

Doesticks Q. K. Philander

Doesticks: What He Says



Philander Doesticks
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Nothing

In a literary point of view this book claims nothing:

This is the manufacturer's assertion.

In a literary point of view this book amounts to nothing.

This will be the reader's conclusion.

And if any skeptical person insists upon investigating the matter for himself, he will eventually be compelled to acknowledge the verity of this remark; and will, at the same time, bear a strong testimony to the sagacity of the publisher, who has put his trust in nothing — *for he will have bought the book.*

This work simply professes to be sketches of various persons, places, and events – some of which have been published, and some hav'n't; some are bad, and some are worse; but all have a claim to originality in treatment, although the same things may have been better said by better people.

Some of these bubbles have been, for some time, floating on the sea of literature – the lightest froth of the restless wave; still there are many of them which have never met the public eye, and which are here, for the first time, set afloat.

And for their publication the writer makes no apology.

Accident has brought these "airy nothings" into notice; and although many of the thoughts are not novel in themselves, but are merely whimsically put, and not a few of the whims are borrowed unhesitatingly from others, they are dressed up in a lingual garb so quaint, eccentric, fantastic, or extravagant, that each lender would be sadly puzzled to know his own.

It is undoubtedly this trick of phrase, this affectation of a new-found style, which has caused their widespread newspaper notoriety. And in the hope that people will buy the book before the trick is stale, and not suspect the secret of the joke until they read it on this page, the writer has authorized the collection of these roving unsubstantial ink-brats into their present shelter, and now presents the whole uncouth family for inspection, trusting that the experiment will "put money in the purse," not only of himself, but of his sanguine publisher.

This book, like Hodge's razors, was "made to sell;" and if the sometime good-natured world will pay the price, and have its huge grim smile over these unlicked fancies – although in a political, moral, or utilitarian sense it will have gained nothing – it will, in a literal if not literary view, lose nothing.

But if it is in a surly mood, and chooses to look with dignified contempt upon this avowed and candid literary humbug, some one will be disappointed to think he has miscalculated the fickle taste of the aforesaid world and some one will be out of pocket by its sulky humor; but *of* these persons, their whereabouts, their circumstances, or their names, the world can *say* nothing;

because it will know nothing; no, nothing.

Q. K. PHILANDER DOESTICKS, P.B.

New York, *June*, 1855.

I

How Doesticks came to think of it

It is not pretended that this volume is a work of inspiration, or that any portion of it has been revealed by accommodating "Spirits" through the "Medium" of those crack-brained masculine women, or addle-headed feminine men who profess to act as go-betweens from Earth to the Spirit World.

No part of it has been "rapped" out by uneasy tables, or thumped out by dancing chairs; Doctor Franklin didn't dictate it; Lord Byron didn't write it; Napoleon wasn't consulted about it; Cardinal Richelieu didn't have a finger in it; George the Third hadn't anything to do with it; Shakspeare didn't suggest anything in it; and Benedict Arnold didn't know anything about it.

That these worthies might have afforded much valuable information, offered many important improvements, and enriched the book with a host of wise opinions, had some sapient "Medium" asked their assistance, is unquestionable. But as neither Andrew Jackson Davis, or any other spiritual call boy was at the elbow of the writer to summon these desirable but defunct individuals, they were probably left to pursue, in unmolested peace, their favorite and dignified occupations of "tipping" tables, knocking on partitions, drumming on floors, frightening old women and little girls into hysterics, and upsetting

the propriety of whole parlors full of furniture, whole closets full of glass-ware, and whole cup-boards full of pots, pans and other kitchen gear. For in such intellectual and elevated employments are great men's ghosts engaged, when they pass into a more refined state of existence, if we may credit the assertions of the self-styled "*Spiritualists*."

But, unassisted, and alone, I, the writer, have undertaken this mighty work, instigated only by the Spirits hereinafter referred to, and by the representations of my publisher.

Although at present neither celebrated nor notorious, I have a presentiment that I am speedily about to become one or the other. Through an accidental rip in the curtain of futurity, I have caught a glimpse of the Goddess of Fame. I have heard her sing out from her rather elevated position for me to come up and take a "hasty plate" of glory; and I have not the heart to refuse the request of such a good-looking female, preferred in such elegant language. I am going to shin up the slippery rope leading to her aerial temple (for accurate dimensions and appearance, see engraving in the old Elementary Spelling Book), for the purpose of taking a hand in the game of literary renown, trusting that Nature has given me trumps enough to make the "game," and that Fortune will deal me all "the honors."

For weeks I have been haunted perpetually by a voice – not a "still, small voice" – but a large voice, a considerable voice; a voice vociferous, unctuous, and ever-present, and withal insinuating, and not wholly distasteful. It has been constant in my

ear, suggesting pleasing hopes and fanciful desires; and though its *notes* were often varied, yet ever was the *theme* the same; and the constant burden of that ceaseless song was, "Write a book! write a book!"

And in dreams, too, visions of good-looking ladies with wings, came into my 7×9 chamber, and whispered in my ear, and they too said, "Write a book! write a book!" – and one I thought, with versi-colored plumage, with her finger on her lip, quoted the perpetually murdered Shakspeare prophetically, and, no doubt, with an eye to the success of the volume aforesaid, and said, suiting with a fairy-like gesture the action to the word, "I could a tale unfold." And plucking a snowy quill, she gave it to me, murmuring, as did all the rest, "Write a book! write a book!"

Awoke – put on my pantaloons and boots, and in my shirt sleeves sat down to cogitate. Result is, that I shall use the lengthy quill – I shall accept the pressing invitation of the Goddess of Fame; and in order most effectually to *dis*-tinguish or *ex*-tinguish myself, hereby with malice aforethought, and the penalty of a failure before my eyes, I sit down to write a book.

But my physician informs me that I have got the "cacoethes scribendi," which he says is as bad as the small-pox, toothache, and yellow fever. The disease, he says, must have its course – it may end in a malignant biography – result in an infectious broadsword and blunderbuss, yellow covered novel, or degenerate into a weak form of pseudo-sentimental verse writing, in which latter case, on the appearance of the first

symptom he intends to order me a literary tombstone.

Having fully determined upon making this literary effort, it became necessary to make up my mind as to what should be the contents of the work. A mental cogitation ensued. Philander was puzzled to know what Doesticks was going to write about – Philander asked Doesticks – whereupon Doesticks, in order to satisfy Philander, replied as follows, upon hearing which reply Philander was content.

II

Doesticks satisfies Philander

What it will be all about, time alone will show, for although I have done a little of almost everything, it has in most instances been *so* little, that a premeditated autobiography would probably lack incident, and be deficient in interest. I have not as yet invented humbugs enough to earn a *Prince*-ly title, and not having made a fortune by ingenious trickery, metallic impudence and barefaced deception, cannot edify the "darling public," by telling how the thing is done.

Never having made fierce love to a lady against her will, followed her from place to place in the small-beer spirit of presumptuous puppyism, been outwitted by her at last, and left to cool my amorous passion in a prison, the story of my courtship and its consequence, would not prove attractive.

As I have ever been on good terms with my family, I feel no desire, under the guise of a fictitious narrative, to call any members of it miserly and mean, purse-proud and haughty, or to say that others are conceited, vain, selfish, silly, foppish, or weak-brained.

Novel writing is out of the question. I have tried that, but met with serious difficulties. I couldn't keep my hero of the same nation – in the first chapter I made him a Spaniard; two pages

afterward he was an English nobleman; in the fourth chapter an Oriental juggler, balancing a bamboo ladder on his nose, and making a fig-tree grow out of the calf of his leg – and so on, successively, an Italian image-seller, a Dutch burgomaster, a South American Indian, and a Mississippi steamboat pilot.

I had as much difficulty in permanently locating the country of my fictitious favorite, as the Know-Nothing party of New York in the late election had, in determining the nativity of their candidate for Governor, whose chances of election were fair while he was thought to be an American, but who was finally defeated on the ground that he was a Hindoo, and owned stock in the car of Juggernaut. Poetry has been overdone; the gentle art has culminated in a recent "Spasmodic Tragedy," and in the sublime, whose matchless lays have won for him undying fame, and the admiration of several; and who so outruns competition that there is nothing left to be done in that direction.

