The MAN *from* MAINE

FRANK CARLOS GRIFFITH

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The MAN from MAINE

By

FRANK CARLOS GRIFFITH

Miss Gertrude Doolittle.

The MAN *from* MAINE

A Humorous Episode in
The LIFE *of* ASA KING

BY
FRANK CARLOS GRIFFITH

PICTURES BY
A. B. SHUTE

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To the One
Who Has Been the
Inspiration, Aid and Kindly Critic
of My Work
MARY CATHERINE LEE-GRIFFITH
I dedicate the result

Illustrations

The Man from Maine

CHAPTER ONE

NOT many years ago—I will not say how many, for certain people to be alluded to might be identified were I to do so, but yet easily within my lifetime—there lived, away up in Oxford County, Maine, in the village of Dixfield, a man by the name of King, Asa J. King, generally well known by the short and simple name of Asa.

Asa was born there on the banks of the Androscoggin River, and Asa's father had been known as "Cap'n" Joel King. His captaincy consisted of having once, and for one consecutive trip, piloted the only steamboat that ever floated on the waters of that shallow river, from Mexico Corner, near Rumford Falls, down to Canton P'int, a

distance of nearly fifteen miles; the boat never having been able to return, or to go farther on, the excursion tickets issued have never been taken up, and are at this remote date valuable only as souvenirs. Probably the rust-encrusted remains of its ironwork can yet be seen where it was hauled up to the bank.

Asa grew up in the pretty little hill-surrounded village, went to school up near the plains, turned somersaults in the sandbanks behind the schoolhouse, argued points with the schoolmaster, played tricks upon him, getting well "thrashed" when discovered, and did the usual things that country boys do.

His strong point was "speaking pieces," and in this Asa revelled. He knew "Marco Bozzaris," and Drake's "American Flag," Scott's "Marmion," and best of all, nearly every speech of note that Daniel Webster ever delivered. Webster was his idol, and after he had married Maria Stackpole, and their first boy was announced, the name of

that boy was as instantly announced to be Daniel Webster King.

At the time we first come into the society of this product of the soil of Maine, Asa was from fifty-eight to sixty years of age, and the flourishing proprietor of a blacksmithing business, as well as the whole crew of workmen. Asa blew the bellows, when Dan wasn't too busy in swimming; he shod the horses and oxen, he ironed all the carriages and sleighs, carts and pungs for miles around, for Asa had a reputation for square dealing that no one had reason to dispute.

In personal appearance, he was sufficiently like Daniel Webster for it to be a subject of general remark, although of a smaller build, and these physical characteristics, may in his early life, have had much to do with his fondness for the immortal Daniel.

Resembling as he undoubtedly did the great jurist, Asa affected clothing to add to the resemblance, and the dickey and stock, the buff waistcoat, and blue swallow-tailed

coat with brass buttons, were to be found in his wardrobe, to say nothing of the large-brimmed and formidable "stove-pipe" hat, so well known as characteristic of the great Daniel.

The villagers of Asa's age and older, were fond of strolling in at his broad, wide-open door at the smithy, seating themselves on convenient nail-kegs, the bench or even the anvil, when not resounding to his hammer strokes, and there old Squire Doolittle, Doctor Locke, Tim Brackett, Uncle Bill Cox and Deacon Stanley, had discussed and left still unsettled, every topic that had come before Congress in the previous fifty years. The Mexican War was fiercely waged over Asa's anvil chorus, the Civil War was many times re-fought, every general court-martialled or decorated with laurel wreaths, every defeat could have been made a victory, and every victory, it was shown, should have ended the struggle there and then.

When these subjects were reaching cli-

mactic points, and Asa's hammer would make the sparks fly in emphasis, the small boys would begin to congregate, and listen with great respect to the arguments of these sage men, and generally Asa, with his wide reading and excellent memory, would let out about a stickful of Scott, Clay, Calhoun or Webster, that would generally be unanswerable, chiefly because it was not understandable by his listeners.

The place to learn how this government should be run, was in Asa King's blacksmith shop and Asa was the principal of the school.

"Gosh all hemlock, squire," said Asa. "What's the use of sending men to Congress who don't know enough to weld a tire? There's that Pete Sandford, in the Senate, he don't know a hub from a hoe, and he's a bringin' in a bill to regulate something like the hypothecation of syndicated collateral."

"Sho;" says the squire.

"Yes, and darn me, I shouldn't wonder if he accomplicated it too." The squire

mopped his brow and seriously ventured the inquiry:

"Wall, spose he does, what in thunder can he do with 'em when he's got 'em?"

"You don't understand, squire. Them's funds! Collateral is what you put up when you hain't got nothing. Then the other fellers git together, and the feller that had the collateral gits all the other fellers had, and the new fellers are what they call a syndicate, and raise the price on iron and fish, and hair oil, and that's where the swindle is, don't you see?" explained Asa, turning to give the bellows a puff or two.

"Wall, Asa, I never looked at it quite like that afore. That's what makes wagons cost more than they did when I was a boy."

This appeared to be quite illuminative to the squire, who began making semicircles in the hoof-parings on the floor with his cane.

"Exactly so. These fellers go to Washington and dicker and parley, go to the theayter, and call it legislation. We don't need no more laws, we got too many a'ready.

Old Hickory Jackson was about the only one of 'em that knew what's what. I'm for Old Hickory every time." And the anvil rung with the blow of the hammer that punctuated that oft-repeated remark.

"I'd jest like to see him president agin, Asa," ventured the squire.

"Gorryation, so would I, and I'd like to be his prime minister."

"Bet you'd make a better one than we got now," acquiesced the squire.

"Don't know about that, but as soon as I got settled into the harness, guess I could teach 'em a thing or two," and the horseshoe he had been fashioning was thrown on the heap on the floor.

The squire arose, hummed a bit, a characteristic habit of his, and looked up the street.

"Say, Asa," said he, "who is that young feller coming down the road?"

Asa took a step in that direction and immediately replied: "That? Oh that's Jim Bailey; you know Cy Bailey, who used to

live over at Farmington and moved to Boston some ten years ago? That's Cy's son. He comes down for his vacation. Nice chap, too. He was saying t'other day, that I ought to be in Congress. Guess he was foolin', but he's well posted, if he is jest out of college."

CHAPTER TWO

WHILE Jim Bailey is approaching, it may be well to fill in the minute or two with a brief description of the old squire Doolittle.

He was a man of perhaps seventy years of age, of medium height, round and fat, with a head as round as a ball, short, thin white hair, but not bald, and a face like the setting sun on a summer's day, when promise of a hot day to-morrow is read in its ruddy hue.

Small sharp eyes were set in this circle of clean-shaven outline, the complexion of whose features indicated the absorption of occasional good hot toddies, from the original package, in this ostensibly prohibitory State.

He was never seen without his short, thick, round cane, with a round nob of ivory at its head, and when not in conversation,

was generally humming like a bumblebee, bearing not the slightest resemblance to a tune. He owned his place, had a small sufficiency of funds, and lived in the care of his children, his wife having been dead many years.

"Hello, Mr. King," was the hearty salutation of Jim Bailey as he entered the shop.

"Hello, yerself, an' see how ye like it, how be ye?" from Asa, at the same time extending his hand in a manner that admitted of no mistake as to the heartiness of greeting.

"First rate, don't I look it?"

"Jerusha Ann, I should say you did. What ye ben doin' on?"

"Studying hard," said Jim.

"Get along, studyin' don't make them square shoulders and broad chest; studyin' don't make muscle, big arms and solid legs like the two you're standin' on top of; studyin' makes a man thin, an holler-eyed, makes him thin-chested and stoop. I read a good deal in the newspapers, and when I

want a diet of figgers I read Hill's Manual, but I don't study none to hurt. I've ben swingin' this old hammer, by hokey, for the last thirty-five year, and that keeps me in trim. You don't git no hammer swingin' so how do you git a figger like yourn?"

"Athletics," was Jim's laconic reply.

"Athwhatics?" inquired Asa with a twinkle. "Is that a new study?"

"Yes, it's a new study. It's the science of health. We have our regular studies the same as usual, but outside the walls of college, we take up athletics; we row, play football, run races, punch the bag, fence, play baseball and golf," said Jim enthusiastically.

Asa, who had been standing by his anvil leaning on his hammer, now threw one leg over the anvil and took up the thread.

"I used to row an old leaky flat bottom boat up on Webb's river when I was a youngster, an' I used to run races *away* from school; but fencing I done a lot of. I spose I've built forty miles of fence, but

about the only ball we ever played was three old cat, wa'n't it squire?"

"Yes," acquiesced the squire; "three old cat, and one out all out, was about all there was to ball in our day."

"That was about all we knew to do with a ball, I guess," added Asa; "and we never punched no bags, and we never heerd of this new goff, did we squire?"

Again the squire agreed with his friend. "No, not to my knowledge, and I'm older than you be." Then to Jim. "Was he any relation to old John B. Gough, the temperance lecturer, that I heerd once up to Treemont Temple in Bosting?"

"No, no relation," Jim replied. "The golf I refer to, is a Scotch game."

"Well, John B. was game too, I reckon," laughed Asa, in which both Jim and the squire joined, the latter's soon ending in a cough, and the reddest face anything but a lobster could equal.

While Asa is offering the squire a glass of water, poured from an old stoneware

pitcher, which he indignantly spurned, and Jim Bailey is industriously pounding the squire's back, we may take a look at the young man, and make note of a few things.

Jim Bailey was an all-around good fellow and the pride of his class, as well as being a mystery to them. With a retentive memory, he easily kept up with his studies; with a strong tendency toward athletics he joined with a will in nearly all. He was pitcher in the ball team, centre-rush in the football, stroke oar in the college crew, could box anyone of the fellows to a quick finish, and went over the links in seventy-two, which was four under Bogie.

He was in for any proper legitimate sport, but was never known to descend to any of the unmanly acts that would bring disgrace.

His father had become wealthy in street railway speculations, since moving to Boston, and Jim was in line to enter some profession to occupy his active mind. All these things explain the broad chest and shoulders,

the sturdy form and manly bearing of Jim Bailey at the age of twenty-three.

"Feeling better now, sir?" he inquired, as the squire ceased to splutter and choke.

"Yes, guess I'm all right now, thank ye."

At this moment a new figure appeared in the doorway, a large, full-bearded man of middle age, who carried a small leather trunk in his hand.

"Hullo, doctor," exclaimed Asa. "Just in time to be too late, as the Dutchman said."

"Why, is the man dead?" he asked with a chuckle.

"No, he's recovered."

"How do you do, doctor," inquired Jim.

"How are you, Mr. Bailey?" from the doctor. "What's been happening to the squire?"

"Why ye see, doctor," explained Asa, "Jim Bailey here was telling us of a new game called goff, and the squire wanted to know ef he was related to John B. and I said John B. was game too."

Dr. Locke had prepared for a laugh from the beginning of Asa's explanation and his mouth had rapidly opened wider and wider, his hand nervously gesticulating, apropos of nothing, until the climax, when he also burst into a convulsive laugh, aided and abetted by the others.

"Well, you know they say," began the doctor when he could subside sufficiently, "doctors are generally late, and old Doctor Hartlett used to say, if you have a hurry call on a baby in convulsions, walk your horse until you come in sight of the house, then lay the whip on and come up on the run, for the chances are that the baby will be out of the convulsions before you get there anyhow," which caused another laugh from the four.

"How's your father, Mr. Bailey?" then inquired the doctor.

"Oh, he's in excellent health, thank you."

"No chance for a patient there, doctor," chimed in the blacksmith.

"I hope not," said Jim putting both hands into his side pockets, which action evidently brought to mind something hitherto forgotten or neglected. "By the way, Mr. King," said he, drawing forth a formidable looking envelope, "here's something Chase handed me at the post-office when I happened to say that I was coming down to your shop. He said it might be important from the appearance of the outside."

Jim had passed it over to Asa while speaking, who in turn laid it on the anvil while he proceeded to remove his glasses from a peg over the bellows.

The squire had now risen and moved toward the anvil, while Dr. Locke also showed nervous evidence of interest in results.

Asa held the envelope off at nearly arm's length and gazed silently upon it.

"Washington, D. C.," he read aloud finally.

"D. C. Washington, Asa? He may be

"Asa held the envelope off at arm's length."

related to George," ventured the squire, now nearly looking over the blacksmith's shoulder.

"Department of State. Who in thunder is writing to me from the Department of State?" he pondered.

"Perhaps they want you to come on and be Secretary, Asa, I shouldn't wonder," ventured the doctor.

"Likely's not," assented the squire.

Asa had been looking the envelope over, front and back, top and bottom, with, as yet, no attempt to open it.

"Forgot to put a stamp on it, by gosh;" he suddenly ejaculated.

"Wonder Chase didn't hold it for postage then," the squire was led to remark.

"Perhaps it's franked," Jim ventured to suggest.

"Geewhillikens," said Asa, throwing the letter down upon the anvil, "It beats me! I can't think who's a-writin' to me from Washington."

"'Tis cur'us" the squire agreed.

"Who do you suspect?" was Dr. Locke's inquiry.

"I'm jiggered if I know, but s'pose it's some lightning rod agent, or some feller in the gold brick business; mebbe some kind of endearment insurance, or p'raps some sewing machines on the installation plan."

"Suppose you open it and find out, Mr. King," was the practical suggestion of Jim.

"Wall, I guess that would be the eftest way. Hope it ain't no infernal machine," said Asa, once more very gingerly removing it from the anvil, and proceeding to open it with a horse nail.

The squire and Dr. Locke could scarcely conceal their curiosity, and in fact, it may be doubted if they made any attempt in that direction, while Jim Bailey lighted a cigar and proceeded to enjoy it.

Could anyone have studied the pleased expression of countenance, and the merry twinkle of his eye, they might have been led to the conclusion that he had some previous knowledge of what was about to eventuate.

Asa drew a formidable legal-looking document from the envelope, decorated with the great seal of the State Department, and looked at the top and the bottom, and from the bottom back again to the top.

"Cracky Jane," he at length exclaimed, "I can't make head nor tail to it. It's got my name in it all right, and it's signed by the Secertary of State, and 's near 's I can get the drift of the thing, it 'pints me United States Consul to Bully-something-or-other, in Zululand, South Africa.

"Say Jim, you know 'bout them things better'n I do, jest take a look at that, and see if it's a ten-per-cent-a-week dodge, or a ground-floor-double-sub-basement copper mine scheme."

Jim calmly took the document and glanced at the contents, devoured by the eager glances of the three interested spectators. When he had done so, he lowered the paper, removing the cigar from his mouth.

"Mr. King," he began seriously, "I con-

gratulate you. The paper is genuine, and is an appointment in proper legal form, with the signature and seal of the Secretary of State, appointing you as the United States Government representative, or in other words, the Consul to Boolahackentula in Zululand, South Africa, with a salary of three thousand dollars, allowance for a private secretary and travelling expenses."

"Well I'm jiggered," was Asa's almost breathless exclamation, as his hammer fell from his grasp on to the foot of a yellow dog that was nosing about among the hoof parings, and whose ki-yis rent the air as he fled into the open, skurrying up the street with his tail tight between his legs.

"'Taint no joke, is it?" inquired the doctor.

"No; the document is all proper, and the envelope is franked by the Secretary of State at Washington. No; it's all straight and regular," Jim assured the trio.

"But I don't know the Secertary of

State," ventured the awe-stricken blacksmith.

"Evidently you don't have to; but it is quite evident that he knows you, and so does the President, for the President has to make or suggest these appointments," Jim explained.

"Sho. You don't mean it. Then the President and the Secertary have heerd of me, you say? Ain't no mistake in the name, is there? Asa J. King? There's more Kings, ye know. Sure they got me J.?"

"No mistake, you're J. King. You're an Asa, a J and you're a King all straight," was Jim's most reassuring reply, returning the document to its owner.

Asa took it up, folded it carefully, restoring it to the envelope, and laid it again on the anvil. He was straighter and more dignified than he had been a short time before, as he proceeded to remove his leather apron, turn down his shirt sleeves, cover the smouldering coals in his forge,

remove his spectacles, fold them and restore them to their case.

His next proceeding was to resume his linen coat and straw hat. When this had been accomplished he possessed himself once more of the precious document, and turned to the three interested spectators.

" Gentlemen," said he, " shop's closed for the day. Come on Jim. I'm going home to see what Maria thinks of the dumned old talking machine now."

CHAPTER THREE

ASA'S home was well up the street from his shop, to go to and from which he must pass through the village to the opposite side, where the typical village white house with green blinds, was located.

It was commodious, and attractive in appearance, scrupulously neat and tidy about the ample grounds, the whole speaking plainly of careful supervision and a prosperous owner. This was true, too, for Asa King by his industry had accumulated what would be considered an ample competency in his small community.

The squire and Dr. Locke, being thus unceremoniously evicted, started off up the village, as Asa closed the shop door without a thought even of locking it.

Jim Bailey easily kept pace with the old blacksmith, smoking his cigar, but saying

nothing, until Asa himself ventured a remark.

"I s'pose men of idees, and who ain't afraid of expressin' 'em, get known somehow or other to them Washington chaps sooner or later, don't you?"

"Certainly; they can't hide their light under a bushel always. Do you know your Congressman from this district?" Jim inquired.

"I know *of* him, and I heerd him speak once up to Mexico Corner at a mass meetin'. He's Sam Hopkins that used to have a peg factory down at Livermore Falls."

"Perhaps he recommended you, Mr. King," suggested his companion.

"No, can't be him, he don't know me from a side of sole leather, besides he's a Republican, and I'm a hard-shelled old-line Jacksonian Democrat," Asa asserted in emphatic manner.

"Well, Mr. King, somebody had heard of you and knew your worth and qualifications."

"There ain't no denyin' that," was Asa's reply, and Jim could not fail to observe that the old gentleman straightened up more than usual, walking with an added air of dignity. Presently he gave Jim a pleased look as he inquired,—"What do you suppose Maria 'll say?"

"I don't know, Mr. King, but she will be greatly pleased no doubt, and feel highly honoured at this mark of the President's special favour, don't you think so?"

Asa looked somewhat puzzled at first, evidently a little uncertain of results, and expressed himself accordingly.

"At fust, Jim, she won't believe it, then she won't have it, then I don't know enough for it, then it ain't no good nohow, then I couldn't leave my shop either, but the final thing that will settle the whole hash, will be the three thousand per. Maria 'll give in to that."

"You think that will fetch her, eh?"

"Oh, for a dead certainty. I know her p'ints. She's skittish and shies at all the

little common things, but you can fire a barrel of paper money about her heels and she won't lift a hoof. Gosh, I ain't lived with her thirty year for nothin'." A reflection that caused a chuckle of pleasure from the narrator.

They were now about to enter the grounds that extended broadly in front of the blacksmith's house, when Jim hesitated and inquired:

"Shall I come in, Mr. King?"

"Of course, and I tell you right now, I want you for my Private Secertary of State, guv'ment pays for it, ye know."

"All right sir, I'll think about it."

In another moment they had entered the house, using as is the almost universal custom, the rear, or kitchen entrance. This brought them almost at once, into the presence of a thin, tall woman, the queen of the household, Maria King.

"Wipe your feet," was the first salutation, as Asa's form appeared in the doorway, and both Asa and Jim at once obeyed

the command, on the circular rag rug in the little hallway.

"Why sakes alive, if there ain't Jim Bailey," she exclaimed heartily, as she now perceived Asa's companion, and hastily wiped her hands on her apron. "Glad to see ye, Jim. How's all the folks? You'll have to excuse my apron. What brought you home so early, Asa, 'taint nowheres near supper time? How d'ye say your folks are? Asa, take Jim into the settin'-room. I'll be in in a minute, soon 's I git this doughnut fat off the stove. Like new doughnuts 's well 's ever, Jim? Now, Asa, don't leave your hat on that chair for somebody to set on. My stars, didn't Cy Bailey use' to like new doughnuts though, when they use' to have sleigh-ride parties over to our house. I s'pose he's got pretty rich now, hain't he? Well, I'm glad, for if ever a man deserved it, he did. All Asa needs is opportunity, though. He'd make his mark if he only had a chance. There's men in Congress don't know half as much

as Asa does about things. I wish to goodness they'd 'pint him minister to Rooshie or Prooshie, or else some kind of highcock-alorum to Cochin China, and give him a chance. My! ain't it hot here?"

Asa looked at Jim, and Jim at Asa, each with an amused twinkle in the eye.

"Hold yer hosses a minute, Maria; train don't go for 's much as an hour," said Asa, as he got a chance to speak. "S'pose I was to have my chance at my time of life."

"Your time of life,—now Jim Bailey, does he look as if he'd arrived at his time of life yit? I wish the chance to do something besides hammering hoss shoes would come; you won't git to your time of life for ten years yit." And as she delivered herself of this complimentary speech she lifted the kettle of fat from the stove and set it over on the cook table to cool.

"Well, Maria, my chance has come," said Asa with a satisfied air.

"Has come! Asa King, you hain't ben

buying no lottery ticket unbeknownst to me, hev ye?"

"No, it ain't no lottery ticket. Do you see that?" he remarked, as he threw the official envelope with its contents upon the table.

"Well, there ain't nothing the matter with my eyesight, Asa, if my brains are wobbly."

"Who do you suppose ordered that sent to me from Washington?"

"Some pension shark, I guess."

"No, higher."

"Some representative wants a vote."

"Once more, higher."

"Mebbe a senator then."

"Higher."

"Well, I guess then the vice-president must have heard of your hoss shoes."

"Higher," was Asa's almost breathless reiteration.

"There ain't no higher, but the President," said Maria, now quite excited.

"That's him," said Asa. "Ain't it, Jim?"

Jim for the first time had an opportunity to speak.

"That's right," was his laconic reply.

"The President; why, what,—what's, what's he done, Asa?" was Mrs. King's disjointed inquiry.

"He's, he's 'pinted me,—'pinted me, United States Consul, by hokey, ain't he Jim?"

Again Jim assured Mrs. King that what Asa had said was true to the letter. Mrs. King was not a weak or "fainty" woman, but on this occasion she gradually melted into a convenient chair.

"Land o' mercy, Asa King. Where to; not to London or China?"

"No," said Asa. "Where is it, Jim?"

"Boolahackentula, in South Africa," said he promptly.

"Where on airth is that?" Maria wanted to know.

"In Zululand, on the east coast of South Africa."

"What do they pay for the job? I

sh'd think you'd git as much as seventy-five dollars a month," was Maria's idea of good compensation.

Asa swelled to considerably larger proportion than normal, as he made answer. "Seventy five dollars a month. Maria; Three thousand dollars a year, and perqs. How's that for an old down-east Reuben, eh?" and Asa struck an attitude that would have done credit to an end man in a minstrel show.

"Why, Asa King, be you talking in your sleep, or am I? Are you there, Jim Bailey, or am I dreamin' you?"

"I'm here sure enough, Mrs. King; we're all awake, and there's the document that proves the statement," which remark of Jim's appeared to settle things for once and all.

Asa wiped his now perspiring brow, as Maria found strength to rise and approach the two men, to throw her arms first about her now distinguished spouse, and then about Jim Bailey, who returned the embrace

with a hearty laugh. Her next action was to put her head out of the open window and call, "Dan, Daniel, come here, I want ye," then to go to the chamber stairs, open the door and call, "Mary, May King, come down quick," and finally to stand back and gaze at Asa.

"I snummy," said she. "Three thousand dollars, and—hurry up, May,—and a, —what did you say you are, a council? Come here, Dan."

Dan King had just entered the room as also had May from upstairs.

"Look at your father, what do you think he is?"

Asa was beaming with pride and hitherto unknown satisfaction.

"Nutty, I guess," was their son's jocose reply.

"He's got a United States Consul's app'intment."

