Parker Hats

six short stories

Ellis Parker Butler

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by Ellis Parker Butler

Lover's Leap

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This was back in the years when I was going about the country getting up "Beautifuls." That was what we called them. They were really local write-ups with about six half-tone engravings of Main Street and bits of local scenery that we got nothing for, and half a hundred or more portraits of prominent citizens, pictures of oatmeal-mills, banks, and so on, that cost us five dollars and for which we collected twenty-five dollars apiece, sometimes more. There were twenty or so of us in the business, working on salary, and sent out by the Cities Beautiful Company, of Lima, Ohio. We went into a town, made a contract with some local newspaper, and set to work. Usually there were ten pages of local history and general "write-up" stuff, followed by all the way from forty to one hundred pages of paid advertising, either display or in the form of write-ups.

We stuck pretty close to sample in all cases. Every book was a "Beautiful"--Kalamazoo Beautiful, Oconomowoc Beautiful, Columbus Junction Beautiful, and so on. The six half-tone engravings followed a rule, too. There was always "Main Street Seen from the Corner of Third Avenue and Elm Street," or something of the sort; there was always the High School; there was always the City Hall. Nine times out of ten one of the three remaining pictures--which were scenic--included a Lover's Leap.

Lover's Leap was a good card, always. There was always an Indian legend, and always the same one. If there was no legend we wrote one, and it was again always the same one. It was our only way of getting romance into the "Beautifuls," and it made a hit with the ladies. It helped the sale. American towns are utilitarian, and for that

reason admire anything romantic that can be hooked up with the local history. It was always safe to ask where Lover's Leap was when we struck a town, because there always was one if there was a side hill ten feet high. And it was always the same Indian lover and his dusky sweetheart and her cruel father that took part in the ancient tragedy.

One August I struck a town in Kansas--Kildare, I think it was--that was situated in the middle of a stretch of prairie that was as flat as a table. You could ride fifty miles in any direction without coming upon a dip or a rise as prominent as a wrinkle in a tablecloth. I made my deal with the editor and owner of the newspaper to print and bind the Kildare Beautiful book and then, jokingly, I said to him:

"I'll bet this is one town that hasn't a Lover's Leap."

"Oh yes, it has!" he said. "Every decent town has one. If there isn't one, the City Council votes one."

I thought he was joking.

"Did the City Council vote this one?" I asked.

"No, sir!"

"What did the fearless Indian hero jump from?" I asked him. "The top of the High School?"

"No, sir!"

"Well, listen, Briggs," I said, that being his name. "Is it a thing I can photograph? Because, if it is, I'm going to have it in Kildare Beautiful."

"No, don't!" he said.

"Why not?"

"Well, no matter why. Don't do it. It would make this book ridiculous. Put in a picture of the cemetery instead, showing the new fence. That will please old Hillis. He gave the fence. You can say that, and he will give you his own portrait to print, and a picture of his lumber-yard."

I was busy a few days, rushing around the town signing up the first twenty display-pages that were needed to make the book a safe go, and I forgot about Lover's Leap awhile, but one day, after dinner, I came out in front of the Kildare Hotel and pulled a chair into the shade. Old Billy Mifflin was half asleep in the only occupied chair, so I handed him a cigar. He looked like an oldest inhabitant or something of the sort, and somehow it reminded me of Lover's Leap.

"Uncle Billy," I said, "there's only one thing this town needs."

"What might that be?" he asked, getting ready to declare that Kildare did not need whatever it was.

"It needs a Lover's Leap," I said.

"No, it don't, nuther," he declared. "It's got one."

"No, you don't understand me," I said. "I said a Lover's Leap. A spot where Unconquerable Love and Fearless Bravery brought Two Fond Hearts together forever."

"I knowed what you said the fust time," he said, peevishly. "I said we got one. We got a Lover's Leap. I don't know as it ever fetched two fond hearts together, but it fetched one of 'em."

"Unconquerable Love--" I murmured.

"That, or a blat like a sick sheep," said Uncle Billy. "What I say is we

got a Lover's Leap. There ain't no modern improvements this town--"

"Where is this Lover's Leap?" I asked.

"Out yonder," he said, indicating a spot beyond the corn-elevator on the other side of the railway track.

"Want to walk over and show it to me?"

He got out of his chair and led the way. I tried to see something that might be a hidden depression into which a love-mad Indian might have leaped if there had been such an Indian, but I could not. Old Billy trudged along half a step ahead of me. We crossed the railway and entered the unfenced field. There was nothing in it but weeds and a pile of decayed timbers, thrown together, hit or miss, and left to rot. The old fellow led me through the weeds until we reached the rotten boards and two-by-fours.

"There she is, " he said.

"I don't see anything, " I said.

"Well, that ain't no fault o' mine. There she is. There's Lover's Leap. If you don't take a fancy to her, it ain't no fault o' mine. All I done was fetch you, and if you don't like her it ain't no fault o' mine."

"But I don't see anything," I said.

"Well, she's sort of hid by them boards, and that's a fact," he said. "When she stopped blowin'--"

"When what stopped blowing?"

"Th' well."

"Oh, it's a well!" I exclaimed. "The fond lover jumped down a well!"

"Nothin' o' th' sort! And he wa'n't no fond lover. He was a fugitive. That's what he was--a fugitive."

"I see! He hid in the well--"

"No, he wasn't ever in no well. Not that I know of, anyways. "

"Then the girl was in the well, and--"

"She wa'n't no girl, and she wa'n't in no well. Neither of 'em was in the well. It wa'n't that kind of a well. It was a 'tesian well."

"An artesian well? But how--"

"It was a bored well. I ought to know because I was the feller what bored it."

"Uncle Billy," I said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you a dollar if you will tell me why this is called Lover's Leap, and what happened. I'm not in much of a hurry. I expect to be here quite a while. I have time. But I'm impatient. I want to know about this thing some time during this century."

"Well, this here man by name of Joe--that was what I allus called him--Joe. This here man by name of Joe come to town and aimed he would set up in business here. I didn't have nothin' ag'in' him. He was a likely feller, but meeklike. He was sort of scared-like, as you may say. If you popped out at him, sudden-like, 'What's your name?' he would go red and say, 'Ah--ah--' like that. So this here Sally Hodgers she made up her mind he was goin' to wed her. I guess so. She acted like it, anyways. She done her hair up in curl-papers and took the papers out afore noon, anyways. She acted kittenish when he

come around. I guess she made up her mind to grab him. Leastways, I know she did.

"So this here Joe feller he got scared at last. For a while he didn't know what Sally was up to--he just thought she was crazy or the like of that--because he was sort of young and Sally wasn't. Not what you would call so. She was forty and more. She was what I would call a dad-basted old vinegar-cruet, that's what she was. I've told her so more 'n once. 'Sally,' I says to her, 'you're the dad-bastedest old vinegar-cruet I ever laid eyes on.' I have so. And she was. Nobody needn't tell me nothin' else.

"So when she got this Joe feller scared of her she up and proposed holy wedlock to him. I guess she did. That's how I understand it was. I been told so. Anyhow, that day this here 'tesian well I was borin' come in. She come with a rush and blowed all my contraptions sky-high, only she didn't come in with water--she come in with air. She was an air-well. She blowed out air like all-git-out. Like water out of a fire-hose nozzle. That's how she blowed.

"That was June eighteen, and I remember it mighty well, because J. C. Burling, what I bored that well for, never paid me a cent. So along about nine o'clock this Joe feller snuck out of the back door of the hotel and started across country for Minnesota or the North Pole or somewheres where Sally wa'n't. He run like the dickens and fust thing he knew he run right into this here dry 'tesian well o' mine, and up he went."

"Up he went?" I asked Uncle Billy.

"Up was what I said," said old Billy, "and up it was. He went up and he stayed up. Hain't you ever seen one of them jets of water that keeps a leetle glass ball a jigglin' around on top of it and don't let it drop? Say, didn't you ever see a boy stick a pin half through a pea

and put the bowl of a pipe in his mouth and blow, and send the pea dancin' and jiggin" in the air over the top of the stem? That's what that Joe feller done. He run right into the colyum of air that was shootin' out of that dry 'tesian well and it shot him straight up one hundred and fifty-two feet and kep' him there, kickin' and tossin' and yellin'. Yes, sir!

"I sort of heard him yell myself. I says to my wife, 'Somebody is drunk and yellin' like blazes.' But I never thought what it was. Nobody would. So nobody knowed this Joe feller was bein" tossed and jiggled up there in the air one hundred and fifty-two feet. Nobody knowed it until next mornin' when I went out to see if maybe the well had changed its mind and started to give water.

"I come out of my house and started for the well, and the fust thing I see was something black bouncin' around right up yonder in the air one hundred and fifty-two feet. This Joe feller had been up there all night. I run to the well here, and before I got here I seen it was a human bein' and I turned back and got a gang of fellers together.

"I knowed how serious it was. You can't tell nothing about them 'tesian wells. This one might keep on for seven thousand years, and by that time this Joe feller wouldn't be nothin' but bones, so to speak.

"Every once in a while he let out a weak sort of yip, but for the most part he was bein' tossed and turned head-over-heels. I got a barn door and us fellers slid it over the well, but the air was too strong for us. It wrested the barn door away from us and the barn door flew up and hit this Joe feller a wallop and then skidded off and come down.

"We done everything we could think of to fetch him down. We tried a rope, but when one end would get up a ways it would get out of the air current and the whole caboodle would come down. It was right pitiful to hear him yip once in a while, and it looked like he would stay up

there until he starved to death and then keep on right where he was. We tried tossin' victuals into the air-current, but it wa'n't what you'd call successful. They went up all right but, bein' lighter than this Joe feller, they went right on beyond him. In no time at all we had a sort of bouquet of victuals bouncin' and jiggin' ten or twelve feet above his head, but it didn't do him no good. So it looked like the best we could do would be to get a gun and shoot him. There wa'n't no use lettin' him die of starvation.

"It was whilst Orley Morvis was goin' for his rifle that this Sally person come to where he was. The news that this Joe feller was gone but not forgotten had come to her and she come with all speed. Right away she begun to blat like a sick sheep. It wasn't nothin' but, 'My dearly beloved!' and, 'Save him! save him!' and blaw-blaw-blaw. That woman sure did git on my nerves.

"'For the land's sake, shet up!' I says, when I couldn't stand it no longer. 'If you don't,' I says, I'll chuck you into that air-shoot with him.'

"'My Joseph!' she blats, and what does she do but jump right into the air-current! My stars! I give one grab for her, but it was too late. Up she went!

"Up she went, and I says, 'Now there's two of them!' but as she went shootin' up past him she reaches out a hand and grabs her well-intended by the foot and clings on. For a second or two they was all one ball, and then down they come. Gradual. Slow and gradual. They was too heavy for the air-current when together that way, and down they come. So that's why we call this here lot Lover's Leap. This Sally person leaped up and saved this Joe feller."

I looked at old Uncle Billy, but he did not bat an eye. He gave me stare for stare.

"Is that the truth?" I asked.

"Ask anybody," he said.

"You mean every one here believes it? That it is the legend that clings to this ground?"

"I don't know nothin' about legend," he said. "It's whut happened, like I'm tellin' you."

"Well, I say it is a good story," I said. "I say I'm going to use it in Kildare Beautiful. It is as good romance as any Lover's Leap story. I don't see why Briggs objected to my using it."

