

**MARSHALL
PINCKNEY
WILDER**

THE WIT AND HUMOR OF
AMERICA, VOLUME VI

Marshall Pinckney Wilder

**The Wit and Humor of
America, Volume VI**

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Various The Wit and Humor of America, Volume VI. (of X.)

GRAINS OF TRUTH

BY BILL NYE

A young friend has written to me as follows: "Could you tell me something of the location of the porcelain works in Sèvres, France, and what the process is of making those beautiful things which come from there? How is the name of the town pronounced? Can you tell me anything of the history of Mme. Pompadour? Who was the Dauphin? Did you learn anything of Louis XV whilst in France? What are your literary habits?"

It is with a great, bounding joy that I impart the desired information. Sèvres is a small village just outside of St. Cloud (pronounced San Cloo). It is given up to the manufacture of porcelain. You go to St. Cloud by rail or river, and then drive over to Sèvres by diligence or voiture. Some go one way and some go the other. I rode up on the Seine, aboard of a little, noiseless, low-pressure steamer about the size of a sewing machine. It was called the Silvooy Play, I think.

The fare was thirty centimes—or, say, three cents. After paying my fare and finding that I still had money left, I lunched at St. Cloud in the open air at a trifling expense. I then took a bottle of milk from my pocket and quenched my thirst. Traveling through France one finds that the water is especially bad, tasting of the Dauphin at times, and dangerous in the extreme. I advise those, therefore, who wish to be well whilst doing the Continent, to carry, especially in France, as I did, a large, thick-set bottle of milk, or kumiss, with which to take the wire edge off one's whistle whilst being yanked through the Louvre.

St. Cloud is seven miles west of the center of Paris and almost ten miles by rail on the road to Versailles—pronounced Vairsi. St. Cloud belongs to the canton of Sèvres and the arrondissement of Versailles. An arrondissement is not anything reprehensible. It is all right. You, yourself, could belong to an arrondissement if you lived in France.

St. Cloud is on the beautiful hill slope, looking down the valley of the Seine, with Paris in the distance. It is peaceful and quiet and beautiful. Everything is peaceful in Paris when there is no revolution on the carpet. The steam cars run safely and do not make so much noise as ours do. The steam whistle does not have such a hold on people as it does here. The adjutant-general at the depot blows a little tin bugle, the admiral of the train returns the salute, the adjutant-general says "Allons!" and the train starts off like a somewhat leisurely young man who is going to the depot to meet his wife's mother.

One does not realize what a Fourth of July racket we live in and employ in our business till he has been the guest of a monarchy of Europe, between whose toes the timothy and clover have sprung up to a great height. And yet it is a pleasing change, and I shall be glad when we as a republic have passed the blow-hard period, laid aside the ear-splitting steam whistle, settled down to good, permanent institutions, and taken on the restful, soothing, Boston air which comes with time and the quiet self-congratulation that one is born in a Bible land and with Gospel privileges, and where the right to worship in a strictly high-church manner is open to all.

The Palace of St. Cloud was once the residence of Napoleon I in summer-time. He used to go out there for the heated term, and folding his arms across his stomach, have thought after thought

regarding the future of France. Yet he very likely never had an idea that some day it would be a thrifty republic, engaged in growing green peas, or pulling a soiled dove out of the Seine, now and then, to add to the attractions of her justly celebrated morgue.

Louis XVIII also put up at the Palace in St. Cloud several summers. He spelled it "palais," which shows that he had very poor early English advantages, or that he was, as I have always suspected, a native of Quebec. Charles X also changed the bedding somewhat, and moved in during his reign. He also added a new iron sink and a place in the barn for washing buggies. Louis Philippe spent his summers here for a number of years, and wrote weekly letters to the Paris papers, signed "Uno," in which he urged the taxpayers to show more veneration for their royal nibs. Napoleon III occupied the palais in summer during his lifetime, availing himself finally of the use of Mr. Bright's justly celebrated disease and dying at the dawn of better institutions for beautiful but unhappy France.

I visited the palais (pronounced pally), which was burned by the Prussians in 1870. The grounds occupy 960 acres, which I offered to buy and fit up, but probably I did not deal with responsible parties. This part of France reminds me very much of North Carolina. I mean, of course, the natural features. Man has done more for France, it seems to me, than for the Tar Heel State, and the cities of Asheville and Paris are widely different. The police of Paris rarely get together in front of the court-house to pitch horseshoes or dwell on the outlook for the goober crop.

And yet the same blue, ozonic sky, if I may be allowed to coin a word, the same soft, restful, *dolce frumenti* air of gentle, genial health, and of cark destroying, magnetic balm to the congested soul, the inflamed nerve and the festering brain, are present in Asheville that one finds in the quiet drives of San Cloo with the successful squirt of the mighty fountains of Vairsi and the dark and whispering forests of Fon-taine-*blou*.

The palais at San Cloo presents a rather dejected appearance since it was burned, and the scorched walls are bare, save where here and there a warped and wilted water pipe festoons the blackened and blistered wreck of what was once so grand and so gay.

San Cloo has a normal school for the training of male teachers only. I visited it, but for some cause I did not make a hit in my address to the pupils until I began to speak in their own national tongue. Then the closest attention was paid to what I said, and the keenest delight was manifest on every radiant face. The president, who spoke some English, shook hands with me as we parted, and I asked him how the students took my remarks. He said: "They shall all the time keep the thinkness—what you shall call the recollect—of monsieur's speech in preserves, so that they shall forget it not continuale. We shall all the time say we have not witness something like it since the time we come here, and have not so much enjoy ourselves since the grand assassination by the guillotine. Come next winter and be with us for one week. Some of us will remain in the hall each time."

At San Cloo I hired of a quiet young fellow about thirty-five years of age, who kept a very neat livery stable there, a sort of victoria and a big Percheron horse, with fetlock whiskers that reminded me of the Sutherland sisters. As I was in no hurry I sat on the iron settee in the cool court of the livery stable, and with my arm resting on the shoulder of the proprietor I spoke of the crops and asked if generally people about there regarded the farmer movement as in any way threatening to the other two great parties. He did not seem to know, and so I watched the coachman who was to drive me, as he changed his clothes in order to give me my money's worth in grandeur.

One thing I liked about France was that the people were willing, at a slight advance on the regular price, to treat a very ordinary man with unusual respect and esteem. This surprised and delighted me beyond measure, and I often told people there that I did not begrudge the additional expense. The coachman was also hostler, and when the carriage was ready he altered his attire by removing a coarse, gray shirt or tunic and putting on a long, olive green coachman's coat, with erect linen collar and cuffs sewed into the collar and sleeves. He wore a high hat that was much better than mine, as is frequently the case with coachmen and their employers. My coachman now gives me his silk hat when he gets through with it in the spring and fall, so I am better dressed than I used to be.

But we were going to say a word regarding the porcelain works at Sèvres. It is a modern building and is under government control. The museum is filled with the most beautiful china dishes and funny business that one could well imagine. Besides, the pottery ever since its construction has retained its models, and they, of course, are worthy of a day's study. The "Sèvres blue" is said to be a little bit bluer than anything else in the known world except the man who starts a nonpareil paper in a pica town.

I was careful not to break any of these vases and things, and thus endeared myself to the foreman of the place. All employes are uniformed and extremely deferential to recognized ability. Practically, for half a day, I owned the place.

A cattle friend of mine who was looking for a dynasty, whose tail he could twist while in Europe, and who used often to say over our glass of vin ordinaire (which I have since learned is not the best brand at all), that nothing would tickle him more than "to have a little deal with a crowned head and get him in the door," accidentally broke a blue crock out there at Sèvres which wouldn't hold over a gallon, and it took the best part of a carload of cows to pay for it, he told me.

The process of making the Sèvres ware is not yet published in book form, especially the method of coloring and enameling. It is a secret possessed by duly authorized artists. The name of the town is pronounced Save.

Mme. Pompadour is said to have been the natural daughter of a butcher, which I regard as being more to her own credit than though she had been an artificial one. Her name was Jeanne Antoinette Poisson Le Normand d'Etioles, Marchioness de Pompadour, and her name is yet used by the authorities of Versailles as a fire escape, so I am told.

