PHILANDER DOESTICKS,
EDWARD UNDERHILL

THE HISTORY AND RECORDS OF THE ELEPHANT CLUB

Philander Doesticks

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Doesticks P.

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Содержание

Q. K. Philander Doesticks
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PREFACE

This book has been written by the Authors, and printed by the Publishers, in the hope that it may be purchased by the Public. If it proves to be a failure, the responsibility must rest with the People who don't buy it.

HOW THEY MET

[Enter with a Flourish of Trumpets.]

Shakespeare.

THERE were *no* two horses to be seen winding along the base of a precipitous hill; and there were *no* dark-looking riders on those horses which were not to be seen; and it *wasn't* at the close of a dusky autumn evening; and the setting sun *didn't* gild, with his departing rays, the steep summit of the mountain tops; and the gloomy cry of the owl was *not* to be heard from the depths of a neighboring forest – first, because there *wasn't* any neighboring forest, and, second, because the owl was in better business, having, some hours before, gone to bed, it now being broad daylight. The mountain tops, the lofty summits, the inaccessible precipices, the precipitous descents, the descending inaccessibilities, and the usual quantity of insurmountable landscape, which forms the stereotyped opening to popular romances, is here omitted by particular request.

The time and place to which the unfortunate reader's attention is particularly called, are four o'clock of a melting afternoon in August, and a labyrinth of bricks and mortar, yclept Gotham. The majority of the inhabitants of the aforesaid place, at the identical time herein referred to, were perspiring; others were sweltering; still others were melting down into their boots, and the remainder were dying from sun-stroke.

At this time, a young gentleman seated himself behind the front window of the reading and smoking-room of the Shanghae Hotel, in Broadway. The chair he occupied was capacious, and had been contrived originally, by ingenious mechanics, for the purpose of inducing laziness. The gentleman had taken possession of this article of furniture for the double purpose of resting himself from the fatigues of a month's inactivity, and also securing a position where he could see the ladies pass and repass, in hopes that the sight might dispel the dull monotony of a hotel life in the city, during summer. On this occasion, to secure additional ease, the individual had adopted the American attitude of raising his feet to a level with his head, by placing them upon a cast-iron fender behind the window – an attitude, by the way, not particularly characterized by its classic grace.

There was nothing remarkable in the dress of the person to whom we have alluded. He was evidently a victim to the popular insanity of conforming to fashion. So strictly were his garments cut and made in accordance with the prevailing style, no one could doubt for a moment that the taste, or want of taste, manifested in his dress, was not his own, but the tailor's. In his hand he held a small cane, with which he amused himself, first, by biting the ivory head, then by making it turn summersaults through the fingers of his right hand, after the manner in which Hibernians are supposed to exercise their shillelahs.

Whether the activity in the streets, the appearance of the ladies with every variety of dress, or the gymnastic eccentricities of his cane, were particularly entertaining, is very questionable; certain it is, that the expression of his eyes showed gradually less and less of animation. By degrees his eyelids closed. His head soon vibrated with an irregular motion, until it found a support against the back of the chair. His hat fell from his head, and his cane dropped from his fingers. His muscles became fully relaxed. He was, undeniably, asleep.

He had been sleeping nearly a half hour, when an individual, who was walking leisurely down Broadway, casually glanced in the window of the Shanghae, where our first person singular was sleeping, with more seeming comfort than real elegance of position. He seemed struck with the appearance of the sleeper, and pausing for a brief time to survey his form, contorted, as it was, into all sorts of geometrical irregularities, curves, angles, and indescribable shapes, he entered the hotel,

passed around into the room where the sleeper was, and did not stop until at his side. He again stood for a moment, silently contemplating the form and features of the sleep-bound stranger.

The second person was also singular. He was, apparently, about twenty-five years of age, with a full, florid, and expressive face. His body was quite rotund, even to corpulency; and, save a heavy moustache, his face was closely shaven. His clothes were of the thinnest material, and well adapted to secure comfort during the hot season. His expression, as he stood watching the first person singular, seemed full of doubt. At last, as if determined to remain in doubt no longer, he touched the somnolent first person lightly on the shoulder. First person singular opened his eyes with a spasmodic start, stared wildly about him for a moment, until his eyes rested upon the disturber of his slumbers.

"Excuse me, sir," said second person singular, "but an irresistible impulse led me to awaken you. The fact is, sir, a few years since, I had an intimate friend who was lost at sea, and such is the resemblance you bear to him, the thought struck me that you might be he. Were you ever lost at sea, sir?"

First person singular looked with some little astonishment upon his interrogator. He wiped the perspiration from his forehead, assumed an erect position in his chair, and replied:

"I don't think I ever was."

"It may have been your brother," said second person singular.

"It couldn't have been, for I never had a brother. By the way, I did have an uncle who, on one occasion, when hunting in Illinois, some fifteen years since, was lost on a prairie. Perhaps it's that circumstance to which you refer?"

"No, it was at sea. I'm sorry, sir, that I disturbed your sleep."

"You needn't be," was the reply, "for I went to sleep without intending to do so."

"Do you ever imbibe?" was the next interrogation.

First person singular said he was guilty of no small vices, though he didn't care if he did take a brandy smash. The parties then adjourned to the inner temple of the Shanghae. Second person singular ordered the smash for his companion, and a sherry cobbler (so called from its supposed potency in patching up the human frame, when it is about falling to pieces under the influence of weather of a high temperature) for himself. A succession of singular coincidences followed. Each party suggested at the same moment, that it was confoundedly hot in the sun. Both simultaneously imbibed. Each said he felt better after it, and each undoubtedly told the truth. Both arose at the same instant, inquired who the other was, whereupon two autobiographies were extemporized in brief. They disclosed the following facts. First person singular's name was Myndert Van Dam; he was a descendent of one of the Dutch families who originally colonized Manhattan Island. He had been three years absent in Europe, and on returning a few weeks before, found most of his acquaintances had left the city on account of the hot weather, and his experience had been one of uninterrupted dullness. Second person singular rejoiced in the appellation of John Spout. His genealogy was obscure, but so far as he could learn, he was descended in a direct line from his great grandfather on his mother's side. If his ancestry had ever done anything which would entitle their names to a place in history, it was very certain that historians had failed to do their duty: for he had never found the name of Spout recorded in connection with great deeds, from the robbing of a hen roost down to cowhiding a Congressman. He was by profession an apothecary, and was laying off for a few weeks' relaxation. Mr. Spout concluded his personal narrative by suggesting the following proposition:

Whereas, We have demolished a smash, and annihilated a cobler;

Resolved, That we now proceed to devastate a couple of segars.

Mr. Spout adopted the resolution unanimously, and by a further singular coincidence, they lighted their segars, and left the place for a promenade. A brisk rain beginning to fall, they sheltered themselves under an awning. A pair of gold spectacles containing a tall, sharp featured man, adorned with an unshaven face and a brigandish hat, approached them, and asked Mr. Spout for a light. Mr. Spout acquiesced. The party in attempting to return the cigar, accidentally touched the lighted

end to Mr. Spout's hand, and not only burned his hand slightly, but knocked the cigar out of the fingers of third party; whereupon, Mr. Spout extemporized a moderate swear. Third party apologized, and offered a cigar to Spout and Van Dam from his own cigar-case, which they accepted; and he hoped that in their future acquaintance, should they feel disposed to continue it, he would not again involuntarily burn their fingers. He announced himself to be Mr. Remington Dropper, a two years' importation from Cincinnati, and a book-keeper in the heavy hardware house of Steel, Banger & Co., down town.

"Mr. Dropper," said Spout, "I am happy to have made your acquaintance. My name is Spout – John Spout – chemist and apothecary, with Pound & Mixem, No. 34, opposite the whisky-shop. Allow me to make you acquainted with my old and valued friend Mr. – Mr. – what the devil did you say your name is?" said he, addressing Van Dam, aside.

"Myndert Van Dam," suggested the gentleman speaking for himself.

"Yes," resumed Spout, "Myndert Van Dam."

As they shook hands, Mr. Dropper's attention was called in another direction. He desired his companions to notice the fact that a man was approaching with his umbrella, and having bought and lost too many articles of that description, he should not stand unmoved, and see the last one vanish from his sight.

An individual of small stature, apparently about forty-five years of age, with hair of an undeniable, though not an undyeable red approached, holding over his head a silk umbrella.

Mr. Dropper stepped forward and confronted him. He said he was aware that if every man were compelled to account for the possession of that which he claimed as his own, the world would hear some rich developments, in a moral point of view, respecting the tenure of property; and it was precisely for this reason that he had stopped him in the street. He inquired of fat party with the silk umbrella, if he saw the point of his remark. Fat party confessed his inability to comprehend its intent. Mr. Dropper then proceeded to state that when he called fat party's attention to the subject of titles to property in general, he did suppose that fat party would be led to ask himself whether he had a legal and equitable title to the umbrella in particular which he was then under. Fat party fancied that he *did* perceive a lurking innuendo that he had stolen somebody's umbrella. Mr. Dropper was gratified to discover fat party's readiness of comprehension; at his request fat party brought down the umbrella, which discovered the following words painted conspicuously on the cloth outside:

"Stolen From R. Dropper."