In the play-writing vein, I have also failed; not from any lack of merit in my drama, as the manager solemnly assured me, but because he had not the menagerie requisite to its proper representation. Improving upon the hint offered by the managers of the "*Thespian Wigwam*," who have added an elephant and a circus company to their company of "gifted artists," I had introduced into my play a rhinoceros, a lioness, two hyenas, a team of "two-forty" reindeers, a couple of ostriches, and a muley-cow, – and even then there was but a slight obstacle – the manager might have procured the animals, but he was afraid the cow

would quarrel with the rhinoceros, and so disturb the harmony of his establishment.

But this book, Philander, it will be impossible to class as strictly either classic, scientific, historical, humorous, or descriptive. Fantastic and extravagant it will be in many things, but we will do our best to make it agreeable to the palate of the public. I promise everything, like all book-makers, and I shall afterwards perform what is convenient, following the same reliable precedent.

My book shall be full of love and poetry to suit the "fast" young ladies, and shall be written in easy words of two syllables to meet the necessities of the "fast" young men.

I shall praise, flatter, and commend everybody and everything, that everyone may receive his meed of approbation; and I shall also censure, find fault, and criticise in an equally universal manner, that no one may escape his proper castigation.

I shall set forth a great multitude of fancies, theories, and hypotheses, that those who are fond of innovation may not lack gratification; and I shall immediately proceed to controvert and deny them all, that the conservative portion of community be not offended.

I shall cry down education and instruction, for there are those who consider all teaching an evil; and on the other hand, I shall advocate learning and science, for there is a very respectable minority which insist that the people may advantageously be taught something more.

I shall not stand up for love and charity, for it might induce people to love the wrong persons, and to give their pennies to imposters; and yet I shall not eulogize avarice and hate, for there are a few who think benevolence and kindness preferable even to these.

I shall not throw my influence in the scale of Protestantism lest the Catholics should take offence, nor yet shall strive to build up Catholicism, lest thereby the dislike of the Orthodoxy be incurred. Nor shall I show myself a partisan of religion of any kind, for the Atheist says it is all a farce. Neither shall I endeavor to inculcate principles of infidelity, for there is still an occasional prejudice in favor of Christianity.

It will be "a work which no gentleman's library should be without." It is considered necessary to the safety of the Union, that its democratic principles be thoroughly disseminated, and it is indispensable to the stability of the English throne that its monarchical doctrines be thoroughly comprehended. Every man, woman, child, canal driver, billiard marker, faro dealer, and member of Congress will be provided with a copy, thereby preserving the Union, destroying our liberties, and keeping unsullied the honor and dignity of "our flag."

I hope the public will be as well satisfied by this eloquent speech as Philander was, that this book is one of immense utility, and will consequently peruse the same with a huge degree of gratification.

III

Niagara

I was never given to accepting the decisions of others as gospel in any cases where it was possible for me to manufacture a home-made opinion of my own; and I did not greatly wonder at myself when I discovered that my emotions, when I first beheld that great aqueous brag of universal Yankeedom, Niagara, were not of the stereotyped and generally-considered-to-be-necessary – sort. The letter which follows, and which is all the reminiscence of my visit extant, was published soon after, and extensively copied, and was, in fact, the first article which bore the name of Doesticks.

IV

Doesticks on a Bender

i have been to Niagara – you know Niagara Falls – big rocks, water, foam, Table Rock, Indian curiosities, squaws, moccasins, stuffed snakes, rapids, wolves, Clifton House, suspension bridge, place where the water runs swift, the ladies faint, scream, and get the paint washed off their faces; where the aristocratic Indian ladies sit on the dirt and make little bags; where all the inhabitants swindle strangers; where the cars go in a hurry, the waiters are impudent, and all the small boys swear.

When I came in sight of the suspension bridge, I was vividly impressed with the idea that it was "some" bridge; in fact, a considerable curiosity, and a "considerable" bridge. Took a glass of beer and walked up to the Falls; another glass of beer and walked under the Falls; wanted another glass of beer, but couldn't get it; walked away from the Falls, wet through, mad, triumphant, victorious; humbug! humbug! Sir, all humbug! except the dampness of everything, which is a moist certainty, and the cupidity of everybody, which is a diabolical fact, and the Indians and niggers everywhere, which is a satanic truth.

Another glass of beer – 'twas forthcoming – immediately – also another, all of which I drank. I then proceeded to drink a glass of beer; went over to the States, where I procured a glass of

beer – went up-stairs, for which I paid a sixpence; over to Goat Island, for which I disbursed twenty-five cents; hired a guide, to whom I paid half a dollar – sneezed four times, at nine cents a sneeze – went up on the tower for a quarter of a dollar, and looked at the Falls – didn't feel sublime any; tried to, but couldn't; took some beer, and tried again, but failed – drank a glass of beer and began to feel better – thought the waters were sent for and were on a journey to the – ; thought the place below was one sea of beer – was going to jump down and get some; guide held me; sent him over to the hotel to get a glass of beer, while I tried to write some poetry – result as follows:

Oh Thou (spray in one eye) awful, (small lobster in one shoe,) sublime (both feet wet) master-piece of (what a lie) the Almighty! terrible and majestic art thou in thy tremendous might – awful (orful) to behold, (cramp in my right shoulder,) gigantic, huge and nice! Oh, thou that tumbled down and riseth up again in misty majesty to heaven – thou glorious parent of a thousand rainbows – what a huge, grand, awful, terrible, tremendous, infinite, old swindling humbug you are; what are you doing there, you rapids, you – you know you've tumbled over there, and can't get up again to save your puny existence; you make a great fuss, don't you?

Man came back with the beer, drank it to the last drop, and wished there had been a gallon more – walked out on a rock to the edge of the fall, woman on the shore very much frightened – I told her not to get excited if I fell over, as I would step right up again

– it would not be much of a fall anyhow – got a glass of beer of a man, another of a woman, and another of two small boys with a pail – fifteen minutes elapsed, when I purchased some more of an Indian woman, and imbibed it through a straw; it wasn't good – had to get a glass of beer to take the taste out of my mouth; legs began to tangle up, effects of the spray in my eyes, got hungry and wanted something to eat – went into an eating-house, called for a plate of beans, when the plate brought the waiter in his hand. I took it, hung up my beef and beans on a nail, eat my hat, paid the dollar a nigger, and sided out on the step-walk, bought a boy of a glass of dog with a small beer and a neck on his tail, with a collar with a spot on the end – felt funny, sick – got some soda-water in a tin-cup, drank the cup and placed the soda on the counter, and paid for the money full of pocket – very bad headache; rubbed it against the lamp-post and then stumped along; station-house came along and said if I did not go straight he'd take me to the watchman – tried to oblige the station-house, very civil station-house, very – met a baby with an Irish woman and a wheelbarrow in it; couldn't get out of the way; she wouldn't walk on the sidewalk, but insisted on going on both sides of the street at once; tried to walk between her; consequence collision, awful, knocked out the wheelbarrow's nose, broke the Irish woman all to pieces, baby loose, court-house handy, took me to the constable, jury sat on me, and the jail said the magistrate must take me to the constable; objected; the dungeon put me into the darkest constable in the city; got out, and here I am, prepared to stick to

my original opinion.

Niagara, non est excelsus (ego fui) humbug est! indignus admirationi!

V

Seeking a Fortune – Rail Road Felicities

Young men in the west, when they get too lazy to plough, drive oxen, and dig potatoes, invariably either go to studying Law, Physic, or Divinity, or emigrate to New York to make their fortunes. Hence the inundation of two-and-sixpenny pettifoggers, the abundant crop of innocent-looking juvenile M.D.'s, and the army of weak-eyed preachers, whose original simplicity is too deeply rooted to be ever overgrown by the cares of after life. The portion of our country known as "the West" sends forth every year scores of these misguided innocents, who, had they stayed at home, might have grown up into tolerable farmers, or even been cultivated into respectable mechanics, but who, being once thrown into the whirl of city life, degenerate into puny clerks with not half salary enough to pay for their patent-leather boots.