She was the mistress of Louis XV, who never allowed her to put her hands in dishwater during the entire time she visited at his house. D'Etioles was her first husband, but she left him for a gay but rather reprehensible life at court, where she was terribly talked about, though she is said not to have cared a cent.

She developed into a marvelous politician, and early seeing that the French people were largely governed by the literary lights of that time, she began to cultivate the acquaintance of the magazine writers, and tried to join the Authors' Club.

She then became prominent by originating a method of doing up the hair, which has since grown popular among people whose hair has not, like my own, been already "done up."

This style of Mme. Pompadour's was at once popular with the young men who ran the throttles of the soda fountains of that time, and is still well spoken of. A young friend of mine trained his hair up from his forehead in that way once and could not get it down again. During his funeral his hair, which had been glued down by the undertaker, became surprised at something said by the clergyman and pushed out the end of his casket.

The king tired in a few years of Mme. Pompadour and wished that he had not encouraged her to run away from her husband. She, however, retained her hold upon the blasé and alcoholic monarch by her wonderful versatility and genius.

When all her talents as an artiste and politician palled upon his old rum-soaked and emaciated brain, and ennui, like a mighty canker, ate away large corners of his moth-eaten soul, she would sit in the gloaming and sing to him, "Hard Times, Hard Times, Come Again No More," meantime accompanying herself on the harpsichord or the sackbut or whatever they played in those days. Then she instituted theatricals, giving, through the aid of the nobility, a very good version of "Peck's Bad Boy" and "Lend Me Five Centimes."

She finally lost her influence over Looney the XV, and as he got to be an old man the thought suddenly occurred to him to reform, and so he had Mme. Pompadour beheaded at the age of forty-two years. This little story should teach us that no matter how gifted we are, or how high we may wear our hair, our ambitions must be tempered by honor and integrity; also that pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a plunk.

CHAD'S STORY OF THE GOOSE

BY F. HOPKINSON SMITH

I nodded my head, and Chad closed the door softly, taking with him a small cup and saucer, and returning in a few minutes followed by that most delicious of all aromas, the savory steam of boiling coffee.

"My Marsa John," he continued, filling the cup with the smoking beverage, "never drank nuffin' but tea, eben at de big dinners when all de gemmen had coffee in de little cups—dat's one ob 'em you's drinkin' out ob now; dey ain't mo' dan fo' on 'em left. Old marsa would have his pot ob tea: Henny use' ter make it for him; makes it now for Miss Nancy.

"Henny was a young gal den, long 'fo' we was married. Henny b'longed to Colonel Lloyd Barbour, on de next plantation to ourn.

"Mo' coffee, Major?" I handed Chad the empty cup. He refilled it, and went straight on without drawing breath.

"Wust scrape I eber got into wid old Marsa John was ober Henny. I tell ye she was a harricane in dem days. She come into de kitchen one time where I was helpin' git de dinner ready, an' de cook had gone to de spring house, an' she says:

"Chad, what ye cookin' dat smells so nice?"

"Dat's a goose," I says, 'cookin' for Marsa John's dinner. We got quality,' says I, pointin' to de dinin'-room do'.

"Quality!" she says. 'Spec' I know what de quality is. Dat's for you an' de cook.'

"Wid dat she grabs a caarvin' knife from de table, opens de do' ob de big oven, cuts off a leg ob de goose, an' dis'pears round de kitchen corner wid de leg in her mouf.

"Fo' I knowed whar I was Marsa John come to de kitchen do' an' says, 'Gittin' late, Chad; bring in de dinner.' You see, Major, dey ain't no up an' down stairs in de big house, like it is yer; kitchen an' dinin'-room all on de same flo'.

"Well, sah, I was scared to def, but I tuk dat goose an' laid him wid de cut side down on de bottom of de pan 'fo' de cook got back, put some dressin' an' stuffin' ober him, an' shet de stove do'. Den I tuk de sweet potatoes an' de hominy an' put 'em on de table, an' den I went back in de kitchen to git de baked ham. I put on de ham an' some mo' dishes, an' marsa says, lookin' up:

"I t'ought dere was a roast goose, Chad."

"I ain't yerd nothin' 'bout no goose," I says, 'I'll ask de cook.'

"Next minute I yerd old marsa a-hollerin':

"Mammy Jane, ain't we got a goose?"

"Lord-a-massy! yes, marsa. Chad, you wu'thless nigger, ain't you tuk dat goose out yit?"

"Is we got a goose?" said I.

"*Is we got a goose? Didn't you help pick it?*"

"I see whar my hair was short, an' I snatched up a hot dish from de hearth, opened de oven do', an' slide de goose in jes as he was, an' lay him down befo' Marsa John.

"Now see what de ladies'll have for dinner," says old marsa, pickin' up his caarvin' knife.

"What'll you take for dinner, miss?" says I. 'Baked ham?'

"No," she says, lookin' up to whar Marsa John sat; 'I think I'll take a leg ob dat goose'—jes so.

"Well, marsa, cut off de leg an' put a little stuffin' an' gravy on wid a spoon, an' says to me, 'Chad, see what dat gemman'll have.'

"What'll you take for dinner, sah?" says I. 'Nice breast o' goose, or slice o' ham?'

"No; I think I'll take a leg of dat goose,' he says.

"I didn't say nuffin', but I knowed bery well he wa'n't a-gwine to git it.

"But, Major, you oughter seen ole marsa lookin' for der udder leg ob dat goose! He rolled him ober on de dish, dis way an' dat way, an' den he jabbed dat ole bone-handled caarvin' fork in him an' hel' him up ober de dish an' looked under him an' on top ob him, an' den he says, kinder sad like:

"Chad, whar is de udder leg ob dat goose?"

"It didn't hab none,' says I.

"You mean ter say, Chad, dat de geoses on my plantation on'y got one leg?"

"Some ob 'em has an' some ob 'em ain't. You see, marsa, we got two kinds in de pond, an' we was a little boddered to-day, so Mammy Jane cooked dis one 'cause I cotched it fust."

"Well,' said he, lookin' like he look when he send for you in de little room, 'I'll settle wid ye after dinner.'

"Well, dar I was shiverin' an' shakin' in my shoes, an' droppin' gravy an' spillin' de wine on de table-cloth, I was dat shuck up; an' when de dinner was ober he calls all de ladies an' gemmen, an' says, 'Now come down to de duck pond. I'm gwineter show dis nigger dat all de geoses on my plantation got mo' den one leg.'

"I followed 'long, trapesin' after de whole kit an' b'ilin', an' when we got to de pond"—here Chad nearly went into a convulsion with suppressed laughter—"dar was de geoses sittin' on a log in de middle of dat ole green goose-pond wid one leg stuck down so, an' de udder tucked under de wing."

Chad was now on one leg, balancing himself by my chair, the tears running down his cheek.

"Dar, marsa,' says I, 'don't ye see? Look at dat ole gray goose! Dat's de berry match ob de one we had to-day.'

"Den de ladies all hollered, an' de gemmen laughed so loud dey yerd 'em at de big house.

"Stop, you black scoun'rel!' Marsa John says, his face gittin' white an' he a-gerkin' his handkerchief from his pocket. 'Shoo!'

"Major, I hope to have my brains kicked out by a lame grasshopper if ebery one ob dem geoses didn't put down de udder leg!

"Now, you lyin' nigger,' he says, raisin' his cane ober my head, 'I'll show you'—

"Stop, Marsa John!' I hollered; 't ain't fair, 't ain't fair.'

"Why ain't it fair?' says he.

"'Cause,' says I, 'you didn't say "Shoo!" to de goose what was on de table!'

Chad laughed until he choked.

"And did he thrash you?"

"Marsa John? No, sah. He laughed loud as anybody; an' den dat night he says to me as I was puttin' some wood on de fire:

"Chad, where did dat leg go?' An' so I ups an' tells him all about Henny, an' how I was lyin' 'case I was 'feared de gal would git hurt, an' how she was on'y a-foolin', thinkin' it was my goose; an' den de ole marsa look in de fire for a long time, an' den he says:

"Dat's Colonel Barbour's Henny, ain't it, Chad?"

"Yes, marsa,' says I.

