' I replied: 'Madam, take the whole month, take a year, but leave me in peace.'

Such at least was the spirit of my answers to invitations. In practice I used to find it sufficient to send a telegram that read:

'Crushed with work, impossible to get away,' and then stroll back into the reading-room of the club and fall asleep again.

But my coming here was my own fault. It resulted from one of those unhappy moments of expansiveness such as occur, I imagine, to everybody—moments when one appears to be something quite different from what one really is, when one feels oneself a thorough good fellow, sociable, merry, appreciative, and finds the people around one the same. Such moods are known to all of us. Some people say that it is the super-self asserting itself. Others say it is from drinking. But let it pass. That at any rate was the kind of mood that I was in when I met Beverly-Jones and when he asked me here.

It was in the afternoon, at the club. As I recall it, we were drinking cocktails and I was thinking what a bright, genial fellow Beverly-Jones was, and how completely I had mistaken him. For myself—I admit it—I am a brighter, better man after drinking two cocktails than at any other time—quicker, kindlier, more genial. And higher, morally. I had been telling stories in that inimitable way that one has after two cocktails. In reality, I only know four stories, and a fifth that I don't quite remember, but in moments of expansiveness they feel like a fund or flow.

It was under such circumstances that I sat

with Beverly-Jones. And it was in shaking hands at leaving that he said: 'I *do* wish, old chap, that you could run up to our summer place and give us the whole of August!' and I answered, as I shook him warmly by the hand: 'My *dear* fellow, I'd simply *love* to!' 'By gad, then, it's a go!' he said. 'You must come up for August, and wake us all up!'

Wake them up! Ye gods! Me wake them up!

One hour later I was repenting of my folly, and wishing, when I thought of the two cocktails, that the prohibition wave could be hurried up so as to leave us all high and dry—bone-dry, silent and unsociable.

Then I clung to the hope that Beverly-Jones would forget. But no. In due time his wife wrote to me. They were looking forward so much, she said, to my visit; they felt—she repeated her husband's ominous phrase—that I should wake them all up!

What sort of alarm-clock did they take me for, anyway!

Ah, well! They know better now. It was only yesterday afternoon that Beverly-Jones found me standing here in the gloom of some cedar-trees beside the edge of the pond and took me back so quietly to the house that I realized he thought I meant to drown myself. So I did.

I could have stood it better—my coming

here, I mean—if they hadn't come down to the station in a body to meet me in one of those long vehicles with seats down the sides: silly-looking men in coloured blazers and girls with no hats, all making a hullabaloo of welcome. 'We are quite a small party,' Mrs. Beverly-Jones had written. Small! Great heavens, what would they call a large one? And even those at the station turned out to be only half of them. There were just as many more all lined up on the piazza of the house as we drove up, all waving a fool welcome with tennis rackets and golf clubs.

Small party, indeed! Why, after six days there are still some of the idiots whose names I haven't got straight! That fool with the fluffy moustache, which is he? And that jackass that made the salad at the picnic yesterday, is he the brother of the woman with the guitar, or who?

But what I mean is, there is something in that sort of noisy welcome that puts me to the bad at the start. It always does. A group of strangers all laughing together, and with a set of catchwords and jokes all their own, always throws me into a fit of sadness, deeper than words. I had thought, when Mrs. Beverly-Jones said a *small* party, she really meant small. I had had a mental picture of a few sad people, greeting me very quietly and gently, and of myself, quiet, too, but cheerful

—somehow lifting them up, with no great effort, by my mere presence.

Somehow from the very first I could feel that Beverly-Jones was disappointed in me. He said nothing. But I knew it. On that first afternoon, between my arrival and dinner, he took me about his place, to show it to me. I wish that at some proper time I had learned just what it is that you say when a man shows you about his place. I never knew before how deficient I am in it. I am all right to be shown an iron-and-steel plant, or a soda-water factory, or anything really wonderful, but being shown a house and grounds and trees, things that I have seen all my life, leaves me absolutely silent.

'These big gates,' said Beverly-Jones, 'we only put up this year.'

'Oh,' I said. That was all. Why shouldn't they put them up this year? I didn't care if they'd put them up this year or a thousand years ago.

'We had quite a struggle,' he continued, 'before we finally decided on sandstone.'

'You did, eh?' I said. There seemed nothing more to say; I didn't know what sort of struggle he meant, or who fought who; and personally sandstone or soapstone or any other stone is all the same to me.

'This lawn,' said Beverly-Jones, 'we laid down the first year we were here.' I answered

nothing. He looked me right in the face as he said it and I looked straight back at him, but I saw no reason to challenge his statement. 'The geraniums along the border,' he went on, 'are rather an experiment. They're Dutch.'

I looked fixedly at the geraniums but never said a word. They were Dutch; all right, why not? They were an experiment. Very good; let them be so. I know nothing in particular to say about a Dutch experiment.

I could feel that Beverly-Jones grew depressed as he showed me round. I was sorry for him, but unable to help. I realized that there were certain sections of my education that had been neglected. How to be shown things and make appropriate comments seems to be an art in itself. I don't possess it. It is not likely now, as I look at this pond, that I ever shall.

Yet how simple a thing it seems when done by others. I saw the difference at once the very next day, the second day of my visit, when Beverly-Jones took round young Poppleton, the man that I mentioned above who will presently give a Swiss yodel from a clump of laurel bushes to indicate that the day's fun has begun.

Poppleton I had known before slightly. I used to see him at the club. In club surroundings he always struck me as an ineffable young ass, loud and talkative and perpetually breaking the silence rules. Yet I have to admit that in

his summer flannels and with a straw hat on he can do things that I can't.

'These big gates,' began Beverly-Jones, as he showed Poppleton round the place with me trailing beside them, 'we only put up this year.'

Poppleton, who has a summer place of his own, looked at the gates very critically.

'Now, do you know what *I'd* have done with those gates, if they were mine?' he said.

'No,' said Beverly-Jones.

'I'd have set them two feet wider apart; they're too narrow, old chap, too narrow.' Poppleton shook his head sadly at the gates.

'We had quite a struggle,' said Beverly-Jones, 'before we finally decided on sandstone.'

I realized that he had one and the same line of talk that he always used. I resented it. No wonder it was easy for him.

'Great mistake,' said Poppleton. 'Too soft. Look at this'—here he picked up a big stone and began pounding at the gate-post—'see how easily it chips! Smashes right off. Look at that, the whole corner knocks right off, see!'

Beverly-Jones entered no protest. I began to see that there is a sort of understanding, a kind of freemasonry, among men who have summer places. One shows his things; the other runs them down, and smashes them. This makes the whole thing easy at once. Beverly-Jones showed his lawn.

'Your turf is all wrong, old boy,' said Popple-

ton. 'Look! it has no body to it. See, I can kick holes in it with my heel. Look at that, and that! If I had on stronger boots I could kick this lawn all to pieces.'

'These geraniums along the border,' said Beverly-Jones, 'are rather an experiment. They're Dutch.'

'But my dear fellow,' said Poppleton, 'you've got them set in wrongly. They ought to slope *from* the sun you know, never *to* it. Wait a bit' —here he picked up a spade that was lying where a gardener had been working—'I'll throw a few out. Notice how easily they come up. Ah, that fellow broke! They're apt to. There, I won't bother to reset them, but tell your man to slope them over from the sun. That's the idea.'

Beverly-Jones showed his new boat-house next and Poppleton knocked a hole in the side with a hammer to show that the lumber was too thin.

'If that were *my* boat-house,' he said, 'I'd rip the outside clean off it, and use shingle and stucco.'

It was, I noticed, Poppleton's plan first to imagine Beverly-Jones's things his own, and then to smash them, and then give them back smashed to Beverly-Jones. This seemed to please them both. Apparently it is a well-understood method of entertaining a guest and being entertained. Beverly-Jones and

Poppleton, after an hour or so of it, were delighted with one another.

Yet somehow, when I tried it myself, it failed to work.

'Do you know what I would do with that cedar summer-house if it was mine?' I asked my host the next day.

'No,' he said.

'I'd knock the thing down and burn it,' I answered.

But I think I must have said it too fiercely. Beverly-Jones looked hurt and said nothing.

Not that these people are not doing all they can for me. I know that. I admit it. If I *should* meet my end here and if—to put the thing straight out—my lifeless body is found floating on the surface of this pond, I should like there to be documentary evidence of *that* much. They are trying their best. 'This is Liberty Hall,' Mrs. Beverly-Jones said to me on the first day of my visit. 'We want you to feel that you are to do absolutely as you like!'

Absolutely as I like! How little they know me. I should like to have answered: 'Madam, I have now reached a time of life when human society at breakfast is impossible to me; when any conversation prior to eleven a.m. must be considered out of the question; when I prefer to eat my meals in quiet, or with only such mild hilarity as can be got from a comic paper; when I can no longer wear nankeen pants and

a coloured blazer without a sense of personal indignity; when I can no longer leap and play in the water like a young fish; when I do not yodel, cannot sing and, to my regret, dance even worse than I did when young; and when the mood of mirth and hilarity comes to me only as a rare visitant—shall we say at a burlesque performance—and never as a daily part of my existence. Madam, I am unfit to be a summer guest. If this is Liberty Hall indeed, let me, oh, let me go!'

Such is the speech that I would make if it were possible. As it is, I can only rehearse it to myself.

Indeed, the more I analyse it the more impossible it seems, for a man of my temperament at any rate, to be a summer guest. These people, and, I imagine, all other summer people, seem to be trying to live in a perpetual joke. Everything, all day, has to be taken in a mood of uproarious fun.

However, I can speak of it all now in quiet retrospect and without bitterness. It will soon be over now. Indeed, the reason why I have come down at this early hour to this quiet water is that things have reached a crisis. The situation has become extreme and I must end it.

It happened last night. Beverly-Jones took me aside while the others were dancing the fox-trot to the victrola on the piazza.

'We're planning to have some rather good

fun to-morrow night,' he said, 'something that will be a good deal more in your line than a lot of it, I'm afraid, has been up here. In fact, my wife says that this will be the very thing for you.'

'Oh,' I said.

'We're going to get all the people from the other houses over and the girls'—this term Beverly-Jones uses to mean his wife and her friends—'are going to get up a sort of entertainment with charades and things, all impromptu, more or less, of course——'

'Oh,' I said. I saw already what was coming.

'And they want you to act as a sort of master-of-ceremonies, to make up the gags and introduce the different stunts and all that. I was telling the girls about that afternoon at the club, when you were simply killing us all with those funny stories of yours, and they're all wild over it.'

'Wild?' I repeated.

'Yes, quite wild over it. They say it will be the hit of the summer.'

Beverly-Jones shook hands with great warmth as we parted for the night. I knew that he was thinking that my character was about to be triumphantly vindicated, and that he was glad for my sake.

Last night I did not sleep. I remained awake all night thinking of the 'entertainment'. In my whole life I have done nothing in public

except once when I presented a walking-stick to the vice-president of our club on the occasion of his taking a trip to Europe. Even for that I used to rehearse to myself far into the night sentences that began: 'This walking-stick, gentlemen, means far more than a mere walking-stick.'

And now they expect me to come out as a merry master-of-ceremonies before an assembled crowd of summer guests.

But never mind. It is nearly over now. I have come down to this quiet water in the early morning to throw myself in. They will find me floating here among the lilies. Some few will understand. I can see it written, as it will be, in the newspapers.