It is a curious fact that two-thirds of the young men from the country, their first year in the metropolis, do not receive as a remuneration for their valuable services a sum sufficient to keep them in theatre tickets.

If a committee of their employers should be detailed to investigate the hidden pecuniary fountain whence these young

men obtain the funds many of them lavish so freely, the said committee would be considerably astonished to find out how much more champagne and oysters the N. Y. merchants pay for than the most knowing of them are aware of; and their wives would be astounded to learn how many bracelets and diamond pins had been presented to ladies of the theatre and ballet, and bought with their husbands' money. And many a country mother would mourn to hear that her darling had, in the first six months of his city life, learned to practise more vices than she had ever heard of, and among his other attainments, had acquired the elegant city accomplishment of spending his employer's money as freely as if it was his own.

And in due course of time the writer of this paragraph, wearied of the eternal sameness of a country village, the same unvarying prospect of ox-teams, hay-scales, errant swine, and wandering disconsolate cows, took the roving fever and resolved to visit Gotham, looking for a cure.

Packed up my traps in a red box, kissed all my friends who had clean faces, and bade a long farewell to the aspiring village (which had long since assumed the name of city, but had never grown large enough to fit the appellation, and for this reason always reminded me of a boy with his father's boots on,) where I had vegetated for several years; took a last look at its town-pump, its grocery, and its court-house square without any fence round it; feasted my eyes for the last time upon the dusty charms of the seminary girls who are perpetually going to the story-and-a-

half post-office for letters which never come; rode to the railroad for the last time in the four-wheeled smoke-house, which, from early youth, had been impressed upon my ignorant simplicity as an omnibus; and taking my seat in the cars, left without many tears the town where I had treasured up such stores of classic knowledge under the consistent inattention of teachers who had been paid to neglect my education.

Paid the man with the brass door-plate on him, sixteen dollars and a half for a dirty piece of pasteboard, – hung up my carpet-bag on a hook which immediately broke down, and let the aforesaid bag drop on the bonnet of a populous lady with a pair of twins, whom it completely demolished for the time – settled myself in my seat for a comfortable nap – was continually roused therefrom by the door-plate man, who seemed to have a mania for inspecting the dirty pasteboard every fifteen minutes – got my mouth full of dust and cinders, which I converted into a mortar-bed in my stomach by drinking warm water from the spout of a water-pot (brought round by the boy who expects you to buy his greasy apples and ancient newspapers as a compensation for the temporary dilution) – changed cars about twenty times, and had the satisfaction of seeing my trunk pitched about by the vindictive baggagemen at every step, as if they were under obligations to knock it to pieces in the least possible space of time. (When it arrived at the end of my journey the lock was broken, the hinges pulled off, and a large hole punched in the end, so that I found my clean shirts full of gravel, and that a

piece of brick which had got in through the place where the lock had been, had been rubbed against a daguerreotype of my lady-love, thereby demolishing her left eye and scratching the top of her head off.) Rode all night; every time I would get into an uncomfortable doze the train would stop, more passengers come in, and I would have to vacate my seat to accommodate some woman with three children and a multitude of bundles (a woman in a railroad car always occupies four times as much room as she pays for, generally turning over the back of the seat next to her, and occupying one place for herself and the other three for her provisions and bandboxes) – then finding another place, and getting into an uneasy dream about earthquakes, wash-tubs, bass-drums, and threshing-machines, and waking up with a sudden choke when some unusually large cinder got into my mouth – coming to a sudden stop at some side station and finding my anatomical constituents in a most uncomfortable state of paralysis; my arms fast asleep and feeling like frozen sausages; my other extremities ditto, and with no more feeling in them than in a bass-wood log; having a dim consciousness that something was wrong, and endeavoring to navigate by means of the benumbed members before alluded to, and get out doors to see what the matter was, and in the attempt falling over the stove and knocking my teeth out against the coal-hod – being called at four o'clock in the morning to assist in the dismal farce of breakfast, and sitting down (with my hat on and my hands dirty in order to be in the fashion) at a long table where the crockery

looks as if it had not been washed in a month, and the only visible viands are cold biscuits, hard-boiled eggs, and despairing mutton-chops struggling inextricably in a tallowy ocean – where the half-awake waiters bring you apple-pie in place of coffee, and pour the hot water down your back, and spill the sugar in your hair – where, in the midst of your second mouthful, you are called upon to suspend operations and pay half a dollar to a man with uncombed hair who gives you wild-cat paper and crossed quarters in exchange for your Yankee gold – and where, before the third morsel reaches your expectant lips, the bell rings, the malicious engine gives its vicious shriek, and you are hurried, swindled and starving, into the cars again.

In this delectable manner for two days and nights I was hurried, hustled, and tumbled towards my journey's end – reached my destination at last, crossed the North River in one of those ferry-boats which run either end first like a crab, and on my arrival was instantly attacked by a crowd of runners, was forcibly thrust into a hack, the remains of my trunk tossed at my feet, and in obedience to my panting request, I was driven to that hotel, the cognomen whereof is simultaneously suggestive of holy men and of the adversary.

VI

Seeing the Lions – Barnum's Museum

As soon as I had become comfortably established as a citizen of New York, and had replaced the straw hat with a green ribbon, which decorated my head at the time of my metropolitan advent, by a shining beaver with white fur on the under side; had run in debt for a new suit of clothes, and sold my trunk to buy a set of gold shirt-studs, I began to assume that knowing air of superiority which ever distinguishes the thorough-bred city man from his country cousins.

I made up my mind to devote the next six months of my valuable time, to seeing the sights, and becoming acquainted with the celebrities of the town. To this end I proposed to visit the various places of amusement, to go on excursions, join volunteer companies, run to fires, in short, to make myself ever present, wherever there was anything to be seen, to which the verdant eyes of a backwoods Wolverine were unaccustomed.

I addressed myself a speech wherein I remarked, "Phil, you have now been a resident of this city long enough to know something of the localities thereto appertaining – know where the City Hall is – ditto Hospital. Also where the Astor House is generally located – can tell the general direction of Mercer and Bowery streets from the Crystal Palace – and can at most times of

day point out Trinity Church with a tolerable degree of accuracy.

"But there are, nevertheless, sundry other points of interest, with which you should become familiar, and divers other objects whose names you should remember, that hereafter you may not mistake a Grand Street stage for a perambulating Circus wagon, or again, point out the Wall Street Ferry House to a friend and assure him it is the Hippodrome building, but be able after this to give reliable and correct information on these points to all who ask."

Accordingly, since that time, I have striven hard to acquire such a knowledge of the city that I could find any of the theatres without a Directory, and get home at any time of night without the escort of a Policeman.

Have been to the Battery, for which I paid a shilling to the dilapidated Hibernian who attends the iron portal – afterwards visited (by particular desire,) the cocked-hat shaped Sahara known as the "City Hall Square" – saw the splendid fountain with its symmetrical basin filled with golden fishes (as I was credibly informed) – I could not exactly perceive them myself – in the midst of its elegant miniature forest (yet in its infancy) – gazed with admiration at the ancient structure denominated the City Hall – said to have been built by the ancient Greeks, of which I have not the slightest doubt, as all the avenues leading thereto were thronged with *modern* Greeks, whose general costume was not so classically correct as I could have wished – looked at the glorious fountain which adorns the centre of the spacious lawn

– admired the magnificent proportions of the vast forest trees which rear their lofty forms therein – gazed long and earnestly at the glittering jet (not quite so lofty as I had been led to suppose,) of the magnificent fountain which embellishes the princely grounds – then turned to look at a circular edifice, which, I confess, did not strike me as being remarkable for architectural beauty, but which undoubtedly is exceedingly useful – then turned to feast my wondering eyes upon the diamond-glittering drops of a fountain near at hand; looked with much approbation upon the wide and spacious avenues, and the clearly gravelled walks, and also at a fountain near by, which I think I have before mentioned; surveyed the other fine buildings near at hand, which adorn and beautify that triangular piece of earth; and ever returned with constantly increasing gratification to view a beautiful lake in the centre thereof, from the midst of which burst forth in aqueous glory the waters of a fountain; soon, convinced that I had seen my money's worth, prepared to leave – casting one longing, lingering look behind (as my friend L. E. G. Gray says,) at the glorious old classic ruin, the hall, and the pluvial splendors of the fountain.

