JOURNEYS TO BAGDAD

BY CHARLES S. BROOKS

ILLUSTRATED WITH ORIGINAL WOOD-CUTS BY ALLEN LEWIS

YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS
NEW HAVEN CONNECTICUT
M D CCCC XV

Title: Journeys to Bagdad

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Release Date: December 12, 2006 [eBook #20095]

Language: English

Character set encoding: ISO-8859-1

E-text prepared by Barbara Tozier, Bill Tozier,
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(http://www.pgdp.net/)

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First printed November, 1915, 1000 copies

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The Yale University Press makes grateful acknowledgment to the Editors of the *Yale Review* and of the *New Republic* for permission to include in the present work essays of which they were the original publishers.

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JOURNEYS TO BAGDAD

A procession of people.

Are you of that elect who, at certain seasons of the year—perhaps in March

when there is timid promise of the spring or in the days of October when there are winds across the earth and gorgeous panic of fallen leaves—are you of that elect who, on such occasion or any occasion else, feel stirrings in you to be quit of whatever prosy work is yours, to throw down your book or ledger, or your measuring tape—if such device marks your service—and to go forth into the world?

I do count myself of this elect. And I will name such stimuli as most set these stirrings in me. And first of all there is a smell compounded out of hemp and tar that works pleasantly to my undoing. Now it happens that there is in this city, down by the river where it flows black with city stain as though the toes of commerce had been washed therein, a certain ship chandlery. It is filthy coming on the place, for there is reek from the river and staleness from the shops—ancient whiffs no wise enfeebled by their longevity, Nestors of their race with span of seventy lusty summers. But these smells do not prevail within the chandlery. At first you see nothing but rope. Besides clothesline and other such familiar and domestic twistings, there are great cordages scarce kinsmen to them, which will later put to sea and will whistle with shrill enjoyment at their release. There are such hooks, swivels, blocks and tackles, such confusion of ships' devices as would be enough for the building of a sea tale. It may be fancied that here is Treasure Island itself, shuffled and laid apart in bits like a puzzle-picture. (For genius, maybe, is but a nimbleness of collocation of such hitherto unconsidered trifles.) Then you will go aloft where sails are made, with sailormen squatting about, bronzed fellows, rheumatic, all with pipes. And through all this shop is the smell of hemp and tar.

In finer matters I have no nose. It is ridiculous, really, that this very

messenger and forerunner of myself, this trumpeter of my coming, this bi-nasal fellow in the crow's-nest, should be so deficient. If smells were bears, how often I would be bit! My nose may serve by way of ornament or for the sniffing of the heavier odors, yet will fail in the nice detection of the fainter waftings and olfactory ticklings. Yet how will it dilate on the Odyssean smell of hemp and tar! And I have no explanation of this, for I am no sailor. Indeed, at sea I am misery itself whenever perchance "the ship goes *wop* (with a wiggle between)." Such wistful glances have I cast upon the wide freedom of the decks when I leave them on the perilous adventure of dinner! So this relish of hemp and tar must be a legacy from a far-off time—a dim atavism, to put it as hard as possible—for I seem to remember being told that my ancestors were once engaged in buccaneering or other valiant livelihood.

But here is a peculiar thing. The chandlery gives me no desire to run away to sea. Rather, the smell of the place urges me indeterminately, diffusedly, to truantry. It offers me no particular chart. It but cuts my moorings for whatever winds are blowing. If there be blood of a pirate in me, it is a shame what faded juice it is. It would flow pink on the sticking. In mean contrast to skulls, bowie-knives and other red villainy, my thoughts will be set toward the mild truantry of trudging for an afternoon in the country. Or it is likely that I'll carry stones for the castle that I have been this long time building. Were the trick of prosody in me, I would hew a poem on the spot.

A ship grounds on the Earth.

Such is my anemia. And yet there is a touch of valiancy, too, as from the days

when my sainted ancestors sailed with their glass beads from Bristol harbor; the desire of visiting the sunset, of sailing down on the far side of the last horizon where the world itself falls off and there is sky with swirl of stars beyond.

In the spring of each year everyone should go to Bagdad—not particularly to Bagdad, for I shall not dictate in matter of detail—but to any such town that may happen to be so remote that you are not sure when you look it up whether it is on page 47 which is Asia, or on page 53 which is Persia. But Bagdad will serve: For surely, Reader, you have not forgotten that it was in Bagdad in the surprising reign of Haroun-al-Raschid that Sinbad the Sailor lived! Nor can it have escaped you that scarce a mule's back distance—such was the method of computation in those golden days—lived that prince of medieval plain-clothes men, Ali Baba!

Historically, Bagdad lies in that tract of earth where purple darkens into night. Geographically, it lies obliquely downward, and is, I compute, considerably off the southeast corner of my basement. It is such distant proximity, doubtless, that renders my basement—and particularly its woodpile, which lies obscurely beyond the laundry—such a shadowy, grim and altogether mysterious place. If there be any part of the house, including certain dark corners of the attic, that is fearfully Mesopotamian after nightfall, it is that woodpile. Even when I sit above, secure with lights, if by chance I hear tappings from below—such noises are common on a windy night—I know that it is the African Magician pounding for the genie, the sound echoing through the hollow earth. It is matter of doubt whether the iron bars so usual on basement windows serve chiefly to keep burglars out, or whether their greater service is not their defense of western Christianity against the invasion from the East which, except for

these bars, would enter here as by a postern. At a hazard, my suspicion would fall on the iron doors that open inwards in the base of chimneys. We have been fondly credulous that there is nothing but ash inside and mere siftings from the fire above; and when, on an occasion, we reach in with a trowel for a scoop of this wood-ash for our roses, we laugh at ourselves for our scare of being nabbed. But some day if by way of experiment you will thrust your head within—it's a small hole and you will be besmirched beyond anything but a Saturday's reckoning—you will see that the pit goes off in darkness—*downward*. It was but the other evening as we were seated about the fire that there came upward from the basement a gibbering squeak. Then the woodpile fell over, for so we judged the clatter. Is it fantastic to think that some dark and muffled Persian, after his dingy tunneling from the banks of the Tigris, had climbed the pile of wood for a breath of night at the window and, his foot slipping, the pile fell over? Plainly, we heard him scuttling back to the ash-pit.

Be these things as they may, when you have arrived in Bagdad—and it is best that you travel over land and sea—if you be serious in your zest, you will not be satisfied, but will journey a thousand miles more at the very least, in whatever direction is steepest. And you will turn the flanks of seven mountains, with seven villainous peaks thereon. For the very number of them will put a spell on you. And you will cross running water, that you leave no scent for the world behind. Such journey would be the soul of truantry and you should set out upon the road every spring when the wind comes warm.

Now the medieval pilgrimage in its day, as you very well know, was a most popular institution. And the reasons are as plentiful as blackberries. But in the first place and foremost, it came always in the spring. It was like a tonic, iron for

the blood. There were many men who were not a bit pious, who, on the first warm day when customers were scarce, yawned themselves into a prodigious holiness. Who, indeed, would resign himself to changing moneys or selling doves upon the Temple steps when such appeal was in the air? What cobbler even, bent upon his leather, whose soul would not mount upon such a summons? Who was it preached the first crusade? There was no marvel in the business. Did he come down our street now that April's here, he would win recruits from every house. I myself would care little whether he were Christian or Mohammedan if only the shrine lay over-seas and deep within the twistings of the mountains.

If, however, your truantry is domestic, and the scope of the seven seas with glimpse of Bagdad is too broad for your desire, then your yearning may direct itself to the spaces just outside your own town. If such myopic truantry is in you, there is much to be said for going afoot. In these days when motors are as plentiful as mortgages this may appear but discontented destitution, the cry of sour grapes. And yet much of the adventuring of life has been gained afoot. But walking now has fallen on evil days. It needs but an enlistment of words to show its decadence. Tramp is such a word. Time was when it signified a straight back and muscular calves and an appetite, and at nightfall, maybe, pleasant gossip at the hearth on the affairs of distant villages. There was rhythm in the sound. But now it means a loafer, a shuffler, a wilted rascal. It is patched, dingy, out-at-elbows. Take the word vagabond! It ought to be of innocent repute, for it is built solely from stuff that means to wander, and wandering since the days of Moses has been practiced by the most respectable persons. Yet Noah Webster, a most disinterested old gentleman, makes it clear that a vagabond is a vicious scamp who deserves no better than the lockup.

A man plays a flute.

Doubtless Webster, if at home, would loose his dog did such a one appear. A wayfarer, also, in former times was but a goer of ways, a man afoot, whether on pilgrimage or itinerant with his wares and cart and bell. Does the word not recall the poetry of the older road, the jogging horse, the bush of the tavern, the crowd about the peddler's pack, the musician piping to the open window, or the shrine in the hollow? Or maybe it summons to you a decked and painted Cambyses bellowing his wrath to an inn-yard.

A man with a gouty foot sits at a table.

One would think that the inventor of these scandals was a crutched and limping fellow, who being himself stunted and dwarfed below the waist was trying to sneer into disuse all walking the world over, or one who was paunched by fat living beyond carrying power, larding the lean earth, fearing lest he sweat himself to death, some Falstaff who unbuttons him after supper and sleeps on benches after noon. Rather these words should connote the strong, the self-reliant, the youthful. He is a tramp, we should say, who relies most on his own legs and resources, who least cushions himself daintily against jar in his neighbor's tonneau, whose eye shines out seldomest from the curb for a lift. The wayfarer must go forth in the open air. He must seek hilltop and wind. He must gather the dust of counties. His prospects must be of broad fields and the smoking chimneys of supper.

But the goer afoot must not be conceived as primarily an engine of muscle.

He is the best walker who keeps most widely awake in his five senses. Some men might as well walk through a railway tunnel. They are so concerned with the getting there that a black night hangs over them. They plunge forward with their heads down as though they came of an antique race of road builders. Should there be mileposts they are busied with them only, and they will draw dials from their pokes to time themselves. I fell into this iniquity on a walk in Wales from Bala to Dolgelley. Although I set out leisurely enough, with an eye for the lake and hills, before many hours had elapsed I had acquired the milepost habit and walked as if for a wager. I covered the last twenty miles in less than five hours, and when the brown stone village came in sight and I had thumped down the last hill and over the peaked bridge, I was a dilapidated and foot-sore vagrant and nothing more. To this day Wales for me is the land where one's feet have the ugly habit of foregathering in the end of the shoes.

Worse still than the athletic walker is he who takes Dame Care out for a stroll. He forever runs his machinery, plans his business ventures and introduces his warehouse to the countryside.

Nor must walking be conceived as merely a means of resting. One should set out refreshed and for this reason morning is the best time. Yours must be an exultant mood. "Full many a glorious morning have I seen flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye." Your brain is off at a speed that was impossible in your lack-luster days. You have a flow of thoughts instead of the miserable trickle that ordinarily serves your business purposes and keeps you from under the trolley cars.

But all truantry is not in the open air. I know a man who while it is yet winter will get out his rods and fit them together as he sits before the fire. Then

he will swing his arm forward from the elbow. The table has become his covert and the rug beyond is his pool. And sometimes even when the rod is not in his hand he will make the motion forward from the elbow and will drop his thumb. It will show that he has jumped the seasons and that he stands to his knees in an August stream.

It was but yesterday on my return from work that I witnessed a sight that moved me pleasantly to thoughts of truantry. Now, in all points a grocer's wagon is staid and respectable. Indeed, in its adherence to the business of the hour we might use it as a pattern. For six days in the week it concerns itself solely with its errands of mercy—such "whoas" and running up the kitchen steps with baskets of potatoes—such poundings on the door—such golden wealth of melons as it dispenses. Though there may be a kind of gayety in this, yet I'll hazard that in the whole range of quadricycle life no vehicle is more free from any taint of riotous conduct. Mark how it keeps its Sabbath in the shed! Yet here was this sturdy Puritan tied by a rope to a motor-car and fairly bounding down the street. It was a worse breach than when Noah was drunk within his tent. Was it an instance of falling into bad company? It was Nym, you remember, who set Master Slender on to drinking. "And I be drunk again," quoth he, "I'll be drunk with those that have the fear of God, and not with drunken knaves." Or rather did not every separate squeak of the grocer's wagon cry out a truant disposition? After years of repression here was its chance at last. And with what a joyous rollic, with what a lively clatter, with what a hilarious reeling, as though in gay defiance of the law of gravity, was it using its liberty! Had it been a hearse in a runaway, the comedy would not have been better. If I had been younger I would have pelted after and climbed in over the tailboard to share the reckless pitch of

its enfranchisement.