'What makes the sad fatality doubly poignant is that the unhappy victim had just entered upon a holiday visit that was to have been prolonged throughout the whole month. Needless to say, he was regarded as the life and soul of the pleasant party of holiday makers that had gathered at the delightful country home of Mr. and Mrs. Beverly-Jones. Indeed, on the very day of the tragedy, he was to have taken a leading part in staging a merry performance of charades and parlour entertainments—a thing for which his genial talents and overflowing high spirits rendered him specially fit.'

When they read that, those who know me best will understand how and why I died.

'He had still over three weeks to stay there,' they will say. 'He was to act as the stage manager of charades.' They will shake their heads. They will understand.

But what is this? I raise my eyes from the paper and I see Beverly-Jones hurriedly approaching from the house. He is hastily dressed, with flannel trousers and a dressing-gown. His face looks grave. Something has happened. Thank God, something has happened. Some accident! Some tragedy! Something to prevent the charades!

. . . . .

I write these few lines on a fast train that is carrying me back to New York, a cool, comfortable train, with a deserted club-car where I can sit in a leather arm-chair, with my feet up on another, smoking, silent, and at peace.

Villages, farms and summer places are flying by. Let them fly. I, too, am flying—back to the rest and quiet of the city.

'Old man,' Beverly-Jones said, as he laid his hand on mine very kindly—he is a decent fellow, after all, is Jones—'they're calling you by long-distance from New York.'

'What is it?' I asked, or tried to gasp.

'It's bad news, old chap; fire in your office last evening. I'm afraid a lot of your private papers were burned. Robinson—that's your senior clerk, isn't it?—seems to have been on

the spot trying to save things. He's badly singed about the face and hands. I'm afraid you must go at once.'

'Yes, yes,' I said, 'at once.'

'I know. I've told the man to get the trap ready right away. You've just time to catch the seven-ten. Come along.'

'Right,' I said. I kept my face as well as I could, trying to hide my exultation. The office burnt! Fine! Robinson singed! Glorious! I hurriedly packed my things and whispered to Beverly-Jones farewell messages for the sleeping household. I never felt so jolly and facetious in my life. I could feel that Beverly-Jones was admiring the spirit and pluck with which I took my misfortune. Later on he would tell them all about it.

The trap ready! Hurrah! Good-bye, old man! Hurrah! All right. I'll telegraph. Right you are, good-bye. Hip, hip, hurrah! Here we are! Train right on time. Just these two bags, porter, and there's a dollar for you. What merry, merry fellows these darky porters are, anyway!

And so here I am in the train, safe bound for home and the summer quiet of my club.

Well done for Robinson! I was afraid that it had missed fire, or that my message to him had gone wrong. It was on the second day of my visit that I sent word to him to invent an accident—something, anything—to call me

back. I thought the message had failed. I had lost hope. But it is all right now, though he certainly pitched the note pretty high.

Of course I can't let the Beverly-Jones know that it was a put-up job. I must set fire to the office as soon as I get back. But it's worth it. And I'll have to singe Robinson about the face and hands. But it's worth that too!

V. THE PERFECT SALESMAN: A COMPLETE GUIDE TO BUSINESS

I ADMIT at the outset that I know nothing direct, personal or immediate about business. I have never been in it. If I were told to-morrow to go out and make $100,000 I should scarcely know how to do it. If anybody showed me a man in the street and told me to sell him a municipal six per cent bond, I shouldn't know how to begin: I shouldn't know how to 'approach' him, or how to hold his interest, or how to make him forget his troubles, or how to clinch him, or strike him to the earth at the final moment.

As to borrowing money—which is one of the great essentials of business—I simply couldn't do it. As soon as I got across the steps of the bank I should get afraid—scared that they would throw me out. I know, of course, from reading about it that this is mere silliness, that the bankers are there simply waiting to lend the money—just crazy to lend it. All you have to do is invite the general manager out to lunch and tell him that you want half a million dollars to float a big proposition (you don't tell him what it is—you just say that you'll let him know later), and the manager, so I gather, will be simply wild to lend you the money. All this I

pick up from the conversations which I overhear at my club from men who float things. But I couldn't do it myself: there's an art in it. To borrow money, big money, you have to wear your clothes in a certain way, walk in a certain way, and have about you an air of solemnity and majesty—something like the atmosphere of a Gothic cathedral. Small men like me and you, my dear reader, especially you, can't do it. We feel mean about it; and when we get the money, even if it is only ten dollars, we give ourselves away at once by wanting to hustle away with it too fast. The really big man in this kind of thing can borrow half a million, button it up in his chest, and then draw on his gloves and talk easily about the League of Nations and the prospect of rain. I admit I couldn't do it. If I ever got that half a million dollars I'd beat it out of the bank as fast as a cat going over a fence.

So, as I say, I make no pretensions to being a business man or to knowing anything about business. But I have a huge admiration for it, especially for big business, for the men at the top. They say that the whole railway business of this continent centres really in four men; and they say, too, that the whole money power of New York is really held by about six men; the entire forests of this country are practically owned by three men; the whole of South America, though it doesn't know it, is controlled by less than

five men; and the Atlantic Ocean is now to all intents and purposes in the hands of a little international group of not more than seven and less than eight.

Think what it would mean to be one of those eight, or one of that four, or even one or two of that three! There must be a tremendous fascination about it, to be in this kind of really Big Business: to sit at a desk and feel one's great brain slowly revolving on its axis; to know that one's capacious mind was majestically turning round and round, and to observe one's ponderous intellect moving irresistibly up and down.

We cannot wonder, when we reflect on this, that all the world nowadays is drawn by the fascination of business. It is not the money that people want—I will acquit humanity of that: few people care for money for its own sake—it is the thought of what can be done with the money. 'Oh, if I only had a million dollars!' I heard a woman say the other day on the platform of a social service meeting. And I could guess just what she meant—that she would quit work and go to the South Sea Islands and play Mah Jong and smoke opium. I've had the same idea again and again.

SALESMANSHIP AND THE PERFECT SALESMAN

The most essential feature of modern business is, I imagine, salesmanship. My readers may

not appreciate this at once—they seldom seem to get anything readily—and so I will explain some of the reasons which lead me to think so. Without salesmanship we could not sell anything. If we could not sell anything we might as well not make anything, because if we made things and couldn't sell them it would be as bad as if we sold things and couldn't make them.

Hence the most terrible danger that the world can face is that everybody will be buying things and nobody able to sell them. This danger of not selling anything, which used to threaten the world with disaster only a short time ago, is now being removed. Salesmanship, my readers will be glad to learn—at least if the miserable creatures ever get thrilled at anything—is being reduced to a science. A great number of Manuals of Salesmanship are now being placed within reach of everybody, and from these we can gather the essentials of the subject.

In the small space which it is here feasible to devote to the subject it is not possible to treat in an adequate way such a vast and important subject as modern salesmanship. For complete information recourse should be had to any one of the many manuals to which I refer, and which can be had at a trifling sum, such as ten dollars, or even more. But we may indicate here a few of the principal points of salesmanship.

THE PERFECT SALESMAN

PERSONALITY OF THE SALESMAN

It is essential that the salesman should have charm. If he wishes to sell anything—let us say lead pipe for use in sewers and house drains—he will find that what he needs most in selling is personal charm, a sort of indefinable manner, with just that little touch of *noblesse* which suggests the easy *camaraderie* of the menagerie. In other words, he must diffuse wherever he goes, in selling sewer pipes, a sense of sunshine which makes the world seem a little brighter when he is gone.

In person, the perfect salesman should be rather tall, with a figure which suggests, to his customers, the outline of the Venus de Milo. According to the manuals of salesmanship he can get this figure by taking exercises every morning on the floor of his hotel bedroom. But the discussion of that point has been undertaken already. Let us suppose him, then, with the characteristic figure of a Venus de Milo, or, if one will, of a Paduan Mercury, or of a Bologna sausage. We come, in any case, to the all important point of dress.

HOW SHALL THE PERFECT SALESMAN DRESS?

Every manual on the subject emphasizes the large importance of dress for the salesman. Indeed, there is probably nothing which has a greater bearing on success and failure in the

salesman than his dress. The well-dressed man —in selling, let us say, municipal bonds—has an initial advantage over the man who comes into his customer's store in tattered rags, with his toes protruding from his boots, unshaved and with a general air of want and misery stamped all over him. Customers are quick to notice these little things. But let the salesman turn up in an appropriate costume, bright and neat from head to foot and bringing with him something of the gladness of the early spring and the singing bird, and the customer is immediately impressed in his favour.

One asks, what, then, should be the costume of the perfect salesman? It is not an easy question to answer. Obviously his costume must vary with the season and with the weather and with the time of day. One might suggest, however, that on rising in the morning the salesman should throw round him a light *peignoir* of yellow silk or a figured kimono slashed from the hips with pink insertions and brought round in a bold sweep to the small of the back. This should be worn during the morning toilet while putting the hair up in its combs, while adjusting the dicky and easing the suspenders. If breakfast is taken in the bedroom, the liver and bacon may be eaten in this costume.

Breakfast over, the great moment approaches for the perfect salesman to get out upon the street. Here the daintiest care must be selected

in choosing his dress. And here we may interpose at once a piece of plain and vigorous advice: the simplest is the best. The salesman makes a great mistake who comes into his customer's premises covered with jewellery, with ear-rings in his ears and expensive bracelets on his feet and ankles. Nor should there be in the salesman's dress anything the least suggestive of immodesty. No salesman should ever appear with bare arms, or with his waistcoat cut so low as to suggest impropriety. Some salesmen, especially in the hardware business, are tempted to appear with bare arms, but they ought not to do it. For evening wear and for social recreation the case is different. When work is over, the salesman, in returning to his hotel, may very properly throw on a georgette camisole open at the throat or a lace fichu with ear-flaps of perforated celluloid. But the salesman should remember that for the hours of business anything in the way of a luxurious or suggestive costume should be avoided. Unfortunately this is not always done. I have myself again and again noticed salesmen, especially in the hardware business, where they take their coats off, to be wearing a suit calculated to reveal their figure round the hips and the lower part of the back in an immodest way.

All this kind of thing should be avoided. The salesman should select from his wardrobe (or from his straw valise) a suit of plain, severe

design, attractive and yet simple, good and yet bad, long and at the same time short, in other words, something that is expensive but cheap.

He should button this up in some simple way with just a plain clasp at the throat, agate perhaps or onyx, and then, having buttoned up all his buttons, but, mark me, not until then, he should go out upon the street prepared to do business.

Let any of my readers who doubts the importance of dress—and some of them are nuts enough to doubt anything—consider the following little anecdote of salesmanship. It is one that I selected from among the many little anecdotes of the sort which are always inserted in the manuals.

ANECDOTE OF THE ILL-DRESSED SALESMAN

A salesman in the middle west, whom we will call Mr. Blank, called upon a merchant, whom we will call Mr. Nut, and, finding no difficulty in approaching him, started in to show him his line with every hope of selling him. It should be explained that the line which Mr. Blank carried consisted of haberdashery, gents' furnishings and cut-to-fit suits. Mr. Nut was evidently delighted with the samples, and already a big pile of neckties, gents' collarings, gents' shirtings and gents' sockings was stacked up on the counter and an order form for $375.50 all ready to sign, when Mr. Nut noticed the

salesman's own costume. Mr. Blank, who was a careless man in regard to dress, though otherwise a man of intelligence, was wearing a low-crowned Derby hat with a scooping brim over his ears, a celluloid collar and a dicky that was too small for him. His coat sleeves came only a little way below his elbows and plainly showed his cuffs, fastened with long steel clips to his undershirt. In other words, the man somehow lacked *class*. Mr. Nut put down his pen. 'I'm sorry, Mr. Blank,' he said, 'I can't buy from you. Your line is all right, but you lack something, I can't just say what, but if I had to give it a name I should call it *tone*.' Blank, however, who was a man of resource, at once realised his error. 'One moment, Mr. Nut,' he said, 'don't refuse this order too soon.' With that he gathered up his valise and his samples and retreated to the back of the store behind a screen. In a few minutes he reappeared *dressed in his own samples*. The merchant, delighted at the change in Mr. Blank's appearance, kissed him and signed the order.