"Well, de next mawnin' he had his black horse saddled, an' I held the stirrup for him to git on, an' he rode ober to de Barbour plantation, an' didn't come back till plumb black night. When he come up I held de lantern so I could see his face, for I wa'n't easy in my mine all day. But it was all bright an' shinin' same as a' angel's.

"Chad,' he says, handin' me de reins, 'I bought yo' Henny dis arternoon from Colonel Barbour, an' she's comin' ober to-morrow, an' you can bofe git married next Sunday.'"

UNCONSCIOUS HUMOR

BY J.K. WETHERILL

Perhaps unconscious humor does not appeal to the more amiable side of our sense of mirth, for it excites in us a conceited feeling of superiority over those who are making us laugh,—but its unexpectedness and infinite variety render it irresistible to a certain class of minds. The duly labeled "joke" follows a certain law and rule; whereas no jester could invent the *grotesqueries* of the unconscious humorist.

As a humble gleaner after the editorial scythe,—or, to be truly modern, I should say mowing-machine,—I have gathered some strange sheaves of this sort of humor. Like many provincial newspapers, that to which I am attached makes a feature of printing the social happenings in villages of the surrounding country, and these out-of-town correspondents "don't do a thing to" the English language. One of them invariably refers to the social lights of his vicinity as "our prominent socialists," and describes some individual as "happening to an accident." To another, every festal occasion is "a bower of beauty and a scene of fairyland." Blue-penciling they resent, and one of them wrote to complain that a descriptive effort of his had been "much altered and deranged." The paper also publishes portraits of children and young women, and it is in the descriptions accompanying these pictures that the rural correspondent excels himself. One wound up his eulogy in an apparently irrepressible burst of enthusiasm: "She is indeed a *tout ensemble*." A child of six months was described as "studious"; and another correspondent went into details thus: "Little Willie has only one large blue eye, the other having been punched out by his brother with a stick, by accident." A small child was accredited with "a pleasing disposition and a keen juvenile conception."

The following are some of the descriptive phrases applied to village belles: "She is perfectly at home on the piano, where her executions have attained international celebrity." ... "She possesses a mine of repartee and the qualities which have long rendered illustrious her noble family." ... "Her carriage and disposition are swan-like." ... "Her eyes can express pathetic pathos, but flash forth fiery independence when her country's name is translated." ... "She has a molded arm, and her Juno-like form glides with a rhythmic move in the soft swell of a Strauss." ... "Her chestnut hair gives a rich recess to her lovely, fawnlike eyes, which shine like a star set in the crown of an angel." ... One writer becomes absolutely incoherent in his admiration, and lavishes a mixture of metaphors upon his subject: "She portrays a picture worthy of a Raphael. She dances like the fairies before the heavenly spirits. She looks like a celestial goddess from an outburst of morning-glories; her lovely form would assume a phantomlike flash as she glides the floor, as though she were a mystic dream."

Scarcely less rich in unconscious humor are some of the effusions of those who have literary aspirations. A descriptive article contains a reference to "a lonely house that stood in silent mutiny." "Indians who border on civilization, an interesting people in their superstitious way," infested the vicinity, and one of the points of interest was the Wild Man's Leap, "so called from an Indian who is said to have leaped across to get away from some men who were trying to expatriate him." An aspirant made this generous offer: "I will write you an article every week if you so wish it, as I have nothing to do after supper." Modest was the request of another, concerning remuneration: "I do not ask for money, but would like you to send me a small monkey. I already have a parrot."

But no finer specimen of unconscious humor has ever fallen under the sub-editorial eye than "The Beautiful Circus Girl." In these enterprising days rising young authors sometimes boast in print of their ignorance of grammar and spelling, but the author of the aforementioned bit of fiction

surpasses them all in that respect. It seems only just that such a unique gem should be rescued from the dull obscurity of the waste-basket.

THE BEAUTIFUL CIRCUS GIRL

Some years ago the quaint but slow little village of Mariana was all on the qui-of-eve with excitement. Pasted on every tree and sign was announcements of Hall's circus, and the aperence of pretty Rose Floid in the pearless feets of tight-rope dancing, and Seignor Paul Paulo as her attendent. All the vilage was agog, for in their midst had old Hall and his Wife whome he always (spoke of as the Misus) taken a small but quaint cotage, so as to make quiet and please Rose whose gardien he was.

In the distanse was seen an advancing teem, and mounted on its box driving was W. Alexander, distinguished as to aperence, tallent, and that charm, *money*. He was of the most patricien aristocrats of the place. Placed on the summit of one of those hils that spring up in the most unexpected ways and degrees was the quaint old Tudor mansion of the Alexanders called Waterloo, in remembrance of the home of his ancestors which now rests on the banks of the Potomack; a legend as to war and romance. Though bearing with him all the honners that Cambridg could confere, W. Alexander was a faverite in the vilage, being ever ready with a kind enquiry as to Parent, or peny for marbles, not forgetting his boyhoods days. Though the beau par excelant of the vilage, and possessing vast landed estate and a kind retinu, he was not haughty.

Every one was eger to see Rose perform. She in her pasage too and frow had won by her sweet manners (many likings) ere she exhibited her skill.

The eventful hour of promis came and what a crowd was there. Rose came fourth, asisted by Paul Paulo. His form was molded even as an Apolo, and his eger eye was fixed on the bony girl. She ballanced her pole, saught her equiliberum, and every heart was at her desposal, not accepting W. Alexander. Seeing this, the dark pashonate eye of the Italian scowled.

So dropped the curtain of the first performance. And W. Alexander stroled on towards his home, heart and head full of the beautiful circus girl, thoughts were very conflicting, love at first sight.

(We will skip, for want of space, the exquisite passages descriptive of the mutual love of Rose and W. Alexander, and pass on to the finale.)

There was a paus, a sencation, and Rose came fourth to meander in mid-air. Admeration was at its hight, as she swayed too and frow as it were a winged egle from some etherial climb.

Low! a paus—the rope snaps—and Rose falls to erth a helpless mass of youth and beauty. The venerable man of medicin closed her star-lit eyes now forever dimed to this world. And all knew she had walked the last rope that bound her to this erth.

What, who, was her murderer?

The rope seemed to be cut with some jaged instrument so that when her tiny feat pressed its coils it became her destroyer.

Suspician pointed at the Italian.

W. Alexander's old Father of sympathy now the strongest, entreted our Hero to sale for distent shores, there asisted by that balm time and change, there assuage his grefe.

Well, came the last evening, and with the sadest of hearts and a bunch of sweet violets W. Alexander went to bid a long fare well.

But as he neared the sacred spot his heart seemed deadened. Prone on her grave changing the snowy whiteness of the flowers with its crimson die was the body of Paul Paulo. Who by his own hand caused his life blood to floe as an attonement.

UP AND DOWN OLD BRANDYWINE

BY JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY

Up and down old Brandywine,
In the days 'at's past and gone—
With a dad-burn hook-and-line
And a saplin'-pole—i swawn!
I've had more fun, to the square
Inch, than ever *anywhere!*
Heaven to come can't discount mine
Up and down old Brandywine!

Haint no sense in *wishin'*—yit
Wisht to goodness I *could* jes
"Gee" the blame world round and git
Back to that old happiness!—
Kindo' drive back in the shade
"The old Covered Bridge" there laid
Crosst the crick, and sorto' soak
My soul over, hub and spoke!

Honest, now!—it haint no *dream*
'At I'm wantin',—but *the fac's*
As they wuz; the same old stream,
And the same old times, i jacks!—
Gim me back my bare feet—and
Stonebruise too!—And scratched and tanned!
And let hottest dog-days shine
Up and down old Brandywine!

In and on betwixt the trees
'Long the banks, pour down yer noon,
Kindo' curdled with the breeze
And the yallerhammer's tune;
And the smokin', chokin' dust
O' the turnpike at its wusst—
Saturd'ys, say, when it seems
Road's jes jammed with country teams!—

Whilse the old town, fur away
'Crosst the hazy pastur'-land,
Dozed-like in the heat o' day
Peaceful' as a hired hand.
Jolt the gravel th'ough the floor

O' the old bridge!—grind and roar
With yer blame percession-line—
Up and down old Brandywine!