Went out, but looking back, perceived that in the splendid park I had just left, there rose in "misty majesty" (vide somebody,) the jet of a fountain. Resolved to return and have another look at the ivied and crumbling ruins, and also to inspect minutely a fountain which I now perceived hard by.

Wishing to be perfectly *posted* up, I went to the *Post* office

(the *Evening Post* office), and obtained a paper containing the latest news of the day, and also a list of entertainments for the evening. Desiring to see the Museum, of which I had read, and also to behold Barnum, of whom I had heard some mention, in connection, I think, with one Thomas Thumb, and Joice Heth, an antiquated and venerable lady, colored (who afterwards *died*), I determined instantly to visit that place of delectation, "perfectly regardless of expense."

Arrived at the door, man demanded a quarter, but, like Byron's Dream, "I had no further change," so was necessitated to get a bill broke; offered him Washtenaw, but that was too effectually *broke* to suit his purpose. Got in somehow, after a lengthy delay, and some internal profanity.

Soon after my entrance, young man, attired in a dress-coat, a huge standing collar, and a high hat, introduced himself as "A. Damphool, Esq.," gentleman of leisure, and man about town. Having never before had any experience of a class of individuals who compose, I am told, a large proportion of the masculine population of the city, I eagerly embraced the opportunity of making his acquaintance.

He also presented his friend "Mr. Bull Dogge," and we three then proceeded to view the curiosities; we commenced with the double-barreled nigger baby (which Bull Dogge says is an illegitimate devil), – went on to the Rhinoceros (who is always provided with a horn, Barnum's temperance talk to the contrary nevertheless) – the Happy Family – the two-legged calf, (B.

D. says it is not the only one in the city), a red darkey – a green Yankee – a white Irishman (Damphool says that this latter individual is an impossibility, and could only have originated with Barnum) – wax-figure of a tall man in a blue coat, with a star on his breast, (Damphool says it is a policeman, who was found when he was wanted; but Bull Dogge says there was never any such person, and that the whole story is a Gay fable,) found by the programme that it is supposed to represent Louis Napoleon; never knew before that he had one eye black, and one blue (Bull Dogge asserts that the usual custom is to have one eye both black *and* blue); wax model of the railroad man who swindled the community (now living on his money, and president of the Foreign Mission Society for the suppression of pilfering on the Foo-Foo Islands); wax figure of the abandoned, dissolute, and totally depraved woman, who filched half a loaf of bread to give her hungry children, and who was very properly sent to Blackwell's Island for it – also of the City Contractor who *did* clean the streets – (Damphool states that he is residing at Utica).

Saw a great multitude of monkeys, streaked face, white face, black face, hairy face, bald face (Bull Dogge prefers the latter), with a great assortment of tails, differing in length, and varying as to color, long tails, short tails, stump tails, ring tails, wiry tails, curly tails, tails interesting and insinuating, tails indignant and uncompromising, big tails, little tails, bob tails, (Damphool suggests Robert narratives), and no tails (Bull Dogge says that some effeminate descendants of this latter class now promenade

Broadway, and he swears that they have greatly degenerated in intelligence); pictures, paddles, pumpkins, carriages, corals, lava, boats, breeches, boa constrictors, shells, oars, snakes, toads, butterflies, lizards, bears, reptiles, reprobates, bugs, bulls, bells, bats, birds, petrifications, putrefactions, model railroads, model churns, model gridirons, model artists, model babies, cockneys, cockades, cockroaches, cocktails, scalps, Thomashawks, Noah's ark, Paganini's fiddle, Old Grimes's coat, autocrats, autobiographies, autographs, chickens, cheeses, codfish, Shanghais, mud-turtles, alligators, moose, mermaids, hay-scales, scale armor, monsters, curiosities from Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Beaverdam, Chow Sing, Tchinsing, Linsing, Lansing, Sing Sing, cubebs, cart wheels, mummies, heroes, poets, idiots, maniacs, benefactors, malefactors, pumps, porcupines and pill machines, all mingled, mixed, and conglomerated, like a Connecticut chowder, or the Jew soup of the Witches in Macbeth.

Upstairs at last, and into an adolescent theatre, christened a Lecture Room, (Dampfool says it is known as the Deacon's Theatre, and that all his pious namesakes attend). Saw the play, laughed, cried, and felt good all over. Much pleased with a bit of fun originating in a jealous fireman, and terminating in a free fight.

Fireman Mose saw Rose, his sweetheart, with Joe, the hackman; got jealous, pitched into him – fun – thought of Tom Hood, and went off at half-cock – thus —

Enter Rose with Joe – sees Mose – Mose beaus Rose; Rose knows those beaux foes – Joe's bellicose – so's Mose – Mose blows Joe's nose – Joe's blows pose Mose – Rose Oh's – Mose hoes Joe's rows – Joe's blows chose Mose's nose – Mose shows Joe's nose blows – Joe's nose grows rose – Mose knows Joe's nose shows those blows – Joe goes – Mose crows.

Joe being whipped, and moreover being the only innocent one in the whole fight, was arrested by the vigilant and efficient police.

Damphool says that Joe treated the Emerald conservators of the public quiet, and is again at large.

Let Mose beware.

VII

Model Boarding Houses

Immediately upon my arrival in the city of Newsboys and Three-cent Stages, I proceeded, as is hereinbefore mentioned, to the white-faced Hotel which is surmounted by the bird called Shanghai, who seems from the top of his lofty perch where he roosts in unreachable security, to crow over neighboring boroughs, and exult in the great glory of the Manhattan Island. It required, however, but a few days to weary of the "constant noise and confusion" of this saintly mansion, and to become sick of the eternal presence of men in white aprons who are everywhere at the same time, and who are, mathematically speaking, a constant quantity.

These waiters are certainly ubiquitous; at the table there is one at each elbow, at night a stranger is escorted to bed by a grand procession, and one pulls off his boots while another unbuttons his shirt-collar, and a third lights the gas and turns down the bed-clothes; a waiter meets you at the door, another takes away your overcoat and gives it to a waiter who presents you with a brass check for it – there are waiters in the bar, in the washroom, in the barber-shop, in the cellar, in the reading-room; waiters running races through the halls all night; there is always a snowy neckerchief and an outstretched palm when you leave

the premises, and on sunshiny days there is invariably a distant glimpse of a white-jacket on the roof of the house.

As soon after my arrival as I could collect my senses, and knew enough not to take every M. P. for a foreign ambassador, and pull off my hat to the Star, I deemed it advisable to search for lodgings more quiet, and not so expensive.

It took about a fortnight to restore my mind to its accustomed serenity, and then having become, to a certain extent, a fixture in this high old town, it became necessary to search out a fit habitation, wherein I might eat, sleep, change my shirt (Dampfool blushes), and attend to the other comforts of the external *homo*, and the inner individual.

My friend Bull Dogge having deserted his late place of residence, (on account of the perpetual reign of salt mackerel at the breakfast table), we started together on a voyage of discovery. To describe all the dilapidated gentlewomen, whose apartments we inspected – all the many inducements which were used to persuade us to take up our quarters in all sorts of musty smelling rooms, and to recount how many promises we made to "call again," would take too much time.

Suffice it to say, that at six o'clock in the evening, wearied out and desperate, we cast anchor in the domicile of an Irish lady with one eye. She assured us that her boarders were all "rispectible, and found their own tibaccy, and that there was divil a bug in the place."

We took adjoining rooms, and resignedly went down to tea.

I noticed that my cup had evidently sustained a compound comminuted fracture, and been patched up with putty (which came off in my tea) – that the bread was scant – the butter powerful – the tea, "on the contrary, quite the reverse," – however, although matters looked somewhat discouraging – "hoping against hope" – we retired to our respective rooms.

Horror of horror!! O! most horrible!!! I was besieged – had I been Sebastopol itself I could not have been attacked with more vigor, or by more determined and bloodthirsty enemies.