"Does it fit?" inquired Dan.

"Quit your foolin' now, Dan. May, here's Jim Bailey.

May had been waiting for a chance to shake hands with her old friend, which opportunity they now improved to the utmost.

There were exchanges of " how do you do, May," and " when did you get back, Jim," and such like expressions, from the two who had been friends from childhood.

Matters soon began to settle down to a rational discussion of things and an adjournment to the " settin'-room " was carried into effect, where the mysterious and precious document was unfolded and seriously discussed by the five happy people.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE preceding events took place early in August, and between that time and the end of the month, matters had settled themselves down, through correspondence with Washington, into a certainty, and preparations had been made for departure early in September.

Asa had been reading up in anticipation of events to come, and had suddenly loomed above all his fellow-townsmen of Dixfield, and the vicinity, as a man struck by the administration's wealth-producing lightning, and henceforth a distinguished figure in local affairs. He was pointed out as he walked through the village streets, and boys looked upon Asa as something made of superior clay.

Dan, already nearly six feet tall, loomed like a giant flagstaff among the other boys of his age, while May, of diminutive stature,

appeared as suddenly to have acquired several inches, in the estimation of her young lady acquaintances.

Jim Bailey had been on to Boston to make arrangements for a prolonged vacation, but had recently returned for consultation with Asa.

It was the last day of August, and supper had been cleared away by Mrs. King and May, for they kept no help, and the sun was just sinking behind the hills.

The scene that presents itself to us at this moment is one of perfect peace and quiet. We are in Maria King's "settin'-room," the windows of the large bay are wide open, as also is the door leading to the outside.

There is heard the light jangle of cow bells, suggesting the browsing of cattle upon the lawn; the asthmatic wheezing and gurgle of a pump is also heard, the key gradually rising as the water neared the top; together with the evening song of birds bidding the sun good-night.

This apartment was not furnished with

any attempt at elegance, it not being the "best room" and was intended for daily use, while the parlor, or "best room" was not intended, according to Maria's idea, for anything other than weddings and funerals, being kept almost hermetically sealed at other times. Should a misguided fly chance to wander in, when one of the periodical tours of inspection was made, to see if the wax flower wreath had been burglarized, or the parian marble card receiver melted; the said venturesome fly would have been found on the next tour frozen solidly into the very midst of the frigid atmosphere and have to be chopped out.

The sitting-room, however, was sunny, comfortable, and attractive. The furniture was of the haircloth variety, at least the sofa and black walnut chairs were; there was a black walnut whatnot in a corner, with some coloured glass vases with artificial flowers, a box covered with shells, some specimens of minerals; a card receiver made of worsted-worked perforated cardboard,

the eight sloping sides being attached to each other by bits of narrow ribbon.

There were various other objects upon its shelves, while a bookcase at one side was well filled with books and magazines, in addition to which a table was also the support for more books, including a large family Bible, an album and a plain kerosene lamp, with a coloured paper shade.

On the walls were a few pictures, conspicuous among which, was one of Asa's hero of heroes, Daniel Webster, the others being "Washington, at Mount Vernon," a weeping willow with a tombstone beneath; a portrait, evidently the product of some travelling tramp artist, and so far as resemblance was concerned, heaven alone could tell for whom it was intended, and if purchased on merit, should have been about five for a quarter, but for which, as a matter of fact, Asa was proud to state, he had paid ten dollars.

There was a motto in coloured worsted, worked into perforated cardboard, whose

legend was the admonition to "Love One Another."

Yet one more was a portrait which we are bound to believe was intended to represent Napoleon Bonaparte, his name being boldly painted underneath.

It is just possible that the squire had sat for the model soon after having imbibed one of those samples from the original package, for the face was very much like one of the red toy balloons children affect so much on Boston Common the Fourth of July.

His historic lock of hair might have been made of wrought iron, and his chapeau of copper-riveted boiler plate, the otherwise crosswise hat being slightly tipped to the northeast, giving the hero of Lodi, Rivoli, Austerlitz, Marengo, and other places too numerous to mention, a leer that historians have failed to mention.

In modest letters in the lower left-hand corner were these words: "Painted by Mary King at the age of eight years." The inscription is positively illuminating, and all

shortcomings are at once understood and forgiven.

A dog, probably a yellow one, begins to bark outside the house, very likely at the cows, for yellow dogs and cows have never signed a treaty of peace that the dog feels bound to respect, the cow being constantly in danger of the yellow peril. The dog barks again, and yet again, a proceeding that rouses dormant objections ready to be fired through the medium of Mrs. King's lungs, for on the fifth bark, her voice is heard from the direction of the kitchen calling,—

"Dan*iel, Dan*iel. *Dan,* you rascal." To which Dan's high soprano makes impatient reply,—

"What in thunder do you want?"

Mrs. King is again heard: "Keep that dog away from them caouws."

The namesake of the great Daniel now makes his appearance in the sitting-room, delivering himself of a few remarks in classic English.

"Will I? Well, I guess it 'll take nothin' short of prussic acid to keep that dog still. That dog ain't built that way."

As I before remarked, Dan was a very tall boy, also very slim, taking after his mother; while his sister May was more like her father.

Dan was plain; May round and handsome. The garments that encased the classic form of Dan at this time were clearly not made to order—for him. The sleeves of the coat were scarcely more than midway from his elbows to his wrists; the vest and pants—yes, these were certainly just pants—had either never been introduced, or else the vest had been divorced on a separate maintenance plan, while the said pants were in no danger from muddy roads, or the roaring torrents of the annual freshet.

Dan further relieved his mind of more choice specimens of his cold-stored wisdom. "Women don't know nothin' anyhow. I never knowed a woman who knew enough to go into the house when it rained."

As this remark on the ignorance of the sex was uttered, May King entered from the grounds. At one glance anyone would have said that her presence alone was enough to refute Dan's statement.

"How about me, Danny?" she inquired.

"You ain't a woman, you're only a sawed-off sample."

"That's all right, little brother; but you know what they say about small parcels," May replied, reaching up and chucking him under the chin.

"Yes,—pizen in 'em." Dan was evidently in bad humour.

"What is the matter with you to-night, don't your clothes——"

"No they *don't* fit me. Now you know there's goin' to be a party to-night, and it's half-past-seven now, and marm sent down to Lewiston for a suit of clothes for a boy of sixteen," he asserted.

"Well, Danny, that's your age, sixteen," May added.

Dan was half ready to cry, as he continued:

"I know it, but I'm a misfit. She oughter ordered a suit for a boy of ninety."

Dan's joke fitted, if the suit did not, causing May to laugh in spite of her desire to console Dan. She soon controlled herself, however, and made another effort.

"Never mind, Danny, they probably sent the largest boy's suit they had. Just look at me, my clothes fit, and I am eighteen," turning completely around for his inspection.

"Of course they do; you can always buy babies' clothes ready made."

May saw that Dan had the best of the argument and was incorrigible.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" she inquired in despair.

"I'm goin' to wear this suit to New York when we go, and into Uncle Hiram's house, and to South Africa."

"You wouldn't, Dan."

"You wait and see, that's all. Marm's stuck up cos Pop's 'pinted Consul, and wants

to queer me with Gert Doolittle, but I'm on to her little dodge."

May now saw a chance to sidetrack the suit question, so she opened the switch—

"Say, Danny, you mustn't call papa 'Pop' any more."

Dan's childish instincts were still predominant, hence childlike he imitated his sister's speech extravagantly.

"Papa; why not?"

"You should call him the Guv'nor."

This was too much for Dan's democratic ideas, and the merest film of dignity possessed by him gave way in loud, coarse laughter.

"Ho, ho! the Guv'nor! Dad King! I'd like to see him try to govern—our old sick cow, or—or—marm!"

The idea was altogether too preposterous for his comprehension.

"And you, Dan," May again essayed; "you must try to become dignified, like your great namesake, Daniel Webster."

Evidently the sidetrack upon which May

had switched had a freight train loaded with high explosives upon it, for the smash promptly followed.

"Don't Daniel Webster me. It's enough to have to carry his thunderin' *name* all my life, and not try to live up to a dictionary. Daniel Webster! and me most seven foot tall, and with a head like an egg."

"But he had brains."

"And precious little good his brains do me. Who was he, anyhow? You just produce him to-day, and I'll scare him to death with an electric car, or a telephone, or a bicycle, or a phonograph. Daniel Webster! What did he know? All he could do was to shoot off his mouth, to scare folks."

Dan's disgust was certainly genuine, and of the dynamic variety.

"Dan, you're awful. Don't you know he was a man of giant intellect? that he talked——"

"Yes, and that's all he did do," Dan went on, the steam still escaping from every valve.

" There's a bookcase full of Daniel Webster, nothing but Webster. There's a big dictionary, full of words, and that's what he talked; and what did he say? "

" Got anything ter eat in the house? "

The reply to Dan's peroration was as unexpected as it was startling to both Dan and May, and came in very husky tones from the direction of the outside door.

One glance from each caused Dan to exclaim, " A tramp," and May to bolt, without standing upon the order of her going, for the kitchen, that being the shortest way out.

The aforesaid tramp was not to be mistaken for a settled minister, a bank president, or a chairman of the school committee, so the boy guessed right the very first time, as the song goes.

Some time in the remote past, his costume may have belonged to the syndicated proprietorship of the above trio, but since passing from their control, the articles of apparel had certainly done yeoman service.

The trousers, once trousers, had been originally light of colour, and fashioned for a taller man, the result of which was a liberal length of fringe around the ankles. Dirt, worn and torn places, patches of varying colours crudely adjusted, were the jewels in the setting of original material.

The vest had been of fancy cut and cloth, now long since forgotten. A red undershirt was apparently on tip-toe, endeavouring to look out above the waistcoat, and to get one breath of fresh air, which it sorely needed, it being nearly black in the face. The hat had been a soft one, but now was very, *very* soft, while the coat was out of all sympathy with its companions. It was a black cutaway, of superior material and style, and so far as seen, was in excellent condition. A razor was evidently not included in his travelling outfit.

He took up the cue promptly that Dan gave him, and began singing:

"Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching;
Cheer up comrades and be gay."

Dan stretched himself up, raising aloft one of his lengthy arms, as he replied:

"Don't you git gay with me. I'm onto you."

"Come down to earth, sonny," said the picturesque pedestrian. "I'm looking for work."

"All right," said Dan; "I can give you lots of it."

The tramp turned and took two long steps toward the door.

"Come back; I thought you said you were looking for work?"

"So I am; just looking for it, that's all."

"Well, you hain't seen it yet," pursued the boy.

"No, and I don't want to see it. If I don't see it, I don't find it, do I, sonny? But we are wandering from the subject; let us wander back. Is there any grub up here?"

"Lashings of it, Weary Willie," was Dan's reassuring reply.

"Prove it. I am of a shy and incredulous nature; my faith in man, and especially

woman, has been ruthlessly imposed upon, so pardon me, gentle youth, if I say again, prove it."

"In a minute," and Dan vanished into the kitchen.

The Tourist of the Ties was left alone, but there appeared to be nothing he wished to adhere to, or possibly he was not that way inclined, so with an amused chuckle he thus soliloquized:

"Did I get onto his giraffelet's pantlets? Well, I should whistle!"

As he gazed about, his eyes encountered the portrait of Daniel Webster.

"Durn me, if there ain't the duffer I was named from. Hello, Dan. How are you, Daniel? Day-day. Won't shake? All right, old man. I can stand it if you can."

At this juncture Dan returned with a plate of hash.

"There, Sleepy Haymow, there's hash," said he, offering the tempting assortment of colour, which apparently did not appeal to

the aristocratic taste of the namesake of the great orator.

"That stuff was never made to eat," said he, with apparent disgust; but the maker of that mixture was behind the gun, for Maria was in the kitchen doorway, and she was an expert on explosives.

"You jest git out into the kitchen. Can't eat hash, eh? Git! Ain't good enough for ye, is it? Somebody's got to eat hash. I'll give ye something ye can't swaller," and Mrs. King reached for the broom outside the door.

The tramp Webster parleyed.

"Say, woman, you little know that the gentleman who stands proudly before you counts among his kindred ties the blood of a Webster."

"Counts fiddlesticks!" poohed the madam.

"No, madam, counts ties."

"I guess that's right, and I'd have you to know that I am the Honourabless Mrs. King, and I hain't got no blood. Dan, take

that Websterian brain-tank out into the kitchen and jam it full of hash, d'ye hear, *hash*. It's good enough for me, and it's good enough for him. Mizzle!" and the broom was agitated visibly by its possessor.

Webster evidently did not possess himself of an insurance company's report, before entering the King's palace, as to the extra hazardous nature of Mrs. King as a risk.

"Women are the ruin of this country," he mildly murmured. "Some of our brightest men have been ruined by them. Look at me," whereupon he was "expedited" into the kitchen by Dan's hand upon his collar, and Mrs. King's broom upon his seating capacity. Exit Webster, hurriedly, in the custody of Dan. The broom followed like a projectile from a torpedo boat destroyer.

"I s'pose if Asa'd ben here, he'd a given him a sirlioin steak with toadstool trimmings. Webster! Sakes alive! if the devil himself told Asa that his name 's Webster, Asa'd worship him," and Maria turned to

"Take that Websterian brain-tank out into the kitchen and jam it full of hash."

see if anything required readjustment in the room. As she did so, she encountered Jim Bailey and Jane Higgins as they entered together.

"Land sakes!" was Maria's greeting. "If here ain't Jim Bailey with Jane Higgins. Glad to see ye. Didn't know ye's courtin' Jane, Jim. How long's that ben?" she laughed.

"Oh, about ten minutes," said he.

"'Most long enough to make a match now'days."

Jane was blushing. Jane was an old maid of the uncertain thirties, evidently among the high branches, where a quartette of decades would be recorded before many more warm summers had melted into the historic has been.

"There now, Mari, you've said enough," she affirmed.

"Hain't said half 's much 's I can," and no one who knew Maria Stackpole King would have doubted that for one instant.

Jim enjoyed fun, however, and therefore

urged: "Go ahead, Mrs. King, give us the limit."

For once, however, Mrs. King reined up.

"Hain't got time, Jim. Mercy me! Asa has only just come in. He had to stop to shoe somebody's hoss; guess it was the widder Green's, or deacon Wilbur's mare. Both of 'em kick their shoes so loose in five minutes there ain't no keepin' nothin' on 'em. The deacon had two shoes on day before yist'day, and I guess the widder's must be barefoot by this time."

"How does Asa bear his new honours?" Jane inquired.

"Oh, he's as bunkum as a bantam rooster, and frisky as a young colt. He don't know though yit, just how the President happened to hear of him, and that he was so well qualified for a Consul to Bully-what-you-may-call-em. I never can remember that name."

"Boolahackentula," said Jim.

"Yes; Dan says I must have that on my visitin' card, along with Maria Antoinetty

Stackpole King, Consullette to that place, whatever it is."

"Well, you see, Mrs. King, the whole thing is simple enough. The President always has his emissaries around, spying out the worthy ones, and he naturally hit upon Asa," Jim endeavoured to explain.

"Wall, if he's had any seminaries around Asa's shop, Asa never suspicioned it. Now, Jim, you entertain Jane while I slip out for a minute and change my dress. Wall, Asa has his good p'ints. I won't be a minute. There's the album, Jane, an' you can show Jim, Cousin Hannah's baby."

With this Mrs. King disappeared into her bedroom to accomplish her rehabilitation.

"For goodness sake, Jim Bailey," said Jane, seating herself by the table, "how was it Asa King ever got that 'pintment?"

"I'll tell you," he replied, appropriating a seat on the haircloth sofa; "some years ago, when the President was a plain, unimportant citizen, my father had the good fortune to save his life. He was genuinely

grateful, and told him then that if ever he could do him a favour, to call on him. He never wanted anything, so there was never a word said until lately, when he wrote at my solicitation, saying that I knew a man to whom I wished he would give a consulship, to some unimportant place, where the pay was fair, and the duties of no earthly account. Hang me if he didn't send the commission right on, bang, in Asa's name, to Boolahackentula, South Africa; so there you have it."

"Does Asa know that?"

"Not a word."

"Well, I never! Is there any pay?"

"Pay! Yes; $3,000 a year, expenses and perq's. You see—it's one of those places where there is only the remotest possibility of an important matter coming up, and there must be somebody there to screech 'Hail Columbia,' and wave the Star Spangled Banner over some poor cuss who ain't worth two cents."

Jane was greatly impressed by the recital, it was quite evident.

"Three thousand dollars!" she exclaimed. "That's a fortune, Jim. But why didn't you get it for yourself?"

"You see, I'll get more than the money's worth in fun, watching the blacksmith play Consul."

"Be you goin' too?"

"Yes, I'm going as Private Secretary," and Jim placed his thumbs into the armholes of his vest, making a deep bow to his interested listener.

CHAPTER FIVE

AT the "moment of contact," as they say in describing railroad collisions, or in other words, as Jim made his low obeisance to Jane Higgins, a third party entered the room in the shape of May King, a vision of simple diminutive beauty.

She stopped short in the doorway, evidently confused.

"Good evening," said Jim, bowing again, without the slightest embarrassment.

"Good evening," said she in a confused manner. "Do I interrupt?"

"No, indeed," Jim replied. "I was showing Jane Higgins the style of salute to give the King of Zululand, also the Queen of the King household," making another low bow, minus the thumbs in the armholes.

"Oh," said May, also bowing low. Peace was declared.

"Hello, Jane," now warmly exclaimed the beautiful young lady, who was very simply but tastefully gowned. "Isn't it going to be lovely? You see, Jim is going with us, and he can take me around, and show me all the beautiful places, the grand palaces, and the princes and princesses."

"Yes," added Jane, "and the dukes and dukesses, and the earls and earlesses, I suppose, too."

"Oh, yes, of course," said Jim. "I'll show her all there are, rest assured."

May and Jim were now seated on the sofa together, and in the innocence of her heart she continued to paint the air-drawn picture.

"I suppose we'll have a fine turnout after we get there. The Guv'nor will buy one, of course."

"The Guv'nor?" Jane repeated inquiringly.

"Yes, papa. Jim says I ought to call him that now."

"I guess," Jane replied, with the set lip expression of offended propriety supposed

to belong to unselected maidens of semi-mature years, "I guess in the regal royal society of Bally Whack or whatever, you'll have to give up callin' the Guv'nor's Private Secretary, Jim."

"I guess not, must I, Jim?"

"Not on your life."

"No, I've always called him Jim, and I'm always going to," and the beautiful little doll was as firm as a plate of Harveyized steel.

"You stick to that," the interested party referred to agreed emphatically.

There was now the opening of the bedroom door, and the low rustle of a dress, accompanied by the entrance of Mrs. King into the apartment.

She was attired—not simply dressed, but *attired*—in *the* black silk dress that hitherto had only seen the light on such occasions as called for the use of the "best room;" but this being a state occasion, even if informal, May had succeeded in inducing her mother to don it.

She was all excitement, as she glanced out of the still open doorway, where a flood of mingled glow of the western heavens, with the pale bluish light of a nearly full moon made the atmosphere almost as light as day.

"Here comes Squire Doolittle, and Doctor Locke, and Nell," she announced hastily; "and who do you think? If Squire Doolittle hain't brought that city niece of his, Gertrude Doolittle, along with him, and ain't she rigged out to kill? She's got a hat on bigger 'n an ambrill. Mary, set them chairs back straight agin the wall. I wish Asa'd hurry up an' git dressed. I can dress in half the time he can. Guess she's 'fraid she'll git moonstruck."

Dan now put in an appearance from the kitchen, and at once fell under the Inspector General's gaze.

"Dan, pull down your pants leg," was the quick order.

Dan was fully as quick. In fact, there was nothing slow about Dan.

"Can't 'thout showin' my shirt."

Gertrude Doolittle was the first to enter, and hearing this remark of the lengthy young man, very modestly beat a speedy retreat, for fear the order might be enforced.

The Squire then hove in sight, followed by his niece, who discreetly used her uncle as a visual buffer, then Nell Locke and the doctor.

Mrs. King, who was chairman of all committees, extended greetings.

"Why, Squire, how d'ye do? Glad to see ye. You're looking well, doctor. Hello, Nell, where'd ye git that ring? Ben gettin' engaged to some feller? I hain't heard nothin' 'bout it. An' this, I s'pose, is Gertrude Doolittle. Land sakes! I ain't seen you sence you was round here barelegged."

The squire and the doctor had appropriately recognised her salutations, shaking hands with Jim Bailey and May. Jane Higgins joined the group of ladies, who removed their hats, Dan and May doing the honours in bestowing them safely. When

this had been accomplished, Mrs. King resumed:

"Now, folks, make yourselves comf'table, and I'll see if Asa is ever comin'. You've no idee what a time I've had sence that man got his sentence—I mean his 'pintment. I shouldn't wonder ef he put himself in nomination for the Presidency next term."

Whereupon the squire added:

"I s'pose he's got his nomination speech ready now. Asa's a great speechifier."

At this moment the door of the bedroom opened, and a 16mo edition of an octavo Daniel Webster stood one moment in the entrance.

He wore a blue swallow-tailed coat with brass buttons, a buff vest, and tight, dark trousers, light gaiters, high dickey and stock; as nearly a reproduction of the American Demosthenes as he could well present.

Taking a step forward, he raised one hand aloft, and thus addressed his friends:

"Feller Citizens: The eagle eye of the President has swept the horizon, in search of

a fitting representative, who will be a beacon light of his administration in the far-away darkness.

"As the lightning descends, and strikes the most conspicuous object, so his eye imitated the lightning, and struck—me. But I am not proud or stuck up; no matter how common the folks be, I will still take 'em by the hand."

He approached the squire: "How be ye, squire; evenin', doctor," shaking hands heartily with each.

"Toler'ble, toler'ble," returned the first gentleman. "Do ye feel any different sence ye was made a Council, Asa?"

Asa placed one hand to his throat as he answered:

"I begin ter feel a bit of a choking sensation in my phalanx now an' then. Ye see, I ain't used to travellin', an' I never was furder than Lewiston and Augusta in my life."

Early as was the stage of affairs, Dan's exuberant nature prompted him to inquire of his mother:

"Marm, can I bring in the molasses candy now?"

"Shut up! Set down, all hands. Dan, show the album to the girls," directed the Consul's consort.

Asa then continued:

"That's when I think of the great responsibility which is placed on me, to represent this great guv'ment. Ye see this guv'ment hain't been run right sence Andy Jackson was President. I've been tellin' folks so for years, an' now they're a findin' of it out."

Asa was beginning to enjoy the exalted position which he had suddenly attained among his townsmen. He was a man who would have continued to his dying day the "same old sixpence," so even was his disposition, had nothing extraordinary occurred to lift him into the limelight of political notoriety, but great and honest as was his nature, he could not but feel the importance of his position in the eyes of all he met in that remote corner of the world.

The doctor now thought to have his little joke, and yet in more than half earnest he inquired:

"I say, Asa, you don't think you'd like to take me along, as Surgeon-General to the royal household, do you?"

But the Consul took his inquiry in all seriousness.

"I've ben thinkin' of that, doctor. I s'pose the suit——"

May thought this a good time to correct her father's improper pronunciation.

"Suite, papa," she whispered, which the said sweet papa promptly misunderstood.

"Very affectionate child, doctor," he remarked. "I s'pose the suit——"

Another prompting from the affectionate child.

"Suite, *suite,* papa."

"Sweet girl," fondly repeated the appointee for consular honours, but May was not to be shaken off. She had taken it upon herself to ingraft into her father's limited vocabulary some polite English, that ap-

peared necessary for South African consumption, hence her persistence.

"Papa, you don't pronounce it right. You should say, suite."

This was where Asa reared. The spur was too much for the plodding old family horse. He knew that for the present, at least, there was no occasion for a revision of his dictionary.