APPROACHING THE PROSPECT

So much for the salesman's dress, a matter of great importance, but still only a preliminary to our discussion. Let us suppose then our salesman, fully dressed, his buttons all adjusted and drawing well, his suspenders regulated and his

dicky set well in place. His next task is to 'approach' his customer.

All those who understand salesmanship are well aware this is the really vital matter. Everything depends on it. And nevertheless 'approaching' the merchant is a thing of great difficulty. The merchant, if we may believe our best books on salesmanship, is as wary as a mountain antelope. At the least alarm he will leap from his counter ten feet in the air and rush to the top of his attic floor; or perhaps he will make a dive into his cellar, where he will burrow his way among barrels and boxes and become completely hidden. In such a case he can only be dug out with a spade. Some merchants are even crafty enough to have an assistant or sentinel posted in such a way as to give the alarm of the salesman's approach.

How then can the salesman manage to get his interview with the merchant or, to use a technical term, to get next to his *prospect*? The answer is that he must 'stalk' his prospect as the hunter stalks the mountain goat or the wild hog. Dressed in a becoming way, he must circulate outside his prospect's premises, occasionally taking a peep at him through the window and perhaps imitating the song of a bird or the gentle cooing of a dove. Pleased with the soft note of the bird's song, the prospect will presently be seen to relax into a smile. Now is the moment for the salesman to act.

He enters the place boldly, and says with a winning frankness, 'Mr. Nut, you thought it was a bird. It was not. It was I. I am here to show you my line.'

If the salesman has chosen his moment rightly he will win. The merchant, once decoyed into looking at the line, is easily landed. On the other hand, the prospect may refuse even now to see the salesman and the attack must begin again. This difficulty of getting the merchant to see the salesman even when close beside him, and the way in which it can be overcome by perseverance, is well illustrated by a striking little anecdote which I quote from a recent book on salesmanship. The work, I may say, is authoritative, having been written by a man with over thirty years of experience in selling hardware and perfumes in the middle south-west.

ANECDOTE OF THE INVISIBLE MERCHANT

A salesman whom we will call Mr. M.—I should perhaps explain here the M. is not really his name, but just an ingenious way of indicating him—while travelling in the interests of perfume in the middle south-west came to a town which we designate T., where he was most anxious to see a prospect whom we will speak of as P. Entering P.'s premises one morning, M. asking if he could see P. P. refused. M. went out of the store and waited at

the door until P. emerged at the noon hour. As soon as P. emerged, M. politely asked if he could see him. P. refused to be seen. M. waited till night, and then presented himself at P.'s residence. 'Mr. P.,' said M., 'can I see you?' 'No,' said P., 'you can't.' This sort of thing went on for several days, during which M. presented himself continually before P., who as continually refused to see him. M. was almost in despair.

Perhaps I may interrupt this little story a moment to beg my readers not to be too much oppressed by M.'s despair. In these anecdotes the salesmen are always in despair at the lowest point of the story. But it is only a sign that the clouds are breaking. I will beg my readers then—if the poor simps have been getting depressed—to cheer up and hear what follows.

M., we say, was almost in despair when an idea occurred to him. He knew that Mr. P. was a very religious man and always attended divine worship (church) every Sunday. Disguising himself therefore to look like one of the apostles, M. seated himself at one side of Mr. P.'s pew. Mr. P., mistaking him for St. Matthew, was easily induced, during the sermon, to look over M.'s line of perfume.

The above anecdote incidentally raises the important question, how frank should the salesman be with his prospect? Should he go to

the length of telling the truth? An answer to this is that frankness will be found to be the best policy. We will illustrate it with a little story taken from the experience of a young salesman travelling in the north-south-west in the interest of brushes, face powder and toilet notion.

ANECDOTE OF THE TRUTHFUL SALESMAN

A young salesman, whom we will indicate as Mr. Asterisk, travelling in brushes and toilet supplies, was one day showing his line to Mr. Stroke, a drug merchant of a town in the east-north-south-west. Picking up one of the sample brushes, Mr. S. said to the salesman, 'That's an excellent brush.' Mr. A. answered, 'No, I'm sorry to say it is not. Its bristles fall out easily, and the wood is not really rosewood but a cheap imitation.' Mr. S. was so pleased with the young man's candour that he said, 'Mr. A., it is not often I meet a salesman as candid as you are. If you will show me the rest of your line I shall be delighted to fill out a first-class order.' 'Mr. S.,' answered Mr. A., 'I'm sorry to say that the whole line is as rotten as that brush.' More delighted than ever, Mr. S., who was a widower, invited Mr. A. to his house, where he met Mr. S.'s grown-up daughter, who kept house for him. The two young people immediately fell in love and were married, Mr. A. moving into the house and taking over the

business, while Mr. S., now without a home, went out selling brushes.

While we are speaking of the approach of the prospect it may be well to remind our readers very clearly—for the poor guys don't seem to get anything unless we make it clear—that a prospect otherwise invisible may be approached and seen by utilizing his fondness for amusements or sport. Many a man who is adamant at his place of business is mud on a golf course. The sternest and hardest of merchants may turn out to be an enthusiastic angler, or even a fisherman. The salesman who takes care to saunter into the store with a dead catfish in his pocket will meet with a cordial reception; and a conversation pleasantly initiated over the catfish and its habits may end in a handsome order. At other times it is even possible to follow the prospect out to his golf course, or to track him out to the trout streams and round him up in the woods. In this case salesmanship takes on a close analogy with out-of-door hunting, the search for the prospect, the stalking of the prospect and the final encounter being very similar to accounts of the stalking of big game.

I append here an illustrative anecdote. As a matter of fact it was written not in reference to salesmanship but as an account of hunting the Wallaboo or Great Hog in the uplands of

East Africa. But anybody familiar with stories of salesmanship will see at once that it fits both cases. I have merely altered the wording a little just at the end.

ANECDOTE OF A HOG

'I had been credibly informed,' says the writer, 'that there was at least a sporting chance of getting in touch with the Great Hog at his drinking time.'—It will be observed that, apart from the capital letters, this is almost exactly the remark that a salesman often makes.—'The natives of the place told me that the Hog could probably be found soon after daylight at a stream about ten miles away, where the brute was accustomed to drink and to catch fish. I therefore rose early, rode through the thick squab which covered the upland and reached the stream, or nullah, just after daybreak. There I concealed myself in a thick gob of fuz.

'I had not long to wait. The Great Hog soon appeared, sniffing the air and snorting at the prospect of a drink. Extending himself prone on the bank with his snout in the water and his huge hind quarters in the air, the Hog presented an ideal mark for the sportsman. I rose from my thicket, rifle in hand, and said, "Mr. A., I have followed you out to this trout stream in the hope of getting a chance to show you my line. If you have a few minutes at your disposal I shall be glad to show you some

samples. If you don't care to buy anything, I can assure you that it will be a pleasure to show my line".'

The text seems to go a little wrong here, but we can make it all right by reverting to the original, which says:

'After letting him have it thus I had no trouble in hauling the Great Hog up to the bank, where I skinned him.'

Just one other question may be mentioned before we pass on from this fascinating topic of salesmanship. Should a salesman accept presents, especially presents from ladies? On the whole we think not. It is a delicate problem, and one which every young salesman must think out for himself. But the salesman should always remember that a firm refusal, if made in a gracious and winning manner, is not calculated to give offence. If after concluding his business the salesman finds that the merchant endeavours to slip a bracelet or a pair of ear-rings into his hand, the salesman should say, 'I can't take it, old top, I really can't,' then kiss the merchant on the forehead and withdraw.

A present from a lady should be returned with a neat little note so framed as to avoid all offence and yet letting the donor realize clearly that the salesman is not that kind of man.

Let us turn now from the problem of salesmanship to the equally important field of advertising.

THE WHOLE ART OF ADVERTISING

I suppose it is no exaggeration to say that salesmanship and advertising are the two most important things in the world. One of the biggest advertising men in the country is reported as saying the other day in his big way, 'Where would the world be without advertising?' The more you think of this expression —which only a big man could have expressed— the more you are struck with the truth of it. Indeed, it has just exactly that pith, that pep, that punch, which all good advertising ought to have. It sets you wondering right away as to what advertising really is, as to what constitutes good and bad advertising, and how the world got on during the dull centuries which did not advertise.

As a matter of fact the world got on very badly. This may be understood when we realize what the world was like before advertising existed. Christopher Columbus, we are told, spent eighteen years vainly trying to persuade the sovereigns of Europe to discover America. Under present conditions all he would have needed to do would have been to circulate among the kings a form letter with the heading, Do You Want a Continent? or put a picture of himself on the paper with one hand extended towards a cloud in the sky and the legend, *This Man Discovers Continents*: or,

better still, put up picture placards showing the American Marines at Target Practice in the Matamoras Bay, Mexico.

In other words, advertising has now been reduced to a science, thus taking its place alongside chemistry, salesmanship, dynamics, comparative religion, nursing, astronomy, poultry and other college subjects. It has become the subject of so many manuals and guide-books that nothing is easier than to give a brief résumé of the general principles of advertising.

Advertising may be described as the science of arresting the human intelligence long enough to get money from it. It is carried on by means of printed notices, signboards, placards, and above all, owing to the simplicity of the human mind, by pictures. It consists of commands, exhortations, adjurations, summonses, directions, and other authoritative appeals. The first essential of a good advertisement or notice is that it must be brief. In the earlier days of advertising this was not understood. When first the railways were built in England and signs were put up to indicate dangerous crossings they were written in small writing and read as follows:

'Any person or persons proposing to cross this railway track at this point at a time when a train or trains may be approaching is or are

warned that if he or she does it, he or they are in danger of coming into collision with it or them.'

This was found ineffective. In America the simpler plan was adopted of putting up a notice:

LOOK OUT FOR THE CARS.

Even this was presently found to be too long and was replaced by a simple sign, LOOK OUT. And perhaps LOOK would be enough.

Next to brevity, the thing demanded in a good advertisement is that it should be as peremptory as possible. Fifty years ago such notices were to be seen as the following:

'No person or persons can be permitted to enter these premises unless he or it enters in the course of some definite transaction pertaining to the business of the company.'

This was presently replaced by the sign, '*No admission except on business.*' But how much superior is the up-to-date printed notice, KEEP OUT.

This shows us that every good advertisement must be as personal as possible. It should begin *This is You!* or *Listen, you poor Simp.* Or it should ask some direct questions, such as *Do you ever take a Bath? What would you do if your wife ran away?* and so forth.

When once the general principles of advertising language are grasped it is not difficult to

convert ordinary common English into first-class advertising prose. I will give you a few examples which will show at once the enormous gain in emphasis, force and directness which is imparted to a passage in literature when it is turned into advertising. Take first a few stanzas from Longfellow, written, presumably, with a view to stir the reader into noble activity, but unfortunately expressed in a tone that verges on drowsiness:

> Tell me not in mournful numbers
> Life is but an empty dream,
> That the soul is dead that slumbers,
> And things are not what they seem.
>
> Life is real, life is earnest,
> And the grave is not its goal.
> Dust thou art to dust returnest
> Was not spoken of the soul.
>
> Let us then be up and doing
> With a heart for any fate,
> Still achieving, still pursuing,
> Learn to labour and to wait.