Mr. Dropper insisted that there was the evidence, "R. Dropper," meaning Remington Dropper – Remington Dropper being himself – "Stolen from R. Dropper," by whom? – He would not assert positively that fat party was a hall-thief, but he would say and he did say, that his umbrella was found in fat party's possession, without his permission. Some old stick-in-the-mud had said somewhere, to somebody, sometime, that an honest confession was good for the soul, and if fat party would acknowledge the unbuilt whisky, he wouldn't appear against him on his trial for petty larceny. Fat party repudiated the idea that he was a thief. As far as Mr. Dropper's recollection assisted him he had always noticed that the biggest rascals protested their innocence the most emphatically. Fat party appealed to Mr. Dropper's magnanimity to hear his explanation, which Mr. Dropper consented to do.

The explanation developed the fact that fat party was Mr. James George Boggs, late of the Department of the Interior, at Washington, who had arrived that afternoon in the city with his sister, Mrs. Banger, wife of Mr. Banger, of the firm of Steel, Banger & Co., who, it is already stated, were Mr. Dropper's employers. They went directly to Mr. Banger's counting-room, and whilst there it commenced to rain; Mr. Banger offered Mr. Boggs Dropper's umbrella to walk up with, Boggs accepted it, and on his way up had been stopped on suspicion of theft.

Dropper made a humiliating apology, swore eternal friendship to Boggs, introduced him to Van Dam and Spout, and invited the party to his room to spoil a snifter from his private bottle. They accepted the invitation with commendable alacrity, and soon arrived at Mr. Dropper's cozy apartment, which was situated on one of the streets intersecting Broadway. At Mr. Dropper's request, they seated themselves in a circle around the table, with the view of calling up the spirits, but whether saintly or satanic, the compilers of these records do not venture an opinion. After sitting three minutes and twenty seconds in solemn silence, it was discovered that Dropper was a medium, as he was enabled to bring up the spirits in tangible and unmistaken shape from his closet, and forthwith communications of a very satisfactory character were made to the circle. Indeed, the opinion was very generally expressed, that the spirits were genuine spirits, and the medium an excellent test medium, through which they should delight, in future, to have further communications.

As they finished their wine a knock was heard at the door. Dropper responded with a "Come in." An Irish servant put her head within the apartment:

"Plase, sir," said she, "I have a caird here that a gintleman at the door towld me to give to the red-headed gintleman as just come in."

Dropper viewed the card, and the four looked at each other for a moment, apparently with a view of discovering who it was that answered the description of a "red-headed gintleman." At last, Boggs spoke.

"I think it must be me," said he, receiving the card from Dropper, and reading aloud, from the back of it, as follows:

"Sir, an old acquaintance desires to see you for a moment, in relation to a matter involving your own interest."

"Show him up," said Dropper, "it will only make one more – that is, if Boggs is agreed."

Mr. Boggs had no objections to such course being taken, though he was deeply puzzled to know who the old acquaintance could be.

In a moment, the servant introduced into the room a tall, spare individual, of about thirty-two years of age. He was ordinarily attired, and, though not seedy, his garments were by no means new. His face was closely shaven, and surrounded by a large standing collar. He looked around the room upon the different parties present, until his eyes rested upon Boggs. He then ventured to speak.

"Gentlemen," said he, "excuse this interruption. The fact is, I have been seeking this gentleman for nearly three years past, and observing him in company with you, I could not forbear following to seek a brief interview."

Boggs turned pale. Visions of cowhides and pistols came before his mind.

"You are perfectly excusable," said Dropper. "We will leave the room, if you desire."

"N-n-not for all the world," ejaculated Boggs, hastily. "I have not the slightest objection to your remaining."

"Nor I," said the tall gentleman. "Your name," continued he, addressing Boggs, "is Johnson, I believe."

Nothing could have relieved Boggs from the suspense under which he was laboring more than this last remark. The gentleman had evidently mistaken him for one Johnson, who had, probably, insulted or injured the tall individual, on some previous occasion. The blush again returned to Boggs' cheeks.

"You are mistaken," said he, at last. "My name is Boggs."

"Boggs – so it is," said the tall stranger. "My bad memory often leads me into errors. But the mistake is very natural – Johnson sounds so much like Boggs; but, whether Johnson or Boggs, you are the individual whom I seek."

This announcement caused Boggs's courage to again descend into his boots.

"It is three years since I have seen you," said the tall individual. "During that length of time, a person would be likely to forget a name. But your person, sir, that I could never, never forget,"

continued the tall man, solemnly, and throwing in a little melo-dramatic action, as he spoke, which made Boggs shudder.

"C-c-certainly," said Boggs.

"Mr. Boggs," said the stranger, "you probably don't recollect me."

"C-can't say that I do," stammered Boggs.

"That need make no difference," said the stranger, mysteriously. "I know you."

The stranger then commenced feeling in his coat pockets with his hands.

Boggs sprang to his feet, observing this movement, fully satisfied that the stranger was seeking his revolver or bowie-knife.

"Sir," said Boggs, hurriedly, "if I have ever unconsciously done you an injury, I am ready to apologize. I can see no good reason why this apartment should be made the scene of a sanguinary conflict."

"Sanguinary conflict – apology" – said the other, somewhat astonished. "My dear sir, the apology is due to you."

Boggs's equanimity was once more restored. "You don't know how happy I am to hear you say so," said he. "Could you make it convenient to apologize at once, to fully relieve my mind of the frightful anticipations?"

"With the greatest pleasure in the world, Mr. Boggs," said the stranger. "I apologize."

"And I cheerfully forgive you," said Boggs.

"Then you recollect the circumstance, do you?" asked the stranger.

"Hang me if I do," said Boggs.

"Then you forgive me in anticipation."

"Certainly," replied Boggs. "But what the devil were you feeling in your pockets for so mysteriously?"

"My *porte-monnaie*," replied the stranger, who at length succeeded in finding the object of his search. He took from it a gold dollar, two dimes and a cent, and placed them on the table before Boggs. "There," said he, "is the sum of one dollar and twenty-one cents, United States currency, which amount is justly your due."

"What the deuce does all this mean?" asked Boggs, in his bewilderment; "for between being waylaid in the street, accused of petty larceny, anticipations of being murdered, receiving apologies for unknown injuries, and the proffer of money from a total stranger, I hardly know whether I am standing on my heels or my head."

The mysterious stranger then proceeded to make his explanation.

"About three years ago," said he, "I invited a lady friend to the theatre. She signified her intention to accept the invitation. In the evening I called for her, attired in my best, and found her seated in the parlor attired in *her* best. We arrived at the theatre. I had taken with me only a small sum of money – amounting in the aggregate to one dollar and thirty-seven and a half cents. I took the dollar from my pocket, and passed it to the ticket-seller, who took occasion to pass it to me again immediately, and putting his physiognomy before the seven by nine aperture through which the money goes in and the pasteboard comes out, he announced to me, in effect, that the bank note aforesaid, of the denomination of one dollar, was a base imitation. This was a perplexing position. Had I been the fortunate possessor of another dollar on the spot, I should not have been troubled. The lady's acquaintance I had but recently formed. My pride would not permit me to announce to her my true financial condition at that moment. Between pride and a hurried contemplation of the prospective frightful results of my monetary deficiency, I was completely bewildered. I stammered out something about having nothing with me except two or three shillings and a fifty dollar bill – the first of which, gentlemen, existed in the innermost recesses of my vest pocket, and the last in my imagination. I was wondering what the devil I should do next, when a gentleman with red hair addressed me. "Good evening, sir," said he, touching his hat, "did you say you have difficulty in

getting a bill changed?" Without waiting for me to speak he said, "here's a dollar; you can return it to me to-morrow, when you call at my office to transact that matter of which we were speaking yesterday. Good evening." I looked in my hand, and found in it two half dollars and a card, upon which I perceived a name and address written. I was more bewildered than ever, owing to the unexpected deliverance, from what a moment before, I had believed to be an inextricable difficulty. I thought that heaven had deputed some red-haired angel to come to my relief. Then I doubted whether it was not a dream; but the weight of the two half dollars satisfied me that the whole thing was a tangible reality. The difficulty was dissipated, the funds were provided, and the necessary tickets purchased. Next morning I resolved to visit my deliverer, and give him my heartfelt thanks and a dollar. As I was about to leave on my joyful errand, I felt in my pocket for the card; it was gone. I was horror-stricken. I searched everywhere, but could not find it. I tried then to recall to my mind the name; but having read it under considerable excitement, it had not impressed itself upon my memory. I went to the theatre, in hopes to find it there, but in vain. For three months, gentlemen, all my spare time was employed in perambulating Broadway, and standing at the entrance of the theatre, in hopes of meeting my deliverer. Many are the short and red-haired gentlemen whom I have vainly pursued. A half hour since, as I was riding down Broadway in a stage, I saw my deliverer turning the corner of this street, in company with three other gentlemen. I stopped the stage, gave the driver a quarter, and without waiting to receive the change, I made a rush for the stage door, stepped on the silk skirt of a lady passenger, kicked a fat gentleman on the shins, knocked a baby out of an Irishwoman's lap, fell, and struck my head against the door, tumbled out, slipped on the Russ pavement, excited the mirth of the passengers and pedestrians, got up, and reached the corner just in time to see the party whom I followed enter this house. I rushed on, and after some little inquiry, succeeded in attaining this apartment. Gentlemen, Boggs was my deliverer."