"Well, mebby"--said Uncle Billy, slowly,--"mebby one reason is he was the Joe feller that got h'isted. Mebby that sort of influenced him ag'in' the facts in print. His wife Sally might not favor it. She kind of thinks it was undignified to be shootin' up in the air like that before a gang of us fellers. Well, I don't know!"

"You don't know what?"

"Well, I don't know but what it was, seein' as she went up feet first," said Uncle Billy.

Geoffrey's Panklaggephone

by Ellis Parker Butler

If you can't pronounce it, never mind; neither could Casey. It is a sort of amateur Greek word that Geoffrey made up himself, so it would fit in the same list as telephone, phonograph, cinematograph, megaphone, and so on; and Casey was no Greek. Far from it. If you had mentioned Demosthenes and Solon to Casey he would have said, "Sure now, an' I dunno anny av thim fruit-stand fellers." All he knew about Greece was that it was somewhere in Italy, where the dagos and Portuguese come from.

As Casey came along one morning on his way to his boiler-shop he noticed that a sign was being painted on the small factory next door; and when he went home that night he saw that the sign was complete, "The Geoffrey Panklaggephone Company." By the name he guessed carelessly that it was a company to make either some new-fangled moving-picture machine or a patent medicine, and forgot all about it. When a man is trying to run a boiler-shop these days he has his hands full with that. He hasn't time to stop to stufdy out Pan--panklag--pan-whatever-it-is. No, sor.

The way that Geoffrey got the name was this. He looked up "noise" in the dictionary, and it didn't have a Greek root, so he found a synonym, "clangor," and he looked that up, and that did have a Greek root. He had to have Greek in the name. The word was "klagge," so he took "klagge" and tacked "pan" on one end, to mean that his machine was good for all kinds of noise, and then he stuck "phone" on the other end, because that never seems to do any harm, and makes a good ending for any sort of newfangled machine; and there he had his word--"panklaggephone." It didn't mean anything, but it

looked whooping on a sign. That was just the kind of word Geoffrey wanted; the kind a man like Casey couldn't pronounce. It looked as sweet as "vitagraph."

It is wonderful what simple little things hide under big names, sometimes. There Geoffrey had worked out that tremendous word for his machine, and the machine was just a simple little everyday invention, a noise-absorber. Nothing more. Just a noise-absorber. Anyone could have invented it. Geoffrey happened to think of it first.

The whole thing was so simple that it was almost childish. I can describe the panklaggephone in a very few words, so that anyone can understand it and, if he desires, make one himself. The idea is simply this: If we have too much water anywhere, and we want to get rid of it, we get a sponge. A sponge is a water-absorber. If we have too much electricity and want to get rid of it, we get a storage battery. A storage battery is an electricity-absorber. If we have too much money and want to get rid of it, we get an automobile. An automobile is a money-absorber. But what Geoffrey wanted to create was a noise-absorber. Water makes a noise, electricity makes a noise, money makes a noise; therefore Geoffrey built a machine that was something like an automobile, something like a storage-battery, and something like a sponge. Having done this, and found that his model worked all right, Geoffrey formed his stock company, rented the factory building, and began making panklaggephones.

Great is modern science! A friend of mine went out the other day to kill a man who had insulted him. He took his rifle, which was the new soundless kind, and loaded it with smokeless powder. He walked up to within twenty feet of his enemy, aimed full at his heart, pulled the trigger, and shot him dead. All his enemy did was to say, "Don't point that gun at me!" No smoke from the gun, no sound from it, how was the man to know he had been killed? My friend went up to him and

told him he was dead, that he was shot through the heart, and still he wouldn't believe it. No smoke, no sound--he simply couldn't believe he was dead. My friend showed him the hole he had shot in him, and that it was a new hole, but the fellow was still skeptical. He didn't weaken until my friend got a paper and showed him an article about soundless guns and smokeless powder, and even then he said he half believed it was a newspaper fake. But he hated to disoblige, so he died. But he wasted half an hour of my friend's time uselessly. It was one of the fruits of ignorance. It was the same kind of ignorance as that which afflicted Casey.

Casey's boiler-shop was built on the principle that seems most approved for boiler-shops--the reverberant principle. In a boiler-shop of that kind, if you hit a saucepan with a tack-hammer the sound will boom up to the ceiling, and echo back along the walls, and roll up and down, multiplying as it goes, until it is making as much racket as a Wagner crescendo. But if you put two men at work on a big iron tubular boiler in that sort of shop, one man inside the boiler and one outside, both with heavy hammers, the utmost limit of slam-bang noise is reached. Casey had forty-one men at work in his boiler-shop

When he went up to a workman and shouted in his ear at the top of his lungs all the workman could hear was the warm breath of Casey on the back of his neck. When Casey wanted to talk to a workman in his shop he had to take him by the sleeve and lead him one block east and two south, and draw him into the recesses of a lumber-yard. Over by the front door of Casey's boiler-shop was the machine that takes the flat plates of boiler-iron and rolls them into cylinders. It was a pretty good noise-maker, too. Off to one side of that machine was Casey's own boiler, the one that ran the machines in his shop, and it was a boiler Casey was proud of. It was the first boiler he had ever made, and it was breaking the age-record for boilers. Everyone said it was already ten years beyond the utmost age-limit for boilers, and it

was patched up with squares and oblongs of riveted iron until it looked like a cylindrical crazy-quilt. Everyone told Casey he ought to have a new boiler. Every time he took a workman one block east and two south the workman would give notice that he was going to quit unless Casey got a new boiler. They told Casey it wasn't safe to work in a shop where there was an old, rickety boiler that leaked so it put out the furnace fire. Then Casey would say he guessed he'd make himself a new boiler as soon as he got time; but he never got time, and the next time he had a chance to speak to the workmen they would tell him it was absolute suicide to carry seventy pounds of steam in that old teakettle; that forty pounds would be dangerous. Casey stood it as long as he could, and then, one morning, he called all his workmen together and made them a speech. He said he had been making boilers before most of them were born, and knew more about boilers than any man in the country, and that they need not be afraid of that boiler if he wasn't.

He said he had had that boiler years and years, and it had never exploded yet, and that he was tired of having men, in his shop, work with one eye on their job and one on the old boiler.

"Go awn back t' worrk now," said Casey, "an' whin ye see me makin' fer th' door 'twill be plinty av toime fer ye t' think av th' boiler bustin'. Pat Casey is th' biggest coward av th' lot av ye, make sure av that."

Then he went around behind the boiler and changed the gage so that it registered forty pounds when it was carrying seventy, threw a cup of kerosene into the furnace to encourage the fire, and forgot all about it.

The third day after the sign of the Panklaggephone Company was painted on the wall of the building next door to his boiler-shop Casey got down to work early. It was his custom. If he had any orders to give it was necessary to give them before work began, so that they might

be heard.

One by one the men dropped in, and when Casey blew the whistle they set to work, all at once and heartily. It was a grand noise; forty men pounding on boiler-plate with heavy hammers, and one rolling steel plates through the machine. It was the climax of clangor. It was so noisy that not a sound could be heard; it was roar! Bang! Clank! Continuously, without intermission. Each man was making so much noise himself that he could not hear any other man's noise. Casey was behind his boiler, stopping up a leak in a seam with wet ashes.

Suddenly a look of anger darkened his face. Silence, utter silence, had settled over the boiler-shop. Casey knew what was the matter. The cowards had taken fear of the old boiler! Rage filled his heart. After him making them a speech about it, too! He took off his greasy felt hat and threw it down and stamped on it. He pulled off his greasy coat and threw that down and kicked it. He rolled up his sleeves and doubled up his fists, and stepped from behind the boiler. He yelled the war cry of all the Caseys. Then he stopped short. Not a man was gone from his place. Not a man had stopped work. Everywhere hammers rose and fell against boilerplates. And everywhere was absolute silence. Not a sound; not a murmur. Absolute silence.

For one minute Casey stood absolutely still, and then a pale, scared look came over his face. He glanced around cautiously--no one seemed to be observing him. He swelled out his chest and yelled twice, like a scared jackal, but he could not hear his own yell. He could not hear anything. He began to perspire.

There is so much noise in a boiler-shop that often the boilermakers cannot hear the noise. Casey was pretty sure he had gone suddenly deaf, but he was not quite sure. With a cautious motion he bent slowly down and picked up a square of boiler-iron and a hammer. If he was

once outside the shop and beat on that square of iron with the hammer he would soon know if he had gone deaf. Slowly he turned and stepped cautiously toward the door.

The boilermakers saw him and got there first. Long before Casey had reached the sidewalk the last boiler-maker was on his way to the lumber-yard, with one eye on safety and the other on the air, where he expected to see Casey's boiler soaring. He was a cross-eyed boiler-maker or he could not have done this. There were plenty of lumber-piles, and the boiler-makers went so far under them that Casey had to pry them out with a piece of scantling.

"Ye fools!" said Casey, when he had them all out again.

"Aw!" said the foreman; "you said yerself we was t' git out when we seen you git out. Wasn't you gittin' out?"

"I'll not say but what I was steppin' outside a bit," said Casey, "but I was not runnin'. I was walkin' easy. 'Twas not because av th' boiler I was goin'."

"How was we to know what you was goin' out for?" asked the foreman angrily. "What was you goin' out for, anyway?"

"Nawthin'," said Casey evasively. "I fergit what it was, now. 'Twas nawthin' important, annyhow. Mebby 'twas some wan goin' by I wanted a word with."

"All right," said the foreman sulkily. "All I got to say is it must have been some one you're mighty scared of, by the looks of you when you was goin', for--"

Suddenly the foreman stopped speaking. His lips kept on forming words, but they made no sounds. Casey was walking on with his

head down, and, as his words faded away, the foreman turned pale. There was something the matter with his voice, but he did not know what. He glanced secretively at Casey, but Casey was not looking. He tried a few words experimentally, but the experiment worked badly. He whistled. Not a sound. Deaf and dumb both! The scared look gathered on the foreman's face. Casey and his foreman and his boilermakers went back to the boiler-shop as silently as a funeral driving over moss.

"Well, byes," said Casey, when they were all inside, "'twas no wan's fault. Git t' worrk!" But his voice fell silent. Hodges picked up his hammer and hit the side of a boiler. He might as well have hit a roll of cotton batting. He looked at the boiler in surprise. Then he looked at the head of his hammer.

Then he hit the boiler again, and the pale, scared look came upon his face. He glanced around cautiously. Casey was paying no attention to him. No one was. All the boilermakers were pale and scared, and were tapping on their boilers experimentally. Pale and scared, they all went to work. They motioned and gestured to each other, just as they did when the shop was full of clangor. They were like pictures of a boiler-shop and its workers thrown on a sheet by a cinematograph--all motion and no noise.

When the day's work was ended the workers did not troop out together as usual. They stole away one by one, and they did not go home immediately. One by one they sought their favorite doctors.

"I'm thinkin'," said Casey to his, "there do be somethin' th' matter with me ears, Doc. There be flushes av silence come over me t'day, whilst I'm worrkin' in me shop. Would ye be testin' me ears for me?"

"Step into the operating room here," said the doctor. "Now, let me see, what is your business?"

"I'm Casey, th' boilermaker."

"Oh!" said the doctor, and then turned to the door, where his attendant had come. "A man? Well, have him wait. What is his trouble?"