In a way this is not half bad. There is a certain life to it. But it fails to bring up the idea of the need for immediate effort with sufficient prominence. Compare the advertising counterpart:

Young Man, This is You! Do you want to remain all your life on a low salary? If not, why not

be up and doing? Still achieving, still pursuing! We can show you how. Why not take a correspondence course! Our curriculum includes engineering, poultry, mind reading, oratory, cost accounting and religion. Don't wait. Start achieving now!

Or take another example from the same poet, the opening lines, I believe, of the poem called 'Evangeline':

This is the forest primeval, the murmuring pines
and the hemlocks
Stand like Druids of old with beards that rest on
their bosoms. . . .

This poem, which was not without merit in its original form, is now immensely improved when used as material for the tourists' advertisements.

Mr. Business Man! Do you ever take a vacation? What about the Annapolis Valley for this year's outing? Why not visit the 'forest primeval', where you may stand buried in reverie under the 'murmuring pines and the hemlocks', or, emerging, enjoy as fine a meal for a dollar as you will get anywhere? Why not dream yourself back into the days of the coureurs de bois and the belted and plumed seigneurs within easy reach of a garage and with first-class plumbing all through the house? Why not bring along the wife and take her into the heart of the primeval forest.

The next example is taken from Shakespeare. Originally it formed part of Hamlet's soliloquy on death, but nearly every line of this passage

has been transposed and improved by the modern advertiser:

> To be or not to be, that is the question.
> Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
> Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
> And by opposing end them!

The advertiser expresses the same though with much greater point.

Do you feel only half Alive? Are you aware of a heavy sensation after eating and a sense of inflation after drinking a cup of tea? If so, why not 'take arms against a sea of trouble'? Do you know that Calcul, taken as one pill a day, will restore tone and vigour to the system, effecting an immediate restoration of the, tissues and rebuilding th ebones? Remember the name Calcul!

My readers will long since have suspected—if the poor simps are sharp enough ever to suspect anything—that advertising, as we have been seeing again and again, is superior to reality. And this is indeed the case. By the time the advertiser has finished with his exhortations and his glowing descriptions and his pictures he has created a world far brighter than the poor place in which we live.

Who would not wish to be transported to the bright glad world of the painted advertisement and there live for ever. There to watch the glistening limousine roll on its distended tires (guaranteed for 20,000 miles) in front of

the Georgian residence, the shingles of which can be laid by two men in one morning and are really cheaper than the best Italian tiles. See the faultless youth (whose suit, please note it, is marked down to $29.50, but will only stay down till Saturday—you can't *keep* a suit like that down). Watch him as he stands on the clipped green lawn. (The seed of that lawn, can you believe it? is actually sold for only 50 cents a packet, and you can have some.) Observe the gladsome girl beside him. Don't you wish you knew her? Do you know why she is gladsome? It is because her digestion is kept in such extraordinary order by taking one *Calcul* pill a day. I suppose that you are aware that those glistening brown leather shoes that she wears combine style, elegance and comfort in a way that gives ease to the foot and allows free play to the bones of the thorax: if you don't know that, you need only consult the little dotted diagram in the corner of the picture showing the human foot anatomically with bones of the thorax moving freely in the fibula: and to think that that shoe can be had *everywhere* at $15.75!

In short, if you will take a comprehensive glance at the red and white house and the green lawn and the glistening motor-car and the aspect of young love in the foreground you will realize that advertising is just one more item added to the Pictured Vision of Unreality, better than life itself.

VI. "OROASTUS," A GREEK TRAGEDY

(As presented in our Colleges)

THE Greek Drama, as everybody knows, possesses a majesty that we do not find elsewhere. It has a loftiness, a sublimity, to which no later theatre has attained. Anybody who has seen the play of *Alcestis* put on by the senior class of the Podunk High School will admit this at once.

The Greek Drama, unfortunately, is no longer exhibited to the ordinary theatre-going public.

It is too sublime for them. They are away beneath it. The attempt to put on one act of the *Œdipus Polyphlogistus* of Boanerges at the entertainment evening of the annual convention of the rubber men of America last January was voted down by a nine-to-one vote in favour of having Highland dances of the Six Susquehanna Sisters.

Another difficulty is that a lot of the Greek Drama is lost. Some critics think that all the best of it is lost; others say, not all; others again claim that what we have ought to make us feel that we have no right to complain over what is lost.

But though the Greek Drama is not presented

in our commercial theatres, it still flourishes in our institutions of learning. One may yet see the stupendous tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides put on in the auditorium of the Jefferson High School, or acted, under pressure, by the boys of St. Peter's (Episcopal) Resident Academy, or presented in commencement week by the Fi Fi Omega (Oil) Fraternity of the University of Atalanta.

The open season of the Greek Drama in the college is the month of February. This gives the students four months to learn the Greek lines, and is based on a piece-work rate of five words a day. After the play they have still time to get back to what is now called 'normaley' before the end of the college session.

Let us therefore transport ourselves in fancy to the winter evening in a college town when the Greek play is to be put on by the senior class in Classics. There is no unusual light or brilliance in the streets to announce this fact. On the contrary, the general appearance is as of gloom. Here and there a glaring light against a boarding brazenly announces the vulgar fact that Harold Lloyd, or rather the shade of him, is revolving at the Coliseum. But of the fact that the shade of Sophocles is to be at the auditorium of the Faculty of Liberal Arts there is no public indication. Nor is the location of Sophocles easy to find. Our first attempt to

follow what seems to be the movement of the crowd leads us vainly towards the entrance of Third Street Skating Rink, and then to the lighted portico of the Gaiety Burlesque Theatre, Ladies Cordially Welcomed. No such lighted path leads to the august dead. Nor are the services of a taxi of any use to us. The driver has not heard of the performance, is not aware apparently of the existence of the college auditorium, and can only suggest that Sophocles himself may be staying at the *Jefferson*. Most of the actors do.

But to anybody accustomed to colleges and their ways it is not difficult to find the auditorium. One has but to notice here and there among the elm-trees of the side streets a few shivering figures moving in the same direction and wearing a costume half-way between fashion and disreputability. These are college professors, and they are going to the play. Let us follow them.

We do this, and we easily find the auditorium—in fact, on a close inspection we can distinctly see light here and there in its windows. and people going in. Entrance is effected in two ways: either by ticket, for those who have tickets, or without a ticket, for those who haven't got a ticket. When we are well inside the place, we find a large placard, visible only to those who have got in, announcing the attraction:

A GREAT TRAGEDY

THE GREEK PLAY

OROASTUS

PUT ON IN THE ORIGINAL
BY THE SENIOR CLASS

A MASTERPIECE OF SORROW
DON'T MISS IT
"ALL UP"

There is quite a sprinkling of people already seated. There must be what is called 'easily three hundred'. But on such occasions nobody is mean enough to count the audience. We are shown to our seats by girl ushers in college gowns and bobbed hair, a touch of old Greek life which goes to our heart.

If the senior class understood advertising as well as they know Greek, they would have put that placard near the railway station and had a band playing, and one or two of the girls with bobbed hair selling tickets behind glass. Nor

would it have been necessary to select the girls who know most Greek. But still—we started by saying that the Greek Drama was lofty: let it remain so.

When we get to our seats we realize that we needn't have come for a long time yet. There is no evidence of anybody starting anything. Greek or otherwise. There is a subdued chatter among the audience, and people straggling in, one, two, and even three at a time. We notice presently that all the audience in the hall except ourselves have got little books or pamphlets—paper things that look like the uplift hymns at a Rotary Club six o'clock supper, or the hymnal of a Chautauqua Society. We go back to the outer entrance and get one (fifty cents each), and find that this priceless thing is the book of the play with the Greek on one side and the English (it seems English) on the other. So now we can take our seats again and study the thing out.

On the outside of the book of the play is an announcement for

KOLLEGE KLOTHES

Superb Suits, $13.50. *Classy Overcoats*, $9.50

—but we had always known that education was a struggle, and we pass this by.

On the inside the thing begins in earnest.

It is still a little sprinkled with advertisements here and there, but we rightly gathered

that they are not essential to the tragedy. The book runs thus:

OROASTUS

KOLLEGE KLOTHES AND STUDENTS BOOTS.

A Greek Drama dating probably from the fifth century STUDENTS SHIRTS before Christ. The play is generally attributed to Diplodocus, who lived probably at Megara but also perhaps KNIT TO FIT UNDERWEAR FOR COLLEGE MEN at Syraceuse. His work ALL WOOL is generally esteemed on a par with that of his great contemporaries IAMBILICHUS AND EUARBILIUS. He is said on what seems credible ground to have died during the presentation of one of his own plays. But the place of his death THIRD AVENUE AND JEFFERSON STREET. THE HOME LUNCH RESORT is unknown.

The entire works of Diplocodus with the single exception of *Oroastus* are lost, but they are none the less esteemed on that account. A full account of his life was written by Polybius, but is lost. (RAH! RAH! JOIN THE MANDOLIN CLUB.) A critique of his genius written by Diogenes Laertius, but attributed also to Pliny, has perished. The bust of Diplocodus, said to be the work of Phidias Senior, was lost, either at sea or on land. The bust now in the Louvre was executed one thousand six hundred years after his

supposed death, and may or may not show him as he was. Internal evidence goes to show that Diplodocus was, internally, very unhappy TRY POSSUM'S PILLS ONE A DAY. From the play before us many lines have unfortunately been lost. But the loss is in every case indicated by asterisks in the text GET YOUR NECKTIES AT APPLETON'S.

The simple theme of sorrow, the rigour of fate, and the emptiness of human desire dominate the play HAVE YOU JOINED THE BIBLE CLASS? NOW IS THE TIME TO JOIN.

And at this point the solid Greek begins, pages and pages of it, and facing it on the other side solid masses of English. And just as we begin to try and study it out—we ought really to have begun a month ago—we realize that the entertainment is beginning.

. . . . .

The huge white sheet that acts as a curtain slides sideways, groaning on a wire, and behold the platform of the auditorium, converted into the severe stage of the Greeks, with white curtains on the sides and a bare floor, and of stage properties no trace. No comfortable little red mica fire burning at the side such as cheers the actors of a drawing-room play; none of the green grass and the cardboard inn with the swinging sign that stand for eighteenth-century

comedy; nothing of the sweep of rock and the curtain of cloud that indicates that Forbes Robertson is about to be Hamlet. Nothing, just nothing; boards, a little sawdust, room to come in and out, and sorrow. That is all that the Greeks asked or wanted. How infinitely superior to ourselves, who have so piled up panoply of life about us that our lightest acts and our deepest grief must alike be hung with priceless decorations. But the Greek Theatre, like the four bare walls of the Puritan House of Worship——but stop, the play has started.

A tall figure walks in, a player in a long draped sheet of white, a bearded player, with a chaplet of leaves about his head. . . . This must be Oroastus—let me look; yes, it's Oroastus, King of Thebes. What's he saying? A sort of long-drawn howling, 'Aie! Aie! Aie! Aie!' My! My! Oroastus must be in a terrible way.

Aie! Aie! Aie! Aie!

