In the Sweet Dry and Dry

Christopher Morley and Bart Haley

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DEDICATED TO G. K. CHESTERTON
MOST DELIGHTFUL OF MODERN DECANTERBURY PILGRIMS

FOREWORD

As far as this book is concerned, the public may Take It, or the public may Let It Alone. But the authors feel it their duty to say that no deductions as to their own private habits are to be made from the story here offered. With its composition they have beguiled the moments of the valley of the shadow.

Acknowledgement should be made to the Evening Public Ledger of Philadelphia for permission to reprint the ditty included in Chapter VI.

The public will forgive this being only a brief preface, for at the moment of writing the time is short. Wishing you a Merry Abstinence, and looking forward to meeting you some day in Europe,

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY, BART HALEY.

Philadelphia, Ten minutes before Midnight, June 30, 1919.

CHAPTER I. MYSTERY OF THE UNEXPECTED JULEP

Dunraven Bleak, the managing editor of The Evening Balloon, sat at his desk in the center of the local−room, under a furious cone of electric light. It was six o'clock of a warm summer afternoon: he was filling his pipe and turning over the pages of the Final edition of the paper, which had just come up from the press−room. After the turmoil of the day the room had quieted, most of the reporters had left, and the shaded lamps shone upon empty tables and a floor strewn ankle−deep with papers. Nearby sat the city editor, checking over the list of assignments for the next morning. From an adjoining kennel issued occasional deep groans and a strong whiff of savage shag tobacco, blown outward by the droning gust of an electric fan. These proved that the cartoonist (a man whose sprightly drawings were born to an obbligato of vehement blasphemy) was at work within.

Mr. Bleak was just beginning to recuperate from the incessant vigilance of the day's work. There was an unconscious pathos in his lean, desiccated figure as he rose and crossed the room to the green glass drinking−fountain. After the custom of experienced newspapermen, he rapidly twirled a makeshift cup out of a sheet of copy paper. He poured himself a draught of clear but rather tepid water, and drank it without noticeable relish. His lifted head betrayed only the automatic thankfulness of the domestic fowl. There had been a time when six o'clock meant something better than a paper goblet of lukewarm filtration.

He sat down at his desk again. He had loaded his pipe sedulously with an extra fine blend which he kept in his desk drawer for smoking during rare moments of relaxation when he had leisure to savor it. As he reached for a match he was meditating a genial remark to the city editor, when he discovered that there was only one tandsticker in the box. He struck it, and the blazing head flew off upon the cream−colored thigh of his Palm Beach suit. His naturally placid temper, undermined by thirty years of newspaper work and two years of prohibition, flamed up also. With a loud scream of rage and a curse against Sweden, he leaped to his feet and shook the glowing cinder from his person. Facing him he found a stranger who had entered the room quietly and unobserved.

This was a huge man, clad in a sober uniform of gray cloth, with silver buttons and silver braid. A Sam Browne belt of wide blue leather marched across his extensive diagonal in a gentle curve. The band of his vizored military cap showed the initials C.P.H. in silver embroidery. His face, broad and clean−shaven, shone with a lustre which was partly warmth and partly simple friendliness. Save for a certain humility of bearing, he might have been taken for the liveried door−man of a moving−picture theater or exclusive millinery shop.

In one hand he carried a very large black leather suit−case.

"Is this Mr. Bleak?" he asked politely.

"Yes," said the editor, in surprise. His secret surmise was that some one had died and left him a legacy which would enable him to retire from newspaper work. (This is the unacknowledged dream that haunts many journalists.) Mr. Bleak was wondering whether this was the way in which legacies were announced.

The man in the gray uniform set the bag down with great care on the large flat desk. He drew out a key and unlocked it. Before opening it he looked round the room. The city editor and three reporters were watching curiously. A shy gayety twinkled in his clear blue eyes.

"Mr. Bleak," he said, "you and these other gentlemen present are men of discretion—?"

Bleak made a gesture of reassurance.

The other leaned over the suit−case and lifted the lid.

The bag was divided into several compartments. In one, the startled editor beheld a nest of tall glasses; in another, a number of interesting flasks lying in a porcelain container among chipped ice. In the lid was an array of straws, napkins, a flat tray labeled CLOVES, and a bunch of what looked uncommonly like mint leaves. Mr. Bleak did not speak, but his pulse was disorderly.

The man in gray drew out five tumblers and placed them on the desk. Rapidly several bottles caught the light: there was a gesture of pouring, a clink of ice, and beneath the spellbound gaze of the watchers the glasses fumed and bubbled with a volatile potion. A glass mixing rod tinkled in the thin crystal shells, and the man of mystery deftly thrust a clump of foliage into each. A well known fragrance exhaled upon the tobacco−thickened air.

"Shades of the Grail!" cried Bleak. "Mint julep!"

The visitor bowed and pushed the glasses forward. "With the compliments of the Corporation," he said.

The city editor sprang to his feet. Sagely cynical, he suspected a ruse.

"It's a plant!" he exclaimed. "Don't touch it! It's a trick on the part of the Department of Justice, trying to get us into trouble."

Bleak gazed angrily at the stranger. If this was indeed a federal stratagem, what an intolerably cruel one! In front of him the glasses sparkled alluringly: a delicate mist gathered on their ice−chilled curves: a pungent sweetness wavered in his nostrils.

"See here!" he blurted with shrill excitement. "Are you a damned government agent? If so, take your poison and get out."

The tall stranger in his impressive uniform stood erect and unabashed. With affectionate care he gave the tumblers a final musical stir.

"O ye of little faith!" he said calmly. The sadness of the misunderstood idealist grieved his features. "Have you forgotten the miracle of Cana?" From his pocket he took a card and laid it on the desk.

Bleak seized it. It said:

THE CORPORATION FOR THE PERPETUATION OF HAPPINESS

1316 Caraway Street

Virgil Quimbleton, Associate Director

He stared at the pasteboard, stupefied, and handed it to the city editor.

Meanwhile the three reporters had drawn near. Light−hearted and irresponsible souls, unoppressed by the embittered suspicion of their superiors, they nosed the floating aroma with candid hilarity.

"The breath of Eden!" said one.

"It's a warm evening," remarked another, with seeming irrelevance.

The face of Virgil Quimbleton, the man in gray, relaxed again at these marks of honest appreciation. He waved an encouraging arm over the crystals. "With the compliments of the Corporation," he repeated.

Bleak and the city editor looked again at the card, and at each other. They scanned the face of their mysterious benefactor. Bleak's hand went out to the nearest glass. He raised it to his lips. An almost−forgotten formula recurred to him. "Down the rat− hole!" he cried, and tilted his arm. The others followed suit, and the associate director watched them with a glow of perfect altruism.

The glasses were still in air when the cartoonist emerged from his room. "Holy cat!" he cried in amazement. "What's going on?" He seized one of the empty vessels and sniffed it.

"Treason!" he exclaimed. "Who's been robbing the mint?"

"Maybe you can have one too," said Bleak, and turned to where Quimbleton had been standing. But the mysterious visitor had leff the room.

"You're too late, Bill," said the city editor genially. "There was a kind of Messiah here, but he's gone. Tough luck."

"Say, boss," suggested one of the reporters. "There's a story in this. May I interview that guy?"

Bleak picked up the card and put it in his pocket. A heavenly warmth pervaded his mental fabric. "A story?" he said. "Forget it! This is no story. It's a legend of the dear dead past. I'll cover this assignment myself."

He borrowed a match and lit his pipe. Then he put on his coat and hat and left the office.

It was remarked by faithful readers of the Balloon that the next day's cartoon was one of the least successful in the history of that brilliant newspaper.

CHAPTER II. THE HOUSE ON CARAWAY STREET

After telephoning to his wife that he would not be home for supper, Bleak set out for Caraway Street. He was in that exuberant mood discernible in commuters unexpectedly spending an evening in town. Instead of hurrying out to the suburbs on the 6:17 train, to mow the lawn and admire the fireflies, here he was watching the more dazzling fireflies of the city—the electric signs which were already bulbed wanly against the rich orange of the falling sun. He puffed his pipe lustily and with a jaunty condescension watched the crowds thronging the drugstores for their dram of ice−cream soda. In his bosom the secret julep tingled radiantly. At that hour of the evening the shining bustle of the central streets was drawing the life of the city to itself. In the residential by−ways through which his route took him the pavements were nearly deserted. A delicious sense of extravagant adventure possessed him. As a newspaper man, he did not feel at all sure that he was on the threshold of a printable "story"; but as a connoisseur of juleps he felt that very possibly he was on the threshold of another drink. Passing a line of billboards, he noticed a brightly colored poster advertising a brand of collars. In sheer light−heartedness he drew a soft pencil from his waistcoat and adorned the comely young man on the collar poster with a heavy mustache.

Caraway Street, with which he had not previously been familiar, proved to be a quaint little channel of old brick houses, leading into the bonfire of the summer sunset. There was nothing to distinguish number 1316 from its neighbors. He rang the bell, and there ensued a rapid clicking in the lock, indicating that the latch had been released by some one within. He pushed the door open, and entered.

He had a curious sensation of having stepped into an old Flemish painting. The hall in which he stood was cool and rather dark, though a bright refraction of light tossed from some upper window upon a tall mirror filled the shadow with broken spangles. Through an open doorway at the rear was the green glimmer of a garden. In front of him was a mahogany sideboard. On its polished top lay two books, a box of cigars, and a cut glass decanter surrounded by several glasses. In the decanter was a pale yellow fluid which held a beam of light. The house was completely silent.

Somewhat abashed, he removed his hat and stood irresolute, expecting some greeting. But nothing happened. On a rack against the wall he saw a gray uniform coat like that which Mr. Quimbleton had worn in the Balloon office, and a similar gray cap with the silver monogram. He glanced at the books. One was The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, the other was a Bible, open at the second chapter of John. He was looking curiously at the decanter when a voice startled him.

"Dandelion wine!" it said. "Will you have a glass?"

He turned and saw an old gentleman with profuse white hair and beard tottering into the hall.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Bleak," said the latter. "I was expecting you."

"You are very kind," said the editor. "I fear you have the advantage of me—I was told that Walt Whitman died in 1892—"

"Nonsense!" wheezed the other with a senile chuckle. He straightened, ripped off his silver fringes, and appeared as the stalwart Quimbleton himself.

"Forgive my precautions," he said. "I am surrounded by spies. I have to be careful. Should some of my enemies learn that old Mr. Monkbones of Caraway Street is the same as Virgil Quimbleton of the Happiness Corporation, my life wouldn't be worth—well, a glass of gooseberry brandy. Speaking of that, Have a little of the dandelion wine." He pointed to the decanter.

Bleak poured himself a glass, and watched his host carefully resume the hoary wig and whiskers. They passed into the garden, a quiet green enclosure surrounded by brick walls and bright with hollyhocks and other flowers. It was overlooked by a quaint jumble of rear gables, tall chimneys and white−shuttered dormer windows.

"Do you play croquet?" asked Quimbleton, showing a neat pattern of white hoops fixed in the shaven turf. "If so, we must have a game after supper. It's very agreeable as a quiet relaxation."

Mr. Bleak was still trying to get his bearings. To see this robust creature gravely counterfeiting the posture of extreme old age was almost too much for his gravity. There was a bizarre absurdity in the solemn way Quimbleton beamed out from his frosty and fraudulent shrubbery. Something in the air of the garden, also,

seemed to push Bleak toward laughter. He had that sensation which we have all experienced—an unaccountable desire to roar with mirth, for no very definite cause. He bit his lip, and sought rigorously for decorum.

"Upon my soul," he said, "This is the most fragrant garden I ever smelt. What is that delicious odor in the air, that faint perfume—?"

"That subtle sweetness?" said Quimbleton, with unexpected drollery.

"Exactly," said Bleak. "That abounding and pervasive aroma—"

"That delicate bouquet—?"

"Quite so, that breath of myrrh—"

"That balmy exhalation—?"

Bleak wondered if this was a game. He tried valiantly to continue. "Precisely," he said, "That quintessence of—"

He could coerce himself no longer, and burst into a yell of laughter.

"Hush!" said Quimbleton, nervously. "Some one may be watching us. But the fragrance of the garden is something I am rather proud of. You see, I water the flowers with champagne."

"With champagne!" echoed Bleak. "Good heavens, man, you'll get penal servitude."

"Nonsense!" said Quimbleton. "The Eighteenth Amendment says that intoxicating liquors may not be manufactured, sold or transported FOR BEVERAGE PURPOSES. Nothing is said about using them to irrigate the garden. I have a friend who makes this champagne himself and gives me some of it for my rose−beds. If you spray the flowers with it, and then walk round and inhale them, you get quite a genial reaction. I do it principally to annoy Bishop Chuff. You see, he lives next door."

"Bishop Chuff of the Pan−Antis?"

"Yes," said Quimbleton—"but don't shout! His garden adjoins this. He has a periscope that overlooks my quarters. That's why I have to wear this disguise in the garden. I think he's getting a bit suspicious. I manage to cause him a good deal of suffering with the fizz fumes from my garden. Jolly idea, isn't it?"

Bleak was aghast at the temerity of the man. Bishop Chuff, the fanatical leader of the Anti−Everything League—jocosely known as the Pan−Antis—was the most feared man in America. It was he whose untiring organization had forced prohibition through the legislatures of forty States—had closed the golf links on Sundays—had made it a misdemeanor to be found laughing in public. And here was this daring Quimbleton, living at the very sill of the lion's den.

"By means of my disguise," whispered Quimbleton, "I was able to make a pleasant impression on the Bishop. One evening I went to call on him. I took the precaution to eat a green persimmon beforehand, which distorted my features into such a malignant contraction of pessimism and misanthropy that I quite won his heart. He accepted an invitation to play croquet with me. That afternoon I prepared the garden with a deluge of champagne. The golden drops sparkled on every rose−petal: the lawn was drenched with it. After playing one round the Bishop was gloriously inflamed. He had to be carried home, roaring the most unseemly ditties. Since then, as I say, he has grown (I fear) a trifle suspicious. But let us have a bite of supper."

More than once, as they sat under a thickly leafy grape arbor in the quiet green enclosure, Bleak had to pinch himself to confirm the witness of his senses. A table was delicately spread with an agreeable repast of cold salmon, asparagus salad, fruits, jellies, and whipped creams. The flagon of dandelion vintage played its due part in the repast, and Mr. Bleak began to entertain a new respect for this common flower of which he had been unduly inappreciative. Although the trellis screened them from observation, Quimbleton seemed ill at ease. He kept an alert gaze roving about him, and spoke only in whispers. Once, when a bird lighted in the foliage behind them, causing a sudden stir among the leaves, his shaggy beard whirled round with every symptom of panic. Little by little this apprehension began to infect the journalist also. At first he had hardly restrained his mirth at the sight of this burly athlete framed in the bush of Santa Claus. Now he began to wonder whether his escapade had been consummated at too great a risk.

That old−fashioned quarter of the city was incredibly still. As the light ebbed slowly, and broad blue shadows crept across the patch of turf, they sat in a silence broken only by the wiry cheep of sparrows and the distant moan of trolley cars. The arrows of the decumbent sun gilded the ripening grapes above them. Suddenly there were two loud bangs and a vicious whistle sang through the arbor. Broken twigs eddied down upon the table cloth.

"Spotted mackerel!" cried Bleak. "Is some one shooting at us?"

Quimbleton reappeared presently from under the table. "All serene," he said. "We're safe now. That was only Chuff. Every night about this time he comes out on his back gallery and enjoys a little sharp−shooting. He's a very good shot, and picks off the grapes that have ripened during the day. There were only two that were really purple this evening, so now we can go ahead. Unless he should send over a raiding party, we're all right."

The editor solaced himself with another beaker of the dandelion wine and they finished their meal in thoughtful silence.

"Mr. Bleak," said the other at last, "it was something more than mere desire to give you a pleasant surprise that led me to your office this afternoon. Have you leisure to listen? Good! Please try one of these cigars. If, while I am talking, you should hear any one moving in the garden, just tap quietly on the table. Tell me, have you, before to−day, ever heard of the Corporation for the Perpetuation of Happiness?"