Souse me and my new straw-hat
Off the foot-log!—what *I* care?—
Fist shoved in the crown o' that—
Like the old Clown ust to wear.
Wouldn't swop it fer a' old
Gin-u-wine raal crown o' gold!—
Keep yer *King* ef you'll gim me
Jes the boy I ust to be!

Spill my fishin'-worms! er steal
My best "goggle-eye!"—but you
Can't lay hands on joys I feel
Nibblin' like they ust to do!
So, in memory, to-day
Same old ripple lips away
At my cork and saggin' line,
Up and down old Brandywine!

There the logs is, round the hill,
Where "Old Irvin" ust to lift
Out sunfish from daylight till
Dew-fall—'fore he'd leave "The Drift"
And give *us* a chance—and then
Kindo' fish back home again,
Ketchin' 'em jes left and right
Where *we* hadn't got "a bite!"

Er, 'way windin' out and in,—
Old path th'ough the iurnweeds
And dog-fennel to yer chin—
Then come suddent, th'ough the reeds
And cat-tails, smack into where
Them-air woods-hogs ust to scare
Us clean 'crosst the County-line,
Up and down old Brandywine!

But the dim roar o' the dam
It 'ud coax us funder still
Tords the old race, slow and ca'm,
Slidin' on to Huston's mill—
Where, I 'spect, "The Freeport crowd"
Never *warmed* to us er 'lowed
We wuz quite so overly
Welcome as we aimed to be.

Still it peared-like ever'thing—
Fur away from home as *there*—
Had more *relish*-like, i jing!—
Fish in stream, er bird in air!
O them rich old bottom-lands,
Past where Cowden's Schoolhouse stands!
Wortermelons—*master-mine!*
Up and down old Brandywine!

And sich pop-paws!—Lumps o' raw
Gold and green,—jes oozy th'ough
With ripe yaller—like you've saw
Custard-pie with no crust to:
And jes *gorges* o' wild plums,
Till a feller'd suck his thumbs
Clean up to his elbows! *My!*—
Me some more er lem me die!

Up and down old Brandywine!...
Stripe me with pokeberry-juice!—
Flick me with a pizenvine
And yell "*Yip!*" and lem me loose!
—Old now as I then wuz young,
'F I could sing as I *have* sung,
Song 'ud surely ring *dee-vine*
Up and down old Brandywine!

JONES

BY LLOYD OSBOURNE

I

I could have taken "No" like a man, and would have gone away decently and never bothered her again. I told her so straight out in the first angry flush of my rejection—but this string business, with everything left hanging in the air, so to speak, made a fellow feel like thirty cents.

"It simply means that I'm engaged and you are not," I said.

"It's nothing of the kind," she returned tearfully. "You're as free as free, Ezra. You can go away this moment, and never write or anything!"

Her lips trembled as she said this, and I confess it gave me a kind of savage pleasure to feel that it was still in my power to hurt her.

It may sound unkind, but still you must admit that the whole situation was exasperating. Here was five-foot-five of exquisite, blooming, twenty-year-old American girlhood sending away the man she confessed to care for, because, forsooth, she would not marry before her elder sister! I always thought it was beautiful of Freddy (she was named Frederica, you know) to be always so sweet and tender and grateful about Eleanor; but sometimes gratitude can be carried altogether too far, even if you *are* an orphan, and *were* brought up by hand. Eleanor was thirty-four if a day—a nice enough woman, of course, and college bred, and cultivated, and clever—but her long suit wasn't good looks. She was tall and bony; worshipped genius and all that; and played the violin.

"No," repeated Freddy, "I shall never, never marry before Eleanor. It would mortify her—I know it would—and make her feel that she herself had failed. She's awfully frank about those things, Ezra—surprisingly frank. I don't see why being an old maid is always supposed to be so funny, do you? It's touching and tragic in a woman who'd like to marry and who isn't asked!"

"But Eleanor must have had heaps of offers," I said, "surely—"

"Just one."

"Well, one's something," I remarked cheerfully. "Why didn't she take him then?"

"She told me only last night that she was sorry she hadn't!"

Here, at any rate, was something to chew on. I saw a gleam of hope. Why shouldn't Eleanor marry the only one—and make us all happy!

"That was three years ago," said Freddy.

"I have loved you for four," I retorted. I was cross with disappointment. To be dashed to the ground, you know, just as I was beginning—"Tell me some more about him," I went on. I'm a plain business man and hang on to an idea like a bulldog; once I get my teeth in they stay in, for all you may drag at me and wallop me with an umbrella—metaphorically speaking, of course.

"Tell me his name, where he lives, and all."

"We were coming back from Colorado, and there was some mistake about our tickets. They sold our Pullman drawing-room twice over—to Doctor Jones and his mother, and also to ourselves. You never saw such a fight—and that led to our making friends, and his proposing to Eleanor!"

"Then why in Heaven's name didn't she" (it was on the tip of my tongue to say "jump at him") "take him?"

"She said she couldn't marry a man who was her intellectual inferior."

"And was he?"

"Oh, he was a perfect idiot—but nice, and all that, and tremendously in love with her. Pity, wasn't it?"

"The obvious thing to do is to chase him up instantly. Where did you say he lived?"

"His mother told me he was going to New York to practice medicine."

"But didn't you ever hear from him again? I mean, was that the end of it all?"

"Yes."

"Then you don't even know if he has married since?"

"No!"

"Nor died?"

"No."

"Nor anything at all?"

"No."

"What was his first name?"

"Wait a moment ... let me think ... yes, it was Harry."

"Just Harry Jones, then, New York City?"

Freddy laughed forlornly.

"But he must have had antecedents," I cried out. "There are two ways of doing this Sherlock Holmes business—backward and forward, you know. Let's take Doctor Jones backward. As they say in post-office forms?—what was his place of origin?"

"New York City."

"He begins there and ends there, does he, then?"

"Yes."

"But how sure are you that Eleanor would marry him if I did manage to find him and bring him back?"

"I'm not sure at all."

"No, but Freddy, listen—it's important. You told me yourself that she—I want the very identical words she used."

Freddy reflected.

"She said she was almost sorry she hadn't accepted that silly doctor!"

"That doesn't seem much, does it?" I remarked gloomily.

"Oh, from Eleanor it does, Ezra. She said it quite seriously. She always hides her feelings under a veil of sarcastic humor, you know."

"You're certainly a very difficult family to marry," I said.

"Being an orphan—" she began.

"Well, I'm going to find that Jones if I—!"

"Ezra, dear boy, you're crazy. How could you think for a moment that—"

"I'm off, little girl. Good-by!"

"Wait a second, Ezra!"

She rose and went into the next room, reappearing with something in her hand. She was crying and smiling both at once. I took the little case she gave me—it was like one of those things that pen-knives are put in—and looked at her for an explanation.

"It's the h-h-hindleg of a j-j-jack-rabbit," she said, "shot by a g-g-grave at the f-f-full of the moon. It's supposed to be l-l-lucky. It was given to me by a naval officer who got drowned. It's the only way I can h-h-help you!"

And thus equipped I started bravely for New York.

II

In the directory I found eleven pages of Joneses; three hundred and eighty-four Henry Joneses; and (excluding seventeen dentists) eighty-seven Doctor Henry Joneses. I asked one of the typists in the office to copy out the list, and prepared to wade in. We were on the eve of a labor war, and it was exceedingly difficult for me to get away. As the managing partner of Hodge & Westoby, boxers (not punching boxers, nor China boxers, but just plain American box-making boxers), I had to bear the brunt of the whole affair, and had about as much spare time as you could heap on a ten-cent piece. I had to be firm, conciliatory, defiant and tactful all at once, and every hour I took off for Jonesing threatened to blow the business sky-high. It was a tight place and no mistake, and it was simply jack-rabbit hindleg luck that pulled me through!

My first Jones was a hoary old rascal above a drug store. He was a hard man to get away from, and made such a fuss about my wasting his time with idle questions that I flung him a dollar and departed. He followed me down to my cab and insisted on sticking in a giant bottle of his Dog-Root Tonic. I dropped it overboard a few blocks farther on, and thought that was the end of it till the whole street began to yell at me, and a policeman grabbed my horse, while a street arab darted up breathless with the Dog-Root Tonic. I presented it to him, together with a quarter, the policeman darkly regarding me as an incipient madman.