With his present attainments he had risen to fame, and as a farmer would not put on a dress suit to take luncheon with a neighbour, so polished diction was uncalled for now, even were he possessed of the lingual commodity, which he was not.

"Don't you s'pose I know the calipers of the folks I'm talkin' to?" was his impatient inquiry. "Well, all right. I s'pose the su-su-it wouldn't be complete 'thout a surgeon, but the salary won't warrant it. I've got to have a Private Secertary of State, and a varlet, and when a man has to hobnob with r'y'lty, the tin melts fast. We've got to give state bankets, too, and that costs like

Sancho. Ye can't banket r'y'lty on baked beans and salt pork, and it don't matter a gosh darn to them what it costs, does it, Jim?"

"Not a thing," Jim agreed.

"About what wages does a Private Secretary git?" was the squire's practical inquiry.

"He don't git wages, squire, he gits a salary." Asa had learned the difference that accompanies this distinction.

"Does the varlet git a salary, too?" continued the squire.

"No, he gits wages."

"What does he do?"

"The varlet?"

"Yes."

"Wall, I've ben readin' up the life of Napoleon—he was the fust Consul, ye know—an' as near as I can figure it out, he had to dress him, an' ondress him, see that his flannels was mended, keep his hair brushed, an'—an' his boots well tallered."

Mrs. King, who had been respectfully

silent until now, saw her opportunity to emerge from temporary eclipse.

"Well, I guess some of them duties I'll take care of," with a nod that placed this in the category of ultimatums.

Maria's ultimatums having been for years as numerous as unsold shares in an over-capitalized copper mining company, this one created no panic in the market—so Asa continued.

"Then he's got to have lit'ry talent, so's to write a book about his master arterwards."

"Pretty good job, ain't it, Asa?" ventured the doctor.

"Yes, but I shall be able to let up on some of them duties." Mrs. King again ventured into the firing line.

"Is that varlet coming right into our bedroom, I sh'd like to know?"

"Ye see, Napoleon teches a leetle bit light on that p'int. I can't jest make out yit, whuther Josephine had got up first, and gone out to the kitchen, or how," he explained.

Jane's confidence in Mrs. King suddenly became a known factor.

"I ain't much acquainted with Josie," she averred, "but if she had half Maria's spunk, she'd a ben up and had a fire built, an' the kittle bilin'"

Asa's historical research now enabled him to sink Jane's craft with a contact mine.

"Bless your poor ignorant soul, Jane Higgins, why, they hed a cook."

"La sakes," weakly from Jane.

"Yes, an' we'll hev one in our su-su-it, too; but we can hire a whole reticule of servants after we get there. Ye see, the guv'ment is princely in the matter of salary. $3,000 per year, an' found."

The "ohs" and "ahs" that followed would remind a listener, of a fireworks night on a Fourth of July.

"Yes-sir-ee; Bob-nag-ee; Horse-and-buggy. $3,000 per year."

This was real Yankee emphasis, and Asa was Yankee from keel to truck. Dan had been speechless for an unconscionably long

time in his estimation, and regardless of consequences repeated his former inquiry:

"Marm, can't I bring in the molasses candy now?"

"Shut up; don't you hear your father talking?"

Dan again retired into a temporary obscurity, as the doctor wanted information.

"What's Mrs. King going to have?"

"Ye see, doctor, guv'ment don't take women into account. Officially they don't exist. It seems Josephine had a maid, but we may hev to put up with a smart widder."

The quick-firing gun responded.

"Asa J. King," said Mrs. King, and when the "J" was inserted, there was something doing, "when I can't arrange and disarrange my own twilight, you kin git a widder, but it won't be till you're a widderer, I kin tell ye."

In reporting this, "laughter and applause" should be added. Maria was a practised target shooter, and she generally hit the bull's-eye.

"Good for you, Mari," said Jane, who had no sympathy with airs.

"What 'll ye do when r'y'lties come callin' on ye?" inquired the squire.

"I ain't callated much on that yit, but I guess I'll send my varlet out to hold the hoss an' ask 'em in. Then they can kind er look at the picters in the album till I'm ready ter receive 'em. Ye see, it don't do to see folks too soon, or they'll think ye ain't much punkins. Napoleon, I hear, made folks cool their heels in the anteroom. What on airth he wanted 'em to have cold heels for, I don't know. Now Maria wouldn't need no anteroom——"

Maria was ready; as an extemporaneous speaker, Maria was a success of the first magnitude.

"Don't you say nothin', Asa, for if ever I had ice on my spinal column, it was——"

What the occasion was, is still unknown, for Dan, whose knowledge of inappropriate periods in the conversation of his elders, when he might venture a remark, might be

represented by the algebraic character of "x," butted in, in time to cut short even Mrs. King in the height of her indignation.

"Say!" was Dan's introductory monosyllable, "ain't ye never goin' to do nothin'? Can't we play Button, Spin the Platter, Copenhagen, or somethin'?"

"Dan, you hain't got a bit of dignity," retorted his mother. "Look at your father."

"Oh, rats on your father!" was the decidedly disrespectful rejoinder of Asa's only son, but which, coming as it did from Dan, attracted absolutely no attention from anyone.

It is to be understood, that while much of Asa's conversation may appear impossible, if taken with absolute seriousness, he was possessed of much grim humour, and while speaking with apparent earnestness at times, there was ample evidence that in his heavy way, he was merely "jollying" his friends, and that even they were not always deceived by his appearance of ignorance.

A stranger listening to Asa King's apparently ignorant utterances might have taken him for a fool, while in fact he was many degrees removed from such a condition of mind. True, his actual knowledge of the world from personal observation was limited, but like the desert that only wants irrigation to produce beautiful results, so Asa's mind was fertile and prolific of mental wonders, were he to have had, or to still have, the brain irrigation of travel and actual contact with ways and people, other than those of his own kin and kind.

He was gentle, and simple as a child, of kindly nature, but like everybody else, and which nobody will admit, he had eccentric, almost trivial caprices. We see these things plainly enough in others, but think ourselves absolutely free from them.

Probably each one of us knows of certain people, intimate friends, perhaps, of unquestioned sanity and intelligence, who cannot remain in the room with a cat; who are made frantic by the presence of cheese, or per-

haps celery on the table; to hear a person whistle, or drum with their fingers; and scores of other things. But who of us can enumerate our own peculiarities, or even if we could, would admit for one instant that they indicated in the slightest degree any impairment of the brain, or lessened our ability to comprehend the progress of the world.

Asa might be placed in this category. A trickster probably could not have unloaded a gold brick on Asa, or have inveigled him into any unknown place by means of confidence games, for Asa "read the papers," but it is highly probable that he might have many times given money to sham charity solicitors, rather than miss one that was genuine.

Mrs. King, although talkative and assertive, was a true helpmeet to Asa, and had every respect for him in her unpolished way. No sign of affection was ever publicly shown, but she would have fought for him, like an enraged tigress, had the necessity

arisen. While she generally spoke promptly and with an air of emphasis, still she never thought of "bossing" Asa, and Asa would have been a bad candidate for such treatment, gentle as he appeared. There was plenty of Yankee grit and firmness there when necessary, as witness the fact that he persisted in his adherence to the doctrines of the Democratic party in his little community, when, like Casabianca, "all but him had fled."

CHAPTER SIX

SQUIRE DOOLITTLE, short, fat and cumbrous, appeared to be quite rejuvenated this evening, advertising the fact by remarking—

"I feel like a boy agin, seein' Asa doin' so well. I b'lieve I could beat most any on ye," alluding of course to Dan's proposition to play games, the thing uppermost in Dan's mind, associated as games usually were to him, with refreshments, and forfeits, which meant kisses, in addition to which, Gert Doolittle was present, a very important factor, who cut a wide swath in Dan's juvenile affections.

The squire was the same age as Dan, they were seventy and sixteen, the former being in his second childhood. The feeling for fun appeared to be infectious, for the doctor now joined the union of which Dan was the walking delegate.

"Me, too, squire," said he. "Trot out a plate, Dan, and we'll see which is the spryest, eh, Asa?"

"The ancientest of Romans had games, and them fellers had Consuls, so I'll go ye."

The acquiescence of the Yankee Consul settled the matter, and Dan began a war dance of the Sioux instanter.

Mrs. King was quite as interested as any of them to participate in the fun, and one might readily have believed that some exhilarating and youth-renewing fluid had been suddenly turned on at the metre, so giddy were old and young.

"All right; now boys and girls set round in a circle. Dan, git a plate."

All was now bustle and buzz, everybody talking at once in anticipation of a good time.

Dan probably thought that by this time his mother might have forgotten something, he therefore prompted her again as before.

"Can I bring in the molas——"

Molas— was as far as Dan was allowed to proceed this time.

"Dan King, you say molasses candy to me again to-night, and I'll *warm you well,*" she said in a tone that carried conviction—at the time.

Dan went after the plate with mutterings that if magnified into audible speech, undoubtedly indicated his firm determination to run away to sea, or to enlist in the army as a drummer boy or captain's waiter; possibly he may have had some idea of becoming a pirate, or exterminating all the Indians still left on the far western prairies.

Jane suggested that it would be a pretty large heating contract to warm the whole of Dan's anatomy, but Mrs. King failed to agree.

"I can fill it all right. Here you, Mary, take this table out'r the way. There, Jim, you set there, next the squire."

Dan returned with the plate.

"Dan, go over there by the doctor."

Dan reluctantly obeyed, casting backward

glances at Gertrude, by whose side he would have much preferred to sit. They were now seated in a semicircle, in about the following order: Dan, Dr. Locke, Gertrude, Nell Locke, Mrs. King, Asa, Jane Higgins, May, Squire Doolittle, and Jim Bailey.

The idea at once suggested itself to Jim's accustomed eye that there was a strong resemblance to a minstrel first part in the arrangement of the assemblage, which led him to remark:

"Opening Chorus: 'There once lived a darkey, and his name was Uncle Ned,'" which bit of pleasantry caused loud laughter from all. When this had subsided, Mrs. King, as Mistress of Ceremonies, issued Department Order No. 2.

"Now, Dan, spin the platter."

Dan took the centre of the stage like a star performer, and all eyes were on him. It was a long range to absorb Dan with one glance, but he was not famed for his bashful qualities, and it would not have required the genius of a Sherlock Holmes to deduce

that, for a dead certainty, Dan would call Gertrude Doolittle's name when that plate was duly spun.

The expected happened, and the name of Gert Doolittle resounded on the evening air as the circular china revolved on the carpet.

With a leap and a bound, the city girl was on the spot, capturing the prize before it had appreciably slackened. Simple as was her success, yet applause and complimentary remarks were liberally bestowed upon her.

Dan retired, while the "Jim Dandiest Peacherine" in the world, in his estimation, had the floor. As she twisted the plate, and its revolutions began, she cried, "Uncle John," but Uncle John was not as young as he used to be, and the centre of equilibrium when seated, was where he had to project it forward several degrees, and adjust himself to the new order of things before rising. Then locomotion set in, and the space between the chair and the object of his desires was covered.

Needless to say, probably, the plate was as dead on the floor as the carpet itself when he reached it.

"Gosh dang it!" said he, as a perfect shout of laughter was the penalty of his failure. "What hev I got to do?" he inquired, good-naturedly.

"Forfeit, forfeit," was the chorus of replies.

"What is it goin' ter be?" he wished to know.

"Measure four yards of tape with Mrs. King," was the squire's sentence.

This brought the said party of the second part promptly to her feet.

"Well, I do declare!" was her exclamation. "All right, Uncle John. We kin do it, I guess. Dan, bring me them l'unge cushions. Our knees hain't got prayin' hide on, has they?"

"My hide is thick enough, I guess, Maria," affirmed the squire, "but I guess the hinges need 'ilin'."

Dan procured the cushions, throwing them

each in turn in the air, and hitting them with his fist on the way down, as he would strike a punching bag. Dan never lost a chance to fill in the extras.

The cushions being finally placed on the floor, Mrs. King knelt promptly, but the squire with much ado; whereupon they took hands and " measured tape " to the quantity of four yards, Gertrude calling the number.

Maria rose nimbly at the conclusion, it requiring the assistance of the doctor and Jim to restore the squire to a perpendicular position.

Places being resumed, the squire essayed to give the plate a whirl, but there was no " Foxy Grandpa " about the squire, the plate giving two or three very wobbly imitations of " we won't go home till morning," as he called with much deliberation, " May King."

Had May King been electricity, she could not have reached that plate in time to prevent its fall, and " forfeit, forfeit," again became the cry.

The forfeit was announced by the squire to be as follows:

"You kin git three letters out'n the post office with—Dan."

Dan's countenance fell like the mercury when a lump of ice is applied, and his disappointment and disgust found vent in these words:

"Aw, I can kiss my sister any time, if I want to."

Had Dan's sister been Jim's sister, or Dan been Jim, wild horses could not have prevented the exchange of kiss microbes, as the result of the squire's announcement. The moral is too obvious to need explanation.

Dan sulked. He moved sullenly to the centre of the room, and held his head up to the utmost of his ability, as May stood in front of him, gazing skyward as she might at the top of the Eiffel Tower.

Not to be balked, May ran to a closet, and brought forth a set of folding steps that appear ordinarily as an innocent chair, but on reversing the back they become a series

of steps. These she placed promptly in Dan's right-of-way, and mounted, appropriating the three letters, and returning to earth, amid the loud cries of approval and laughter of the entire party. May made a hit, and Dan retired into obscurity. The steps were set one side, and the little beauty, whom Dan could "kiss any time," gave the plate a rapid whirl.

"The Guv'nor," called May, which caused no movement from anyone.

"That's you, dad," shouted Dan, fully recovered from the sulks.

"Me?" inquired Asa deliberately.

Both Dan and May assured him that it meant him.

"Didn't know I was the Guv'nor," was Asa's remark, as he made for the plate, but too late to reach it in time.

Jim announced that "that was one on him."

"I s'pose I got to whang it now, ain't I?" Asa inquired, when a chorus of protests arose in the shape of "no," "not yet," "not 'till

you've paid a forfeit," " don't be in a hurry," and the like.

The twinkle came into Asa's eye as he said,—

" P'raps Consuls aint 'lowed to kiss nobody."

" Ain't they though? " from Jim.

" Mary, tell me something dignified and proper now."

" Let me see," May reflected. " You may pick a bushel of cherries with Jane Higgins."

" Be the cherries ripe? " he wished to know.

Jim proposed that he sample them.

Asa had been sitting in a rocking chair, and as Mrs. King suggested:

" Come, git up in your chairs you two," Asa mounted the rocker although very unsteady, and Jane the cane seated chair she had been occupying.

Jim called, " Now,—one," and the first " cherry " was picked, which prompted Asa to inquire:

"How many cherries be there in a bushel?" Squire Doolittle supplying the information desired by replying,—

"Nigh on 't two thousand, I reckon."

"Cracky, Jane," said Asa.

The prospect of standing on that uncertain foundation for the length of time required had its drawbacks.

Dan bobbed up serenely once more, when the prospect of a long session arose. Dan had a short memory.

"Marm, ain't it time for the molasses candy?"

You have only to knock long enough at a door, to have it opened. Dan was an optimistic believer in the perseverance that had no special reference to keeping honour bright.

"Mercy sakes alive, yes," said Mrs. King resignedly. Port Arthur had capitulated, and with a "too-whoo" yell, that would have driven a Comanche brave into nervous prostration, Dan leaped toward the kitchen door, opened it wide, and shouted "Varlet."

What followed, instantly struck everyone in that assemblage with equal consternation. Dan had sprung a mine.

Webster, the tramp, had "acquired" some of Asa's wardrobe, as well as some of Mrs. King's, and entered the sitting-room at Dan's call, which this "devilish kid" had prearranged, carrying before him a large tray of molasses candy.

Each rose suddenly and moved back, not knowing just what this strange figure meant; whether it was a clever bit of masquerading on the part of someone, or just what the secret of it might be.

Even Mrs. King was speechless, which goes far to illustrate the consternation with which the remainder of the party was seized.

Webster came directly in front of the couple mounted on the chairs, holding up the tray.

"Here ye are, Guv'nor. Have a kiss with me this time."

"Git out," was Asa's reply, as he made a

"Here ye are, Guv'nor. Have a kiss with me this time."

pass at the tray with one hand, knocking it from Webster's, it falling on the cushions below without upsetting; the aforesaid cushions not having been removed from the floor since the squire's and Mrs. King's forfeit.

This violent action on the part of the blacksmith caused him to lose his balance upon the rocking chair, and to pitch forward, falling backward into the tray of molasses candy on the cushions.

Jane naturally had endeavoured to arrest his fall, which effort on her part resulted disastrously to her as well, for one foot perforated the cane seat of the chair, and an amount of striped-hosed limb of goodly proportions sufficient to reach from the seat of the chair to the floor, became visible to the astonished onlookers.

Jim had not been idle meantime, for as Asa fell, he had made a sudden dash forward, shoving Webster violently backward, he striking the still unfolded steps, the impetus causing them to double up, with the

tramp standing on his head on the other side.

Asa unhurt, was assisted to his feet by the doctor and Mrs. King, with many choice bits of molasses candy adhering to his Websterian swallow-tail.

This series of events caused Dan to burst into a high state of convulsive laughter, which, in spite of the diversified accidents, became contagious and the laugh general among all the spectators.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TO Gertrude Doolittle I am indebted for a very considerable portion of this story of the sudden rise of Asa King, the village blacksmith; and for the remainder Jim Bailey is responsible. Both have proved good narrators, and fully alive to the humour of the situation.

Jim had procured this appointment for Asa purely for a lark, and proposed to see the thing through. He realised that a man, generally considered to be of more than average ability in a small community, when suddenly transplanted and placed in a position where his duties and responsibilities were as foreign to him as the land he was going to, must bring about results quite up to farce comedy.

You may, on the other hand, transplant the shrewdest operator in Wall Street to the

blacksmith shop or the farm, and get fully as ludicrous results. The palm is a flat failure above the Arctic circle, as also is the maple in the torrid zone.

Asa was a sage in Dixfield, now let us see what benefit that is to him when he arrives in South Africa.

Days passed, and preparations were completed for the voyage. Jim had attended to nearly all the details of the trip, and especially all that concerned the government. The passage was secured from New York, whither the whole party were to proceed, and remain a week, Asa planning to surprise his brother, Hiram, there, by his appointment and "su-it."

Miss Doolittle had returned to New York, and on a day early in September, Asa, Mrs. King, Dan, May, Jim Bailey, and lastly Webster, whose name had endeared him to Asa, and who appointed him "varlet" in consequence; proceeded to Portland, where they embarked on the steamer for Boston, there taking train for New York.

Such was the status of affairs as the reader is introduced into the drawing-room of Hiram King on Fifth Avenue, which was palatial in extent and in the magnificence of its appointments.

Why describe the furnishings of the residence of a millionaire, a gentleman of high social attainments, extremely cultured, educated, artistic and refined? I will merely mention two things, however, not that they were unusual, or of noticeable style or quality under similar circumstances, but because they are incidents in my story.

In the centre of this elegant apartment stood a large round ottoman with high centre, and at each side of the broad entrance were statues; one of Diana, the other of Venus.

On the evening in question, the Hon. Hiram King, former Governor of the State of New York, and his wife, Victoria King, were each quietly occupied reading; the former a magazine, and the latter a novel.

Presently Hiram looked up from his book, and remarked:

"When you get to a period, sweetheart, I want to speak to you."

This brought instant attention from Mrs. King, who replied,—

"Why now,—any time, dear," and her book was closed.

"Here is a short story," he began, "which from the incidents, I believe was written from the true facts regarding that man Fielding, whom I pardoned, you remember."

"Indeed."

"Yes. I received some harsh criticism you recollect, from the press at the time, but the real facts could not be made known, without serious injury to others. The man was an innocent man, and somehow this author has embodied the actual facts in his tale with changed names and location."

Mrs. King laid her book aside, and prepared to listen.

"I shall be interested to hear it," she said. "You are such a good reader, dear, won't you read it aloud?"

At this moment a bell was heard.

"Yes. I hope that is not an interruption. Well, it opens in St. Louis instead of Syracuse, and the author has called the man Mayfield instead of Fielding. Very well; he begins: 'There are thousands of people——'"

This is all we shall probably ever know about this story, for an interruption occurred at that moment, and the shape of it was Gertrude Doolittle. She entered like a gust of wind when the outer door is opened during a gale, running to Mrs. King and saluting her with a kiss.

"Oh, Mrs. King," she effervescently began; "I ran over for a bit of a chat about Mr. King."

"About me?" inquired Hiram.

"No, your brother."

"What about Asa?"

"Why, his sudden rise," said Gertrude.

"Rise? What has he been doing, building a flying machine, or been kicked by a horse?"

"No, he'll never shoe any more horses, I don't think."

Hiram now showed a genuine interest.

"Why, Gertrude, you alarm me, has anything happened to Asa?"

"Well, I should smile. Hasn't he written you?"

"Not a line for six months."

"And you didn't see it in the papers?"

Mrs. King began to be impatient.

"Child," said she, "do not keep us on the rack; what has happened?"

"Well then, you know I have been down-east on a vacation, and just returned yesterday?"

"Yes."

"I stopped a while at Uncle John's at Dixfield, and while there—well, Asa King's out of sight."

"Gertrude, Gertrude, any misfortune?" earnestly inquired Hiram King.

"Nit," was her slang reply. "It seems, according to your brother's story, 'the President swept the horizon' with his eye,—a big contract, wasn't it,—for a Consul to,—oh, Bally-whack, or some such place, in South Africa, and he being the most prominent feature visible, the President's eye lit on him, and he has the blooming sinecure, and $3,000 per year, and perqs. There now!" And Gertrude plumped down on the ottoman with an emphasis that made an impression on the upholstery.

A marked change came over Hiram's features as she went on, and from a keen interest in Asa's well-being to one of decided amusement, the change gradually overcame his countenance.

He now lay back in his chair, giving expression to his feelings in hearty laughter.

"Asa a Consul! Well of all,—" which was as far as words went, his mirth drowning them.

"I'm astounded," said Mrs. King seriously.

"Well, it knocked me silly," said Gertrude with her characteristic slang. "I haven't got over laughing yet. You should have seen him give a farewell reception one night. Mama! Daniel Webster ain't in it." The exuberance of Gertrude knew no bounds, and her vocabulary of slang phrases was unlimited.

Hiram, having quieted down, now remarked:

"But Asa has had no experience in public affairs."

"That doesn't cut any ice. The family are all going, and Jim Bailey,—you knew his father, Cy Bailey?"

"Yes."

"He's going to be Private Secretary 'of State,' ah-hah."

"A private secretary, eh?"

"Yes,—and the 'varlet' as he calls him, —he's a bird, wait till you see him. He is going to take him because his name is Webster."

This was too much, even for the dignified

Mrs. King, who joined her husband in a hearty laugh.

"Wait now,"—Gertrude continued, "He was looking for a maid for Mrs. King, but he was afraid he might have to put up with a smart widder."

By this time all three were shaken by convulsive laughter, Hiram throwing himself back in his chair, Mrs. King holding her sides, and Gertrude with both hands in the air.

When Hiram could control himself sufficiently to speak once more, he repeated:

"A private secertary, a varlet, and a smart widder. It's too good. This is better than the story, Victoria. When do they leave?"

"You may expect them any time, as they are coming to stop with you till they sail. He asked me what I thought the 'Castoria' would tax them for board and lodging for a week, if you didn't have any spare beds."

This was the signal for more hilarity, Gertrude finally continuing:

"I was afraid I might be too late, before their arrival, to tell you."

Mrs. King suddenly came to a realising sense of the situation and what was to be the price paid for the laughter she had so far enjoyed.