"Never," replied Bleak, kindling a magnifico of remarkably rich, mild flavor.

"That is as I expected," rejoined Quimbleton. "We have campaigned incognito, partly by choice and partly (let me be candid) by necessity. But the time is come when we shall have to appear in the open. The last great struggle is on, and it can no longer be conducted in the dark. In the course of my remarks I may be tempted to forget our present perils. I beg of you, if you hear any sounds that seem suspicious, to notify me instantly."

"Pardon me," said Bleak, a little uneasily; "it was my intention to catch the 9.30 train for Mandrake Park."

The fantastic cascade of false white hair wagged gravely in the dusk.

"My dear sir," said Quimbleton solemnly, "I fancy you are to be gratified by a far higher destiny than catching the 9.30. Do me the honor of filling your glass. But be careful not to clink the decanter against the tumbler. There is every probability that vigilant ears are on the alert."

There was a brief silence, and Bleak wondered (a trifle wildly) if he were dreaming. The cigar on the opposite side of the little table glowed rosily several times, and then Quimbleton's voice resumed, in a deep undertone.

"It is necessary to tell you," he said, "that the Corporation was founded a number of years ago, long before the events of the fatal year 1919 and the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution. The incident of this afternoon may have caused you to think that what is vulgarly called booze is the chief preoccupation of our society. That is not so. We were organized at first simply to bring merriment and good cheer into the lives of those who have found the vexations of modern life too trying. In our early days we carried on an excellent (though unsystematic) guerilla warfare against human suffering.

"In this (let me admit it frankly) we were to a great degree selfish. As you are aware, the essence of humor is surprise: we found a delicious humor in our campaign of surprising woebegone humanity in moments of crisis. For instance, we used to picket the railway terminals to console commuters who had just missed their trains. We found it uproariously funny to approach a perspiring suburbanite, who had missed the train (let us say) to Mandrake Park, and to press upon him, with the compliments of the Corporation, some consolatory souvenir—a box of cigars, perhaps, or a basket of rare fruit. Housewives, groaning over their endless routine of bathing the baby, ordering the meals, sweeping the floors and so on, would be amazed by the sudden appearance of one of our deputies, in the service uniform of gray and silver, equipped with vacuum cleaner and electric baby−washing machine, to take over the domestic chores for one day. The troubles of lovers were under our special care. We saw how much anguish is caused by the passion of jealousy. Many an engaged damsel, tempted to mild escapade in some perfumed conservatory, found her heart chilled by the stern eye of a uniformed C.P.H. agent lurking behind a potted hydrangea. We hired bands of urchins to make faces at evil old men who plate−glass themselves in the windows of clubs. Many a husband, wondering desperately which hat or which tie to select, has been surprised by the appearance of one of our staff at his elbow, tactfully pointing out which article would best harmonize with his complexion and station in life. Ladies who insisted on overpowdering their noses were quietly waylaid by one of our matrons, and the excess of rice−dust removed. A whole shipload of people who persisted in eating onions were gathered (without any publicity) into a concentration camp, and in company with several popular comedians, deported to a coral atoll. I could enumerate thousands of such instances. For several years we worked in this unassuming way, trying to add to the sum of human happiness."

Quimbleton's white beard shone with a pinkish brightness as he inhaled heavily on his cigar.

"Now, Mr. Bleak," he went on, "I come to you because we need your help. We can no longer maintain a light−hearted sniping campaign on the enemies of human happiness. This is a death struggle. You are aware that Chuff and his legions are planning a tremendous parade for to−morrow. You know that it will be the most

startling demonstration of its kind ever arranged. One hundred thousand pan− antis will parade on the Boulevard, with a hundred brass bands, led by the Bishop himself on his coal black horse. Do you know the purpose of the parade?"

"In a general way," said Bleak, "I suppose it is to give publicity to the prohibition cause."

"They have kept their malign scheme entirely secret," said Quimbleton. "You, as a newspaper man, should know it. Does the (so−called) cause of prohibition require publicity? Nonsense! Prohibition is already in effect. The purpose of the parade is to undermine the splendid work our Corporation has been doing for the past two years. As soon as the fatal amendment was passed we set to work to teach people how to brew beverages of their own, in their own homes. As you know, very delicious wine may be made from almost every vegetable and fruit. Potatoes, tomatoes, rhubarb, currants, blackberries, gooseberries, raisins, apples—all these are susceptible of fermentation, transforming their juices into desirable vintages. We specialized on such beverages. We printed and distributed millions of recipes. Chuff countered by passing laws that no printed recipes could circulate through the mails. We had motion pictures filmed, showing the eager public how to perform these simple and cheering processes. Chuff thereupon had motion pictures banned. He would abolish the principle of fermentation itself if he could.

"We composed a little song−recipe for dandelion wine, sending thousands of minstrels to sing it about the country until the people should memorize it. Now Chuff threatens to forbid singing and the memorizing of poetry. At this moment he has fifty thousand zealots working in the countryside collecting and burning dandelion seeds so as to reduce the crop next spring.

"The purpose of his parade to−morrow is devastating in its simplicity. Having learned that wine may be made from gooseberries, he proposes (as a first step) to abolish them altogether. This is to be the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution. No gooseberries shall be grown upon the soil of the United States, or imported from abroad. Raisins too, since it is said that one raisin in a bottle of grape juice can cause it to bubble in illicit fashion, are to be put in the category of deadly weapons. Any one found carrying a concealed raisin will go before a firing squad. And Chuff threatens to abolish all vegetables of every kind if necessary."

Bleak sat in horrified silence.

"There is another aspect of the matter," said Quimbleton, "that touches your profession very closely. Bishop Chuff is greatly annoyed at the persistent use of the printing press to issue clandestine vinous recipes. He solemnly threatens, if this continues, to abolish the printing press. This is to be the Twentieth Amendment. No printing press shall be used in the territory of the United States. Any man found with a printing press concealed about his person shall be sentenced to life imprisonment. Even the Congressional Record is to be written entirely by hand."

The editor was unable to speak. He reached for the decanter, but found it empty.

"Very well then," said Quimbleton. "The facts are before you. I suppose The Evening Balloon has made its customary enterprising preparations to report the big parade?"

"Why, yes," said Bleak. "Three photographers and three of our most brilliant reporters have been assigned to cover the event. One of the stories, dealing with pathetic incidents of the procession, has already been written—cases of women swooning in the vast throng, and so on. The Balloon is always first," he added, by force of habit.

"I want you to discard all your plans for describing the parade," said Quimbleton. "I am about to give you the greatest scoop in the history of journalism. The procession will break up in confusion. All that will be necessary to say can be said in half a dozen lines, which I will give you now. I suggest that you print them on your front page in the largest possible type."

From his pocket he took a sheet of paper, neatly folded, and handed it across the table.

"What on earth do you mean?" asked Bleak. "How can you know what will happen?"

"The Corporation has spoken," said his host. "Let us go indoors, where you can read what I have written."

In a small handsomely appointed library Bleak opened the paper. It was a sheet of official stationery and read as follows:—

THE CORPORATION FOR THE PERPETUATION OF HAPPINESS

Cable Address: Hapcorp
Virgil Quimbleton, Associate Director
1316 Caraway Street

Owing to the intoxication of Bishop Chuff, the projected parade of the Pan−Antis broke up in confusion. Federal Home for Inebriates at Cana, N.J., reopened after two years' vacation.

"Is this straight stuff?" asked Bleak tremulously.

"My right hand upon it," cried Quimbleton, tearing off his beard in his earnestness.

"Then good−night!" said Bleak. "I must get back to the office."

CHAPTER III. INCIDENT OF THE GOOSEBERRY BOMBS

The day of the great parade dawned dazzling and clear, with every promise of heat. From the first blue of morning, while the streets were still cool and marble front steps moist from housemaids' sluicings, crowds of Bishop Chuff's marchers came pouring into the city. At the prearranged mobilization points, where bands were stationed to keep the throngs amused until the immense procession could be ranged in line, the press was terrific. Every trolley, every suburban train, every jitney, was crammed with the pan− antis, clad in white, carrying the buttons, ribbons and banners that had been prepared for this great occasion. DOWN WITH GOOSEBERRIES, THE NEW MENACE! was the terrifying legend printed on these emblems.