Then there is a truantry that I mention with hesitation, for it comes close to the heart of my desire, and in such matter particularly I would not wish to appear a fool to my fellows. The child has this truantry when he plays at Indian, for he fashions the universe to his desires. But some men too can lift themselves, though theirs is an intellectual bootstrap, into a life that moves above these denser airs. Theirs is an intensity that goes deeper than daydreaming, although it admits distant kinship. Through what twilight and shadows do such men climb until night and star-dust are about them! Theirs is the dizzy exaltation of him who mounts above the world. Alas, in me is no such unfathomable mystery. I but trick myself. Yet I have my moments. These stones that I carry on the mountain, what of them? On what windy ridge do I build my castle? It is shrill and bleak, they say, on the topmost peaks of the Delectable Mountains, so lower down I have reared its walls. There is no storm in these upland valleys and the sun sits pleasantly on their southern slopes. But even if there be unfolded no broad prospect from the devil to the sunrise, there are pleasant cottages in sight and the smoke of many suppers curling up.

If you happened to have been a freshman at Yale some eighteen years ago and were at all addicted to canoeing on Lake Whitney, and if, moreover, on coming off the lake there burned in you a thirst for ginger-beer—as is common in the gullet of a freshman—doubtless you have gone from the boathouse to a certain little white building across the road to gratify your hot desires. When you opened the door, your contemptible person—I speak with the vocabulary of a sophomore—is proclaimed to all within by the jangling of a bell. After due interval wherein you busy yourself in an inspection of the cakes and buns that

beam upon you from a show-case—your nose meanwhile being pressed close against the glass for any slight blemish that might deflect your decision (for a currant in the dough often raises an unsavory suspicion and you'll squint to make the matter sure)—there will appear through a back door a little old man to minister unto you. You will give no great time to the naming of your drink—for the fires are hot in you—but will take your bottle to a table. The braver spirits among you will scorn glasses as effeminate and will gulp the liquor straight from the bottle with what wickedest bravado you can muster.

Now it is likely that you have done this with a swagger and have called your servitor "old top" or other playful name. Mark your mistake! You were in the presence, if you but knew it, of a real author, not a tyro fumbling for self-expression, but a man with thirty serials to his credit. Shall I name the periodical? It was the *Golden Hours*, I think. Ginger-beer and jangling bells were but a fringe upon his darker purpose. His desk was somewhere in the back of the house, and there he would rise to all the fury of a South-Sea wreck—for his genius lay in the broader effects. Even while we simpletons jested feebly and practiced drinking with the open throat—which we esteemed would be of service when we had progressed to the heavier art of drinking real beer—even as we munched upon his ginger cakes, he had left us and was exterminating an army corps in the back room. He was a little man, pale and stooped, but with a genius for truantry—a pilgrim of the Bagdad road.

But we move on too high a plane. Most of us are admitted into truantry by the accidents, merely, of our senses. By way of instance, the sniff of a rotten apple will set a man off as on seven-league boots to the valleys of his childhood. The dry rustling of November leaves re-lights the fires of youth. It was only this

afternoon that so slight a circumstance as a ray of light flashing in my eye provided me an agreeable and unexpected truantry. It sent me climbing the mountains of the North and in no less company than that of Brunhilda and a troop of Valkyrs.

It is likely enough that none of you have heard of Long Street. As far as I am aware it is not known to general fame. It is typically a back street of the business of a city, that is, the ventages of its buildings are darkened most often by packing cases and bales. Behind these ventages are metal shoots. To one uninitiated in the ways of commerce it would appear that these openings were patterned for the multiform enactment of an Amy Robsart tragedy, with such devilish deceit are the shoots laid up against the openings. First the teamster teeters and cajoles the box to the edge of the dray, then, with a sudden push, he throws it off down the shoot, from which it disappears with a booming sound. As I recall it was by some such treachery that Amy Robsart met her death. Be that as it may, all day long great drays go by with Earls of Leicester on their lofty seats, prevailing on their horses with stout, Elizabethan language. If there comes a tangle in the traffic it is then especially that you will hear a largeness of speech as of spacious and heroic days.

During the meaner hours of daylight it is my privilege to occupy a desk and chair at a window that overlooks this street. Of the details of my activity I shall make no mention, such level being far below the flight of these enfranchised hours of night wherein I write. But in the pauses of this activity I see below me wagon loads of nails go by and wagon loads of hammers hard after, to get a crack at them. Then there will be a truck of saws, as though the planking of the world yearned toward amputation. Or maybe, at a guess, ten thousand rat-traps

will move on down the street. It's sure they take us for Hamelin Town, and are eager to lay their ambushment. There is something rather stirring in such prodigious marshaling, but I hear you ask what this has to do with truantry.

It was near quitting time yesterday that a dray was discharging cases down a shoot. These cases were secured with metal reinforcement, and this metal being rubbed bright happened to catch a ray of the sun at such an angle that it was reflected in my eye. This flash, which was like lightning in its intensity, together with the roar of the falling case, transported me—it's monstrous what jumps we take when the fit is on us—to the slopes of dim mountains in the night, to the heights above Valhalla with the flash of Valkyrs descending. And the booming of the case upon the slide—God pity me—was the music. It was thus that I was sent aloft upon the mountains of the North, into the glare of lightning, with the cry of Valkyrs above the storm….

But presently there was a voice from the street. "It's the last case to-night, Sam, you lunk-head. It's quitting time."

The light fades on Long Street. The drays have gone home. The Earls of Leicester drowse in their own kitchens, or spread whole slices of bread on their broad, aristocratic palms. Somewhere in the dimmest recesses of those cluttered buildings ten thousand rat-traps await expectant the oncoming of the rats. And in your own basement—the shadows having prospered in the twilight—it is sure (by the beard of the prophet, it is sure) that the ash-pit door is again ajar and that a pair of eyes gleam upon you from the darkness. If, on the instant, you will crouch behind the laundry tubs and will hold your breath—as though a doctor's thermometer were in your mouth, you with a cold in the head—it's likely that you will see a Persian climb from the pit, shake the ashes off him, and make for

the vantage of the woodpile, where—the window being barred—he will sigh his soul for the freedom of the night.

A ghostly face stares out of a plain window.

THE WORST EDITION OF SHAKESPEARE

A nun is on her knees before a man in a short flared skirt.

THE WORST EDITION OF SHAKESPEARE

Reader, if by fortunate chance you have a son of tender years—the age is best from the sixth to the eleventh summer—or in lieu of a son, a nephew, only a few years in pants—mere shoots of nether garments not yet descending to the knees—doubtless, if such fortunate chance be yours, you went on one or more occasions last summer to a circus.

If the true holiday spirit be in you—and you be of other sort, I'll not chronicle you—you will have come early to the scene for a just examination of what mysteries and excitements are set forth in the side-shows. Now if you be a man of humane reasoning, you will stand lightly on your legs, alert to be pulled this way or that as the nepotic wish shall direct, whether it be to the fat woman's booth or to the platform where the thin man sits with legs entwined behind his neck, in delightful promise of what joy awaits you when you have dropped your nickel in the box and gone inside. To draw your steps, it is the showman's privilege to make what blare he please upon the sidewalk; to puff his cheeks with robustious announcement.

If by further fortunate chance, you are addicted, let us say, in the quieter hours of winter, to writing of any kind—and for your joy, I pray that this be so, whether this writing be in massive volumes, or obscure and unpublished beyond its demerit—if such has been your addiction, you have found, doubtless, that your case lies much like the fat woman's; that it is the show you give before the door that must determine what numbers go within—that, to be plain with you, much thought must be given to the taking of your title. It must be a most alluring trumpeting, above the din of rival shows.

So I have named this article with thought of how I might stir your learned curiosity. I have set scholars' words upon my platform, thereby to make you

think how prodigiously I have stuffed the matter in. And all this while, my article has to do only with a certain set of Shakespeare in nine calfskin volumes, edited by a man named John Bell, now long since dead, which set happens to have stood for several years upon my shelves; also, how it was disclosed to me that he was the worst of all editors, together with the reasons thereto and his final acquittal from the charge.

John Bell has stood, for the most part, in unfingered tranquillity, for I read from a handier, single volume. Only at cleaning times has he been touched, and then but in the common misery with all my books. Against this cleaning, which I take to be only a quirk of the female brain, I have often urged that the great, round earth itself has been subjected to only one flood, and that even that was a failure, for, despite Noah's shrewdness at the gangway, villains still persist on it. How then shall my books profitably endure a deluge both autumn and spring?

Thereafter, when the tempest has spent itself and the waters have returned from off my shelves, I'll venture in the room. There will be something different in the sniff of the place, and it will be marvelously picked up. Yet I can mend these faults. But it does fret me how books will be standing on their heads. Were certain volumes only singled out to stand upon their heads, Shaw for one, and others of our moderns, I would suspect the housemaid of expressing in this fashion a sly and just criticism of their inverted beliefs. I accused her on one occasion of this subtlety, but was met by such a vacant stare that I acquitted her at once. However, as she leaves my solidest authors also on their heads, men beyond the peradventure of such antics, I must consider it but a part of her carelessness, for which I have warned her twice. Were it not for her cunning with griddlecakes, to which I am much affected, I would have dismissed her before

this.

And now this Bell, which has ridden out so many of my floods, is proclaimed to me a villain. We had got beyond the April freshets and there was in consequence a soapy smell about. It is clear in my mind that a street organ had started up a gay tune and that there were sounds of gathering feet. I was reading at the time, in the green rocker by the lamp, a life of John Murray, by one whose name I have forgotten, when my eyes came on the sentence that has shaken me. Bell, it said, Bell of my own bookshelf, of all the editors of Shakespeare was the worst.

In my agitation I removed my glasses, breathed upon the lenses, and polished them. Here was one of my familiars accused of something that was doubtless heinous, although in what particulars I was at a loss to know. It came on me suddenly. It was like a whispered scandal, sinister in its lack of detail. All that I had known of Bell was that its publication had dated from the eighteenth century. Yet its very age had seemed a patent of respectability. If a thing does not rot and smell in a hundred and forty years, it would seem to be safe from corruption: it were true peacock. But here at last from Bell was an unsavory whiff. My flood had abated only a fortnight since, and here was a stowaway escaped. Bell was proclaimed a villain. Again had a flood proved itself a failure.

A crowd of children, outside.

Now, I feel no shame in having an outsider like Murray display to me these hidden evils; for I owe no inquisitorial duty to my books. There are people who will not admit a volume to their shelves until they have thrown it open and laid

its contents bare. This is the unmannerly conduct of the customs wharf. Indeed, it is such scrutiny, doubtless, that induces some authors to pack their ideas obscurely, thereby to smuggle them. However, there being now a scandal on my shelves, I must spy into it.

John Murray, wherein I had read the charge, had been such a friendly, tea-and-gossip book, not the kind to hiss a scandal at you. It was bound in blue cloth and was a heavy book, so that I held it on a cushion. (And this device I recommend to others.) It was the kind of book that stays open at your place, if you leave it for a moment to poke the fire. Some books will flop a hundred pages, to make you thumb them back and forth, though whether this be the binder's fault or a deviltry set therein by their authors I am at a loss to say. But Shaw would be of this kind, flopping and spry to mix you up. And in general, Shaw's humor is like that of a shell-man at a country fair—a thimble-rigger. No matter where you guess that he has placed the bean, you will be always wrong. Even though you swear that you have seen him slip it under, it's but his cunning to lead you off. But Murray was not that kind. It would stand at its post, unhitched, like a family horse.

Here was quandary. I looked at Bell, but God forgive me, it was not with the old trustfulness. He was on the top shelf but one, just in line with the eyes, with gilt front winking in the firelight. I had set him thus conspicuous with intention, because of his calfskin binding, quite old and worn. A decayed Gibbon, I had thought, proclaims a grandfather. A set of British Essayists, if disordered, takes you back of the black walnut. To what length, then, of cultured ancestry must not this Bell give evidence? (I had bought Bell, secondhand, on Farringdon Road, London, from a cart, cheap, because a volume was missing.)

And now it seemed he was in some sort a villain. Although shocked, I felt a secret joy. For somewhat too broadly had Bell smirked his sanctity on me. When piety has been flaunting over you, you will steal a slim occasion to proclaim a flaw. There is much human nature goes to the stoning of a saint. In my ignorance I had set the rogue in the company of the decorous Lorna Doone and the gentle ladies of Mrs. Gaskell. It is not that I admire that chaste assembly. But it were monstrous, even so, that I should neighbor them with this Bell, who, as it appeared, was no better than a wolf in calf's clothing. It was Little Red Riding Hood, you will recall, who mistook a wolf for her grandmother. And with what grief do we look on her unhappy end!

My hand was now raised to drag Bell out by the heels, when I reflected that what I had heard might be unfounded gossip, mere tattle, and that before I turned against an old acquaintance, it were well to set an inquiry afoot. First, however, I put him alongside Herbert Spencer. If it were Bell's desire to play the grandmother to him, he would find him tough meat.

Bell, John—I looked him up, first in volume Aus to Bis of the encyclopedia, without finding him, and then successfully in the National Biography—Bell, John, was a London bookseller. He was born in 1745, published his edition of Shakespeare in 1774, and after this assault, with the blood upon him, lived fifty years. This was reassuring. It was then but a bit of wild oats, no hanging matter. I now went at the question deeply. Yet I left him awhile with the indigestible Herbert.