This must be that note of sorrow that I spoke about; or else it is some of the internal melancholy of Diplodocus.

Oroastus, King of Thebes, walks out pretty well into the middle of the stage and stands there groaning, 'Aie! Aie! Aie! . . .'

So to get a clue to what is now going to happen, we look at our book of the play to see that the next thing marked in the English text is:

Entry of the Chorus.

Ah now! Cheer up! That's something like. The Chorus! Bring them right along in. No doubt they will be of that beautiful type of classic Greek girls. If there is one thing that we specialize on in the modern drama, it is the Chorus. Fetch the girls in by all means.

In they come. Help! What is this? Three old men—very aged, with cotton-wool beards and long white robes like the one Oroastus wears.

No, there is no doubt about it, the Greek idea of a chorus is a matter on which we take issue at once. These three old men may think themselves terribly cute, but for us, quite frankly, they are not in it. We knew before we came in that the Greek Tragedy was severe, but this is a pitch of severity for which we were not prepared.

However, as these three saucy old men are on the stage, let's see what they're doing. Look, they all lift their arms up straight above their heads, and they all begin to moan:

Aie! Aie! Aie—e!

In fact, just like King Oroastus. They evidently have got the same internal trouble that he has.

Now they seem to be breaking into a kind of sustained talk in a sort of chant. It's impossible to know what they are saying, because it's all in Greek—or, no—of course we can follow it.

We have the English in the book of the play; in fact, you can see all the people in the audience turning the leaves of their little book and burying their heads in them up to their spectacles. At a Greek college play the audience don't look at the stage; they look at the little book.

This is what the three saucy old men are saying:

> O how unhappy is this (now standing before us) King!
>
> O Fate! with what dark clouds art thou about to overwhelm (or perhaps to soak) him.
>
> O what grief is his! and how on the one hand shall he for his part escape it. O woe! O anxiety, O grief, O woe!

In other words, in the Greek play the business of the Chorus is to come in and tell the audience what a classy spectacle it is going to be. Sorrow being the chief idea of Greek Tragedy, the Chorus have to inform the audience what they're going to get, and to get it good. It's a great idea in dramatic construction. It's just as if at the beginning of *Hamlet* the Chorus stuck their heads over the battlements of Elsinore and said, in up-to-date English, 'Say, look at this young man! Isn't he going to get it in the neck? Eh, what? Isn't he in for hard luck? Just wait till his father's ghost gets a twist on him.'

So the Chorus groan and the King keeps

howling, 'Aie, aie, aie!' and after they've done it long enough, the three Chorus walk out, one behind the other, like the figures on an Athenian frieze, and the King is left alone.

He speaks (and a footnote in the books says that this speech is one of the finest things in Greek Tragedy):

> What awful fate hangs over (or perhaps overhangs) me, this unhappy King!
>
> What sorrow now does the swift-moving hand (or perhaps the revolving finger) of Doom make for me!
>
> Where shall I turn? Whither shall I go? What is going to hit me next?
>
> What would I not give, even if it were my palace itself, to be let loose from this overwhelming anxiety (or perhaps this rather unusual situation)?
>
> Beside it, my palace and my crown are nothing.

The King pauses, and lifts his two hands straight up in the air, and cries:

> O Zeus, what next?

And at this juncture the little book says:

Enter a Herald.

And the audience look up from their books a minute to see this Herald come in. In runs the Herald. He is young and has no beard. He

has a tunic and bare legs, and on his feet are sandals with wings, and on his head also are wings, and he carries a wand. The wings on his feet are meant to show how fast he could go if he really had to—like the bicycle that the telegraph messenger pushes along with him. The wand means that if he needed to he could fly.

The entrance of this Herald causes the only interruption from the audience that occurs during the play. There are cries from the gallery of 'Attaboy! Good work, Teddy!' The Herald is one of the most popular members of the Fi Fi Omega Society. Anybody looking at that Herald approves of him. He is the best stage effect of the lot. In fact, there is more 'pep' about the Herald than in all the rest put together.

He confronts Oroastus and they hold a dialogue like this:

O King.
O Herald.
Aie!
Me, too.
Woe, woe! King.
I believe you.
Things are bad.
They are indeed. What misfortune brings you in this direction?
A grave one.

I guess it must be; but tell me that my ear may hear it.

Grievous are my tidings.

I am sure they are.

And hard for your to hear.

. . . . .

The slowness of the Herald in giving the bad news to the King is one of the striking things in the Greek Drama. It is only equalled on the modern stage by the great detective revealing the mystery of the fifth act, or a lawyer explaining terms of the secret will, or the dying criminal (shot, deservedly, in a cellar) confessing the innocence of the heroine. In fact, the Greek Herald was the man who started this kind of trouble. He was the first original exponent of the idea of not telling a good thing in a hurry.

He speaks again:

Things are not what they seem.

Oroastus groans 'Oh!' All the dialogue has by this time been knocked out of him. The Herald realizes that he can't get another rise out of him. So he gets down to facts:

Your palace, O King, has on the one hand been destroyed by fire and your crown, which in and of itself for the most part signified your kingship, has on the other hand been stolen.

OROASTUS: Aie, aie, aie! My palace is

destroyed and my crown is lost. O whoa, this is grief.

THE HERALD: It is. Good-bye. I have other tasks (or perhaps avocations).

The Herald says this and withdraws; and as he goes out in come the three old Chorus men again. That was the great thing about the Greek Tragedy. It never stopped. It went right on. In the modern play when the Herald said 'Good-bye', the curtain would fall on Act I. In the moving picture the scene would shift and show the palace being burnt. But the good old Greek Tragedy went right on, like sawing wood. This is called the unity of the drama, and so far nothing beats it.

The Chorus, of course, have merely come in to have a good time by piling up the sorrow and gloating over Oroastus.

They line up and they chant out:

Oh! look at this—now standing before us
—King (or sometimes rendered this ordinary man). Sorrow has struck him.
His palace and his crown are destroyed.
But Fate is not done with him yet.
All-compelling Fate is getting ready another arrow (or, perhaps, is going to take another crack at him).
He has lost his palace.
But watch out.
There is more coming.

And at this the three miserable old brutes troop out again. Then the King says:

> O me, alas! My palace is gone and yet a further fate overhangs me. What is this hang-over?
>
> For so much, indeed, have I borne that to me now it seems that nothing further could overwhelm me, even if it were the loss of my tender consort herself.

And just as he says this, the sign goes up again in the book:

The Herald enters.

The King speaks:

> What now? And why have your feet brought you back?

It was evident that a favourite theory of the Greek tragedians was that a man went where his feet took him. This was part of the general *necessity*, or rigour, of fate.

The Herald says:

> Terrible are the tidings.
> What are they?
> Something awful.
> Tell me what they are.
> How can I?
> Go at it (or perhaps go to it).
>
> Dark indeed is the news and terrible is the certainty.

What is it?

How can I say it? It is dark.

What is the dark stuff that you are giving to me? Does it perhaps concern my consort, the fair-fingered Apologee?

It does.

How much?

Very much.

Tell me then the whole extent of the matter, concealing nothing.

I will.

Do.

With my lips I will say it.

Do so.

The King groans. The Herald knows that the time has come to let loose his information. He says:

Listen, then, O King. Your queenly consort, the fair-fingered Apologee, has gone to Hades.

THE KING: Too bad!

THE HERALD: Gloomy Pluto has carried her off.

THE KING: This is deplorable (or perhaps reprehensible)!

THE HERALD: Good-bye. I have other avocations.

The Herald retires, and the King has hardly had time to say 'Aie!' before the Chorus come

trailing on again and take up their station. They cant out:

Look at this.
How's this for grief?

The royal consort has been carried off by the Gloomy Dis, he of the long ears, to his dark home. But sorrow is not yet done. There is a whole lot more coming. 'For such is the fate of Kings. Either they have a good time or they don't.' With this sentiment the Chorus all troop off again. We gather from the little book, even if we didn't know it already, that their last sentiment, 'Either they have a good time or they don't', is considered one of the gems of the Greek Drama. The commentators say that this shows us the profundity of the mind of Diplodocus. Some think that this places him above the lighter work of such men as Iambilichus or Euarbilius. Others again claim that this passage, 'Either they have a good time or they don't', shows (internally, of course) that the life of Diplodocus was not all sorrow. To write this, Diplodocus must himself have had a good time some of the time. In fact, these lines, we are given to understand, have occasioned one of those controversies which have made the Greek Drama what it is.

King Oroastus, being now left alone, starts a new fit of sorrow: 'Aie, aie, aie!'—in fact, just as we expected he would. By this time we

have grasped the idea of the tragedy: the successive blows of sorrow that hit Oroastus one after the other. First the Chorus say, 'There'll be sorrow,' then Oroastus says, 'Here comes a sorrow,' and then the Herald comes in and says, 'Get ready now, stand by for a new sorrow,' and lands it at him. There's a beautiful simplicity about it that you never see on the stage to-day. In fact, this is that sublimity, that loftiness, that only the Fi Fi Omega players can catch.

So the King groans:

> Oh, what an absolutely complete sorrow this is, this last one!
>
> O Apologee!
>
> O Hades!
>
> For me, what now is left? My palace is destroyed, and the fair-fingered Apologee has gone to Hades. What now is left to me but my old dog?
>
> Old dog that I am myself on the one hand, my old dog on the other hand is all.

This passage, 'Old dog that I am myself', is indicated in the text as one of the high spots. In fact, it is a joke. The text says so. From where we sit we can see the Professor of Greek laughing at it. Indeed, we could easily prove by looking up the large editions of the play that this is a joke. The commentators say: 'The bitter jest of Oroastus in calling himself

an "old dog" illustrates for us the delicious irony of the great tragedian. Certain commentators have claimed indeed that the passage is corrupt, and that Oroastus called himself not an "old dog" but a "hot dog". We prefer, however, the earlier reading, which seems to us exquisite. Diplodocus undoubtedly felt that the weight of sorrow at this point had become more than Oroastus or even the spectators could bear. By calling himself an "old dog" he removes exactly that much of it.'

This contention seems pretty well sustained. In fact, anybody accustomed to the modern stage will realize that we are here at the source of the alleviating joke, introduced at any moment of terrible tension. In the modern play a comic character is carried all through the piece in order to make these jokes. But the Greek Tragedy was nothing if not simple, direct, and honest. The hero has to make his own jokes.

Still, we are keeping the Herald waiting. The time is ripe for him to come in again.

Enter the Herald.

In he comes just as before (the Greeks didn't believe in vanity), and the King at once asks him the usual question about his feet:

> For what purpose, O Herald (he inquires), do your feet bring you this way again?

THE HERALD: A gloomy one.
Let me have it.
I will.
Do. For, however dark it is, I being now an old dog (or perhaps a hot dog), have no further consolation in life than my dog.

It is to be noticed that Diplodocus here uses the same joke twice. Anybody who deals in humour will warmly approve of this. To get the best out of a joke it must be used over and over again. In this matter the Greeks have nothing on us.

This time the Herald knows that Oroastus can't stand for much more. So he says:

Old dog, indeed? Did your lips lead you to say 'old dog'?
They did indeed.
Are you perhaps under the impression, O King, that you still have an old dog?
Such is my impression.
In that case you never made a bigger mistake in your life.
Let me know it, and if indeed I have made a mistake, let me hear it.
Hear it then. Your old dog is gone to Hades. Good-bye. I have other avocations.

The Herald leaves, and the King breaks out into lamentations:

Aie, aie (he says)! My consort, the fair-

fingered Apologee, and my old dog are in Hades. Why am I still left in the upper air (or perhaps up in the air)? Oh whoa!