"Hurrah for Boggs," shouted Dropper.

"Boggs, you're a philanthropist," said Spout.

"*Vive le Boggs*," said Van Dam.

"Gentlemen," said Boggs, "I protest against your unwarranted compliments. My dear sir," said he, addressing the stranger, "you only borrowed a dollar of me, whereas, I perceive you have given me one dollar and twenty-one cents."

"Three years interest, at seven per cent," suggested the stranger, "Legally your due, and I insist upon your accepting interest as well as principal."

Boggs, without further objection pocketed the proffered amount.

"Your case," said Spout, to the stranger; "is one of morbid concientiousness; so much so that I feel desirous of knowing you better."

"My name, gentlemen," said the stranger, "is Dusenbury Quackenbush."

A general rush was made toward the stranger. Van Dam seized one hand, Boggs the other; Spout caught him by the arm, whilst Dropper, who was the last to reach him, threw his long arms around the whole party. For a moment there was general commotion, growing out of a fierce shaking of hands and arms. Each person loudly assured Mr. Quackenbush of the happiness he felt in having formed his acquaintance. As soon as they had relieved him from their affectionate welcomings Mr. Quackenbush spoke.

"I am certainly happy to become acquainted with you, gentlemen," remarked he, "but really I am fearful I shall not be a very interesting acquaintance in a *coterie* of old friends, as you appear to be, and without doubt are."

"Yes, we are old friends," said Spout, "our friendship is as enduring as the gullibility of the public, and I might add as ancient as – as – gentlemen excuse me if I fail in this point to institute an appropriate comparison. As an astonisher, however, I will inform you of a fact known only to Mr. Van Dam and myself; and which is, that, two hours since, not one of the gentlemen of this quintet had ever known another of it; if I except the case of Mr. Boggs and Mr. Quackenbush."

"Mr. Quackenbush," inquired Spout, "allow me to ask whether you are acquainted with life in the metropolis in its multiform phases?"

"I confess my ignorance," was the reply. "It is most unfortunate that the position of a teacher in a public school is one not calculated to bring an individual in contact with much that is interesting."

"Taking that fact into consideration," said Spout, "I propose, that you all meet me at my room, two evenings hence, when I shall be prepared to unfold to you a purpose and a plan, which I have just conceived. My room, gentlemen, is over old Shavem's, the brokers, three doors from the corner. The number would be 461½, if there were any on the door. You can't mistake the place, however; there is an antiquated pump in front, and when I'm at home there is a Spout inside."

"Oh – h!" groaned Dropper.

"Never mind," resumed Spout, "I don't often attempt such things. Can I depend upon your coming?"

All gave an affirmative response.

"Then," said Spout, "you can depend upon my going, I pronounce this meeting adjourned."

After a few words the parties separated.

HOW THE CLUB ORGANIZED

Put out the light, and then put. —

Shakspeare.

THE evening arrived on which the gentlemen, named in the last chapter, were to meet in the room of Mr. John Spout.

Mr. Spout was there, awaiting the arrival of his friends. He was seated at the end of a table, in a large easy-chair, in his dressing-gown. Before him, on the table, were several written papers. The apartment was one of moderate dimensions, neatly carpeted, and, with plenty of furniture, unobjectionable in quality and taste. On the walls were suspended various pictures, engravings, fencing-foils, and masks, boxing-gloves, antique models, Indian ornaments, plaster casts of legs, arms, hands, feet, &c. On either side of the table were two chairs, placed there, evidently, in anticipation of the arrival of his friends.

Several pipe-stems protruded from a pasteboard box, which was on the table. It required no unusual shrewdness to guess at the contents, and to rightly determine that it was filled with the best-abused, and, at the same time, best-used weed known.

One by one, the other gentlemen arrived, and were ushered by the housekeeper into Mr. Spout's apartment. They sat, engaged in discussing tobacco and the events of the day. At length, Mr. Dropper inquired of Mr. Spout if he had as yet fully elaborated the idea which, on the occasion of the previous meeting, had seemed to weigh so heavily on his mind?

"I was about to advert to the subject," said Mr. Spout. "It has engaged my undivided attention up to the present time, and the idea and plan based upon it are sufficiently perfected to satisfy myself."

"Trot it out," said Boggs, "we are all attention."

"The fact, gentlemen," said Spout, "that most of our number have been either absent from the city, or so much engaged in our different vocations that we have never gained, or have lost, familiarity with many interesting phases of life, as it exists in New York, suggested to me the thought of devoting some portion of our time to looking about, and having put our observations in writing, to interchange them for our mutual gratification."

"A capital idea," said Mr. Dusenbury Quackenbush.

"Brilliant with pleasurable results," remarked Mr. Myndert Van Dam.

"Replete with rational enjoyment," suggested Mr. Remington Dropper.

"I'm in," was the laconic response of Mr. James George Boggs.

"Then I suppose I can count upon your coöperation in the realization of the idea," said Spout.

A general affirmative answer being given, Mr. Spout continued.

"You being unanimous," said he, "I'll now proceed to unfold my plans. To secure unanimity of action and entire success, it is necessary that we have a plan of organization. But in thinking upon this subject, I have foreseen that, by the adoption of any of the ordinary plans, we saddle ourselves with a useless machinery, which will hinder the successful accomplishment of the object we desire. We have no time to spare in discussing rules of order, the adoption of which invariably makes disorder the rule. Yet, there must be a head. In brief, then, gentlemen, I propose that the principles upon which our meetings shall be governed, shall be a despotic principle, but one which shall be compatible with the largest liberty of the governed. How do you like the idea?"

"The idea looks paradoxical to me," said Van Dam.

"Rather profound," suggested Quackenbush.

"Funny," said Boggs.

"I can tell better when I hear the rules," said Dropper.

"I have them prepared," continued Spout. "Shall I read them to you?"

"By all means," replied Van Dam.

The others signified an affirmative response.

Mr. Spout then proceeded to read: —

"We, whose signatures are hereunto affixed, do hereby organize ourselves into a club, having for its

NAME,

The Elephant Club, and having in view the following

OBJECTS:

1. The enjoyment and amusement of its members through.

2. A profound study of the Metropolitan Elephant, by surveying him in all his majesty of proportion, by tracing him to his secret haunts, and observing his habits, both in his wild and domestic state.

OFFICER

The only officer of the club shall be a Higholdboy, whose

DUTY

It shall be to sit in a big chair, at the end of the table, and to see that the members conform to the following

RULES OF CONDUCT:

1. In the meetings of the club, every member shall do exactly as he pleases.

2. Each member shall speak when he pleases, what he pleases, and as long as he pleases.

N.B. – If the remarks of any member are particularly stupid or tedious, the other members are under no obligations to remain and hear them.

N. particular B. Should the speaker, at the conclusion of his remarks, find himself in the presence of only a part of his original audience, and some of those asleep; he is at full liberty, for his private satisfaction, to conclude that his eloquence, like that of the traditional parsons, is not only moving and soothing, as evidenced by the absence of some and the somnolence of others, but so satisfactory that those who were awake will never care to hear him again.

3. No member shall be permitted to bring spirituous or fermented liquors, wine, beer, or cider, whether imported or domestic, into any of the meetings of the club, under the penalty of passing them around for general use; unless the member prefers to keep them to himself, from motives of economy – the economy in such case to be regarded as an offence, to be punished with a severe letting alone.

4. The third rule shall apply to cigars, cheroots, and cigaretts.

5. Ditto – ditto – sardines, Bologna sausages, crackers and cheese.

6. Members are prohibited from sitting with their feet on the table, unless in that position they sit with more comfort, or they have other reasons satisfactory to themselves.

N.B. – The Higholdboy, in consideration of his onerous duties, is exempted from the action of this rule.

7. The Higholdboy is empowered to reprimand any member, when he considers it necessary to preserve the dignity of the club.