The second Jones was a man of about thirty, a nice, gentlemanly fellow, in a fine office. I have usually been an off-hand man in business, accustomed to quick decisions and very little beating about the bush. But I confess I was rather nonplussed with the second Jones. How the devil was I to *begin*? His waiting-room was full of people, and I hardly felt entitled to sit down and gas about one thing and the other till the chance offered of leading up to the Van Coorts. So I said I had some queer, shooting sensations in the chest. In five minutes he had me half-stripped and was pounding my midriff in. And the questions that man asked! He began with my grandparents, roamed through my childhood and youth, dissected my early manhood, and finally came down to coffee and what I ate for breakfast.

Then it was my turn.

I asked him, as a starter, whether he had ever been in Colorado?

No, he hadn't.

After forty-five minutes of being hammered, and stethoscoped, and punched, and holding my breath till I was purple, and hopping on one leg, he said I was a very obscure case of something with nine syllables!

"At least, I won't be positive with one examination," he said; "but kindly come to-morrow at nine, when I shall be more at leisure to go into the matter thoroughly."

I paid him ten dollars and went sorrowfully away.

The third Jones was too old to be my man; so was the fourth; the fifth had gone away the month before, leaving no address; the sixth, however, was younger and more promising. I thought this time I'd choose something easier than pains in the chest. I changed them to my left hand. I was going to keep my clothes on, anyhow. But it wasn't any use. Off they came. After a decent interval of thumping and grandfathers, and what I had for breakfast, I managed to get in my question:

"Ever in Colorado, Doctor?"

"Oh, dear me, no!"

Another ten dollars, and nothing accomplished!

The seventh Jones was again too old; the eighth was a pale hobbledohoy; the ninth was a loathsome quack; the tenth had died that morning; the eleventh was busy; the twelfth was a veterinary surgeon; the thirteenth was an intern living at home with his widowed sister. Colorado? No, the widowed sister was positive he had never been there. The fourteenth was a handsome fellow of about thirty-five. He looked poor and threadbare, and I had a glimpse of a shabby bed behind a screen.

Patients obviously did not often come his way, and his joy at seeing me was pitiful. I had meant to try a bluff and get in my Colorado question this time free of charge; but I hadn't the heart to do it. Slight pains in the head seemed a safe complaint.

After a few questions he said he would have to make a thorough physical examination.

"No clothes off!" I protested.

"It's essential," he said, and went on with something about the radio-activity of the brain, and the vasomotor centers. The word motor made me feel like a sick automobile. I begged to keep my clothes on; I insisted; I promised to come to-morrow; but it wasn't any good, and in a few minutes he was hitting me harder than either of the two before. Maybe I was more tender! He electrocuted me extra from a switchboard, ran red-hot needles into my legs, and finally, after banging me around the room, said I was the strongest and wellest man who had ever entered his office.

"There's a lot of make-believe in medicine," he said; "but I'm one of those poor devils who can't help telling a patient the truth. There's nothing whatever the matter with you, Mr. Westoby, except that your skin has a slightly abraded look, and I seem to notice an abnormal sensitiveness to touch."

"Were you ever in Colorado, Doctor?" I asked while he was good enough to help me into my shirt.

"Oh, yes, I know Colorado well!"

My heart beat high.

"Some friends of mine were out there three years ago," I said. "Wouldn't it be strange if by any chance the Van Coorts—"

"Oh, I left Denver when I was fifteen."

Five dollars!

The fifteenth Jones was a doctor of divinity; the sixteenth was a tapeworm specialist; the seventeenth was too old, the eighteenth was too old, the nineteenth was too old—a trio of disappointing patriarchs. The twentieth painted out black eyes; the twenty-first was a Russian who could scarcely speak any English. He said he had changed his name from Karaforvochristophervitch to something more suited to American pronunciation. He seemed to think that Jones gave him a better chance. I sincerely hope it did. He told me that all the rest of the Jones family was in Siberia, but that he was going to bomb them out! The twenty-second was a negro. The twenty-third—! He was a tall, youngish man, narrow-shouldered, rather commonplace-looking, with beautiful blue eyes, and a timid, winning, deprecatory manner. I told him I was suffering from insomnia. After raking over my grandfathers again and bringing the family history down by stages to the very moment I was shown into his office he said he should have to ask me to undergo a thorough physical—! But I was tired of being slapped and punched and breathed on and prodded, and was bold enough to refuse point-blank. I'd rather have the insomnia! We worked up quite a fuss about it, for there was something tenacious in the fellow, for all his mild, kind, gentle ways; and I had all I could do to get off by pleading press of business. But I wasn't to escape scot-free. Medical science had to get even somehow. He compromised by stinging my eye out with belladonna. Have *you* ever had belladonna squirted in *your* eye? Well, don't.

He was sitting at the table, writing out some cabalistic wiggles that stood for bromide of potassium, when I remarked casually that it was strange how well I could always sleep in Colorado.

He laid down the pen with a sigh.

"A wonderful state—Colorado," I observed.

"To me it's the land of memories," he said. "Sad, beautiful, irrevocable memories—try tea for breakfast—do you read Browning? Then you will remember that line: 'Oh, if I—' And I insist on your giving up that cocktail before dinner."

"Some very dear friends of mine were once in Colorado," I said. "Morristown people—the Van Coorts."

"The Van Coorts!"

Doctor Jones sprang from his chair, his thin, handsome face flushing with excitement.

"Do you mean to say that you know Eleanor Van Coort?" he gasped.

"All my life."

He dropped back into the chair again and mumbled something about cigars. I was only to have blank a day. In his perturbation I believe he limited me to a daily box. He was trying—and trying very badly—to conceal the emotions I had conjured up.

"They were talking about you only yesterday," I went on. "That is, if it *was* you! A Pullman drawing-room—"

"And a mistake about the tickets," he broke out. "Yes, yes, it's they all right. Talking about me, did you say? Did Eleanor—I mean, did Miss Van Coort—express—?"

"She was wondering how she could find you," I said. "You see, they're busy getting up a house-party and she was running over her men. 'If I only knew where that dear Doctor Jones was,' she said, and then asked me, if by any possible chance—"

His fine blue eyes were glistening with all sorts of tender thoughts. It was really touching. And I was in love myself, you know.

"So she has remained unmarried!" he exclaimed softly. "Unmarried—after all these years!"

"She's a very popular girl," I said. "She's had dozens of men at her feet—but an unfortunate attachment, something that seems to go back to about three years ago, has apparently determined her to stay out of the game!"

Doctor Jones dropped his head on his hands and murmured something that sounded like "Eleanor, Eleanor!" Then he looked up with one of the most radiant smiles I ever saw on a man's face. "I hope I'm not presuming on a very short acquaintance," he said, "but the fact is—why should I not tell you?—Miss Van Coort was the woman in my life!"

I explained to him that Freddy was the woman in mine.

Then you ought to have seen us fraternize!

In twenty minutes I had him almost convinced that Eleanor had loved him all these years. But he worried a lot about a Mr. Wise who had been on the same train, and a certain Colonel Hadow who had also paid Eleanor attention. Jones was a great fellow for wanting to be sure. I pooh-poohed them out of the way and gave him the open track. Then, indeed, the clouds rolled away. He beamed with joy. In his rich gush of friendship he recurred to the subject of my insomnia with a new-born enthusiasm. He subdivided all my symptoms. He dived again into my physical being. He consulted German authorities. I squirmed and lied and resisted all I could, but he said he owed me an eternal debt that could only be liquidated by an absolute cure. He wanted to tie me up and shoot me with an X-ray. He ordered me to wear white socks. He had a long, terrifying look at a drop of my blood. He jerked hairs out of my head to sample my nerve force. He said I was a baffling subject, but that he meant to make me well if it took the last shot in the scientific locker. And he wound up at last by refusing point-blank to be paid a cent!