For two hours I maintained a sanguinary combat with an odoriferous band of determined cannibal insects – armed only with a fire-shovel, I gallantly kept up the unequal conflict – but the treacherous implement broke at the critical moment; I thought I should be compelled to yield – despair filled all my senses – my heart failed me – my brain grew dizzy with horror – hurried thoughts of enemies unpardoned – of duties neglected – and of errors committed, rushed across my mind – a last thought of cherished home and absent friends was in my heart, and with a hasty prayer for mercy and forgiveness, was at the point of yielding, when my frantic eye caught sight of my cast-iron boot-jack. With an exclamation of pious gratitude to heaven, (Bull Dogge says it did not sound so to him), I seized it, and with the desperate strength of a dying man I renewed the battle, and eventually came off victorious and triumphant. Weary with slaughter, I fell exhausted on the bed, and slept till morning; Bull Dogge, who had been engaged in the same delightful occupation,

appeared at the breakfast table with one eye black, and his face spotted like a he-tiger. We held a council of war, and resolved instantly to quit the premises of the Emerald Islander, who had agreed to "lodge and eat" us (the she-Cyclops), and who had so nearly fulfilled the latter clause by proxy.

Another search and another home. Here for a week things went on tolerably well; the steak was sometimes capable of mastication, the coffee wasn't *always* weak, nor the butter always strong; but one day there appeared at breakfast a dish of beef, (Bull Dogge asserts that it was the fossil remains of an omnibus horse) – it was not molested; at dinner it made its appearance again, still it was not disturbed; at tea fragments of it were visible, but it yet remained untouched; in the morning a tempting looking stew made its appearance, but, alas! it was only a weak invention of the enemy to conceal the ubiquitous beef; at dinner a meat-pie enshrined a portion of the aforesaid beef; it went away unharmed.

For a week, every day, at every meal, in every subtle form, in some ingenious disguise, still was forced upon our notice this omnipresent beef; it went through more changes than Harlequin in the Pantomime, and like that nimble individual came always out uninjured.

At the end of the second day Bull Dogge grumbled to himself; the third he spoke "out in meeting;" the fourth he growled audibly; the fifth he had an hour's swear to himself in his own room; the sixth, seventh, and eighth, he preserved a dignified silence; but his silence was ominous, on the ninth day we both

left.

Our next landlady had a gigantic mouth, but her nose was a magnificent failure. We stayed with her a week, and left because she seemed to be possessed of the idea that one sausage was enough for two men. For a month longer we ran the gauntlet of all the model boarding-houses. We were entrapped by all kinds of alluring promises, and perpetually swindled without any regard to decency; we had a taste of Yankee, French, Dutch, and, I have mentioned it before, (ye gods!), *Irish*; and we lived four days in an establishment presided over by a red-eyed darkey, with a wife the color of a new saddle.

At last one day in an agony of despair I exclaimed, "Where, O where can humbugged humanity find a decent place to feed?" Echo answered, "In the eating-houses." We resolved to try it, and the result is glorious. We have achieved a victory, sir, an heroic, unexpected victory.

And now farewell, all scrawny landladies, ye snuffy beldames, with your wooden smiles; farewell, ye viviparous bedsteads, ye emaciated feather beds, and ye attenuated bolsters; a long good-bye to scant blankets and mattresses stuffed with shavings; farewell to hirsute butter and to ancient bread; good-bye (I say it with a tear,) ye immortal, everlasting beef; farewell to sloppy coffee and to azure milk (Damphool says, not yet); farewell ye antediluvian pies, and you lilliputian puddings; farewell you two-inch napkins, and ye *holy* table-cloths; farewell ye empty grates and rusty coal-scuttles; farewell ye cracked mirrors which make

a man look like a drunken Satyr; farewell ye respectable chairs with dislocated limbs; farewell ye fractured teacups, ye broken forks, and knives with handsaw edges; farewell, in fact, all ye lodging houses, where you *can't* have a latch-key, and where you *can* tell when they get a new hired girl by the color of the hairs in the biscuit.

(I noticed this last remarkable fact a long time since.)

Give us joy, for we have found a place where things are done up right, where we can choose our own viands, where the beef is positively tender, where there are no little red ants in the sugar, where the potatoes are not waxy, and where, if anything goes wrong, we can inflate the waiter.

In fact, we are suited; if anything runs short, "John gets particular *fits*" and "nuthin' shorter;" where we can eat *when* we please, and call for *what* we please; where charges are moderate, and it is permitted to grumble at the waiter for nothing.

And here, in this Elysian spot, have Bull Dogge and I taken our daily bread (beans and butter included) for the past month, "without fear and without reproach."

As our poetical friend, Thomas Plus, has remarked,

"Joy, joy, forever, our task is done,
Our trials are past, and our Restaurant is *some*."

Damphool says my concluding quotation is not strictly correct, but what does he know about it?

VIII

The Potency of Croton Water, or an aqueous quality hitherto unknown

It has been a cherished superstition of our ancestors that water as a beverage is innocuous; I myself was laboring under this infatuated delusion when I left the shades of private life, and the sweet retiracy of the swamps of Michigan, to become a denizen of the Island City.

Believing that my previous experience in the article justified me in drinking freely of the treacherous liquid, I did not hesitate on my arrival here to imbibe on various occasions as much of the undiluted Croton as my thirsty body seemed to need.

How I was deceived in the potency of the fluid a single night's experience will show; I am confident that on this particular occasion I was bewitched by the mischievous God of the stream called the Croton, and that, if I had given him any further opportunities to exercise his craft, my name would positively have appeared in the Police Reports some morning, and Doesticks would have been therein stigmatized as "*Drunk and Disorderly.*"

But the imputation would be slanderous, – I will lay before the public the events of a single night, and its verdict shall be a triumphant vindication of my character, – shall exculpate the

Deity Bacchus (now resident in Ohio,) from the grave charge of leading me astray, – and lay the entire blame of the transaction upon the rascal River God.

Only once in my life have I been drunk. It was a youthful inebriation, caused by partaking too freely of cider made from apples with worms in them. At present I am sober. If, since my sojourn in this city, I have been intoxicated, then the time has arrived when any person who wishes to have a regular "drunk" need only apply to the nearest hydrant.

Heretofore I have supposed water to be a beverage innocent and harmless; but now – well; no matter – I will not anticipate. Listen while I relate a "plain, unvarnished tale."

I left my boarding-house in company with a friend, intending to witness the Shakspearian revival at Burton's – the "Midsummer Night's Dream." Before leaving the hotel, at his suggestion, we partook of a potable, known, I think, as punch — *whiskey punch*. I watched attentively the preparation of this agreeable beverage, and I am certain that there entered into its composition a certain amount of water – Croton water, as I have every reason to believe; and I am also sure that in that treacherous draught I imbibed the first instalment of that villanous liquid which produced the diabolical state of facts I am about to describe; and also that the second and third of those ingenious inventions (both of which we drank on the spot) were as guilty, in this respect, as their "illustrious predecessor!"

And I furthermore conscientiously state that *my* glass of

brandy (one of a couple we ordered soon afterwards), and which, according to my invariable custom, should have been "*straight*," was also surreptitiously diluted with the same detestable fluid by the malicious bar-keeper, for I remember experiencing a slight confusion on going out, and mistaking a topsail schooner for the Broadway theatre.

We immediately entered another saloon to procure the wherewith to steady our nerves, when we partook of two gin cocktails and a brandy smash individually, and I state, according to the best of my knowledge and belief, that our principal ingredient in each and every one of these compounds was water – Croton water – culpably introduced therein by some evil-disposed persons without my knowledge or consent.

On leaving this saloon, I noticed that my friend, although a single man, had by some mysterious process of multiplication become two. I kept fast hold of both, and, after doubling, with a great deal of difficulty, a great number and variety of corners, we reached Burton's. Tickets being mysteriously procured, we entered, and eventually obtained seats. Finding, after prolonged trial, that it was impracticable to put my hat in my vest pocket, I placed it on the floor, and put both feet in it. The theatre generally seemed to be somewhat mixed up. The parquette, gallery, and dress circle were all one; and the stage was whirling round at a rate which must have been extremely inconvenient to the revolving actors.