"He thinks he's going deaf," said the attendant.

The doctor took up Casey's case. He tested him in every known way. He told Casey he had ears so perfect that they were almost marvelous.

"Excuse me, Doctor," said the attendant, looking in, "but there is another man here now."

"What is his trouble?" asked the doctor.

"He thinks he is going deaf," said the attendant.

"Tell him to come in," said the doctor, "and tell the other man to come in, and if any more men come thinking they are going deaf have them come in."

A few more did drop in, soon. They were all pale and scared looking.

"Now, men," said the doctor, when he had examined them all, "you have not a thing to worry about. Your ears are all perfect. Your cases are peculiar, but not inexplicable. I might say that they resemble the snow-blindness that is caused by too much light. You are evidently suffering from something that I may call boiler-shop deafness, caused by too much noise. The nerves of the ear are temporarily paralyzed by too many and too violent soundwaves. In order to prevent a recurrence I advise you to wear earmuffs stuffed with cotton."

At the end of his first manufacturing week Geoffrey had twenty panklaggephones completed, ready for shipment, and he went home to his young wife beaming with happiness, riding beside the driver on the high seat of a delivery truck. Behind him, in the truck, was a full-sized panklaggephone. He was taking it home. It was his wife's birthday present.

Geoffrey had had a panklaggephone in his house, but it had been the model merely, a small affair. It had been enough to prove to him that his idea was a good one, and that the panklaggephone would absorb noises, but the machine had been so small that it left much to be desired. It was strong enough to absorb the noise of a mosquito or two, and had been useful in that way, giving one perfect rest from mosquitoes in the bedroom, until the mosquito really bit; but Mrs. Geoffrey had been losing sleep night after night on account of the crying of her baby, and was growing pale and thin. She knew that the best thing to do was to let the baby cry itself to sleep again, but she was so nervous she could not, and Geoffrey felt that a panklaggephone in the house would be a great boon. It would not only absorb the baby's cries, but the street noises, Mrs. Geoffrey's snores (she would sleep with her mouth open), the crowing of the neighbors' roosters in the early morning, and a lot of other unpleasant sounds.

He and the driver of the truck unloaded the panklaggephone--it was quite a large affair--and carried it into the house. They set it, temporarily, in the hall, and Geoffrey touched the button that started the absorber. As he did so he said:

"Now, dear, you will see how it works. You hear the baby crying at the top of his voice" ("I should think I did," said Mrs. Geoffrey) "and all I do is touch this button--"

Geoffrey touched the button. The baby cried louder than before, and

his voice was quite as apparent. A frown gathered on Geoffrey's brow.

"That's funny," he said. He pushed the button again and again.

The panklaggephone would not absorb." That's very funny," said Geoffrey.

"Well, never mind just now," said Mrs. Geoffrey. "Here is a telegram that came to the house just a few minutes ago. I opened it. And you must come to your dinner right away if you are to catch the train."

The telegram was from Geoffrey's agent in Chicago. He wired that he hoped to close a contract for one hundred panklaggephones, but thought Geoffrey himself should be on the spot.

Geoffrey hurried through his dinner and then ran to catch the train, and the last thing he said, before he went, was that he would fix the panklaggephone when he got home Monday. He supposed there was something wrong with the mechanism. He did not know that the panklaggephone had absorbed up to its full capacity.

The home of the Geoffreys was in a very refined and quiet section of the town; a section so quiet that, after ten o'clock at night, the steps of the police officer could be heard for several blocks, and when Mrs. Geoffrey went to her dining-room that night at one o'clock to see if she had really forgotten to lock the windows, she was greatly pleased to hear the steps of the policeman on the street before the house. It made her feel much safer. She was always a little nervous when Geoffrey was away.

The moment she reached the top of the stairs she paused, listening. From below, somewhere, she heard the sound of a heavy truck jolting over a stone-paved street. Tin-sound seemed to come from the front

hall, as if the truck were being driven about the hall itself. Mrs. Geoffrey turned pale, and a scared look settled upon her face. She could hear the heavy breathing of the horses, the crack of the whip, and the creaking of the harness. Then, suddenly, from the hall, came two wild Irish yells, and instantly a boiler-shop burst into full voice. Her ears were deafened by the clangor of metal against metal, of hammer against boilerplate, a wild hurricane of noise, terrific, unbelievable, stunning. Mrs. Geoffrey put her two hands straight out in front of her and fainted backward with a thud that was lost in the racket.

The panklaggephone was unloading the boiler-shop.

The house shook with the noise, and the windows rattled. It was a rude shock to that refined and quiet neighborhood, and the policeman dashed up the steps and kicked in the front door. He stopped, stunned. To the best of his knowledge and belief there were forty-one boiler-makers busily making boilers in that house. There was noise everywhere--it did not seem to come from any one spot. The house was all noise. He dashed upstairs, and tripped over Mrs. Geoffrey--not another soul but the baby. He dashed to the garret--not a soul. He dashed down to the first floor--not a soul. Not a soul in the cellar! No one in the house but a fainted woman and a baby. And the racket of forty-one strenuous boilermakers pounding on iron with steel hammers! The policeman yelled once and ran.

All up and down the street windows opened and heads were put out. People came forth dressed in nothing much with a spare sheet over it. The fire department came on the run, and so did the police reserves. Police reserves are useful in keeping people away from places, but there is not much a fire department can do in putting out noises, but it did what it could. It worked on the principle that the noise was coming out of Geoffrey's house, and that if there was no

house the noise could not come out of it, so they did what they could to do away with the house. They were pretty successful. A fire department can do a great deal when it tries. Of course there were some pieces of plaster here and there that would not come off the walls easily, but when they turned the hose on them they began to weaken, and they would have had them all off had a stream of water not brought Mrs. Geoffrey to herself. Pat Casey himself helped carry the panklaggephone out of the house when she had explained that the noise probably came from that.

When Geoffrey reached his office Monday noon he found Casey awaiting him.

"Good day t' ye," said Casey. "Ye're Mister Geoffrey, I'm thinkin'?"

"I am," said Geoffrey.

"Casey's me name," said Casey. "I'm th' man what runs th' boiler-shop that meks th' noise thim machines av your'n has been absorbin'"

"Now, Mr. Casey," said Geoffrey firmly, "I am very busy today. I have been away, and I have come home to find my house a wreck. I am willing to do what is right in the matter, but I really cannot take the time to go over it today. If the absorption of your noise by my machines has caused you any loss my company will pay for it, but--"

"'Twas not that I was thinkin' av," said Casey. "I was wonderin' what wan av thim pank--thim panic--"

"Panklaggephones?" said Geoffrey.

"Yis; wan iv thim. I was wonderin' what th' cost might be?"

"Certainly," said Geoffrey. "Such a machine should be of the greatest use in a boiler-shop, particularly if this crusade against noise--Now, we will guarantee to supply one that has not absorbed any noise."

"Do ye know me ould woman?" asked Casey.

"No," said Geoffrey, with some surprise.

"Well, 'twas not wan av th' absorbin' kind I was thinkin' av," said Casey. "I mek out very well at th' boiler-shop; very well. But there do be some toimes whin me ould woman has th' gift o' speech, an' th' house do be annythin' but peaceful an' quiet, an' I'm a man that loikes quiet, Mister Geoffrey. I was after hearin' th' pank--th' machine goin' off at yer house th' other night, Mr. Geoffrey, an' I would loike t' have wan av thim loaded up with a boiler-shop t' take home. 'Twould be restful, loike, t' turn awn whin th' ould woman breaks loose."

The Chromatic Ghosts of Thomas

by Ellis Parker Butler

1907

Our cat Thomas was very sensitive. I never knew such a sensitive cat as Thomas was. The slightest harsh word seemed to hurt his feelings and put him into a fit of the dumps. And if anybody scolded him he would sob once or twice, then burst into tears. My wife and I tried to be gentle and kind to Thomas, but when a cat has such abnormally sensitive feelings as that, one is almost every minute doing something inadvertently to wound them, and Thomas seemed to be everlastingly looking for something to take to heart. It got so that he wandered about the house from one week's end to another, with a downcast, mournful expression, and it began to get on our nerves.

Time and again I made up my mind to speak to my wife about it, and then I would remember how kind and loving and faithful Thomas had been when he was a kitten, and I would try to soothe my nerves by playing on my violin; but whether it was the material of which the violin strings were made, or something else, this would hurt Thomas' feelings, too, and he would sit and look at me, oh, so sadly! until I would have to weep also, and then my wife would come in, and seeing both her darlings in tears, would fall to crying. We were very, very unhappy, and all because Thomas was so ridiculously sensitive.

I stood it until one day when he had been more than usually moody. He had taken offense at some fancied slight early in the morning, and all day he had sat with a frown on his brow, not saying a word to me, nor answering me when I spoke to him, I said nothing until evening,

and then, being sure that Thomas had fallen asleep on our best silk damask chair, I spoke to my wife about it. I told her plainly that I was becoming a nervous wreck on account of that cat's feelings. I said that either I would move out and leave the house to Thomas, or that Thomas must move out and leave the house to me; that his moods were too moody, and that his permanent melancholy was beginning to tinge my writing, and that if I lost any more of the blithe joyousness that was my principal hold on the public, I would lose my popularity, and no one would want my writings, and we should all starve.

I can see now that I was a little too vehement. My mind was very much wrought up over the matter, and I may have spoken louder than I had intended. At any rate, Thomas suddenly jumped from the chair and walked dejectedly from the room. At the door he stopped and gave me one reproachful glance, and then we heard him push open the screen door and go out onto the kitchen porch.

My wife and I sat for a minute in silence. The awful significance of what I had done came upon me. Never before had I outspokenly told my feelings regarding Thomas in his hearing.

"Edward," said my wife, "I fear you have mortally offended Thomas."

I pretended I was indifferent about what Thomas thought of what I had said, but at heart I was worried and ashamed. I knew I had said more than I had intended. In the heat of my words I had gone further than I should otherwise have gone. However. I doggedly set my mouth into firm lines, and scowled.

"Edward," said my wife anxiously, a few minutes later, "Thomas is very quiet out there. Don't you--don't you think you had better go and coax him in? Hadn't you--hadn't you better go to the door and say a kind word to him? You know how sensitive he is, and--"

She did not say the awful words, but we both understood what she meant. Thomas was in the exact condition of melancholy in which suicide suggests itself to the hypochondriac mind. I moved uneasily in my chair. I hated to beg the cat's pardon, for I felt that I was right in the quality of what I had said, even if I had made the quantity too large. I hesitated, and then I rose.

At that moment my wife screamed, and I--strong man though I be--jumped nervously, for our straining ears caught the sound of a heavy body splashing into our rain barrel. For one terror-stricken moment Mary and I stood looking at each other aghast; the next moment I was dashing from the room. Wildly, impetuously, I ran to the rain barrel. Our worst fears had been realized. Thomas had committed suicide!

My garden rake was standing near, and with it I hastily raked all that remained of poor, misguided Thomas out of the rain barrel, and laid his dank body on the back porch. Poor Thomas!