N. special and particular B. In order that this rule shall not operate prejudicially to the sovereign rights of individuals, the members of the club are at liberty to treat the reprimand of the Higholdboy as a good joke.

8. Any member who shall be absent from any meeting of the club, shall be liable to stand a half-dozen on the half shell for each of his fellow-members, unless he gives *no* previous notice to the club, or any member thereof, of his prospective absence. Such notice, which he fails to give, to be either verbal or written, at his own option.

9. These foregoing rules shall in all cases be construed strictly, they shall never be repealed or amended; and shall be of binding force, except as hereinafter provided in the

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. The Higholdboy shall announce the suspension of all rules for three months.

At the conclusion, Mr. Spout, in a solemn tone, addressed the party.

"Gentleman," said he, "I am aware that the rules, which I have prepared and submitted, are stringent in the extreme, but I think they will be found, on examination, to be no more so than is essential to secure that unanimity of action so indispensable to the accomplishment of any great end. Believing, then, that you fully appreciate the importance of the end we have in view, I trust they will meet with your approval. Gentlemen, I give way to others."

Mr. Spout took his seat, amid manifestations of the approval of his associates.

Mr. Boggs was the first to speak on the subject of the rules.

"Gentlemen," said he, "unaccustomed as I am to public speaking, and overpowered as I feel at the present moment, I should do injustice to my own feelings, did I fail to endorse the excellence of the rules reported by my friend Spout, and to give my unqualified adhesion, in accordance with the spirit which pervades them."

Mr. Dropper said that he had but one fault to find. He was by nature fond of resisting all rules, the idea of which he had always associated with a restriction of individual liberty. The rules proposed by Mr. Spout contemplated no restriction. They were so nice an adjustment of the relations between the governor and the governed that he could not find it in his heart to resist them. Hence he would be debarred his usual gratification of combatting them. Still he was willing to give them a trial.

Mr. Quackenbush liked the rules very much, as he thought it was coming down to first principles.

Mr. Van Dam said that, so far as he was concerned, the matter was all right; if it wasn't, "he'd make it right."

An inquiry was made as to who would fill the office of the Higholdboy.

Mr. Spout replied. He said that their club was an anomaly. It differed in its features from any organization which had ever been made. He thought that its individual peculiarities should be kept up in the matter of the election of its presiding officers. He was in favor of self-elevation to the position, and of letting the voluntary acquiescence of the members measure the duration of individuals' tenure of office – in other words, when they got tired of him, leave him to preside over a meeting composed of himself and the furniture. "Now, gentlemen," concluded Mr. Spout, "who wants to be a Higholdboy? Don't all speak at once."

Van Dam looked at Boggs; Boggs glanced at Dropper; Dropper eyed Quackenbush, and Quackenbush turned his eyes upon Spout.

"No one speaks," said Spout, "which leads me to believe that no one desires the position unless it be myself, which I confess, gentlemen, is true. Gentlemen, I declare myself duly elevated and installed into the office of Higholdboy of the Elephant Club, and when you survey my proportions,

and look at the size of that chair, I am satisfied you will concede that I am well adapted to fill it. In conclusion, gentlemen, I ask of you your coöperation in forwarding the aims and purposes of this club. Mr. Boggs, will you pass me the tobacco-box?"

"Certainly," said Boggs, as he passed the box, "and allow me to congratulate your constituency in having elevated you to so responsible a position."

"A very respectable constituency of one – Spout," said Mr. Quackenbush. "But it is very funny, isn't it?" said he.

"It's a go," said Dropper.

Mr. Van Dam was very glad that he wasn't the lucky man, as he had such an abhorrence of responsibility.

The question of the time and place of meetings was the next subject discussed. It was finally agreed to leave that matter for future consideration.

"Gentlemen," said Spout, "I have assumed a responsibility, in anticipation of my attaining the Higholdboyship of this club. In this, perhaps, my course will not meet with your full approval; the nature of the step you will be apprised of in the room below. Will you accompany me?"

The party assented, wondering what further surprise was to greet them. They entered a rear parlor on the first floor, where an excellent dinner was waiting them, got up at the expense of Mr. John Spout, Higholdboy of the Elephant Club.

A good dinner is an excellent ending for any thing – even a chapter.

THE ELEPHANTINE DEN

Off with his head so much. —

Shakspeare.

THE Club now being organized, and the eager members anxious to begin at once their expeditions in search of the pachydermatous animal whose peculiar habits, in a state of metropolitan domesticity, were to be henceforth their care and study, it became necessary to fix upon some convenient place of rendezvous, at which they might convene to prepare for their excursions, and where they might reassemble, should any desperate chance divide their strength, and separate their numbers. After some discussion as to the most convenient locality, a room in Broadway was selected, as being less likely to attract attention if lighted up and showing signs of occupancy at an unseasonable hour; and as being easily accessible in case a member was compelled to evade the pursuit of an avenging M.P.; or should he be taken suddenly drunk, and stand in need of brotherly assistance. It was not on the first floor, lest it should be mistaken for a tavern; nor on the second, lest the uninvited public should stray up stairs, thinking it to be a billiard saloon; neither was it in the attic, as the gas didn't run so high; but on the third floor of an imposing building, a room was discovered, appropriate in dimensions, convenient in locality, and the rent of which was not so high but that its altitude was easily admeasured by a weekly V. It is not our present intention to designate the identical numeral which, in the directory, would point out the precise latitude of this mysterious apartment to the anxious inquirer. Suffice it to say that it was in the immediate vicinity of the public office of the man whose name is synonymous with that of the adolescent offspring of the bird whose unmelodious note once saved the imperial city from its fierce invaders, and that the occupation of this man of the ornithological appellation is to provide food and drink for hungry humanity. The relative situations of the club-room and this restaurant were such, that a plummet, dropped from the chair of the Higholdboy, would, if unimpeded by interposing floors, fall directly upon the private bottle of the amiable proprietor in the bar below.

By the timely suggestion of Mr. Remington Dropper, ingenious advantage was taken of the proximity of an establishment so praiseworthy, and so conducive to the common comfort. A wire was arranged, running from a point ever in reach of the chair of the august presiding officer, thence to a bell in the room beneath. A system of tintinabulatory signals was contrived, that the dispenser of good things, on the first floor, might be made to comprehend the wants of the thirsty individuals in the loft, without their coming down stairs. One jerk meant "brandy smashes" all round; two pulls signified "hot whisky punches, with plenty of lemon;" a prolonged jingle was to be immediately answered by an unlimited supply of ale, porter and pewter mugs; while a convulsive twitch, or a couple of spasmodic tugs, signified to the man in waiting, not only that the entire club was "over the bay," but that they wanted, on the instant, soda-water enough to float them in safety to the shore again.

The furniture of this private elephantine den was simple, but necessary, made not for ornament, so much as contrived for use, and consisted of a long table, with an extra quantity of super-solid legs, in case the club should all take a freak to go to bed on it at once – two chairs for each member, one for the customary use, and the other for the accommodation of his feet, an upright piano-forte, a huge match-box, and a wash-tub for empty bottles. A journal was also provided, in which to inscribe the proceedings of each evening, and, by general agreement, it was made a standing order that no man should write therein unless he was sufficiently sober to tell a gold pen from a boot jack.

The poker was chained to the grate, that it might not, in case of an unusual excitement, become a convenient instrument for the demolition of furniture, or the extinguishment of an offending member. For the same reason, the water-jug was tied to the door-knob, and the private tumbler of each member

made fast to one of his chairs with an elastic band, so that, should he throw it at any one, he would not only miss the object of his unnoble aim, but the elasticity of the securing thong would cause it to recoil upon his own pate, with a force which would, probably, render him for the future less inclined to experiment in projectiles. Over the entrance-door, on the outside, was placed a toy elephant, two feet long, but four feet underneath, imported from Germany, at the unheard-of cost of ten dollars.

The room being furnished, and the club ready to commence operations, it was deemed expedient to select an individual of superior physical strength to attend to the door, lest some intruding outsider might sometime interrupt the deliberations of the honorable quadrupedal order. Mr. Quackenbush elected himself to this dignified and honorable office, and, under the belief that his brawny arms were eminently suited to do duty in case of the irruption of sacrilegious outsiders upon the sanctified premises, all the other members acquiesced in his promotion. If any undesirable person presented himself for admission, he was to inform him of the secrecy of the convention. Should the outsider persevere, he was first to expostulate with him, and endeavor to persuade him to go peaceably away. If all milder means should prove unavailing, he was first to black both of his eyes with a pewter mug, taking care to do it impartially and symmetrically, that the discoloration of one optic should not in the least exceed that of the other; he was then mildly to knock him down with a chair, pitch him gently, head first, down both flights of stairs into the street, and then, having filled his boots full of gravel, and put a brick in his mouth, he was to leave him; but on no account was he to deal harshly with such offender, unless he chose to do so on his own responsibility, or was specially authorized by a unanimous vote of all the members awake, in which case he might act his own pleasure. He solemnly bound himself, in case he should at any time be overcome by fatigue, or any other potent cause, that he would go to sleep immediately before the threshold, in order to prevent any animated worldling from penetrating into the secret den, and spy out the mystic doings of the elephants, without forcing an entrance over his prostrate body.