It was in 1774 that Bell squirted his dirty ink. In *The Gentleman's Magazine* for that year appear mutterings from America, since called the Boston Tea Party. I set this down to bring the time more warmly to your mind, for a date alone is

but a blurred signpost unless you be a scholar. And it is advisedly that I quote from this particular periodical, because its old files can best put the past back upon its legs and set it going. There is a kind of history-book that sorts the bones and ties them all about with strings, that sets the past up and bids it walk. Yet it will not wag a finger. Its knees will clap together, its chest fall in. Such books are like the scribblings on a tombstone; the ghost below gives not the slightest squeal of life. But slap it shut and read what was written hastily at the time on the pages of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, and it will be as though Gabriel had blown a practice toot among the headstones. It is then that you will get the gibbering of returning life.

So it was in 1774 that Bell put out his version of Shakespeare. Bell was not a man of the schools. Caring not a cracked tinkle for learning, it was not to the folios, nor to any authority that he turned for the texts of his plays. Instead, he went to Drury Lane and Covent Garden and took their acting copies. These volumes, then, that catch my firelight hold the very plays that the crowds of 1774 looked upon. Herein is the Romeo, word for word, that Lydia Languish sniffled over. Herein is Shylock, not yet with pathos on him, but a buffoon still, to draw the gallery laugh.

A few nights later, having by grace of God escaped a dinner out, and being of a consequence in a kindly mood, the scandal, too, having somewhat abated in my memory, I took down a brown volume and ran my fingers over its sides and along its yellow edges. Then I made myself comfortable and opened it up.

There is nothing to-day more degenerate than our title-pages. It is in a mean spirit that we pinch and starve them. I commend the older kind wherein, generously ensampled, is the promise of the rich diet that shall follow. At the

circus, I have said, I'll go within that booth that has most allurement on its canvas front, and where the hawker has the biggest voice. If a fellow will but swallow a snake upon the platform at the door, my money is already in my palm. Thus of a book I demand an earnest on the title-page.

Bell's title-page is of the right kind. In the profusion and variety of its letters it is like a printer's sample book, with tall letters and short letters, dogmatic letters for heaping facts on you and script letters reclining on their elbows, convalescent in the text. There are slim letters and again the very progeny of Falstaff. And what flourishes on the page! It is like a pond after the antics of a skater.

There follows the subscribers' list. It is a Mr. Tickle's set that has come to me, for his name is on the fly-leaf. But for me and this set of Bell, Mr. Tickle would seem to have sunk into obscurity. I proclaim him here, and if there be anywhere at this day younger Tickles, even down to the merest titillation, may they see these lines and thus take a greeting from the past.

Then follows an essay on oratory. It made me grin from end to end. Yet, as on the repeating of a comic story, it is hard to get the sting and rollic on the tongue. And much quotation on a page makes it like a foundling hospital—sentences unparented, ideas abandoned of their proper text. "Where grief is to be expressed," says Bell, "the right hand laid slowly on the left breast, the head and chest bending forward, is a just expression of it…. Ardent affection is gained by closing both hands warmly, at half arm's length, the fingers intermingling, and bringing them to the breast with spirit…. Folding arms, with a drooping of the head, describe contemplation." I have put it to you and you can judge it.

Let us consider Bell's marginalia of the plays! Every age has importuned

itself with words. *Reason* was such a word, and *fraternity*, and *liberty*. *Efficiency*, maybe, is the latest, though it is sure that when you want anything done properly, you have to fight for it. It is below the dignity of my page to put a plumber on it, yet I have endured occasions! This word *efficiency*, then, comes from our needs and not from our accomplishment. It is at best a marching song, not a shout of victory. It is when the house is dirty that the cry goes up for brooms.

So Bell in the notes upon the margins of his pages echoes a world that is talking about *delicacy*, about *sentiment*, about *equality*. (For a breeze blows up from France.) It was these words that the eighteenth century most babbled when it grew old. It had horror for what was low and vulgar. It wore laces on its doublet front, and though it seldom washed, it perfumed itself. And all this is in Bell, for his notes are a running comment of a shallow, puritanistic prig, who had sharp eyes and a gossip's tongue. This was the time, too, when such words as *blanket* were not spoken by young ladies if men were about; for it is a bedroom word and therefore immoral. Bell objected from the bottom of his silly soul that Lady Macbeth should soil her mouth with it. "Blanket of the dark," he says, "is an expression greatly below our author. Curtain is evidently better." "Was the hope drunk wherein you dressed yourself?" Whereat Bell again complains that Lady Macbeth is "unnecessarily indelicate." "Though this tragedy," says Bell, "must be allowed a very noble composition, it is highly reprehensible for exhibiting the chimeras of witchcraft, and still more so for advancing in several places the principles of fatalism. We would not wish to see young, unsettled minds to peruse this piece without proper companions to prevent absurd prejudices."

It must appear from this, that, although one gains no knowledge of Shakespeare, one does gain a considerable knowledge of Bell and of his time. And this is just as well. For Bell's light on Shakespeare would be but a sulphur match the more at carnival time. Indeed, Shakespeare criticism has been such a pageantry of spluttering candle-ends and sniffing wicks that it is well that one or two tallow dips leave the rabble and illuminate the adjacent alleys. It is down such an alley that Bell's smoking light goes wandering off.

As I read Bell this night, it is as though I listen at the boxes and in the pit, in that tinkling time of 'seventy-four. The patched Lætitia sits surrounded by her beaux. It was this afternoon she had the vapors. Next to her, as dragon over beauty, is a fat dame with "grenadier head-dress." "The Rivals" has yet to be written. London still hears "The Beggar's Opera." Lady Macbeth is played in hoopskirts. The Bastille is a tolerably tight building. Robert Burns is strewn with his first crumbs. It is the age of omber, of sonnets to Chloe's false ringlets, of odes to red heels and epics to lap dogs, of tinseled struttings in gilded drawing-rooms. It was town-and-alley, this age; and though the fields lay daily in their new creation with sun and shadow on them, together with the minstrelsy of the winds across them and the still pipings of leaf and water, London, the while, kept herself in her smudgy convent, her ear tuned only to the jolting music of her streets, the rough syncope of wheel and voice. Since then what countless winds have blown across the world, and cloud-wrack! And this older century is now but a clamor of the memory. What mystery it is! What were the happenings in that pin-prick of universe called London? Of all the millions of ant hills this side Orion, what about this one? London was so certain it was the center of circumambient space. Tintinnabulate, little Bell!

So you see that the head and front of Bell's villainy was that he was a little man with an abnormal capacity for gossip. If gossip, then, be a gallows matter, let Bell unbutton him for the end. On the contrary, if gossip be but a trifle, here were a case for clement judgment.

In the first place, there is no vice of necessity in gossip. This must be clearly understood. It is proximity in time and place that makes it intolerable. A gossip next door may be a nuisance. A gossip in history may be delightful. No doubt if I had lived in Auchinleck in the days when Boswell lived at home, I would have thought him a nasty little "skike." But let him get to London and far off in the revolving years, and I admit him virtuous.

A gossip seldom dies. The oldest person in every community is a gossip and there are others still blooming and tender, who we know will live to be leathery and hard. That the life-insurance actuaries do not recognize this truth is a shame to their perception. Ancestral lesions should bulk for them no bigger than any slightest taint of keyhole lassitude. For it is by thinking of ourselves that we die. It leads to rheums and indigestions and off we go. And even an ignoble altruism would save us. I know one old lady who has been preserved to us these thirty years by no other nostrum than a knot-hole appearing in her garden fence.

An old lady stands at a garden fence.

It is a matter of doubt whether at the fashionable cures it is the water that has chief potency; or whether, so many being met together each morning at the pump, it is not the exchange of these bits of news that leads to convalescence. It is marvelous how a dull eye lights up if the bit be spicy. There was a famous

cure, I’m told, though I answer not for the truth of this, closed up for no other reason than that a deeper scandal being hissed about (a lady’s maid affair), all the inmates became distracted from their own complaints, and so, being made new, departed. To this day the building stands with broken doors and windows as testament to the blight such a sudden miracle put on the springs.

This shows, therefore, that gossipry must be judged by its effects. If it allay the stone or give a pleasant evening it should have reward instead of punishment. And here had Bell diverted me agreeably for an hour. It is true he had given me no “chill and arid knowledge” of Shakespeare, but I had had ample substitute and the clock had struck ten before its time. It were justice, then, that I cast back the lie on Murray and give Bell full acquittal.

No sooner was this decision made than I lifted him tenderly from the shelf where I had sequestered him. Volume seven was on its head, but I set it upright. Then I stroked its sides and blew upon its top, as is my custom. At the last I put him on his former shelf in the company of the chaste Lorna Doone and the gentle ladies of Mrs. Gaskell.

He sits there now, this night, on the top shelf but one, just in line with the eyes, with gilt front winking in the firelight. A decayed Gibbon, I had thought, proclaims a grandfather. To what length, then, of cultured ancestry must not this Bell give evidence?

A person is being carried in a sedan chair.

THE DECLINE OF NIGHT-CAPS

A man in a nightcap with a devil pulling on the end.

It sounds like the tinkle of triviality to descend from the stern business of this present time to write of night-caps: And yet while the discordant battles are puffing their cheeks upon the rumbling bass pipes, it is relief if there be intermingled a small, shrill treble—any slightest squeak outside the general woe.

There was a time when the chief issue of fowl was feather-beds. Some few tallest and straightest feathers, maybe, were used on women's hats, and a few of better nib than common were set aside for poets' use—goose feathers in particular being fashioned properly for the softer flutings, whether of Love or Spring—but in the main the manifest destiny of a feather was a feather-bed.

In those days it was not enough that you plunged to the chin in this hot swarm of feathers, for discretion, in an attempt to ward off from you all snuffling rheums, coughings, hackings and other fleshly ills, required you before kicking off the final slippers to shut the windows against what were believed to be the dank humors of the night. Nor was this enough. You slept, of course, in a four-post bed; and the curtains had to be pulled together beyond the peradventure of a cranny. Then as a last prophylaxis you put on a night-cap. Mr. Pickwick's was tied under the chin like a sunbonnet and the cords dangled against his chest, but this was a matter of taste. It was behind such triple rampart that you slept, and were adjudged safe from the foul contagion of the dark. Consequently your bed was not exactly like a little boat. Rather it was like a Pullman sleeper, which, as you will remember, was invented early in the nineteenth century and stands as a monument to its wisdom.

I have marveled at the ease with which Othello strangled Desdemona. Further thought gives it explanation. The poor girl was half suffocated before he laid hands on her. I find also a solution of Macbeth's enigmatic speech, "Wicked

dreams abuse the curtain'd sleep." Any dream that could get at you through the circumvallation of glass, brocade, cotton and feathers could be no better than a quadruplicated house-breaker, compounded out of desperate villainies.

Reader, have you ever purchased a pair of pajamas in London? This is homely stuff I write, yet there's pathos in it. That jaunty air betokens the beginning of your search before question and reiteration have dulled your spirits. Later, there will be less sparkle in your eye. What! Do not the English wear pajamas? Does not the sex that is bifurcated by day keep by night to its manly bifurcation? Is not each separate leg swathed in complete divorcement from its fellow? Or, womanish, do they rest in the common dormitory of a shirt *de nuit*? The Englishman *does* wear pajamas, but the word with him takes on an Icelandic meaning. They are built to the prescription of an Esquimo. They are woolly, fuzzy and the width of a finger thick. If I were a night-watchman, "doom'd for a certain term to walk the night," I should insist on English pajamas to keep me awake. If Saint Sebastian, who, I take it, wore sackcloth for the glory of his soul, could have lighted on the pair of pajamas that I bought on Oxford Circus, his halo would have burned the brighter.

Just how the feathery and billowy nights of our great-grandparents were changed into the present is too deep for explanation. Perhaps Annie left a door or window open—such neglect fitting with her other heedlessness—and notwithstanding this means of entry, it was found in the morning that no sprite or ooph had got in to pinch the noses of the sleepers. At least, there was no evidence of such a visitation, unless the snoring that abounded all the night did proceed from the pinching of the nose (the nasal orifice being so clamped betwixt the forefinger and the thumb of these devilish sprites that the breath was

denied its proper channel). Unless snoring was so caused, it is clear that no ooph had clambered through the window.

Or perhaps some brave man—a brother to him who first ate an oyster—put up the window out of bravado to snap thereby his fingers at the forms of darkness, and being found whole and without blemish or mark of witch upon his throat and without catarrhal snuffling in his nose, of a consequence the harsh opinion against the night softened.

Or maybe some younger woman threw up her window to listen to the slim tenor of moonlight passion with such strumming business as accompanied—tinkling of cithern or mandolin—and so with chin in hand, she sighed her soul abroad, to the result that the closing was forgotten. It is like enough that her dreams were all the sweeter for the breeze that blew across her bed—loaded with the rhythmic memory of the words she had heard within the night.