Mary came and stood beside me, and I threw my arms around her, and together we looked down at that dripping, lifeless form. When her first strong paroxysms of grief were over I took her hand, and then, as we looked, Thomas quivered, staggered to his feet, and tottered into the kitchen. You may be sure that Mary and I were joyful. We got a huckaback towel and rubbed him dry. We dosed him with hot catnip. We stroked him gently, and tickled him under the chin, where a cat loves best to be tickled. He revived quickly, and, strange to say, he seemed to bear me no resentment. In fact, he seemed to be a new cat. He had no recollection of what had passed between us, nor of his awful act. He was happy and blithe, as he had been when we first made his acquaintance, and he purred and smiled at us good-naturedly. We left him asleep by the kitchen fire, and Mary and I went into the parlor to talk the matter over.

We decided we would be very good to Thomas in the future, for his

suicide had been a lesson to us, and we knew that Thomas had only eight lives more. No cat has more than nine lives at the best, and we agreed that we must do all we could to cherish those eight remaining lives. We sat in the parlor planning pleasant little surprises and gifts for Thomas, and evolving new ways of making him contented and happy, for we felt that our little home must be dull for a cat of Thomas' parts, with no children to amuse him, and we saw that we had been wrong to blame him for his melancholy. We should have made his life pleasanter and brighter, and should have tried to draw him out of himself more. So interested did we become that we were surprised to hear the clock strike midnight, for time goes so quickly when one is conspiring good deeds.

As the last stroke of twelve sounded Thomas bounded into the parlor. His eyes were glaring wildly. His limbs were trembling. Every hair on his body was standing erect. He backed between my feet, and stared with horror at what seemed to us to be but the vacant air. He alternated between pitiful mewing and frantic spitting and clawing at the air before him. I supposed that he had awakened suddenly out of a bad dream, but when I bade him go to his usual bed in the kitchen he plead so piteously to be allowed to sleep in our bedroom that Mary begged me to remember how near we had come to losing him. and I agreed to let him come with us.

The permission seemed to give him pleasure, but all the way up the stairs he kept close to my feet, now and then looking back with evident terror, and while I was disrobing he did not move an inch away from me.

When I turned off the gas and moved toward my bed. I stopped short in amazement. In the black darkness of the room I could distinguish Thomas by his two huge, terror-stricken eyes, but that was not what made me pause and tremble. Perched on the foot of my bed was a

thin, phosphorescent form. It was a pale blue, transparent cat, and its face was contorted into a diabolical grin. Through it I could see the frightened face of my wife. In every feature the ghost cat was identical with Thomas. It was, indeed, the ghost of Thomas' first life returned to haunt him. I do not--or did not then--believe very much in ghosts. I have always been willing to admit that there were ghosts, but that a man of any stamina should be afraid of them seemed to me the utmost folly, and I took a hairbrush and tried to brush the blue cat ghost off the footboard of my bed, but the ghost cat would not vanish; the brush passed through it as it would have passed through a moonbeam. I blew at the ghost, and it flickered, as a flame flickers in a draft, but it remained where it had been. If anything, it glowed with a brighter blue.

Thomas had jumped upon the bed and was cowering in my wife's arms. My own hair and my mustache were standing erect, and the hairs of my mustache tickled my nose and made me sneeze repeatedly. I sneezed right through the cat ghost each time, and this bent him into odd curves, twisting his infernal grin into horrible caricatures of Thomas' sweet face.

I tried every antidote for ghosts of which I had ever read, but without the least success; and finally I lighted the gas again, which dissipated the cat ghost so far as Mary and I were concerned. I thought I could see a thin blue haze above the footboard, just where the cat ghost had been.

To Thomas, however, the blue ghost remained perfectly visible, as we knew by the manner in which he trembled all night as he lay between Mary and me. I was very thankful that he was a cat instead of a pig. for his hair remained permanently erect, and if he had been a pig his bristles would have stuck out like those on a hairbrush, and would have made sleep impossible for us.

I hoped that the ghost cat would depart with the rising of the sun, but although to Mary and me it was quite invisible, the actions of Thomas told us as plainly as possible that the ghost of himself was still haunting him. All that morning Thomas walked sideways, spitting and scratching at the thin air where we knew the ghost cat must be walking beside him, and occasionally he would make wild dashes around the room, or seek to climb the smooth side of the hall, or hide his head under a hassock. As the day wore on he became exhausted, and he finally fell into a troubled sleep. He slept several hours, until about nine o'clock in the evening, and then he awoke with a blood-curdling scream, and dashed madly up the stairs.

My wife and I darted after him, but we were too late to save the rash creature from the consequences of his folly. As we panted into the attic we saw him dash madly through a pane of glass in the window under the eaves, and a moment later we heard him strike on the brick walk below. Poor, poor Thomas! Once more he had been driven to that last resort of unfortunates, and had killed himself. I threw my arms around Mary, and when her first strong paroxysms of grief were over I took her hand and together we wended our way downstairs and opened the door.

There was a dogged look as Thomas entered the hall--a look of hopeless, spiritless woe that was only broken when he sprang, striking out viciously, at the ghost, now to one side and now to the other.

I thought it best then to speak to Thomas as one man should speak to another. I told him that he was not playing the part of a man; that he should bear up and be brave; that men had been haunted by ghosts before, and had lived to be happy, and that he should try to conquer his hatred and fear of the blue ghost, and bear with it; but Thomas only crept closer to Mary's skirts, and refused to be comforted or to

have his fears allayed.

That night a second ghost of Thomas took its place on my footboard beside the first. There was no question then that Thomas had lost the second of his nine lives, and that he had but seven left, and before I got into bed I gave him a good lecture on the necessity of taking good care of the few precious lives he had left. But his attention was not on what I was saying; and that can hardly be wondered at, for the second ghost on my bed was as like the first as one pin is like another, and both were as like Thomas as could be, but the second ghost was, instead of being blue, a rich, vivid red.

The two ghosts prowled back and forth, walking through each other, and if I had not been possessed by a shuddering chill I should have been highly amused, for when the two ghosts walked through each other, and the red and blue combined, they formed a rich purple. I might with honesty say that I had never seen a blue cat ghost before, nor even a red cat ghost, but I can take my oath that neither I nor my wife nor Thomas had ever seen a purple cat ghost. It was trying for me and for Mary, but think what it must have been for Thomas, considering that these were ghosts of himself.

I will not extend this story needlessly. Any one who wishes to read the complete details will find them in the report I wrote for the Society for Psychical Research. I cannot, I fear, make the story as amusing as it would be if it were a work of fiction. It would be amusing, no doubt, were I to go on to say that each night a new ghost of Thomas was added to the line of ghost cats that prowled about on the footboard of my bed, until nine ghosts of various hues were gathered there. Mr. John Kendrick Bangs would doubtless have sacrificed the truth in order to create just such a comical situation, for he is a humorist, and if a few vari-colored cat ghosts had happened to roost on his bed, he would have seen something funny in them, and would have

exaggerated the facts in order to have a little fun with the subject; but I have a reputation as a family man and as secretary of the Bowne Park Improvement Association to maintain, and I cannot bring myself to pander to your love of amusement by any such mendacity. I must stick to the facts.

Of course I cannot deny that poor, dear Thomas committed suicide every day for nine consecutive days; for that is the truth. In spite of all our efforts to prevent him, he managed each day to accomplish his fell purpose.

I cannot deny that on the third day he ate an abnormally large portion of rat poison, driven to desperation by the care that kills cats, nor that when, after Mary's first strong paroxysms of grief were over, Thomas staggered up our stairs with only six lives remaining in him, there was a new ghost on the footboard to greet him. Neither can I deny that when, on the fourth day, melancholy seized him, and he jumped into the oven of our gas stove, when the heat there was as great as is obtainable from our suburban gas, and perished miserably, my Mary was seized with a paroxysm of grief, for we loved Thomas, and it pained us to see him get into the dying habit.

Nor shall I deny that he died by his own act on the fifth day, when he allowed our heavy front door to slam shut on his neck, extinguishing himself and causing my wife strong paroxysms of grief. And it would not be the truth if I did not say that on the sixth day Thomas, to the paroxysmal grief of my wife, chewed up and swallowed a lamp chimney, and died a wicked death. I trust, too, that my wife is as tender hearted as any other woman, but I cannot deny that when, on the seventh day, we found Thomas hanged by the neck in our lovely three-dollar-ninety-eight-marked-down-from-five-dollar rope portieres, and dead. Mary's paroxysms of grief were less strong than Thomas had, perhaps, come to expect on such occasions. I claim

that no woman can be expected, by any reasonable cat, to keep up a high standard of paroxysms of grief day after day without falling off a little in energy from time to time.

But Thomas was not a reasonable cat, and what he thought was Mary's indifference so affected him that on the eighth day he gnawed the rubber coating off an electric-light wire, and perished miserably. My wife hardly paroxysmed at all. But it was another matter when, on the ninth day, poor, dear Thomas snuffed out his last life by crawling under the sofa pillows of our almost Oriental cozy corner, and there suffocated. Then we knew poor Thomas was indeed lost to us. While six or four lives are left there is still, as the proverb says, hope; but when the ninth life of a cat is gone, it is a dead cat. Our sweet, suffering Thomas had left us, and I cannot deny that when Mary had recovered somewhat from her paroxysms of grief we hoped we had seen the last of Thomas. These things I cannot deny; but at no time was our bedroom full of multi-colored ghost cats, walking through each other and perching all around the room. We had no such vision of a woe-begone Thomas mournfully moving about the house followed by his eight ghosts of himself in a long, prismatic row.

What really happened was this: On the third night a third cat ghost of Thomas appeared, of a rich yellow color, and perched on my footboard, but the red and blue ghosts of the night before had permanently merged into one ghost of a rich purple. I do not try to account for this. I merely state it as a fact, and say that any one who knows anything about color knows that red and blue combined make purple. On the fourth night the purple ghost and the yellow ghost were joined by a new blue ghost, of a rather stronger shade than the first blue ghost had been; but when a red ghost appeared on the fifth night we found that the yellow and blue ghosts had combined to form one green one, and then this red ghost and the green ghost amalgamated into one brown one.

Thus it continued, a new yellow cat ghost materializing on the sixth night, only to mingle with a new red one on the seventh night, making a lovely orange-colored one; while on the eighth night a most peculiar cat ghost appeared that was what might be called a tortoise-shell cat ghost of all hues. We went to our room on the ninth night with considerable anxiety, not knowing what the last ghost of Thomas would be like; but we found that all the ghosts had combined to form one single ghost of spotless purity--a white iridescent ghost with a white iridescent grin that faded away into the air and disappeared entirely.

Perhaps truth is stranger than fiction. Perhaps you may consider this blending of the ghosts stranger than the congregating of nine prismatic cat ghosts would have been. I can only say it is more logical.

For several days after Thomas for the last time left us so abruptly--cut down for the ninth time in his prime--my wife and I discussed the matter, but we could make nothing of it, and it was at her suggestion that I wrote out the whole story and laid it before the Society for Psychical Research. The conclusion that the society reached was that in this the laws of ghosts was happily illustrated; for if every cat was allowed to send nine distinct ghosts into the ghost realm the population there would soon be too cattv.

It was also pointed out that if each ghost of poor, dear Thomas had been white, each would have been complete in itself, but that by being colored they could only reach perfection and harmony by combining to form one white ghost. The society also asked us to let it know if we were haunted by Thomas in his new and white form; but we have had nothing to report. Occasionally we awake at night to hear a soft patter of feet, or a weird rattle of plaster in the walls, or unearthly squeakings, but while I am persuaded that these are due to

the death of Thomas, I do not believe they are ghostly manifestations. I know they are rats.