I waltzed away on air to write an account of the whole affair to Freddy, and dictate a plan of operations. I was justified in feeling proud of myself. Most men would have tamely submitted to their fate instead of chasing up all the Joneses of Jonesville! Freddy sent me an early answer—a gay, happy, overflowing little note—telling me to try and engage Doctor Jones for a three-day house-party at Morristown. I was to telegraph when he could come, and was promised an official invitation from Mrs. Matthewman. (She was the aunt, you know, that they lived with—one of those old porcelain ladies with a lace cap and a rent-roll.) However, I could not do anything for two days, for we had reached a crisis in the labor troubles, and matters were approaching the breaking point. We were threatened with one of those "sympathetic" strikes that drive business men crazy. There was no question at issue between ourselves and our employes; but the thing ramified off somewhere to the sugar vacuum-boiler riveters' union. Finally the S.V.B.R.U. came to a settlement with their bosses, and peace was permitted to descend on Hodge & Westoby's.

I took immediate advantage of it to descend myself on Doctor Jones. He received me with open arms and an insomniacal outburst. He had been reading up; he had been seeing distinguished confrères; he had been mastering the subject to the last dot, and was panting to begin. I hated to dampen such friendship and ardor by telling him that I had completely recovered. Under the circumstances it seemed brutal—but I did it. The poor fellow tried to argue with me, but I insisted that I now slept like a top. It sounded horribly ungrateful. Here I was spurning the treasures of his mind, and almost insulting him with my disgusting good health. I swerved off to the house-party; Eleanor's delight, and so on; Mrs. Matthewman's pending invitation; the hope that he might have an early date free—

He listened to it all in silence, walking restlessly about the office, his blue eyes shining with a strange light. He took up a bronze paper-weight and gazed at it with an intensity of self-absorption.

"I can't go," he said.

"Oh, but you have to," I exclaimed.

"Mr. Westoby," he resumed, "I was foolish enough to back a friend's credit at a store here. He has skipped to Minnesota, and I am left with three hundred and four dollars and seventy-five cents to pay. To take a three days' holiday would be a serious matter to me at any time, but at this moment it is impossible."

I gave him a good long look. He didn't strike me as a borrowing kind of man. I should probably insult him by volunteering. Was there ever anything so unfortunate?

"I can't go," he repeated with a little choke.

"You may never have another opportunity," I said. "Eleanor is doing a thing I should never have expected from one of her proud and reserved nature. The advances of such a woman—"

He interrupted me with a groan.

"If it wasn't for my mother I'd throw everything to the winds and fly to her," he burst out. "But I have a mother—a sainted mother, Mr. Westoby—her welfare must always be my first consideration!"

"Is there no chance of anything turning up?" I said. "An appendicitis case—an outbreak of measles? I thought there was a lot of scarlatina just now."

He shook his head dejectedly.

"Doctor," I began again, "I am pretty well fixed myself. I'm blessed with an income that runs to five figures. If all goes the way it should we shall be brothers-in-law in six months. We are almost relations. Give me the privilege of taking over this small obligation—"

I never saw a man so overcome. My proposal seemed to tear the poor devil to pieces. When he spoke his voice was trembling.

"You don't know what it means to me to refuse," he said. "My self-respect ... my—my...." And then he positively began to weep!

"You said three hundred and four dollars and seventy-five cents, I believe?"

He waved it from him with a long, lean hand.

"I can not do it," he said; "and, for God's sake, don't ask me to!"

I argued with him for twenty minutes; I laid the question before him in a million lights; I racked him with a picture of Eleanor, so deeply hurt, so mortified, that in her recklessness and despair she would probably throw herself away on the first man that offered! This was his chance, I told him; the one chance of his life; he was letting a piece of idiotic pride wreck the probable happiness of years. He agreed with me with moans and weeps. He had the candor of a child and the torrential sentiment of a German musician. Three hundred and four dollars and seventy-five cents stood between him and eternal bliss, and yet he waved my pocketbook from him! And all the while I saw myself losing Freddy.

I went away with his "no, no, no!" still ringing in my ears.

At the club I found a note from Freddy. She pressed me to lose no time. Mrs. Matthewman was talking of going to Europe, and of course she and Eleanor would have to accompany her. Eleanor, she

said, had ordered two new gowns and had brightened up wonderfully. "Only yesterday she told me she wished that silly doctor would hurry up and come—and that, you know, from Eleanor is almost a declaration!"

Some of my best friends happened to be in the club. It occurred to me that poor Nevill was diabetic, and that Charley Crossman had been boring everybody about his gout. I buttonholed them both, and laid my unfortunate predicament before them. I said I'd pay all the expenses. In fact, the more they could make it cost the better I'd be pleased.

"What," roared Nevill, "put myself in the hands of a young fool so that he may fill his empty pockets with your money! Where do *I* come in? Good heavens, Westoby, you're crazy! Think what would happen to me if it came to Doctor Saltworthy's ears? He'd never have anything more to do with me!"

Charley Crossman was equally rebellious and unreasonable.

"I guess you've never had the gout," he said grimly.

"But Charley, old man," I pleaded, "all that you'd have to do would be to let him *talk* to you. I don't ask you to suffer for it. Just pay—that's all—pay my money!"

"I'm awfully easily talked into things," said Charley. (There was never such a mule on the Produce Exchange.) "He'd be saying, 'Take this'—and I'm the kind of blankety-blank fool that would take it!"

Then I did a mean thing. I reminded Crossman of having backed some bills of his—big bills, too—at a time when it was touch and go whether he'd manage to keep his head above water.

"Westoby," he replied, "don't think that time has lessened my sense of that obligation. I'd cut off my right hand to do you a good turn. But for heaven's sake, don't ask me to monkey with my gout!"

The best I could get out of him was the promise of an anemic servant-girl. Nevill generously threw in a groom with varicose veins. Small contributions, but thankfully received.

"Now, what you do," said Nevill, "is to go round right off and interview Bishop Jordan. He has sick people to burn!"

But I said Jones would get on to it if I deluged him with the misery of the slums.

"That's just where the bishop comes in," said Nevill. "There isn't a man more in touch with the saddest kind of poverty in New York—the decent, clean, shrinking poverty that hides away from all the dead-head coffee and doughnuts. If I was in your fix I'd fall over myself to reach Jordan!"

"Yes, you try Jordan," said Charley, who, I'm sure, had never heard of him before.

"Then it's me for Jordan," said I.

I went down stairs and told one of the bell-boys to look up the address in the telephone-book. It seemed to me he looked pale, that boy.

"Aren't you well, Dan?" I said.

"I don't know what's the matter with me, sir. I guess it must be the night work."

I gave him a five-dollar bill and made him write down 1892 Eighth Avenue on a piece of paper.

"You go and see Doctor Jones first thing," I said. "And don't mention my name, nor spend the money on *Her Mad Marriage*."

I jumped into a hansom with a pleasant sense that I was beginning to make the fur fly.

"That's a horrible cold of yours, Cabby," I said as we stopped at the bishop's door and I handed him up a dollar bill. "That's just the kind of a cold that makes graveyards hum!"

"I can't shake it off, sir," he said despondently. "Try what I can, and it's never no use!"

"There's one doctor in the world who can cure anything," I said; "Doctor Henry Jones, 1892 Eighth Avenue. I was worse than you two weeks ago, and now look at me! Take this five dollars, and for heaven's sake, man, put yourself in his hands quick."

Bishop Jordan was a fine type of modern clergyman. He was broad-shouldered mentally as well as physically, and he brought to philanthropic work the thoroughness, care, enthusiasm and capacity that would have earned him a fortune in business.

"Bishop," I said, "I've come to see if I can't make a trade with you!"

He raised his grizzled eyebrows and gave me a very searching look.

"A trade," he repeated in a holding-back kind of tone, as though wondering what the trap was.

"Here's a check for one thousand dollars drawn to your order," I went on. "And here's the address of Doctor Henry Jones, 1892 Eighth Avenue. I want this money to reach him via your sick people, and that without my name being known or at all suspected."

"May I not ask the meaning of so peculiar a request?"

"He's hard up," I said, "and I want to help him. It occurred to me that I might make you—er—a confederate in my little game, you know."

His eyes twinkled as he slowly folded up my check and put it in his pocket.

"I don't want any economy about it, Bishop," I went on. "I don't want to make the best use of it, or anything of that kind. I want to slap it into Doctor Jones' till, and slap it in quick."

"Would you consider two weeks—?"

"Oh, one, please!"

"It is understood, of course, that this young man is a duly qualified and capable physician, and that in the event of my finding it otherwise I shall be at liberty to direct your check to other uses?"