It was vanity killed the night-cap. What aldermanic man would risk the chance of seeing himself in the mirror? What judge, peruked by day, could so contain his learned locks? What male with waxed moustachios, or with limpest beard, or chin new-reaped would put his ears in such a compress? You will recall how Mr. Pickwick snatched his off when he found the lady in the curl papers in his room. His round face showed red with shame against the dusky bed-curtains, like the sun peering through the fog.

As for bed-curtains, they served the intrigue of at least five generations of novelists from Fielding onward. There was not a rogue’s tale of the eighteenth century complete without them. The wrong persons were always being pinned up inside them. The cause of such confusion started in the tap, too much negus or an over-drop of pineapple rum with a lemon in it or a potent drink whose

name I have forgotten that was always ordered “and make it luke, my dear.” Then, after such evening, a turn to the left instead of right, a wrong counting of doors along the passage, the jiggling of bed-curtains, screams and consternation. It is one of the seven original plots. Except for clothes-closets, screens and bed-curtains, Sterne must have gone out of the novel business, Sheridan have lost fecundity and Dryden starved in a garret. But the moths got into their red brocade at last and a pretty meal they made.

A sleeping porch is the symbol of the friendly truce between man and the material universe. The world itself and the void spaces of its wanderings, together with the elements of our celestial neighborhood, have been viewed by man with dark suspicion, with rather a squint-eyed prejudice. Let’s take a single case! Winds for a long time have borne bad reputations—except such anemic collateral as are called zephyrs—but winds, properly speaking, which are big and strong enough to have rough chins and beards coming, have been looked upon as roustabouts. What was mere humor in their behavior has been set down to mischief. If a wind in playfulness does but shake a casement, or if in frolic it scatters the ashes across the hearth, or if in liveliness it swishes you as you turn a corner and drives you aslant across the street, is it right that you set your tongue to gossip and judge it a son of Belial?

There are persons also—but such sleep indoors—in whose ears the wind whistles only gloomy tunes. Or if it rise to shrill piping, it rouses only a fear of chimneys. Thus in both high pitch and low there is fear in the hearing of it. Into their faces will come a kind of God-help-the-poor-sailors-in-the-channel look, as in a melodrama when the paper snowstorm is at its worst and the wind machine is straining at its straps. One would think that they were afraid the old earth itself

might be buffeted off its course and fall afoul of neighboring planets.

But behold the man whose custom is to sleep upon a porch! At what slightest hint—the night being yet young, with scarce three yawns gone round—does he shut his book and screen the fire! With what speed he bolts the door and puts out the downstairs lights, lest callers catch him in the business! How briskly does he mount the stairs with fingers already on the buttons! Then with what scattering of garments he makes him ready, as though his explosive speed had blown him all to pieces and lodged him about the room!

Then behold him—such general amputation not having proved fatal—advancing to the door muffled like a monk! There is a slippered flight. He dives beneath the covers. (I draw you a winter picture.) You will see no more of him now than the tip of his nose, rising like a little Ætna from the waves.

But does *he* fear the wind as it fumbles around the porch and plays like a kitten with the awning cords? Bless you, he has become a playmate of the children of the night—the swaying branches, the stars, the swirl of leaves—all the romping children of the night. And if there was any fear at all within the darkness, it has gone to sulk behind the mountains.

A small whirlwind deposits leaves at the corner of a building.

But the wind sings a sleepy song and the game's too short. Then the wind goes round and round the house looking for the leaves—for the wind is a bit of a nursemaid—and wherever it finds them it tucks them in, under fences and up against cellar windows where they will be safe until morning. Then it goes off on other business, for there are other streets in town and a great many leaves to be

attended to.

But the fellow with the periscopic nose above the covers lies on his back beneath the stars, and contemplation journeys to him from the wide spaces of the night.

MAPS AND RABBIT-HOLES

The rear end of a rabbit sticks out of a rolled-up map

MAPS AND RABBIT-HOLES

In what pleasurable mystery would we live were it not for maps! If I chance on the name of a town I have visited, I locate it on a map. I may not actually get

down the atlas and put my finger on the name, but at least I picture to myself its lines and contour and judge its miles in inches. And thereby for a thing of ink and cardboard I have banished from the world its immensity and mystery. But if there were no maps—what then? By other devices I would have to locate it. I would say that it came at the end of some particular day's journey; that it lies in the twilight at the conclusion of twenty miles of dusty road; that it lies one hour nightward of a blow-out. I would make it neighbor to an appetite gratified and a thirst assuaged, a cool bath, a lazy evening with starlight and country sounds. Is not this better than a dot on a printed page?

A man sits on a grazing horse.

That is the town, I would say, where we had the mutton chops and where we heard the bullfrogs on the bridge. Or that town may be circumstanced in cherry pie, a comical face at the next table, a friendly dog with hair-trigger tail, or some immortal glass of beer on a bench outside a road-inn. These things make that town as a flame in the darkness, a flame on a hillside to overtop my course. Many years can go grinding by without obliterating the pleasant sight of its flare. Or maybe the town is so intermingled with dismal memories that no good comes of too particularly locating it. Then Tony Lumpkin's advice on finding Mr. Hardcastle's house is enough. "It's a damn'd long, dark, boggy, dirty, dangerous way." And let it go at that.

Maps are toadies to the thoroughfares. They shower their attentions on the wide pavements, holding them up to observation, marking them in red, and babbling and prattling obsequiously about them, meanwhile snubbing with

disregard all the lanes and bypaths. They are cockney and are interested in showing only the highroads between cities, and in consequence neglect all tributary loops and windings. In a word, they are against the jog-trot countryside and conspire with the signposts against all loitering and irregularity.

As for me, I do not like a straight thoroughfare. To travel such a road is like passing a holiday with a man who is going about his business. Idle as you are, vacant of purpose, alert for distraction, *he* must keep his eyes straight ahead and he must attend to the business in hand. I like a road that is at heart a vagabond, which loiters in the shade and turns its head on occasion to look around the corner of a hill, which will seek out obscure villages even though it requires a zigzag course up a hillside, which follows a river for the very love of its company and humors its windings, which trots alongside and listens to its ripple and then crosses, sans bridge, like a schoolboy, with its toes in the water. I love a road which goes with the easy, rolling gait of a sailor ashore. It has no thought of time and it accepts all the vagaries of your laziness. I love a road which weaves itself into eddies of eager traffic before the door of an inn, and stops a minute at the drinking trough because it has heard the thirst in your horse's whinny; and afterwards it bends its head on the hillside for a last look at the kindly spot. Ah, but the vagabond cannot remain long on the hills. Its best are its lower levels. So down it dips. The descent is easy for roads and cart wheels and vagabonds and much else; until in the evening it hears again the murmur of waters, and its journey has ended.

A monk uses dividers, a map and a globe are behind him.

There is of course some fun in a map that is all wrong. Those, for example, of the early navigators are worth anybody's time. There is possibility in one that shows Japan where Long Island ought to be. That map is human. It makes a correct and proper map no better than a molly-coddle. There can be fine excitement in learning on the best of fourteenth century authority that there is no America and that India lies outside the Pillars of Hercules. The uncharted seas, the *incognova terra* where lions are (*ubi leones erunt*, as the maps say), these must always stir us. In my copy of Gulliver are maps of his discoveries. Lilliput lies off the coast of Sumatra and must now be within sight of the passengers bound from London to Melbourne if only they had eyes to see it. Brobdingnag, would you believe it, is a hump on the west coast of America and cannot be far from San Francisco. That gives one a start. Swift, writing in 1725 with a world to choose from, selects the Californian coast as the most remote and unknown for the scene of his fantastical adventure. It thrusts 1725 into a gray antiquity. And yet there are many buildings in England still standing that antedate 1725 by many years, some by centuries. Queen Elizabeth had been dead more than a hundred years. Canterbury was almost as old and probably in worse repair than it is now, when Frisco was still Brobdingnag. Can it be that the giant red trees and the tall bragging of the coast date from its heroic past?

Story-writers have nearly always been the foes of maps, finding in them a kind of cramping of their mental legs. And in consequence they have struck upon certain devices for getting off the map and away from its precise and restricting bigotry. Davy fell asleep. It was Davy, you remember, who grew drowsy one winter afternoon before the fire and sailed away with the goblin in his grandfather's clock. Robinson Crusoe was driven off his bearings by stress of

weather at sea. This is a popular device for eluding the known world. Whenever in your novel you come on a sentence like this—On the third night it came on to blow and that night and the three succeeding days and nights we ran close-reefed before the tempest—whenever you come on a sentence like that, you may know that the author feels pinched and cramped by civilization, and is going to regale you with some adventures of his uncharted imagination which are likely to be worth your attention.

Then there was Sentimental Tommy! Do you remember how he came to find the Enchanted Street? It happened that there was a parade, “an endless row of policemen walking in single file, all with the right leg in the air at the same time, then the left leg. Seeing at once that they were after him, Tommy ran, ran, ran until in turning a corner he found himself wedged between two legs. He was of just sufficient size to fill the aperture, but after a momentary lock he squeezed through, and they proved to be the gate into an enchanted land.” In that lies the whole philosophy of going without a map. There is magic in the world then. There are surprises. You do not know what is ahead. And you cannot tell what is about to happen. You move in a proper twilight of events. After that Tommy went looking for policemen’s legs. Doubtless there were some details of the wizardry that he overlooked, as never again could he come out on the Enchanted Street in quite the same fashion. Alice had a different method. She fell down a rabbit-hole and thereby freed herself from some very irksome lessons and besides met several interesting people, including a Duchess. Alice may be considered the very John Cabot of the rabbit-hole. Before her time it was known only to rabbits, wood-chucks, and dogs on holidays, whose noses are muddy with poking. But since her time all this is changed. Now it is known as the portal

of adventure. It is the escape from the plane of life into its third dimension.

Children have the true understanding of maps. They never yield slavishly to them. If they want a pirates' den they put it where it is handiest, behind the couch in the sitting-room, just beyond the glimmer of firelight. If they want an Indian village, where is there a better place than in the black space under the stairs, where it can be reached without great fatigue after supper? Farthest Thule may be behind the asparagus bed. The North Pole itself may be decorated by Annie on Monday afternoon with the week's wash. From whatever house you hear a child's laugh, if it be a real child and therefore a great poet, you may know that from the garret window, even as you pass, Sinbad, adrift on the Indian Ocean, may be looking for a sail, and that the forty thieves huddle, daggers drawn, in the coal hole. Then it is a fine thing for a child to run away to sea—well, really not to sea, but down the street, past gates and gates and gates, until it comes to the edge of the known and sees a collie or some such terrible thing. I myself have fine recollection of running away from a farmhouse. Maybe I did not get more than a hundred paces, but I looked on some broad heavens, saw a new mystery in the night's shadows, and just before I became afraid I had a taste of a new life.

To me it is strange that so few people go down rabbit-holes. We cannot be expected to find the same delight in squeezing our fat selves behind the couch of evenings, nor can we hope to find that the Chinese Mountains actually lie beyond our garden fence. We cannot exactly run away either; after one is twenty, that takes on an ugly and vagrant look, commendable as it may be on the early marches. Prince Hal is always a more amiable spectacle than John Falstaff, much as we love the knight. But there are men, however few, who although they are

beyond forty, retain in themselves a fine zest for adventure. A man who, I am proud to say, is a friend of mine and who is a devil for work by which he is making himself known in the world, goes of evenings into the most delightful truantry with his music. And it isn't only music, it is flowers and pictures and books. Of course he has an unusual brain and few men can hope to equal him. He is like Disraeli in that respect, who, it is said, could turn in a flash from the problem of financing the Suez Canal to the contemplation of the daffodils nodding along the fence. But do the rest of us try? There are few men of business, no matter with what singleness of purpose they have been installing their machinery and counting their nickels, but will admit that this is but a small part of life. They dream of rabbit-holes, but they will never go down one. I had dinner recently with a man who by his honesty and perseverance has built up and maintained a large and successful business. An orchestra was playing, and when it finished the man told me that if he could write music like that we had heard he would devote himself to it. Well, if he has enough desire in him for that speech, he owes it to himself that he sound his own depths for the discoveries he may make. It is doubtful if this quest would really lead him to write music, God forbid; it might however induce him to develop a latent appreciation until it became in him both a refreshment and a stimulus.

There are many places uncharted that are worth a visit. Treasure Island is somewhere on the seas, the still-vex'd Bermoothes feel the wind of some southern ocean, the coast of Bohemia lies on the furthermost shore of fairyland —all of these wonderful, like white towers in the mind. But nearer home, as near as the pirates' den that we built as children, within sight of our firelight, should come the dreams and thoughts that set us free from sordidness, that teach our

minds versatility and sympathy, that create for us hobbies and avocations of worth, that rest and refresh us. If we must be ocean liners all day, plodding between known and monotonous ports, at least we may be tramp ships at night, cargoed with strange stuffs and trafficking for lonely and unvisited seas.

A man lying on a beach watches a sailing ship.

TUNES FOR SPRING

A Satyr plays Pan pipes

Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

Spring, the sweet Spring!