The King lifts his hands up in sorrow, and a note in the book says: 'King Oroastus has now nearly had enough.' To this we quite agree. One might say, in fact, he had had plenty.

But the Chorus are not done with him yet. On they come, with the remorselessness of the Greek Drama.

They line up.

Look then at this (standing before us) King. What a load he has!

But worse is yet coming. Keep your seats and watch him.

They go out in their usual undisturbed way, and Oroastus says:

Oh what a last final instalment (or hang-over) of bitter grief is now mine! What now is left? Now that everything has gone to Hades, of what use is life itself? Oh, day! Oh, sunshine! Oh, light! Let me withdraw myself, I, before my time, to my tomb, to my mausoleum which I have had made by the skilled hands of artificers, and there let me join hands with Death.

Oroastus has hardly said this when the

Herald comes back. By this time everybody guesses the news that he brings. Under the circumstances not even a Greek Herald could string it out. The thing is too obvious.

The King says—well, there is no need to write it again—the Herald's feet, that same stuff; but what he really means is, 'Are you back again?' And the Herald says, 'Yes.' This is the first plain answer that the Herald has given all through the play.

Then Oroastus says:

> Is it dark stuff again?

And the Herald says:

> The darkest.

At which the King gives a groan and says:

> Then let me not hear it, for already to me, thinking over pretty well everything, the matter seems more or less what you would call played out (or possibly worked to death). It is now in my mind, hearing nothing further, to retire to the mausoleum which I have long since caused to be built by skilled artificers, and there, lying down upon the stone, to clasp the hand of Death.
>
> THE HERALD: You can't.
>
> THE KING: Why not? What is which? For your words convey nothing. Tell me what it is.

THE HERALD: I will.

THE KING: Do.

THE HERALD: All right. Get ready for something pretty tough. Are you all set?

I am.

Know then, that your mausoleum no longer is. It was broken into by burglars and is unfit to use. Good-bye. I have other avocations.

OROASTUS: Aie, aie, aie! . . .

Then they line up for a last crack at Oroastus:

Look at him!

Isn't he the unlucky bean (or perhaps turnip).

Did you ever hear of worse luck than his?

Can you beat it?

But such is life, Oroastus, and it is a necessity of the gods that even death is withheld from the sorrowful—'Aie, aie, aie!'

And with that the play gives every symptom of being over. The white sheet that acts as the curtain glides down, and there is quite a burst of applause in the audience. The actors line up on the stage, and all the Fi Fi Omega crowd in the gallery call out, 'Attaboy, Oroastus! Good work, Teddy!'

After which the audience doesn't break up as an ordinary theatre audience does, but coagulates itself into little knots and groups.

It knows that presently coffee and sandwiches are going to be passed around, and the Greek Professor will stand in the middle of an admiring group while he explains to them that Oraostus is under the compulsion of ANANGKE.

But for us no cake nor coffee. Let us get back to the Jefferson Hotel grill-room while the supper is still on, and while we can still get places for the midnight vaudeville show, with the dances of the Susquehanna Sextette and the black-faced comedian with the saxophone. This Greek stuff is sublime, we admit it; and it is lofty, we know it; and it has a dignity that the Susquehanna Sextette has not.

But, after seeing Greek Tragedy once, we know our level. And henceforth we mean to stick to it.

VII. CAROLINE'S CHRISTMAS: OR, THE INEXPLICABLE INFANT

IT was Xmas—Xmas with its mantle of white snow, scintillating from a thousand diamond points, Xmas with its good cheer, its peace on earth—Xmas with its feasting and merriment, Xmas with its—well, anyway, it was Xmas.

Or no, that's a slight slip; it wasn't exactly Xmas, it was Xmas Eve, Xmas Eve, with its mantle of white snow lying beneath the calm moonlight—and, in fact, with practically the above list of accompanying circumstances with a few obvious emendations.

Yes, it was Xmas Eve.

And more than that!

Listen to *where* it was Xmas.

It was Xmas Eve on the Old Homestead. Reader, do you know, by sight, the Old Homestead? In the pauses of your work at your city desk, where you have grown rich and avaricious, does it never rise before your mind's eye, the quiet old homestead that knew you as a boy, before your greed of gold tore you away from it? The Old Homestead that stands beside the road just on the rise of the hill, with its dark spruce trees wrapped in snow, the snug barns and straw stacks behind it; while from its windows there streams a shaft of light from

a coal-oil lamp, about as thick as a slate pencil that you can see four miles away, from the other side of the cedar swamp in the hollow. Don't talk to me of your modern searchlights and your incandescent arcs, beside that gleam of light from the coal-oil lamp in the farmhouse window. It will shine clear to the heart across thirty years of distance. Do you not turn, I say, sometimes, reader, from the roar and hustle of the city with its ill-gotten wealth and its godless creed of mammon, to think of the quiet homestead under the brow of the hill? You don't! Well, you skunk!

It was Xmas Eve.

The light shone from the windows of the homestead farm. The light of the log fire rose and flickered and mingled its red glare on the windows with the calm yellow of the lamp-light.

John Enderby and his wife sat in the kitchen room of the farmstead. Do you know it, reader, the room called the kitchen?—with the open fire on its old brick hearth, and the cook stove in the corner. It is the room of the farm where people cook and eat and live. It is the living-room. The only other room beside the bedroom is the small room in front, chill-cold in winter, with an organ in it for playing 'Rock of Ages' on, when company came. But this room is only used for music and funerals. The real room of the old farm is the kitchen.

Does it not rise up before you, reader? It doesn't? Well, you darn fool!

At any rate, there sat old John Enderby beside the plain deal table, his head bowed upon his hands, his grizzled face with its unshorn stubble stricken down with the lines of devastating trouble. From time to time he rose and cast a fresh stick of tamarack into the fire with a savage thud that sent a shower of sparks up the chimney. Across the fireplace sat his wife Anna on a straight-backed chair, looking into the fire with the mute resignation of her sex.

What was wrong with them anyway? Ah, reader, can you ask? Do you know or remember so little of the life of the old homestead? When I have said that it is the Old Homestead and Xmas Eve, and that the farmer is in great trouble and throwing tamarack at the fire, surely you ought to guess!

The Old Homestead was mortgaged! Ten years ago, reckless with debt, crazed with remorse, mad with despair and persecuted with rheumatism, John Enderby had mortgaged his farmstead for twenty-four dollars and thirty cents.

To-night the mortgage fell due, to-night at midnight, Xmas night. Such is the way in which mortgages of this kind are always drawn. Yes, sir, it was drawn with such diabolical skill that on this night of all nights the mortgage

would be foreclosed. At midnight the men would come with hammer and nails and foreclose it, nail it up tight.

So the afflicted couple sat.

Anna, with the patient resignation of her sex, sat silent or at times endeavoured to read. She had taken down from the little wall-shelf Bunyan's *Holy Living and Holy Dying*. She tried to read it. She could not. Then she had taken Dante's *Inferno*. She could not read it. Then she had selected Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. But she could not read it either. Lastly, she had taken the Farmer's Almanac for 1911. The books lay littered about her as she sat in patient despair.

John Enderby showed all the passion of an uncontrolled nature. At times he would reach out for the crock of buttermilk that stood beside him and drain a draught of the maddening liquid, till his brain glowed like the coals of the tamarack fire before him.

'John,' pleaded Anna, 'leave alone the buttermilk. It only maddens you. No good ever came of that.'

'Aye, lass,' said the farmer, with a bitter laugh, as he buried his head again in the crock, 'what care I if it maddens me.'

'Ah, John, you'd better be employed in reading the Good Book than in your wild courses. Here take it, father, and read it'—and she handed to him the well-worn black volume

from the shelf. Enderby paused a moment and held the volume in his hand. He and his wife had known nothing of religious teaching in the public schools of their day, but the first-class non-sectarian education that the farmer had received had stood him in good stead.

'Take the book,' she said. 'Read, John, in this hour of affliction; it brings comfort.'

The farmer took from her hand the well-worn copy of Euclid's *Elements*, and laying aside his hat with reverence, he read aloud: 'The angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal, and whosoever shall produce the sides, lo, the same also shall be equal each unto each.'

The farmer put the book aside.

'It's no use, Anna. I can't read the good words to-night.'

He rose, staggered to the crock of buttermilk, and before his wife could stay his hand, drained it to the last drop.

Then he sank heavily to his chair.

'Let them foreclose it, if they will,' he said; 'I am past caring.'

The woman looked sadly into the fire.

'Ah, if only her son Henry had been here. Henry, who had left them three years agone, and whose bright letters still brought from time to time the gleam of hope to the stricken farmhouse.

Henry was in Sing Sing. His letters brought

news to his mother of his steady success; first in the baseball nine of the prison, a favourite with his wardens and the chaplain, the best bridge player of the corridor. Henry was pushing his way to the front with the old-time spirit of the Enderbys.

His mother had hoped that he might have been with her at Xmas, but Henry had written that it was practically impossible for him to leave Sing Sing. He could not see his way out. The authorities were arranging a dance and sleighing party for the Xmas celebration. He had some hope, he said, of slipping away unnoticed, but his doing so might excite attention.

Of the trouble at home Anna had told her son nothing.

No, Henry could not come. There was no help there. And William, the other son, ten years older than Henry. Alas, William had gone forth from the old homestead to fight his way in the great city! 'Mother,' he had said, 'when I make a million dollars I'll come home. Till then good-bye,' and he had gone.

How Anna's heart had beat for him. Would he make that million dollars? Would she ever live to see it? And as the years passed she and John had often sat in the evenings picturing William at home again, bringing with him a million dollars, or picturing the million dollars sent by express with love. But the years had passed. William came not. He

did not come. The great city had swallowed him up as it has many another lad from the old homestead.

Anna started from her musing—

What was that at the door? The sound of a soft and timid rapping, and through the glass of the door-pane, a face, a woman's face looking into the fire-lit room with pleading eyes. What was it she bore in her arms, the little bundle that she held tight to her breast to shield it from the falling snow? Can you guess, reader? Try three guesses and see. Right you are. That's what it was.

The farmer's wife went hastily to the door.

'Lord's mercy!' she cried, 'what are you doing out on such a night? Come in, child, to the fire!'

The woman entered, carrying the little bundle with her, and looking with wide eyes (they were at least an inch and a half across) at Enderby and his wife. Anna could see that there was no wedding-ring on her hand.

'Your name?' said the farmer's wife.

'My name is Caroline,' the girl whispered. The rest was lost in the low tones of her voice. 'I want shelter,' she paused, 'I want you to take the child.'

Anna took the baby and laid it carefully on the top shelf of the cupboard, then she hastened to bring a glass of water and a dough-nut, and set it before the half-frozen girl.

'Eat,' she said, 'and warm yourself.'

John rose from his seat.

'I'll have no child of that sort here,' he said.

'John, John,' pleaded Anna, 'remember what the Good Book says: 'Things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another!'

John sank back in his chair.

And why had Caroline no wedding-ring? Ah, reader, can you not guess? Well, you can't. It wasn't what you think at all; so there. Caroline had no wedding-ring because she had thrown it away in bitterness, as she tramped the streets of the great city. 'Why,' she cried, 'should the wife of a man in the penitentiary wear a ring?'

Then she had gone forth with the child from what had been her home.

It was the old sad story.