The Boulevard had been roped off by the police by eight o'clock, and the pavements were swarming with citizens, many of whom had camped there all night in order to witness this tremendous spectacle. As the sun surged pitilessly higher, the temperature became painful. The asphalt streets grew soft under the twingeing feet of the Pan−Antis, and waves of heat radiation shimmered along the vista of the magnificent highway. To keep themselves cheerful the legions of Chuff sang their new Gooseberry Anthem, written by Miss Theodolinda Chuff (the Bishop's daughter) to the air of "Marching Through Georgia." The rousing strains rose in unison from thousands of earnest throats. The majesty of the song cannot be comprehended unless the reader will permit himself to hum to the familiar tune:—

```
Root up every gooseberry where Satan winks
      his eye—
We will make the sinful earth a credit by and
      by:
Europe may be stubborn, but we'll legislate her
      dry,
And then we'll tackle the planets.

Chorus:

Hurrah! Hurrah! We're anti−everything—
Hurrah! Hurrah! An end to joy we sing:
Come let's make life doleful and then
             death will lose its sting,
         Happiness is only a habit!

Come then, all ye citizens, and join our stern
      Verein:
We're the ones that put the crimp in whiskey,
      beer and wine;
Booze is gone and soon we'll make tobacco fall
      in line,
And then we'll tackle the planets.

Chorus:

Hurrah! Hurrah! We're anti−everything—
Hurrah! Hurrah! An end to joy we sing:
Come let's make life doleful and then
             death will lose its sting,
         Happiness is only a habit!

We'll abolish every fruit attempting to ferment—
We will alter Nature's laws and teach her to
     repent:
Let the fatal gooseberry proceed where cocktails
      went,
  And then we'll tackle the planets.
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Chorus as before.
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From the beginning of the day, however, it became apparent that there was a concerted movement under way to heckle the Pan−Antis. As the Gooseberry Anthem came to an end a number of men were observed on the skyline of a tall building, wig−wagging with flags. All eyes were turned aloft, and much speculation ensued among the waiting thousands as to the meaning of the signals. Then a cry of anger burst from one of the section leaders, who was acquainted with the Morse code. The flags were spelling WHAT A DAY FOR A DRINK! All down the Boulevard the white and gold banners tossed in anger. To those above, the mass of agitated chuffs looked like a field of daisies in a wind.

Shortly afterward the familiar buzz of airplane motors was heard, and three silver−gray machines came coasting above the channel of the Boulevard. They flew low, and it was easy to read the initials C.P.H. painted on the nether surface of their wings. Over the front ranks of the parade (which was beginning to fall in line) they executed a series of fantastic twirls. Then, as though at a concerted signal, they dropped a cloud of paper slips which came eddying down through the sunlight. The chuffs scrambled for them, wondering. A sullen murmur rose when the messages were read. They ran thus:—

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TO MAKE GOOSEBERRY WINE

(Paste This in Your Hat),

Ten quarts of gooseberries, thoroughly
    crushed;
Over these, five quarts of water are flushed.
Twice round the clock let the fluid remain,
Then through a sieve the blithe mixture you
      strain,
Adding some sugar (not less than ten pound)
And stirring it carefully, round and around.

To the pulp of the fruit that remains in the
      sieve
A gallon of pure filtered water you give:
This you let stand for a dozen of hours,
Then add to the other to strengthen its powers.
Shut up the whole for the space of a day
And it will ferment in a riotous way.

When you see by the froth that the fluid grows
     thicker
You, should skim it (with glee) for it's turning
     to liquor!
While it ferments, please continue to skim:
At the end, you may murmur the Bartender's
       Hymn.
This makes a booze that is potent enough—
Seal in a hogshead—and hide it from Chuff!

Corporation for the
Perpetuation of Happiness.
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The Pan−Antis were still muttering furiously over this daring act of defiance when a shrill bugle−call pealed down the avenue. Bishop Chuff rode out into the middle of the street on his famous coal−black charger, John Barleycorn. There was a long hush. Then, with a wave of his hand, he gave the signal. One hundred bands burst into the somber and clanging strains of "The Face on the Bar−Room Floor." The great parade had begun.

From a house−top farther up the street Dunraven Bleak watched them come. He had taken Quimbleton's word

seriously, and with his usual enterprise had rented a roof overlooking the Boulevard, on which several members of the Balloon staff were prepared to deal with any startling events that might occur. A battery of telephones had been installed on the house−top; Bleak himself sat with apparatus clamped to his head like an operator at central. Two reporters were busy with paper and pencil; the cartoonist sat on the cornice, with legs swinging above two hundred feet of space, sketching the prodigious scene. The young lady editor of the Woman's Page was there, with opera glasses, noting down the "among those present."

It was an awe−inspiring spectacle. Between sidewalks jammed with silent and morose citizens, the Pan−Antis passed like a conquering army. The terrible Bishop, the man who had put military discipline into the ranks of his mighty organization, rode his horse as the Kaiser would have liked to ride entering Paris. His small, bitter, fanatical face wore a deeply carved sneer. His great black beard flapped in the breeze, and he sang as he rode. Behind him came huge floats depicting in startling tableaux the hideous menace of the gooseberry. Bands blared and crashed. Then, rank on rank, as far as eye could see, followed the zealots in their garments of white. Each one, it was noticed, carried a neat knapsack. Huge tractors rumbled along, groaning beneath a tonnage of tracts which were shot into the watching crowd by pneumatic guns. Banners whipped and fluttered.

The sound of shrill chanting vibrated in the blazing air like a visible wave of power. These were conquerors of a nation, and they knew it. A former bartender, standing in the front of the crowd, caught Chuff's merciless gaze, wavered, and swooned. A retired distiller, sitting in the window of the Brass Rail Club, fell dead of apoplexy.

Bleak trembled with nervousness. Had Quimbleton hoaxed him? What could halt this mighty pageant now? He was about to telephone to his city editor to go ahead with the one o'clock edition as originally planned. ...

From the sky came a roar of engines that drowned for a moment the thundering echoes of the parade. The three gray planes, which had been circling far above, swooped down almost to a level with the tops of the buildings. One of these, a huge two−seated bomber, passed directly over Bleak's head. He craned upward, and caught a glimpse of what he thought at first was a white pennant trailing over the bulwark of the cockpit. A snowy shag of whiskers came tossing down through the air and fell in his lap. It was Quimbleton's beard, torn from its moorings by the tug of wind− pressure. Bleak thrust it quickly in his pocket. As the great plane passed over the head of the parade, flying dangerously low, every face save that of the iron−willed Bishop was turned upward. But even in their curiosity the rigid discipline of the Pan−Antis prevailed. Now they were singing, to the tune of "The Old Gray Mare,"

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Old John Barleycorn, he ain't what he used
to be
AIN'T WHAT HE USED TO BE—
AIN'T WHAT HE USED TO BE!
Old John Barleycorn, he ain't what he used
to be,
Many a year ago.
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The great volume of gusty sound, hurled aloft by these thousands of sky−pointing mouths, created an air−pocket in which the bombing plane tilted dangerously. For a moment, Bleak, who was watching the plane, thought it was going to careen into a tail−spin and crash down fatally. Then he saw Quimbleton, still recognizable by an adhering shred of whisker, lean over the side of the fuselage.

A small dark object dropped through the air, fell with a loud POP on the street a few yards in front of the Bishop. A faint green vapor arose, misting for a moment the proud figures of Chuff and his horse. At the same instant the other two planes, throbbing down the line of the parade, discharged a rain of similar projectiles along the vacant strip of paving between the marching chuffs and the police−lined curb. An eddying emerald fume filled the street, drifting with the brisk air down through all the ranks of the procession. There were shouts and screams; the clanging bands squawked discordantly.

"Holy cat!" shouted the cartoonist—"Poison gas!"

"Nix!" said Bleak, revealing Quimbleton's secret in his excitement. "Gooseberry bombs. Every chuff that inhales it will be properly soused. Oh, boy, some story! Look at the Bish! He's got a snootful already—his face has turned black!"

"The whole crowd has turned black," said the cartoonist, almost falling off his perch in a frantic effort to see more clearly through the olive haze that filled the street.

It was true. Above the thousands of white figures, as they emerged from the intoxicating cloud−bank of gooseberry gas, grinned ghastly, inhuman, blackened faces, with staring goggle eyes. The Bishop was most frightful of all. His horse was prancing and swaying wildly, and the Bishop's transformed features were diabolic. His whole profile had altered, seemed black and shapeless as the face of a tadpole. The amazing truth burst upon Bleak. Chuff and his paraders were wearing gas−masks. These were what they had carried in their knapsacks. Indomitable Chuff, who had foreseen everything!

"Poor Quimbleton," said Bleak. "This will break his heart!"

"His neck too, I fancy," said one of the others, pointing to the sky, and indeed one of the three planes was seen falling tragically to earth behind the tower of the City Hall.

The cloud of gas was rapidly drifting off down the Boulevard, and through the exhilarating and delicious fog the Pan−Antis waved their defiant banners unscathed. The progress of the parade, however, was halted by the behavior of the Bishop's horse, for which no mask had been provided. The noble animal, under this sudden and extraordinary stimulus, was almost human in its actions. At first it stood, whinneying sharply, and pawing the air with one forefoot—as though feeling for the brass rail, as one of Bleak's companions said. It raised its head proudly, with open mouth and expanded nostrils. Then, dashing off across the broad street, it seemed eager to climb a lamp−post, and only the fierce restraint of the Bishop held it in. One of the chuffs (perhaps only lukewarm in loyalty), ran up and offered to give his mask to the horse, but was sternly motioned back to the ranks by the infuriated leader, who was wildly wrestling to gain control of the exuberant animal. At last the horse solved the problem by lying down in the street, on top of the Bishop, and going to sleep. An ambulance, marked Federal Home for Inebriates, Cana, N.J., dashed up with shrilling gong. This had been arranged by Quimbleton, who had wired a requisition for an ambulance to remove one intoxicated bishop. As the Bishop was quite in command of his faculties, the horse, after some delay, was hoisted into the ambulance instead. The Bishop was given a dusting, and the parade proceeded. The self−control of the police alone averted prolonged and frightful disorder, for when the conduct of the horse was observed thousands of spectators fought desperately to get through the ropes and out into the fumes that still lingered in wisps and whorls of green vapor. Others tore off their coats and attempted to bag a few cubic inches of the gas in these garments. But the police, with a devotion to duty that was beyond praise, kept the mob in check and themselves bore the brunt of the lingering acid. Only one man, who leaped from an office−window with an improvised parachute, really succeeded in getting into the middle of the Boulevard, and he refused to be ejected on the ground that he was chief of the street−cleaning department. This department, by the way, was given a remarkable illustration of the fine public spirit of the citizens, for by three o'clock in the afternoon two hundred thousand applications had been received from those eager to act as volunteer street−cleaners and help scour the Boulevard after the passage of the great parade.

CHAPTER IV. THE GREAT WAR BEGINS

As the echoes of the parade died away, public excitement was roused to fever by the discovery that evening of an infernal machine in the City Hall. Leaning against one of the great marble pillars in the lobby of the building, a gleaming object (looking very much like a four−inch shrapnel shell) was found by a vigilant patrolman. To his horror he found it to be one of the much− dreaded thermos bottles. Experts from the Bureau of Rumbustibles were summoned, and the bomb was carefully analyzed. Much to the disappointment of the chief inspector, the devilish ingredients of the explosive had been spoiled by immersion in a pail of water, so his examination was purely theoretical; but it was plain that the leading component of this hellish mixture had been nothing less than gin, animated by a fuse of lemon−peel. If the cylinder had exploded, unquestionably every occupant of the City Hall would have been intoxicated.

The conduct of the municipal officials in this crisis was extremely courageous. No one knew whether other articles of this kind might not be concealed about the building, but the Mayor and councilmen refused to go home, and even assisted in the search for possible bombs. Secret service men were called from Washington, and went into consultation with Bishop Chuff. It was a night of uproar. A reign of terror was freely predicted, and many prominent citizens sat up until after midnight on the chance of discovering similar explosives concealed about their premises.

The morning papers rallied rapidly to the cause of threatened civilization. The Daily Circumspect declared, editorially:—

The alcoholsheviks have at last thrown down the gauntlet. The news that the ginarchists have placed a ginfernal machine in the very shrine of law and order is tantamount to a declaration of war upon sobriety as a whole. A canister of forbidden design, filled with the deadliest gingredients, was found in the corridor leading to the bureau of marriage licenses in the City Hall. There must have been something more than accident in its discovery just in this spot. Men of thoughtful temper will do well to heed the symbolism of this incident. Plainly not only the constitution of the United States is to be made a quaffing−stock, but the very sanctity of the marriage bond is assailed. To this form of terrorism there is but one answer.

In the meantime, Quimbleton had disappeared. The house on Caraway Street was broken into by the police, but except for the grape arbor and a great quantity of empty bottles in the cellar, no clue was found. Apparently, however, the vanished ginarchist (for so Chuff called him) had been writing poetry before his departure. The following rather inscrutable doggerel was found scrawled on a piece of paper:—

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When Death doth reap
And Chuff is sickled,
He will not keep:
He was never pickled.

For Bishop Chuff
This is ill cheer:
That Time will force him
To the bier.

And when he stands
On his last legs
Then Death will drain him
To the dregs.

So when Chuff croaks
Bury him on a high hill—
For he's a hoax
Et praeterea nihil!
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But Bishop Chuff was not the man to take these insults tamely. His first act was to call together the legislature

of the State in special session, and the following act was rushed through:

AN ACT

Severing relations with Nature, and amending the principles and processes of the same in so far as they contravene the Constitution of the United States and the tenets of the Pan−Antis:

WHEREAS, in accordance with the Declaration of Gindependence, it may become necessary for a people to dissolve the alcoholic bands which have connected them with one another and to assume among the powers of the earth the sobriety to which the laws of pessimism entitle them, a decent disrespect to the opinions of drinkers requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to drouth.

WHEREAS we hold these truths to be self−evident, that all men are created sober, and are endowed with certain inalienable rights, such as Life, Grievances, and the Pursuit of Other People's Happiness. Whenever any form of amusement becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the Pan−Antis to abolish it. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that beverages long established should not be abolished for light and transient causes. But when it is evident that Nature herself is in conspiracy against the Constitution of the United States, and that millions of so−called human beings have found in forbidden tipples a cause for mirth and merriment, it is time to call a halt to malt, and have no parley with barley.

WHEREAS it has frequently and regrettably been evidenced that Nature is a sot at heart, by reason of her deplorably lax morals. Painful as it is to make the admission, there are many of her apparently innocent fruits and plants that are susceptible, by the unlawful processes of fermentation and effervescence, of transformation into alcoholic liquid. Science tells us that this abominable form of activity to which Nature is privy is in reality a form of decomposition or putrefaction; but willful men will hardly be restrained by science in their illicit pursuit of frivolity.

WHEREAS Nature (hereinafter referred to as The Enemy) has been guilty of repeated ruptures of the Constitution of the United States, having permitted the juice of apples to ferment into cider, having encouraged seditious effervescence on the part of gooseberries, currants, raisins, grapes and similar conspirators; having fomented outrageous yeastiness in hops, malt, rye, barley and other grains and fodders,

THEREFORE be it enacted, and it hereby is, that all relations with the Enemy are hereby and henceforward suspended; and any citizen of the United States having commerce with Nature, or giving her aid and comfort or encouragement in her atrocious alcoholshevik designs on human dignity, be, and hereby is, guilty of treason and lese−sobriety.

BE IT ALSO enacted, and it hereby is, that the principle of fermentation is forbidden in the territory of the United States; and all plants, herbs, legumes, vegetables, fruits and foliage showing themselves capable of producing effervescent juices or liquids in which bubbles and gases rise to the top be, and hereby are, confiscated, eradicated and removed from the surface of the soil. And all the laws of Nature inconsistent with the principle of this Act be and hereby are repealed and rendered null and inconclusive.

IT IS HOPED that this suspension of relations with Nature will operate as a sharp rebuke, and bring her to reason. It is not the sense of this Act to withhold from the Enemy all hope of a future reconciliation, should she cast off the habits that have made her a menace. We have no quarrel with Nature as a whole. But there is a certain misguided clique, the dandelions and gooseberries and other irresponsible plants, which must be humiliated. We do not presume to suggest to Nature any alteration or modification of her necessary institutions. But who can claim that the principle of fermentation, which she has arrogated to herself, is necessary to her health and happiness? This Intolerable Thing, of which Nature has shown us the ugly mug, this menace of combined intrigue and force, must be crushed, with proud punctilio.

AND FOR THE strict enforcement of this Act, the Pan−Antis are authorized and empowered to organize expeditionary forces, by recruitment or (if necessary) by conscription and draft, to proceed into the territory of the enemy, lay waste and ravage all dandelions, gooseberries and other unlawful plants. Until this is accomplished Nature shall be and hereby is declared a barred zone, in which civilians and non−combatants pass at their own peril; and all citizens not serving with the expeditionary forces shall remain within city and village limits until the territory of Nature is made safe for sobriety.

This document, having been signed by the Governor, became law, and thousands of people who were about to leave town for their vacation were held up at the railway stations. Nature was declared under martial law. There were many who held that the Act, while admirable in principle, did not go far enough in practice. For instance, it

was argued, the detestable principle of fermentation was due in great part to the influence of the sun upon vegetable matter; and it was suggested that this heavenly body should be abolished. Others, pointing out that this was a matter that would take some time, advanced the theory that large tracts of open country should be shielded from the sun's rays by vast tents or awnings. Bishop Chuff, with his customary perspicacity, made it plain that one of the chief causes of temptation was hot weather, which causes immoderate thirst. In order to lessen the amount of thirst in the population he suggested that it might be feasible to shift the axis of the earth, so that the climate of the United States would become perceptibly cooler and the torrid zone would be transferred to the area of the North Pole. This would have the supreme advantage of melting all the northern ice−cap and providing the temperate belts with a new supply of fresh water. It would be quite easy (the Bishop insisted) to tilt the earth on its axis if everything heavy on the surface of the United States were moved up to Hudson's Bay. Accordingly he began to make arrangements to have the complete files of the Congressional Record moved to the far north in endless freight trains.

Dunraven Bleak, a good deal exhausted by his efforts to keep all these matters carefully reported in the columns of the Evening Balloon, was ready to take his vacation. As a newspaper man he was able to get a passport to go into the country, on the pretext of observing the movements of the troops of the Pan−Antis, who were vigorously attacking the dandelion fields and gooseberry vineyards. He had already sent his wife and children down to the seashore, in the last refugee train which had left the city before Nature was declared outlaw.

It was a hot morning, and having wound up his work at the office he was sitting in a small lunchroom having a shrimp salad sandwich and a glass of milk. The street outside was thronged with great motor ambulances rumbling in from the suburbs, carrying the wilted remains of berries and fruits which had been dug up by the furious legions of Chuff. These were hastily transported to the municipal cannery where they were made into jams and preserves with all possible speed, before fermentation could set in. Bleak saw them pass with saddened eyes.

A beautiful gray motor car drew up at the curb, and honked vigorously. The proprietor of the lunchroom, thinking that possibly the chauffeur wanted some sandwiches, left the cash register and crossed the pavement eagerly. Every eye in the restaurant was turned upon the glittering limousine, whose panels of dove−throat gray shone with a steely lustre. In a moment the proprietor returned with a large basket and a small folded paper, looking puzzled. He glanced about the room, and approached Bleak.

"I guess you're the guy," he said, and handed the editor a note on which was scrawled in pencil

TO THE MAN WITH A PENETRATING GAZE WHO HAS JUST SPILLED SOME SHRIMP SALAD ON HIS PALM BEACH TROUSERS

Bleak, after removing the shrimp, opened the paper. Inside he read

PLEASE BRING TWO DOZEN RYE−TONGUE SANDWICHES AND AS MUCH SHRIMP SALAD AS THE BASKET WILL HOLD. AM FAMISHED.

QUIMBLETON.

He looked at the restaurateur in surprise.

"The lady said you were to get the grub and put it in this basket," said the latter.

"The lady?" inquired Bleak.

"The dame in the car," said Isidor, owner of the Busy Wasp Lunchroom.

Bleak obeyed orders. He filled the basket with tongue sandwiches and a huge platter of shrimp salad, paid the check, and carried the burden to the door of the motor.

At the wheel sat a damsel of extraordinary beauty. The massive proportions of the enormous car only accentuated the perfection of her streamline figure. Her chassis was admirable; she was upholstered in a sports suit of fawn−colored whipcord; and her sherry−brown eyes were unmodified by any dimming devices. Before Bleak could say anything she cried eagerly, "Get in, Mr. Bleak! I've been looking for you everywhere. What a happy moment this is!"

Bleak handed in the basket. "Quimbleton—" he began.

"I know," she said. "I'm taking you to him. Poor fellow, he is in great peril. Get in, please."

By the time Bleak was in the seat beside her, the car was already in motion.

"You have your passport?" she said, steering through the tangled traffic.

"Yes," he said. He could not help stealing a sidelong glance at this bewitching creature. Her dainty and vivacious face, just now a trifle sunburnt, was fixed resolutely upon the vehicles ahead. On the rim of the big

steering wheel her small gloved hands gave an impression of great capability. Bleak thought that her profile seemed oddly familiar.

"Haven't I seen you before?" he said.

"Very possibly. Your newspaper printed my picture the other day, with some rather uncomplimentary remarks."

Bleak was nonplussed.

"Very stupid of me," he said, "but I don't seem to recall—"

"I am Miss Chuff," she said calmly.

The editor's brain staggered.

"Miss Theodolinda Chuff?" he said, in amazement. He recalled some satirical editorials the Balloon had printed concerning the activities of the Chuffs, and wondered if he were being kidnaped for court−martial by the Pan−Antis. Evidently the use of Quimbleton's name had been a ruse.

"It was unfair of you to make use of Quimbleton's name to get me into your hands," he said angrily.

Miss Chuff turned a momentary gaze of amusement upon him, as they passed a large tractor drawing several truckloads of gooseberry plants.

"You don't understand," she said demurely. "You may remember that Mr. Quimbleton's card gave his name as associate director of the Happiness Corporation?"

"Yes," said Bleak.

"I am the Director," she said.

"YOU? But how can that be? Why, your father—"

"That's just why. Any one who had to live with Father would be sure to take the opposite side. He's a Pan−Anti. I'm a Pan−Pro. Those poems I have written for him were merely a form of camouflage. Besides, they were so absurd they were sure to do harm to the cause. That's why I wrote them. I'll explain it all to you a little later."