If by any chance you have seen a man in a coat with sagging pockets, and a cloth hat of the latest fashion but two—a hat which I may say is precious to him (old friends, old wine, old hats)—emerging from his house just short of noon, do not lay his belated appearance to any disorder in his conduct! Certain neighbors at their windows as he passed, raised their eyes in a manner, if I mistake not, of suspicion that a man should be so far trespassing on the day, for nine o'clock should be the penny-picker's latest departure for the vineyard. Thereafter the street belongs to the women, except for such sprouting and unripe manhood as brings the groceries, and the hardened villainy that fetches ice and with deep voice breaks the treble of the neighborhood. But beyond these there are no men in sight save the pantalooned exception who mows the grass, and with the whirr of his clicking knives sounds the prelude of the summer. I'll say by way of no more than a parenthetical flick of notice that his eastern front, conspicuous from the rear as he bends forward over his machine, shows a patched and jointed mullionry that is not unlike the tracery of some cathedral's rounded apse. But I go too far in imagery. Plain speech is best. I'll waive the gothic touch.

But observe this sluggard who issues from his door! He knows he is suspected—that the finger is uplifted and the chin is wagging. And so he takes on a smarter stride with a pretense of briskness, to proclaim thereby the virtue of having risen early despite his belated appearance, and what mighty business he has despatched within the morning.

But you will get no clue as to whether he has been closeted with the law, or whether it is domestic faction—plumbers or others of their ilk (if indeed plumbers really have any ilk and do not, as I suspect, stand unbrothered like the humped Richard in the play). Or maybe some swirl of fancy blew upon him as

he was spooning up his breakfast, which he must set down in an essay before the matter cool. Or an epic may have thumped within him. Let us hope that his thoughts this cool spring morning have not been heated to such bloody purpose that he has killed a score of men upon his page, and that it is with the black gore of the ink-pot on him that he has called for his boots to face the world. You remember the fellow who kills him “some six or seven dozens of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife, ‘Fie upon this quiet life! I want work.’”

Such ferocity should not sully this fair May morning, when there are sounds only of carpet-beating, the tinkle of the man who is out to grind your knives and the recurrent melody of the connoisseur of rags and bottles who stands in his cart as he drives his lean and pointed horse. At the cry of this perfumed Brummel—if you be not gone in years too far—as often as he prepares to shout the purpose of his quest, you’ll put a question to him, “Hey, there, what do you feed your wife on?” And then his answer will come pat to your expectation, “Pa-a-a-per Ra-a-a-gs, Pa-a-a-per Ra-a-a-gs!” If the persistence of youth be in you and the belief that a jest becomes better with repetition—like beans nine days cold within the pot—you will shout your question until he turns the corner and his answer is lost in the noises of the street. “Adieu! Adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades—”

To this day I think of a rag-picker’s wife as dining sparingly out of a bag—not with her head inside like a horse, but thrusting her scrawny arm elbow deep to stir the pottage, and sprinkling salt and pepper on for nicer flavor. Following such preparation she will fork it out like macaroni, with her head thrown back to present the wider orifice. If her husband’s route lies along the richer streets she will have by way of tidbit for dessert a piece of chewy velvet, sugared and

buttered to a tenderness.

But what is this jingling racket that comes upon the street? Bless us, it's a hurdy-gurdy. The hurdy-gurdy, I need hardly tell you, belongs to the organ family. This family is one of the very oldest and claims descent, I believe, from the god Pan. However, it accepted Christianity early and has sent many a son within the church to pipe divinity. But the hurdy-gurdy—a younger son, wild, and a bit of a pagan like its progenitor—took to the streets. In its life there it has acquired, among much rascality, certain charming vices that are beyond the capacity of its brother in the loft, however much we may admire the deep rumble of his Sabbath utterance.

The world has denied that chanticleer proclaims the day. But as far as I know no one has had the insolence to deny the street-organ as the proper herald of the spring. Without it the seasons would halt. Though science lay me by the heels, I'll assert that the crocus, which is a pioneer on the windy borderland of March, would not show its head except on the sounding of the hurdy-gurdy. I'll not deny that flowers pop up their heads afield without such call, that the jack-in-the-pulpit speaks its maiden sermon on some other beckoning of nature. But in the city it is the hurdy-gurdy that gives notice of the turning of the seasons. On its sudden blare I've seen the green stalk of the daffodil jiggle. If the tune be of sufficient rattle and prolonged to the giving of the third nickel, before the end is reached there will be seen a touch of yellow.

Whether this follows from the same cause as attracts the children to flatten their noses on the windows and calls them to the curb that they put their ears close upon the racket that no sweetest sound be lost, is a deep question and not to be lightly answered. In the sound there is promise of the days to come when

circuses will be loosed upon the land and elephants will go padding by—with eyes looking around for peanuts. Why this biggest of all beasts, this creature that looms above you like a crustaceous dinosaur—to use long words without squinting too closely on their meaning—why this behemoth with the swishing trunk, should eat peanuts, contemptible peanuts, lies so deep in nature that the mind turns dizzy. It is small stuff to feed valor on—a penny's worth of food in such a mighty hulk. Whatever the lion eats may turn to lion, but the elephant strains the proverb. He might swallow you instead, breeches, hat and suspenders—if you be of the older school of dress before the belt came in—and not so much as cough upon the buttons. And there will be red and yellow wagons, boarded up seductively, as though they could show you, if they would, snakes and hyenas. May be it is best, you think—such things lying in the seeds of time—to lay aside a dime from the budget of the week, for one can never be sure against the carelessness of parents, and their jaded appetites.

A boy feeds an elephant (whose trunk only is in the picture).

But the hurdy-gurdy is the call to sterner business also. I know an old lady who, at the first tinkle from the street, will take off her glasses with a finality as though she were never to use them again for the light pleasure of reading, but intended to fill the remainder of her days with deeper purpose. There is a piece of two-legged villainy in her employ by the name of William, and even before the changing of the tune, she will have him rolling up the rugs for the spring cleaning. There is a sour rhythm in the fellow and he will beat a pretty syncopation on them if the hurdy-gurdy will but stick to marching time. It is said

that he once broke the fabric of a Kermanshah in his zeal at some crescendo of the *Robert E. Lee*. But he was lost upon the valse and struck languidly and out of time.

But maybe, Reader, in your youth you have heated a penny above a lamp, and with treacherous smile you have come before an open window. And when the son of Italy has grinned and beckoned for your bounty—the penny being just short of a molten state—you have thrown it to him. He stoops, he feels…. You have learned by this how much more blessed it is to give than to receive. Or, to dig deep in the riot of your youth, you have leased a hurdy-gurdy for a dollar and with other devils of your kind gone forth to seek your fortune. It's in noisier fashion than when Goldsmith played the flute through France for board and bed. If you turned the handle slowly and fast by jerks you attained a rare tempo that drew attention from even the most stolid windows. But as music it was as naught.

Down the street—it being now noon and the day Monday—Mrs. Y's washing will be out to dry. Observe her gaunt replica, *cap-a-pie*, as immodest as an advertisement! In her proper person she is prodigal if she unmask her beauty to the moon. And in company with this, is the woolen semblance of her plump husband. Neither of them is shap'd for sportive tricks: But look upon them when the music starts! Hand in hand upon the line, as is proper for married folk, heel and toe together, one, two, and a one, two, three. It is the hurdy-gurdy that calls to life such revelry. The polka has come to its own again.

Yet despite this evidence that the hurdy-gurdy sets the world to dancing—like the fiddle in the Turkish tale where even the headsman forgot his business—despite such evidence there are persons who affect to despise its melody. These

claim such perceptivity of the outer ear and such fineness of the channels that the tune is but a clack when it gets inside. God pity such! I'll not write a word of them.

A spring day is at its best about noon. I thrust this in the teeth of those who prefer the dawn or the coming on of night. At noon there are more yellow wheels upon the street. The hammering on sheds is at its loudest as the time for lunch comes near. More grocers' carts are rattling on their business. There is a better chance that a load of green wheelbarrows may go by, or a wagon of red rhubarb. Then, too, the air is so warm that even decrepitude fumbles on the porch and down the steps, with a cane to poke the weeds.

If you have luck, you may see a "cullud pusson" pushing a whitewash cart with altruistic intent toward all dusky surfaces except his own. Or maybe he has nice appreciation of what color contrasts he himself presents when the work is midway. If he wear the faded memory of a silk hat, it's the better picture.

But also the schools are out and the joy of life is hissing up a hundred gullets. Baseball has now a fierceness it lacks at the end of day. There is wild demand that "Shorty, soak 'er home!" "Butter-fingers!" is a harder insult. And meanwhile a pop-corn wagon will be whistling a blithe if monotonous tune in trial if there be pennies in the crowd. Or a waffle may be purchased if you be a Crœsus, ladled exclusively for you and dropped on the gridiron with a splutter. It is a sweet reward after you have knocked a three-bagger and stolen home, and is worth a search in all your eleven pockets for any last penny that may be skulking in the fuzz.

Or perhaps there is such wealth upon your person that there is still a restless jingle. In such case you will cross the street to a shop that ministers to the wants

of youth. In the window is displayed a box of marbles—glassies, commonies, and a larger browny adapted to the purpose of “pugging,” by reason of the violence with which it seems to respond to the impact of your thumb. Then there are baseballs of graded excellence and seduction. And tops. Time is needed for the choosing of a top. First you stand tiptoe with nose just above the glass and make your trial selection. Pay no attention to the color, for that’s the way a girl chooses! Black is good, without womanish taint. Then you wiggle the peg for its tightness and demand whether it be screwed in like an honest top. And finally, before putting your money down, you will squint upon its roundness. Then slam the door and yell your presence to the street!

Or do you come on softer errand? In the rear of the shop is a parlor with a base-burner and virtuous mottoes on the walls—a cosy room with vases. And here it is they serve cream-puffs…. For safe transfer you balance the puff in your fingers and take an enveloping bite, emerging with a prolonged suck for such particles as may not have come safely across, and bending forward with stomach held in. I’ll leave you in this refreshment; for if the money hold, you will gobble until the ringing of the bell.

By this time, as you may imagine, the person with the sagging pockets whom I told you of, has arrived in the center of the city where already he is practicing such device of penny-picking as he may be master of.

A basket of flowers.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED TO A MOURNFUL AIR

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To any one of several editors.

Dear Sir: I paid a visit to your city several days since and humored myself with ambitious thoughts in the contemplation of your editorial windows. I was tempted to rap at your door and request an audience but modesty held me off. Once by appointment I passed an hour in your office pleasantly and profitably and even so tardily do I acknowledge your courtesy and good-nature. But a beggar must choose his streets carefully and must not be seen too often in a neighborhood as the same door does not always offer pie. So this time your brass knocker shows no finger-marks of mine.

You did not accept for publication the last paper I sent to you. (You spread an infinite deal of sorrow in your path.) On its return I re-read it and now confess to concurrence with your judgment. Something had gone wrong. It was not as intended. Unlike Cleopatra, age had withered it. Was I not like a cook whose dinner has been sent back untasted? The best available ingredients were put into that confection and if it did not issue from the oven with those savory whiffs that compel appetite, my stove is at fault. Perhaps some good old literary housewife will tell me, disconsolate among my pots and pans, how long an idea must be boiled to be tender and how best to garnish a thought to an editor's taste? And yet, sir, your manners are excellent. It was Petruchio who cried:

> What's this? Mutton?—
> 'Tis burnt; and so is all the meat.
> Where is the rascal cook?

Manners have improved. In pleasant contrast is your courteous note, signifying the excellence of my proffered pastry, your delight that you are allowed to sniff and your regret for lack of appetite and abdominal capacity. Nevertheless, the

food came back and I poked at the broken pieces mournfully. It is a witch's business presiding at the caldron of these things and there is no magic pottage above my fire.

And yet, kind sir, with your permission I shall continue in my ways and offer to you from time to time such messes as I have, hoping that some day your taste will deteriorate to my level or that I shall myself learn the witchcraft and enter your regard.

Up to this present time only a few of my papers have been asked to stay. The rest have gone the downward tread of your stair carpet and have passed into the night. My desk has become a kind of mausoleum of such as have come home to die, and when I raise its lid a silence falls on me as on one who visits sacred places.

A man on a donkey picks fruit from a tree.