At length, after a liberal allowance of overture, the curtain

went up, and I was enabled, by the most unremitting attention, to concentrate the actors sufficiently to understand the performance. And many things which I hitherto deemed dramatically incorrect were presented to my wondering vision then and there.

"Hippolyta" was dressed in knee-breeches and brogans, and "Titania" did not, to me, present a very fairy-like appearance in a fireman's red shirt and a three-cocked hat. "Oberon" was not so objectionable (being a gentleman,) in a talma and plaid pantaloons, though even he might have blacked his boots and omitted the spurs. I fear I did not properly appreciate the rest of the fairies, who had their heads decorated with sunflowers and their hands full of onions.

At last the entertainment was concluded, and I remember consulting with my duplicated friend as to the feasibility of a return to Brooklyn, to our boarding-house. On our journey thither we witnessed many strange things about which I desire information.

In the first place, is it the custom, as a general thing, for the City Hall and Barnum's Museum to indulge in an animated contra-dance up and down Broadway in the middle of the night, accompanied in their fantastic movements, by the upper story of Stewart's and the Bible Society's building? For they certainly did on that eventful evening, and I feel called upon to enter my solemn protest against these nocturnal architectural saltatory exhibitions, as unworthy the dignity of the Empire City.

And I would, with all humility, suggest, that if the stony goddess of Justice, whose appropriate place is on the top of the City Hall, will desert her responsible post, she might choose a more becoming amusement than sitting cross-legged on the top of a Houston street stage, playing the jews-harp.

I am *now* convinced that Bowling-Green fountain is not *permanently* located on the top of Trinity Church cross; but that it *was* on that memorable night, my wondering eyes bore ample testimony.

I am sufficiently well acquainted with the city to know that the Astor House should be found on the corner of Barclay street, but I am ready to take my oath that on that particular occasion it plied as an opposition ferry-boat between Whitehall street and Hamilton avenue. The last thing I distinctly recollect is trying to pay the fare for three on this novel craft, with a single piece of money (which I *now* know to have been a Bungtown copper), and demanding two-and-sixpence change, which I didn't get.

In the morning I found myself in bed with my overcoat on, and afterwards discovered my boots under the pillow – my hat in the grate, with my pantaloons and hair-brush in it – my watch in the water-jug, and my latch-key in the bird-cage. I presume I had tried to write a letter to some one with my tooth-brush, as I found that article in my inkstand.

Now, if Croton water interferes with my susceptible system in this unaccountable manner, what shall I drink? I would resort to milk, but I fear our city edition of the lacteal contains sufficient

of the aqueous enemy to again upset my too delicate nerves. I exclaim, like Cæsar, when he, too, was afflicted with superfluity of water, "Help me, Cassius, or I sink!"

What would be the effect of brandy and water without any water, and a little lemon?

IX

Modern Witchcraft

It has been asserted, that no humbug can be invented which is so improbable that it will find no believers. No theory is too ridiculous, no folly too great to turn the stomach of the modern wonder-seeking Public; it opens its staring eyes, perhaps, a little wider than usual at some transcendent tomfoolery, but its sapient optics have as yet discerned nothing in all the superfluous deceptions and jugglery of the age, too hugely nonsensical to be swallowed without even a single qualm.

Hence, all the "pathies" and "isms" of medical Empiricism, all the newly discovered charlatanry of the legal trade, and even the latest form of religious quackery, that new device of bashful, half-grown, bastard Infidelity, denominated Spiritualism, which would be impious if it was not idiotic, have all received from the wise ones of the nineteenth century belief and credence.

For at this time of triumphant and successful humbug – when indiscriminate puffery is freely used to boost into notice all kinds of sham, deception, and deceit, which thereupon grow fat and thrive – when vermin exterminators, lucifer matches, and patent blacking employ such high-flown language in commendation of their merits, that inventions of real merit and importance must resort to the basest bombast to keep pace with the foolery of their

neighbors – when solid merit which *would* succeed, must vie in euphuistic phrase with brainless emptiness which *will* – when, in Literature, inane collections of stolen wit, diluted humor, and feeble fiction are spawned in scores from weak-brained fops and aspiring women, inflated by unsparing puffery into a transient notoriety, and palmed upon the public as works of sterling merit – when even these Doestick Letters are purchased and perused, it may easily be imagined that no impudent humbug, if properly managed, will turn the stomach of the enlightened Yankee Nation.

It is not astonishing, that, in a sort of gross imitation of the clairvoyants and spirit-seers, other persons not quite so intellectual perhaps, but fully as reliable should also profess to hold converse with invisible beings.

The *fortune-tellers* of the city are these, and they certainly deserve praise for attempting to apply their pretended knowledge to some practical use, instead of dealing entirely with abstractions. In New York these people are numerous, and they pick up as many coppers in quite as honest a way as their fellows in the art of table-tipping notoriety.

Having read the advertisement of a Grand street fortune-teller, who advertised herself the "seventh daughter of a seventh daughter," a lineal descendant from some one of the Egyptian magicians who couldn't kill the frogs – I straightway resolved to pay her a visit.

Since that memorable day my destiny is no longer a mystery. I

know it all. I know what kind of a woman I'm to marry, how many children we're to have, how many will die of measles, and how many will be choked with the croup, and can calculate to a quart how much castor oil I shall have to lay in for family consumption. I've had my fortune told by a witch.

The witches of modern time do not frequent graves and gibbets at midnight – they hold no nocturnal orgies with dancing skeletons and corpses, brought by the black art back to temporary life – they now-a-days take no pains to conceal their trade, but advertise it in the daily papers.

Their believers are not now the great men and wise women of the earth alone, but chamber-maids and servant girls who want love-powders to win some noble swain – or some verdant countryman anxious to recover the pilfered eelskin which contained his treasured pennies. They easily satisfy these gullible customers, by promising the first no end of rich, handsome princes, who are to appear some day and carry off their brides in four-horse coaches; and the latter by an extemporaneous description of the thief, and a wish that he may suffer pains in his head, heart, liver, and all other important parts of his body, until the property is restored.

Witchcraft is rife in our midst, and we do not hang or burn the hags and beldames who practice it, or stick them full of needles, or duck them in the horse-ponds, as in the good old days of Salem – more's the pity.

In this day of railroads and three-cent stages, they have no

occasion to perform their journeys upon broomsticks; and in our city, where cream is only traditional, they cannot bewitch their neighbors' churnings, or throw their dire enchantments over the incipient cheese – so the protective horse-shoe is of no avail.

They have robbed the trade of all its mystery and romance; we hear no more of mighty magician, with hoary beard and flowing robe, with magic wand and attendant spirits; no more "weird sisters," with talon fingers and sunken eyes; not even romantic wandering gipsies – but ugly women, with unwashed hands, who can't spell.

The calling has degenerated, and the necromantic trade has passed into the hands of unworthy successors, who would steal their living, if cheating wasn't easier. And the trade thrives, and the swindling practisers thereof flaunt in silks, while honest virtue staves off destitution by making "hickory" shirts at eight cents a piece.

Went up town, found the house, rung the bell, and was shown into a shabby room by a stuttering girl, who informed me by instalments that her mistress would see me presently. Examined the furniture – rickety table, ditto chairs, bare floor with knot-holes in it, unctuous mirror, two hair trunks, a clothes basket, and a hat-box.

Enter mistress – minus youth, beauty, hair-pins and clean stockings.

She wore no flowing robe figured with cabalistic signs, she bore no sable wand of magic, but she was clad in a calico dress,

and had a brass candlestick in her hand – she drew no mystic circle, she performed no inscrutable incantations, she spoke in no unknown tongue – but she put the candlestick on the rickety table, sat down in a cane-bottomed chair, and asked me what my name was, and what I wanted.

Told her I wanted to find out who I was going to marry, and wanted her to tell me a lucky number in the lottery, which should draw a prize big enough to support the family – also wanted a description of the man who stole my jack-knife, and a knowledge of the place where I could find the same.

Now she began to work – she did not consult the stars – she did not cast my horoscope – she did not even ask me where I was born, or what my father did for a living – she exhibited no strange paraphernalia of sorcery and conjuration – no obscure language, suggestive of a divination or enchantment, fell from her prophetic lips.