"Oh, I can answer for his being all right, Bishop. He's thoroughly up-to-date, you know; does the X-ray act; and keeps the pace of modern science."

"You say you can answer for him," said the bishop genially. "Might I inquire who *you* are?"

"I'm named Westoby—Ezra Westoby—managing partner of Hodge & Westoby, boxers."

"I like boxers," said the bishop in the tone of a benediction, rising to dismiss me. "I like one thousand dollar checks, too. When you have any more to spare just give them a fair wind in this direction!"

I went out feeling that the Episcopal Church had risen fifty per cent. in my esteem. Bishops like that would make a success of any denomination. I like to see a fellow who's on to his job.

I gave Jones a week to grapple with the new developments, and then happened along. The anteroom was full, and there was a queue down the street like a line of music-loving citizens waiting to hear Patti. Nice, decent-looking people, with money in their hands. (I always like to see a cash business, don't you?) I guess it took me an hour to crowd my way up stairs, and even then I had to buy a man out of the line.

Jones was carrying off the boom more quietly than I cared about. He wore a curt, snappy air. I don't know why, but I felt misgivings as I shook hands with him.

Of course I commented on the rush.

"The Lord only knows what's happened to my practice," he said. "The blamed thing has gone up like a rocket. It seems to me there must be a great wave of sickness passing over New York just now."

"Everybody's complaining," I said.

This reminded him of my insomnia till I cut him short.

"What's the matter with our going down to the Van Coorts' from Saturday to Tuesday," I said. "They haven't given up the hope of seeing you there, Doctor, and the thing's still open."

Then I waited for him to jump with joy.

He didn't jump a bit. He shook his head. He distinctly said "No."

"I told you it was the money side of it that bothered me," he explained. "So it was at the time, for, of course, I couldn't foresee that my practice was going to fill the street and call for policemen to keep order. But, my dear Westoby, after giving the subject a great deal of consideration I have come to the conclusion that it would be too painful for me to revive those—those—unhappy emotions I was just beginning to recover from!"

"I thought you loved her!" I exclaimed.

"That's why I've determined not to go," he said. "I have outlived one refusal. How do I know I have the strength, the determination, the hardihood to undergo the agonies of another?"

It seemed a feeble remark to say that faint heart never won fair lady. I growled it out more like a swear than anything else. I was disgusted with the chump.

"She's the star above me," he said; "and I am crushed by my own presumption. Is there any such fool as the man that breaks his heart twice for the impossible?"

"But it isn't impossible," I cried. "Hasn't she—as far as a woman can—hasn't she called you back to her? What more do you expect her to do? A woman's delicacy forbids her screaming for a man! I think Eleanor has already gone a tremendous way in just hinting—"

"You may be right," he said pathetically; "but then you may also be wrong. The risk is too terrible for me to run. It will comfort me all my life to think that perhaps she does love me in secret!"

"Do you mean to say you're going to give it all up?" I roared.

"You needn't get so warm about it," he returned. "After all, I have some justification in thinking she doesn't care."

"What on earth do you suppose she invited you for, then?"

"Well, it would be different," he said, "if I had a note from her—a flower—some little tender reminder of those dear old dead days in the Pullman!"

"She's saving up all that for Morristown," I said.

For the first time in our acquaintance Doctor Jones looked at me with suspicion. His blue eyes clouded. He was growing a little restive under my handling.

"You seem to make the matter a very personal one," he observed.

"Well, I love Freddy," I explained. "It naturally brings your own case very close to me. And then I am so positive that you love Eleanor and that Eleanor loves you. Put yourself in my place, Doctor! Do you mean that you'd do nothing to bring two such noble hearts together?"

He seized my hand and wrung it effusively. He really *did* love Eleanor, you know. The only fault with him was his being so darned humble about it. He was eaten up with a sense of his own inferiority. And yet I could see he was just tingling to go to Morristown. Of course, I crowded him all I could, but the best I could accomplish was his promise to "think it over." I hated to leave him wabbling, but patients were scuffling at the door and fighting on the stairs.

The next thing I did was to get Freddy on the long-distance 'phone.

"Freddy," I said, after explaining the situation, "you must get Eleanor to telegraph to him direct!"

"What's the good of asking what she won't do?" bubbled the sweet little voice.

"Can't you persuade her?"

"I know she won't do it!"

"Then you must forge it," I said desperately. "It needn't be anything red-hot, you know. But something tender and sincere: 'Shall be awfully disappointed if you don't come,' or, 'There was a time when you would not have failed me!'"

"It's impossible."

"Then he won't budge a single inch!" I replied.

"Ezra?"

"Darling!"

"Suppose I just signed the telegram Van Coort?"

"The very thing!"

"If he misunderstood it—I mean if he thought it really came from Eleanor—there couldn't be any fuss about it afterward, could there?"

"And, of course, you'll send the official invitation from Mrs. Matthewman besides?"

"For Saturday?"

"Yes, Saturday!"

"And *you'll* come?"

"Just watch me!"

"Ezra, are you happy?"

"That depends on Jones."

"Oh, isn't it exciting?"

"I have the ring in my pocket—"

"But touch wood, won't you?"

"Freddy?"

"Yes—"

"What's the matter with getting some forget-me-nots and mailing them to Jones in an envelope?"

"All right, I'll attend to it. Eighteen ninety-two Eighth Avenue, isn't it?"

"Be sure it *is* forget-me-nots, you know. Don't mix up the language of flowers, and send him one that says: 'I'm off with a handsomer man,' or, 'You needn't come round any more!'"

"Oh, Ezra, Eleanor is really getting quite worked up!"

"So am I!"

"Wouldn't it be perfectly splendid if—Switch off quick, here's aunt coming!"

"Mayn't I even say I love you?"

"I daren't say it back, Ezra—she's calling."

"But *do* you?"

"Yes, unfortunately—"

"Why unfortun—?"

Buzz-buzz-swizzleum-bux-bux!—Aunt had cut us off. However, short as my talk with Freddy had been, it brightened my whole day.

Late the same afternoon I went back to Doctor Jones. I was prepared to find him uplifted, but I hadn't counted on his being maudlin. The fellow was drunk, positively drunk—with happiness. His tongue ran on like a mill-stream. I had to sit down and have the whole Pullman-car episode inflicted on me a second time. I was shown the receipt-slip. I was shown the telegram from Eleanor. I was shown with a whoop the forget-me-nots! Then he was going on Saturday? I asked. He said he guessed it would take an earthquake to keep him away, and a pretty big earthquake, too!... Oh, it was a great moment, and all the greater because I was tremendously worked up, too. I saw Freddy floating before me, my sweet, girlish, darling Freddy, holding out her arms ... while Jones gassed and gassed and gassed....

I left him taking phenacetin for his headache.

III

The house-party had grown a little larger than was originally intended. On Saturday night we sat down twelve to dinner. Doctor Jones and I shared a room together, and I must say whatever misgivings I might have had about him wore away very quickly on closer acquaintance. In the first place he looked well in evening dress, carrying himself with a sort of shy, kind air that became him immensely. At table he developed the greatest of conversational gifts—that of the appreciative and intelligent listener. I heard one of the guests asking Eleanor who was that charming young man. Freddy and I hugged each other (I mean metaphorically, of course) and gloried in his success. In the presence of an admirer (such is the mystery of women) Eleanor instantly got fifteen points better looking, and you wouldn't have known her for the same girl. Freddy thought it was the two-hundred-and-fifty-dollar gown she wore, but I could see it was deeper than that. She was thawing in the sunshine of love, and I'll do Doctor Jones the justice to say that he didn't hide his affection under a bushel. It was generous enough for everybody to bask in, and in his pell-mell ardor he took us all to his bosom. The women loved him for it, and entered into a tacit conspiracy to gain him the right-of-way to wherever

Eleanor was to be found. In fact, he followed her about like a dog, and she could scarcely move without stepping on him.