At this moment they were held up by an armed guard of chuffs, stationed at the city limits. These saluted respectfully on seeing the Bishop's daughter, but examined Bleak's passport with care. Then the car passed on into the suburbs.

As they neared the fields of actual battle, Bleak was able to see something of the embittered nature of the conflict. In the hot white sunlight of the summer morning platoons of Pan−Antis could be seen marching across the fields, going up from the rest centers to the firing line. In one place a shallow trench had been dug, from which the chuffs were firing upon a blackberry hedge at long range. One by one the unprincipled berries were being picked off by expert marksmen. The dusty highway was stained with ghastly rivulets and dribbles of scarlet juices. At a crossroads they came upon a group of chuffs who had shown themselves to be conscientious objectors: these were being escorted to an internment camp where they would be horribly punished by confinement to lecture rooms with Chautauqua lecturers. War is always cruel, and even non−combatants did not escape. In the heat of combat, the neutrality of an orchard of plum trees had been violated, and wagonloads of the innocent fruit were being carried away into slavery and worse than death. A young apple tree was standing in front of a firing squad, and Bleak closed his eyes rather than watch the tragic spectacle. The apples were all green, and too young to ferment, but the chuffs were ruthless once their passions were roused.

They passed through the battle zone, and into a strip of country where pine woods flourished on a sandy soil. The fragrant breath of sun−warmed balsam came down about them, and Miss Chuff let out the motor as though to escape from the scene of carnage they had just witnessed.

"Whither are we bound?" asked the editor, with pardonable curiosity, as their tires hummed over a smooth road.

"Cana, New Jersey," said Miss Chuff, "where poor Quimbleton is in hiding. He is in very sore straits. He narrowly escaped capture after the parade the other day. I managed to get him smuggled out of the city in the same ambulance that carried Father's horse. The horse was drunk and Quim was sober. Wasn't that an irony of fate? But I promised to tell you how I became associated with the Happiness Corporation."

CHAPTER V. THE TREACHERY OF MISS CHUFF

My story," said Miss Chuff, as the car slid along the road, "is rich in pathos. My father, as you can imagine, is an impossible man to live with. My poor mother was taken to an asylum years ago. Her malady takes a curious form: she is never violent, but spends all her time in poring over books, magazines and papers. Every time she finds the word HUSBAND in print she crosses it out with blue pencil.

"From my earliest days I was accustomed to hear very little else but talk about liquor. The fairy tales that most children are allowed to enjoy merely as stories were explained to me by my father as allegories bearing upon the sinister seductions of drink. Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf, for instance, became a symbol of young womanhood pursued by the devouring Bronx cocktail. The princess from whose mouth came toads and snakes was (of course) a princess under the influence of creme de menthe. Cinderella was a young girl who had been brought low by taking a dash of brandy in her soup. Every dragon, with which good fairy tales are liberally provided, was the Demon Rum. It is really amazing what stirring prohibition propaganda fairy tales contain if you know how to interpret them.

"All this kind of palaver naturally roused my childish curiosity as to the subject of intoxicants. But, like a docile daughter, I fell into the career marked out for me by my father. I became a militant for the Pan−Antis. I distributed tracts by the million; I wrote a little poem on the idea that the gates of hell are swinging doors with slats. I can honestly say that I never felt any real hankering for liquor until it was prohibited altogether. That is a curious feature of human nature, that as soon as you forbid a thing it becomes irresistibly alluring. You remember the story of Mrs. Bluebeard.

"It occurred to me, after booze had gone, that it was a sad thing that I, Bishop Chuff's daughter, who was devoting my life to the prohibition cause, should have not the slightest knowledge of the nature of this hideous evil we had been pursuing. I brooded over this a great deal, and fell into a melancholy state. The thought came to me, there must be some virtue in drink, or why would so many people have stubbornly contested its abolition? It would be too long a story to tell you all the details, but it was at that time that I first became aware of my psychic gift."

"Your psychic gift?" queried Bleak, wondering.

She turned her bright beer−brown eyes upon him gravely. "Yes," she said, "I am an alcoholic medium. It is the latest and most superior form of spiritualism. By gazing upon crystal— particularly upon an empty tumbler—I am able to throw myself into a trance in which I can communicate with departed spirits. A good drink does not die, you know: its soul hovers radiantly on the twentieth plane, and through the occult power of a medium those who loved it in life can get in touch with it once more. Through these trances of mine I have been privileged to put many bereaved ones in communication with their dear departed spirits. To hear the table−rappings and the shouts of ecstasy you would perceive that a great deal of the anguish of separation is assuaged."

"Do you often have these trances?" said Bleak, with a certain wistfulness.

"They are not hard to induce," she said. "All that is necessary for a seance is a round table, preferably of some highly polished brown wood, a brass rail for the worshipers to put their feet on, and an empty tumbler to concentrate the power of yearning. If those present all wish hard enough there is sure to be a successful reunion with the Beyond."

"But surely," said the fascinated editor, "surely not any—well, actual MATERIALIZATION?"

"Oh, no; but the communion of souls produces quite sufficient results. You see, so many fine spirits passed over at once, suddenly, on that First of July, that the twentieth plane is quite thronged with them, and they are just as eager to come back as their friends could be to welcome them. One good yearn deserves another, as we say. The only time when these seances fail is when some inharmonious soul is present—some personality not completely EN RAPPORT with the spirit of the gathering. I remember, for instance, an occasion when a gentleman from Kentucky had most ardently desired to get into communication with the astrals of some mint juleps he had loved very deeply in life. Everything seemed propitious, but though I struggled hard I simply could not get the julep spirit to descend to our mortal plane. Finally I made inquiry and found that one of the guests was a root−beer manufacturer. Of course you may say that was petty jealousy on the side of the departed, but even

these vanished spirits have their human phases."

She was silent for a moment.

"You can imagine," she said, "what a perplexity I was in when I discovered these hitherto unsuspected powers in myself. Was I justified in putting them to use, for the good of humanity? And wasn't there a certain pathetic significance in the fact that I, the daughter of the man who had done so much to put these poor lonely spirits into the Beyond, should be made their sole channel of reunion with their bereaved and sorrowing adorers? In all his harangues, I had never heard my Father attack anything but the actual DRINKING of liquor. This form of communication seemed to me to solve so many problems. And it was in this way that I first met Virgil."

"Virgil?" said Bleak, absent−mindedly, for he was wondering whether he might be privileged to attend one of these seances.

"Virgil Quimbleton," she said. "In the early days of my trances I was much haunted by the spirit of a certain cocktail—blended, I believe, of champagne and angostura—which insisted that it would be inconsolable until it could get in contact with Quimbleton and reassure him as to the certainty of its existence beyond mortal bars. The deep affection and old comradeship evidently cherished between Quimbleton and this cocktail was very touching, and I was more than happy to be able to effect their reunion. It was for this reason that Quimbleton, under a careful disguise, came to live next door to us on Caraway Street. I would go out into the garden and have a trance; Quimbleton, poor bereaved fellow, would sit by me in the dusk and revel with the spirit of his dear comrade. This common bond soon ripened into Jove, and we became betrothed."

She stripped off one of her gloves and showed Bleak a beautiful amethyst ring.

"This is my engagement ring," she said. "It's a very precious symbol, for Quimbleton explained to me that the amethyst is a talisman against drunkenness. I looked it up in the dictionary, and found that he was right. As long as I wear this ring the departed spirits have no ill effect upon me. But I sometimes wonder," she added with a sigh, "whether Virgil really loves me for myself, or only as a kind of swinging door into the spirit world."

The car was now approaching an open belt of country. Behind them lay the dark line of pine woods; far off, across a wide shimmer of sun and sandy fields sweetened by purple clover; and flowering grasses, was a blue ribbon of sea. But even in this remote shelf of New Jersey the implacable hand of Chuff was at work. From a meadow near by they saw an observation balloon going up and the windlass unwinding its cable. A huge paraboloid breath−detector (or breathoscope) was stationed on a low ridge. This terribly ingenious machine, which had just been invented by the pan−antis, records the vibrations of any alcoholic breath within five miles, and indicates on a sensitive dial the exact direction and distance of the breath. It was only too evident that the search for Quimbleton was going forward with fierce system. In the shelter of an old barn they heard a cork−popping machine−gun going off rapidly. This was one of the most atrocious ruses employed by the chuffs in their search for conscientious drinkers. The gun fires no projectile, but produces a pleasant detonation like the swift and repeated drawing of corks. Set up in the neighborhood of any bottle−habited man, it will invariably lure him into an approach. Near it was an ice−tinkling device, used for the same purposes of stratagem.

"Poor Virgil!" said Miss Chuff with a sigh. "I'm afraid he has had a grievous ordeal. We must run carefully now, so as not to give him away."

Fortunately Miss Chuff's presence at the wheel, and Bleak's credentials as war correspondent, enabled them to pass several scouting parties of chuff uhlans without suspicion. In this way they neared the extensive grounds surrounding the Federal Home for Inebriates, Cana, N. J. This magnificent Gothic building, already showing some signs of decay from two years of vacancy, stands on a slight eminence among what the real estate agents call "old shade," with a fine and carefully calculated view over one of the largest bodies of undrinkable fluid known to man, the Atlantic Ocean.

The car turned into a narrow sandy road skirting one side of the walled park. This byway was completely screened from outside observation by the high bulwark of the Home and by thick masses of rhododendron shrubbery. At a bend in the road Miss Chuff halted the motor, and motioned Bleak to descend.

"Now we will look for the persecuted patriot," she said.

Bleak took charge of the basket of food, and Miss Chuff drew a small rope ladder from a locker under the driver's seat. This she threw deftly up to the top of the wall, hooking it upon the iron spikes. Bleak politely ascended first, and they scaled the wall, dropping down into a tangle of underbrush.

"I left him in here somewhere," said the girl, as they set off along a narrow path. "This was obviously the best

place to hide, as, except for Father's horse, the Home hasn't had an inmate for two years. There was some talk of Father making this the headquarters of the Great General Strafe in this campaign, but I don't believe they have done so yet."

"Hush!" said Bleak. "What is that I hear?"

A dull, regular, recurrent sound, a sort of rasping sigh, stole through the thickets. They both listened in some agitation.

"Sounds a little like an airplane, with one engine missing," said Bleak.

"Can it be the sea, the surf breaking on the sand?" asked Miss Chuff.

This seemed probable, and they accepted it as such; but as they pushed on through the tangle of saplings and bushes the sound seemed to localize itself on their left. Bleak peeped cautiously through a leafy screen, and then beckoned the girl to his side. They looked down into a warm sandy hollow, overgrown and sheltered by a large rhododendron with knotted branches and dry, shiny leaves. Curled up on the sand bank, in the unconsciously pathetic posture of sheer exhaustion, lay Quimbleton, asleep. A droning snore buzzed heavily from where he lay.

"Poor Virgil!" said Miss Chuff. "How tired he looks."

He did, indeed. The gray and silver uniform was ragged and soil− stained; his boots were white with dust; his face was unshaved, though a razor lay beside him, and it seemed that he had been trying to strop it on his Sam Browne belt. His pipe, filled but unlit, had fallen from his weary fingers; beside him was an empty match−box and tragic evidence of a number of unsuccessful attempts to get fire from a Swedish tandsticker. Crumpled under the elbow of the indomitable idealist was a much−thumbed copy of The Bartender's Benefactor, or How to Mix 1001 Drinks, in which he had been seeking imaginary solace when he fell asleep. Near his head ticked a pocket alarm clock, which they found set to gong at two o'clock.

"It seems a shame to wake him," said Theodolinda. Her brown eyes liquefied and effervesced with tenderness, until (as Bleak thought to himself) they were quite the color of brandy and soda, without too much soda.

The sleeper stirred, and a radiant smile passed over his unconscious features—a smile of pure and heavenly beatitude.

"Say when, Jerry," he murmured.

"He's dreaming!" cried Theodolinda. "See, his soul is far away!"

"Two years away," said Bleak enviously. "Let him go to it while we reconnoiter. I believe in the Prevention of Cruelty to Sleep. He didn't intend to wake up just yet, you can see by the alarm clock."

"That's a good idea," she agreed. "I'd like to find out whether we're in any immediate danger of pursuit."

They set the basket of food beside Quimbleton, and carefully moved on through the strip of young trees until they neared the broad lawns that surround the Home for Inebriates. Miss Chuff, spying delicately through a leafy chink, gave a cry of alarm.

"Heavens!" she said. "The place is full of people!"

To their amazement, they saw the white banner of the Pan−Antis floating on one of the towers of the building, and the grounds about the Home blackened with a moving throng. Though they were too far distant to discern any details of the crowd, it was plain (from the curious to−and−fro of the gathering, like the seething of an ant−hill) that its units were imbued with some strong emotion. At that distance it might have been anger, or fear, or (more appropriate to the surroundings) drink.

They hurried back to Quimbleton's hiding place, and found him already sitting up and attacking the shrimp salad. Bleak courteously averted his eyes from the affectionate embrace of the lovers.

"Bless your heart for this grub," said Quimbleton to Bleak. "As soon as I smelt that shrimp salad I woke up. Do you know, I haven't eaten for two days."

"Oh Virgil!" cried Theodolinda, "what does this mean—all the crowd round the Home? Mr. Bleak and I looked up there, and the place is simply packed. You can't stay undiscovered long with all those people around. Who are they, anyway?"

Quimbleton had to delay his reply until deglutition had mastered a bulky consignment of shrimp. His large, resolute face, while somewhat marred by hardships, showed no trace of panic.

"I know all about it," he said. "It is the latest step on the route of all evil taken by that fanatical person whom I shall presently call father−in−law. He is not content with arresting people found drinking. This morning they began to seize people who THINK about drinking. Any one who is guilty of thinking, in an affirmative way,

about liquor, is to be interned in the Federal Home for a course in mental healing."

"But how can they tell?" asked Bleak, nervously.

"I don't know," said Quimbleton. "Perhaps they have a kind of Third Degree, flash a seidel of beer on you suddenly, and if you make an involuntary gesture of pleasure, you're convicted. Perhaps they've invented an instrument that tells what you think about. Perhaps they just arrest you on suspicion. At any rate all the folks who have been thinking about booze are being collected and sent over here. I know because I've seen most of my friends arriving all morning. I suppose they'll get me next. I don't much care as long as I've had something to eat."

"Virgil, dear," said Miss Chuff, "you MUSTN'T give up hope now, after being so brave. You know I'll stand by you to the end—to the very dregs."

"If only I had some disguise," said Quimbleton sadly, "it wouldn't be so bad. But I must confess that these breath detectors and other unscrupulous instruments they use have rather unnerved me."

Bleak suddenly remembered, and thrust his hand in his hip−pocket. He pulled out the hank of white beard that had floated down from the airplane a few days before. It was much crumpled, but intact.

"Good man!" cried Quimbleton. "My jolly old beard!" He clapped it onto his face and beamed hopefully. "Now, if there were some way of getting rid of this tell−tale uniform—"

They discussed this problem at some length, sitting in the sheltered bowl of sand, while Quimbleton finished his lunch. Bleak's suggestion of stitching together a sort of Robinson Crusoe suit of rhododendron leaves did not meet Quimbleton's approval.

"No Robinson trousseau for me," he said. "I thought of pasting together the leaves of The Bartender's Benefactor, but I'm afraid that would be rather damning. No, I don't see what to do."

"I have it!" said Theodolinda, gleefully. "I've got a sewing kit in the car—we'll unrip the upholstery and I can stitch you up a suit in no time. At least it will be better than the C. P. H. get− up, which would take you in front of a firing squad if it were seen."

This seemed a good idea. Bleak volunteered to escort Miss Chuff back to the car and help her rip the covers off the cushions. This was done, and they carried back to Quimbleton's hiding place many yards of pale lilac colored twill (or whatever it is) and a flask of iced tea. In spite of distant sounds of warfare, the time passed pleasantly enough. Miss Chuff cut out and stitched assiduously; Quimbleton and Bleak, under her directions, sewed on the buttons snipped from the uniform. Birds twittered in the greenery about them, and they all felt something of the elation of a picnic when the garments were done and Quimbleton retired to a neighboring copse to make the change. The other two were too seriously concerned for his welfare to laugh when they saw him.

"Splendid!" cried Bleak. "Now you can lie down in Miss Chuff's car and if any one looks in they'll just think you're part of the furnishings."

"And I think we'd better get back to the car without delay," said Theodolinda. "I'd like to get you out of this danger zone as soon as possible."

They hastened back to the wall, scaled it with the rope ladder— and stared in dismay. The car had gone. They could see it far down the road, guarded by a group of Pan−Antis. A cordon of the enemy had been thrown completely round the Home and escape was impossible. Worse still, the treachery of Miss Chuff must have been discovered, and they trembled to think what retaliation the Bishop might devise.

In this moment of crisis Quimbleton regained his customary hardihood. Quilted in his lilac garments, with the white hedge of beard tossing in the breeze, he looked the dashing leader.

"There's only one thing to do," he said. "We're surrounded in this place. We must go to the Home, make common cause with the prisoners there, and lead them in a sudden sally of escape."

CHAPTER VI. DEPARTED SPIRITS

If Bishop Chuff desired to make people stop thinking about alcohol, his plan of seizing them and shutting them up in the grounds of the Federal Home at Cana was a quaint way of attaining this purpose. For all the victims, who had been suddenly arrested in the course of their daily concerns, accused (before a rum−head court martial) of harboring illicit alcoholic desires, and driven over to Cana in crowded motor−trucks, now had very little else to brood about. In the golden light and fragrance of a summer afternoon, here they were surrounded by all the apparatus to restrain alcoholic excess, and not even the slightest exhilaration of spirit to justify the depressing scene. It was annoying to see frequent notices such as: This Entrance for Brandy−Topers; or Vodka Patients in This Ward; or Inmates Must Not Bite Off the Door−Knobs. It seemed carrying a jest too far when these citizens, most of whom had not even smelt a drink in two years, found themselves billeted into padded cells and confronted by rows of strait−jackets. Moreover, the Home had lain unused for many months: it was dusty, dilapidated, and of a moldy savor. Some of the unwilling visitors, finding that the grounds included a strip of sandy beach, took their ordeal with reasonable philosophy. "Since we are to be slaves," they said, "at least let's have some serf bathing." And donning (with a shudder) the rather gruesome padded bathing suits they found in the lockers, they went off for a swim. Others, of a humorous turn, derived a certain rudimentary amusement in studying the garden marked Reserved for Patients with Insane Delusions, where they found a very excellent relief−model of the battleground of the Marne, laid out by a former inmate who had imagined himself to be General Joffre. But most of them stood about in groups, talking bitterly.

Quimbleton, therefore, found a receptive audience for his Spartacus scheme of organizing this band of downtrodden victims into a fighting force. He gathered them into the dining−hall of the Home and addressed them in spirited language.

"My friends" (he said), "unaccustomed as I am to public speaking, I feel it my duty to administer a few remarks on the subject of our present situation.

"And the first thought that comes to my mind, candidly, is this, that we must give Bishop Chuff credit for a quality we never imagined him to possess. That quality, gentlemen, is a sense of humor. I hear some dissent; and yet it seems to me to be somewhat humorous that this gathering, composed of men who were accustomed, in the good old days, to carry their liquor like gentlemen, should now, when they have been cold sober for two years, be incarcerated in this humiliating place, surrounded by the morbid relics of those weaker souls who found their grog too strong for them.

"I say therefore that we must give Bishop Chuff credit for a sense of humor. It makes him all the more deadly enemy. Yet I think we will have the laugh on him yet, in a manner I shall presently describe. For the Bishop has what may be denominated a single− tract mind. He undoubtedly imagines that we will submit tamely to this outrage. He has surrounded us with guards. He expects us to be meek. In my experience, the meek inherit the dearth. Let us not be meek!"

There was a shout of applause, and Quimbleton's salient of horse− hair beard waved triumphantly as he gathered strength. His burly figure in the lilac upholstering dominated the audience. He went on:

"And what is our crime? That we have nourished, in the privacy of our own intellects, treasonable thoughts or desires concerning alcohol! Gentlemen, it is the first principle of common law that a man cannot be indicted for thinking a crime. There must be some overt act, some evidence of illegal intention. Can a man be deprived of freedom for carrying concealed thoughts? If so, we might as well abolish the human mind itself. Which Bishop Chuff and his flunkeys would gladly do, I doubt not, for they themselves would lose nothing thereby."

Vigorous clapping greeted this sally.

"Now, gentlemen," cried Quimbleton, "though we follow a lost cause, and even though the gooseberry and the raisin and the apple be doomed, let us see it through with gallantry! The enemy has mobilized dreadful engines of war against us. Let us retort in kind. He has tanks in the field—let us retort with tankards. They tell me there is a warship in the offing, to shell us into submission. Very well: if he has gobs, let us retort with goblets. If he has deacons, let us parry him with decanters. Chuff has put us here under the pretext of being drunk. Very well: then let us BE drunk. Let us go down in our cups, not in our saucers. Where there's a swill, there's a way! Let us be sot

in our ways," he added, sotto voce.

Terrific uproar followed this fine outburst. Quimbleton had to calm the frenzy by gesturing for silence.

"I hear some natural queries," he said. "Some one asks 'How?' To this I shall presently explain 'Here's how.' Bear with me a moment.

"My friends, it would be idle for us to attempt the great task before us relying merely on ourselves. In such great crises it is necessary to call upon a Higher Power for strength and succor. This is no mere brawl, no haphazard scuffle: it is the battle− ground—if I were jocosely minded I might say it is the bottle− ground—of a great principle. If, gentlemen, I wished to harrow your souls, I would ask you to hark back in memory to the fine old days when brave men and lovely women sat down at the same table with a glass of wine, or a mug of ale, and no one thought any the worse. I would ask you to remember the color of the wine in the goblet, how it caught the light, how merrily it twinkled with beaded bubbles winking at the brim, as some poet has observed. If I wanted to harrow you, gentlemen, I would recall to you little tables, little round tables, set out under the trees on the lawn of some country inn, where the enchanting music of harp and fiddle twangled on the summer air, where great bowls of punch chimed gently as the lumps of ice knocked on the thin crystal. The little tables were spread tinder the trees, and then, later on, perhaps, the customers were spread under the tables.—I would ask you to recall the manly seidel of dark beer as you knew it, the bitter chill of it as it went down, the simple felicity it induced in the care−burdened mind. I could quote to you poet after poet who has nourished his song upon honest malt liquor. I need only think of Mr. Masefield, who has put these manly words in the mouth of his pirate mate:

```
Oh some are fond of Spanish wine, and some
    are fond of French,
And some'll swallow tea and stuff fit only for
    a wench,
But I'm for right Jamaica till I roll beneath the
    bench!

Oh some are fond of fiddles and a song well
    sung,
And some are all for music for to lilt upon the
    tongue;
But mouths were made for tankards, and for
    sucking at the bung!"
```

This apparently artless oratory was beginning to have its effect. Loud huzzas filled the hall. These touching words had evoked wistful memories hidden deep in every heart. Old wounds were reopened and bled afresh.

Again Quimbleton had to call for silence.

"I will recite to you," he said, "a ditty that I have composed myself. It is called A Chanty of Departed Spirits."

In a voice tremulous with emotion he began:

```
The earth is grown puny and pallid,
 The earth is grown gouty and gray,
For whiskey no longer is valid
 And wine has been voted away—
As for beer, we no longer will swill it
 In riotous rollicking spree;
The little hot dogs in the skillet
 Will have to be sluiced down with tea.

O ales that were creamy like lather!
  O beers that were foamy like suds!
O fizz that I loved like a father!
  O fie on the drinks that are duds!
I sat by the doors that were slatted
  And the stuff had a surf like the sea—
No vintage was anywhere vatted
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  Too strong for ventripotent me!

I wallowed in waves that were tidal,
  But yet I was never unmoored;
And after the twentieth seidel
  My syllables still were assured.
I never was forced to cut cable
  And drift upon perilous shores,
To get home I was perfectly able,
  Erect, or at least on all fours.

Although I was often some swiller,
  I never was fuddled or blowsed;
My hand was still firm on the tiller,
  No matter how deep I caroused;
But now they have put an embargo
  On jazz−juice that tingles the spine,

We can't even cozen a cargo
  Of harmless old gooseberry wine!

But no legislation can daunt us:
  The drinks that we knew never die:
Their spirits will come back to haunt us
  And whimper and hover near by.
The spookists insist that communion
  Exists with the souls that we lose—
And so we may count on reunion
  With all that's immortal of Booze.

Those spirits we loved have departed
  To some psychical twentieth plane;
But still we will not be downhearted,
  We'll soon greet our loved ones again—
To lighten our drouth and our tedium
  Whenever our moments would sag,
We'll call in a spiritist medium
  And go on a psychical jag!
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As the frenzy of cheering died away, Quimbleton's face took on the glow of simple benignance that Bleak had first observed at the time of the julep incident in the Balloon office. The flush of a warm, impulsive idealism over−spread his genial features. It was the face of one who deeply loved his fellow−men.

"My friends," he said, "now I am able to say, in all sincerity, Here's How. I have great honor in presenting to you my betrothed fiancee, Miss Theodolinda Chuff. Do not be startled by the name, gentlemen. Miss Chuff, the daughter of our arch−enemy, is wholly in sympathy with us. She is the possessor (happily for us) of extraordinary psychic powers. I have persuaded her to demonstrate them for our benefit. If you will follow my instructions implicitly, you will have the good fortune of witnessing an alcoholic seance."

Miss Chuff, very pale, but obviously glad to put her spiritual gift at the disposal of her lover, was escorted to the platform by Bleak. The editor had been coached beforehand by Quimbleton as to the routine of the seance.

"The first requirement," said Quimbleton to the awe−struck gathering, "is to put yourselves in the proper frame of mind. For that purpose I will ask you all to stand up, placing one foot on the rung of a chair. Kindly imagine yourselves standing with one foot on a brass rail. You will then summon to mind, with all possible accuracy and vividness, the scenes of some bar−room which was once dear to you. I will also ask you to concentrate your mental faculties upon some beverage which was once your favorite. Please rehearse in imagination the entire ritual which was once so familiar, from the inquiring look of the bartender down to the final clang of the cash−register. A visualization of the old free lunch counter is also advisable. All these details will assist the medium to trance herself."

Bleak in the meantime had carried a small table on the platform, and placed an empty glass upon it. Miss Chuff sat down at this table, and gazed intently at the glass. Quimbleton produced a white apron from somewhere, and tied it round his burly form. With Bleak playing the role of customer he then went through a pantomime of serving imaginary drinks. His representation of the now vanished type of the bartender was so admirably realistic that it brought tears to the eyes of more than one in the gathering. The editor, with appropriate countenance and gesture, dramatized the motions of ordering, drinking, and paying for his invisible refreshment. His pantomime was also accurate and satisfying, evidently based upon seasoned experience. The argument as to who should pay, the gesture conveying the generous sentiment "This one's on me," the spinning of a coin on the bar, the raising of the elbow, the final toss that dispatched the fluid—all these were done to the life. The audience followed suit with a will. A whispering rustle ran through the dingy hall as each man murmured his favorite catchwords. "Give it a name," "Set 'em up again," "Here's luck," and such archaic phrases were faintly audible. Miss Chuff kept her gaze fastened on the empty tumbler.

Suddenly her rigid pose relaxed. She drooped forward in her chair, with her head sunk and hands limp. Tenderly and reverently Quimbleton bent over her. Then, his face shining with triumph, he spoke to the hushed watchers.

"She is in the trance," he said. "Gentlemen, her happy soul is in touch with the departed spirits. What'll you have? Don't all speak at once."

Fifty−nine, in hushed voices, petitioned for a Bronx. Quimbleton turned to the unconscious girl.

"Fifty−nine devotees," he said, "ask that the spirit of the Bronx cocktail vouchsafe his presence among us."

Miss Chuff's slender figure stiffened again. Her hand went out to the glass beside her, and raised it to her lips. Some of the more eagerly credulous afterwards asserted that they had seen a cloudy yellow liquid appear in the vessel, but it is not improbable that the wish was father to the vision. At any rate, the fifty−nine suppliants experienced at that instant a gush of sweet coolness down their throats, and the unmistakable subsequent tingle. They gazed at each other with a wild surmise.

"How about another?" said one in a thrilling whisper.

"Take your turn," said Quimbleton. "Who's next?"

One hundred and fifty−three nominated Scotch whiskey. The order was filled without a slip. Quimbleton's face beamed above his beard like a full−blown rose. "Magnificent!" he whispered to Bleak, both of them having partaken in the second round. "If this keeps on we'll have a charge of the tight brigade."

The next round was ninety−five Jack Rose cocktails, but the audience was beginning to get out of hand. Those who had not yet been served grew restive. They saw their companions with brightened eyes and beaming faces, comparing notes as to this delicious revival of old sensations. In the impatience of some and the jubilation of others, the psychic concentration flagged a little. Then, just as Quimbleton was about to ask for the fourth round, the unforgiveable happened. Some one at the back shouted, "A glass of buttermilk!"

Miss Chuff shuddered, quivered, and opened her eyes with a tragic gasp. She slipped from the chair, and fell exhausted to the floor. Bleak ran to pick her up. Quimbleton screamed out an oath.

"The spell is broken!" he roared. "There's a spy in the room!"

At that instant a battalion of armed chuffs burst into the hall. They carried a huge hose, and in ten seconds a six−inch stream of cold water was being poured upon the bewildered psychic tipplers. Quimbleton and Bleak, seizing the girl's helpless form, escaped by a door at the back of the platform.

"Heaven help us," cried Bleak, distraught. "What shall we do? This means the firing squad unless we can escape."

Theodolinda feebly opened her eyes.

"O horrible," she murmured. "The spirit of buttermilk—I saw him— he threatened me—"

"The horse!" cried Quimbleton, with fierce energy. "The Bishop's horse—in the stable!"

They ran wildly to the rear quarters of the Home, where they found the Bishop's famous charger whinneying in his stall. All three leaped upon his back. In the confusion, amid the screams of the tortured inmates and the cruel cries of the invading chuffs, they made good their escape.

Every one of the wretched inmates captured at the psychic carouse was immediately sentenced to six months' hard listening on the Chautauqua circuit. But even during this brutal punishment their memories returned with tenderest reminiscence to the experience of that afternoon. As one of them said, "it was a real treat." And although

Quimbleton had plainly stated the relation in which he stood to Theodolinda Chuff, she had no less than two hundred and ten proposals of marriage, by mail, from those who had attended the seance.

CHAPTER VII. THE DECANTERBURY PILGRIMS

Through a dreary waste of devastated country a little group of refugees plodded in silence. All about them lay fields and orchards which had been torn and uprooted as though by some unbelievable whirlwind. At a watering trough along the road they halted, facing the sign:

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COMPULSORY DRINKING STATION

Adults, 1 quart
Children, 1 pint

THIRST FORBIDDEN BETWEEN HERE AND THE NEXT STATION
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Under the eye of an armed chuff, who watched them suspiciously, the wretched wanderers drank the water in silence, but without enthusiasm. Then they shuffled on down the road.

At the front of the small procession a slender girl, in a much− stained sports suit, rode on a tall black horse. Beside the horse trudged a bulky man in a grotesque garb of dirty lavender quilting. A matted whisk of coarse beard drooped from his chin, but his blue eyes burned brightly in his sunburnt face. Over his shoulder he carried a six foot length of brass railing, a small folding table, and a shabby knapsack.

Behind the horse limped a lean, dyspeptic−colored individual in a Palm Beach suit that would have been a social death−warrant on the shining sands of its name−place. There is no form of sartorialism that takes on such utter humility as a Palm Beach suit gone wrong. This particular vestment was spotted with ink, with mud, with fruit−juices, with every kind of stain; it was punctured with perforations that might have been due to fallen tobacco tinder. The individual within this travesty of clothing was painfully propelling a wheelbarrow, in which rode (not without complaint) a substantial woman and a baby. An older child trailed from the Palm Beach coat−tail.

These jovial vagabonds, as the reader will have suspected, were no other than Theodolinda Chuff, Virgil Quimbleton, and the family of Bleaks.

Affairs had gone steadily from bad to worse. After the incident— or, as some blasphemously called it, the miracle—at Cana, Bishop Chuff had commenced ruthless warfare. Enraged beyond control by the perfidy of his daughter, he had sent out the armies of the Pan−Antis to wreak vengeance on every human enterprise that could be suspected of complicity in the matter of fermentation. Not only had the countryside been laid waste, but the printing press had been abolished and all publishing trades were now a thing of the past. This, of course, had thrown Dunraven Bleak out of a job. He had retrieved his wife and children from the seashore, and in company with Quimbleton and Miss Chuff, and the noble and faithful horse John Barleycorn, they had led a nomad existence for weeks, flying from bands of pursuing chuffs, and bravely preaching their illicit gospel of good cheer in the face of terrible dangers.