She had taken the baby and laid it tenderly, gently on a seat in the park. Then she walked rapidly away. A few minutes after a man had chased after Caroline with the little bundle in his arms. 'I beg your pardon,' he said, panting, 'I think you left your baby in the park.' Caroline thanked him.

Next she took the baby to the Grand Central Waiting-room, kissed it tenderly, and laid it on a shelf behind the lunch-counter.

A few minutes later an official, beaming with satisfaction, had brought it back to her.

'Yours, I think, madame,' he said, as he handed it to her. Caroline thanked him.

Then she had left it at the desk of the Waldorf Astoria, and at the ticket-office of the subway.

It always came back.

Once or twice she took it to Brooklyn Bridge and threw it into the river, but perhaps something in the way it fell through the air touched the mother's heart and smote her, and she had descended to the river and fished it out.

Then Caroline had taken the child to the country. At first she thought to leave it on the wayside and she had put it down in the snow, and standing a little distance off had thrown mullein stalks at it, but something in the way the little bundle lay covered in the snow appealed to the mother's heart.

She picked it up and went on. 'Somewhere,' she murmured, 'I shall find a door of kindness open to it.' Soon after she had staggered into the homestead.

Anna, with true woman's kindness, asked no questions. She put the baby carefully away in a trunk, saw Caroline safely to bed in the best room, and returned to her seat beside the fire.

The old clock struck twenty minutes past eight.

Again a knock sounded at the door.

There entered the familiar figure of the

village lawyer. His astrachan coat of yellow dogskin, his celluloid collar, and boots which reached no higher than the ankle, contrasted with the rude surroundings of the little room.

'Enderby,' he said, 'can you pay?'

'Lawyer Perkins,' said the farmer, 'give me time and I will; so help me, give me five years more and I'll clear this debt to the last cent.

'John,' said the lawyer, touched in spite of his rough (dogskin) exterior, 'I couldn't, if I would. These things are not what they were. It's a big New York corporation, Pinchem & Company, that makes these loans now, and they take their money on the day, or they sell you up. I can't help it. So there's your notice, John and I am sorry! No, I'll take no buttermilk, I must keep a clear head to work,' and with that he hurried out into the snow again.

John sat brooding in his chair.

The fire flickered down.

The old clock struck half past eight, then it half struck a quarter to nine, then slowly it struck striking.

Presently Enderby rose, picked a lantern from its hook, 'Mortgage or no mortgage,' he said, 'I must see to the stock.'

He passed out of the house, and standing in the yard, looked over the snow to the cedar swamp beyond with the snow winding through

it, far in the distance the lights of the village far away.

He thought of the forty years he had spent here on the homestead—the rude, pioneer days —the house he had built for himself, with its plain furniture, the old-fashioned spinning-wheel on which Anna had spun his trousers, the wooden telephone and the rude skidway on which he ate his meals.

He looked out over the swamp and sighed.

Down in the swamp, two miles away, could he but have seen it, there moved a sleigh, and in it a man dressed in a sealskin coat and silk hat, whose face beamed in the moonlight as he turned to and fro and stared at each object by the roadside as at an old familiar scene. Round his waist was a belt containing a million dollars in gold coin, and as he halted his horse in an opening of the road he unstrapped the belt and counted the coins.

Beside him there crouched in the bushes at the dark edge of the swamp road, with eyes that watched every glitter of the coins, and a hand that grasped a heavy cudgel of blackthorn, a man whose close-cropped hair and hard-lined face belonged nowhere but within the walls of Sing Sing.

When the sleigh started again the man in the bushes followed doggedly in its track.

Meantime John Enderby had made the rounds of his outbuildings. He bedded the

fat cattle that blinked in the flashing light of the lantern. He stood a moment among his hogs, and, farmer as he was, forgot his troubles a moment to speak to each, calling them by name. It smote him to think how at times he had been tempted to sell one of the hogs, or even to sell the cattle to clear the mortgage off the place. Thank God, however, he had put that temptation behind him.

As he reached the house a sleigh was standing on the roadway. Anna met him at the door. 'John,' she said, 'there was a stranger came while you were in the barn, and wanted a lodging for the night; a city man, I reckon, by his clothes. I hated to refuse him, and I put him in Willie's room. We'll never want it again, and he's gone to sleep.'

'Ay, we can't refuse.'

John Enderby took out the horse to the barn, and then returned to his vigil with Anna beside the fire.

The fumes of the buttermilk had died out of his brain. He was thinking, as he sat there, of midnight and what it would bring.

In the room above, the man in the sealskin coat had thrown himself down, clothes and all, upon the bed, tired with his drive.

'How it all comes back to me,' he muttered as he fell asleep, 'the same old room, nothing changed—except them—how worn they look,' and a tear started to his eyes. He thought of

his leaving his home fifteen years ago, of his struggle in the great city, of the great idea he had conceived of making money, and of the Farm Investment Company he had instituted —the simple system of applying the crushing power of capital to exact the uttermost penny from the farm loans. And now here he was back again, true to his word, with a million dollars in his belt. 'To-morrow,' he had murmured, 'I will tell them. It will be Xmas.' Then William—yes, reader, it was William (see line 503 above)—had fallen asleep.

The hours passed, and kept passing.

It was 11.30.

Then suddenly Anna started from her place.

'Henry!' she cried as the door opened and a man entered. He advanced gladly to meet her, and in a moment mother and son were folded in a close embrace. It was Henry, the man from Sing Sing. True to his word, he had slipped away unostentatiously at the height of the festivities.

'Alas, Henry,' said the mother after the warmth of the first greetings had passed, 'you come at an unlucky hour.' They told him of the mortgage on the farm and the ruin of his home.

'Yes,' said Anna, 'not even a bed to offer you,' and she spoke of the strangers who had arrived; of the stricken woman and the child,

and the rich man in the sealskin coat who had asked for a night's shelter.

Henry listened intently while they told him of the man, and a sudden light of intelligence flashed into his eye.

'By Heaven, father, I have it!' he cried. Then dropping his voice, he said, 'Speak low, father. This man upstairs, he had a sealskin coat and silk hat?'

'Yes,' said the father.

'Father,' said Henry, 'I saw a man sitting in a sleigh in the cedar swamp. He had money in his hand, and he counted it, and chuckled—five-dollar gold pieces—in all, 1,125,465 dollars and a quarter.'

The father and son looked at one another.

'I see your idea,' said Enderby sternly.

'We'll choke him,' said Henry.

'Or club him' said the farmer, 'and pay the mortgage.'

Anna looked from one to the other, joy and hope struggling with the sorrow in her face. 'Henry, my Henry,' she said proudly, 'I knew he would find a way.'

'Come on,' said Henry; 'bring the lamp, mother, take the club, father,' and gaily, but with hushed voices the three stole up the stairs.

The stranger lay sunk in sleep. The back of his head was turned to them as they came in.

'Now, mother,' said the farmer firmly, 'hold the lamp a little nearer; just behind the ear, I think, Henry.'

'No,' said Henry, rolling back his sleeve and speaking with the quick authority that sat well upon him, 'across the jaw, father, it's quicker and neater.'

'Well, well,' said the farmer, smiling proudly, 'have your own way, lad, you know best.'

Henry raised the club.

But as he did so—stay, what was that? Far away behind the cedar swamp the deep booming of the bell of the village church began to strike out midnight. One, two, three, its tones came clear across the crisp air. Almost at the same moment the clock below began with deep strokes to mark the midnight hour, from the farmyard chicken coop a rooster began to crow twelve times, while the loud lowing of the cattle and the soft cooing of the hogs seemed to usher in the morning of Christmas with its message of peace and goodwill.

The club fell from Henry's hand and rattled on the floor.

The sleeper woke and sat up.

'Father! Mother!' he cried.

'My son, my son,' sobbed the father, 'we had guessed it was you. We had come to wake you.'

'Yes, it is I,' said William, smiling to his

parents, 'and I have brought the million dollars. Here it is,' and with that he unstrapped the belt from his waist and laid a million dollars on the table.

'Thank Heaven!' cried Anna, 'our troubles are at an end. This money will help clear the mortgage—and the greed of Pinchem & Co. cannot harm us now.'

'The farm was mortgaged!' said William, aghast.

'Ay,' said the farmer, 'mortgaged to men who have no conscience, whose greedy hand has nearly brought us to the grave. See how she has aged, my boy,' and he pointed to Anna.

'Father,' said William, in deep tones of contrition, 'I am Pinchem & Co. Heaven help me! I see it now. I see at what expense of suffering my fortune was made. I will restore it all, these million dollars, to those I have wronged.'

'No,' said his mother softly. 'You repent, dear son, with true Christian repentance. That is enough. You may keep the money. We will look upon it as a trust, a sacred trust, and every time we spend a dollar of it on ourselves we will think of it as a trust.'

'Yes,' said the farmer softly, 'your mother is right, the money is a trust, and we will restock the farm with it, buy out the Jones's property, and regard the whole thing as a trust.'

At this moment the door of the room opened. A woman's form appeared. It was Caroline, robed in one of Anna's directoire nightgowns.

'I heard your voices,' she said, and then, as she caught sight of Henry, she gave a great cry.

'My husband!'

'My wife,' said Henry, and folded her to his heart.

'You have left Sing Sing?' cried Caroline with joy.

'Yes, Caroline,' said Henry. 'I shall never go back.'

Gaily the reunited family descended. Anna carried the lamp, Henry carried the club. William carried the million dollars.

The tamarack fire roared again upon the hearth. The buttermilk circulated from hand to hand. William and Henry told and retold the story of their adventures. The first streak of the Christmas morn fell through the door-pane.

'Ah, my sons,' said John Enderby, 'henceforth let us stick to the narrow path. What is it that the Good Book says: "A straight line is that which lies evenly between its extreme points".'

VIII. BUGGAM GRANGE: A GOOD OLD GHOST STORY

THE evening was already falling as the vehicle in which I was contained entered upon the long and gloomy avenue that leads to Buggam Grange.

A resounding shriek echoed through the wood as I entered the avenue. I paid no attention to it at the moment, judging it to be merely one of those resounding shrieks which one might expect to hear in such a place at such a time. As my drive continued, however, I found myself wondering in spite of myself why such a shriek should have been uttered at the very moment of my approach.

I am not by temperament in any degree a nervous man, and yet there was much in my surroundings to justify a certain feeling of apprehension. The Grange is situated in the loneliest part of England, the marsh country of the fens to which civilization has still hardly penetrated. The inhabitants, of whom there are only one and a half to the square mile, live here and there among the fens and eke out a miserable existence by frog-fishing and catching flies. They speak a dialect so broken as to be practically unintelligible, while the perpetual rain which

falls upon them renders speech itself almost superfluous.

Here and there where the ground rises slightly above the level of the fens there are dense woods tangled with parasitic creepers and filled with owls. Bats fly from wood to wood. The air on the lower ground is charged with the poisonous gases which exude from the marsh, while in the woods it is heavy with the dank odours of deadly nightshade and poison ivy.

It had been raining in the afternoon, and as I drove up the avenue the mournful dripping of the rain from the dark trees accentuated the cheerlessness of the gloom. The vehicle in which I rode was a fly on three wheels, the fourth having apparently been broken and taken off, causing the fly to sag on one side and drag on its axle over the muddy ground, the fly thus moving only at a foot's pace in a way calculated to enhance the dreariness of the occasion. The driver on the box in front of me was so thickly muffled up as to be indistinguishable, while the horse which drew us was so thickly coated with mist as to be practically invisible. Seldom, I may say, have I had a drive of so mournful a character.