The arrangements being now complete, a solemn convocation of the honorable body was held, and a quadrupedal quorum being present, after a smoky and juicy deliberation of some seven hours, the Higholdboy, Mr. John Spout, unanimously *Resolved*:

1. That the club proceed to hunt the long-nosed animal.
2. In a body.
3. To-morrow night.

To this series of resolutions each of the other members acceded. The result of this bold determination will be fully detailed in another chapter.

FIRST DISCOVERIES OF THE CLUB

"He who fights and runs away,
Will live – "

A. Nonymous.

PURSUANT to the resolutions unanimously adopted on the evening before, the Elephant Club met to proceed, under the direction of some experienced hunter, to scrutinize their ponderous game. Being duly equipped with all the arms and ammunition required for an expedition of so perilous a nature, they sallied forth. They dragged no heavy, ponderous artillery, they wore no clanking swords, they rallied under no silken banner, and marched to no inspiriting music; but they tramped along, their only rallying-flag being a yellow handkerchief round the hat of Mr. Myndert Van Dam, who had thus protected his "Cady" from any injury from a sudden shower; their only martial music was the shrill pipe of Mr. James George Boggs, who whistled "Pop goes the Weasel," and for arms each one had a hickory cane, and in the breast pocket of his overcoat, a single "pocket-pistol," loaded, but not dangerous. Mr. Remington Dropper had assumed the leadership, and was to conduct the party on their cruise.

They had proceeded but a short distance when Mr. Boggs called out to the party to observe the motions of a queer-looking character, who was approaching at a distance of a half block. He was stepping on the edge of the sidewalk with his gaze fixed upon the gutter, and in apparent unconsciousness of the existence of anything but himself. He was lank, lean, and sallow. His clothes were quite dilapidated, his beard and hair long. A smile on his face seemed to indicate his entire satisfaction with himself. He was a marked character, and after a moment's sight at the individual, inquiries were made of Mr. Boggs as to who he was.

"That is more than I can say," was Boggs's response. "I have known him by sight for years, and he has always appeared the same. He belongs to a class of beings in New York, a few specimens of which are familiar to those who frequent the principal thoroughfares, and are known by the ornithological appellation of "gutter-snipes." I have often talked with him, but he knows nothing of his own history; or, if he does, chooses not to reveal it. He is a monomaniac, but perfectly harmless, and calls himself Nicholas Quail. I have learned from other sources a few facts of his history. He sleeps anywhere and everywhere, and eats in the same localities. Nobody ever harms him, all being familiar with his whims. As far as I can learn, he was formerly a raftsman. He has never in his life owned real estate enough to form the site for a hen-coop, nor timber sufficient to build it. His personal property could be crowded into a small pocket-handkerchief; but let him get four inches of whisky in him, and he fancies he has such boundless and illimitable wealth, that in comparison, the treasures of Aladdin, provided by the accommodating slave of the lamp, would be but small change. He walks about the streets viewing what he terms the improvements he is making; he gives all sorts of absurd directions to workmen as to how he desires the work to be done, much to their amusement. But here he is, now; if he is tight we'll have some sport."

As the personage approached, Boggs accosted him, when the following dialogue took place.

"So Nicholas," said Boggs, "you've come back, have you? How is the financial department at present?"

Nick looked up and smiled.

"The fact is," said he, "I've just been buying all the grain in Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, and Indiana for $7 a bushel, and I am rather short for small change, but if you want a hundred thousand or so, just send a cart round to my office. Would you prefer having it in quarter eagles or twenty dollar pieces?"

"Well, Nick, I don't care to borrow at present, but a boy says you've been drunk. How is it?"

"What boy is it?"

"Your boy in your counting-room – the urchin who runs on errands for you, smokes your stubs, and pockets the small change."

"Now, hadn't he ought to be ashamed of himself, the red-haired devil, for getting Old Nick into such a scrape by his drunken lies? Haven't I made him presents enough? It was only last week that I gave him a house in Thirty-second street, and a splendid mansion on the North River; and on the 4th of July he had fourteen thousand dollars, all in pennies, to buy fire-crackers and soda-water with; and yet he goes to you and lies, and says that I've been drunk. Don't you believe the lying cub; he's got a spite agin me, because last night I wouldn't give him the Erie Railroad to bet on poker; but I couldn't do it, General; I seen the cards was agin him; the other feller held four kings, and he hadn't nothin' in the world but three high-heeled jacks and a pair of fours."

"I do believe you were drunk," said Boggs, "and if you ever get hauled up before the justice you will have to pay ten dollars, and if you have not that decimal amount handy, you had better entrust it to the boy's keeping, to have it ready in case of such an emergency."

Nick felt in his pockets, and with a puzzled air remarked:

"I haven't got the money here, but I'll give you a check on the Nassau Bank for a thousand, and you can give me the change; or I'll give you a deed of Stewart's, or a mortgage lien on the Astor House."

"Shan't do it, shan't do it, Old Nick; and I'm afraid you'll have to go to Blackwell's Island, sure."

"There's that infernal island again," said Nick; "if I'd ever thought it would come to this, I never'd have given that little piece of property to the city; but I'll buy it back next week, and use it hereafter for a cabbage garden; see if I don't."

By this time the Elephants seemed to disposed to go, but Nick spied on the shirt-front of Mr. John Spout a diamond pin, which seemed to take his fancy. He offered in vain a block of stores in Pearl street, the Custom-House, the Assay-Office, the Metropolitan Hotel and three-quarters of the steamer Atlantic, and to throw into the bargain Staten Island and Brooklyn City; but it was no use, the party took their leave, and Nick was disconsolate.

Passing up Broadway, their attention was attracted by one of those full-length basswood statues of impossible-looking men, holding an impracticable pistol in his hand, at an angle which never could be achieved by a live man with the usual allowance of bones, but which defiant figure was evidently intended to be suggestive of a shooting-gallery in the rear.

Mr. John Spout, who was in a philosophic mood, remarked that it was a curious study to observe the various abortive efforts of aspiring carpenters to represent the human form divine, in the three-cornered wooden men, which stand for "pistol-galleries;" and the inexplicable Turks, the unheard of Scotchmen, and the Indians of every possible and impossible tribe, which are supposed to hint "tobacco and cigars."

The ambitious carpenter first hews out a distorted caricature of a man, which he passes over to the painters to be embellished. By the time the figure has survived the last operation, it might certainly be worshipped without transgressing any scriptural injunction, for it certainly looks like nothing in "the heavens above, the earth below, or the waters under the earth." It is, however, an easy matter to distinguish the Highlanders from the Turks, by the fact, that the calves of their legs are larger around than their waists, and they are dressed in petticoats and plaid stockings; the Turks and Indians, however, being of the same color, might easily be confounded, were it not for the inexplicable circumstance that the former are always squatting down, while the latter are invariably standing up; they are all, however, remarkable for the unstable material of which their countenances are manufactured; after one has been exposed to the boys and the weather for about a fortnight, his nose will disappear, his lips come up a minus quantity, the top of his head be knocked off, and a minute's scrutiny will generally disclose the presence of innumerable gimlet-holes in his eyes. The boys, in

their desire to comprehend perfectly the internal economy of these human libels, not unfrequently carry their anatomical investigations to the extent of cutting off a leg or two, and amputating one or more arms, or cutting out three or four ribs with a buck-saw or a broad-axe. Indeed, there is one unfortunate wooden Indian, of some fossil and unknown tribe, on exhibition in front of a snuff-shop in the Bowery, who has not only lost both legs, one arm, and his stomach, but has actually endured the amputation of the head and neck, and bears a staff stuck in the hole where his spine ought to be, and upon a flag is inscribed the heartless sentence, "Mrs. Miller's Fine Cut – for particulars inquire within."

Mr. John Spout having concluded his explanatory remarks, the entire party went into the pistol-gallery before-mentioned, to have a crack at the iron man, with the pipe in his mouth.

The nature of Mr. Quackenbush's profession, that of a teacher, was not such as would make him familiar with the use of fire-arms, and, in point of fact, he had about as good a notion of pistol-shooting as a stage-horse has of hunting wild bees; but he resolved to try his hand with the rest. When it came to his turn to try, he spilled the priming, and fired the hair-trigger instrument, accidentally, four times, to the imminent danger of the bystanders, before he could be taught to hold it so that it wouldn't go off before he got ready. He finally got a fair shot, and succeeded in breaking a window immediately behind him, after which he concluded he would not shoot any more.