The girl, who was indeed the Jeanne d'Arc of their cause, was their sole means of subsistence. It was her psychic powers that made it possible for them, in a furtive way, to give their little entertainments. Their method was, on reaching a village where there were no chuff troops, to distribute certain handbills which Bleak had been able to get printed by stealth. These read thus:

THE SIX QUIMBLETONS or The Decanterbury Pilgrims In Their Artistic Revival Of Old and Entertaining Customs, Tableaux Vivants Vanished Arts, Folklore Games and Conjuring Tricks Such as The Drinking of Healths, Toasts, Nosepainting, The Lifted Elbow, Let's Match For It, Say When, Light or Dark? and This One's On Me. COMMUNION WITH DEPARTED SPIRITS Please Do Not Leave Before the Hat Goes Round

Having taken their station in some not too prominent place, Bleak would mount the wheelbarrow and play Coming Through the Rye on a jew's−harp. This, his sole musical accomplishment, was exceedingly distasteful to him: all his training had been in the anonymity of a newspaper office, and he felt his public humiliation bitterly.

When a crowd had gathered, Quimbleton would ascend the barrow and make a brief speech (of a highly inflammatory and treasonable nature) after which he would set up the small table and the brass rail, produce a

white apron and a tumbler from his knapsack, and introduce Theodolinda for an alcoholic trance. It was found that the public entered into the spirit of these seances with great gusto, and often the collection taken up was gratifyingly large. However, the life was hazardous in the extreme, and they were in perpetual danger of meeting secret service agents. It was only by repeated private trances of their own that they were able to keep up their morale.

Reaching a bend in the way, where a grove of trees cast a grateful shade, the Decanterbury Pilgrims halted to rest. Quimbleton helped Theodolinda down from her horse, and they all sat sadly by the roadside.

"Theo," said Quimbleton, as he wiped his brow, "do you think, dear, that if I set up the table you could give us a little trance? Upon my soul, I am nearly done in."

"Darling Virgil," said Theodolinda, "I really can't do it. You know I've given you four trances already this morning, and you have communed with the soul of Wurzburger at least a dozen times. Then, as you know, I have put Mr. Bleak in touch with a julep six or seven times. All that takes it out of me dreadfully. I really must consider my art a bit: I don't want to be a mere psychic bartender, a clairvoyant distiller."

"You are quite right, dear girl," said Quimbleton remorsefully. "But I couldn't help thinking how agreeable a psychical seidel of dark beer would be just now. You are our little Jeanne Dark, you know," he added, with an atrocious attempt at pleasantry.

"That's all very well," said Bleak (who preferred julep to beer), "but if we don't look out Miss Chuff will go into a permanent trance. I've noticed it has been harder and harder to bring her back from these states of suspended sobriety. You know, if we crowd these phantasms of the grape upon her too fast, she might pass over altogether, and stay behind the bar for good. We are deeply indebted to Miss Chuff for her adorable willingness to act as a kind of bunghole into the spirit world, but we don't want her to slip through the hole and evaporate."

"Safety thirst!" cried Quimbleton, raising his loved one to his lips.

"We can't go on like this indefinitely," continued Bleak. "I don't mind being a mountebank, but mountebanks don't pay much interest. I'd rather be a safe deposit somewhere out of Chuff's reach. There's too much drama in this way of living."

"I can stand the drama as long as I get the drams," said the unrepentant Quimbleton.

"Well, _I_ won't stand it!" exclaimed Mrs. Bleak, shrilly. "Look what your insane schemes have brought us to! You and my husband seem to find comfort in your psychical toping, but I don't notice any psychical millinery being draped about for Miss Chuff or myself. And look at the children! They're simply in rags. If you really loved Miss Chuff I should think you'd be ashamed to use her as a spiritual demijohn! You've alienated her from her father, and reduced my husband from managing editor of a leading paper to managing jew's−harpist of a gang of psychic bootleggers." She burst into angry tears.

Quimbleton groaned, and turned a ghastly fade upon Bleak.

"It's quite true," he said.

In the excitement Miss Chuff had turned very pale.

"Virgil," she said faintly, "I believe I feel a trance coming on."

"Great grief!" cried the harassed leader. "Not now, my darling! I think I see some troops in the distance. Quick, try to concentrate your mind on lemonade, on buttermilk, on beef tea!"

Happily this crisis passed. Theodolinda had presence of mind enough to pull out a little photograph of her father from some secret hiding place, and by putting her mind on it shook off the dominion of the other world.

Quimbleton spoke with anguished remorse.

"Mrs. Bleak is right. I've been trying to hide it from myself, but I can do so no longer. This monkey business—what we might call this gorilla warfare—must stop. We will only land in front of a firing squad. I have only one idea, which I have been saving in case all else failed."

The Bleaks were too discouraged to comment, but Theodolinda smiled bravely.

"Virgil dear," she said, "your ideas are always so original. What is it?"

Quimbleton stood up, unconsciously putting one foot on the portable brass rail which rested on its six−inch legs by the roadside. His tired eyes shone anew with characteristic enthusiasm. It was plain that he imagined himself before a large and sympathetic audience.

"My friends," he said, "the secret of eloquence is to know your facts—or, as the all−powerful Chuff would amend it, to know your tracts. One fact, I think I may say, is plain. The jig is up, or (more literally), the jag is up. I

can see now that alcohol will never be more than a memory. Principalities and powers are in league against us. If the malt has lost its favor, wherewith shall it be malted?"

He paused a moment, as though expecting a little applause, and Theodolinda murmured an encouraging "Here, here."

With rekindled eye he resumed.

"Alcohol, I say, will never be more than a memory. Yet even a memory must be kept alive. The great tradition must not die. For the very sake of antiquarian accuracy, for the instruction of posterity, some exact record must be kept of the influence of alcohol upon the human soul. How can this be preserved? Not in books, not in the dead mummies of a museum. No, not in dead mummies, indeed, but in living rummies. That brings me to my great idea, which I have long cherished.

"I propose, my dear friends, that in some appropriate shrine, surrounded by all the authentic trappings and utensils, some chosen individual be maintained at the public charge, to exhibit for the contemplation of a drouthing world the immortal flame of intoxication. He will be known, without soft concealments, as the Perpetual Souse. In his little bar, served by austere attendants, he will be kept in a state of gentle exhilaration. Nothing gross, nothing unseemly, I insist! In that state of sweetly glowing mind and heart, in that ineffable blossoming of all the nobler qualities of human dignity, this priest of alcohol will represent and perpetuate the virtues of the grape. Booze, in the general sense, will have gone West, but ah how fair and ruddy a sunset will it have in the person of this its vicar! There he will live, visited, studied, revered, a living memorial. There he will live, perpetually in a mellow fume of bliss, trailing clouds of glory, as if—as some poet says,

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As if his whole vocation
Were endless intoxication.
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And now, my friends—not to weary you with the minor details of this far−reaching proposal—let me come to the point. For so gravely responsible a post, for an office so representative of the ideals and ambitions of millions, the choice cannot be cast haphazard. The choice must fall upon one qualified, confirmed, consecrated to this end. This deeply significant office must be conferred by the people themselves. It must be conferred by popular election. Candidates must be nominated, must stump the country explaining their qualifications. And let me say that, upon looking over the whole field, I see one man, who by the jury of his peers—or shall I say by the jury of his beers?—is supremely fitted for this post. It is my intention to nominate Mr. Dunraven Bleak for the office of Perpetual Souse."

There was a moment of complete silence while his hearers considered the vast scope of this remarkable suggestion. It is only fair to say that Mr. Bleak's face had at first lighted up, but then he glanced at his wife and his countenance grew pinched. He spoke hastily:

"A very generous thought, my dear fellow; but I feel that you would be far more competent for this form of public service than I could hope to be."

"Your modesty does you credit," replied Quimbleton, "but you forget that owing to my relation with Miss Chuff I shall happily be precluded from the necessity of entering public life for this purpose."

"And what, pray," said Mrs. Bleak with distinct asperity, "is to become of me and the children if Mr. Bleak is elected to this preposterous office?"

"I was coming to that," said Quimbleton eagerly. "It would be arranged, of course, that the Perpetual Souse would be granted a liberal salary for his family expenses; you and your delightful children would be maintained at the public expense in a suitable bungalow nearby, with a private family entrance into the official cellars. Your rank, of course, would be that of Perpetual Spouse."

"My good Quimbleton," said Bleak, somewhat bitterly, "this is a fascinating vision indeed, but how can it be accomplished? How would you ever get such a scheme accepted by Bishop Chuff, who will never forgive you for kidnaping his daughter? You are building bar−rooms in Spain, my dear chap; you are blowing mere soap−bubbles."

"And why not?" cried his friend. "Bishop Chuff has called me a soap−box orator. At any rate, a man who stands upon a soap−box is nearer heaven by several inches than the man who stands upon the ground."

Theodolinda's face sparkled with the impact of an idea.

"Come," she said, "it's not impossible after all. I have a thought. We'll offer Father an armistice and talk things over with him. He doesn't know what straits we're in, and maybe we can bring him to terms. He was very badly scared by those gooseberry bombs, and maybe we can bluff him into a concession."

"If we had had any luck," said Quimbleton, "we would have blown him into a concussion. But anyway, that's a bonny scheme. We'll grant him a truce. Bleak, you're a newspaper man, just get hold of the United Press and let them know the armistice is signed."

Bleak smiled wanly at the thrust.

"All right," he said. "Let's go. But what's your idea, Miss Chuff? We must have something to base negotiations on."

"Wait and see," she cried gayly. "We'll talk it over as we go along."

Mrs. Bleak aroused her children, who had fallen asleep, and climbed back into the wheelbarrow.

"I don't know that I approve of that scheme of making Dunraven the Perpetual Souse," she remarked. "I can imagine what my poor mother would say about it if she were living. She came of fine old Kentucky stock, and it would humiliate her deeply to know to what a level we had been reduced."

"My dear Mrs. Bleak," said Quimbleton, as he hoisted his betrothed into the saddle and the pilgrims began to move, "I know of a great deal of good old Kentucky stock that has had a far worse fate than that in these tragic years."

CHAPTER VIII. WITH BENEFIT OF CLERGY

Through the sullen streets of the terrorized city Miss Chuff, Quimbleton and Bleak proceeded toward the great building where the Pan−Antis had their headquarters. They had left Mrs. Bleak, the children and the horse at a quiet soda−fountain in the suburbs. After repeated application over the wireless telephone, the terrible Bishop—the Prohibishop, as Quimbleton called him—had agreed to grant them an audience, and had accorded them safe− conduct through the chuff troops. Even so, their progress was difficult. Every few hundred yards they were halted and subjected to curt inquiry. Men and women who had heard of their gallant struggle against fearful odds pressed forward in an attempt to seize their hands, to embrace and applaud them, but these evidences of enthusiasm were sternly repressed by the chuffs.

Bleak was frankly nervous as they approached the Chuff Building.

"What line of talk are we going to adopt?" he asked.

"Like any self−respecting line," replied Quimbleton, "Ours will be the shortest distance between two points. The first point is that we want to obtain something from Chuff. The second is that we have some information to give him which will be of immense value to him. This we shall hold over him as a club, to force him to concede what we want."

"And what is this club?" asked Bleak, somewhat suspicious of his friend's sanguine disposition.

"The admirable plan," said Quimbleton, "is Theodolinda's idea. She knows her father better than we do. She says that his passion is for prohibiting things. He thinks he has now prohibited everything possible. We are in a position to tell him something that still remains unprohibited. His eagerness to know what that may be will make him yield to our request."

Bleak pondered gloomily. As far as he could recall, the Prohibition Government had overlooked nothing. The quaint part of it was that some of its prohibitions, carried to their logical extreme, had curiously overleaped their mark. For instance, finding it impossible to enforce the laws against playing games on Sundays, the Government had concluded that the only way to make the Sabbath utterly immaculate was to abolish it altogether, which was done. Other laws, probably based upon genuine zeal for human welfare, had resulted in odd evasions or legal fictions. For instance, people were forbidden to miss trains. The penalty for missing a train was ten days' hard labor splitting infinitives in the government tract−factory. Rather than impose this harsh punishment on any one, good−hearted engineers would permit their trains to loiter about the stations until they felt certain no other passengers would turn up. Consequently no trains were ever on time, and the Government was forced to do away with time entirely. Another thing that was abolished was hot weather. It had been found too tedious to tilt the axis of the earth, therefore all the thermometers were re−scaled. When the temperature was really 96 degrees, the mercury registered only 70 degrees, and every one was saying how jolly cool it was for the time of year. This, of course, was careless, for there was no such thing as time or year, but still people kept on saying it. Bleak was thinking over these matters when he suddenly recalled that it was forbidden to remember things as they had been under the old regime. He pulled himself up with a start. In order to make his mind a blank he tried to imagine himself about to write a leading editorial for the Balloon. This was so successful that he did not come to earth again until they stood in the ante−room—or as Quimbleton called it, the anti−room—of the Bishop.

"Who is to be spokesman?" he said apprehensively, gazing with distaste at the angular females who were pecking at typewriters. "It would be unseemly for me to present my own claims in this project. Quimbleton, you are the one—you have the gift of the tongue."

"I would rather have the gift of the bung," whispered Quimbleton resolutely as they were ushered into the inner sanctum.

The dreaded Bishop sat at an immense ebony flat−topped desk. The room was furnished like his mind, that is to say, sparsely, and without any southern exposure. A peculiarly terrifying feature of the scene was that the top of the desk was completely bare, not a single paper lay on it. Remembering his own desk in the newspaper office, Bleak felt that this was unnatural and monstrous. He noticed a breathoscope on the mantelpiece, with its sensitive needle trembling on the scaled dial which read thus:—

As he watched the indicator oscillate rapidly on the dial, and finally subside uncertainly at zero, he thanked

heaven that they had indulged in no psychic grogs that day.

The Bishop's black beard foamed downward upon the desk like a gloomy cataract. Quimbleton for a moment was almost abashed, and regretted that he had not thought to whitewash his own dingy thicket.

Bishop Chuff's piercing and cruel gaze stabbed all three. He ignored Theodolinda with contempt. His disdain was so complete that (as the unhappy girl said afterward) he seemed more like a younger brother than a father. There were no chairs: they were forced to stand. In a small mirror fastened to the edge of his desk the sneering potentate could note the dial−reading of the instrument without turning. He watched the reflected needle flicker and come to rest.

"So, Mr. Quimbleton," he said, in a harsh and untuned voice, "You come comparatively sober. Strange that you should choose to be unintoxicated when you face the greatest ordeal of your life."

The savage irony of this angered Quimbleton.

"One touch of liquor makes the whole world kin," he said. "I assure you I have no desire to claim kinship with your bitter and intolerant soul."

"Ah?" said the Bishop, with mock politeness. "You relieve me greatly. I had thought you desired to claim me as father−in−law."

"Oh, Parent!" cried Theodolinda; "How can you be so cruel? Sarcasm is such a low form of humor."

"I am not trying to be humorous," said the Bishop grimly. "You, who were once the apple of my eye, are now only an apple of discord. You, whom I considered such a promising child, are now a breach of promise. You have sucked my blood. You are a Vampire."

"The Vampire on whom the sun never sets," whispered Quimbleton to the terrified girl, encouraging her as she shrank against him.

"This is no time for jest," said the Bishop angrily. "You said you had a matter of vital import to lay before me. Make haste. And remember that you are here only on sufferance. I shall be pitiless. I shall scourge the evil principle you represent from the face of the earth."

"We do not fear your threats," said Quimbleton stoutly. "We are not alarmed by your frown."

He was, greatly, but he was sparring for time to put his thoughts in order. He started to say "Uneasy lies the head that wears a frown," which was an aphorism of his own he thought highly of, but Theodolinda checked him. She knew that her father detested puns. It was perhaps his only virtue.

"Bishop Chuff," said Quimbleton, "perhaps you are not aware of the strength and tenacity of the sentiment we represent. I assure you that if you underestimate the power of the millions of thirsty mouths that speak through us, you will rue the consequences. Trouble is brewing—"

"Neither trouble, nor anything else, is brewing nowadays," said the terrible Bishop.