She only asked me if I had any moles on my person, and what I dreamed about last night – then plunging her hand through a slit in the side of her dress, she fished out from some unknown depth a pack of cards. Greasy were they, and well worn – the knave of spades had his legs torn off, the queen of diamonds had her face scratched with a thimble, two of the aces were stuck together with beeswax, and the king of clubs had evidently been used to skim flies out of the molasses.

After much shuffling of the royal and plebeian members of the pack, she got them fixed to her satisfaction, and I proceeded

to draw therefrom nine cards, which she disposed in three symmetrical piles; then looked them over – bit her lip – stamped her foot; then told me that my knife had been stolen by a squint-eyed Irishman, who had disposed of it to his uncle for a dozen cotton night-caps, sixty cigars and thirty cents ready money, and that if I was anxious to reclaim it, I would find it at No. 1 Round the Corner.

Asked her if I was big enough to lick the Irishman, at which she waxed indignant, and for a moment I half feared she would turn me into some horrible monster; that, like Circe of old, she would exercise her magic power, and qualify me to play a star engagement at the Metropolitan Theatre by transforming me into an elephant, a she-wolf, or a Bengal tiger.

But, as my mouth didn't get any larger, my toe nails grow any longer, or my fingers change to claws; as I felt no growing appetite for blood, and my nose didn't elongate into a trunk, I soon recovered my equanimity.

Then she went on to say that No. 67 would draw me a prize in the lottery, and that I could get it of "Sam" – that I would marry a red-haired woman, who would die and leave me with a nursing baby – that I would then be "jilted" by a widow, and finally wed a lady whose description corresponds exactly with my present washer-woman; our family is to increase to seventeen; my second son is to be President, and my eldest daughter is to run away with the Czar of all the Russias. She wasn't exactly positive about the manner of my death, but from the looks of the jack of clubs,

she "judged I should break my neck coming home from a clam-bake."

Gave her a dollar, and left. A month has passed – 67 seems a promising number – hav'n't got my knife yet, but live in hope – have seen my future wife, hav'n't yet proposed, but have reason to suppose she would not object.

She was in Catharine street, and had a basket on her head full of shrimps.

X

City Target Excursion

In this City, which, even in cholera seasons, is most heroically nasty, when the filth in Broadway gets so deep as to stop the stages and throw the cars off the track, men are sent round by the City to expend an infinity of labor in hoeing it into symmetrical heaps, like miniature fortifications. In fact, if plenitude of mud could avail to protect a town from invading foes, New York might bid the world defiance, for all the allied powers of all the earth could no more reduce our (in that case) impregnable City, than the late chivalrous Lord Forth could take Sebastopol, by lying flat on his back, and calling for his ma to come and take him home. As the City authorities content themselves with *erecting* these picturesque monuments, and do not trouble themselves to remove the same, but leave them to adorn the landscape, of course the first rain metamorphoses the fragrant mass from an embryo mountain to a diminutive lake, almost disgusting enough to make a street contractor sick. No lady attempts the perilous navigation of our streets, unless she has been a couple of seasons at Newport or Rockaway, and learned to swim like a mermaid. And any man who would black his boots in the morning, would be taken to the Lunatic Asylum before night. A search for a dry crossing would be a hopeless pilgrimage, and

he who would find a get-over-able-without-getting-your-shoes-full-of-mud street in this metropolis, would wear his life out in a fruitless exploration, and be prematurely planted in Greenwood, with his object unattained. In ordinary times the ladies sweep the sidewalks tolerably clean with their trailing skirts, but now they seem to have thrown up their contract. Coming down town the other day in a stage, our reckless driver tried the depth of one of the above mentioned municipal lakes – the wheels stuck fast – the vehicle settled into the hopeless depth – one scream from the ladies – one unanimous curse from the men – one frantic, furious, ineffectual struggle of the horses, and in another instant we were floating a hopeless wreck. Every one for himself. I saw one of the ladies dragged safely out by the hair – men eventually reached the land in safety, but I rejoiced to see a malignant baby, (which during our journey had screamed and kicked one half the time, and the other half persisted in calling me "Daddy," and soiling my shirt-front with its sticky fingers,) go to the bottom amid a universal chorus of thanksgiving from the company. Got ashore myself, with my coat spoiled, my hat minus, my boots full of water, and my whole person "dripping from the recent flood," like a he-Venus rising from an odoriferous ocean.

As a consequence of my involuntary bath, I have since been afflicted with a severe toothache, pleading which comfortable and soothing ail, I obtained leave of absence for a day from the popular establishment where I have the honor to sell peanuts and pop-corn to the confiding public, and I resolved to employ the

unusual holiday in attending one of the peculiar institutions of grown-up New York, denominated a "target shoot."

From the incongruous population of the village aforesaid, target companies spring up with the rapidity and profusion of mushrooms in an old pasture. In all other cities they are exotics, and never have a vigorous and healthy existence – here only are they indigenous, and on Manhattan Island do they flourish in native luxuriance.

The materials are varied – the ingredients sometimes curious – a company being sometimes composed entirely of journeymen tailors, blacksmiths' apprentices, master carpenters, clerks, porters, coalheavers, stagedrivers, candy-peddlers, popcorn men, or those persevering individuals who roast perpetual chestnuts on the sidewalk in tin pans – fire companies, express companies, policemen, gangs of men from all kinds of mammoth shops – for wherever thirty or forty individuals work in the same house, they form themselves into a military company, and once or twice every year go to Hoboken and shoot for whiskey and other prizes.

When they want to make a full turn-out, the places of any missing members are filled by extemporaneous volunteers. It was in this capacity that I proposed to go. In these companies there are always more officers than men, more epaulettes than muskets – always a big band of music, and two darkies to carry the target. As to their marching, no two ever step together, and they always put a tall man by the side of a short one, so as to have the

average length of steps come right. They go forth in the morning in high spirits, and return at night surly, dusty, discontented, dilapidated, and drunk. As the target is always carried in triumph through the streets, and afterward exhibited in the drill-room, the darkey invariably carries an auger with him, with which explosive weapon all the best shots are made. Every member has a whiskey-bottle in his cartridge-box, or a brandy-flask in his knapsack.

As a general thing, they turn their toes in, and are bandy-legged – they carry their guns over their shoulders at all conceivable angles, and so little do they know about fire-arms, that probably, if called to load their muskets in a hurry, two out of three would put their cartridges in their breeches pockets, and stick their percussion caps on the ends of their ramrods.

When they fire salute, and mean to all shoot together, the report is so near simultaneous that a stranger would think they were firing minute guns. They always select for judges of the shooting, the men who will give the most whiskey, and make the shortest speeches.

As these excursions come off just before election, the candidates for office generally pay for the prizes, and bear the expenses of a reporter for the press to puff the company. The judges carry out the rewards in the morning tied up in brown paper, and the soldiers wear them back at night, around their necks. Six or eight men, called pioneers, march in front, with muffs on their heads, leather aprons tied around their waists, and theoretical axes in their hands, which could never,

by any possibility, be made to cut anything. The officers walk between the platoons, flourishing their dandy swords – their attention being pretty equally divided between keeping the men in the line, keeping the little boys out of the line, keeping their unaccustomed white cotton gloves on, and trying to keep step with the music. In single file the men march like a flock of geese on their winding way to the mill-pond, and six or eight abreast, they go with the regularity of a crowd of school-boys, effecting a masterly but hurried retreat from somebody's melon-patch. In order to make them form a straight line, it is necessary to back them up against a brick block, or make them stand between the tracks of a railroad.

Such was the company of which I became a member for a brief eventful time. Its cognomen was "The Lager-Bier American Volunteers, and Native Empire City Shillelagh Guards," being composed of Irish, Dutch, Spaniards, and Sandwich Islanders – the only Americans in the company being the colored target-bearers, and the undersigned.

Convened in the drill-room at 8 A. M. As I was a new member, and had borrowed my uniform, I had some difficulty in putting it on – buckled my crossbelt round my neck, got my cap on wrong side before, stuck my bayonet through my coat-tail – put my cartridge-box between my shoulders, and my priming-wire where my "pompon" should have been.