As the other side of the room was used for a bowling alley, the company proceeded to have a game of ten-pins; and here, again, Mr. Quackenbush distinguished himself. After dropping one ball on his toes, and allowing another to fall into a spittoon, he succeeded in getting one to roll down the alley; with his second ball, by some miraculous chance, he got a "ten-strike," knocking down, not only all the pins, but also the luckless youth who presided over the setting-up-department.

Having refreshed themselves, the party once more regained Broadway, and consulted as to what place should be visited next.

Mr. Spout suggested that he would like to smoke. Nobody dissented except Mr. Dropper, who said he had read the day previous, in the morning papers, that a Turkish elephant had arrived in town, and was on exhibition on Broadway, above the Metropolitan Hotel. Thinking that a comparison instituted between the Turkish quadruped and the one which it was their particular office to study, might be of benefit to the members of the club, in their investigations, Mr. Dropper suggested that the smoking be dispensed with, until they should come into the presence of the oriental animal. Onward the zoölogical specialists sped their way, sometimes marching in Indian file, and sometimes arm-in-arm, running over little boys, dirty dogs, drygoods boxes, low awnings and area railings, until at last Mr. Dropper cried "Halt!" before the portals of the den wherein the mysterious elephant, which had arrived from Constantinople, was concealed. It became a question who should lead in making an entrance. Boggs was fearful, Van Dam was afraid, Spout was cautious, Quackenbush would a little rather not, but Dropper's courage failed not, and he walked boldly into the outer temple, followed by his timid associates. Here they discovered a long counter, and a glass show-case, in which were displayed queer shoes, quaint tooth-picks, funny pipes, and singular ornaments. A glass jar, filled with a rose-pink fluid was also on the counter. A tall gentleman with a ferocious moustache, and a diminutive red cap, without a front-piece, met them. Mr. Quackenbush's curiosity was in a single direction; he said he wanted to go through the harem. They finally entered into the rear apartment. Here their wondering eyes beheld a long room, well lighted with gas. In the centre was a small basin, in which goldfish were indulging in their accustomed aquatic sports. On either side were arranged wide divans, covered with red drapery and high pillows. Small stands were arranged in front of them. Various parties were seated with novel inventions before them, suggested by the minds of ingenious Turks, to accomplish the destruction of the tobacco crop. The members of the Elephant Club placed themselves on the divans, and after they had arranged themselves to their satisfaction, their oriental friend approached them, and gave to each a "programme" of Turkish delicacies. Mr. Spout inquired what a *nargillê* was, and was informed that it was a water-pipe. Mr. Spout insisted that he preferred

a pipe wherein fire, rather than water, was the element used. Mr. Boggs said he would take a *chibouk* on trial. Mr. Spout coincided, and called also for a *chibouk*. But Van Dam ordered three *nargillês*, one for himself, another for Dropper, and a third for Quackenbush. The *chibouks* were produced, and Boggs and Spout commenced smoking in earnest.

In the mean time, the *nargillês* were produced for the other members of the club. Van Dam backed down at their first appearance. The glass vase, having in it water below and fire above, looked suspicious, and added to that was a mysterious length of hose, which was wound about in all directions, commencing at the fire, and running around the vase, about the table legs, over the chair, back through the rounds, about his legs, around his body, and finally came up over his shoulder, and terminated in a mouth-piece. Mr. Van Dam's first sensations, after these preliminaries had been arranged, were that he was in imminent danger of his life, and acting upon this impulse, he obstinately refused to go the *nargillê*, remarking, that they might be harmless enough in the hands of the Turks, who knew how to use such fire-arms, but he thought prudence dictated that he should keep clear of such diabolical inventions.

Dropper and Quackenbush, however, had no fears, but their drafts on the fire, through the hose, were not honored with smoke. They exhausted the atmosphere in their mouths, but get a taste of smoke they could not, and, in despair, Mr. Quackenbush called in the proprietor for an explanation of the mysteries of fumigating *à la Turque*. In compliance with the request, the gentleman informed the amateur Turks that they must inhale the smoke. Dropper protested that he wouldn't make his lungs a stove-pipe to oblige anybody – even the sultan and his sultanas – and he accordingly dropped the hose, and ordered a *chibouk*. Quackenbush, however, made the effort, but a spasmodic coughing put an end to further attempts, and the result was that another *chibouk* was called for. Each member of the club began to feel himself sufficiently etherealized to aspire to a position in a Mahomedan heaven, where he could be surrounded by the spirits of numberless beautiful *houris*, when the attention of Mr. Spout was attracted to a young gentleman, seated on a divan, in the rear of the apartment.

He was smoking a ponderous *chibouk*, and the cloudy volumes sent forth from his mouth hung about his form, quite obscuring him from sight. Occasionally, however, he would stop to breathe, which gave the members of the club an opportunity to survey his appearance. He was a young man of about twenty-two years, small in stature, with a pale, delicate skin, and light hair, plastered down by the barber's skill with exactness. He had no signs of beard or moustache. He was evidently making mighty efforts to become a Turk. He sat on the divan, with his legs drawn up under him, adopting the Turkish mode of inhaling the smoke, and he followed one inhalation by another with such fearful rapidity that the first impulse of the uninitiated would have been to cry out fire. But he evidently didn't sit easy, for after a few minutes, he pulled his legs out from under him and stretched them out at full length, to get out the wrinkles. The Turkish manner of sitting was, evidently, attended with physical inconveniences, for, after about a dozen experimental efforts, he gave it up, put his heels on the table, and laid himself back against the cushions. Still, however, he continued to smoke unremittingly (as if to make up in that what he lacked in ability to sit in the Turkish posture). But it was soon manifest that the young man was suffering. His face was deathly pale, and, dropping his *chibouk*, he called out for his oriental host. The gentleman in the red cap appeared, and the sufferer informed him that he "felt so bad," and he placed his hand on his stomach, denoting that as the particular seat of his difficulty. The benevolent Turk suggested exercise out of doors, and, as the elephant hunters were about going out, they offered to accompany him to his home. The offer was accepted, and the youth, sick in the cause of Turkey, left, supported by Dropper and Quackenbush.

A walk of a few squares relieved the young gentleman of the extremely unpleasant sensations, when he begged leave to express his thanks to the gentlemen for their kindness. He took occasion to inform them that his name was John I. Cake, late a resident of an interior town in Illinois, where his parents now reside. He was, at present, living in New York with an uncle, who was a banker in Wall-street, under whose tuition he was learning rapidly how to make inroads upon the plunder of

his neighbors, without being in danger of finding his efforts rewarded with board and lodging at the expense of State. He had been educated at a country college, and knew nothing of city life, except what he had seen in Wall street.

Mr. Spout said that he was very happy to have met him, and inquired whether he would like to have an opportunity of seeing the elephant.

Mr. John I. Cake said that nothing would please him better. Mr. Spout proceeded at once to inform him that the gentlemen who were present were members of an organization gotten up for that express purpose, and which was known among themselves as the Elephant Club; further he said to Mr. Cake, that if he desired to join, they would administer the obligation to him that evening, and initiate him into the order.

Mr. Cake said by all means. At this time the party had reached the front of a church, in the shadow of which they stopped. Mr. Spout, as Higholdboy, announced that the Elephant Club was now organized. "Mr. Cake," said he, "step forward and receive the obligation."

Mr. Cake did step forward with a bold and determined step.

Mr. Spout continued: "Let your arm," said he, "hang in an easy position from the right shoulder. Now let the digits of your other hand point 'over the left.' Now then, Mr. John I. Cake, late of the State of Illinois, but now encircled with, the moral atmosphere of Wall street, you do solemnly swear, by the sacred horn spoons, that you desire to become a member of the Elephant Club, that you are willing, on becoming a member, to do as you please, unless it pleases you to do something else; that you will never kick a big Irishman's dog, unless you think you are smart enough to thrash his master; that you will be just as honest as you think the times will economically allow; that you will, under no circumstances buy and smoke a 'penny grab,' so long as you have philanthropic friends who will give you Havanas. All of this you solemnly swear, so help you John Rogers."

"Perhaps," was the response of Mr. John I. Cake.

"Having given the correct response," said the Higholdboy, "you are pronounced a member of the Elephant Club, when you shall have duly favored us with the initiative sit down."

"Good!" said Mr. Cake, "where shall it be?"

"Wherever good oysters are to be procured," said Mr. Dropper.

"Here you are, then," remarked Quackenbush, as he pointed to a sign over a subterranean doorway, over which was inscribed the words,

"Here are the spot
Where good oysters is got."

The club descended into the saloon, and Mr. Cake called for six half dozens on the half shell.