Billy Brad and the Forbidden Fruit

By Ellis Parker Butler

Taken from "McClure's Magazine," Volume 40, November 1912 - April 1913

"And you must not take an apple," said Billy Brad's mother warningly. "If you want an apple, come to me and ask me, and if I think you may have one I will pare one for you. You are too young to know whether you need an apple or not. Do you understand? You must not take the apples!"

"Yes, mama," said Billy Brad cheerfully, and that was a bad sign. There was no reason why Billy Brad should be cheerful; for the day, so far, had not been a success--success and mischief being synonymous in Billy Brad's mind. So far, he had been spanked only twice, and this was far below the average and indicated an unsuccessful day. His world seemed barren of opportunities. The day had begun well enough, for he had found a large jar of cold cream on his mother's toilet-table, and had oiled the bedroom floor with it, giving the floor a better gloss than even Katy had ever been able to give it. For this he had been mildly spanked. Then he had found the shears, and stood on tiptoe, searching the top of Mrs. Bradley's toilet-table for a certain long switch of hair that at times reposed there--for at that moment Billy Brad was a barber, and wanted to "cut it." There was no switch visible, so he "cut" the hair of Mrs. Bradley's best silver-backed hair-brush. The crisp bristles snipped deliciously, but the affair was a tactical error.

"Just look at that brush!" his mother had exclaimed. "It is not good for

a thing in this world, now, but to spank you with. I'll keep it to spank you with, Billy Brad. Come here to me!"

For an hour after that Billy Brad's morning was dull. He could think of nothing better than to throw all his toys out of the play-room window into the geranium-bed--killing "Inyuns "; but when all the red-blossomed Indians had been crushed to earth, this was no fun, and he came downstairs. His first impulse was to come downstairs as a "big old dog"--on his hands and knees; but he remembered that the last big old dog he had been had fallen bumpety-bump down the entire long flight, so he came down as a big old snake.

A big old snake comes downstairs head first, on its belly, clinging with its toes, and hissing virulently. Four or five steps from the bottom, it loses its hold and bumps down. In this it resembles the big old dog.

Billy Brad picked himself up and seated himself on the bottom step. The descent had been a failure; he was not even hurt. It was evident that the world was askew this morning, and Billy Brad had about decided to be gloomy, when he thought of the apples.

The apples were in the lower part of the sideboard--the part with doors. There were bottles of catsup and Worcestershire and cans of maple syrup in the lower part of the sideboard, and when Billy Brad opened the door of the lower part of the sideboard he saw a catsup bottle. Here was something worth while! The things Billy Brad might do with half a bottle of catsup would make the stoutest heart tremble. In your wildest imaginings you could not guess what Billy Brad could do with half a bottle of catsup. He would not paint the wallpaper with it, for that is something you could imagine him doing. Billy Brad always did the thing no one else could possibly have thought of doing. But just as he reached for the catsup bottle Mrs. Bradley entered from the kitchen.

"Billy Brad!" she said sharply. "Don't you touch those apples."

"No, mama," he said sweetly, as she closed the door of the sideboard.

"Now, mind!" said his mother. "Will you promise me not to take an apple?"

"Yes, mama," said Billy Brad. "I won't take a napple, but--but--but maybe a big old slickery snake might take a napple."

Mrs. Bradley looked at him suspiciously. She knew that Billy Brad could, with case, transform himself into beast or bird or reptile. When he crept on his hands and knees and said, "Wow, wow!" he was a big old dog; when he walked on hands and feet, with his plump little haunches higher than his head. and said, "Oof, oof!" he was a big old bear; and when he lay flat on his belly, and wiggled and hissed, drawing himself along by his elbows and fingernails, he was a big old slickery snake. A slickery snake might do, with a clear conscience, things Billy Brad had promised not to do.

"Billy Brad," said his mother, "you must promise that no big old slickery snake, nor any other animal, or bird, or anything else, will touch the apples. Will you promise?"

"Yes, mama," said Billy Brad cheerfully. "And--and--and if a big old slickery snake comes to take one of my mama's apples, I'll take a big swo-word and--and--and cut its head off, I will!"

"Never mind about that!" said Mrs. Bradley. "You have promised. My little boy would not tell a fib. I can trust him. Can't I?"

"Yes, mama," said Billy Brad willingly, for he had no intention of taking an apple. He desired a catsup bottle. He hungered for a

catsup bottle. What he would do with it when he got it did not bother him at all. A catsup bottle half full of catsup is a useful thing for a boy to have on hand in case of emergencies. There is no telling when it may come in handiest, and the rational thing to do, when there is a catsup bottle to be had, is to have it.

Mrs. Bradley went into the kitchen, her mind at rest as to the apples, for Billy Brad was a truthful boy. If he said he would not take an apple she felt she could depend on him not to take one, for he had been taught the awfulness of a lie. Mr. Bradley had taught him, with a little rawhide whip that lay on the top shelf of the hall closet. Billy Brad knew that a lie was the one unforgivable sin.

Billy Brad lingered between the dining-table and the sideboard when his mother had gone into the kitchen. Although nothing had been said about catsup bottles, he had a feeling that he had better wait a while before taking one. He leaned against the dining-table and waited. It was a circular table, of mahogany, with a high, glowing polish, and when Billy Brad leaned against it with his head raised enough to give him a good view of its top, his mouth just reached the rim of the table. He put out his tongue and tasted the table top. There was no taste to it at all; it was neither sweet nor sour nor bitter. He opened his mouth wider and tried to bite the table top, and his sharp little teeth sank into the soft, varnished wood quite pleasantly, and when he looked he saw that his teeth had made a pretty semicircle of white dots. This was interesting. Billy Brad moved slowly around the table, making semicircles of white dots. He felt that the appearance of the table was greatly improved. He made dots quite around the table top.

On the top of the table was a large, highly embroidered linen table-cover, and in the exact center of the cover stood a tall glass vase of flowers. Billy Brad fingered the edge of the table-cover, and it moved. He grasped one of the pointed scallops and walked slowly around

the table. The entire table-cover revolved, and with it the vase in the center turned slowly. As he walked he kept his eyes on the vase, and sang:

"All aroun' a mubbery-bush, mubbery-bush. mubbery-bush;

All aroun' a mubberybush, mubbery-bush, mubbery-bush."

He walked around the table three times, sing-songing, but the vase did not topple over. It was an unsatisfactory vase, and the fourth time around Billy Brad held out his free hand. By stretching out his free arm he could touch three chairs as he passed them. So he sang:

"All aroun' a mubbery-bush--tag!

Mubbery-bush--tag!

Mubbery-bush--tag!"

On the fifth round, holding his hand extended after touching the second chair, his finger-tips touched the door of the sideboard. It was a loosely hung door, and, when he touched it, it closed and rebounded open again. On the next round he tagged it a little harder, and it opened a full two inches. A delicious odor of apples issued forth, and through the crack Billy Brad could see the catsup bottle. When he reached the door again he deserted the table-cover and opened the sideboard door. He put his hand into the lower part of the sideboard, reaching for the catsup bottle, and the topmost apple of the pile in the dish bumped to the floor and rolled under the table. Billy Brad withdrew his hand quickly, and three more big red apples followed and rolled across the floor. A glimmering of the power of circumstantial evidence to convict the innocent frightened him, and he hippety-hopped guiltily twice, away from the sideboard.

He went into the hall. When apples are roiling is no time to acquire a catsup bottle. The front door was open, and Billy Brad went out upon the porch. At the bottom of the porch steps was a cement walk, and at the corner of the walk was a small hole, no bigger than his thumb, that led into unknown depths under the walk. Billy Brad remembered this hole now, and he remembered that he had a dead caterpillar in the porch hammock, so he got the dead caterpillar and put it in the hole. He now had three dead bugs, a glass marble, and a dead caterpillar in the hole. It was quite a treasure-trove. He looked about for some other thing of great value to put in the hole. He tried to remember where he had seen a certain dried angleworm. He heard the screen door of the next house slam. He brightened at once. It meant that Florence was coming out to play.

Florence came down her porch steps slowly, with her hands behind her back. She looked at Billy Brad doubtfully, for only last night she had been whipped for letting Billy Brad put burs in her hair. She had gone in proudly, with her yellow curls beautifully "done up" in the back with burs, and instead of meeting with praise she had been whipped. Contact with Billy Brad might mean serious catastrophe. She hesitated at the bottom of her steps.

But Billy Brad did not hesitate. He walked straight across the pansy-bed into Florence's yard, and took his place immediately before her, with his hands behind his back,--because Florence had her hands behind her back,--and looked at her.

"I got some'n an' you ain' got," said Florence teasingly.

"I got a--a big old lion in my house," said Billy Brad. "And--and--and I got it down my cellar. And--and--and I got it in a coal-bim, I have. And--and--and if I want to I can go down in my cellar, and--and I can go in my coal-bim. And--and I can pat my big old lion, I can. And--and he won't bite me, for 'cause I tooked my mama's scissors and I cutted

his teef all out."

Florence looked at him doubtfully. To her mind, it was quite within possibility that a boy should have a lion down cellar in his coal-bin. If he had, it was quite useless to compete by mentioning that her mama had a big cake in the kitchen. She decided it would be more tantalizing to stick to things near at hand.

"I got a napple," she said, suddenly flashing it before Billy Brad's eyes, "an' you ain't!"

"That's my napple!" said Billy Brad promptly. "I want my napple."

"It's my napple!" said Florence. "My mama gave me my napple."

"I want it," said Billy Brad, and he took it. At that age all little boys are robber barons, and no little girls have sex, so he took it as a right. Florence, being robbed, opened her mouth and wept. Billy Brad stood ungallantly and watched her cry, for the cryings of Florence were an interesting mystery to Billy Brad. She was the best cryer on the block, and when she cried Billy Brad could see all the trimmings of the inside of her mouth--the small white teeth, the funny crinkles in the roof of the mouth, and the red tongue all the way back to where it was hitched on. It was an interesting spectacle, and Billy Brad took a step nearer, that he might see better.

"My papa's got gold teef," he said, when he had satisfied himself there was no chance of seeing all the way down Florence's throat. "And you ain't got gold teef."

Florence stopped crying immediately. She had never thought of having gold teeth. It was a new idea. She considered it a moment, and decided that the loss of the apple was the most important incident of the moment.

"I want my napple!" she screamed. It was a shocking display of temper.

"You can't have it," said Billy Brad, and turned away. "I need it."

Five minutes later Billy Brad sat on his porch steps, eating the big red apple, and Florence, virtuously aloof, sat on her own steps, eating another, when Mrs. Bradley, passing through the dining-room, saw the apples on the floor and the sideboard door wide open. She stepped to the front door and looked out. Billy Brad, who had promised not to touch the apples, eating one! As he heard his mother's step he looked up at her--placidly.

"Billy Brad," said his mother sternly, "I am going to tell your father!"

"Are you?" said Billy Brad pleasantly. He did not ask what she was going to tell him. He did not so much as wonder what. So many things happen in the course of a day that it is not worth while trying to think what a father is to be told. Often, when Billy Brad had decided what he was to be whipped for, it had, in the event, proved to be something entirely different--something he had quite forgotten.