It is a true saying that those who dance must pay the fiddler. With a look of consternation in her face she exclaimed:

"Coming here, all those people! Hiram King, what have we done?"

With supreme good nature Hiram adjusted himself to the situation, and without a ruffle on the surface of his calm features, he replied:

"I have no doubt we shall be able to take good care of them. With all his eccentricities, Asa is an honest, noble fellow, and we must make them feel at home. Let me see, there's Asa, Maria, Dan, and May; the private secretary, and the 'varlet.'"

"Yes," interrupted the irrepressible Gertrude, "wait till you see him; he's a cuckoo."

"That's six," Hiram continued. "Oh, well, we've plenty of room for all, yes, yes, and welcome."

"Certainly, Hiram," Victoria acquiesced, but reluctantly.

"Now I must be off," from Gertrude. "I promised Harry faithfully to be at home when he calls at seven-thirty."

"Well, child, it is eight, now," suggested Hiram.

"Oh, that doesn't matter. He'll get busy with a cigarette and the ivories in the billiard room till I show up."

"Very well then, we expect some friends in for a bit of music later, some sort of suggestions to be tried for the amateur minstrel show they are arranging for the coal fund for the poor; won't you stop?" inquired Mr. King.

"No, thanks, can't; Harry'd kick."

At this moment the door bell was heard to ring, and Gertrude hastily added:

"There's some of your folks now. I'll sneak before they come."

So saying she snatched a hasty kiss from Mrs. King, patted Mr. King on the shoulder as she passed, with a "bye-bye" to both, when just as she was about to disappear through the open entrance, she stopped suddenly enough to be almost precipitated forward upon her face.

A voice was heard that suddenly transfixed her in about the attitude of the statue on the top of Madison Square Garden, the voice being unmistakably that of Asa King.

"Duz Hiram King live here?"

Gertrude came back to earth, and into the apartment.

"I've changed my mind, I'll stay," said she.

"But Harry?" Victoria suggested.

"Oh, bother Harry. I'm going to have some fun. Now you watch the Consul, and his 'su-it,'" said Gertrude, throwing herself into a chair to await developments.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ALTHOUGH Hiram King by real Yankee thrift, honest principles, and clear business perceptions had acted wisely in removing to New York early in life, as was easily apparent from his surroundings, his history, and his position of high esteem among his fellow citizens, would Asa have done as wisely had he imitated his brother's example? The percheron is not built for racing, nor the locomotive for designing house plans.

Both brothers were well fitted to their surroundings, and each was happy in them. A million of dollars would not have added one pleasure to Asa's, but doubtless much pain and worry; while Hiram could scarcely be imagined with less to his credit, yet all of this he would have shared with his unsophisticated brother, were the necessity to arise.

The voice of Asa with all its unpolished

naturalness, possessed a music and a charm to Hiram, that was as sweet to his ears in Fifth Avenue, as it would have possessed in the village home in Dixfield, therefore the familiar tones fell upon his ears with pleasure unmixed with alarm or consternation.

Horace, the English hall porter, presently appeared in the entrance, and with a hesitating air, announced:

"If you please, sir, there's a——" when he was interrupted by the appearance of Asa himself, who thus addressed the liveried attendant:

"Much obleeged, General, for comin' to the door. I s'pose Hite was busy," and as he ventured this remark, his eye fell upon the brother in question, hastening toward him with outstretched arms.

"Hello, Hite, old boy, how be ye?" and the handshaking and back-patting that followed, was genuine in its indication of true brotherly love. Asa then continued:

"An' this is your woman, ain't it?" followed by a composite handshake that began

"Hite, you know Maria?"

by Mrs. King holding her hand aloft, and by a hearty grasp from Asa that brought it at once down to his honest unaffected level.

"Hain't seen ye sence that summer ye was down to our house. Glad to see ye, marm. Oh, wait a minute!" he suddenly exclaimed, hastening towards the door, where with a beckoning motion of the hand he called on Maria to "come along." Then turning to Hiram and Victoria he added, as she entered:

"Hite, you know Maria?"

Hiram assured him that he did, as also did Mrs. King; who, by the way, did not attempt the elevated hand-shake this time; instead, cordially asserting that she was very glad to see them both; causing Gertrude over "on the side," to remark:

"Polite lie, but it goes."

Asa again returned to the entrance, at the same time throwing over the arm of Diana, his linen duster, and over the right hand of Venus, his hat, as he again beckoned, and called joyously:

"Come on, Mary, Dan, and you fellers, we're all welcome."

"Mercy me," was Victoria's quiet aside at the thought, but Hiram was all cordiality, and a prince of hospitality, making Asa feel entirely at his ease. He grasped his brother's hand again.

"So you've come to pay me a visit at last."

"Yes, but only for a week, though. Ship sails next Wednesday."

May and Dan are now added to the group; the former, pretty as a dream of a fairy, and Dan,—well, Dan was Dan,—the same Dan as of yore, the overgrown awkward boy.

"How do you do, Daniel?" his uncle greeted him with.

"Fair to middlin'. How be you?"

"Very well, thank you. Let me see, how old are you now?"

"Sixteen."

"Bless me, what a fine boy!"

Gertrude indulged in another of her asides at that,—

"Gee, ain't he a Rube!"

May and Victoria had been getting along during this, with the utmost cordiality, May informing her aunt that she was delighted to see her, which was undoubtedly true.

"And I to see you, dear child."

Asa still at his post of observation, now called:

"Here, secertary, I want to interduce ye," as Jim Bailey entered the room. Jim fitted the present locale of this story, as perfectly as a prince would a royal levee. Well and tastefully dressed, his splendid figure, and refined manly features came upon the scene rather as a surprise to the Hiram Kings.

"Hite," said Asa, "this is my Private Secertary of State. He knows more things than any six men in Dixfield, and I guess I could throw in Peru, Franklin Plantation an' Tollawolly, to boot."

Jim paid little heed to Asa's honestly meant compliment, but shook the proffered hand of Mr. King with perfect ease and

cordiality, bowing gracefully to Mrs. King.

Again Asa resumed his place at the door.

"Here, varlet, take these things."

"Get on to the varlet," said Gertrude aside to Victoria.

"Sh!" was her response.

Asa was all excitement, and proceeded to direct the disposition of his forces.

"Dan," said he, "give Mr. Webster yer hat and rubbers. Turn down yer pants. Rainin' in London, we heerd a feller say, as we come along. Wonderful, them long distance weather reports. Secertary, give him your traps; Maria, your notions and things; Mary, yer carpet bag."

As Asa had directed, all the impedimenta of the travellers had been dumped upon the patient Webster, who stood as calmly until all had finished, as the little Mexican burro does to be buried beneath his freight.

Webster was certainly a noticeable object. Jim had probably kept a restraining hand

on Asa's desire to adorn him with braid and buttons. He had been shaved, but his beard being naturally of that blue-black variety that requires two operations daily, he, at any time, would have passed for the ghost of Captain Kidd, or some of his fraternity.

Opportunities for preliminary training and practice drill not having been abundant with Webster, his knowledge of "what to do," was limited, consequently the easiest thing to do, was the proper one in his estimation, accordingly one by one these articles were attached to the persons of Diana and Venus, the former thus adding to her outfit a rifle, also a variety of wraps and parcels, while Venus appeared for the first time in public with a pair of gum shoes, a green cotton umbrella, and a picture hat.

Hiram looked at his watch.

"It's now about eight-thirty. We have had dinner, have you?"

"Oh, yes," promptly replied Asa.

"Very well. We shall have some supper

about ten, or ten-thirty, but if you are hungry,—" Hiram continued.

Asa had pulled Jim's sleeve.

" Here, secertary," he said, " make a note, —supper in high society at ten-thirty."

Jim made, or pretended to make notes. Dan, he of the molasses candy, now butted in.

" Marm, can I get up to supper? " Dan could always be depended upon.

" Shut up," was Mrs. King's mimeographed, ready-at-all-times reply, short, sharp and convincing,—for the moment. Mrs. King had been strangely silent up to this time.

Asa now appeared to be a little puzzled, and not standing in the least awe of his distinguished relative, inquired,—

" Dinner at twelve, supper at ten-thirty. Say Hite, ye don't make that jump at one fell swoop, do ye, 'thout a snack of anything between meals, do ye? "

Hiram laughed good-naturedly as he explained.

"I forgot, we dine at five o'clock."

"Same time Napoleon did, by hokey. Now I say Vict'ry, can't them women folks be packed off to their rooms to spruce up a bit?"

"Certainly, by all means."

Asa, not to lose any chance, nudged Maria's elbow, cautioning her quietly to "watch this now."

Victoria struck a little Japanese gong on a table, and presently Horace appeared.

"Horace," directed Victoria, "show Mrs. King and her daughter upstairs, and tell Janet to see them comfortable in the pink suite."

Asa continued to direct Maria.

"Did ye see how that was did? Jest as easy,—we must have some of them pink things, too." Then calling Webster, who responded with a military salute, and "here, Guv'nor," he said,—

"Assist the general with them notions and things."

As Victoria was showing very kindly in-

terest in Maria, the latter assured her, she was " that fagged out by them cars I hardly know which end my head is on," to which Victoria replied that she would soon recover from her fatigue, whereupon Maria King and May withdrew from the apartment followed by Horace and Webster with the Diana and Venus relief impedimenta.

" Dan, you and Jim can go out to the woodshed, and shake the dust off, then Dan, you go and wash the soot out'n your ears, and don't you black the roller towel all up, nuther," were Asa's instructions. " I want to talk with Hite."

" Victoria," said Hiram, " will you kindly speak to Catherine or Annie, and tell her to show them their apartments? George is away this evening."

" Certainly, dear. Come Daniel, and Mr. Bailey. Gertrude, won't you please wait for me in the small reception-room, I will join you in a moment? "

" Cert," was the incisive reply, which instruction she immediately carried into effect;

at the same time Mrs. King retired to direct Dan and Jim Bailey to their apartments.

Asa was now left alone with his brother, the successful blacksmith and the successful financier and statesman. To estimate the size of the two men by the size of the puddles in which they swam, Asa was the greater man, for he was looked upon as the wealthiest, as well as the most distinguished in his community, while there were many richer men in New York than Hiram, and of greater present importance, but the same honest qualities were to be found in each of the brothers, the one crude, the other polished and refined.

Asa took a general look around at the grand apartment in which he was a welcome guest, and then at Hiram, who was standing watching him with a pleased expression, waiting to hear what he would say.

" Fine place ye got here, Hite. If it ain't bein' too inquisitive, what do ye pay fur hatracks like them? " indicating the Diana and Venus.

"I paid five thousand dollars for the two," said Hiram.

"Sho! Five thous—No!"

"Yes, Asa."

"Five thousand dollars? Well I swanny! Didn't no clothes come with 'em?"

"No."

"Hain't nobody presented no set of resolutions 'ginst 'em?" Asa pursued.

"Never." Hiram laughed.

"That beats all! Squire Doolittle down to our town, went to the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, with Harriet, and he tells me there was a statoo there by the name of 'Love Blinds,' and the woman didn't have so much as a necktie on, and a little naked boy was settin' on her shoulder, all the time he was there. Squire was there three days, and he says he saw that statoo regularly eight times a day. He says he allowed intervals of fifteen minutes between, in which to see the rest of the show, and ten minutes for refreshments."

"Art is wonderfully attractive," said Hiram.

"Guess ye're about right there, but natur gits me every time. That's mighty nice paper, Hite," Asa added as he ran his hand over a portion of the wall.

"Yes, it will do, I guess," laughed Hiram.

Asa now returned to Hiram, and while looking admiringly at him, continued.

"Great doin's ain't they, Hite? I'm goin' to interduce all the American idees I can into Boolahackentula. Jim has ben postin' me, and I want to take some of the stunninest funicher I can find. S'pose I can git a set like this?"

"Why, yes, you may have this one, I will give it to you, Asa. I want a change."

"You don't mean it!"

"Yes, but you haven't told me, Asa. Miss Doolittle told us something, but not clearly. What has happened, and where are you going? Sit down."

"I didn't, did I? Forgot all about it.

You see the President selected me out of all the folks he knew, to be his representative in South Africa. He said he wanted a man from Maine, the old Pine Tree State, and I s'pose I filled the bill."

"No doubt you will, if he wants honesty and earnestness." Hiram assured his brother.

"Jes' so. Ye see it's in the track of commerce, a sort of half-way house on the road to India, and he wants a man of will and determination to raise Ned there the minute any of them effete fellers snaps his fingers under the beak of the American Eagle. I can call on the whole goll darned navy to back me up, if wust comes to wust."

"Hope you will not have any trouble, Asa."

"No, I aint lookin' for trouble, but they needn't think they can pull the wool over their Uncle Samuel's eyes, not if the court knows itself. I'll show 'em how we do things."

"You ought to see me in my Court dress.

I've ben readin' all over again, the life of Daniel Webster, an' I find he allus wore the very same things I've got." Asa was getting enthusiastic.

"Wonderful!" exclaimed his brother.

"And Maria,—she'll be a pictur. I s'pose Dan and Mary 'll be about equal to crown princes over there. Say, Hite, I'm drier 'n a contribution box, where's the pump?" and Asa was about to rise to look for that very necessary adjunct of his village home.

"Sit still," Hiram said, placing one hand upon the top of the ottoman, which action resulted in the tinkling of a bell outside. "Horace will get some water for you."

Horace now appearing, he was directed to bring some ice-water.

"Them bells is great things, ain't they Hite? I'm goin' to hitch one of them on my varlet."

"I would call him valet, Asa," suggested Hiram.

"Well, ye see he ain't of much vally, I

kinder took to him, that's all. Napoleon, the Fust Consul had one, and that sort of set the fashion. He seemed necessary to my su-su-it."

"Suite, Asa," was Hiram's quiet prompting.

"Yes, my dear brother, I know 'twas kinder good of me, but I can make him useful, sawin' wood, brushin' my coat, holdin' hosses and such like chores. Thank ye, general," said Asa, the latter remark being addressed to Horace, who had returned with a silver tray, a carafe of clear water, a glass with a large piece of ice in it, and silver ice tongs.

Asa immediately appropriated the carafe, and Hiram probably fearing that the unsophisticated Asa might drink from it direct, suddenly interrupted the action by saying:

"Horace, pour some water for my brother."

Horace, whose astonishment knew no bounds, took the bottle and did as directed by Mr. King, afterward presenting it on the

tray to Asa, who raised it to his lips, but on account of the superabundance of ice he could not drink.

"So much ice I can't git no water," he explained.

Hiram again came to the rescue.

"Horace, remove some of the ice, and be more careful."

The little silver tongs were at once brought into use by the servant, the superfluous ice removed, Asa emptying the glass almost at a swallow.

"Much obleeged, general. That's mighty good water, Hite. I didn't s'pose they had as good water as that outside of the State of Maine. Got a spring on the place?"

"No, that's Poland Water."

"Sho! You don't tell me! I didn't know they piped it as fur as this."

Hiram laughed heartily.

"No, Asa, we get it in glass bottles."

"Guess I'll take some of that along with me. I'm goin' to take a lot of things, a telephone, a piano, sewin' machine, rat-trap

and a gun. Didn't know but I might want to go gunnin' 'tween receptions, ye know. S'pose you don't git no gunnin' here?"

"Not much, only bulls and bears."

"You don't say so! They're good shootin', 'specially ef they're huntin' you."

"They predominate in Wall Street. We do not see them much up this way," Hiram explained.

"Keep 'em behind a wall, eh! Can't they git out?"

"Oh yes, they can, and by the looks of the ticker, I guess there are a lot of them *out* to-day."

"Now, Hite, I'd like to go up and go to bed, so 's to have a little nap before supper," said Asa rising; Hiram immediately following his example.

"All right, Asa."

"I s'pose you don't blow a horn for supper, same 's we used to on the farm?"

"No, Horace will call you if you wish at ten."

"Have you got any mutton taller? I'd

like to grease my boots, and put 'em by the kitchen fire."

"Leave them outside your door, and they shall be attended to."

"All right, I'll be down to supper," and with this final remark he disappeared, leaving Hiram watching his ascent of the stairs.

"Room straight at the head of the stairs," he called after him, and returned laughing.

"Dear innocent Asa. I would give a thousand dollars to see him in his official capacity. Dear old boy."

CHAPTER NINE

ALTHOUGH Hiram had the highest regard for his brother, and would have resented laughter at his expense on the part of others, it was beyond his power to prevent his own, and even while laughing at his oddities, his admiration for his good qualities was not one whit the less.

Hiram had no sooner left the drawing-room, than Gertrude Doolittle re-entered it. There certainly was no effort on her part to bottle up any of her effervescent spirits, consequently they sizzed and bubbled over.

"Oh, mama!" she exclaimed, "Those Zulus won't do a thing to those jays. They won't toast them on a spear or nothing, to a pizzicato andante on the tom-tom. U-m Nit! Gee, wouldn't I like to take that bunch to see the living pictures."

As Gertrude reached this climax of her

youthful imagination, Asa was seen entering, at the same time glancing over the floor as he came.

He was now in his shirt-sleeves and stocking-feet.

"I come back," he said, "'cos I lost a button off'n my galluses. Hain't seen nothin' of no button 'bout here, hev ye, Miss Doolittle?"

"Nope."

"Big horn button, like them," and he raised one side of his vest to indicate the size of the stray button. "A summer girl what boarded down our way, give me um off her coat."

"Haven't see it," Gertrude repeated.

"I don't vally it so much for the horn as 's in it, but it's mighty useful in its place. Say, Sis, do the folks eat in the kitchen here, or how?"

"Not on your life! What's the matter with the dining-room?"

"Darned if I know. Do they hev a room jest for eatin' in?"

"Bet yer!"

"Nothin' but eatin' in?"

"Sure, Mike."

"Don't keep a sewin' machine, a parlour organ, or even a grin'stone in it?"

"No, they don't have grin'stones here, Mr. King."

"Don't hev a grin'stone! How in thunder do they grind their scythes?"

At this moment, Horace, the hall porter, passed through, but not before Asa had hailed him with,—

"Hullo, say,—look here, general. I guess I'm kinder green 'bout city ways, so I wish you'd set next to me to supper, so 's to nudge me, see, when I put my foot in it."

"Hi 'd be werry 'appy, sir, but hi don't heat in the dining-room," was Horace's amused reply.

"Sho!" exclaimed Asa, "Well, I'd a thunderin' sight ruther eat in the kitchen myself. Wall, I must go and lay down or I won't git up in time for supper." Then, as he looked once more over the floor, he added,

"Sorry I lost that button, they ain't goin' to make no more of 'em, I hear tell," and the half innocent, half jollying old soul, was lost to sight once more, leaving Gertrude and Horace to express their emotions each in their own way. The humour of the situation was only just beginning to filter through Horace's slow perceptions; but infiltration was not a feature of Gertrude's brain, which was as receptive as sticky fly-paper.

"Blast my blooming heyes," said Horace. "This is the rummest go hi ever hexperienced."

There was a ring once more at the door-bell. "Wonder hif it's more jays," he said, and proceeded to investigate, as Mrs. King re-entered the apartment, finding Gertrude doing physical culture acts in her convulsive glee.

"Talk about circuses, comic operas, and farce comedies, they aren't in it with the naked truth," she exclaimed, with Delsartean gesticulation.

"But be careful, Gertrude," admonished Victoria, "we must treat them with respect."

"I'm fly enough for that. We were taught deportment right up to the scratch at Vassar."

Horace appeared and announced:

"Mr. West and Mrs. Gay." They followed the announcement at once, when greetings between the four ensued in the conventional manner.

West, languidly, and in an imitation English swell manner, was the first to speak.

"Evening, Mrs. King, how do, Miss Doolittle," sparing this from his limited vocabulary.

"Nicely, thanks. Mr. King will be here presently," Victoria replied.

"Perfectly delightful evening," from Mrs. Gay. "How's Harry, Gert?"

"Don't know, haven't seen him since,—four o'clock." Then with a slight curtsey and an air of mock seriousness, added:

"Mr. King's got company."

"Now behave yourself, Gertrude," admonished Mrs. King, adding in explanation, "Mr. King's brother, and——"

"Su-it," came like a torpedo, from the irrepressible Gertrude.

"And family, from the country,—" Mrs. King continued with an attempt at seriousness; "but I think they have retired."

"I saw the 'varlet' sneak out of the kitchen door a little while ago," said Gertrude, "with a tomato can in his hand."

"Bless me, how very odd," said Mrs. King.

"Isn't it. One might mistake him for a hobo."

"Ah, here comes Mr. King," exclaimed Mrs. Gay, as Hiram entered the room.

"Good-evening, Mrs. Gay, good-evening, Mr. West. How's Rock Island to-day?" Hiram inquired.

"Really, Mr. King, I've been too busy to look, don't you know. I had an hour at my dentist's, beastly slow fellow; an hour

at the manicurist's, which really should have been two, and a Turkish bath, and a trifling walk on the avenue, then lunching and dining, there you are," was Mr. West's very lucid account of his day.

"Aren't you fatigued?" inquired Gertrude, with a drawl.

"Of course you are prepared with the song you promised us, for the charity benefit?" Mrs. King inquired, as all became seated.

"Oh, quite. I'm not a Sims Reeves, but I can warble a few notes like a bird."

"Yes, you're a lark," interposed Gertrude. "Well, let's have the song."

"Victoria, dear, will you accompany Mr. West?" Mr. King inquired.

"Delighted, I'm sure. Have you the music, Mr. West?"

"Certainly."

"Mercy, it's a coon song!" exclaimed Mrs. King in surprise.

"Yes, they're all the rage, you know."

"Very well, proceed," and Mr. West

"proceeded" to illustrate the darkey dialect, through the medium of a pronounced dandy, which was about as wide of the mark as a French chanteuse of the boulevards.

I tell yo', Washington White,
No coon hain't got no sight
To a-gittin' me
Till I kin see
De colour ob his cash.
Dat coon mus' hab a yot,
An' sides, he's got ter got
A big dollar watch, an' he's got to fotch,
Me ebery new moon, a big fat coon,
An' a coon dat he done kotch;
He'sef, Wash White.

An' what's mo,' Washington White,
'Tain't no use for to write
Me no billy doos nice,
'Cos dey don't cut ice,
An' I ain't on no mash.
Go coff up a sealskin sack,
Jes' made fer to fit dis back;
Git a safety wheel, an' a ottymobile,
An' a dimun pin, dat'll scotch yo' chin,
'Cos I don't want no tar heel;
Yo' hear, Wash White?

Furthermore, Washington White,
I ain't white trash, dat's right.
But I'm out fer de dough,
An' a big pile, so;
'Cos dis chicken ain't eatin' hash.
I ain't takin' floo's in ter wash;
An' you kain't gib me no josh,
'Cos I ain't built that way, an' wha's
dat yo' say?
Won de lot'ry prize, ob de biggest size?
Go long, Wash White;
Yo's a dandy nigger, Wash, an' de slickest
in de bunch;
It's nuthin' less den champagne, coon, an'
chicken fer our lunch.
Gee whizz, Wash White!

Such was Mr. West's song, and about as inappropriately rendered as it was possible, yet to one who appreciated the utter absurdity of the foppish rendition, it might have been excruciatingly funny, especially with the attempt at a cakewalk that Mr. West concluded his offering with.

About the beginning of the second stanza, " things happened " not on the pro-

gram, and not exactly to be anticipated. At that time Asa King had appeared in the entrance, dressed as we saw him last. As those in the drawing-room were seated, he was wholly unperceived, and as West proceeded Asa beckoned vigorously, whereupon Maria appeared, then in turn May, Dan, and Jim, Dan with his jacket in his hand.

At the close of the song, the gallery, consisting of Asa, Maria, and Dan, laughed heartily and applauded vigorously, while May and Jim conducted themselves with more decorum.