Ready at length to start – crossed the ferry – disembarked – proceeded to the ground and prepared to drill.

The captain finding it impossible to get into a straight line in the usual manner, at length ingeniously overcame this geometrical difficulty by ranging us against a board fence – he then proceeded to put us through the exercise: "Shoulder arms!" Got my gun on the wrong shoulder. "Order arms!" Brought it down on the toes of my neighbor. "Shoulder arms!" again. Got it on the right shoulder this time, but in so doing knocked off the cap of the man next to me, &c. Got through the rest of the drill without any serious mishap, except that in attempting to charge my piece, I bit off the wrong end of the cartridge, and swallowed the ball – spilled the powder on the ground, and loaded the musket with the paper only.

Now came the shooting. Nigger set the target at twenty paces – four volleys and not a ball in it – moved it up to fifteen – no better luck – moved it again, one ball put in it this time by a clumsy Dutchman, who shut his eyes when he fired, and hit by mistake. Finding that shooting was no use, captain adopted the usual plan – set the target at ten paces, blindfolded the men, and each one charged on it with the auger; where the point happened to hit, he bored a hole, and the one nearest the bull's eye took the prize. I could see a little through a hole in the cloth – consequence: hit the centre and took the first prize, (a plated cake-basket with a pewter handle, bought for silver by the sagacious Committee).

As the brandy had circulated pretty freely, some of the shots were rather wild – several missed the target entirely and knocked their heads against the trees; one bored a deep hole in a sand

bank, and the first lieutenant was put under arrest for attempting to tap the captain.

The man who took the second prize did not come so near the mark by an inch and a half as another man, but he had a pretty sister whom one of the judges was in love with, so he took "the spoons." Ready to go home – Muggins, one of the judges, missing. After a long search found him wrapped up in the colors, fast asleep with his head in a hog-trough – stirred him up with a musket, when he called me "Mrs. Muggins," and swore at me for pulling all the sheet over to my side.

Marched home in as good order as circumstances would allow – the darkey bearing in proud triumph the perforated target, which had so many hits near the centre, as to excite the admiration of the deluded public, which, as a general rule, in such cases, can't tell a bullet mark from an auger-hole.

XI

A new Patent Medicine Operation

As I too desire to have a mansion on the Fifth Avenue, like the Medical Worthy of Sarsaprilla memory, and wished like him to be able to build a patent medicine palace, with a private chapel under the back-stairs, and a conservatory down-cellar, I cast about me for some means whereby the requisite cash might be reputably accumulated.

I feared that the Panacea and Cure-Everything trick had been played too often, but I determined to make one big try, and I think that at last my fortune is made.

Congratulate me – I am immortalized, and I've done it myself. My name will be handed down to posterity as that of a universal benefactor. The hand which hereafter writes upon the record of Fame, the names of Ayer, Sands, Townsend, Moffat, Morrison, and Brandreth, must also inscribe, side by side with these distinguished appellations, the no less brilliant cognomen of the undying Doesticks.

Emulous of the deathly notoriety which has been acquired by the medicinal worthies just mentioned, *I* also resolved to achieve a name and a fortune in the same reputable and honest manner.

Bought a gallon of tar, a cake of beeswax, and a firkin of lard, and in twenty-one hours I presented to the world the first batch

of "*Doesticks' Patent, Self-Acting, Four-Horse Power Balsam,*" designed to cure all diseases of mind, body, or estate, to give strength to the weak, money to the poor, bread and butter to the hungry, boots to the barefoot, decency to blackguards, and common sense to the Know-Nothings. It acts physically, morally, mentally, psychologically, physiologically, and geologically, and it is intended to make our sublunary sphere a blissful paradise, to which Heaven itself shall be but a side-show.

I have not yet brought it to absolute perfection, but even now it acts with immense force, as you will perceive by the accompanying testimonials and records of my own individual experience. You will observe that I have not resorted to the usual manner of preparing certificates: which is, to be certain that all those intended for Eastern circulation shall seem to come from some formerly unheard-of place in the West, while those sent to the West shall be dated at some place forty miles east of sunrise. But I send to *you*, as representing the western country, a certificate from an Oregon farmer.

"Dear Sir: The land composing my farm has hitherto been so poor that a Scotchman couldn't get his living off it; and so stony that we had to slice our potatoes and plant them edgeways; but, hearing of your balsam, I put some on the corner of a ten-acre lot, surrounded by a rail-fence, and in the morning I found the rocks had entirely disappeared – a neat stone wall encircled the field, and the rails were split into ovenwood and piled up symmetrically in my back yard.

Put half an ounce into the middle of a huckleberry

swamp – in two days it was cleared off, planted with corn and pumpkins, and had a row of peach trees in full bloom through the middle.

As an evidence of its tremendous strength, I would state that it drew a striking likeness of my eldest daughter – drew my youngest boy out of the mill-pond – drew a blister all over his stomach – drew a load of potatoes four miles to market, and eventually drew a prize of ninety-seven dollars in the State Lottery.

And the effect upon the inhabitants hereabout has been so wonderful, that they have opened their eyes to the good of the country, and are determined to vote for a Governor who is opposed to frosts in the middle of June, and who will make a positive law against freshets, hail-storms, and the seventeen-year locusts."

There, isn't that *some*?

But I give one more from a member of the senior class in a western college, who, although misguided, neglected, and ignorant, is, undoubtedly, as honest and sincere as his Prussianized education will admit of.

I have corrected the orthography, and revised some grammatical inaccuracies; but, besides attending to these trifles, inserting marks of punctuation, and putting the capitals in the right places, I assure you I have made no alteration.

"Sall Harbor, June 31, 1854.

"My Dear Doctor. [You know I attended medical lectures half a winter, and once assisted in getting a crooked

needle out of a baby's leg; so I understand perfectly well the theory and practice of medicine, and the *Doctor* is perfectly legitimate under the Prussian system.] By the incessant study required in this establishment, I had become worn down so thin that I was obliged to put on an overcoat to cast a shadow – but accidentally hearing of your Balsam, I obtained a quantity, and, in obedience to the Homœopathic principles of this Institution, took an *infinitesimal* dose only; in four days I measured one hundred and eighty-two inches round the waist; could chop eleven cords of hickory wood in two hours and a half; and, on a bet, carried a yoke of oxen two miles and a quarter in my left hand, my right being tied behind me, and if any one doubts the fact, the oxen are still to be seen.

"About two weeks after this, I had the pleasure of participating in a gunpowder explosion, on which occasion my arms and legs were scattered over the village, and my mangled remains pretty equally distributed throughout the entire county.

Under these circumstances my life was despaired of, and my classmates had bought a pine coffin, and borrowed whole shirts to attend the funeral in; when the invincible power of your four horse-power balsam (which I happened to have in my vest pocket) suddenly brought together the scattered pieces of my body – collected my limbs from the rural districts – put new life into my shattered frame, and I was restored, uninjured to my friends, with a new set of double teeth.

I have preserved the label which enveloped the bottle,

and have sewed it into the seat of my pantaloons, and I now bid grim death defiance, for I feel that I am henceforth unkillable, and in fact I am even now generally designated the '*Great Western Achilles*.'

Yours entirely Ski Hy."

I feel that after this, I need give you no more reports of third persons, but will detail some of my own personal experience of the article.

I caused some to be applied to the Washtenaw Bank after its failure, and while the Balsam lasted the Bank redeemed its notes with specie.

The cork of one of the bottles dropped upon the head of a childless widow, and in six weeks she had a young and blooming husband.

Administered some to a hack-driver in a glass of gin and sugar, and that day he swindled but seven people, and only gave two of them bad money in change.

Gave a few drops gratis to a poor woman who was earning a precarious subsistence by making calico shirts with a one-eyed needle, and the next day she was discovered to be heir to a large fortune.

Gave some to an up-town actor, and that night he said "damned" only twenty-one times.

One of the daily papers got the next dose, and in the next edition but one there were but four editorial falsehoods, seven indecent advertisements, and two columns and a half of home-

made "Foreign Correspondence."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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