"And I shall see that he gives you the good whipping you deserve!" said Mrs. Bradley severely.

Billy Brad dug his sharp teeth into the apple. On the score of the apple his mind was at rest. There, at least, he was guiltless. It was his by right of conquest. He humped his back a little more, as if in mute admission of the truth of the sentiment, "We are all miserable sinners."

He ate the apple to the utmost core, and put the core down the hole with the caterpillar. Not because the core was precious, but because

it seemed a logical thing to put an apple core down a hole so evidently sized to receive it.

"Now, Billy Brad," said his father, that evening after dinner, "I want a little serious talk with you, young man! Your mother told you not to take an apple to-day, and you promised not to take one. Do you remember that?"

"Yes," said Billy Brad; "and--and--and Flowence had a napple, and--and--"

"Now, never mind about Florence," said Mr. Bradley coldly. "You promised mother not to take an apple; and when a boy promises not to take one, and then does take one, it is a fib, and a fib is a lie. Do you understand?"

"Yes," said Billy Brad. "Papa, fen--fen--fen you open your mouf I can see all your gold teef. And--and--and Flowence ain't got any gold teef!"

He said it sadly, as if not having gold teeth was the ultimate sorrow. This was, as you can see at once, a complete explanation of the apple episode, and his father should have known it. If Florence had no gold teeth Billy Brad must have been looking into her mouth, and if he had looked into her mouth she must have been crying, and if she had been crying it must have been because Billy Brad took her apple, and that explained where Billy Brad had obtained the apple. But fathers are notoriously dense.

"We'll forget about gold teeth," said Mr. Bradley coldly. "We will talk about apples. Now, Billy Brad, I want you to tell me the whole apple story."

Billy Brad brightened. He loved stories. He loved to hear them, but

even more he loved to tell them.

"There was a big old slickery snake," said Billy Brad, "a great big old slickery snake, and--and--and it wuggled like a wum--"

"Stop there!" said his father. "It did not wiggle like a worm, for there was no snake--no snake at all."

"And--and--and there wasn't no big old slickery snake," said Billy Brad, "and it didn't not wuggle like a wum--What did it wuggle like, papa?"

"It didn't wiggle like anything," said Mr. Bradley sternly. "There was no snake, and you know it. Now, go on with this apple story. Your mother told you not to take an apple--"

"Yes," said Billy Brad, "and--and--and--Why wasn't there no wuggly old snake, papa?"

"Because," said Mr. Bradley, "you were the snake."

"And I was the old slickery snake," said Billy Brad. "And--and--and I wented into the garden, and--and I wuggled up a noak tree--"

"Now, stop!" said Mr. Bradley. "That's nonsense. You didn't go into the garden, and you didn't wiggle up an oak tree, because there is no oak tree in the garden, and if there was it wouldn't have anything to do with apples. Apples don't grow on oak trees. Apples grow on apple trees. Acorns grow on oak trees. And these apples were in the sideboard."

"Were they?'" asked Billy Brad, with surprise.

"Of course they were!" said Mrs. Bradley impatiently. "You know they were, Billy Brad."

"Do I?" said Billy Brad, but the information seemed new to him. "And--and--and," he began carefully, "there wasn't no old wuggly snake, and there wasn't no napples on the noak tree, for 'cause napples grow on napple trees. And--and--and--" He hesitated. Nothing in the way of a story seemed to suit his father this evening. He felt he must be careful. "And a big old nangel flewed down," he began briskly.

"No," said his father, shaking his head. "No angel flew down. Not an angel. Not a single, solitary angel. You took the apple, Billy Brad!"

"Out from the sideboard in the garden?" asked Billy Brad.

"The sideboard couldn't be in the garden," said Mr. Bradley, "and you know it. Sideboards are never in the garden. Sideboards are in the dining-room. You went into the dining-room, and you took an apple out of the sideboard. No snake, no oak tree, no garden. You took the apple. Now, why did you take the apple?"

"For 'cause," said Billy Brad, turning his bright eyes up to his father's face, "for 'cause I was a devil!"

That settled it! A father, even an indulgent father like William Bradley, can not have a son saying such things. He may, or he may not, believe in the black personage mentioned himself, but he can not permit a boy who has stolen an apple, and then fibbed about it, to throw the blame on Satan, still less mention his name in its vulgar form in excuse of his misdoings. He led Billy Brad through the hall to the kitchen, stopping at the hall closet for the rawhide whip. The interview in the kitchen was long. There had to be a long explanation of the reason for the whipping before it took place, and a long wiring of tears and close clasping of a sobbing little boy in a father's arms after it was all over. But Billy Brad never bore ill will. He kissed William Bradley fervently when it was all over, and took his hand to be

led back into the parlor.

Mrs. Bradley was not alone. She was sitting very primly in her chair. And facing her in another chair was Mrs. Wix, her lips set firmly. You know the unpleasant half hour when the woman next door comes to complain of your child, and how unpleasant it is when you know she is right. You know in your heart she is right, and yet you feel that she is a most disagreeable, meddling person. Your back stiffens at once. Mrs. Bradley's back was as stiff as a ramrod.

"More of Billy Brad's naughtiness!" she said. "That's bad!" said Mr. Bradley, without vigor: He knew one thing. After the painful scene in the kitchen, Billy Brad would receive no more punishment at his hands that evening!

He took Billy Brad on his lap. "What's the young terror been doing now?" he asked.

"Will you tell him, Mrs. Wix?" asked Mrs. Bradley stiffly.

"I prefer you should tell his father," said Mrs. Wix, with the air of a woman who has seen her unpleasant duty and has done it.

"Very well," said Mrs. Bradley. "This morning Mrs. Wix gave Florence an apple and sent her into the front yard. She heard Florence cry, and looked out in time to see Billy Brad deliberately take the apple away from her, and then he stood and made faces at her while she cried!"

"I--I--I saw how many teefs Flowence has got," said Billy Brad. "But Flowence hasn't got any gold teef. My papa's got gold teef."

The information was for the benefit of Mrs. Wix, who did not seem much impressed by it, after all.

"Took her apple, did he?" said Mr. Bradley. "Well, I hope he gave it back."

"He did not," said Mrs. Wix. "He took it away from her, and let her come crying to me for another while he sat on his steps and ate it. I would have come over then, but I saw Mrs. Bradley come out. I supposed, naturally, she meant to punish him; but as I heard nothing of the matter from her, I thought it my duty--"

"Quite right!" said Mr. Bradley genially.

"Because I thought Mrs. Bradley might think your son had got the apple in his own house," said Mrs. Wix.

Mr. Bradley looked at Mrs. Bradley meaningly, and Mrs. Bradley arose.

"We shall see that it does not happen again," she said, leading the way to the door. "Mr. Wix is well, I hope? Good night."

"Well?" she said, when she reentered the parlor. "So that is where Billy Brad got the apple! He did not steal it, after all. He did not tell me a fib. And the poor child had to be whipped!"

"Yes," said Mr. Bradley gently. "But why didn't you tell us where you got the apple, Billy Brad?"

It was evident that Mr. Bradley did not consider infantile highway robbery a serious crime--at least, not at all as serious as lying.

"Why didn't you tell us about the apple in the first place?" asked Mr. Bradley. "I asked you to tell me. Tell papa now. Just as it was, Billy Brad."

"There was a old noak tree," said Billy Brad eagerly, "and--and--and

napples growed on it, and--and--and a slickery old snake wuggled up the big old noak tree, and--and--and it tooked a napple--"

"Careful!" warned Mr. Bradley.

"And--and--and the slickery old snake, wuggled down the noak tree," said Billy Brad, very carefully and very slowly, "and--and--and a big old nangel flewed down, and--and--and--"

Mrs. Bradley opened her lips to speak, but Mr. Bradley motioned her to be silent.

"And--and--and the big old slickery snake gived her the apple, and--and--and the nangel he tooked his swo-word, and he said, 'Get out of my garden!' and--and--and--"

"For mercy's sake! You poor kiddie!" exclaimed Mr. Bradley, hugging the wee boy tight in his arms. "You poor kiddie! I told him to tell me the story of the apple, and he's been trying to tell me the story of the Garden of Eden!"

"And--and--and there wasn't no old sideboard out in the garden," said Billy Brad, with bravado.

"No, siree, Billy Brad!" said Mr. Bradley. "You knew better than papa that time, didn't you? And I whipped you for telling a fib, when you didn't tell one. So you can have whatever you want, Billy Brad, to square us. Now, think! What do you want most of anything, Billy Brad?"

"Gold teef," said Bill" Brad, without the slightest hesitation.

Below Zero

by Ellis Parker Butler

From Argosy, May 18, 1918

The activities of the Federal Secret Service men had been so great and so efficient during the spring and summer that we found our hands tied. Our well-arranged plans to injure the United States and hamper its war activities were amounting to nothing whatever. Our agents, after several hundred or more had been arrested and shot, refused to obey our instructions and the carefully planned campaign we had arranged was amounting to nothing.

Through the channel I must not mention I began to receive complaints from Berlin. These were accompanied by most urgent and insistent orders that something be done to convince the people of Germany that their government agents in America were disrupting the American war activities. As I was the head of the entire German activity in the United States this meant that Berlin looked to me to carry out the orders.

I was in no manner suspected by the United States Secret Service. I think I may say that all my arrangements had been made so carefully that I would be the last man suspected.

My position at the head of the great firm of J----and Company was quite enough to seem an absolute guarantee for my patriotic Americanism, and I had fortified this by acts of seeming patriotism until I was actually looked upon as one of the most staunch and true Americans.

Our plans had, of course, included the blowing up of all munitions

factories and all factories whose activities aided the war work of the United States or her Allies. We also planned the destruction of all important bridges, the wrecking of tunnels, and the sinking of as many ships and boats as possible.

All this was planned in the most systematic manner and there were no flaws in any part of the scheme. We had the explosives, we had the men sworn to obey the orders.

In only eight cases, however, out of some seven thousand destructions we had planned, were our men able to do their work. I am convinced there must have been some leak somewhere--some traitor--or the things that happened could not have happened. The United States Secret Service men seemed endowed with supernatural prescience. Often, when our faithful fellows went to some factory or bridge to do their work, they would be arrested on the spot. More often they would be arrested just as they were starting out to do it.

Men--even sworn men--are but human, and it soon became quite clear that any attempts of the sort we desired were mere suicide and would amount to nothing but death for our agents. Many of them simply refused to obey the orders that came to them from the mysterious "No. 44" (which was myself) and, in a word, our whole plan went to pieces.

When we were able to send our agents forth it was to send them to certain death. That became so sure that I was forced reluctantly to abandon all activity.

Thus we reached the last week of December. I remember that I was sitting at my desk in my office on the twenty-eighth floor of the---- Building, in New York, looking out over the harbor when my brother John entered.

I was almost mad with irritation over the flattening out of our well-laid plans. Lighters, canal-barges, car-floats, and so on were teeming on the waters of the harbor and of the two rivers when I had hoped that by this time the commerce of America would be dead, due to our efforts.

The winter had been unusually mild on our coast. We read in the papers of severely cold weather far north, especially in Northwestern Canada, but in the Eastern United States there had been but little snow and almost no ice. There had not been enough cold to interfere with the orderly progress of affairs even temporarily.

My brother John was the one other man entitled to sign the mystic No. 44 to orders. He was the only other person in America aware that I was at the head of Germany's destructive propaganda here.