Very naturally, attention was directed at once to the newcomers, Mrs. Gay and West appearing quite unprepared for this invasion, while Miss Doolittle was seized with an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

"Come in, Asa," called Hiram, always ready to make the best of everything; "Come in, all of you; sit down, and enjoy yourselves."

Mrs. Gay having evidently arrived at a conclusion, now remarked:

"Well, Mrs. King, if this isn't a surprise! What's the name of the play? Where are the programs?"

Mrs. King politely requested her, aside, to be quiet, but Mrs. Gay persisted:

"But——"

"These are our relatives, and friends, Hiram's brother and family, Mr. West and Mrs. Gay."

Each acknowledged the introduction in some form, when Asa waved one hand, and exclaimed:

"Go on with the show. We had a troupe down to our town once, in Marble's Hall, but the funny man wa'n't a patch to you sir."

This created more laughter, this time at West's expense, who bore it coolly. Mrs. King now endeavoured to change the subject by inquiring:

"Florence, did you bring your costume for your dance?"

"Yes, but——"

"Trot it out," burst from Gertrude.

"Give us the dance. Have some fun—go ahead."

"All right, where shall I go?"

"Into my reception parlour," replied Victoria, as Mrs. Gay retired. Mr. King now turned to Gertrude with:

"Come, Gertrude, where are you? Won't you favour us?"

"I only know frothy things," said she.

"Well," said Asa, "give us a frothy thing. Secertary, make a note of these things for our secret memoors," he added to Jim.

"Go on, Gertrude, I'm ready," said Victoria, when Gertrude, with rare vaudeville skill sang and acted the following topical song:

A youth and maiden blonde,
Were sailing on a pond;
As the moon upon the wave
Made a silvery sloppy pave
Not good to walk on.
With one hand the stars he traced,
While the other went to waist,

And the maiden feebly cried,
What ho! my laddy:
What ho! what ho! what ho! my laddy boy:
You really must be careful, or I shall cry
for,—joy.
I know help is not your need,
Your arm is strong indeed,
So what's the use of ho's, my laddy boy,
my laddy?

Another summer's sun,
The maiden had been won;
And their cottage by the sea
Had a lawn so velvetee
'Twas good to walk on.
Then her tears of joy fell fast,
On the greensward as they passed,
Till there was no need of lawn hose, there,
my laddie.
What hose; what hose; what hose, my
laddy boy,
Could irrigate with living dew, like the
tears of joy?
The flowers beneath her feet,
Sprung up, their queen to greet,
So what's the use of hose, my laddy boy,
my laddy?

Another twelvemonth gone,
The clothes line Monday morn,
Told a story without words, of a nest with
four birds,
And things to walk on.
For the baby's tiny socks,
Papa's half hose, mama's clocks,
Hung with grandma's outsize hose,
My patient laddy.
What hose; what hose; what hose, my
laddy boy,
Brings gladness to the daddy heart,
The outsize, or the toy?
But the bare and chubby feet, are to mama
doubly sweet,
So what's the use of hose, my laddy boy,
my laddy?

Gertrude received most generous applause at the conclusion of her song, and from none more than from Asa, who appeared to especially appreciate it.

"That's good, that's good. Mary, we must have that in our itinerary."

This being about as inopportune a time as possible, Dan came to the surface with:

" Marm, ain't it 'most supper time? "

" Shut up! Don't ye know when ye're in high society? " was the characteristic up-go-the-shutters reply of his mother.

Mr. West wished to know of Miss Doolittle, where she got that song, to which Gertrude made answer with a demure look:

" Tony Pastor's."

Asa was what might be termed " a good audience," for, had he been present at a real vaudeville performance, every comedian in the bill would have played directly to him, he was so receptive. Such people in an audience are the delight of the actor, who flatters himself that he has a humorous act to present.

" Say, Hite," said Asa, " do you recollect that song we boys use' to sing, hayin' time? "

" Not perfectly; it has escaped me. Hum it a bit."

" Somethin' like this," and he began somewhat diffidently at first, but as he proceeded, put all the fire and vigour of youth into it.

I remember the time when we raised the new barn,
And the dance that we had later on, by goll darn;
How old Wheeler, the fiddler, he scraped as he'd call,
"Ladies, grand chain," tum, tum, tummy, tummy, tum, tum.
"All shassey," down the hall, lummy tum tummy, tum, tum, tum.
Then old Peter Chase would "balance to pard,"
And cut pigeon wings, 'till the mow timbers jarred;
And Mandy Ann Simmons' little curls would all jiggle
As Pete swung her to place, and made the girls giggle.
Then Wheeler, he says, "now all promenade,"
And they did, to the tie-up, and had lemonade.
Gee-whizz, wa'n't it fine, an' don't I recall, the gal
I stuck clus to, the whole of that ball.
Ri-tu-ral, li-tu-ral, ri-tu-ral-li-lay.

Then I also remember in June, hoin' corn,
With my hands jest as hard as a piece of old horn;
How I wanted to quit, and go fishin' that day,
But dad kept on hoin' an' I had to stay.
I said that my head ached, and back ached, and toes;
But daddy said hoin' was good for all those;

So I grunted, and looked from the pond to the cloud,
And soon it was raining, so I says aloud,—
"Of course you won't hoe any more corn to-day,
Le's go home, 'cos this shower is comin' to stay;
The fish would bite well, le's go, daddy, do."
"You keep on hoin', an' they won't bite you."
Ri-tu-ral, li-tu-ral, ri-tu-ral-li-lay.

CHAPTER TEN

ASA had certainly made a great hit, and it would have taken a skilled artist of the vaudeville stage to have given even as good a rendition as he did.

The calls for the figures, and the steps themselves, were faithfully imitated, the song concluding with a genuinely spontaneous burst of applause from the entire assemblage.

Asa bore his "blushing honours thick upon him," and numerous and complimentary were the remarks from each, in noisy chorus.

When this had subsided, Mrs. Gay peeped in from Mrs. King's reception-room, and inquired if all were ready, receiving a reply in the affirmative, and that she was to proceed. Victoria played an introduction, when Mrs. Gay entered in dancing costume, such

as that usually worn by so-called skirt-dancers.

The colouring was such, that when the folds were extended and held high above her head on each side, the voluminous material bore very faithful resemblance to a butterfly.

Her limbs were encased in yellow silk tights, with numerous bands of varying colours, while on the head she wore a head-dress made to resemble that of the butterfly, the eyes composed of two immense diamonds that sparkled in the brilliant light.

Her dance, which can hardly be classified as such, but more properly designated as evolutions, was graceful and artistic in the extreme. She posed in many graceful positions, ran light as a butterfly from one object to another, sprang upon chairs, tables, arms of couches, and insofar as art can imitate nature, this giant butterfly was as beautiful as the gorgeous creatures of India or South America.

Of course she was rewarded with her share

of applause and laudatory remarks, Asa, Maria and Dan being absolutely mute for the moment, with wonder and delight.

Asa's head swayed in unison with her movements, and when at last his parched tongue could articulate, he slapped his hand emphatically upon his knee and exclaimed:

"By Jupiter, I'll hev one of them, if it costs a leg, I will, by hokey;" then to Mrs. Gay, "Say, Miss."

"Married lady," whispered Jim.

"Is that so?"

"Widow, Mr. King," said Gertrude.

Asa actually jumped into the air. "Cracky Jane," said he, "the very thing for my su-su-it."

Mrs. Gay, evidently fearing that Asa would kidnap her bodily, precipitately fled. This forming material for a climax, probably, in Dan's mind, he now diverted the attention by his reiterated inquiry:

"Marm, ain't it 'most supper time?"

"Shut up." This combination was inseparable between Dan and his mother.

" Folks 'll think ye ain't had no bringin' up." She then aimed her disappearing battery in Asa's direction. " I'll bet we don't hev no harnsum young widders along, in their nighties; not if your aunt Isaac knows herself, and you can bet your boots she does."

" You stick to that, Maria," said Hiram.

" She's jest the thing to entertain ry'lty," persisted Asa.

" Is she? Well, you watch your aunt Hannah do the entertainin'." said Maria with determination, which meant plainly that the incident was closed.

One of Jim's inspirations now prompted him to interrupt with:

" Mr. King, don't you want to dispose of this parcel? " at the same time handing one to him.

" Forgot all about it; besides, I hain't had time. Ben somethin' doin' all the time. Here, Hite, here's a pair of double-thick mittens, mighty useful when you shovel a path to the barn in the winter. Maria knit

'em." These he handed to Hiram, who thanked him earnestly for them.

"An' there's a pair of heavy wool socks for you, Vict'ry, to pull right on over your boots when ye go to meetin'. Maria knit 'em good size, 'cos we heerd ye was a little stocky."

These Asa displayed as frankly as he would have shown a necktie or a piece of ribbon.

"Isn't that fierce?" was the aside of Gertrude. "Wouldn't that joggle you!"

Victoria, who had taken her cue from Hiram, received the offering in the same spirit in which it was given, and thanked both Maria and Asa.

To Dan's great relief, the announcement was now made by Horace that supper was served, resulting in one grand leap by that energetic young man, and in being brought up short by May, who grasped his jacket, and appealed to him to be a gentleman.

"What, when I'm starved?"

Possibly Dan had heard of the remark of someone, that we are only about three days from cannibalism, and could scarcely conceive one being a gentleman and hungry at the same time. The two conditions were the very antipodes, in his estimation.

Asa, always on the alert for points, and not wishing to lose a trick, nudged Maria's elbow as before, remarking:

"Watch this formula, now, 'cos we'll want to know how to do it in style, too."

"Asa," said Hiram, "will you conduct Victoria?"

"Ye see," said Asa to Maria, "ye don't 'hook on,' ye '*conduct*';" then to Hiram, "With the greatest of felicity."

"Mrs. King, allow me," was Hiram's request of Maria.

Asa now caught Jim by the arm, and whispered: "Secertary, jest make a mental reservation of these things."

Hiram then continued:

"Mr. Bailey, Mrs. Gay, when she returns. Mr. West, will you escort Miss King? Dan,

I suppose you will be able to take care of Miss Doolittle?"

"You bet I will," was that young man's reply.

"Wait a minute," shouted Asa. "By hokey, I forgot my boots. I'll be back in a minute," and away he went like a shot.

When he had disappeared, Dan resumed his jacket, Mrs. Gay returned, and Victoria took occasion, while waiting for Asa, to say to Maria:

"Mrs. King, I thank you a thousand times for your thoughtfulness in making those articles for us, and as long as we live we shall prize them as reminders of your visit and your kindly heart."

"Ain't that a good jolly?" murmured Gertrude.

"We shall indeed," added Hiram. "Asa is somewhat unused to the ways of the world, but his heart is as big as an ox's. I have seen the lad, many a time, divide the pennies he had for the circus with poorer boys than we,

and sometimes go home whistling and happy, without seeing the show himself."

This truthful description of Asa's nature brought tears to his wife's eyes, who replied with subdued sobs:

"Asa's a good man, Hiram, an' ef he is a little green, he means well."

A sudden loud report, as of a gun, was heard, causing the utmost consternation among all present. For the first instant no one moved, listening for further developments, which materialised rapidly.

Asa's voice was now heard in the hall, evidently in great glee.

"I got him, I got him. Shot him square 'tween the eyes. I see him lookin' out from under the l'unge, an' I peppered him. B'ars do git out of Wall Street, I guess," whereupon, Asa appeared in the entrance with his gun in one hand, and dragging a huge tiger skin rug with the other.

The shout of laughter that greeted his appearance was electrical. Hiram himself, usually dignified as any judge, threw himself

upon the ottoman in uncontrollable laughter. Gertrude sank into a chair and played a tattoo on the floor with her feet, while her body swayed wildly to and fro.

Asa, not understanding the meaning of this reception, presently looked back at the trophy of his hunt, and for the first time realised the ridiculous nature of his prize.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said he, presently joining in the laughter as heartily as any of the others.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

DURING all the years of Hiram King's residence in New York, he had many times urged his brother to come to the city and make him a good long visit, and at increasingly lengthy intervals Hiram and Victoria had made brief trips to see Asa in his native town.

Asa could not be prevailed upon, however, to wander further than Paris Hill, where the county records were kept, or Lewiston for special purchases, and the State Fair, usually taking the whole family, and "visiting" Jotham King, a cousin, who kept a grain and feed store on Main Street above the canal.

During the week that he had allowed to remain in New York before sailing, Hiram took especial pains to see that he went about and had every opportunity to get familiar

with city customs, never hesitating to introduce him to any friend he met, and with an air of pride in his ability to do so. One might have inferred that Asa was a prince, or a multimillionaire in disguise, from the deference paid to him by Hiram.

Asa already had a crude knowledge of the city's ways from reading the Portland *Transcript,* the Lewiston *Journal,* and the *True Flag,* much the same ideas that a student gets of a foreign tongue, studying from a book and alone.

One day Asa wandered unaccompanied across 34th Street to Broadway, where he was very soon accosted by a very slick-looking stranger, who addressed him as follows:

"Ah, how do you do, Mr. Adams. Come to town once in a while, I see. I'm selling country real estate now; don't care where it is located. Have you got any for sale over in Hohokus?"

"No, my friend, I ain't got no land for sale. I ain't Adam, and I don't live in

Hokus-Pokus," Asa replied grimly and with emphasis.

" Well, well! " replied the stranger, " what a remarkable resemblance! I never saw anything quite so extraordinary. You must be a relative, another branch of the Adams family? "

" Not this eve, stranger," said Asa.

" I really beg your pardon, but I am sure I have met you somewhere, and got the name and location mixed. Let me see, your name is——"

" Pinkham," said Asa.

" Certainly, certainly, now I remember. I met you down in—let me see—don't tell me now—it was down in—er—er—how mortifying."

" Lynn," suggested Asa slyly.

" Ah, that's where it was. Now it all comes back to me, and the first name is——"

" Lydia," said Asa with a laugh that attracted even the attention of a policeman on the opposite side.

The " real estate " man had run against a

Rube who not only read the papers, but who made practical use of what he read.

When Asa related the morning's adventure later to Hiram, the latter laughed until his sides ached.

"You'll do," said he. "If all strangers who come to New York would be as sharp, and exercise a little common sense, the career of the confidence man would be a brief one. All solicitations from strange men, under whatever pretext, are to be looked upon with suspicion."

"I tell you, Hite, I may be green, but by hokey, I ain't ripe enough for pickin'," was Asa's reply.

Hiram assisted Asa and Jim in their purchases, looking carefully after any attempt at overcharging, and saw the entire party, minus Webster the tramp, who disappeared the first day in New York, with the tomato can, on board the steamer for Southampton, from whence they were to take steamer for Cape Town.

There was a large party present at the

pier when they sailed, friends of the Kings who had become greatly interested in the quaint old man and his mission to Zululand, beside Hiram, Victoria and Gertrude.

After leaving the pier, an inspection of the staterooms was instituted.

"Thunder!" Asa exclaimed as he looked their room over, "can we two live in this closet? It hain't got a winder bigger 'n a pants button, an if a feller rolled off of that top shelf, he'd land in the wash basin. Say, Maria, who's goin' to sleep on the top shelf, you or I?"

"I don't know for certain who's goin' to, but I know for sure who ain't, and that's me," said Maria.

"Then I guess it's goin' to be me. Jim, s'pose you order in a tac'le and fall."

"You'll get the hang of it soon," said Jim. "Just stand on the lower one, and swing yourself right in."

"I can manage it some—— say, who's smoking? Somebody's smoking strong tobacco. Strong tobacco always did make

"Say, Maria, who's goin' to sleep on the top shelf, you or I?"

me sick. Gosh, what was that? Guess she struck a rock. Jim, run up to the roof, and look off."

Jim disappeared, but did not go up "on the roof" as directed, but turned just in time to prevent Dan from collapsing like a photographer's tripod; then assisted him to his stateroom, and bundled him bodily into the lower berth, boots and all.

Asa sat down promptly on the side couch, and ran his hand slowly over his clammy brow, while Maria proceeded calmly to dispose of wraps and parcels in safe snug places for the voyage.

Soon, however, her attention was called to Asa from the mere fact of his inactivity, when she observed the paleness of his features, and especially the white rings about his mouth.

"You ain't seasick, be ye, Asa?" she inquired.

"What in thunder do ye think I am—picnicking at Weld Pond?"

"I didn't think you'd be sick, Asa."

"I ain't sick, Maria, I'm dyin'. Jest stand one side while I take a header into that cupboard. I don't want to die on the floor."

Maria, like some few favoured mortals, did not appear to be in the least affected by the movement of the vessel, and never having felt the unexplainable nausea of seasickness, failed as everyone does under like circumstances to appreciate the deathly feeling that had overcome Asa the moment the steamer struck the first swell of the sea.

May had very quietly, and without a word or a sign, stolen to her own room, and there awaited results—not only the effect upon herself, but upon the others.

Asa pitched headforemost on to the "lower shelf," clothes and all, replying to all inquiries that he "wouldn't move for the best farm down east."

No arguments or entreaties from Maria had any effect upon him, and Asa lay like the statue of Napoleon in the Place Ven-

dome, after the Communists had overthrown the column, and the nose of the conqueror was driven into the earth.

Mrs. King, Jim and May never missed a meal, much to the astonishment and disgust of Asa and Dan, who scarcely moved for two days.

On the third day, however, the sea being calm, both were sufficiently sea-broke to be assisted on deck, where they reposed comfortably on steamer chairs, watching the promenade, and the occasional rise of porpoise.

Asa soon recovered his usual good spirits, and on the fourth day he was present at meals, and walked the deck as briskly as any man of his age might. Dan also rebounded like a rubber ball, and became again the once familiar boy.

In due time Southampton was reached, prompt connection being made with the steamer for Cape Town.

It was a long sail the Consul and his party had down the coast of Spain, Portugal, and

Africa, touching at several ports on the way, including a halt at the Canary Islands, and also at St. Helena.

This latter place aroused great interest in Asa, it having been associated so intimately with the career of Napoleon, the "Fust Consul," as he was fond of designating him.

Sufficient time being allowed all who wished, his entire party took the trip inland to the place of the great Emperor's imprisonment and death.

"Now Dan," said Asa reflectively, as they stood in the room where Napoleon breathed his last, "you see a man can be too great; until other folks who don't like turnin' their necks into pavin' stones for conquerors to walk on take a hand in the game, and land him neck and heels in a room this size, with a first-class recommendation as a place to draw his last breath in. You don't want to try and be too great, Dan. Webster tried it, and a whole bunch of the little fellers downed him. Jest sneak up gradual, Dan, and all

at once they'll find a great man among 'em before they have time to trip ye. Let them flies alone on that winder, Dan. P'raps their ancestors use' to be friends of the great Napoleon."

"Guess there wa'n't no flies on Nap, daddy," said Dan.

"No, I don't expect there was, but there are several on you."

From St. Helena but few days remained before Cape Town was reached, where Jim and Dan were dispatched in advance to Boolahackentula, to get things in readiness for the coming of the representative of the United States. The palace of the Consulate was to be gotten in order, with the furnishings and equipment brought by Asa, to make a strong impression on the king and his people.

Asa, Mrs. King, and May remained behind in Cape Town, Jim assuring them that it would not be dignified for Asa to be putting up lace curtains, hanging portières or pictures, and laying rugs and carpets.

Asa very readily acquiesced in this suggestion, for he was naturally dignified and sensitive; besides, it gave him an opportunity to gain some knowledge of South Africa in an unofficial way before he took upon his shoulders the robes of office.

CHAPTER XII

JIM BAILEY and Dan had been a week in Boolahackentula before their labours were completed.

They had found, much to their surprise, that such a thing as a "house" did not exist in that country, the retiring Consul having occupied a four-posted thatched-roof shack, which was considered all that the dreams of avarice, so often alluded to, could desire.

The king lived in just such another, with his daughter, and an Irishman of whom he was very fond.

Aoola I. had offered them every facility for putting their "palace" in order, even assisting in tacking up the lace curtains along the front, and laying rugs over the ground.

The one only hammer in all Zululand, the property of his Majesty, was freely loaned to Jim or Dan, although with caution to guard it safely, and return it to the Mas-

ter of the Household at the conclusion of its service.

This thatched hut, when viewed by Jim and Dan on this particular day, presented some such appearance as this:

It was square, with a roof of four sides coming to a peak. Three sides were open, but the back was thatched like the roof.

Lace and madras curtains hung from the other three sides, while a Japanese bead portière, or several of them, were suspended from the roof inside, answering for partitions.

The ground, inside and outside the hut, was covered with a large carpet and numerous rugs, while Hiram's parlour set of elegant material and design, was artistically bestowed outside as well as inside the shelter, if it may be called such.

A large pier glass was standing under a palm tree, a telephone being attached to another. Over the centre of the structure was placed prominently the familiar portrait of Daniel Webster, while at one corner

was a flagstaff, flying the star spangled banner.

A folding work-table stood near the centre of the open space in front of the official residence, back of which was a short flight of folding steps, covered with a patchwork quilt, the table being also partially concealed by a chenille cover.

At the time we first come into visual contact with this scene, Dan is seated on the top of the steps looking off, through a pair of field glasses, and Jim is lazily smoking a cigar, while seated in a large rocking chair under a tree. Jim speaks first.

"Now, Dan, I think we are ready for them. Everything is in apple-pie order."

"Bet yer sweet life it is, Jim, but you want to watch out when dad finds out this is the Mansion of the United States Embassy."

"Lucky we came on a week ahead from Cape Town and got things in order. Can you see anything of them yet, Dan?"

Dan takes another look through the glass. "No," he replied; then, suddenly, "hold on,

though—them's um now. Hooray! they'll be here in a jiffy," said Dan, coming down from his perch and flying around like a hen with her head cut off.

Presently distant shouts of "halloo" as from Asa were heard, eliciting another "hooray" from Dan, who further suggested to Jim that he fire a gun, which the latter did as an official salute.

"That's it," said Dan; "that 'll warn the natives to look out, too."

Jim now possessed himself of two flags, that had been crossed over Webster's portrait, and waved them vigorously, remarking:

"We'll give them a grand triumphal entry into Boolahackentula, eh, Dan?"

"Bet yer! Hello, dad," he shouted. "Hello, marm. Here we are, hooray!"

In a few moments more the American Consul, his honourable consort, and lovely daughter, entered the little plaza in front of the "Embassy," as Jim waved the flags, backing and bowing obsequiously.

"Welcome to the Mansion of the United States Embassy. Welcome to Boolahack-entula," said Jim with mock gravity.

Asa was puzzled. He scarcely knew what to make of the unexpected condition of things that now confronted him.

"Say, Jim, this is the place I had callated my speech for, but I don't see no gapin' multitude."

"They're off on the royal hunt, but they'll call around later," said Jim reassuringly.

"Say, May," said Dan, "ain't this like a novel? Look at that mansion, marm."

Mrs. King gasped.

"That! What the dickens—now Dan, what you gone an' put them valerble curtings up on that cowshed for?"

"Cowshed!" exclaimed Dan. "I want you to know that's the "Mansion."

"That!" exclaimed Maria with disgust.

"That's the White House."

Asa had by this time recovered sufficient breath to inquire:

"Jim Bailey, is this the habitation of the representative of the United States?"

"That's what it is. It's the best house in the country, anyhow. Even the king's is not as good."

"Ye don't s'pose we've struck the wrong country, do ye—but le's see the inside."

Jim and Dan immediately pulled the curtains aside, revealing more of the parlour set, the piano, the bead portières, and various articles of a useful or decorative character.

"There now," Jim exclaimed with pride, "what do you think of it? Isn't that romantic?"

It struck Asa and Maria in much the same fashion, as each dropped half-paralysed into convenient chairs. May laughed, and voted it "awfully jolly," Jim and Dan joining with her. This was too much for Maria.