The avenue presently opened out upon a lawn with overgrown shrubberies, and in the half darkness I could see the outline of the Grange itself, a rambling, dilapidated building.

A dim light struggled through the casement of a window in a tower room. Save for the melancholy cry of a row of owls sitting on the roof, and croaking of the frogs in the moat which ran around the grounds, the place was soundless. My driver halted his horse at the hither side of the moat. I tried in vain to urge him, by signs, to go farther. I could see by the fellow's face that he was in a paroxysm of fear, and indeed nothing but the extra sixpence which I had added to his fare would have made him undertake the drive up the avenue. I had no sooner alighted than he wheeled his cab about and made off.

Laughing heartily at the fellow's trepidation (I have a way of laughing heartily in the dark), I made my way to the door and pulled the bell-handle. I could hear the muffled reverberations of the bell far within the building. Then all was silent. I bent my ear to listen, but could hear nothing except, perhaps, the sound of a low moaning as of a person in pain or in great mental distress. Convinced, however, from what my friend Sir Jeremy Buggam had told me, that the Grange was not empty, I raised the ponderous knocker and beat with it loudly against the door.

But perhaps at this point I may do well to explain to my readers (before they are too frightened to listen to me) how I came to be beating on the door of Buggam

Grange at nightfall on a gloomy November evening.

A year before I had been sitting with Sir Jeremy Buggam, the present baronet, on the verandah of his ranch in California.

'So you don't believe in the supernatural?' he was saying.

'Not in the slightest,' I answered, lighting a cigar as I spoke. When I want to speak very positively, I generally light a cigar as I speak.

'Well, at any rate, Digby,' said Sir Jeremy, 'Buggam Grange is haunted. If you want to be assured of it go down there any time and spend the night and you'll see for yourself.'

'My dear fellow,' I replied, 'nothing will give me greater pleasure. I shall be back in England in six weeks, and I shall be delighted to put your ideas to the test. Now tell me,' I added somewhat cynically, 'is there any particular season or day when your Grange is supposed to be specially terrible?'

Sir Jeremy looked at me strangely. 'Why do you ask that?' he said. 'Have you heard the story of the Grange?'

'Never heard of the place in my life,' I answered cheerily. 'Till you mentioned it to-night, my dear fellow, I hadn't the remotest idea that you still owned property in England.'

'The Grange is shut up,' said Sir Jeremy, 'and has been for twenty years. But I keep a man there—Horrod—he was butler in my

father's time and before. If you care to go, I'll write him that you're coming. And, since you are taking your own fate in your hands, the fifteenth of November is the day.'

At that moment Lady Buggam and Clara and the other girls came trooping out on the verandah, and the whole thing passed clean out of my mind. Nor did I think of it again until I was back in London. Then, by one of those strange coincidences or premonitions—call it what you will—it suddenly occurred to me one morning that it was the fifteenth of November. Whether Sir Jeremy had written to Horrod or not, I did not know. But none the less nightfall found me, as I have described knocking at the door of Buggam Grange.

The sound of the knocker had scarcely ceased to echo when I heard the shuffling of feet within, and the sound of chains and bolts being withdrawn. The door opened. A man stood before me holding a lighted candle which he shaded with his hand. His faded black clothes, once apparently a butler's dress, his white hair and advanced age left me in no doubt that he was Horrod of whom Sir Jeremy had spoken.

Without a word he motioned me to come in, and, still without speech, he helped me to remove my wet outer garments, and then beckoned me into a great room, evidently the dining-room of the Grange.

I am not in any degree a nervous man by temperament, as I think I remarked before, and yet there was something in the vastness of the wainscoted room, lighted only by a single candle, and in the silence of the empty house, and still more in the appearance of my speechless attendant, which gave me a feeling of distinct uneasiness. As Horrod moved to and fro I took occasion to scrutinize his face more narrowly. I have seldom seen features more calculated to inspire a nervous dread. The pallor of his face and the whiteness of his hair (the man was at least seventy), and still more the peculiar furtiveness of his eyes, seemed to mark him as one who lived under a great terror. He moved with a noiseless step and at times he turned his head to glance in the dark corners of the room.

'Sir Jeremy told me,' I said, speaking as loudly and as heartily as I could, 'that he would apprise you of my coming.'

I was looking into his face as I spoke.

In answer Horrod laid his finger across his lips and I knew that he was deaf and dumb. I am not nervous (I think I said that), but the realization that my sole companion in the empty house was a deaf mute struck a cold chill to my heart.

Horrod laid in front of me a cold meat pie, a cold goose, a cheese, and a tall flagon of cider. But my appetite was gone. I ate the

goose, but found that after I had finished the pie I had but little zest for the cheese, which I finished without enjoyment. The cider had a sour taste, and after having permitted Horrod to refill the flagon twice I found that it induced a sense of melancholy and decided to drink no more.

My meal finished, the butler picked up the candle and beckoned me to follow him. We passed through the empty corridors of the house, a long line of pictured Buggams looking upon us as we passed, their portraits in the flickering light of the taper assuming a strange and life-like appearance, as if leaning forward from their frames to gaze upon the intruder.

Horrod led me upstairs and I realized that he was taking me to the tower in the east wing, in which I had observed a light.

The rooms to which the butler conducted me consisted of a sitting-room with an adjoining bedroom, both of them fitted with antique wainscoting against which a faded tapestry fluttered. There was a candle burning on the table in the sitting-room, but its insufficient light only rendered the surroundings the more dismal. Horrod bent down in front of the fireplace and endeavoured to light a fire there. But the wood was evidently damp and the fire flickered feebly on the hearth.

The butler left me, and in the stillness of

the house I could hear his shuffling step echo down the corridor. It may have been fancy but it seemed to me that his departure was the signal for a low moan that came from somewhere behind the wainscot. There was a narrow cupboard door at one side of the room, and for the moment I wondered whether the moaning came from within. I am not as a rule lacking in courage (I am sure my reader will be decent enough to believe this), yet I found myself entirely unwilling to open the cupboard door and look within. In place of doing so I seated myself in a great chair in front of the feeble fire. I must have been seated there for some time when I happened to lift my eyes to the mantel above and saw standing upon it, a letter addressed to myself. I knew the handwriting at once to be that of Sir Jeremy Buggam.

I opened it, and spreading it out within reach of the feeble candlelight, I read as follows:

'My dear Digby,

'In our talk that you will remember I had no time to finish telling you about the mystery of Buggam Grange. I take for granted, however, that you will go there and that Horrod will put you in the tower rooms, which are the only ones that make any pretence of being habitable. I have, therefore,

sent him this letter to deliver at the Grange itself.

'The story is this:

'On the night of the fifteenth of November, fifty years ago, my grandfather was murdered in the room in which you are sitting, by his cousin, Sir Duggam Buggam. He was stabbed from behind while seated at the little table at which you are probably reading this letter. The two had been playing cards at the table and my grandfather's body was found lying in a litter of cards and gold sovereigns on the floor. Sir Duggam Buggam, insensible from drink, lay beside him, the fatal knife at his hand, his fingers smeared with blood. My grandfather, though of the younger branch, possessed a part of the estates which were to revert to Sir Duggam on his death. Sir Duggam Buggam was tried at the Assizes and was hanged. On the day of his execution he was permitted by the authorities, out of respect for his rank, to wear a mask to the scaffold. The clothes in which he was executed are hanging at full length in the little cupboard to your right, and the mask is above them. It is said that on every fifteenth of November at midnight the cupboard door opens and Sir Duggam Buggam walks out into the room. It has been found impossible to get servants to remain at

the Grange, and the place—except for the presence of Horrod—has been unoccupied for a generation. At the time of the murder Horrod was a young man of twenty-two, newly entered into the service of the family. It was he who entered the room and discovered the crime. On the day of the execution he was stricken with paralysis and has never spoken since. From that time to this he has never consented to leave the Grange, where he lives in isolation.

'Wishing you a pleasant night after your tiring journey,

'I remain,

'Very faithfully,

'JEREMY BUGGAM.'

I leave my reader to imagine my state of mind when I completed the perusal of the letter.

I have as little belief in the supernatural as anyone, yet I must confess that there was something in the surroundings in which I now found myself which rendered me at least uncomfortable. My reader may smile if he will, but I assure him that it was with a very distinct feeling of uneasiness that I at length managed to rise to my feet, and, grasping my candle in my hand, to move backward into the bedroom. As I backed into it something so like a moan seemed to proceed from the closed cupboard that I accelerated my back-

ward movement to a considerable degree. I hastily blew out the candle, threw myself upon the bed and drew the bedclothes over my head, keeping, however, one eye and one ear still out and available.

How long I lay thus listening to every sound, I cannot tell. The stillness had become absolute. From time to time I could dimly hear the distinct cry of an owl, and once far away in the building below a sound as of some one dragging a chain along a floor. More than once I was certain that I heard the sound of moaning behind the wainscot. Meantime I realized that the hour must now be drawing close upon the fatal moment of midnight. My watch I could not see in the darkness, but by reckoning the time that must have elapsed I knew that midnight could not be far away. Then presently my ear, alert to every sound, could just distinguish far away across the fens the striking of a church bell, in the clock tower of Buggam village church, no doubt, tolling the hour of twelve.

On the last stroke of twelve, the cupboard door in the next room opened. There is no need to ask me how I knew it. I couldn't, of course, see it, but I could hear, or sense in some way, the sound of it. I could feel my hair, all of it, rising upon my head. I was aware that there was a *presence* in the adjoining room, I will not say a person, a living soul, but

a *presence*. Anyone who has been in the next room to a presence will know just how I felt. I could hear a sound as of some one groping on the floor and the faint rattle as of coins.

My hair was now perpendicular. My reader can blame it or not, but it was.

Then at this very moment from somewhere below in the building there came the sound of a prolonged and piercing cry, a cry as of a soul passing in agony. My reader may censure me or not, but right at this moment I decided to beat it. Whether I should have remained to see what was happening is a question that I will not discuss. My one idea was to get out, and to get out quickly. The window of the tower room was some twenty-five feet above the ground. I sprang out through the casement in one leap and landed on the grass below. I jumped over the shrubbery in one bound and cleared the moat in one jump. I went down the avenue in about six strides and ran five miles along the road through the fens in three minutes. This at least is an accurate transcription of my sensations. It may have taken longer. I never stopped till I found myself on the threshold of the *Buggam Arms* in Little Buggam, beating on the door for the landlord.

I returned to Buggam Grange on the next day in the bright sunlight of a frosty November morning, in a seven-cylinder motor car with

six local constables and a physician. It makes all the difference. We carried revolvers, spades, pickaxes, shotguns and an ouija board.

What we found cleared up for ever the mystery of the Grange. We discovered Horrod the butler lying on the dining-room floor quite dead. The physician said that he had died from heart failure. There was evidence from the marks of his shoes in the dust that he had come in the night to the tower room. On the table he had placed a paper which contained a full confession of his having murdered Jeremy Buggam fifty years before. The circumstances of the murder had rendered it easy for him to fasten the crime upon Sir Duggam, already insensible from drink. A few minutes with the ouija board enabled us to get a full corroboration from Sir Duggam. He promsed moreover, now that his name was cleared, to go away from the premises for ever.

My friend, the present Sir Jeremy, has rehabilitated Buggam Grange. The place is rebuilt. The moat is drained. The whole house is lit with electricity. There are beautiful motor drives in all directions in the woods. He has had the bats shot and the owls stuffed. His daughter, Clara Buggam, became my wife. She is looking over my shoulder as I write. What more do you want?