Now, be it known to the readers of these records, that Mr. Cake was unacquainted with the perfection to which many departments of manual labor had reached, and being naturally of an inquiring turn of mind, he stayed outside to watch the feats of the young man who brandished the oyster-knife. This gentleman was an adept at his profession. With the most perfect grace of motion, he would lift the oyster in his left hand, lay its edge gently on a small iron standard, give that edge two delicate raps with the butt of the oyster-knife as a signal to the oyster that its turn had now come, when immediately the shells would open, the upper half would jump off and fall below, and the oyster would smile at the young man as he took the knife, and delicately stroked down its beard. All of this transpired in a very short period of time, which, with the artistic grace displayed by the professor, was sufficient to astound Mr. Cake. Indeed, he had entirely forgotten his companions in his admiration of conchological anatomy.

The oysters were placed before the gentlemen, and partaken of with a relish. But Mr. Cake had not seen enough to gratify his wishes. He ordered another dose all around, and again took his position outside to watch the operation of divesting the oysters of one half of their natural exterior protection.

Without doubt, the young man's merits, at his particular vocation, were great; but Mr. Cake magnified them, in his intense admiration, most alarmingly. To him, it seemed as if each particular oyster was waiting for its turn to come, and only wanted a wink from the young man, when it would jump into his grasp, proud that it was permitted so soon to be sacrificed by such a hand. Mr. Cake was transfixed; he never moved his eyes until the second, third and fourth installment of shell-fish were served up.

Mr. Boggs then spoke about drinks. Johnny protested that he never drank anything that would intoxicate – in fact, he was an uncompromising teetotaller. Still, however, he had no objections to treating the crowd, as that would give him an opportunity to remain a few minutes more with the object of his admiration. He continued to watch the motions, whilst his friends were doing justice to the spirituous decoctions. At last Mr. Spout told Johnny that it was time to go. Johnny went to the bar, paid the bill, and, as the party regained the street, Johnny Cake said, with a sigh, that he only wished he were an oyster, that he, too, might be the willing victim of that young man's knife. But, inasmuch as he was not, it was his intention to gratify his desire to see the young man's manipulations by coming every night until he was satisfied.

It is a fact which may be asserted, that Mr. Johnny Cake, as the members of the club had now learned to call him, with forty "oysters and the fixens" on board, did not walk with much apparent comfort.

The club stopped to deliberate, but in the midst of their deliberations the City Hall bell sounded, and instantly commenced all that furious uproar peculiar to Gotham at the sound of an alarm of fire. A crowd of screaming men and boys came tearing along, dragging Engine No. 32½, which hung back and jumped about, as if determined not to go at any hazard. About half a block in advance of this crazy throng rushed a frantic man, with a red shirt and a tin trumpet. Each individual yelled as if the general resurrection were at hand, and he under special obligations to wake up some particular friend. The rheumatic engine held back with all its power, and seemed, for the moment, endowed with a kind of obstinate vitality. Now it threw its wheel round a lamp-post, then it tumbled against the curb-stone, then it ran its tongue into an awning, then affectionately embraced with its projecting arms a crockery-wagon, and finally, with a kind of inanimate dogged determination not to go ahead, in turning a short corner, it leaped triumphantly astride a hydrant, where it stuck. The men tugged, but the engine held fast; the frantic man in the red shirt came tearing back; he had gone far enough ahead to see that 13¼'s boys had got their stream on the fire, and he was furious at the delay. One mighty jerk, and the men and boys were piled in a huge kicking mass on the pavement, which phenomenon was occasioned by the unexpected breaking of the rope. The rope was tied, and by a united effort directed at the wheels, the brakes, the tongue, and every get-at-able point, the machine was again started, protesting, with creaks, and groans, and various portentous rumblings in its inner works, against the roughness of its treatment.

The frantic red-shirt-man howled through his trumpet that Hose 243/8 was coming. The boys looked back, and Hose 243/8 *was* coming. Hose 243/8 came alongside. Hose 243/8 tried to go by. Hose 243/8 was evidently striving to get to the fire in advance of her betters, but Hose 243/8 couldn't do it – for, at this interesting juncture, 32½'s fellows waked up to their work, and the race began. Single gentlemen got into door-ways, or crawled under carts; the ladies who were in the street at that time of night disappeared down oyster-cellars; the M.P.s probably went through the coal-holes, for not one was at that instant "visible to the naked eye." Stages, to get out of the way, turned down alleys so narrow that they had to be drawn out backwards; an express-wagon was run into, and wrecked on a pile of bricks; an early milk-cart was left high and dry on a mountain of oyster-shells; a belated hand-cart-man deserted his vehicle in the middle of the street, and it was instantly demolished, while the owner was only preserved from a similar fate by being knocked gently over a picket-fence into an area, where there couldn't anybody get at him. In the height and very fury of the race, the crowd rushed upon the Elephantines, who were gazing in fancied security at the mixed-up spectacle before them. In an instant they were all inextricably entangled in the rush; those that escaped 32½ were

caught up instantly by 243/8, and those who got away from 243/8, were seized upon by 32½. It was no use resisting – on they must go. The ponderosity of John Spout was no protection to him; nor did the lankness of Dusenbury Quackenbush, and the unreliable appearance of his legs, avail him anything. The quiet inoffensiveness of Van Dam was not respected; no regard was paid to the philosophical composure of Mr. Remington Dropper. The youthful face of Johnny Cake, too, availed nothing in his favor. Mr. Boggs became involved, and all were irretrievably mingled with the howling demi-devils who were racing for the miniature purgatory, the flames from which could now be plainly seen. It was "No. 1, round the corner," the residence of "My Uncle," and each one was anxious to redeem his individual effects without going through the formality of paying charges and giving up the tickets.

But their very anxiety was a serious bar to their rapid progress: and the two machines were jammed together by the zealous rivals. Hard words ensued, and a general row was the instant and legitimate result. Quackenbush was complimented with a lick over the head with a trumpet, in the hands of the frantic red-shirt-man, who accused him of locking the tongue of 243/8 into 32½'s wheel. Dropper had his hat knocked over his eyes, and thereupon, his indignation being roused, he hit out, right and left. His first vigorous blow inflicted terrific damage upon the amiable countenance of his best friend, Mr. Van Dam, and the very first kick he gave upset Mr. John Spout upon the protruding stomach of a man who had been knocked down with a spanner. John quickly recovered himself, and hit Van Dam a clip in the sinister optic, which placed that useful member in a state of temporary total eclipse. The battle became general, and each man waged an indiscriminate war upon his neighbor. Between the affectionate thrashing they gave each other, and the indiscriminate kicks and punches they received from outsiders, the Elephantines were well pommelled. By the time 32½ and 243/8 had got out of the muss, and were fairly on their way to the fire again, Mr. John Spout was the only one of that fraternal band visible on his feet. Dropper was doubled up across a hydrant, Van Dam was comfortably reposing on his back, in the middle of the street, while Quackenbush was sitting on him, trying to wipe the blood out of his eyes, and to ascertain, as nearly as possible, the number of teeth he had swallowed. But when the members came together to make mutual explanations, Johnny Cake was *non est*. Great, indeed, was the cry that was heard after the missing member. Quackenbush bellowed out, in a heavy, sonorous voice, that the difficulty was all past, when Johnny's shrill voice was heard in response. The voice proceeded from an empty molasses hogshead, into which Johnny had jumped, during the melee, for safety. His brother-members released him from his situation, and, when he was once more on Gotham's pavement, he was literally a sweet case. Dirty sugar adhered to every part of his exterior. Explanations were then made, and the members proceeded to shake hands all round, except Mr. Dropper, who couldn't shake hands with anybody, because some one had upset a bucket of tar on his fingers, and he couldn't get it off.

The matter being at length arranged to the satisfaction of all concerned, they adjourned from the sidewalk to a beer-shop, where they washed their faces, pinned up the rents in their pantaloons, and got the jams out of their hats, as well as they could upon so short a notice. They then found their way to the club-room, held a council, and without a great deal of deliberation, it was resolved, every man for himself:

That, to prevent the future possibility of all the members of the club having black eyes at the same time, the members would, from this time forth, pursue their investigations singly, or in pairs – the optical adornment of a single person being bearable, but for all the club to be simultaneously thus affected, was a phenomenon not down in the bills.

The club then adjourned for convalescence.

FIRST EVENING WITH THE CLUB

"Dogs bark." —

Shakespeare.

AS soon as the members of the Elephant Club had recovered their normal appearance, each issued forth alone to catch further glimpses of the colossal quadruped of the metropolis. Each was assiduous in pursuing his investigations, and all manifested a spirit of self-denial worthy of martyrs in the cause of scientific research. The quantity of bad liquors they drank in forming new acquaintances, it were useless to estimate; the horrible cigars they smoked with those acquaintances are beyond computation, and yet they never flagged for a moment. After a few days, thus passed, the Higholdboy thought it time the club should hear the reports of its members. He, accordingly, put up on the bulletin a notice, stating that he expected the attendance of every member on a certain evening.