"Stop laughing, you fools!" she exclaimed excitedly.

Asa presently recovered, and with his usual optimism attempted to console his

wife and himself at the same time, with the remark:

"Well, Maria, it's better 'n the king's. Jim says so."

"I s'pose we've got to stand it. Do we all sleep in that hen-coop?" Maria inquired.

"Yes, indeed," Jim assured her. "Just hang up some of those bead portières, to divide the rooms, and there you are."

This caused a lockjaw of the upper lip to Maria, for that feature set instantly as straight and firm as that of any Boston terrier in a dog fight.

"Jim Bailey!" she exclaimed shortly, "if you expect me to dress an' ondress behind a string of beads, I guess you don't know your aunt Isaac."

Asa had about settled down to the inevitable, the humour of the situation beginning to dawn upon him, therefore he endeavoured as best he might to soothe Maria's ruffled feelings.

"Never mind, Maria," he said, "we'll

hang up the royal bed-quilt, and call it the tapestry chamber;" but Maria tossed her head and flounced off into the hut accompanied by May.

"What's this for, Jim?" Asa inquired, placing one hand on the steps.

"That—oh, you can pick dates off the palms with that, or use them as a signal station."

"I tell ye, dad," interrupted Dan, "that's your throne, when ye receive kings and jacks, and ten spots, and things."

"Hamlet said, 'A king of shreds and patches,'" Jim quoted; "but this would be a throne of shreds and patches."

"And what do we do with the table out here, Jim?"

"I suppose we will have to call that the Council table, to sign treaties on," laughed Jim.

"Yes, and to give banquets on," again suggested Dan.

"Bankets on that, Dan!" said his father; "ye couldn't banket a muskeeter on that."

"You will have plenty of opportunity to try," added Jim.

Asa now took a more general look at the *ensemble* of the place. Noticing a tree with several hats hanging from its trunk, he remarked:

"I s'pose that is a hat-tree, eh, Jim?"

"Yes, and didn't cost five thousand dollars, either."

"Got any rubber trees? I need a new pair."

"Yes, I think there are, sir."

Asa was now in excellent spirits, and joking in his dry, droll way.

"All kinds of trees, eh? Got any umbrella trees or whiffle-trees on the place?"

"Yes sir, a half-dozen umbrella trees."

"Cracky, we won't have to go in when it rains, will we? Well, ye've fixed up nice here, Jim. Dan, you go and help your mother get settled."

"Daniel!" was the loud call at that moment from Maria in the hut.

"I'm a-comin," Dan replied, as he leisurely obeyed.

"Yes, Dan and I have worked hard to get things placed, and when you see the other places, you will feel quite like a king indeed," Jim assured Asa.

"Then the view off here is——" Asa had turned to look off in the opposite direction, when he was actually paralysed to speak, by a sight that suddenly met his gaze as he and Jim turned.

Almost at his back was a man, whose appearance at any time and in any place might bring terror to the beholder.

He was a large man with long hair and beard, both of the lion's mane variety; from beneath his shaggy eyebrows the wildest pair of eyes were glistening, while between his teeth a huge dirk gleamed viciously. He wore a red shirt, and at his belt were two large revolvers. He also wore a pair of rough high boots into which his trousers were tucked, and on his head was a dirty slouch hat of formidable proportions.

"You havn't seen me."—"I'm Jim,— Red Jim."

As this man removed the knife from between his teeth and stepped stealthily forward, Asa slowly retreated until he backed against the steps and almost unconsciously mounted them backwards.

The visitor then growled, or hissed,—

"Ye haven't seen me, d'ye hear,—ye haven't seen me."

Asa would have given a year's salary at that moment, to have been able to reply truthfully that he had not, but he made no reply, only saying to Jim. "Give me the flag, Jim." Jim immediately obeyed, and Asa held it above his head, as Jim stood quietly by, with a hand on his revolver, ready to interfere should it become necessary.

The ladies had sought shelter behind portières and things, while Dan peeped out from behind a post.

"You haven't seen me,—" again mysteriously remarked the miner, "understand? I'm Jim,—Red Jim. Keep that,—" he added as he threw a bag upon the table,—"but ye haven't seen me,—understand,

understand? Don't tell 'em ye saw me. Keep that bag. Sh——" then placing a finger to his lips he stepped cautiously on tip-toe across the space, and as he turned suddenly, he found himself face to face with the large pier glass Jim had placed there.

Throwing up both hands, and with a yell of terror, he turned and fled in the opposite direction, as if all the demons of the infernal regions were after him.

Silence reigned a moment, the tableau of five figures being undisturbed by as much as a breath.

Jim was the first to move, however, in order the better to follow the movements of the retreating figure.

Asa began slowly to descend from his "throne," Maria's head appeared above the piano, May parted the bead strings, and Dan partially emerged.

Suddenly there was a terrific shriek from the direction the miner had taken, and a movement to retreat was instantly begun on the part of all but Jim, who boldly advanced.

"Look out, Jim," cautioned Asa.

"It's all right, he's jumped off that cliff down onto the rocks and there won't be a piece of him left big enough to make a mince pie. It's all right now," was Jim's welcome assurance.

Asa immediately recovered his usual spirits, remarking,—

"The majesty of the Guv'ment was too much for him. Did ye see him wilt when I waved Old Glory? Come out gals an le's see what's in the bag."

The reserves now came forward cautiously from the shelter of the hut, as Asa peeped into the bag.

"Stones, nothin' but stones," was Asa's disgusted remark as he poured them out upon the table.

Jim took one glance at them, removing one to examine it attentively.

"Stones, eh," said he; "well, if they were mine, and anyone offered me fifty thousand dollars for them, I wouldn't sell them."

"Jerusha, Jim, you must be as crazy as the other fellow," exclaimed Asa. "What be they?"

"Diamonds, fifty thousand dollars' worth, at least."

"Jim, honest now, ye ain't foolin' be ye?"

"No, indeed. I never was more serious in my life. They're diamonds, uncut and unpolished. There's one now, that ought to cut to twenty-five thousand dollars. A good day's beginning, Asa."

"Well, ruther. Do all of 'em have to come and pay toll to Uncle Sam? He seemed sort of ashamed like, as if he didn't want folks 'bout here to know we'd seen him."

"No, I see through the whole thing now, Mr. King. That was some miner who has been made insane by his sudden wealth, and thought someone was trying to steal it."

This was Jim's correct solution of the incident as they afterwards discovered.

"Big head," said Asa. "Maria, when we

go back to Maine we won't need a moon no more. I 'spose them come under the head of perqs?"

"Certainly," Jim assured him.

"Oh, mama, mama, won't we shine?" May exclaimed enthusiastically.

"We kin have a di'mun weddin' the minute we strike Dixfield, an' I'll have di'mun buttons on my robe de chamber," was Maria's exultant remark; then placing her little finger prominently against her cheek, as if to display a diamond ring, she added, "Seen anything of our caouw?" at which all laughed heartily, then, "Say, Jim, where's the cook stove?"

"Over in that hut."

"Come, Mary, le's git to work, I'm as hungry as a bear."

May and her mother having departed on their errand, Asa directed Dan to go and split some wood for his mother.

"Aw!" growled that worthy, "a crown prince splittin' wood," but he went nevertheless.

"Put the stones in the ice-box, Jim. I'm afraid they'll melt."

"All right, sir," Jim replied, as he advanced to the telephone on the tree, opened the top, and dropped the bag in, returning to Asa, who had removed his coat preparatory to getting to work.

"I s'pose I've got to git out a proclamation of amnesty, or thanksgiving, pretty soon?"

"I think it had better be thanksgiving," Jim suggested, "for escaping from the crazy miner, for the diamonds, and because we're all hungry."

"Good idee. Now, Jim, I s'pose the fust thing is to make ready for callers."

"Yes, right away."

"I see you've got Daniel up mighty conspicuous, right behind this 'ere table, too. Folk's 'll think it's my own pictur, won't they?"

"To be sure they will."

"Now, let me see, I've heerd of a 'speech from the throne,' an' so long 's you've got a

throne here, I might try mine. I ain't no king,—cracky Jane, yes I am too, come to think of it, and I had expected to be obliged to deliver a speech to these fellers, so I wrote one down on the steamer."

This he takes from his pocket, unrolls, and mounts one step of the "throne."

"There now, Jim, you chip in with the 'hear, hears,' and the 'hoorays.'" Asa cleared his throat and began.

"'I did not expec' to make a speech——'"

"Hold on," interrupted Jim; "how can you say so, when you have it all there written out?"

"Oh, that's all right. That's parliamentary, don't you see? Figger of speech. 'Friends and furrin citizens.'" Asa began, with a flourish, "'I am sent by the great Ruler across the great waves of the heavin' Atlantic, to see that your Guv'ment is run as it ought to be; to see that the Star Spangled Banner'—wave the flag when I git there, Jim—'is allus looked up to and

not trod under the heel of despotism.'—Cur'-us thing 'bout despotism, Jim, it don't never seem to have but one heel.—'We air a free people'—then you want to hooray like thunder, Jim, you an' Dan—'We believe the Bird of Freedom, whose wings extend from ocean to ocean, an' whose tail feathers cover every '——nigger, Jim."

The sudden and unexpected climax to Asa's speech was caused by the sudden appearance from a clump of trees at Jim's back of a startlingly curious figure with the blackest of skins.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

JIM'S attention being thus suddenly diverted from the literally spread-eagle speech of his chief, turned to learn the cause of Asa's odd remark, to behold the reason of his surprise; which, however, was no surprise to him, the "nigger" alluded to being no other than the Zulu king, Boorabo Aoola I., accompanied by his Private Secretary, Patrick O'Hara, and his daughter, the princess Foozoola.

"Mr. Secertary, pass up the ladies' and gents' cards. The United States Guv'ment will give 'em audience," was Asa's very dignified direction to Jim.

The reply that came from Boorabo was as startling, and even more unexpected, than was his sudden appearance, for black as he was, his words were uttered with as rich a

brogue as ever emanated from the "ould bog" in County Connaught.

"Awjence, is it? Sure it's not awjence Aoola the First wants, but jist to see phat kind of a lookin' jay that guy in Ameriky has sint me this time."

This was certainly an unexpected language for the King of the Zulus to converse in, and for the moment it rather staggered the Consul.

Just a moment to describe the appearance of these visitors. As I have said, Boorabo was black, coal black. Surmounting his bushy black hair was a fairly well-kept tall silk hat. His ears bore large gold rings. Around his loins was a mass of white wool, and with the exception of a red English hunting coat, his body under it, as well as his legs, was bare. He wore wide gold arm bracelets and the same around each leg under the knee, and at the ankle.

His daughter, the princess, was of the same type, but only half black, having had a white mother. She wore the heavy mat

" Surmounting his bushy black hair was a fairly well-kept tall silk hat."

of white wool, but her body was covered by a silk shirt waist with large sleeves, evidently acquired from some civilised country, by some means unknown to the writer.

Her hair was done up in a high pyramid or knot on the top of her head, stuck full of fancy pins of gold and precious stones.

Below the mass of white wool, her legs were bare, although her feet were covered by high laced boots of red morocco.

The Private Secretary to his Majesty was entirely European in his get-up, in fact it was practically that of an Irish country squire dressed for the hunt, his coat being of green, and the waistcoat red. He also carried a hunting crop in his hand.

"Be you the king of Boolahackentula?" Asa inquired.

"Indade, I am that same; the Zulu king, Boorabo Aoola First."

Asa, beginning to recover his breath, again inquired:

"I don't like to be inquisitive, but how did ye learn that language?"

"Ain't it good English I'm spakin', thin?"

"I ain't never ben in England, but I sh'ud say it must hev come from acrost the water somewheres."

"That's roight; sure it was Patrick O'Hara, the gintleman that stands at me ilbow, and who's from the County Sligo, London, who tached me the most illigant English, his native tongue. But phat's your name, ma boucle?"

"Asa King."

"Ace a king! Sure, Pat, ye niver told me an ace was iver a king."

"Faith, sire, it's many a strange thing ye see when ye haven't a gun," replied the secretary, the mystery of the king's brogue being no longer a mystery.

"Jim, call the folks," said Asa, which direction Jim at once obeyed. "Have a seat, Miss King, and Mr. Patrick. Have a throne, Mr. King," Asa hospitably requested, waving his hand to chairs, couches, and the steps.

Foozoola availed herself of the invitation by seating herself on a rocker, nearly falling over backward the first instant, while Mr. O'Hara took a seat on the base of the pier glass.

Boorabo declined the invitation, however.

"Excuse me, I do be settin' so much, it's a pleasure to stand. Whin are yez comin' up to my shanty to shmoke a pipe wid me?"

"What's a good time for receptions, anyhow?"

"Come up whin ye're the hungriest, and bedad Foozoola'll cook yez a dinner that 'll bate the world."

"Indade, she can that," added Patrick.

"For I've roamed in many a clime,
And dined with princes and kings;
But Foozoola's the queen of good cooks iv'ry time
And her pratics and dumplings the best of good things."

As he finished, he bowed very low and gracefully to the object of his flattery, who rose and curtsied in turn, with a very charming "Merci, Monsieur," in excellent French,

her reply indicating the presence some time of still another nationality.

"By hokey," exclaimed Asa, "I'll never be any hungrier 'n I am now, I guess."

"Foller me, thin, and I'll sing yez a song after dinner that Pat larnt me."

Just at this moment Jim returned, accompanied by Mrs. King, May and Dan.

"Wait a minute, Mr. King. Here's my wife, my darter, and my son. Folks, this is Mr. Oola, and his darter Foozalum, and Mr. Harrer, the royal family and su-it of Zululand."

"Glad to see ye, Mr. Boozer, and you Miss Boozalum. Hope ye're quite well," said Maria.

May went directly to Foozoola and soon made rapid headway with that member of the royal family.

"Ladies," said O'Hara, bowing low, "it does me heart good to see once more the grace"—bowing to May, who responded—"and queenly dignity"—bowing low to Maria, who returned the low salute with in-

terest—"of the ladies of me own race, although not of me own dear ould sod.

"But divil the odds, be it Yankee or Celt,
The sunshine kisses 'em all;
And the blush on the cheek, where the
warmth of it's felt
Is roses in cream
To the queen of me dream;
And the one that is near
Is the one that's most dear,
Though the kiss is the kiss of Old Sol."

"That's me poet laureate," said Boorabo. "Phat he don't know about poetry is small enough to put in your eye."

"What is this song about, *you* promised us?" Asa inquired.

"About? It's about a——but faith, I'll sing it to yez now."

Asa beckoned Jim, and remarked to him aside:

"Good item for the Oxford *Democrat,* Jim, or the Skowhegan *Clarion.* Mary, git to the pianner, p'raps you can keep him company."

May hastened to do as she was bid, but as she opened it and ran her fingers over the white ivories, Boorabo, who was about to begin his song, stopped suddenly, his eyes staring wildly at the piano.

"Phat the divil's that?"

"A piano," May informed him.

"Howly Moses, hit 'im agin."

May did so, striking several chords.

"Mother o' Moses, did yez iver hear the loikes o' that. Let's thry once more."

"Go on with the song," said May, "and I will follow you with an accompaniment."

"Be off wid yez thin," and Boorabo delighted the party with the following Irish ditty:

"Whin the Lord he created the land and the say,
From his crown he selicted a gim of bright ray;
And the imerald placed in the waters of blue,
Is the gim o' the say, on me word it is true.
But from Cape Town to London, or Hong Kong
to Berne,
It matters not wherever *I* go;
To one spot on earth, do me thoughts quickly turn,
'Tis the top o' the morning to Sligo.

The hills are so green,
Sure niver was seen,
'A spot on the earth,
Like the place of me birth,
That's Sligo, bedad it is Sligo.

"Sure Limerick's fine, and Killarney's a pearl,
And in Cork,—och, bedad, but there's the fine girl!
Thin to ride behind shtame, I wouldn't go far,
While Kilkenny's the place for the ould jauntin' car.
Iv'ry spot has its charm,—Dublin, Belfast, Galway,
In Ireland wherever *I* go;
Still Ulster's me darlint, and Donegal Bay,
Gives the top of the morning to Sligo.
The Blarney stone's great,
Tipperary's hard bate,
But there's only one spot,
Sets me blood runnin' hot;
That's Sligo, bedad it is Sligo."

The song appeared to give great satisfaction to the listeners, while O'Hara could not refrain from joining with the king, in the last lines of each stanza.

"Now begorra I must be off. It's a great time we'll have this day. Hurroo,—but say, the young paple must come in coort dress,

to be presinted officially. Sure 't 'll niver do to come in thim things," pointing to May and Dan. "We're very particular. Obsarve me coort dress. Mr. O'Hara, will yez explain to the ladies the customs of the royal banquets?"

"With pleasure, your Majesty," replied Patrick. "Whin I was Ambassador from Dublin to the Coort of St. Petersburg, ye see the Czar took me aside and confidentially told me to wear me native dress, being such a high official, but if he reprimanded me at dinner for not wearing their coort dress, not to mind, but keep on eating; but the ladies, do ye mind, got niver a tip, and sure they had to obsarve the rules."

"His Majesty Aoola First set the pace for all Europe and Asia, so ye see the ladies must follow the strict letter of the law, only the Ambassador being allowed to wear his own togs. That's the law of the Coort of Boolahackentula. God save the King."

"Wall, I guess my darter don't go pranc-

ing around in a wool mat and no stockings on!" exclaimed Mrs. King with much emphasis.

"Well I guess *yis,* old woman," replied Boorabo, "or your head will decorate the top of that shtick," indicating the top of the flag-staff. "Beware the wrath of King Aoola First," and his Zuluanic Majesty strode pompously away in the direction from which he came."

"Au revoir, Madame, Mademoiselle, et Messieurs," very charmingly added Foozoola who retired also, O'Hara bowing as she passed him.

"Ladies," said the latter, "permit me as an Irish gintleman to say it is a pleasure to me to welcome to the land of me timporary exile, such hitherto unknown acquisitions to the society of the realm; and to add that whiniver Patrick O'Hara can do ye a sarvice, it's mesilf that's at your command. Ladies, Gintlemen, I am your most humble servant," and he bowed low, making a wide sweep with his arm, hat in hand; then turning to Jim

added, "Sure, Jim, don't forgit to return the royal hammer."

With the grace of a master of deportment he restored his hat to his head, and with a swing of the crop, went away singing merrily:

"Oh, the bells of Tipperary are ringing in me ear,
And the girls of Ballycastle in me drames always appear;
So come all ye lads and lasses let us drame on foriver,
For I wouldn't wake and find me slape,
Was far from Shannon River,
Sing ho lally ho, sure we're the b'ys that niver
'Ll forget the sod that's ours from God, foriver and foriver.
Sing ho lally ho," etc.

His melodious and joyous tones being heard for some time after he followed the king.

Following this little episode, Asa turned to his children and directed May to go and put on a court costume, and Dan to go out behind the barn and rig out too.

"I'll go and git my own supper, land sakes," said Maria. "You and the rest of the King family may go and eat fried

ostrich; Jim and I'll stay right here and eat canned baked beans, and I'll bet when I git 'em warmed up and fixed, they'll beat Kafoozleum's cooking all holler."

"I'll bet they will, Mrs. King," Jim replied.

Dan and May disappeared in different directions to carry out their father's instructions, while Asa, with Jim's assistance, went rummaging in an old-fashioned hair trunk for his "court costume," the "very things that Daniel Webster used to wear."

In about a half hour Asa reappeared fully caparisoned, and almost the exact counterpart of the immortal statesman, in fact startlingly so, but of reduced proportions.

Presently Dan and May also appeared, the latter having arrayed herself in a white astrachan cape, fastened about her waist instead of her neck, and reaching nearly to her knees. Her bodice was of somewhat similar style to that of Foozoola, while her hair had been coiled and puffed to a high

elevation, and in addition skewered with shafts and darts of every variety.

Dan was beyond description, resembling a tuning fork more than anything else that presents itself to my mind. A tuning fork with a jacket, a cap, a large pair of shoes, and a pair of bathing trunks.

Such was the picturesque variety of costume presented by the King family, prepared for a banquet with the royal family of Aoola First.

Jim remained behind with Mrs. King as a home guard, and in her excellent New England manner she prepared a meal that both enjoyed to the utmost.

Given an old-fashioned Yankee housewife and a few raw materials, the possibilities are beyond gastronomic calculation. Eggs and even milk are jauntily dispensed with when they are not to be had; biscuit without milk, and, I verily believe, custard without egg, are easily within her scope.

"Truly, Mrs. King," protested Jim, after

they had partaken of their supper, "I never knew that beans *à la can* could taste as good."

"Grandma Stackpole used to say," replied Mrs. King, "that when she cooked, her food tasted, and it's a pretty poor can of beans that I can't doctor up and make wuth somethin', at any rate."

"I can readily believe that, Mrs. King. I have eaten beans cooked in the ground by the river drivers that could scarcely equal these."

"Gammon, Jim Bailey; but these would a ben flatter'n a pancake if I'd jest turned 'em outer that can. Hullo, what's that?"

Maria stopped to listen, Jim imitating her example, when the sound of music lightly fell upon the ear, which gradually increased in volume, until it was easily identified.

"It's that Irishman, or I'm a sinner. Never mind the dishes now. I'll just take off my apron, and——is my hair all right, Jim?"

Jim assured her that it was, as O'Hara's Irish ditty became fully audible.

"Sing ho lally ho, sure we're the b'ys that niver
'Ll forget the sod, that's ours from God, foriver
and foriver;
Sing ho lally ho, for the girls with eyes so blue,
For no colleen was iver seen, so tinder and so true.
Sing ho lally ho—"

"Here we are, safe and sound, home once more under the ould flag. Sure if I'd iver change the green flag of ould Ireland, with its beautiful

'Harp that once through Tara's halls
The soul of music shed,
Now hangs as mute on Tara's walls
As if that soul were fled;'

only that beautiful imblem of freedom should be mine be adoption," was the conclusion of O'Hara's half-musical, half-poetical speech.

O'Hara was accompanied by Asa, May, and Dan, the Consul expressing appreciation of his Irish friend's very complimentary allusion to the United States.

"Won't you stop awhile, Mr. O'Hara?" May politely inquired.

"Thank ye, Miss, but I have to return to me royal master. Sure, he's going to pass a tariff law to-night, and establish a few banks, order two or three nagurs shot for high treason, and there's sure to be something doing."

"All right then, Mr. Harrer, we'll excuse ye," said Asa. "Much obleeged for your company home. Call agin. Glad to see ye any time."

Asa and the children then rejoined Mrs. King and Jim, as O'Hara's voice was once more heard on the evening air, singing his

"Ho lally ho for the girls with eyes so blue,
For no colleen was iver seen, so tinder and so true,
Sing ho lally ho," etc.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

SEVERAL days passed without anything worthy of note occurring, the king making daily unofficial calls at the Consulate; Mr. O'Hara also finding it to his fancy to " drop in " and drum a little on May's piano, playing with an easy grace, and favouring his listeners with numerous Irish ditties of which he appeared to have an inexhaustible fund.

Foozoola had also taken a great fancy to May, and between the little English she could command, and the little French May had acquired at school, they managed to get along very well.

Foozoola explained that her mother had been a French woman, but died some few years previous to these occurrences.

O'Hara had taught Boorabo, her father, " English," and hence the Babel of lan-

guages, Zulu, French, English-Irish, and Irish-English.

"It must be lovely, to be a princess," said May to Jim one day, as they were strolling near the Consulate.

"There *are* 'perfectly lovely' princesses, and princesses that are not lovely. The story book princess is usually of the bon-bon and chocolate cream order, too sweet for anything."