There is, however, another side of this. Certain it is that thousands of us who write seek your recognition and regard. Certain it is that your favorable judgment moves us to elation, and your silence to our merits urges us to harder endeavors. But for all this, dear sir, and despite your continued neglect, we are a tolerably happy crew. It may be that our best things were never published—best, because we enjoyed them most, because they recall the happiest hours and the finest moods. They bring most freshly to our memories the influences of books and friends and the circumstances under which they were written. It is because we lacked the skill to tame our sensations to our uses, the patience to do well what we wished to do fast, that you rightly judged them unavailable. We do not

feel rebellious and we admit that you are right. Only we do not care as much as we did, for most of us are learning to write for the love of the writing and without an eye on the medal. With no livelihood depending, with no compulsion of hours or subject, under the free anonymity of sure rejection, we have worked. It has been a fine world, these hours of study and reflection, and when we assert that one essay is our best, we are right, for it has led us to happiness and pleasant thoughts and to an interpretation of ourselves and the world that moves about us. In these best moods of ours, we live and think beyond our normal powers and even come to a distant kinship with men far greater than ourselves. Knowing this, prudence only keeps us from snapping our fingers at you and marking each paper, as we finish it, “rejected,” without the formality of a trip to you, and then happily beginning the next. We are learning to be amateurs and although our names shall never be shouted from the housetops, we shall be almost as content. Still will there be the morning hours of study with sunlight across the floor, the winding country roads of autumn with smells of corn-stacks and burdened vineyards, the fire-lit hours of evening. Still shall we write in our gardens of a summer afternoon or change the winter snowstorm that drives against our windows into the coinage of our thoughts.

We shall be independent and think and write as we please. And although we enclose stamps for a mournful recessional, please know, dear sir, that even as you dictate your polite note of refusal, we are hard at it with another paper.

A hand snapping fingers.

THE CHILLY PRESENCE OF HARD-HEADED PERSONS

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It is rash business scuttling your own ship. Now as I am in a way a practical person, which is, I take it, a diminutive state of hard-headedness, any detraction against hard-headedness must appear as leveled against myself. Gimlet in hand, deep down amidships, it would look as if I were squatted and set on my own destruction.

But by hard-headed persons I mean those beyond the ordinary, those so far gone that a pin-prick through the skull would yield not so much as a drop of ooze; persons whose brain convolutions did they appear in fright at the aperture on the insertion of the pin—like a head at a window when there is a fire on the street—would betray themselves as but a kind of cordage. Such hard-headedness, you will admit, is of a tougher substance than that which may beset any of us on an occasion at the price of meat, or on the recurrent obligations of the too-constant moon.

I am reasonably free from colds. I do not fret myself into a congestion if a breath comes at me from an open window; or if a swirl of wind puts its cold fingers down my neck do I lift my collar. Yet the presence of a thoroughly hard-headed person provokes a sneeze. There is a chilly vapor off him—a swampish miasma—that puts me in a snuffling state, beyond poultice and mustard footbaths. No matter how I huddle to the fire, my thoughts will congeal and my purpose cramp and stiffen. My conceit too will be but a shriveled bladder.

Several years ago I knew a man of extreme hard-headedness. As I recall, I was afflicted at the time—indeed, the malady co-existed with his acquaintance—with a sorry catarrh of the nasal passages. I can remember still the clearings and snufflings that obtruded in my conversation. For two winters my complaint was beyond the cunning of the doctors. Despite local applications and such pills as

they thought fit to administer, still did the snuffling continue. Then on a sudden my friend left town. Consequent to which and to the amazement of the profession, the springs of my disease dried up. As this happened at the beginning of the warm days of summer, I am loath to lay my cure entirely to his withdrawal, yet there was a nice jointry of time. My acquaintance thereafter dropped to an infrequent, statistical letter, against which I have in time proofed myself. But the catarrh has ceased except when some faint thought echoes from the past, at which again, as in the older days, I am forced to blow a passage in the channel for verbal navigation.

This man's interest in life was oil. It oozed from the ventages of his talk. If he looked on the map of this fair world, with its mountains like caterpillars dozing on the page—for so do maps present themselves to my fancy—*he* would see merely the blueprint and huge specification of oil production and consumption. The dotted cities would suggest no more than agencies in its distribution, and they would be pegged in many colors—as is the custom of our business efficiency—by way of base symbolism of their rank and pretense; the wide oceans themselves would be merely courses for his tank ships to bustle on and leave a greasy trail. Really, contrary to my own experience and sudden cure, one might think that such an oleaginous stream of talk, if directed in atomizer fashion against the nostrils of the listener, would serve as a healing emulsion for the complaint I then suffered with.

Be these things as they may, what I can actually vouch for is that when this fellow had set himself and opened a volley of facts on me, I was shamed to silence. There was a spaciousness, a planetary sweep and glittering breadth that shriveled me. The commodity which I dispensed was but used around the corner,

with a key turned upon it at the shadowy end of day against its intrusion on the night. But his oil, all day long and all night too, was swishing in its tanks on the course to Zanzibar. And all the fretted activity of the earth was tributary to his purpose. How like an untrimmed smoky night-candle did my ambition burn! If I chanced to think in thousands it was a strain upon me. My cerebrum must have throbbed itself to pieces upon the addition of another cypher. But he marshaled his legions and led them up and down, until it dazed me. I was no better than some cobbler with a fiddle, crooked and intent to the twanging of his E string, while the great Napoleon thundered by.

The secret channels of the earth and the fullness thereof made a joyful gurgle in his thoughts. And if he ever wandered in the country and ever saw a primrose on the river's brim—which I consider unlikely, his attention being engaged at the moment on figuring the cost of oil barrels, with special consideration for the price of bungs—if this man ever did see a primrose, would it have been a yellow primrose to him and nothing more? Bless your dear eyes, it would have been a compound of by-products—parafine, wax-candles, cup-grease, lamp-black, beeswax and peppermint drops—not to mention its proper distillation into such rare odors as might be sold at so much a bottle to jobbers, and a set price at retail, with best legal talent to avoid the Sherman Act.

This man has lived—my spleen rises at the thought—in many of the capitals of Europe. For six months at a time he has walked around one end of the Louvre on his way home at night without once putting his head inside. Indeed, it is probable he hasn't noticed the building, or if he has, thinks it is an arsenal. Now in all humility, and unbuttoned, as it were, for a spanking by whomsoever shall wish to give it, I must confess that I myself have no great love for the

Louvre, regarding it somewhat as an endurance test for tired tourists, a kind of blow-in-the-nozzle-and-watch-the-dial-mount-up contrivance, as at a country fair. And so I am not sure but that the band playing in the gardens is a better amusement for a bright afternoon, and that a nursemaid in uniform with her children—bare-legged tots with fingers in the sand—that such sight is more worthy of respect than a dead Duchess painted on the wall. It is but a ritualistic obeisance I have paid the gods inside. My finer reverence has been for benches in the sun and the vagabondage of a bus-top.

If ever my friend gets to heaven it will be but another point for exportation. How closely he will listen for any squeaking of the Pearly Gates, with a nostrum ready for their dry complaint! When he is once through and safe (the other pilgrims still coming up the hill—for heaven, I'm sure, will be set on some wind-swept ridge, with purple distance in the valleys—) how he will put his ear against the hinge for nice diagnosis as to the weight of oil that will give best result! How he will wink upon the gateman that he write his order large!

Reader, I have sent you off upon a wrong direction. I have twisted the wooden finger at the crossroads. The man of oil does not exist. He is a piece of fiction with which to point a moral. Pig-iron or cotton-cloth would have served as well; anything, in fact, whereon, by too close squinting, one may blunt his sight.

We have all observed a growing tendency in many persons to put, as it were, electric lights in all the corners and attics of their brains, until it is too much a rarity to find any one who will admit a twilight in his whole establishment. This is carrying mental housekeeping too far. I will confess that I prefer a light at the foot of the back stairs, where the steps are narrow at the turn,

for Annie is precious to us. I will confess, also, that it is well to have a switch in the kitchen to throw light in the basement, on the chance that the wood-box may get empty before the evening has spent itself. There is comfort, too, in not being forced to go darkling to bed, like Childe Roland to the tower, but to put out the light from the floor above. But we are carrying this business too far in mental concerns. Here is properly a place for a rare twilight. It is not well that a man should always flare himself like a lighted ballroom.

Much of our best mental stuff—if you exclude the harsher grindings of our business hours—fades in too coarse a light. ’Tis a brocade that for best preservation must not be hung always in the sun. There must be regions in you unguessed at—cornered and shadowed places—recesses to be shown at peep of finger width, yielding only to the knock of fancy, dim sequesterings tucked obscurely from the noises of the world, where one must be taken by the hand and led—dusky closets beyond the common use. It is in such places—your finger on your lips and your feet a-tiptoe on the stairs—that you will hide away from baser uses the stowage of moonlight stuff and such other gaseous and delightful foolery as may lie in your inheritance.

A mouse climbs on a melted (and snuffed) candle.

HOOPSKIRTS & OTHER LIVELY MATTER

A woman in hoopskirt fans herself at the top of a staircase

Several months ago I had occasion to go through a deserted “mansion.” It was a gaunt building with long windows and it sat in a great yard. Over the windows were painted scrolls, like eyebrows lifted in astonishment. Whatever was the cause of this, it has long since departed, for it is thirty years since the building was tenanted. It would seem as if it fell asleep—for so the blinds and the drawn curtains attest—before the lines of this first astonishment were off its face. I am told that the faces of men dead in battle show in similar fashion the marks of conflict. But there is a shocked expression on the face of this house as if a scandal were on the street. It is crying, as it were, “Fie, shame!” upon its neighbors.

Inside there are old carpets and curtains which spit dust at you if you touch them. (Is there not some fabulous animal which does the same, thereby to escape in the mirk it has itself created?) Most of the furniture has been removed, but here and there bulky pieces remain, an antique sideboard, maybe too large to be taken away; like Robinson Crusoe’s boat, too heavy to be launched. In each room is a chandelier for gas, resplendent as though Louis XV had come again to life, with tinkling glass pendants and globules interlinked, like enormous Kohinoors.

Down in the kitchen—which is below stairs as in an old English comedy—you can see the place where the range stood. And there are smoky streaks upon the walls that may have come from the coals of ancient feasts. If you sniff, and put your fancy in it—it is an unsavory thought—it is likely even that you can get the stale smell from such hospitable preparation.

From the first floor to the second is a flaring staircase with a landing where opulence can get its breath. And then there is a choice of upward steps, either to

the right or left as your wish shall direct. And on each side is a balustrade unbroken by posts from top to bottom. Now the first excitement of my own life was on such a rail, which seemed a funicular made for my special benefit. The seats of all my early breeches, I have been told, were worn shiny thereon, like a rubbed apple. These descents were executed slowly at the turn, but gathered wild speed on the straight-away. There was slight need for Annie to dust the "balusters."

An old house is strong in its class distinctions. There is a front part and a back part. To know the front part is to know it in its spacious and generous moods. But somewhere you will find a door and there will be three steps behind it, and poof!—you will be prying into the darker life of the place. In this particular house of which I write, it was as if the back rooms, the back halls and the innumerable closets had been playing at hide and seek and had not been told when the game was over, and so still kept to their hiding places. It is in such obscure closets that a family skeleton, if it be kept at all, might be kept most safely. There would be slight hazard of its discovery if the skeleton restrained itself from clanking, as is the whim of skeletons.

It was in the back part of this house that I came on a closet, where, after all these years, women's garments were still hanging. A lighted match—for I am no burglar with a bull's-eye as you might suspect—displayed to me an array of petticoats—the flounced kind that gladdened the eye of woman in those remote days—also certain gauzy matters which the writers of the eighteenth century called by the name of smocks. Besides these, there were suspended from hooks those sartorial deceits, those lying mounds of fashion, that false incrustation on the surface of nature, known as "bustles." Also, there was a hoopskirt curled

upon the floor, and an open barrel with a stowage of books—a novel or two of E. P. Roe, the poems of John Saxe, a table copy of Whittier in padded leather, an album with a flourish on the cover—these at the top of the heap.

I choose to trace the connection between the styles of dress and books, and —where my knowledge serves—to show the effect of political change on both. For it is written that when Constantinople fell in the fifteenth century Turkish costumes became the fashion through western Europe—maybe a flash of eastern color across the shoulders or an oriental buckle for the shoes. Similarly the Balkan War gave us hints for dress. Many styles to-day are marks of our kinship with the East. These are mere broken promptings for your own elaboration. And it seems to sort with this theory of close relation, that the generation which flared and flounced its person until nature was no more than a kernel in the midst, which puffed itself like a muffin with but a finger-point of dough within, should be the generation that particularly delighted in romantic literature, in which likewise nature is so prudently wrapped that scarce an ankle can show itself. It would be a nice inquiry whether the hoopskirt was not introduced—it was midway in the eighteenth century, I think—at the time of the first budding of romantic sentiment. The “Man of Feeling” came after and Anne Radcliffe’s novels. Is it not significant also, in these present days of Russian novels and naked realism, that costume should advance sympathetically to the edge of modesty?

A woman stands near a large plume of smoke.