Theodolinda saw that Quimbleton was losing ground by his incorrigible habit of talking before he said anything. She broke in impetuously, and explained the plan for the Perpetual Souse. Her father listened to the end with his cold, forbidding gaze, while the sensitive needle of the recording instrument on the mantel danced and wagged in agitation.

"So this is your scheme, is it?" he said. "Abandoned offspring, you deserve the gallows."

"Wait a moment," said Quimbleton. "Now comes the other side of the argument. If you grant us this concession we in turn will put you in possession of a magnificent idea. You think that you have prohibited everything. Your vetoes cumber the earth. But there is still one thing you have forgotten to prohibit."

"What is it?" said the Bishop coldly. His hard face was unmoved, but his eyes brightened a trifle.

"There is one thing you have forgotten to prohibit," said Quimbleton solemnly. "I can hardly conceive how it escaped you. The one thing that harasses human beings over the whole civilized world. The one thing which, if you were to abolish it, would make your name, foul as that now is, blessed in the ears of men. Oh, the joy of still having something to prohibit! The unmixed bliss and high privilege of the vetoing function! I envy you, from my heart, in still having something to forbid."

The Bishop stirred uneasily in his chair. "What is it?" he said.

Quimbleton watched him with a steady and slightly annoying smile.

"I like to dwell in imagination upon your surprise when you realize what you have overlooked. It seems so simple! To abolish, prohibit, banish, and remove, at one swoop, the chief preoccupation of mankind! The simple and high−minded felicity of still having something prohibitable subject to your omnipotent legislation! But there,

I dare say I am wrong. Probably you are weary of prohibiting things."

Quimbleton made a motion to his companions as though to leave the room. The Bishop leaped to his feet, with curiously mingled anger and eagerness on his face. "Stop!" he cried. "You can't mean laughter? I abolished that some weeks ago. I don't believe there is anything left—"

"How quaint it is," said Quimbleton (as though talking to himself), "that it is always the plainly obvious that eludes! But, of course, the reason you have not abolished this matter before is that to do so would wholly alter and undermine the habits of the race. Nothing would be the same as before. I daresay a good deal of misery would be caused in the long run, who knows? Ah well, it seems a pity you forgot it—"

"Hell's bells!" roared the Bishop, bringing his fist down on the desk with fury—"What is it? Let me get at it!"

"I should be sorry to marry into a profane family," was Quimbleton's reply, moving toward the door.

The Bishop chewed the end of his beard with a crunching sound. This unpleasant gesture caused a tingle to pass along Bleak's sensitive spine, already strained to painful nervous tension. The office of the Perpetual Souse hung in the balance.

"Look here," said Bishop Chuff, "If I let you have your way about the—the Permanent Exhibit, will you tell me what it is I have forgotten to prohibit?"

"With pleasure," said Quimbleton. "Will you put it down in black and white, please?"

He secured the Bishop's signature to a document giving instructions for the necessary legislation to be passed. Folding the precious paper in his pocket, Quimbleton faced the black− browed Bishop. He held Theodolinda by the hand.

"I am sorry," he said, "that I should have forgotten to bring a ring with me. If I had done so, you might have married us here and now. At least you will not refuse us your blessing?"

"Blessings have been abolished," said Chuff in a voice of exasperation. "Now inform me what it is that I have forgotten to condemn."

"Work!" cried Quimbleton, and the three ran hastily from the room.

CHAPTER IX. THE ELECTION

In the days following Quimbleton's coup Chuff was in seclusion. It was rumored that he was ill; it was rumored that the sounds of breaking furniture had been heard by the neighbors on Caraway Street. But at any rate the Bishop lived up to his word. Orders over his signature went to Congress, and vast sums of money were appropriated immediately for

The establishment and maintenance of a national park with suitable buildings and appurtenances wherein might be maintained an elected individual in a state of freedom, with access to alcoholic beverages, in order that successive generations might view for themselves the devastating effects of alcohol upon the human system.

No political campaign was ever contested with more zeal and zest than that which led up to the election of the Perpetual Souse. Life had grown rather dreary under the innumerable prohibitions of the Chuff regime, and the citizens welcomed the excitement of the campaign as a notable diversion. Quimbleton appointed himself chairman of the committee to nominate Bleak, and the editor (acting under his friend's instructions) had hardly begun to deny vigorously that he had any intention of being a candidate before he found himself plunged into a bewildering vortex of meetings, speeches, and confessions of faith. Marching clubs, properly outfitted with two−quart silk tiles and frock coats, were spatting their way plumply down the Boulevard. Torchlight processions tinted the night; ward picnics strewed the shells of hard−boiled eggs on the lawns of suburban amusement parks, while Bleak, very ill at ease, was kissing adhesive babies and autographing tissue napkins and smiling horribly as he whirled about with the grandmothers in the agony of the carrousel. More than once, reeling with the endless circuit of a painted merry−go−round charger, the perplexed candidate became so confused that he kissed the paper napkin and autographed the baby.

He found Quimbleton a stern ringleader. Virgil was not satisfied with the old−fashioned method of stumping the country from the taff−rail of a Pullman car, and insisted on strapping Bleak into the cockpit of a biplane and flying him from city to city. They would land in some central square, and the candidate, deafened and half−frozen, would stammer a few halting remarks. He felt it rather keenly that Quimbleton looked down on his lack of oratorical gift, and it was a frequent humiliation that when words did not prosper on his tongue his impatient pilot would turn on the motors and zoom off into space in the very middle of a sentence.

Nevertheless, the campaign went famously. Bleak had one considerable advantage in being comparatively unknown. He had never permitted himself the luxury of making enemies: except for a few ex−reporters who had once worked on the Balloon he had not a foe in the world. Quimbleton had been eager to import a covey of gunmen from other cities, but when these arrived there was really nothing for them to do. They were glad to accept jobs from Bishop Chuff, and were well paid for waylaying and sniping the few grapes and apples that had escaped previous pogroms.

There was only one plank in Bleak's modest platform, but he walked it so happily that it began to look like a gangplank leading onto the Ship of State. He expressed his doctrine very agreeably in his speech accepting the party nomination; though credit should be given to Theodolinda, who had assisted him by a little private seance before he addressed the convention.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said (looking as he spoke at one of the handbills announcing his candidacy for the dignity of mouthpiece of the nation)—"I issue dodgers, but I never dodge the issue. I can Take It or Let It Alone, but frankly, I prefer to Take It. I hope I speak modestly: yet candor insists that both by past training and present inclination I feel myself fitted to deal with the problems of this exalted office. If elected to this high place of trust I shall regard myself solely as the servant of the public, solely as the representative of your sovereign will. As I raise the glass or peel the lemon, I shall not act in any individual capacity. My own good cheer (I beg you to believe) will be my last thought. I shall remember, in every gesture and every gulp, that my thirst is in reality the Thirst of a Nation, delegated to me by ballot; that my laughter and song (if things should go so far) are truly the mirth and music of a proud people expressing themselves through me. I shall be at all times accessible to my fellow−men, solicitous to hear their counsel and command. Believing (as I do) in moderation, yet I should not dream of permitting private sentiment to interfere with public interest when more violent measures should seem desirable.

"I like to think, my fellow−citizens, that you have conferred this nomination upon me not wholly at random. I like to think that I am only expressing your thought when I say that many drinkers have been the worst enemies of the cause we all hold dear. The alcoholshevik and the I.W.W.—the I Wallow in Wine faction—have done much to discredit the old bland Jeffersonian toper who carried tippling to the level of a fine art. I have no patience with the doctrine of complete immersion. Ever since I was first admitted to the bar I have deplored the conduct of those violent and vulgar revelers who have brought discredit upon the loveliest, most delicate art known to man. Now, at last, by supreme wisdom, drinking is to be elevated to the dignity of a career. I like to think that I express your sentiment when I say that drinking is too precious, too subtle, too fragile a function to be entrusted to the common crowd. Therefore I heartily applaud your admirable intention of entrusting it entirely to me, and look forward with profound satisfaction to the privilege of enshrining and perpetuating in my own person the genial traditions that have clustered round the institution of Liquor. If elected, I shall endeavor to carry on the fine old rituals and pass them down unimpaired to the next incumbent. I shall endeavor to make duty a pleasure, and pleasure a duty. I shall remind myself that I am only performing the service to humanity that each one of you would willingly render if you were in my place.

"My fellow−citizens, I thank you for your amiable confidence, and am happy to accept the nomination."

There were some who criticized this speech on the ground that it was too academic. It was remembered that Mr. Bleak had at one time been a school−teacher, and his opponents were quick to raise the cry "What can a schoolmaster know about liquor?" It was said that Mr. Bleak was too scholarly, too aloof, too cold−blooded: that his interest in booze was merely philosophical, that he would be incompetent to deal with the practical problems of actual drinking: that he would surround himself with drinks that would be mere puppets, subservient entirely to his own purposes. The adherents of Jerry Purplevein, the nominee of the other party, made haste to assert that Bleak was not a drinker at all but was a tool of the Chuff machine. Jerry was a former bartender who had been pining away in the ice−cream cone business. Huge banners appeared across the streets, showing highly colored pictures of Mr. Purplevein plying his original profession, with the legend:

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RALLY ROUND THE FLAGON

VOTE FOR

PURPLEVEIN

THE PRACTICAL MAN
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One of the exciting features of the campaign was the sudden appearance of a Woman's Party, which launched an ably−conducted boom for a Woman Souse and nominated Miss Cynthia Absinthe as its candidate. The idea of having a woman elected to this responsible office was disconcerting to many citizens, but Miss Absinthe's record (as outlined by her publicity headquarters) compelled respect. She was reputed to have been a passionate and tumultuous consumer of sloe gin, and thousands of women in white bartenders' coats marched with banners announcing:

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ABSINTHE MAKES THE HEART GROW FONDER VOTE FOR CYNTHIA
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and

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OUR SLOGAN IS SLOE GIN
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For a while there was quite a probability that the male vote would be so split by Bleak and Purplevein that Miss Absinthe would come in ahead. But at the height of the campaign she was found in a pharmacy drinking a maple nut foam. After this her cause declined rapidly, and even her most ardent partisans admitted that she would

never be more than an Intermittent Souse.

Purplevein's followers, in their desperate efforts to discredit Bleak, overplayed their hand (as "practical politicians" always do). The sagacious Quimbleton outmaneuvered them at every turn. Moderate drinkers rallied round Bleak. Moreover, the Bleak party had an irresistible assistant in the person of Miss Chuff, who put her trances unreservedly at Dunraven's disposal. In this way Quimbleton was able to produce his candidate before a monster mass meeting at the Opera House in a state of becoming exhilaration. This forever put an end to the rumor that Bleak was not a practical man. Miss Chuff also campaigned strenuously among the women, where Purplevein (being a bachelor) was at a disadvantage. "Vote for Bleak," cried Miss Chuff—"He has a wife to help him." Purplevein's argument that the office of Perpetual Souse should be an entirely stag affair fell dead before Theodolinda's glowing description of the Hostess House which Mrs. Bleak would conduct next door to the little temple which was to be erected by the government for the successful candidate.

Despite the exhaustion of the campaign, Bleak stood it well. Quimbleton, knowing the disastrous effects of over−confidence, kept his man at fighting edge by a little judicious pessimism now and then, and rumors of the popularity of Purplevein among the hard drinkers. Day after day Quimbleton and Miss Chuff, after a little psychic communing, would prop the editor among cushions in the big gray limousine and spin him about the city and suburbs to bow, smile, say a few automatic words and pass on. Over the car floated a big banner with the words: Let Bleak Do Your Drinking For You: He Knows How. The unhappy Purplevein, who had to do his electioneering in a state of chill sobriety, was aghast to see the beaming and gently flushed face of his rival radiating cheer. At the eleventh hour he tried to change his tactics and plastered the billboards with immense posters:

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BLEAK DOESN'T NEED THE JOB—HE'S SOUSED ALREADY
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This line of argument might perhaps have been powerful if adopted earlier, but by that time the agreeable vision of Bleak's ascetic features wreathed in a faintly spiritual benignance was already firmly fixed in the public imagination. The little celluloid button showing his transfigured and endearing smile was worn on millions of lapels. As one walked down the street one met that little badge hundreds of times, and the mere repetition of the tenderly exhilarated face seemed to many a citizen a beautiful and significant thing. Men are altruistic at heart. They saw that Bleak would make of this high office a richly eloquent and appealing stewardship. They were reconciled to their own abstinence in the thought that the dreams and desires of their own hearts would be so nobly fulfilled by him. Alcohol was gone forever, and perhaps it was as well. They themselves were conscious of having abused its sacred powers. But now, in the person of this chosen representative, all that was lovely and laughable in the old customs would be consecrated and enshrined forever. Men who had known Bleak in the days of his employment on the Balloon recollected that even during the cares and efforts of his profession little incidents had occurred that might have shown (had they been shrewd enough to notice) how faithfully he was preparing himself for the great responsibility destiny held concealed.

The day of the election was declared a national festival. The Chuff government, a good deal startled by the universal seriousness and enthusiasm shown in the enrollment at the primaries, was disposed (in secret) to regard the office of Perpetual Souse as a helpful compromise on a vexed question. The war against Nature had been only partially successful: indeed the chuff chief−of−staff declared that Nature had not learned her lesson yet, and that some irreconcilable berries and fruits were still waging a guerilla fermentation, thus rupturing the armistice terms. The countryside had been ravaged, all the Chautauqua lecturers were hoarse, industry was at a standstill, misery and despair were widespread. Even the indomitable Chuff himself was a little nonplussed. Better (he thought) one man indubitably, decorously, publicly, and legally drunk, than millions of citizens privily attempting to cajole raisins and apples into illicit sprightliness.

The citizens went to the polls in a mood of exalted self−denial. They knew that they were voting away their own rights, but they also knew that their private ideals would be more than realized in the legalized frenzy of their representative. Bleak, appearing on the balcony of his hotel, smiled affectionately on the loyal faces that cheered him from below. He was deeply moved. To Quimbleton (who was supporting him from behind) he said: "Their generosity is wonderful. I shall try to be worthy of their confidence. I hope I may have strength to put into

practice the frustrated desires of these noble people."

The result of the polling was to be announced by a searchlight from the City Hall. A white beam sweeping eastward would mean the election of Purplevein. A white beam sweeping westward would mean the triumph of Miss Absinthe. A steady red beam cast upward toward the zenith would indicate the victory of Bleak.

At ten o'clock that night a scream of cheers burst from millions of people packed along the city streets. A clear, glowing shaft of red light leaped upward into the sky. Dunraven Bleak had been elected Perpetual Souse.

Purplevein, who was rather a decent sort, hastened to Bleak's hotel to offer his congratulations. Bleak, who was sitting quietly with Mrs. Bleak, Quimbleton and Theodolinda, greeted him calmly. Poor Purplevein was very much broken up, and Quimbleton and Theodolinda, in the goodness of their hearts, arranged a quiet little seance for his benefit. They all sat their drinking psychic Three−Star in honor of the event. As Quimbleton said, helping Purplevein back to his motor—"Hitch your flagon to a Star."

CHAPTER X. E PLURIBUS UNUM!

Virgil and Theodolinda were returning from their honeymoon, which they had spent touring in Quimbleton's Spad plane. They had been in South America most of the time, where they found charming hosts eager to console them for the tragical developments in the northern continent.

It was a superb morning in early autumn when they were flying homeward. Beneath them lay the green and level meadows of New Jersey, and the dusky violet blue of the ocean shading to a translucent olive where long ridges of foam crumbled upon pale beaches. They turned inland, flying leisurely to admire the beauty of the scene. The mounting sun spread a golden shimmer over woods and corn−stubble. White roads ran like ribbons across the landscape. Quimbleton glided gently downward, intending to skim low over the treetops so that his bride might enjoy the rich loveliness of the view.

Suddenly the great plane dipped sharply, tilted, and very nearly fell into a side−slip. Quimbleton was just able to pull her up again and climbed steeply to a safer altitude. He looked at his dashboard dials and indicators with a puzzled face. "Very queer," he said to Theodolinda through the speaking tube, "the air here has very little carrying power. It seems extraordinarily thin. You might think we were flying in a partial vacuum."