"But, Jim, did you ever see a real princess, I mean one of the truly, *truly* kind, not one like Foozoola, like a new kind of chocolate blend?"

"Why, yes, I suppose so. Just what do you call a real princess?"

"A real princess must be the daughter of a king, in the first place," May explained.

"Then I have seen a real princess."

"Not Foozoola?"

"No, not a bit of black blood."

"Oh Jim, tell me what she was like," May went on, all impatience, her beautiful dark eyes sparkling with interest. "Did she

speak English, French, German, Italian, Spanish or Boston?"

"English principally; it is her native tongue."

"Oh, how lovely, Jim! Go on, tell me all about her. Was she blonde or brunette, short or tall, slim or stout, old or young? Did she speak,—did you hear her speak? What did she say? Go on, why don't you tell me about her?"

"Sit down here a minute," Jim replied, indicating a little rustic bower the retiring Consul had built by the shore of a pretty stream, and which was covered with a variety of flowers.

May did as requested, Jim proceeding to pick one each of various kinds of roses.

"Now, then, in the first place, she was a brunette, of beautiful colour tone, as an artist would say, like that dark rich red rose. She was young, like that pink bud just beginning to give indication of the wealth of beauty soon to be unfolded. She was petite, like that moss rose,

that has nearly reached its maturity. She was of pure, unblemished character, like that white rose, without a touch of colour."

"Oh, Jim, how perfectly, *perfectly lovely!* And she is English, you say?"

"No, I do not think I said so."

"Oh, but you did, though. You said English was her native tongue."

"True, but all to whom the English language is native are not necessarily English; there are Canadians, and Australians, and,—and Americans."

"But no royalty, Jim, only Great Britain's. She must be a Victoria, or a Maud, or an Alice. Come, tell me. Where did you see her?"

"Several places."

"Did you hear her speak?"

"Many times, and her voice was like music."

"Tell me *one* place, Jim Bailey, where you saw this perfect woman, this fairy princess, —oh, how exasperating you are!"

"One place? On the steamer."

"On the steamer! Nonsense! Why didn't I see her?"

"You couldn't."

"But if she came down here, I may yet."

"You will never meet this daughter of a line of kings."

"Never?"

"No, never; it is impossible."

"Why?"

"Because this princess, this daughter of a king, is—yourself."

"Me, Jim? And is all this really meant for me?"

"Every word. To me you are the composite of these flowers, the grace, the beauty, the delicacy, and the sweetness, all combined. To me you are more than a princess, you shall be my queen. May I hope to call you so?"

"Oh, Jim, I shall be so happy, for you have always been—my king."

What happened? The same thing that has happened to untold millions, and which

the majority can imagine would happen, when a grand, manly fellow has been accepted by the girl he loves.

Those roses are still to be seen, pressed between the leaves of a book, and tell mutely the story of the "sweetest love song ever sung," for is not every one the sweetest?

It must not be thought that this was a sudden inspiration on the part of Jim Bailey. No indeed, for he had always known and loved May King, and on the long voyage over had said many tender things to her, to learn her feeling toward him, and the interview of to-day was the climax of the first chapter to what promises to be a long story of love.

The following day, while Asa and Jim were enjoying a chat in front of the "Embassy" which had concerned the love episode of the day before, and in the conclusion of which Asa had grasped Jim by the hand and heartily given his consent, Asa had concluded with,—

"I tell ye, Jim, I'm glad on't. Yer

father too is one of the finest men I ever knew, and so was yer mother. I never knew Cy Bailey to speak a cross word, or to do anybody or anything an injury. He's the stiddiest goin' man in the world. Nothin' ever ruffled him. He'll never die of nervous prostration, or anything, I hope, but extreme old age."

"Thank you, Mr. King. I am sure father will feel proud of possessing your good opinion. Father has gotten to be pretty rich, but I do not think that he is any different from what he was when he lived in Farmington."

"Cos it's the genuine article, the true blue blood, dyed in the wool, no shoddy in his warp, Jim. I know him from way back, and his father afore him. Great snakes, Jim, what's this coming, another crazy miner?"

The villainous-looking person who now appeared bore every mark of being in a similar class with the lunatic who confronted them on the day of their arrival. Asa was

standing in front of the set of steps, and placed one hand on the top, as the miner came near and demanded roughly,—

"Come off your perch. Here, sign that," as he threw a document upon the table. "Hands up, young feller," to Jim, pointing a pistol. Jim quickly followed his "advice," not having any gun about him to "contradict" with.

"Now keep 'em thar. You're the new American Consul, ain't ye?"

"I am that highly——"

"That'll do; now sign that. It's a paper to allow me to enter the United States without question, and not be sent back, or held as an escaped convict." Asa hesitated. "Sign, I say."

The Consul hesitatingly signed the paper with a lead pencil.

"There now, there's your dirty pay to keep your conscience quiet." Saying which, the miner threw a bag upon the table.

"Thank ye," said Asa. "Call again."

"Not if I know it. Look here," he

added, brandishing his revolver, "you betray me and I'll blow you over into Asia. Good-day," and he was gone.

Nothing was said between the two for a moment after the departure of the miner, until finally Asa looked at the bag, and then at Jim, slowly inquiring of the latter,—

"Jim, how—fur—is—Asia?"

"Oh, a matter of two or three thousand miles."

"Ain't that treason, or some kind of contempt, to threaten to blow a United States Consul as fur as that?"

"High treason at least."

"Don't you think we'd better telephone for some war ships?"

"That might be a good idea. The Asiatic squadron may be around here somewhere; but let's see what is in the bag first. There may be balm in it."

Upon this he cautiously untied the bag, and poured its contents upon the table.

"Diamonds again," said he. "Ten thousand dollars' worth at least."

This led Asa very resignedly to remark,—

"And yit folks wonder how we Guv'ment officials git rich. Is this place full of lunatic miners, s'pose?"

"It begins to look that way."

"Then I'm willin' ter dress behind a string of beads, or a string o' onions, for ten years, at this rate."

"That's right, Mr. King, but did you sign the paper?"

Asa chuckled quietly.

"Yes, I signed it all right, but I guess it was a forgery."

"How so?"

"'Cos I signed P. T. Barnum, by jing."

"Good, that's good! You don't think he'll object?"

"Couldn't help it. Signature demanded by force don't count, and by gum, that was the only name I could think of. I remember hearing a story once; somebody called Henry Ward Beecher, a universally well-known man, and Beecher said: "You never made a greater mistake in your life; there

ain't but one universally well-known man, and that is—P. T. Barnum," and by hokey I guess he's right. Take care of the funds, Jim. My conscience troubles me a leetle over this, 'cos it's obtaining di'muns under false pretences."

"Don't let that worry you," said Jim.

"We Guv'ment officials have some blood-curdling escapes, don't we, Jim?"

"Yes, but all for love of country."

"Every bit," Asa agreed.

"Here's somebody else coming, a wild woman, I guess, this time," Jim announced.

"Gimme that flag."

Asa's impulse was to get to the top of the steps, for a wild woman has a thousand more terrors in any man's mind than a man under similar conditions. He had no sooner reached the top of the steps, which were in fact but four steps high, than a plainly dressed woman who had evidently seen better days, not so very remote, either, entered the presence of the Consul, apparently in great distress of mind. She threw

"She threw herself at his feet."

herself at his feet, and with a wild, scared look cried beseechingly,—

"Protection! protection!"

"You shall have it, though I hev leanin's for free trade," was the Consul's pleasing assurance.

"What from, my good girl?" inquired Jim.

"It don't make a darn's odds what frum; she asks pertection, and she's goin' to git it."

"Bless you! You are a noble representative of a great and good government," the young woman exclaimed with renewed fervour.

Asa bowed low.

"I am. Why in thunder don't you shout, Jim? It ain't dignified for me to."

"Hear! hear!" put in Jim.

"That's one of the things I've ben waitin' for somebody ter say. You hev ter look to women for appreciation. Go on, my gal," to her.

"Don't let him take me," she pleaded.

"You air safe under the wings of the

American eagle; but what appears to be the diffikelty?"

This was the sort of thing that brought Asa out strong.

"He is going to America, and is going to drag me after him."

"Drag ye! drag ye! He shan't do it."

"Oh, thank you, thank you."

"Ye needn't thank me, miss. It ain't much punishment to be sent to America, but to be dragged there,—no sir-ee!"

At this juncture the sound of Rocky Bill's voice was again heard, that being the name of the miner who so recently required the Consul's signature.

"I'll settle him durned quick," were his very reassuring words.

As he came into view from behind a clump of foliage, an unexpected thing happened, unexpected to Asa, Jim, and Madge, for that was the suppliant's name, as well as to Rocky Bill.

As the latter strode threateningly forward and was about to lay violent hands on the

woman, the form of O'Hara emerged from the other side of the brush, unseen by the miner, and presenting a revolver at his head, said quietly,—

"Hands up, me frind."

Rocky Bill was taken completely by surprise, and hesitatingly complied.

"Pardon me abruptness, me frind, but there wasn't time to ax your pardon first. Mr. Bailey, sor, will ye kindly favour the gintleman by relieving him of some of his dangerous weapons? Thank you. Don't forget the knife in his belt, and the magazine."

Jim had rapidly followed O'Hara's instructions, removing two revolvers, a large dirk, and a cartridge belt.

"Got the drop on me, didn't you?" growled Bill.

"Mere formality, me b'y. Sure, somebody has to be first, an', be me sowl, this time it was your frind O'Hara."

As he said this he strolled to one side, taking a seat in a rocking-chair, still keeping

his gun in hand, and while apparently indifferent, yet still having a watchful eye on the proceedings.

"What's the matter?" inquired Asa. "Was the signature a forgery?"

"I want the woman; she's mine," was Bill's fierce reply.

Madge clutched wildly at Asa, clinging tightly to his trousers.

"Hold on,—I mean, let go; this place wa'n't built for two. Now, Mr. Miner, le's hear the evidence. Is she yer wife or darter?"

"No."

"Yer mother, yer aunt, or yer cousin?"

"No."

"Then yer claim ain't wuth a Continental darn," was Asa's decision.

"You're an American, she's an English woman, and mine," was Rocky Bill's determined reply.

The fuse had been lighted, and quickly reached Asa's magazine of explosives.

"A female woman is without a nation,

and all countries are her pertectors. When cusses like *you* bully a woman, any *man,* whuther he stands beneath the Stars and Stripes, the Union Jack, or the Russian Bear, will die in her defence. That's all the woman's rights I want in mine," and as he concluded, he stepped down to the ground, facing the burly miner calmly.

"Look here, you Yankee," replied Bill, "I'll call on the British government, and they'll send a warship here that'll blow you off the earth."

"Let 'em. Uncle Sam can send a cruiser here, quicker, and bigger, with more fight in her to the square inch than any gol-durned Guv'ment on earth. I don't know nothin' 'bout international law, an' I ain't up in Cushing's parli'mentary rules, but I *dew* know what's human, an' *I pertect the gal.*"

"Well, I say she's got to go with me," said Bill, very threateningly, as Madge crouched at Asa's feet.

Jim took a step nearer, as O'Hara also

rose from his chair, watching the outcome more closely.

"An' I say, *she shan't!*" from Asa with great force and determination. His face was now as hard as that of the bronze figure in front of the Capitol building in Boston, and showed as little fear.

As he delivered his ultimatum, he brought his clenched fist down so firmly upon the frail table before him, that it collapsed and fell flat upon the ground at the Consul's feet.

Asa contemplated the wreck for an instant, then turning his eyes, they rested upon the weeping woman before him. As he spoke again, his tone had changed to one of extreme gentleness, that showed the sympathy and depth of true manly qualities he possessed in such abundance.

"The fall of that table is like this poor gal—it fell, not because of ch'ice, but because it was weak, and too much pressure was brung to bear. It kin be set up ag'in, an' not be left there to be kicked about for-

ever. So kin this gal, ef the gol-durned human society will reach out and encourage her to stand on her legs ag'in."

"Spoken like a true gintleman," burst forth O'Hara. "Sure, I'm thinkin' ye must have Irish blood in ye."

"Well, keep the gal. I s'pose I'm well rid of her," said Rocky Bill sullenly.

"Der the grapes hang high, or der ye think ye've squeeged the orange dry, an' flung the peel away? Human bein's is like a sponge, an' absorb the good or the bad they're thrown into, but the sponge kin be cleaned an' become pure an' sweet, clean through, an' so kin the human sponge, ef ye give it a chance. Now what hev ye got to say for yerself?"

Asa had certainly found his forte, for no orator, no matter what his degree of education or mental attainments, could have been more effective in impressing his hearers, and in arriving at results.

The strong qualities of some men require great occasions to bring them to the surface,

and crude as were Asa's, they were there, and answered to the call.

In response to Asa's question, Rocky Bill replied,—

"Nothin'. I give her a home, and clothes, and 'nuff to eat, and she deserted me."

With great tenderness, Asa turned to Madge.

"And you, my gal," said he, "what hev you got to say?"

Madge looked up with tears in her eyes, as she replied meekly,—

"The same old story; but I have worked for him, and cared for him when sick, only to be beaten and abused in return. I'll die before I return."

"So ye shell, an' thet's a long way off." Then assuming the attitude of counsel for the defense, he turned toward the steps, as if addressing the Court,—

"Now, your Honor,"—then to Jim and O'Hara,—"and gentlemen of the jury, I maintain that the plaintiff here has failed utterly to make out his case, an' the defend-

ant should be found not guilty. What say you, gentlemen of the jury, is your verdict for the paintiff or for the defendant?"

"The defendant!" shouted Jim.

"The defindant," was also O'Hara's verdict.

"With damages," Jim added.

"Yis," said O'Hara, "damage him complately."

"What shall the damages be?"

"Oh,—blow him over into Asia," was Jim's reply.

"Yis, blow him to the divil," added O'Hara, as he stepped forward to assist Madge to rise.

"Not if I know it," said Rocky Bill, and with a sudden dash he was dodging among the trees and away.

Jim and O'Hara would have fired on him, had not Asa held up a hand restraining them.

"Let him go, boys; p'raps he'll jump off the same cliff t'other feller did. Now, Jim, is the treasury open?"

"Yes."

"Perduce it."

Jim "perduced" the bag Rocky Bill had thrown upon the table for Asa, as Madge, overwhelmed with gratitude, exclaimed,—

"Heaven will bless you for your noble defense."

"I'm blessed a'ready. Here," said he, as he took the bag of diamonds from Jim and offered it to Madge. "Ye helped to earn it, an' it's yours, an' may God bless ye."

This generosity, so ample and unexpected, was too much for the hitherto unhappy young woman, who, with eyes filled with tears, threw herself upon Asa, as her arms clasped about his neck, and her face was buried upon his shoulder.

Asa patted the poor girl in a tender, fatherly way, and was about to cheer her with some consoling remark, when he was awakened from his dream by,—

"*Another widder!* Oh, you Don Josephus!" which plainly emanated from Maria.

A glance over his shoulder revealed to

him his worthy spouse, in a cook apron, sleeves rolled up, and a big wooden spoon in one hand, both being held aloft in surprise.

May was there as well, but in quiet astonishment, while Dan, who had also entered unperceived, lay down, rolled, and kicked upon the lawn.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

IT is a far cry from Boolahackentula to Dixfield, and a span of two years is considerable to look forward to, but very brief to look back upon.

Asa, wholly unfitted technically for the position he had been called upon to fill, had brought a solid basis of honest principles and equity to bear upon subjects that arose during the term of his appointment, and although he "slopped over" at times, and had very erroneous ideas of the functions of a Consul, his good sound common sense soon made him better conversant with his duties and the limitations of his office.

Travel, and contact with other parts of the world than that in which our own nest is built, immensely broadens a man, and at the time Asa sent in his resignation, after being abroad nearly two years, while still the same

in principle, his ideas had been enlarged to understand the broad principle that "we" are not "the only," and that habits and customs common to us are not practicable or even possible in other lands and in other climes; and that their methods of living and doing are the logical and natural results of climatic conditions and environment.

In Mexico, for instance, we find the native woman taking the soiled clothing to the bank of a stream, washing it, and rubbing it clean upon flat stones, removing her own scanty clothing and cleansing it in the same manner, throwing it upon a bush to dry in the sun, meanwhile, herself, taking a bath, until her covering is again ready to don. Nor is this sought to be done in solitude, yet this finds no remonstrance or even thought of impropriety in the mind of the people of her own land; it is only the "higher education" that sees harm in this cleanly custom that we are told is next to godliness.

Like Aladdin of the Arabian tales, we rub the lamp of our imagination, and, presto, we

are back in the old Pine Tree State, in rugged Oxford County, and find ourselves on Asa King's lawn by the waters of the Androscoggin, almost beneath the shadows of the Sugar Loaves, that have stood guard over the valleys of Webb's River and the Androscoggin since the creation of the world.

Dixfield is in a state of great mental activity, for to-day Asa King and family are expected to return to their own again.

It is August, and the day is hot, hence the reception committee, consisting of the squire and the doctor, have seated themselves upon the lawn beneath the shade of the overhanging elms. The old squire is slowly fanning himself with a large palmleaf fan, his straw hat lying upon the ground at his side, while Dr. Locke is occupied, as is his habit, in tracing outlines and diagrams of nothing in particular, upon the ground with his stick.

"Hot day, squire," remarked the doctor.

"Hotter'n tophet, by jing."

"Seems to me, squire, I never saw a hotter day here," added the doctor.

"Well, I have," replied the squire. "It was jest about forty year ago now, we was raisin' Jotham York's barn, and we had a jug of cider under a bush, corked tight. Well, it was so hot, it boiled the cider, and the steam blew the cork up through the brush, and the friction was so great, it set fire to the dry alders. You ask old Deacon Kidder if it didn't. He was there."

"Did the deacon drink any of the cider, squire?"

"Ye see, the cider spouted up into the air, and as it came down, the deacon, who had a powerful big mouth, jest opened it and caught the stream and saved it. If it hadn't ben for the deacon, it would *all* a ben lost," explained the squire.

"Yes, I've always heard that the deacon was a self-sacrificing man, and a public benefactor. My, but it's hot! This ought to produce a good crop of sunstrokes," said the doctor, with an eye to business.

"Good for your wallet, doctor. I s'pose

ef it's as hot as this here, it must be blisterin' down in South Africa."

"No, it ain't, squire; it's just opposite to what it is here."

"How d'ye make that out? Ain't it thousands of miles furder south?" was the squire's inquiry.

"Yes, it's so fur south, it's north again," the doctor explained.

This roused the squire's mettle.

"Who d'ye think ye're talkin' tew, a parcel o' boys? I tell ye, south is south, an' west is west."

"No it ain't either; south ain't south any more after ye git past the pole."

"Wall, by gosh, they ain't nobody got past it yit, nor even tew it."

"They can go round it, can't they, even if they can't find it?" the doctor continued to argue.

"How do they know it's any good, anyway, when they do?"

"There's some sense in that, anyhow. So Asa's to be home to-day?"

"Yes; Jane Higgins told me so yist'day, and I read a hull lot about it in the Lewiston *Journal* last night. I cal'late Asa's got pretty rich down in them diggin's. 'Stonishin' how them Guv'ment 'fishals dew git rich."

"So 'tis," assented the doctor, "but Asa's honest."

"Yes, Asa's honest; lib'ril, too. I was readin' in the *Journal* about a statoot he bought in London on the way home," the Squire said as he pulled a paper from his pocket. "It's got a name I never heern on."

The squire adjusted his spectacles and held the paper off nearly at arm's length, at an angle of about forty-five degrees. "How would *you* pronounce P-s-y-c-h-e; I call it Fish, but John Jackson says it's Sike."

"You're both wrong. It's Fizz-ke," explained the doctor.

"Yes, of course, I know that's the French pronunciation, but we shorten 'em up. I don't know what he's goin' to do with the

statoot, anyway. P'raps he's goin' to tack it onto the revised statoots by'm by."

"Very likely, squire," laughed the doctor.

Just then Gertrude Doolittle appeared, coming up the walk.

"Most time for them to be here, Uncle John," said she, as she seated herself in the swing that hung suspended from a large limb of the biggest elm.

Gertrude had grown even prettier, and had developed into a fine dashing young woman, at the present time, of the "summer girl" variety.

"They'll be here pretty soon, ef they're a comin' to-day," replied her uncle.

"I suppose May King will be covered with diamonds and ostrich feathers, and all those savage things," Gertrude remarked.

"Don't you wish you were?" queried Dr. Locke.

"To a reasonable extent."

"Has any woman discovered what a reasonable extent is?" inquired her interrogator.

"There, I gave you a chance, didn't I? You think there are no sensible women."

"I didn't *say* so."

"No, but you thought it. I know you doctors," said Gertrude, with a wise look and a toss of her head.

"'So I lick you for dat,' as the Dutchman said," added the doctor.

Jane Higgins, who had acted as housekeeper for the Kings during their absence, now joined the little group, coming from the house.

"Sakes alive!" she exclaimed, "I'm so nervous, seem 'sif I sh'd fly," which admission on her part caused the squire to assure her that—

"Ye wouldn't git fur, 'fore ye'd git shot for one er them long legged crane fellers."

"I wouldn't say nothin', squire, ef I was as broad as I was long."

"'Where Mary got the axe,'" hummed Gertrude, as she touched her neck with the edge of her palm.

The squire and the doctor had now arisen,

when the squire calmed Jane by assuring her that he was " just funnin', ye know," when, as the doctor was looking toward the town, he added, " Kin ye see anything of 'em yit? "

" There's two teams coming,—yes, and somebody waving a flag. Guess it's Dan."

Jane, who ran back to the piazza, now exclaimed excitedly,—

" Yes, it is Dan, an' there's May wavin' a handkercher. They're comin', they're comin'."

" I'm blest if there ain't the band in one of them wagons," added the doctor. " Yes, now they're all getting out at the end of the lane. The band is going to play,—they're coming back in style. It pays to be a government official."

" That's what I ben tellin' ye, by Sancho," said the squire. " Band don't play nothin' for me, arter I've ben up to Bosting."

Just then the strains of " When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again " were heard by the waiting quartette of friends, which elicited a few remarks from Jane Higgins.

"Look at them ejuts blowin' their lungs out, and Asa with his hand in his bosom, a-bowin' an' a-scrapin' like all possessed," and Jane gave a slightly exaggerated imitation of the proceeding.

"Mari's got a new fangled bunnit, I vum, an' Dan, he's growed out er sight."

"Taller 'n a bean pole afore," added the squire.

The music now stopped, as Asa's well-known voice was heard in an address to his fellow townsmen, who had gathered to do him honour on his return to his native town.

"Feller Citizens," said the ex-blacksmith-Consul, "I did not expec' to receive such a valedictory on my return to my native town, even arter fightin' the battles of my country single-handed in a furaway furrin' land. Great as has ben the honours as has ben heaped upon me, I am still true to the sile of Maine."

This bit of flattery brought forth loud applause from all within hearing, not only

those in his immediate vicinity, but from the squire, the doctor, and the ladies as well.

"I return to you, feller citizens," he continued, "richer in experience, broader in idees, heavier in wallet, but still ready to shoe a hoss, or to weld a tire; an' ef the widder Green's mare is as barefoot as she ginerally was, I'll shoe her for nothin'."

Shouts, hurrahs and loud laughter followed this generous announcement of Asa's, and a weak, thin, high voice was heard to remark,—"Hain't got a nail on her, Asa," which was followed by more laughter from all."

"Trot her round, widder," Asa went on, "an' I'll fix her up bunkum. Now, thank ye, boys, I must go in and git on a clean shirt, an' see ye down to the shop to-morrer."

Those who had accompanied him to his gate now expressed their welcome by additional shouting, while the band struck up "Home Again," and marched away.