Sunday was even better. One of the housemaids drank some wood-alcohol by mistake for vichy water, and the resulting uproar redounded to Jones' coolness, skill and despatch. He dominated the situation and—well, I won't describe it, this not being a medical work, and the reader probably being a good guesser. Mrs. Matthewman remarked significantly that it must be nice to be the wife of a medical man—one would always have the safe feeling of a doctor at hand in case anything happened at night! Eleanor said it was a beautiful profession that had for its object the alleviation of human pain. Freddy jealously tried to get in a good word for boxers, but nobody would listen to her except me. It was all Jones, Jones, Jones, and the triumphs of modern medicine. Altogether he sailed through that whole day with flying colors, first with the housemaid, and then afterward at church, where he was the only one that knew what Sunday after Epiphany it was. He made it plainer than ever that he was a model young man and a pattern. Mrs. Matthewman compared him to her departed husband, and talked about old-fashioned courtesy and the splendid men of her youth. Everybody fell over everybody else to praise him. It was a regular Jones boom. People began to write down his address, and ask him if he'd be free Thursday, or what about Friday, and started to book seats in advance.

That evening, as I was washing my hands before dinner and cheerfully whistling *Hiawatha*, I became conscious that Jones was lolling back on a sofa at the dark end of the room. What particularly arrested my attention was a groan—preceded by a pack of heartrending sighs. It worried me—when everything seemed to be going so well. He had every right to be whistling *Hiawatha*, too.

"What's the matter, Jones?" said I.

He keeled over on the sofa, and groaned louder than ever.

"It isn't possible—that she's refused you?" I exclaimed. He muttered something about his mother.

"Well, what about your mother?" I said.

"Westoby," he returned, "I guess I was the worst kind of fool ever to put my foot into this house."

That was nice news, wasn't it? Just as I was settling in my head to buy that Seventy-second Street place, and alter the basement into a garage!

"You see, old man, my mother would never consent to my marrying Eleanor. I'm in the position of having to choose between her and the woman I love. And I owe so much to my mother, Westoby. She stinted herself for years to get me through college; she hardly had enough to eat; she...." Then he groaned a lot more.

"I can't think that your mother—a mother like yours, Jones—would consent to stand between you and your lifelong happiness. It's morbid—that's what I call it—morbid, just to dream of such a thing."

"There's Bertha," he quavered.

"Great Scott, and who's Bertha?"

"The girl my mother chose for me two years ago—Bertha McNutt, you know. She'd really prefer me not to marry at all, but if I must—it's Bertha, Westoby—Bertha or nothing!"

"It's too late to say that now, old fellow."

"It's not too late for me to go home this very night."

"Well, Jones," I broke out, "I can't think you'd do such a caddish thing as that. Think it over for a minute. You come down here; you sweep that unfortunate girl off her feet; you make love to her with the fury of a stage villain; you force her to betray her very evident partiality for you—and then you have the effrontery to say: 'Good-by. I'm off.'"

"My mother—" he began.

"You simply can not act so dishonorably, Jones."

He sat silent for a little while.

"My mother—" he started in again finally.

"Surely your mother loves you?" I demanded.

"That's the terrible part of it, Westoby, she—"

"Pooh!"

"She stinted herself to get me through col—"

"Then why did you ever come here?"

"That's just the question I'm asking myself now."

"I don't see that you have any right to assume all that about your mother, anyway. Eleanor Van Coort is a woman of a thousand—unimpeachable social position—a little fortune of her own—accomplished, handsome, charming, sought after—why, if you managed to win such a girl as that your mother would walk on air."

"No, she wouldn't. Bertha—"

"You're a pretty cheap lover," I said. "I don't set up to be a little tin hero, but I'd go through fire and water for *my* girl. Good heavens, love is love, and all the mothers—"

He let out a few more groans.

"Then, see here, Jones," I went on, "you owe some courtesy to our hostess. If you went away to-night it would be an insult. Whatever you decide to do later, you've simply got to stay here till Tuesday morning!"

"Must I?" he said, in the tone of a person who is ordered not to leave the sinking ship.

"A gentleman has to," I said.

He quavered out a sort of acquiescence, and then asked me for the loan of a white tie. I should have loved to give him a bowstring instead, with somebody who knew how to operate it. He was a fluff, that fellow—a tarnation fluff!

IV

It was a pretty glum evening all round. Most of them thought that Jones had got the chilly mitt. Eleanor looked pale and undecided, not knowing what to make of Jones' death's-head face. She was resentful and pitying in turns, and I saw all the material lying around for a first-class conflagration. Freddy was a bit down on me, too, saying that a smoother method would have ironed out Jones, and that I had been headlong and silly. She cried over it, and wouldn't kiss me in the dark; and I was goaded into saying—well, the course of true love ran in bumps that night. There was only one redeeming circumstance, and that was my managing to keep Jones and Eleanor apart. I mean that I insisted on being number three till at last poor Eleanor said she had a headache, and forlornly went up to bed.

Jones was still asleep when I got up the next morning at six and dressed myself quietly so as not to awake him. It was now Monday, and you can see for yourself there was no time to spare. I gave the butler a dollar, and ordered him to say that unexpected business had called me away without warning, but that I should be back by luncheon. I rather overdid the earliness of it all. At least, I hove off 1892 Eighth Avenue at eight-fifteen a.m. I loitered about; looked at pawnshop windows; gave a careful examination to a forty-eight-dollar-ninety-eight-cent complete outfit for a four-room flat; had a chat with a policeman; assisted at a runaway; advanced a nickel to a colored gentleman in distress; had my shoes shined by another; helped a child catch an escaped parrot—and still it wasn't nine! Idleness is a grinding occupation, especially on Eighth Avenue in the morning.

Mrs. Jones was a thin, straight-backed, brisk old lady, with a keen tongue, and a Yankee faculty for coming to the point. I besought her indulgence, and laid the whole Eleanor matter before her—at least, as much of it as seemed wise. I appeared in the rôle of her son's warmest admirer and best friend.

"Surely you won't let Harry ruin his life from a mistaken sense of his duty to you?"

"Duty, fiddlesticks!" said she. "He's going to marry Bertha McNutt!"

"But he doesn't want to marry Bertha McNutt!"

"Then he needn't marry anybody."

She seemed to think this a triumphant answer. Indeed, in some ways I must confess it was. But still I persevered.

"It puts me out to have him shilly-shallying around like this," she said. "I'll give him a good talking to when he gets back. This other arrangement has been understood between Mrs. McNutt and myself for years."

She was an irritating person. I found it not a little difficult to keep my temper with her. It's easier to fight dragons than to temporize with them and appeal to their better nature. I appealed and appealed. She watched me with the same air of interested detachment that one gives to a squirrel revolving in a cage. I could feel that she was flattered; her sense of power was agreeably tickled; my earnestness and despair enhanced the zest of her reiterated refusals. I was a very nice young man, but her son was going to marry Bertha McNutt or marry nobody!

Then I tried to draw a lurid picture of his revolt from her apron-strings.

"Oh, Harry's a good boy," she said. "You can't make me believe that two days has altered his whole character. I'll answer for his doing what I want."

I felt a precisely similar conviction, and my heart sank into my shoes.

At this moment there was a tap at the door, and another old lady bounced in. She was stout, jolly-looking and effusive. The greetings between the pair were warm, and they were evidently old friends. But underneath the new-comer's gush and noise I was dimly conscious of a sort of gay hostility. She was exultant and frightened, both at once, and her eyes were sparkling.

"Well, what do you think?" she cried out explosively.

Mrs. Jones' lips tightened. There was a mean streak in that old woman. I could see she was feeling for her little hatchet, and was getting out her little gun.

"Bertha!" exploded the old lady. "Bertha—"

(Mysterious mental processes at once informed me that this was none other than Bertha's mother.)

Mrs. Jones was coolly taking aim. I was reminded of that old military dictum: "Don't shoot till you see the whites of their eyes!"

"Bertha," vociferated the old lady fiercely—"Bertha has been secretly married to Mr. Stuffenhammer for the last three months!"

Another series of kinematographic mental processes informed me that Mr. Stuffenhammer was an immense catch.

"Twenty thousand dollars a year, and her own carriage," continued Mrs. McNutt gloatingly. "You could have knocked me down with a feather. Bertha is such a considerate child; she insisted on marrying secretly so that she could tone it down by degrees to poor Harry; though there was no engagement or anything like that, she could not help feeling, of course, that she owed it to the dear boy to gradually—"

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