From the behavior of the plane it was evident that some curious atmospheric condition was prevailing. There seemed to be a large hole or pocket in the air, and in spite of his best efforts the pilot was unable to get on even wing. Finally, fearing to lapse into a tail spin, he planed down to make a landing. Beneath them was a beautiful green lawn surrounded by groves of trees. In the middle of this lawn they struck gently, taxied across the smooth turf, and came to a stop beneath a splendid oak. Quimbleton assisted his wife to get out, and they sat down for a few minutes' rest under the tree.

"What a heavenly spot!" cried Theodolinda, "I wonder where we are?"

"Somewhere in New Jersey," said her husband. "I don't understand what was the matter with the air. It didn't act according to Hoyle."

They gazed about them in some surprise at the opulent beauty of the scene. It seemed to be a kind of park, laid out in lawns, gardens and shrubbery, with groves of old trees here and there. A little artificial lake twinkled in a hollow.

They happened to be gazing upward when a small round ball of tawny color fell from the tree. It was a robin. Folded solidly for sleep, he fell unresisting by the flutter of a wing, turning over and over gently until he struck the turf with the tiniest of soft thuds. He bounced slightly, rolled a little distance, and settled motionless in the grass.

Quimbleton, amazed, stooped over the fallen bird, supposing it to be dead. Without lifting it from the ground he withdrew its head from under its wing. The bright eye unlidded and gazed at him sleepily. Then the bird closed its eye with a certain weary resignation, put its head back under its wing, and relaxed comfortably in the grass.

Quimbleton was no very acute student of nature, but this seemed very odd to him. And then, examining the lower limbs of the tree, he uttered an exclamation. He swung himself up into the oak and shook one of the branches. Five other birds plopped comfortably into the grass and rested as easily as the first. He examined them one by one. They were all sound asleep.

"Most amazing!" he said. "My dear, we will have to take up nature study. I am really ashamed of my ignorance. I always thought that owls were the only birds that slept by day."

Theodolinda was looking at the five small bodies. She raised one of them gently, and sniffed gingerly.

"Virgil," she said solemnly, "this is not mere slumber. These birds are drunk!"

Quimbleton was about to speak when a grasshopper went by like an airplane, zooming in a twenty−foot leap. A bee sagged along heavily in an irregular zig−zag, and a caterpillar, more agile and purposeful than any caterpillar they had ever seen, staggered swiftly across a carpet of moss.

The same thought struck them simultaneously, and at that moment Theodolinda noticed a small white signboard affixed to a tree− trunk in the grove. They ran to it, and saw in neat lettering:

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TO THE PERPETUAL SOUSE, ONE MILE
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"Bless me!" cried Quimbleton. "What a stroke of luck! You know old Bleak wrote us when we were in Rio that he had been installed in his temple, but he didn't say where it was. Let's toddle up and have a look at him. That's why the bus acted so queerly. No wonder: we were probably flying in alcohol vapor."

They walked through the grove and emerged upon a lawn that sloped gently upward. At the brow stood a beautiful little temple of Greek architecture. As they approached they read, carved into the marble architrave:

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AEDES TEMULENTI PERPETUI
E PLURIBUS UNUM
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The little porch, under the marble columns, was cool and shady. A signboard said: Visiting Hours, Noon to Midnight. Quimbleton looked at his watch. "It's not noon yet," he said, "but as we're old friends I dare say he'll be willing to see us."

Pushing through a slatted swinging door of beautifully carved bronze, they found themselves in a charmingly furnished reference library. There were lounges and deep leather chairs, and ash trays for smokers. Quimbleton, who was something of a bookworm, ran his eye along the shelves. "A very neat idea," he said. "They have collected a little library of all the standard works on drink. This should be of great value to future historians and researchers."

Through another swinging door they found the central shrine.

It was circular in shape, illuminated through a clear skylight. Under the rotunda was a low, broad marble counter, surmounted by a gleaming mirror and a noble array of bottles, flasks, decanters, goblets and glasses of every size. The pale yellow of white wines, the ruby of claret, the tawny brown of port, the green and violet and rose of various liqueurs, sparkled in their appointed vessels. In front of this altar stood a three−foot mahogany bar, with its scrolled rim and diminutive brass rail, all complete. A red velvet cord hung from brass posts separated it from the open floor.

A series of mural paintings, in the vivid coloring and superb technique of Maxfield Parrish, adorned the walls of the room. They portrayed the history of Alcohol from the dawn of time down to the summer of 1919. A space for one more painting was left blank, and Mr. and Mrs. Quimbleton concluded that the artist was still at work upon the final panel.

An attendant in white was polishing glasses behind the tiny bar. He was an elderly man with a pink clean−shaven face and the initials P. S. were embroidered on the collar of his starched jacket. There was an air of evident pride in his bearing as he listened to their exclamations of admiration.

"Your first visit, sir?" he said.

"Yes," said Quimbleton. "I must confess I had no idea it would be as fine as this. What time does Mr. Bleak get in?"

"He usually opens up with a nip of Scotch about eleven−thirty," said the bartender. "Just so as to get up a little circulation before opening time. He's got a hard afternoon before him to−day," he added.

"How do you mean?" said Quimbleton.

"One of the excursion trains coming. The railroad runs cheap excursions here three days a week, and the crowds is enormous. When there's a bunch like that there's always a lot wants Mr. Bleak to take some special drink they used to be partial to, just to recall old times. Of course, being what you might call a servant of the public, he doesn't like not to oblige. But I doubt whether he's got the constitution to stand it long. The other day the Mint Julep Veterans of Kentucky held a memorial day here, and Mr. Bleak had to sink fifteen juleps to satisfy them. I tell him not to push himself too far, but he's still pretty new at the job. He likes to go over the top every day."

"Your face is very familiar," said Theodolinda. "Where have we seen you before?"

"I wondered if you'd recognize me," said the bartender. "I've shaved off my mustache. I'm Jerry Purplevein. When I was turned down in that election I thought this would be the next best thing. As a matter of fact, it's better. I don't really care for the stuff; I just like to see it around. Miss Absinthe felt the same way. She's head stewardess up to the Hostess House."

"It seems to me I used to see you somewhere in New York," said Quimbleton.

"I was head bar at the Hotel Pennsylvania," said Jerry. "We had the finest bar in the world, had only been running a couple of months when prohibition come in. They turned it into a soda fountain. Ah, that was a tragedy! But this is a grand job. Government service, you see: sure pay, tony surroundings, and what you might call steady custom. Mr. Bleak is as nice a gentleman to mix 'em for as I ever see."

"But what is this for?" asked Theodolinda, pointing to a beautiful marble cash register. "Surely Mr. Bleak doesn't have to BUY his drinks?"

"No, ma'am," said Jerry, "but he likes to have 'em rung up same as customary. He says it makes it seem more natural. Here he is now!"

Jerry flew to attention behind the three−foot bar, and they turned to see their friend enter through the bronze swinging doors.

"Well, well!" cried Bleak. "This is a delightful surprise!"

He was dressed in a lounging suit of fine texture, and while he seemed a little thinner and paler, and his eyes a little weary, he was in excellent spirits.

"Come," he said, "you're just in time for a bite of lunch. Jerry, what's on the counter to−day?"

Jerry bustled proudly over to the free−lunch counter, whipped off the steam−covers, and disclosed a fragrant joint of corned beef nestling among cabbages and boiled potatoes. With the delight of the true artist he seized a long narrow carving knife, gave it a few passes along a steel, and sliced off generous portions of the beef onto plates bearing the P. S. monogram. This they supplemented with other selections from the liberally supplied free−lunch counter. Soft, crumbling orange cheese, pickles, smoked sardines, chopped liver, olives, pretzels—all the now−forgotten appetizers were laid out on broad silver platters.

"I wish I could offer you a drink," said Bleak, "but as you know, it would be unconstitutional. With your permission, I shall have to have something. My office hours begin shortly, and some one might come in."

He took up his station at the little bar behind the velvet cord, and slid his left foot onto the miniature rail. Jerry, with the air of an artist about to resume work on his favorite masterpiece, stood expectant.

"A little Scotch, Jerry," said Bleak.

In the manner reminiscent of an elder day Jerry wiped away imaginary moisture from the mahogany with a deft circular movement of a white cloth. Turning to the gleaming pyramid of glassware, he set out the decanter of whiskey, a small empty glass, and a twin glass two−thirds full of water. His motions were elaborately careless and automatic, but he was plainly bursting with joy to be undergoing such expert and affectionate scrutiny.

Bleak poured out three fingers of whiskey, and held up the baby tumbler.

"Here's to the happy couple!" he cried, and drank it in one swift, practiced gesture. He then swallowed about a tablespoonful of the water. Jerry removed the utensils, again wiped the immaculate bar, and rang the cashless cash−register. The Perpetual Souse smiled happily.

"That's how it's done," he said. "Do you remember?"

"We're just back from South America," said Quimbleton.

"Some of the boys from the old Balloon office were in here the other day," said Bleak. "I'm afraid it was rather too much for them—in an emotional way, I mean. I tossed off a few for their benefit, and one of them—the cartoonist he used to be, perhaps you remember him—fainted with excitement."

"Well, how do you like the job?" said Quimbleton.

Bleak did not answer this directly. Making an apology to Jerry and promising to be back in a few minutes, he escorted his visitors round the temple and gave them some of the picture postcards of himself that were sold to souvenir hunters at five cents each. He showed them the cafeteria for the convenience of visitors, the Hostess House (where they found Mrs. Bleak comfortably installed), the ice−making machinery, the private brewery, and the motor−truck used to transport supplies. In a corner of the garden they found the children playing.

"It's a good thing the children enjoy playing with empty bottles," said Bleak. "It's getting to be quite a problem to know what to do with them. I'm using some of them to make a path across the lawn, bury them bottom up, you know.

"But you ask how I like it? I would never admit it before Jerry, because the good fellow expects more of me than I am able to fulfill, but as a matter of fact this is hardly a one−man job. There ought to be at least seven of us, each to go on duty one day a week. No—you see, being a kind of government museum, I don't even get Sundays

off because lots of people can only get here that day. Next after Mount Vernon and Independence Hall, I get more visitors than any other national shrine. And almost all of them expect me to have a go at their favorite drink while they're watching me. Being what you might call the most public spirited man in the country, I have to oblige them as much as possible. But I doubt whether I shall be a candidate for reelection.

"I think the government has rather overestimated my capacity," he continued. "They import a shipload of stuff from abroad every month, and send an auditor here to check over my empties. I've been hard put to it to get away with all the stuff. I've had to fall back on your old plan of using wine to irrigate the garden. It's had rather a dissipating effect on the birds and insects, though. Really, you ought to spend an evening here some time. The birds sing all night long: they have to sleep it off in the morning. A robin with a hang−over is one of the funniest things in the world."

"We saw one!" cried Theodolinda. "He was more than hanging over— he had fallen right off!"

"There's a butterfly here," said Bleak—"Rather a friend of mine, who can give a bumble bee the knock−out after he gets his drop of rum. I've seen him chase a wasp all over the lot."

From the temple came the sound of chimes striking twelve, and down in the valley they heard the whistle of a train.

"There's the excursion train leaving Souse Junction," said Bleak. "I must get back to the bar!"

They returned to the shrine, and Bleak entered his little enclosure.

"Jerry," he said, "the crowd will soon be here. I must get busy. What do you recommend?"

"Better stick to the Scotch," said Jerry, and put the decanter on the mahogany. Bleak drank two slugs hastily, and turned to his friends with an almost wistful air.

"Come again and stay longer," he said. "I see so many strangers, I get homesick for a friendly face." He called Quimbleton aside. "Does Mrs. Quimbleton keep up her trances?" he whispered.

"Not recently," said Virgil. "You see, in South America there was no necessity—but when we get settled—"

"You are a lucky fellow," whispered Bleak. "All the enjoyment without any of the formalities!" And he added aloud, grasping their hands, "Next time, come in the evening. A man in my line of work is hardly at his best before nightfall."

As they walked back to the plane, Mr. and Mrs. Quimbleton saw the excursionists, a thousand or so, hastening through the park on foot and in huge sight−seeing cars where men with megaphones were roaring comments. One group of pedestrians bore a large banner lettered EGG NOG MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION OF CAMDEN, N. J.

"Poor Mr. Bleak!" said Theodolinda. "On top of all that Scotch!"

When they took the air again they circled over the temple at a safe height. They could see the crowd gathered densely round the little white columns. Virgil shut off the motor for a moment, and even at that distance they could hear the sound of cheers.

CHAPTER XI. IT'S A LONG WORM THAT HAS NO TURNING

Bishop Chuff sat sourly in his office and sighed for more worlds to canker. Round the room stood the tall filing cases containing card indexes of prohibited offences, and he looked gloomily over the crowded drawers in the vain hope of finding something that had been overlooked. He pulled out a drawer at random—Schedule K−36, Minor Social Offenses—and ran his embittered eye over a card. It was marked Conversational Felonies, and began thus:

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Arguing
Blandishing
Buffoonery
Contradicting
Demurring
Ejaculating
Exaggerating
Facetiousness
Giggling
Hemming and Hawing
Implying
Insisting
Jesting
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Each item also referred to another card on which the penalty was noted and legal test cases summarized.

"No," he brooded, "there is nothing left."

Even the most loyal of the Bishop's Staff admitted that he was far from well, and it was decided that he ought to take a vacation. He himself concurred in this, and as the home resorts were no longer places of mirth and glee, he determined to go to Europe. This would have the added advantage of enabling him to spend some time conferring with prohibition leaders abroad as to ways and means of converting Europe to his schemes of reform. Everyone in the office showed genuine unselfishness in making plans for the Bishop's vacation, and he was urged to stay away as long as he felt he could be spared. Europe, too, was much excited over the prospect of his coming, and the British prime minister was questioned on the subject in the House of Commons. For his entertainment on the voyage a set of twelve beautiful folio volumes, bound in black morocco, were prepared. They contained a digest of prohibition legislation which Chuff had been instrumental in having put on the statutes. For the first time in years the Bishop was cheered as he passed about the streets, and he realized that he had never known how popular he was until it was announced that he was going away.

But still he was not content. One morning, not long before the date set for his sailing, he sat gloomily at his desk. He was engaged in making his will, and had found to his secret bitterness that after bequeathing a few personal trinkets to the office staff there was really no one to whom he could leave the bulk of his misfortune. Theodolinda, of course, he had quite cut off from his estate. He only knew that she was living somewhere with the degraded Quimbleton, carrying on a little psychic tavern which no laws could reach, in a state of criminal happiness.

From the street, far beneath his open window, he heard the clamor of a police patrol and leaned eagerly over the sill in the hope of seeing something that would cheer his black mood. But it was only a man being arrested for leaning against a lamp−post—a rather common offence at that time, for most of the normal occupations of the citizens had been prohibited, and they mooned about the highways in a state of listless discontent. But then, farther down the channel of the street, he saw something that caught his eye. A group of people were marching with flags and signs toward the railway station. SATURDAY SCHOOL PICNIC TO SOUSE TEMPLE, he read on a banner. He noticed that in spite of all the laws against smiling in public, these people bore a look of suppressed merriment. They were obviously out for a good time. A sudden thought struck him.

That afternoon, in impenetrable disguise, the Bishop paid his first visit to the Temple of Dunraven Bleak.

The next morning, when his subordinates came to see him about the final plans for his departure, they were

horrified to find him sitting at his desk wearing in the recesses of his beard what would have been called (on any other man) a smile.

"I have changed my mind," he said. "I am not going away."

They cried out in amazement, and pointed out to him how sorely in need of relaxation he was.

"I am planning relaxation," he said, and that was all they could get out of him.

Later in the day a confidential messenger was dispatched to the private printing press of the Chuff Organization, bearing the text of a poster which was found broadcast over the whole country a few days later. It ran thus:

AT THE NEXT ELECTION
For Perpetual Souse
VOTE FOR CHUFF
The People's Friend

THE END