He and I never spoke so much as a word to any person except each other on the great subject. Even my wife did not know I had so much as the slightest leaning toward Germany. She thought I was a staunch American.

Of John's reliability I had not the least doubt. He was a widower, with one daughter, Anne. Anne was twenty and a bright girl, but never by word, hint or gesture did she ever guess that her father was anything but a hard-working chemist, entirely wrapped up in his labors.

Anne did not like me. She considered me selfish because I was the owner of the great chemical works and allowed her father to labor for me on a mere salary as chemist. I often smiled over this since, in fact, John and I were equal owners of the factory.

John entered my office now and seated himself close by me.

"I've just come down from the factory," he said. "I've got something new--something I've been working on for weeks."

"Explosive?" I asked.

"Not exactly," he said and smiled.

He drew from his overcoat pocket a tin box and opened it, putting it on the slide of my desk.

I poked into the contents with a finger. The stuff was white. It might have been coarse table salt or granulated sugar, but there was a slight odor of ammonia.

"It is a coal saver," he said. "It adds forty per cent to the heat-producing value of coal--especially low grade coal. I've tested it out and it works."

"There have been plenty of such things exploited before this," I said. "They work, but they cost more than the coal would cost."

"But this does not cost any such proportion," said John. "This is so cheap it hardly costs anything. Here is the formula."

He put a paper on my desk and I cast my eye over it. I know something of chemistry, of course, and more of the cost of materials.

He was right; the stuff was so inexpensive it could be produced for little or nothing.

"And it works?" I asked.

"Oh, absolutely!"

"Well--" I said, and pushed the paper back on my desk. I was

thinking. "We can get the stuff on the market after the war. It is just what we don't want to put out now; it would increase the value of every ton of coal mined by forty per cent, wouldn't it?"

"Yes," John said, but he still smiled in that peculiar way.

"Look here!" I exclaimed. "You don't mean you want to make this stuff now, do you? You don't want the United States government to grab it and use it? We might just as well show them how to add forty per cent to the coal output."

"Just the same," said John, "I want to produce it."

"John," I said, "you haven't gone over to the Yanks? You haven't deserted the Kaiser?"

"No," he answered, still smiling.

"Then what do you mean?" I wanted to know.

"Well, George," he said, "you might read that paper I handed you all the way through."

I drew the paper toward me again and glanced at it. I had only looked at the formula before, now I read what followed.

It was a brief resume of the experiments connected with the testing of the white stuff, written in John's concise, chemist style. "Two ounces mixed with fourteen pounds of coal, Grade A," "Three ounces mixed with one hundred pounds of coal. Grade B," and so on.

There were column after column of results, given in technical terms of steam pressure secured, heat units, and so on. It was all matter for which I would have taken John's word, and had already taken it, as far as that goes. It was not until I came to the final lines that I looked up in

surprise.

"What's this?" I asked. "This is a mistake isn't it?"

John shook his head, still smiling his enigmatic smile.

"No; that's not a mistake. I did not know the white stuff would have that reaction on the air, but it is not a mistake. I've made exact tests."

I read those last lines again.

"'Torol'"--that was what he called the white stuff--"'does not burn while the coal with which it is mixed is being consumed. My tests show that it is converted into a gas, which I call Torologen, colorless and odorless. This gas escapes and mingles with air. One cubic inch of Torologen is sufficient to lower the temperature of one hundred thousand cubic feet of air ten degrees Fahrenheit.'"

I looked at John.

"You mean to say--" I began.

"I mean to say I have not thought out a way to control this Torologen gas yet," said John. "What I mean is that one cubic inch of it will lower the temperature one hundred thousand cubic feet of air ten degrees, or fifty thousand cubic feet twenty degrees, or a million cubic feet one degree. I mix the stuff with coal, you understand, to make the coal give forty per cent more heat while burning, and the gas of the Torol goes up the chimney. It mixes with the air and cools the air. That is a thing I will have to overcome before we put Torol on the market commercially, but as a war weapon--"

He looked at me with that same smile.

"John," I said seriously, "do you think you can do it?"

"Well, George." he answered with pretended lightness, "I'll tell you. I'll let you figure it out. One ounce of Torol thrown into a furnace will send eight hundred thousand cubic inches of Torologen up the chimney. That's how the stuff expands under heat. Those eight hundred thousand inches of Torologen, mixing with the outer air, will lower the temperature of one hundred thousand times that quantity of air ten degrees. It will lower the temperature of eighty billion cubic inches of air ten degrees."

"I understand," I said.

"That is what an ounce will do," continued John. "A pound will do sixteen times that and I can hold a pound of the white stuff in the hollow of my two hands, easily, George," he broke out, suddenly becoming serious, "with a couple of barrels of Torol mixed in the coal we use normally in our furnaces at the factory I can lower the temperature of a district extending ten miles on every side of New York City to twenty degrees below zero, and by using a couple of barrels a day I can keep the temperature there as long as I wish! That will cost about ninety-six cents a barrel--one dollar and ninety-two cents a day!

"I can send the temperature down to forty below zero as I wish, and I can keep it there as long as I wish, and the cost will be under four dollars! And, George, not a soul in the world but you and I will know what is doing it! Not a soul! I'll be trying out a new chemical coal-saving invention and one that does save coal. My stokers and my engineers at the factory will be enthusiastic about it. They will think I have discovered something that will be of untold value to the United States, in saving coal--in producing more power from a ton of coal than was ever thought possible. And, all the while--"

"We will be freezing the United States into submission!" I exclaimed. "But there is not the slightest chance of our being discovered, is there? You and I must not take any risks, John, We are important men."

"I know that. If there was one chance in a hundred million that we could be detected I would not suggest doing this," John replied. "There is no risk. What risk can there be? The weather, which has been mild, changes. We have a cold spell, and it hangs on,"

"But this gas--this Torologen--can't it be detected in the air?"

"Absolutely not! Not a trace of it! I've tried that out, George. It disappears when it mingles with the atmosphere. No, it is absolutely safe. Say the word and I will tie up New York, which is the heart of America, so tight not a pulse will beat!"

"Go ahead, John," I told him.

The next day when I went out of my house I tested the air with my hand and smiled to myself. The newspapers had announced, "Clear; slightly warmer." Instead of this being true the air was crisp and cold and the water in the gutters was frozen solid.

During the day the cold increased and by night men and women were hurrying along the streets, beating their hands together to keep warm. At midnight the temperature, as officially announced the next day, was one degree below zero and it fell all night at about the rate of one degree an hour. At nine it was ten below zero.

The morning papers, basing their articles on the weather reports, mentioned the sudden cold wave and assured their readers that nothing serious need be expected as the weather bureau predicted warmer weather immediately.

The papers, as you know, are printed about midnight. By the time they were on the streets their optimistic articles had lost all sense; the city was frigid and growing colder each minute. By noon the lowest record ever known was passed and the thermometers registered fifteen degrees below zero. I give the official figures.

By midnight John, by the use of Torol, had driven the atmosphere down to twenty below zero, and there he held it.

I do not mean to say that he was able to hold the mercury exactly at that figure, nor would he have done so in any event. At times the figure registered was as high as ten above zero; one night it touched twenty-five below. That was an awful night in New York. There were over two hundred deaths from freezing.

New York is not built nor prepared for such weather. In a few days the rivers and great stretches of the harbor were frozen over and all water traffic stopped. The severe cold interfered with all varieties of work and the men in the coal yards and on the coal wagons and trucks dropped from their places exhausted. Nine-tenths of all the food in the city, and practically all the food entering it, was frozen and unfit for eating. No milk was to be had whatever. Water pipes and gas pipes froze everywhere.

Not a ship was able to leave the harbor for Europe and not a ship was able to enter. All this was excellent for our purpose. Work came to a. practical standstill; in the factories the workers were too cold to use their hands. The making of uniforms and munitions stopped short.

The beauty of John's idea was that conditions would grow worse each day. Each hour of additional suffering meant much to us.

The first riots that broke out brought a smile to my face, and I do not often smile. There were raids on some yards and factories that were suspected of hoarding coal and the police had great difficulty in handling these first small outbreaks; what would happen when week after week of this weather followed I could easily foresee.

John came to my office one day when he had had about a week of his twenty below zero weather. He was well wrapped in mufflers and coats.

"Cold!" he said as he entered and began to beat his hands. "Can't you keep this place warm?"

"It is like an iceberg here all the time," I told him. "They shut off our steam three days ago. I've only got this one oil-stove. It does not give much heat. My wife is complaining. She wants me to go south; we can't keep the house warm."

John was spreading his hands over the oil-stove,

"It is working fine, isn't it?" he said. "And not a suspicion, George! Not a chance of a suspicion. In a thousand years no one would guess! I can't keep it up forever, of course. I've got to let a little warmer weather come for a spell now and then, and when spring comes we'll have to taper off and give it up. But by spring--"

"Long before that, John," I broke in. "A few weeks more of this and the country will be disorganized. The people of New York will be rioting everywhere, John!"

"Yes?"

"Do you think it would be safe to send Torol to other places? To Chicago, Buffalo--everywhere? You have nothing but a fuel conserver

in Torol; we want to get it on the market; we send a barrel here and a barrel there--on trial. That ought to be safe, John. We could freeze the whole country. We could stop every wheel. We could spread riot and sedition--"

"No," he said slowly. "I don't think we had better try it, George. We're doing well enough here. A month more of this will fix New York, and New York rules America. No, I've thought that all out. There might be a slip-up somewhere. We are safe now, and we must remain safe. As the thing is working now no human being could or would suspect you and me. There is no one to suspect. There is nothing but a spell of unusual weather--"

He stopped and looked toward the door.

My office is a foolproof place. I had it built in such a way that it would be foolproof. The walls are soundproof and the doors are soundproof. When the door is closed on my inner sanctum it cannot be opened except by myself, and my assistant in the outer office can only communicate with me by pressing a button. Then, if I choose, I open the door. The bell had buzzed.

"Or close down." said John, quickly shifting to another topic as the bell buzzed. " Coal has become such an awful question that I doubt whether it is worth our while to keep the factory running. Of course, with government orders on hand, it is our duty to keep running as long as we have any fuel--"

This was mere camouflage of speech. I went to the door and opened it.

"Yes, Miss Anderson?" I said.

Even as I spoke I saw that her face was not as usual. She was as

while as chalk and her eyes were big with fright, but before I could say more she was thrust aside and five men pushed through the doorway. They had revolvers.

There was no struggle--what could John and I do against five? What, indeed, could we gain by struggling? I submitted without so much as an angry word. I tried to be unusually polite.

"Some mistake," I said. "I'm afraid you do not know who you are arresting, gentlemen."

The handcuffs were already snapped on my wrists and on John's.

"Oh, yes we do!" said the leader of the five. "We know you both. We've got you at last. You are the men higher up. You are the No. 44 we have been looking for since the war began. And now we have you!"

"Absolutely a mistake, gentlemen." I assured them.

But it was not. They knew it was not. We had had then, as I have said, a week of John's twenty below zero weather--eight days of it, to be exact.

For six days they had been watching John and me every instant. In those six days they had discovered how I communicated with No. JTR34 and No. LU564, and had taken my code messages as I signaled them standing at my office window, moving my fingers nervously from one button of my waistcoat to another.