The evening came, and with it came the members. The weather was sufficiently warm to admit of the windows being up, and a fine, cooling draught of air passed through the apartment. The gentlemen filled their pipes and proceeded to take it easy. Mr. Dropper hung himself upon two chairs; Boggs stretched himself upon a sofa; Van Dam took off his coat, rolled it up for a pillow, and laid himself out on the floor. Quackenbush put an easy-chair by the door, and seated himself there to act as sentinel. Mr. Spout, the Higholdboy, moved his official chair up to one of the windows, turned the back upon his fellow-members, seated himself, raised his feet to the window-casing, and said that, with his eyes looking out between the toes of his boots upon the tiles and chimney-pots, it could not be said he had seen any disorderly conduct, if the members should see fit to vary the monotony of the proceedings by getting up an extemporized row among themselves. Johnny Cake alone seemed aware that a necessity existed for the exhibition of proper dignity on the part of the meeting. He sat by the table proudly erect. His standing collar, neatly-tied cravat, and scrupulously clean exterior, corresponded with his prim deportment.

It became a serious question who should open his budget of experience first. There was no rule to coerce a member to commence; consequently, appeals were made to the magnanimity of each other. These were irresistible, and all suddenly became willing and even anxious to make the beginning.

Mr. Dropper, however, got the floor first. He insisted that he was not in the habit of appearing in large assemblies as a prominent participant in the proceedings, and, in consideration of this fact, he ventured to hope that his incipient efforts would not be judged of harshly.

Mr. Dropper's spasmodic modesty excited the boisterous mirth of his fellow-members.

Mr. Remington Dropper commenced:

"Gentlemen of the Elephant Club," said he, "the subject which I have to present for your consideration this evening is a remarkable instance of the *genus homo* which I accidentally came across in my peregrinations a few evenings since. I was returning home from the theatre, and in passing a door-way in Broadway, I discovered a man seated on the stone step, with his form reclining against the door-casing. The gas-light shone directly in his face, which revealed to me the fact that he was asleep. The singularity of his personal appearance could not fail to attract my attention, and I stopped to study his form, features, and dress, to determine, if I could, who and what he was. His face had evidently been put up askew. The corner of his mouth, the eye and eyebrow on one side were inclined downward, giving him a demure and melancholy look; but on the other side they were inclined upwards, which made that side show a continued grin. A front view of his face was suggestive of both joy and melancholy, which was equal to no expression at all, as the expression on one side offset that of the other. His coat, which was buttoned tightly about him, was neither a dress nor a

frock, but the skirts were rounded off in front, making it a compromise between the two. His pants were also a go-between; they were neither white nor black, but in point of color, were a pepper-and-salt formation. The leg on one side was rolled up. On one foot was a boot, on the other a shoe. He wore a very dirty collar, which, on the laughing side of his face was Byronic, and on the solemn side, uncompromisingly erect. His hat was an antiquated shanghae – black on the crown and light underneath the brim. If a noun, he was certainly a very uncommon, but not strictly a proper noun. If a verb, he seemed to be passive. The tense of his general appearance it would be difficult to determine. Strictly, it was neither past nor present, nor was it in accordance with my ideas of the future. To a certain extent it was all three. His seedy exterior was the remains of the past, existing in the present, and existing prospectively in the future. His mood was subjunctive, full of doubt and uncertainty. Judging from his entire appearance, I could come to no other conclusion as respects his character, than that he was a combination of ups and downs, a concentration of small differences, a specimen of non-committalism in everything except an entire abstinence from water used as a means of purifying his body externally, and his clothing. His red nose led me to suspect that he did not bathe with cold water to an alarming extent inwardly. The individual was remarkable, not for what he was, but for what he was not.

"Such were my thoughts, gentlemen, and I determined to awake the unconscious sleeper, to see how far my conclusions were right. I shook him well, and accompanied my act with a peremptory order to 'get up.' After a moment he roused himself and looked at me, but immediately dropped his eyes. I commenced a dialogue with him, which, as near as I can recollect, was as follows:

"'What are you doing here?' said I.

"'Dun'no,' was the response.

"'You're certainly quite drunk.'

"'Likely.'

"'That is an offence against the law.'

"'Des'say.'

"'You've been arrested for drunkenness before.'

"'Werry like. But I 'aven't been a doin' nuthin' helse.'

"'But I've arrested you before,' said I, playing the policeman, in order to continue the conversation.

"'Des'say, hofficer; but did I hoffer any resistance?'

"'Your weight did.'

"'Vas it wiolent?'

"'You were too drunk to make any violent resistance.'

"'Des'say; I honly inquired for hinformation.'

"'What's your name?'

"'Vich name do you vant to know?'

"'Your whole name, of course.'

"'Bobinger Thomas.'

"'Where were you born, Thomas?'

"'Hingland.'

"'What is your business?'

"'My perwession?'

"'Yes.'

"'It's warious. I never dabbled with law, physic, or diwinity.'

"'I asked you what your profession is – not what it isn't.'

"'My perwession now, or vot it used to vos?'

"'Your present profession, of course.'

"'Vell – nuthin'.'

"'Well, what was your profession in the past?'

"'Vot do you vant to know for?'

"'I shall answer no questions; but you must. Now tell me what your past profession was.'

"'Dogs.'

"'Are you a dog-fancier?'

"'Poss'bly; I fancies dogs.'

"'What breed of dogs do you fancy?'

"'Them as I gets in Jersey.'

"'What do you do with the dogs that you get there?'

"'I vouldn't go into the business if I vos in your sitivation. It don't pay any more, 'cause there's so many coves as has inwested. I left 'cause it vos hoverdid.'

"'I hadn't the slightest intention of going into the business. I asked you for information.'

"'Glad to 'ear you say so. I vos halmost hutterly ruined in it.'

"'Well, what do you do with the dogs?'

"'I doesn't follow the perwession no more.'

"'I asked you what you did with the dogs you picked up in New Jersey.'

"'They muzzles dogs now more than they did vonce.'

"'Tell me what you did with the dogs.'

"'If you nab a cove for gettin' drunk vot do they do vith 'im?'

"'Are you going to answer my question?'

"'Vill they let me off if I tell vere I got the liquor?'

"'Look here, Thomas, answer my question.'

"'Vot do they do vith the coves as sells?'

"'I shan't trifle with you any longer. If you don't tell me what you do with the dogs, I shall enter a charge of vagrancy against you.'

"'Vell, I didn't sell 'em for sassengers.'

"'What did you sell them for?'

"'I didn't sell 'em.'

"'How did you dispose of them?'

"'Is old Keene varden of the penitentiary now?'

"'Tell me, now, what you did with the dogs.'

"'I took 'em to the dog pound.'

"'What did you do with them there?'

"'Vy, doesn't they muzzle cats the same as dogs?'

"'Look here, Thomas, you must answer my question without equivocation. I want to understand the details of this dog-business. What did you do with them at the dog-pound?'

"'For hevery dog as ve takes to the pound ve gets an 'arf a slum.'

"'Then it seems you caught your dogs in New Jersey, brought them to the New York dog-pound, and claimed for your philanthropic exertions the reward of a half a dollar, offered by ordinance for every dog caught within the limits of New York?'

"'Vell, if you'd been born into the perwession, you couldn't have understood its vays better.'

"'You are a sweet subject, certainly.'

"'Des'say.'

"'Are you not ashamed of yourself, to be found lying drunk in door-ways?'

"'B'lieve so.'

"'Are you not certain you are?'

"'Prob'bly.'

"'Did you drink liquor to-night?'

"'P'r'aps.'

"'Where did you get it?'
"'Dun'no.'
"'What kind was it?'
"'I halvays 'ad a passion for gin.'
"'Was it gin you drank to-night?'
"'Des'say.'
"'Are you not sure that it was?'
"'Mebbee.'
"'How often do you drink?'
"'Honly ven I've got the blunt to pay. Dutchmen vont trust now.'
"'Did you have any money to-night?'
"'Likely.'
"'How did you get it?'
""'Oldin' an 'orse for a cove.'
"'How much did you get for that?'
"'A shillin.'
"'With that you bought gin?'
"'Prob'bly.'
"'And got drunk?'
"'Poss'bly.'
"'Thomas, where do you live?'
"'Noveres, in p'tickler.'
"'Where do you eat?'
"'Vere the wittles is.'
"'Where do you sleep?'
"'Anyveres, so that the M.P.s can't nab me.'
"'You ought to be sent to Blackwell's Island as a vagrant.'
"'Des'say.'
"'You've been there, have you not?'
"'Mebbee.'
"'Don't you know whether you've been there or not?'
"'P'r'aps.'
"'Are you certain of anything?'
"'Dun'no.'

"'Now, Thomas,' said I, in conclusion, 'I am going to let you off this time, but I hope you will keep sober in the future. Now, here is a quarter for you, to pay for your lodging to-night.'

"Thomas, the non-committalist, accepted the silver.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.