Gertrude, who had been an enthusiastic

spectator of the proceedings at the gate, announced,—

"Here they come, now. There's a nigger and a strange woman. I suppose that's the maid, or the young widder. I wonder if that other fellow is the varlet, turned up again?"

In an instant more there was hearty and indiscriminate handshaking; hugs and kisses among the women, and a general assortment of greetings among all those who had met before.

Asa was smarter dressed than formerly, but over all was the familiar linen duster. Maria was attired rather gaudily, with an inartistic attempt at being fashionable; May nattily dressed in a becoming travelling gown, while Dan was quite a sport in a new suit acquired during their stay in London, on the return.

Accompanying them were Madge, quietly and becomingly gowned, as became her disposition; Boorabo, the Zulu king, in a military uniform, and Patrick O'Hara, looking

very jaunty and gentlemanly in a fashionable English walking suit.

Asa had grasped the hand of his old friend the squire, then that of the doctor.

"Squire, how be ye? Doctor, I'm right 'tarnal glad to see ye once ag'in."

"And I to see you. You're looking well," replied the doctor.

"I'm as spry as a young colt, ain't I, Maria?"

Maria, who was talking among the women at a mile a minute pace, turned and replied,—

"Guess so,—yes,—I dunno. What was it?" returning to her interrupted exchange of greetings with Jane and Gertrude.

"Boys," said Asa to his old comrades, "I want to interduce two of my friends. This is General Boorabo, a fine fellow and a great soldier. Squire Doolittle,—Dr. Locke. Gentlemen, this is Sir Patrick O'Hara, an Irish gentleman we met in South Africa."

Boorabo nodded but said nothing. Pat-

"This is General Boorabo, a fine fellow
and a great soldier."

rick, however, bowed politely, taking the hand of each.

"Gintlemen," said he, "this is a proud day in me history. Ye've a fine country, almost as fine as me own; but I'm not jealous, for has it not been selicted by thousands of me own people as the only place on earth nixt in their hearts to their own dear ould sod?"

"Thank ye, Mr. O'Hara," said the doctor, "that's very kind of you indeed."

"Now gals," said Jane, "hustle right into the house an' git the dust off'n ye. Ye must be dog tired."

"Well, I snummy, Jane, ye're 'bout right," was Mrs. King's reply, as they started to follow her advice.

"Madge, gal," directed Asa gently, "go 'long o' Maria."

A general stampede now took place, as Mrs. King, Jane, Gertrude, May, Madge and Jim retired to the interior of the dwelling.

"Set down, boys," directed Asa to the squire and doctor, "an' we'll have a few

minutes' talk. Dan, you show the General where to put them things, an' take Sir Patrick in an' show him 'round."

Dan, Boorabo and O'Hara now picked up the numerous bags and parcels, and followed the ladies—whose voices, principally Mrs. King's and Jane's, might be heard like the buz around a bee-hive—into the house, leaving the three old cronies alone together.

Asa now placed an armchair between the two, and settled himself into it with a comfortable grunt.

"By thunder, boys," he began, "there's no place like home, arter all."

"That's right, Asa," affirmed the squire. "Arter I've ben up to Bosting——"

This remark of his old friend aroused a look of mild, but good-natured, contempt on Asa's countenance, as he interrupted,—

"Bosting! That ain't fur enough ter git away fum the smell uv yer own cow barn, squire."

The squire was not going to be sat on com-

pletely in that fashion, nor have his extended travel belittled, even by such a globe trotter as Asa.

"I tell ye now," said he with a show of spirit, "when ye're on one o' them big Portland steamboats, the salt air will——"

Asa's genial contempt was now supreme, but without bitterness, for such a thing was not a part of his composition.

"Portland steamboats!" he exclaimed; "jumpin' Jehosaphat, squire, them ain't ferry boats, compared to a liner. Why, John Doolittle, them ocean greyhounds is as long as Wid Brackett's cornfield, an' Bill Mitchell's 'tater patch ter boot. I tell ye, doctor, they're jest like a pickerel, slicker 'n grease, an' compacter,—well, nothin' ain't no compacter 'n them things air."

The squire was squelched but not silenced.

"Der they let ye stop along and fish now an' then?" he inquired.

"Thunderation, squire, them boats scoot like greased lightnin', five hunderd miles a day, 'thout stoppin'."

"Jerusha Ann!" exclaimed his listener. "What kind uv a b'iler der they hev?"

"I didn't go down suller to see, but Dan heerd a fireman say it was tubercular."

"I suppose they fed you well, didn't they?" inquired the doctor.

"Bein' as how I wus a Guv'ment official, they give me a good seat right in sight of the Captin', an' he took great interest in us. He'd allus notice when we needed a second helpin'. Guess we was purty durned green, too, regular hayseeds; 'cos Dan said he heerd the Cap'n say once, 'Steward, them jays want fillin' up ag'in,' an' I guess that's about what we was then."

"Is there any chance for a good doctor out there?" the doctor inquired.

"Lots of chance, but not much variety of practice. 'Bout the only kind of operations is pullin' out bullets with sugar tongs, an' buryin' folks with their boots on."

"Sho!" ejaculated the old squire. "Lots of good-lookin' gals, Asa? Good likely one ye brung home with ye."

"Ain't no gals 'tall, scurcely. Mary hed 'bout two offers of marriage a day fur a while, then the market fell off a bit, when they found Mary wa'n't buyin' princes this trip."

"How 'bout this 'ere Hottentot ye got?"

"I'll tell ye 'bout him. That feller's a Zulu king. Fact, by Jupiter!"

"No!" from the squire and the doctor in chorus.

"Fact, boys. I c'udn't bring a hull cargo of monarchs along, so I bought out the throne business of this one, an' told him he'd make more money here in a month than the hull caboodle made in a lifetime over there, kinging it over a lot of niggers. Jim teached him to play the banjo an' sing a nigger song jest as good as any of us."

"Who's t'other feller?" the doctor wanted to know.

"We found him down there, too, kind of tutoring and private secertary to the king. We called him Pat for short, kinder familiar

like, but by the living jingo, 'fore we left London, we found he was a truly baronight, an' he never mentioned it," Asa explained.

"What's a baronight, Asa?" inquired the squire; "some kind of a moonshiner?"

"Gosh, no, squire. Ye hev to say Sir to him, like ye would ef ye was talkin' to old Gin'ral Farwell. It's a title of nobility."

"Tarnation, Asa!" exclaimed the doctor, "you did get hold of some good samples. Then I suppose the woman is an empress, or a boorampootra, or something like that?"

"No, not by a darned sight. She's jest a plain, good, sound, splendid woman, an' that's better," and as he said this, he picked up his hat, and rose from the chair. "Come now, boys, he added, "le's go inter the house, ef there's room to git in fer women."

Both the others followed his example, the squire intimating that he "ought to be moggin' 'long towards home"; but Asa would not listen to any such proceeding.

"Come along in. Come along, doctor,"

he said as he grasped each by an arm. "Don't talk 'bout goin' home yit. The boys 'll milk for ye. Come along, come along," and the two friends allowed themselves to be led into the house by Asa, with very little evidence of reluctance.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THERE can be very little doubt of the esteem in which the Kings were held by their townspeople, for they had no sooner reached their home than neighbours began pouring in upon them in droves, and expressions of hearty welcome were constantly heard.

O'Hara was introduced with every appearance of delight, by Asa, but Madge and Boorabo kept very quietly in the background.

"Well, O'Hara," inquired Jim, "what do you think of this bit of New England? Isn't it fine?"

"Sure, it is that. If the roofs were properly thatched, and a pig or two were let loose, it would be a toss-up bechune it and Ireland itself."

"Patrick, you're past hope. If you can

find any spot on earth finer than New England in summer time, you're a wonder."

"Ah, me b'y, but ye niver set eyes on Sligo Bay, or the Lakes of Killarney. Ye niver gazed on our green hills crowned with their picturesque ruins. Ye niver listened to the music of the bells of ould Limerick, or floated on the waters of the Shannon River.

'There is not in the wide world a valley so sweet
As that vale in whose bosom the bright waters meet.'

Do ye listen to the words of the sweet poet of Ireland, where have ye such another?" and O'Hara waxed eloquent over his panagyric to his native land.

"True," said Jim, "we have no Sligo Bay, or Lakes of Killarney, but we have fifty beautiful bays on the coast of Maine, and as for lakes, a few miles north of here the Rangeley Lakes, and their neighbouring gem, Parmachenee, set in with lofty mountains, can hold their own against the world. Our hills are not crowned with ruins, it is true, but beautiful villages and delightful

homes and hostelries are to be seen from Kittery to Caribou. We have no Shannon River, and no poet Moore, but the whole civilised world sings the praises of Longfellow, and our rivers are legion. My friend, you will learn to love America, as millions of your countrymen have already."

"Your hand, Mr. Bailey. I'm sure of it."

While this little incident was transpiring between Jim and O'Hara in the house, Boorabo had wandered out upon the lawn, and squatted upon the grass, with an old clay pipe in his hand.

"Sure, I struck a dhudeen inside, 'fore I'd ben there a minute," he mused, as he struck a match and lighted it. "An' this is Ameriky, is it? Bedad, I used to howl that I'd lick the whole lot of 'em, but, faith, it's mighty lucky for me I niver begun the job. There was a man in that New York town said he'd give me a hundred dollars a month for to show me as a freak. Phat the divil's a freak, I wonder? Pat niver told me I was

a freak. The women here is not to turn up their noses at our'n; sure, don't they paint their faces, an' wear goold an' di'munds, an' put lots o' feathers on their heads, an' kink their hair, the same as our girls do? Phat the divil's the raisin, thin, we ain't as big as they be? It must be the readin' and the writin'. I'll take me di'munds an' buy some readin' an' some writin', sure, the first thing I do."

As he concluded, he took a handful of diamonds from his pocket, and while puffing vigorously at his pipe, began counting them.

While thus occupied, Dr. Locke and Squire Doolittle emerged from the house, the doctor remarking,—

"Asa'll be a greater authority than ever, now, on the functions of the government. Hullo, here's that Zulu king, looking very much like our native-born article. Hello, Sambo," he called, as he came down on one side of Boorabo, and the squire on the other, "do you speak English?"

Boorabo looked up at his questioner, returning the diamonds to his pocket, making no reply.

The squire, though, seating himself, put the question in another way,—

"My coloured friend, what might be the court lingo in your deestrict?"

Boorabo jumped nimbly to his feet, his eyes flashing, as he replied,—

"English, yer blatherskite, an' the nixt time yez address a king, don't yez presume to call him Sambo, or be the piper that played before Moses, I'll spit yez on me spear!"

Both his listeners were very much surprised at the dialect and accent of the coal-black individual before them, the squire exhibiting considerable alarm.

"Don't get excited, my friend; we meant no harm," said the doctor, "and we don't kill people here for nothing."

"Don't yez. Phat's your trade?"

"I'm a doctor."

"Sure, thin, yez don't, for yez get well paid for it."

This reply of Boorabo's caused an almost convulsive fit of laughter on the part of the squire, who said,—

"He had you there, doctor."

The doctor, somewhat confused, sought to change the conversation by another inquiry.

"Do you use a shillelah?"

"Phat the divil do yez take me for,—an Irishman, bedad,—that I'd use a shtick? Do I look like an Irishman?"

"No, but you talk like one," replied the doctor.

"I talk loik wan! I talk loik wan, is it? Bedad, was yez iver in London?"

"No."

"Thin yez is a nice party to criticise the finest accent that iver Patrick O'Hara of London could tache. Sure, didn't he come from the County of Cork in the very cinter of London, as I know mesilf. Me an Irishman, indade," and Boorabo turned away with the utmost disgust depicted in his countenance.

Just then Asa appeared in the doorway, and called,—

"Come back here, boys, I got suthin' to show ye. Gineral, don't ye want to git yer banjo, an' give us a song 'fore long? Come along, boys," once more disappearing into the house, accompanied by his two friends.

Boorabo was still muling over his wrongs, and as he gazed after them, muttered,—

"Irishman, is it? Sure, they'll be afther takin' me for a nagur nixt, becos I looks like wan," as with a growl he wandered down the lane toward the road.

Dan had not been idle while the numerous visitors were congratulating the family, but made all speed to attach himself to the immediate vicinity of Gertrude Doolittle, the "Peacherine," as he called her.

Dan had brushed up considerably during his two years' absence, under the care of Jim Bailey, who took great interest in the boy, so Dan was not the same gawky boy he was when he left Dixfield. He and Gertrude therefore had moved away from the crowd

in the house, unnoticed, and came out under the trees, as Gertrude was saying,—

"And the varlet, rushed the growler and disappeared?"

"Never showed up again. Say, Gert, what ye ben doin' sence I saw ye at Uncle Hiram's?"

"Graduated," said she curtly.

"Honours?" inquired Dan.

"Honours were easy, I guess. In some things, though, I was out of sight."

"Now I s'pose yer goin' to git married?"

"Catch me."

"If you'll fall my way," was Dan's reply.

"Good boy; you're getting on, but don't be too fly. I'll tell you what I'm up to,—I'm going on the stage."

"Where to?"

"To success, Danny, my boy. You see, years ago we stood no chance; but society has changed, and now we are right in it. I tell you, Danny, the stage is vastly improved."

"Wouldn't you engage yourself now, if you had a real good chance?" Dan inquired,

endeavouring to arrive at a conclusion by an indirect attack.

"Cert, that's what I'm after; but I won't play seconds to anybody, see?"

"Not exactly; but how would an engagement with me do?"

"Oh, I don't want a joint engagement. I'm not out for a variety turn in a 'Continuous,'—I want an engagement alone."

Dan was certainly very much confused by all this, none of his experience having ever brought him in contact with theatrical exhibitions, its people or terms.

"How ye goin' to have an engagement alone?" he asked.

"Oh, that's the regular thing," replied Gertrude.

"I see,—you're engaged, and he ain't, like most of the marriages, 'cordin' to the papers,—the woman's married, but the man ain't."

"Danny!" exclaimed Gertrude, with a very superficial air of reproof.

"Pretty much everything is one-sided

now'days, so I didn't know but there was something new in engagements," he explained.

"Don't monkey with the buzz," Gertrude continued.

"Well, plump now, Gert, engage yourself to me, an' if it's the latest thing goin', I won't ask to be engaged to you."

Dan had now thrown down the gauntlet, and awaited an answer that would at least be comprehensible to him. It was not, however.

"Well, you take the Vienna, the Purcells, and the entire cereal output. What would I do with you? You can't act, and you can't manage."

Dan, however, like the despairing miner, struck his pick into the earth for the last time, and accidentally turned up a nugget.

"But I've got the rocks."

This was certainly understandable, and struck a vital part, mentally, Gertrude remarking,—

"Whew! the most essential thing of the lot!" but audibly.

"Well, my boy, I'll turn it over, and in the meantime,—well—you may *hope,* Danny,—you may hope. Come on, let's go down to the Post Office," and it is to be inferred that a protocol was signed, and friendly relations resumed from that moment, for on frequent occasions thereafter those two heads were seen in the position of the torpedo and the whale, but the explosions, if any, were ineffective and harmless.

Having followed the fortunes of Asa and his family, suppose we just for a few moments take up those of Madge, that gentle, sweet woman of misfortune, who had become attached to the King family by tender ties that all respected.

It had become known that as a girl of sixteen she had been taken to South Africa by her father and mother, Bill Ainsworth, a close friend of her father's accompanying them. She had been there ten years, during which time much had happened. Madge's

father had died after five years' residence there, and after three years more her mother had followed him, after which time "Rocky" Bill had, by fraud and deceit, inveigled her into a mock marriage, the falsity of which she had but recently discovered, when she appeared before Asa at Boolahackentula.

Madge was of a gentle and affectionate nature, while Rocky Bill had been cruel and abusive to her in spite of her willing aid and obedience.

She felt that now her troubles were nearly if not quite over, and was most grateful in consequence. As she wandered out of the house not long after arriving, and found the lawn deserted, she sank into a chair with a restful sigh, and a faint smile of delight.

"A haven of rest at last," she murmured; "a peaceful, happy prospect, a noble hearted man to forget and forgive. The sun is setting in the heavens, but is rising upon a new world to me. I feel its warmth already. It will bring back the old light to my eyes, for

I have everything to look forward to, everything to enjoy."

Tears of thankfulness filled her eyes as this pleasant reflection overcame her, and the return of Asa, accompanied by O'Hara, was unnoticed by her until Asa's voice addressing his Irish friend was heard.

"Ye ain't gittin bashful, be ye, Patrick?"

"Divil a bit; it's an unknown quantity in me family. But I have something on me mind I'd like to have off, so I'd like to talk to ye a minute. Sure, here she is now, all the better."

"Hello, Madge, gal," exclaimed Asa, "come out to see the sun set over by them mountains? We git some durn good sunsets here, I can tell ye. Make ye think of yer Creator, I reckin."

"Yes, Mr. King, that is just what it does suggest."

"Look at that, now," continued the old blacksmith, "hain't no painter t'ever I knowed on, cud slap on the colours like that, though I dew call to mind a feller that

painted his house here once in glowin'er colours than I quite ever seed in natur'."

Asa now seated himself with Madge by his side, while O'Hara stood twirling a light stick, as he hummed an Irish melody.

"I suppose he thought he would improve on nature," suggested Madge.

"Can't be did, woman,—it can't be did. Well, Sir Patrick, what ye brung me out here for?" said Asa suddenly, looking up at his companion.

"I've been spaking to Margaret," he replied.

"Margaret?" Asa repeated inquiringly. "No trouble, I hope?"

"Throuble, is it? Look at the joy in me face, and ask if it's throuble.

'Throuble, what's throuble?
Sure throuble is dead,
Whin throuble is double
It rolls off me head.
Och throuble's a bubble,
Jist prick it it's burst;
And gone is your throuble,
Like ghosts that are curst.'

" That's me opinion of throuble. Sure, I niver let it come bechune me four walls. But it's not throuble that's botherin' me this minute, but joy.

'We wander for years on say and on land,
No heart spakes to my heart, no hand holds me hand.
All at once of a suddint, to me vision appears,
The heart and the hand, me own's longed for for years.
I'm spachless, I'm draming, until I diskiver,
Her heart will be my heart foriver and iver.'"

Asa had followed attentively the words of Sir Patrick, who had thus delivered himself of the eloquence of the poet, in the rollicking manner so characteristic of him. After looking at him a moment, however, he struck the palm of his hand down upon the arm of his chair, and exclaimed with an air of firm conviction,—

" Patrick O'Hara, you're *smit!* But 'tain't no harm, Patrick, it's good for ye. It kinder lifts a feller up; it makes him walk straighter and lift his feet quicker. He can

walk furder, an' saw more wood than he could afore,—that is, ef the gal ain't in sight when he's a-sawin'. I cud shoe a hoss quicker arter I got engaged to Maria, 'cos I wanted to make a sort of a reckid, so's she'd think I's some punkins. But who's the gal, Patrick?"

"There, sor, by your side," he replied proudly.

Madge rose at this and knelt at Asa's feet.

"Madge?"

"Yes, uncle," she replied, "it's me, only me. Isn't he noble?"

"Noble? Him? Bosh! Not a bit of it,—no more nobler 'n you be, only he's ben luckier. Ain't ye got a good sound healthy heart in yer buzzum, gal? Hain't ye seen trials, hardships, temptations, misery and want? Ain't yer soul just as big with tenderness, an' mercy, an' charity, an' all them things, as hisn?"

"Right, sor!" chimed in Patrick.

"Then who's to say he's more nobler 'n you be, becos he follers the dictates of his con-

science and marries the gal who loves him?"

This was a situation that certainly brought Asa out in all his honest eloquence.

"But he forgets the past," Madge urged.

"*Past!* Yer hain't got no *past,* gal. Wipe out all that stuff, and start a clean new slate that no figger's ben made on. Look to the future, gal, and don't be lookin' back. The past don't exist,—what don't exist, ain't,—what *ain't,* ain't wuth considerin'. Look at that settin' sun,—it's magnificent glory soon 'll be hid by so mean and insignificant a thing as John Harlow's hog barns on the hill, but is the greatness of that orb any the less fur that? I guess not. It'll come back to-morrer, an' to-morrer, an' it never had no past."

"You put new heart into me," said Madge happily; "I shall ever thank and bless you."

From his strong, earnest speech of rough eloquence, Asa now spoke with that mellow, sweet tone of sympathy that was so very

characteristic of him on occasions of this nature.

" 'Tain't no new heart, gal, it's the same bright, happy heart that's ben eclipsed by a human hog barn."

Had Hiram King, with his education and opportunities, possessed the wonderful vocal organs of his brother Asa, the powerful tones and the rich melody of his pathos, he would have been without doubt the greatest orator of his time. As it was, Hiram's superb educational attainments, his nobility of character, combined with a remarkable faculty for the management of men and affairs, had placed him where he was.

Asa, on the other hand, had gone to work early in life in his shop, and with little education, but some splendid natural gifts, was fully on a level with his brother in those natural qualities that are alone to be considered in judging men as men, and discarding all extraneous adjuncts such as position and wealth.

" With your permission, sor," Sir Patrick

remarked, " we shall be married soon, an' we shall return to me home in Ireland. It is not me nature to be boastful of me own, but I was the only son of me father, an' me estate an' me means are quite sufficient. I've been a rovin' lad, but I'll niver roam again, niver, —alone."

" Sorry to lose ye, both, but devilish glad ye've come to understand one 'nuther," said Asa, just as Maria appeared at the door and exclaimed,—

" Wall, I do declare, ef they ain't come off out here, an' left the comp'ny. What ye ben doin' on? "

" Ain't done much *yit,*" replied Asa, " but I 'spect there's goin' ter be a new pair of shoes afore long."

Mrs. King, without paying much attention to what her husband had said, she was so flurried, turned and spoke into the house.

" Say, folks, all come out here; hotter 'n tophet in there. Bring a cheer along, an' we'll have a cup of tea under the trees."

Suiting the action to the word, she brought

a chair with her, the squire, doctor, May and Jim following her example.

A general conversation was indulged in, when presently May suggested that Boorabo might give them the darkey song Jim had taught him.

The doctor immediately seconded the motion.

"Yes, Asa," he said, "let's have the song; a nigger song by a Zulu king with an Irish brogue must be worth hearing."

Jane Higgins now appearing from the house, Asa hailed her,—

"Say, Jane, where's Boorabo?"

"Darned if I know, but I guess I can find him for ye."

"All right, gal, find him."

"When d'ye want that air tea, Mari?" Jane inquired.

"Most any time."

"All right," and away she went, as Dan and Gertrude joined the group upon the lawn.

"Here, you two, where ye ben?" inquired

Asa. "Don't ye l'arn Dan any New York flirtations, now."

"Me!" exclaimed Gertrude in surprise. "Teach him! Hully gee! You make me snicker. There are no flies on Danny *now*."

"No, but I kin see 'skeeters."

A few notes of a banjo were now heard from within the house, as Asa resumed his seat in the centre of the group.

"Now here we air, got my hull su——" Asa stopped at that, looking slyly at Gertrude and May. "No ye didn't—thought ye'd ketched me, didn't ye? Ye don't 'sweet papa' me no more. I'm on ter you, —my hull suite ter hum."

Jane was now passing the tea to the assemblage, while Boorabo's banjo became more distinctly audible.

Asa with his cup of tea looked the picture of supreme content, as he continued,—

"Now this is home, and this is comfort. Arter thinkin' I knew enuff to run the hull Guv'ment machine, I find I wa'n't cut out fur politics. I've hed enuff; and now as we

set together under my own vine an' fig tree, with that gentle peace of plenty an' prosperity around us, I'm content to live here, an' shoe the widder Green's mare now an' then, for sweet charity's sake."

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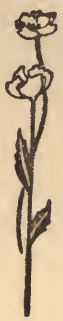

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