There is something, however, to be said in favor of romantic books, despite

the horrible examples at the top of this barrel. Perhaps our own literature shivers in too thin a shift. For once upon a time somewhere between the age of bustles and ourselves there were writers who ended their stories “and they were married and lived happily ever after.” Whereas at this present day stories are begun “They were married and straightway things began to go to the devil.” And for my own part I have read enough of family quarrels. I am tired of the tune upon the triangle and I am ready for softer flutings. When I visit my neighbors, I want them to make a decent pretense. It was Charles Lamb who found his married friends too loving in his presence, but let us not go to extremes! And so, after I have read a few books of marital complication, I yearn for the old-fashioned couple in the older books who went hand in hand to old age. At this minute there is a black book that looks down upon me like a crow. It is “Crime and Punishment.” I read it once when I was ill, and I nearly died of it. I confess that after a very little acquaintance with such books I am tempted to sequester them on a top shelf somewhere, beyond reach of tiptoe, where they may brood upon their banishment and rail against the world.

Encyclopedias and the tonnage of learning properly take their places on the lowest shelves, for their lump and mass make a fitting foundation. I must say, however, that the habit of the dictionary of secreting itself in the darkest corner of the lowest shelf contributes to general illiteracy. I have known families wrangle for ten minutes on the meaning of a word rather than lift this laggard from its depths. Be that as it may, the novels and poetry should be on the fifth shelf from the bottom, just off the end of the nose, so to speak.

Now, the vinegar cruet is never the largest vessel in the house. So by strict analogy, sour books—the kind that bite the temper and snarl upon your better

moods—should be in a small minority. Do not mistake me! I shall find a place, maybe, for a volume or two of Nietzsche, and all of Ibsen surely. I would admit *uplift* too, for my taste is catholic. And there will be other books of a kind that never rouse a chuckle in you. For these are necessary if for no more than as alarm clocks to awake us from our dreaming self-content. But in the main I would not have books too insistent upon the wrongs of the world and the impossibility of remedy.

I confess to a liking for tales of adventure, for wrecks in the South Seas, for treasure islands, for pirates with red shirts. Mark you, how a red shirt lights up a dull page! It is like a scarlet leaf on a gray November day. Also I have a weakness for the bang of pistols, round oaths and other desperate rascality. In such stories there is no small mincing. A villain proclaims himself on his first appearance—unless John Silver be an exception—and retains his villainy until the rope tightens about his neck in the last chapter but one; the very last being set aside for the softer commerce of the hero and heroine.

You will remember that about twenty years ago a fine crop of such stories came out of the Balkans. At that time it was a dim, unknown land, a kind of novelists' Coast of Bohemia, an appropriate setting for distressed princesses. I'll hazard a guess that there was not a peak in all that district on which there was not some Black Rudolph's castle, not a road that did not clack romantically with horses' hoofs on bold adventure. But the wars have changed all this by bringing too sharp a light upon the dim scenery of this pageantry, and swash-bucklery is all but dead.

To confess the truth, it is in such stories that I like horses best. In real life I really do not like them at all. I am rather afraid of them as of strange organisms

that I can neither start with ease nor stop with safety. It is not that I never rode or drove a horse. I have achieved both. But I don't urge him to deviltry. Instead I humor his whims. Some horses even I might be fond of. Give me a horse that nears the age of slippered pantaloon and is, moreover, phlegmatic in his tastes, and then, as the stories say "with tightened girth and feet well home"—but enough! I must not be led into boasting.

But in these older stories I love a horse. With what fire do his hoofs ring out in the flight of elopement! "Pursuit's at the turn. Speed my brave Dobbin!" And when the Prince has kissed the Princess' hand, you know that the story is nearly over and that they will live happily ever after. Of course there is always someone to suggest that Cinderella was never happy after she left her ashes and pumpkins and went to live in the palace. But this is idle gossip. Even if there were "occasional bickerings" between her and the Prince, this is as Lamb says it should be among "near relations."

I nearly died of "Crime and Punishment." These Russian novelists have too distressful a point of view. They remind me too painfully of the poem—

> It was dreadful dark
> In that doleful ark
> When the elephants went to bed.

Doubtless if the lights burn high in you, it is well to read such gloom as is theirs. Perhaps they depict life. These things may be true and if so, we ought to know them. At the best, theirs is a real attempt "to cleanse the foul body of the infected world." But if there be a blast without and driving rain, must we be always running to the door to get it in our face? Will not one glance in the evening be enough? Shall we be always exposing ourselves "to feel what wretches feel"? It

is true that we are too content under the suffering of others, but it is true, also, that too few of us were born under a laughing star. Gray shadows fall too often on our minds. A sunny road is the best to travel by. Furthermore—and here is a deep platitude—there is many a man who sobs upon a doleful book, who to the end of time will blithely underpay his factory girls. His grief upon the book is diffuse. It ranges across the mountains of the world, but misses the nicer point of his own conduct. Is this not sentimentally like the gray yarn hysteria under the spell of which wealthy women clicked their needles in public places for the soldiers? Let me not underrate the number of garments that they made—surely a single machine might produce as many within a week. But there is danger that their work was only a sentimental expression of their world-grief. I'll sink to depths of practicality and claim that a pittance from their allowances would have bought more and better garments in the market.

Perhaps we read too many tragical books. In the decalogue the inheritance of evil is too strongly visited on the children to the third and fourth generation, and there is scant sanction as to the inheritance of goodness. It is the sins of the fathers that live in the children. It is the evil that men do that lives after them, while the good, alas, is oft interred with their bones. If a doleful book stirs you up to life, for God's sake read it! If it wraps you all about as in a winding sheet for death, you had best have none of it.

A woman walks away.

I had now burned several matches—and my fingers too—in the inspection of the closet where the women's garments hung. And it came on me as I poked

the books within the barrel and saw what silly books were there, that perhaps I have overstated my position. It would be a lighter doom, I thought, to be rived and shriveled by the lightning flash of a modern book, even “Crime and Punishment,” than stultified by such as were within.

Then, like the lady of the poem

> Having sat me down upon a mound
> To think on life,
> I concluded that my views were sound
> And got me up and turned me round,
> And went me home again.

ON TRAVELING

A man walks in seven-league boots

ON TRAVELING

In old literature life was compared to a journey, and wise men rejoiced to question old men because, like travelers, they knew the sloughs and roughnesses of the long road. Men arose with the sun, and toddled forth as children on the

day’s journey of their lives, and became strong to endure the heaviness of noonday. They strived forward during the hours of early afternoon while their sun’s ambition was hot, and then as the heat cooled they reached the crest of the last hill, and their road dipped gently to the valley where all roads end. And on into the quiet evening, until, at last, they lie down in that shadowed valley, and await the long night.

This figure has lost its meaning, for we now travel by rail, and life is expressed in terms of the railway time-table. As has been said, we leave and arrive at places, but we no longer travel. Consequently we cannot understand the hubbub that Marco Polo must have caused among his townsmen when he swaggered in. He and his crew were bronzed by the sun, were dressed as Tartars, and could speak their native Italian with difficulty. To convince the Venetians of their identity, Marco gave a magnificent entertainment, at which he and his officers received, clad in oriental dress of red satin. Three times during the banquet they changed their dress, distributing the discarded garments among their guests. At last, the rough Tartar clothing worn on their travels was displayed and then ripped open. Within was a profusion of jewels of the Orient, the gifts of Kublai Khan of Cathay. The proof was regarded as perfect, and from that time Marco was acknowledged by his countrymen, and loaded with distinction. When Drake returned from the Straits of Magellan and, powdered and beflunkied, told his lies at fashionable London dinners, no doubt he was believed. And his crew, let loose on the beer-shops, gathered each his circle of listeners, drank at his admirers’ expense, and yarned far into the night. It was worth one’s while to be a traveler in those times.

But traveling has fallen to the yellow leaf. The greatest traveler is now the

brakeman. Next is he who sells colored cotton. A poor third pursues health and flees from restlessness. Wise men have ceased to question travelers, except to inquire of the arrival of trains and of the comfort of hotels.

To-day I am a thousand miles from home. From my window the world stretches massive, homewards. Even though I stood on the most distant range of mountains and looked west, still I would look on a world that contained no suggestion of home; and if I leaped to that horizon and the next, the result would be the same—so insignificant would be the relative distance accomplished. And here I am set down with no knowledge of how I came. There was a continuous jar and the noise of motion. We passed a barn or two, I believe, and on one hillside animals were frightened from their grazing as we passed. There were the cluttered streets of several cities and villages. There was a prodigious number of telegraph poles going in the opposite direction, hell-bent as fast as we, which poles considerately went at half speed through towns, for fear of hitting children. The United States was once an immense country, and extended quite to the sunset. For convenience we have reduced its size, and made it but a map of its former self. Any section of this map can be unrolled and inspected in a day's time.

In the books for children is the story of the seven-league boots—wonderful boots, worth a cobbler's fortune. If a prince is escaping from an ogre, if he is eloping with a princess, if he has an engagement at the realm's frontier and the wires are down, he straps these boots to his feet and strides the mountains and spans the valleys. For with the clicking of the silver buckles he has destroyed the dimensions of space. Length, breadth and depth are measured for him but in wishes. One wish and perhaps a snap of the fingers, or an invocation to the devil

of locomotion, and he stands on a mountain-top, the next range of hills blue in the distance; another wish and another snap and he has leaped the valley. Wonderful boots, these! Worth a king's ransom. And this prince, too, as he travels thus dizzily may remember one or two barns, animals frightened from their grazing, and the cluttered streets nested in the valley. When he reaches his journey's end he will be just as wise and just as ignorant as we who now travel by rail in magic, seven-league fashion. For here I am set down, and all save the last half-mile of my path is lost in the curve of the mountains. From my window I see the green-covered mountains, so different from city streets with their horizon of buildings.

I fancy that, on the memorable morning when Aladdin's Palace was set down in Africa after its magic night's ride from the Chinese capital, a housemaid must have gone to the window, thrown back the hangings and looked out, astounded, on the barren mountains, when she expected to see only the courtyard of the palace and its swarm of Chinese life. She then recalled that the building rocked gently in the night, and that she heard a whirling sound as of wind. These were the only evidences of the devil-guided flight. Now she looked on a new world, and the familiar pagodas lay far to the east within the eye of the rising sun.

There are summer evenings in my recollection when I have traveled the skies, landing from the sky's blue sea upon the cloud continent, and traversing its mountain ranges, its inland lakes, harbors and valleys. Over the wind-swept ridges I have gone, watching the world-change, seeing

> the hungry ocean gain
> Advantage on the Kingdom of the shore,
> And the firm soil win of the watery main,

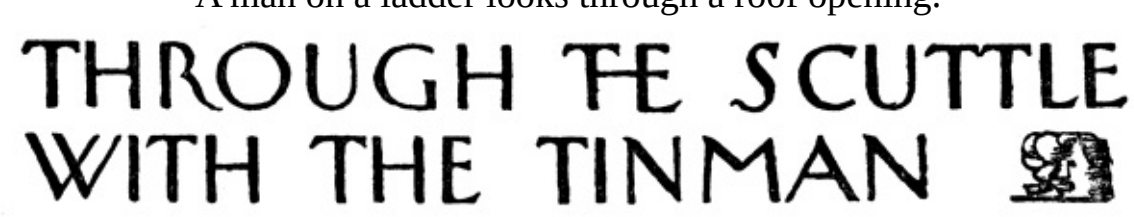
Increasing store with loss and loss with store.

The greatest traveler that I know is a little man, slightly bent, who walks with a stick in his garden or sits passive in his library. Other friends have boasted of travels in the Orient, of mornings spent on the Athenian Acropolis, of visiting the Theatre of Dionysius, and of hallooing to the empty seats that re-echoed. They warn me of this and that hotel, and advise me concerning the journey from London. The usual tale of travelers is that Athens is a ruin. I have heard it rumored, for instance, that the Parthenon marbles are in London, and that the Parthenon itself has suffered from the "wreckful siege of battering days"; that the walls to Piræus contain hardly one stone left upon another.

And this sets me to thinking, for my friend denies all this with such an air of sincerity that I am almost inclined to believe his word against all the others. The Athens he pictures is not ruinous. The Parthenon stands before him as it left the hand of Phidias. The walls to Piræus stand high as on that morning, now almost forgotten, when Athens awaited the Spartan attack. For him the Dionysian Theatre does not echo to tourists' shouts, but gives forth the sounds of many-voiced Greek life. He knows, too, the people of Athens. He walked one day with Socrates along the banks of the Ilissus, and afterwards visited him in his prison when about to drink the hemlock. It is of the grandeur of Athens and her sons that he speaks, not of her ruins. The best of his travels is that he buys no tickets of Cook, nor, indeed, of any one, and when he has seen the cities' sights, his wife enters and says, "Isn't it time for the bookworm to eat?" So he has his American supper in the next room overlooking Attica, so to speak.

A man sits reading on the back of a snail.

THROUGH THE SCUTTLE WITH THE TINMAN



A man on a ladder looks through a roof opening.

Yesterday I was on the roof with the tinman. He did not resemble the tinman of the “Wizard of Oz” or the flaming tinman of “Lavengro,” for he wore a derby hat, had a shiny seat, and smoked a ragged cigar. It was a flue he was fixing, a thing of metal for the gastronomic whiffs journeying from the kitchen to the upper airs. There was a vent through the roof with a cone on top to shed the rain. I watched him from the level cover of a second-story porch as he scrambled up the shingles. I admire men who can climb high places and stand upright and unmoved at the gutter’s edge. But their bravado forces on me unpleasantly how closely I am tied because of dizziness to Mother Earth’s apron strings. These fellows who perch on scaffolds and flaunt themselves on steeple tops are frontiersmen. They stand as the outposts of this flying globe. Often when I observe a workman descend from his eagle’s nest in the open steel frame of a lofty building, I look into his face for some trace of exaltation, some message from his wider horizon. You may remember how they gazed into Alcestis’ face when she returned from the House of Hades, that they might find there a token of her shadowed journey. It is lucky that I am no taller than six feet; if ten, giddiness would set in and reversion to type on all fours. An undizzied man is to me as much of a marvel as one who in his heart of hearts is not afraid of a horse.

Maybe after all, it is just because I am so cowardly and dizzy that I have a liking for high places and especially for roofs. Although here my people have lived for thousands of years on the very rim of things, with the unimagined miles above them and the glitter of Orion on their windows, so little have I learned of these verities that I am frightened on my shed top and the grasses below make me crouch in terror. And yet to my fearful perceptions there may be pleasures

that cannot exist for the accustomed and jaded senses of the tinman. Could he feel stimulus in Hugo's description of Paris from the towers of Notre Dame? He is too much the gargoyle himself for the delights of dizziness.

Quite a little could be said about the creative power of gooseflesh. If Shakespeare had been a tinman he could not have felt the giddy height and grandeur of the Dover Cliffs; Ibsen could not have wrought the climbing of the steeple into the crisis and calamity of "The Master Builder"; Teufelsdröckh could not have uttered his extraordinary night thoughts above the town of Weissnichtwo; "Prometheus Bound" would have been impossible. Only one with at least a dram of dizziness could have conceived an "eagle-baffling mountain, black, wintry, dead, unmeasured." In the days when we read Jules Verne, was not our chief pleasure found in his marvelous way of suspending us with swimming senses over some fearful abyss; wet and slippery crags maybe, and void and blackness before us and below; and then just to give full measure of fright, a sound of running water in the depths. Doesn't it raise the hair? Could a tinman have written it?

But even so, I would like to feel at home on my own roof and have a slippered familiarity with my slates and spouts. A chimney-sweep in the old days doubtless had an ugly occupation, and the fear of a sooty death must have been recurrent to him. But what a sable triumph was his when he had cleared his awful tunnel and had emerged into daylight, blooming, as Lamb would say, in his first tender nigritude! "I seem to remember," he continues, "that a bad sweep was once left in a stack with his brush to indicate which way the wind blew." After observing the tinman for a while, I put on rubber shoes and slunk up to the ridgepole, the very watershed of my sixty-foot kingdom, my legs slanting into

the infinities of the North and South. It sounds unexciting when written, but there I was, astride my house, up among the vents and exhausts of my former cloistered life, my head outspinning the weathercock. My Matterhorn had been climbed, “the pikes of darkness named and stormed.” Next winter when I sit below snug by the fire and hear the wind funneling down the chimney, will not my peace be deeper because I have known the heights where the tempest blows, and the rain goes pattering, and the whirling tin cones go mad?

Right now, if I dared, I would climb to the roof again, and I would sit with my feet over the edge and crane forward and do crazy things just because I could. Then maybe my neighbors would mistake the point of my philosophy and lock me up; would sympathize with my fancies as did Sir Toby and Maria with Malvolio. If one is to escape bread and water in the basement, one’s opinions on such slight things as garters and roofs must be kept dark. Be a freethinker, if you will, on the devil, the deep sea, and the sunrise, but repress yourself in the trifles.

I like flat roofs. There is in my town a public library on the top story of a tall building, and on my way home at night I often stop to read a bit before its windows. When my eyes leave my book and wander to the view of the roofs, I fancy that the giant hands of a phrenologist are feeling the buildings which are the bumps of the city. And listening, I seem to hear his dictum “Vanity”; for below is the market of fashion. The world has sunk to ankle height. I sit on the shoulders of the world, above the tar-and-gravel scum of the city. And at my back are the books—the past, all that has been, the manners of dress and thought—they too peeping aslant through these windows. Soon it will be dark and this day also will be done and burn its ceremonial candles; and the roar from the pavement will be the roar of yesterday.

Astronomy would have come much later if it had not been for the flat roofs of the Orient and its glistening nights. In the cloudy North, where the roofs were thatched or peaked, the philosophers slept indoors tucked to the chin. But where the nights were hot, men, banished from sleep, watched the rising of the stars that they might point the hours. They studied the recurrence of the star patterns until they knew when to look for their reappearance. It was under a cloudless, breathless sky that the constellations were named and their measures and orbits allotted. On the flat roof of some Babylonian temple of Bel came into life astrology, “foolish daughter of a wise mother,” that was to bind the eyes of the world for nearly two thousand years, the most enduring and the strongest of superstitions. It was on these roofs, too, that the planets were first maligned as wanderers, celestial tramps; and this gossip continued until recent years when at last it appeared that they are bodies of regular and irreproachable habits, eccentric in appearance only, doing a cosmic beat with a time-clock at each end, which they have never failed to punch at the proper moment.

Somewhere, if I could but find it, must exist a diary of one of these ancient astronomers—and from it I quote in anticipation. “Early this night to my roof,” it runs, “the heavens being bare of clouds (*cælo aperto*). Set myself to measure the elevation of Sagittarius Alpha with my new astrolabe sent me by my friend and master, Hafiz, from out Arabia. Did this night compute the equation a=Dx/2T f(a, b c T_3). Thus did I prove the variations of the ellipse and show Hassan Sabah to be the mule he is. Then rested, pacing my roof even to the rising of the morning star, which burned red above the Sultan’s turret. To bed, satisfied with this night.”

Northern literature has never taken the roof seriously. There have been

many books written from the viewpoint of windows. The study window is usual. Then there is the college window and the Thrums window. Also there is a window viewpoint as yet scarcely expressed; that of the boy of Stevenson's poems with his nose flattened against the glass—convalescence looking for sailormen with one leg. What is "Un Philosophe sous les Toits" but a garret and its prospect? But does Souvestre ever go up on the roof? He contents himself with opening his casement and feeding crumbs to the birds. Not once does he climb out and scramble around the mansard. On wintry nights neither his legs nor thoughts join the windy devils that play tempest overhead. Then again, from Westminster bridges, from country lanes, from crowded streets, from ships at sea, and mountain tops have sonnets been thrown to the moon; not once from the roof.

Is not this neglect of the roof the chief reason why we Northerners fear the night? When darkness is concerned, the cowardice of our poetry is notorious. It skulks, so to speak, when beyond the glare of the street lights. I propound it as a question for scholars.

> 'Tis now the very witching time of night,
> When churchyards yawn and hell itself breathes out
> Contagion to this world.

Why is the night conceived as the time for the bogey to be abroad?—an

> … evil thing that walks by night,
> In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,
> Blue meager hag, or stubborn unlaid ghost
> That breaks his magic chains at curfew time.

Why does not this slender, cerulean dame keep normal hours and get sleepy after

dinner with the rest of us—and so to bed? Such a baneful thing is night, “hideous,” reeking with cold shivers and gloom, from which morning alone gives relief.

> Pack, clouds, away! and welcome, day!
> With night we banish sorrow.

Day is jocund that stands on the misty mountain tops.

But we cannot expect the night to be friendly and wag its tail when we slam against it our doors and, until lately, our windows. Naturally it takes to ghoulishness. It was in the South where the roofs are flat and men sleep as friends with the night that it was written, "The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament showeth his handiwork."

I get full of my subject as I write and a kind of rage comes over me as I think of the wrongs the roof has suffered. It is the only part of the house that has not kept pace with the times. To say that you have a good roof is taken as meaning that your roof is tight, that it keeps out the water, that it excels in those qualities in which it excelled equally three thousand years ago. What you ought to mean is that you have a roof that is flat and has things on it that make it livable, where you can walk, disport yourself, or sleep; a house-top view of your neighbors' affairs; an airy pleasance with a full sweep of stars; a place to listen of nights to the drone of the city; a place of observation, and if you are so inclined, of meditation.

Everything but the roof has been improved. The basement has been coddled with electric lights until a coal hole is no longer an abode of mystery. Even the garret, that used to be but a dusty suburb of the house and lumber room for early Victorian furniture, has been plastered and strewn with servants' bedrooms.

There *was* a garret once: somewhat misty now after these twenty years. It was not daubed to respectability with paint, nor was it furnished forth as bedrooms; but it was rough-timbered, and resounded with drops when the dark clouds passed above. On bright days a cheerful light lay along the floor and dust motes danced in its luminous shaft. And always there was cobwebbed stillness. But on dark days, when the roof pattered and the branches of trees scratched the shingles and when windows rattled, a deeper obscurity crept out of the corners. Yet was there little fear in the place. This was the front garret where the theatre was, with the practicable curtain. But when the darker mood was on us, there was the back garret. It was six steps lower and over it the roof crouched as if to hide its secrets. The very men that built it must have been lowering, bearded fellows; for they put into it many corners and niches and black holes. The wood, too, from which it was fashioned must have been gnarled and knotted and the nails rusty and crooked. One window cast a narrow light down the middle of this room, but at both sides was immeasurable night. When you had stooped in from the sunlight and had accustomed your eyes to the dimness, you found yourself in an uncertain anchorage of old furniture, abandoned but offering dusty covert for boys with the light of brigands in their eyes. A pirates' den lay safe behind the chimney, protected by a bristling thicket of chairs and table legs, to be approached only on hands and knees after divers rappings. And back there in the dark were strange boxes--strange boxes, stout and securely nailed. But the garret has gone.

Whither have the pirates fled? Maybe some rumor of the great change reached them in their fastnesses; and then in the light of early dawn, in single file they climbed the ladder, up through the scuttle. And straddling the ridgepole

with daggers between their teeth, alas, they became dizzy and toppled down the steep shingles to the gutter, to be whirled away in the torrent of an April shower. Ah me! Had only the roof been flat! Then it would have been for them a reservation where they might have lived on and waited for the sound of children's feet to come again. Then when those feet had come and the old life had returned, then from aloft you would hear the old cry of Ship-ahoy, and you would know that at last your house had again slipped its moorings and was off to Madagascar or the Straits.

> Where shall we adventure, to-day that we’re afloat,
> Wary of the weather and steering by a star?
> Shall it be to Africa, asteering of the boat,
> To Providence, or Babylon, or off to Malabar?

So a roof must be more than a cover. The roof of a boat, its deck, is arranged for occupation and is its best part. Consider the omnibus! Even it has seats on top, the best seats in fine weather. When Martin Chuzzlewit went up to London it was on the *top* of the coach he sat. Pickwick betook himself, gaiters, small-clothes, and all, to the roof. Even the immaculate Rollo scorned the inside seats. He sat on top, you may remember, and sucked oranges to ward off malaria, he and that prince of roisterers, Uncle George. De Quincey is the authority on mail coaches and for the roof seats he is all fire and enthusiasm. It happened once, to continue with De Quincey, that a state coach was presented by His Majesty George the Third of England, as a gift to the Chinese Emperor. This kind of vehicle being unknown in Peking, “it became necessary to call a cabinet council on the grand state question, ‘Where was the Emperor to sit?’ The hammer cloth happened to be unusually gorgeous; and partly on that

consideration, but partly also because the box offered the most elevated seat, was nearest the moon, and undeniably went foremost, it was resolved by acclamation that the box was the Imperial throne, and for the scoundrel who drove, he could sit where he could find a perch."

Consider that the summer day has ended and that you are tired with its rush and heat. Up you must climb to your house-roof. On the rim of the sky is the blurred light from the steel furnaces at the city's edge and, paneling this, stands a line of poplars stirring and sounding in the night wind.

> Alone upon the house-top to the North
> I turn and watch the lightnings in the sky.

Is it fanciful to think that into the mind comes a little of the beauty of the older world when roofs were flat and men meditated under the stars and saw visions in the night?

Once upon a time I crossed the city of Nuremberg after dark; the market cleared of all traces of its morning sale, the "Schöner Brunnen" at its edge, the narrow defile leading to the citadel, the climb at the top. And then I came to an open parade above the town—"except the Schlosskirche Weathercock no biped stands so high." The night had swept away all details of buildings. Nuremberg lay below like a dark etching, the centuries folded and creased in its obscurities. Then from some gaunt tower came a peal of bells, the hour maybe, and then an answering peal. "Thus stands the night," they said; "thus stand the stars." I was in the presence of Time and its black wings were brushing past me. What star was in the ascendant, I knew not. And yet in me I felt a throb that came by blind, circuitous ways from some far-off Chaldean temple, seven-storied in the night. In me was the blood of the star-gazer, my emotions recalling the rejected beliefs,

the signs and wonders of the heavens. The waves of old thought had but lately receded from the world; and I, but a chink and hollow on the beach, had caught my drop of the ebbing ocean.

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