They told us this almost as soon as we were arrested, but it did not clear the mystery of how they had come to suspect me at first.

"Suspect you?" they mocked. "Why, you two simps just naturally

advertised for us to come and get you. Did you ever hear of an aeroplane? Did you ever see one? They are those bird things that men fly in the air with."

This was rather insulting.

"I have heard of them," I said.

"Well, you two are so simple-minded I didn't know whether you had ever or not," went on the fellow. "Have you ever heard of a thermometer? Ever hear of the weather bureau?"

"I have heard of them," I admitted.

"Why, nothing, friend, except that you and your brother here sort of forgot about the weather bureau. I guess you don't read the weather reports on the inside pages of the papers. You are the simple-minded fellows that just read the "Fair and Warmer" at the top of the first page, and let it go at that. Well, the weather bureau had you men spotted twenty-four hours after you began to monkey with the weather."

"The weather bureau!" I exclaimed, for it was the first time I had heard of that department taking part in detective work.

"Sure!" he said. "The weather bureau. If you read the weather reports the way you ought to you'd see them full of things like 'The area of depression is traveling eastward and is in the neighborhood of Buffalo' and 'The lower barometer on the Upper Atlantic Coast indicates that the cold now prevalent in upper New York regions will travel--' and so on. They spotted you easy! You filled little, old New York with below zero weather that didn't come from anywhere, and that did not go anywhere. Any office boy in the weather bureau would know that kind of zero weather had to be made right on the spot. So

they got an aeroplane and a thermometer and sailed it around over New York until they did find where it was being made. It was central over the smoke stack of your factory, and your brother John here was making the zero weather with some kind of white stuff he was putting in the coal. So we took a few days to tie you both up to it, and now we've got you!"

John looked at me. He knew, of course, that we would be shot, as--from one point of view--I admit we deserve to be. He begged my pardon.

"George," he said, "you can blame this all on me. I ought to have sent Torol all over the country. I ought to have sent it up north and made some cold first, so our below zero would have had somewhere to come from."

"Please don't let it worry you, John," I said. "You could not have known that the weather bureau would go sleuthing."

"Well, I guess it won't worry either of you very long," said our captor cheerfully.

An Experiment in Gyro-Hats

by Ellis Parker Butler

1910

The idea of a gyro-hat did not come to me all at once, as some great ideas come to inventors; and in fact I may say that but for a most unpleasant circumstance I might never had thought of gyro-hats at all, although I had for many years been considering the possibility of utilizing the waste space in the top of silk hats in some way or other. As a practical hat dealer and lover of my kind, it had always seemed to me a great economical waste to have a large vacant space inside the upper portion of top hats, or high hats, or "stove-pipe" hats, as they are variously called. When a shoe is on, it is full of foot, and when a glove is on, it is full of hand; but a top hat is not, and never can be, full of head, until such a day as heads assume a cylindrical shape, perfectly flat on top. And no sensible man ever expects that day to come.

I had, therefore, spent much of my leisure in devising methods by which the vacant space above the head in high hats might be turned to advantage, and my patents ranged all the way from a small filing cabinet that just occupied the waste space, to an extensible hat rack on the accordion plan that could be pushed compactly into the top of the top hat when the hat was worn, but could be extended into a hat and coat rack when the hat was not in use. This device should have been very popular, but I may say that the public received the idea coldly.

My attention had been for some time drawn away from this philanthropic work by certain symptoms of uneasiness I noticed in my

daughter Anne, and my wife and I decided after careful consideration that Anne must be in love, and that her love must be unhappy. Otherwise we could not account for the strange excitability of our usually imperturbable daughter. As a practical hat dealer my time has been almost exclusively devoted to hats and, as a good wife, my companion's attention has been almost exclusively devoted to her husband, while Anne was usually so calm and self-contained that she did not take my attention from my hat business at all. But when such a daughter suddenly develops signs of weeping and sighs and general nervousness, any father, no matter how devoted to the hat trade, must pay attention.

One of the primary necessities of a dealer in good hats is calm. An ordinary hat dealer may not need calm. He may buy his hats as another dealer buys flour, in the bulk, and then trust to advertisements to sell them; but I am not that kind of hat dealer. Hat dealing is an art with me, and great art requires calm and peace in order that it may reach its highest development. When I buy hats I do not think of dozens and dollars. No, indeed; I think of noses and ears. To be able to buy of a manufacturer a hat that will make the pug nose and big ears of a man I have never seen seem normal and beautiful when that man enters my store and buys a hat, requires calm. And no hatter can have calm in his soul while his daughter is love sick and unhappy. I demand happiness about and around me, and I must have it. So I told my wife, and I told her so most emphatically, and I informed her that Anne must be happy at once.

Perhaps you can imagine the shock I received when my wife, after making the necessary inquiries of Anne, informed me that Anne was indeed in love, and in love with Walsingham Gribbs. It was not because Walsingham Gribbs had never bought a hat of me that I was shocked. Bad hats are a common failing of mankind, and a man will try a hundred hatters before he at last comes to me.

The trouble was deeper than this. The thing that staggered me was that Walsingham was a staggerer. (This is a joke, but I hold that a hatter has as good a right to make a joke as the next man.)

That my daughter had fallen in love with Walsingham Gribbs without having met him was altogether to her credit. She first saw him when she was crossing the ocean (for she travels where she pleases, my hat business affording her such pleasures) and that he reeled and staggered about the boat did not impress her, for it was a stormy trip and everyone aboard reeled and staggered, even the captain of the boat. But when she returned to New York and saw Walsingham Gribbs on the firm pavement of Fifth Avenue, she had a harsh, cruel disillusionment. Walsingham Gribbs reeled and staggered on terra firma.

I am glad to say that my daughter saw at once the impossibility of the daughter of a high-class hatter mating with a permanent staggerer. As she realized this, she became sad and nervous, thus creating an atmosphere in my home that was quite opposed to the best high-class hatting, irritating my faculties and threatening to reduce me to the state of a mere commercial hatter.

Further investigation only made the matter seem worse, for quiet inquiries brought out the information that Walsingham Gribbs had been staggering since the year his father died. He had been constantly in a reeling, staggering state since his twentieth birthday. For such a man reform is, indeed, impossible. And what made the case more sad was that all proof seemed to point to the fact that Walsingham Gribbs was not a "bounder" nor a "rounder," two classes of men who occasionally acquire a stagger and a reel in company with hearty boon companions.

In short, no one had ever seen Walsingham Gribbs take a drink in

public, and I was forced to conclude that he was of that horrid type that drinks alone--"Alone but with unabated zeal" as the great poet, Sir Walter Scott, has remarked in one of his charming poems.

If all these investigations of mine were conducted without the knowledge of Walsingham Gribbs, you must admit I did only what was right in keeping them secret from him; for since he had never met my daughter he might have considered the efforts of a perfect stranger to peer into his life as being uncalled for. My wife did what she could to comfort Anne, but Anne sadly replied that she could never marry a man that staggered and reeled day in and day out. Thus day by day she became more sad, and I became so upset that I actually sold a narrow-brimmed derby hat to a man with wide, outstanding ears.

Of course this could not go on. No high-grade hat business could support it, and I was standing in my shop door looking gloomily out when I chanced to see Walsingham Gribbs stagger by. I had seen him many times, but now, for the first time I noticed what I should have noticed before--that he invariably wore a high hat, or "topper" as our customers like to call them.

I observed that the shape was awful, and that the hat badly needed the iron, and then my mind recurred to the old problem of the vacant space in the top of top hats; but I found I could not concentrate. Whenever I tried to think of top hats I thought of Walsingham Gribbs in one of them, staggering and reeling up the street, and gradually the thought came that it would be an excellent idea should I be able so to use the space in the top of Walsingham's hat that he would no longer stagger and reel, and then the thought of the gyroscope hat came to me.

I admit that at first I put the idea aside as futile, but it came back again and again, and at length it seemed to force me into

enthusiasm. I dropped everything and went to work on the gyro-hat.

The gyroscope is, as everyone knows, a top, and I might have called the hat I invented a top hat, except that any tall cylindrical silk or beaver hat is called a top hat, so I was forced to adopt the name of gyro-hat.

A gyroscope is not an ordinary top. It is like a heavy fly wheel, revolving on an axis; and if it is spun, the speed of the revolutions maintains the axis in the perpendicular. A huge gyroscope is used to steady the channel steamers, which would otherwise stagger and reel. A gyroscope has just been adopted to the monorail cars, and so long as the gyroscope gyrates the monorail car cannot stagger or reel. If a proper gyroscope was placed on the end of a knitting needle and gyrated at full speed, that knitting needle could be stood on end and it would not fall over.

Therefore, if a gyroscope was placed in the top of a top hat, and the top hat firmly fastened to the head of a man, and the gyroscope set going, that man would remain perpendicular in spite of anything. He could not stagger. He could not reel. He could walk a line as straight as a crack.

When I had completed this gyro-hat I showed it to my wife, and briefly explained what it was and what I meant to do with it. The small but wonderfully powerful motor and the gyroscope itself were all concealed inside the hat, and I explained to my wife that Walsingham Gribbs need but fasten the hat firmly on his head and he would never stagger again. At first my wife seemed doubtful, but as I went on she became enthusiastic.

The only thing she disliked was the method of fastening the hat to the head, for, as it was quite necessary that the hat be very firmly fixed to the head, I had sewed ear tabs to the hat, and these I tied firmly under

my chin. My wife said she feared it would require some time to persuade the public to take to silk hats with ear tabs, and that the sight of a man in a silk hat with ear tabs would be a sign that he was a staggerer. She wanted another method of holding the hat on the head.

"Vacuum suction," I said, for I am quick to catch an idea. A man has to be, in the hat business. "But," I added, "where would you get the vacuum? A man cannot be expected to carry a can of vacuum, or whatever he would need to carry vacuum in, around with him; especially the kind of man that would need the gyro-hat."

"My dear," said my wife, after a minute of thought, during which we both studied the gyro-hat, "I have it! Let the hat make its own vacuum. If the hat is lined with air-tight aluminum, and has a rubber sweat band, and an expulsion valve, the gyroscope motor could pump the air out itself. It could create its own vacuum."

"Of course it could!" I exclaimed. "I could rig it up so that putting the hat on the head would start the gyroscope, and the gyroscope would pump a vacuum. All any staggerer would need to do would be to put on his hat, and the hat would do the rest. It would stay on his head and it would keep him evenly on his keel." (Of course I would not use a nautical term like "keel" in my hat shop, but at home I allow myself some liberties of that sort.)

I set to work at once to perfect the gyro-hat on the plan suggested by my wife and in a few days I was able to say it was a success. By this I mean it was a success in so far as the eye could judge by looking at the hat, and all that was needed was a practical trial.

As the hat had been invented for Walsingham Gribbs more than for any other man, I proposed to my wife that Walsingham--we had spoken of him so often that we now mentioned him as Walsingham--

should be the man to try it out. But my wife is better posted in social manners than I, and she said it would not do at all to attempt such a thing.

In the first place, none of us knew Walsingham; and in all the other places, it would be insulting to suggest such a thing to him, and might ruin Anne's chances. I then assured my wife that I did not mean to allow any ordinary intoxicated man to experiment with the only gyro-hat I possessed, and possibly wreck and ruin it. We had too much at stake for that. So, after considerable discussion, my wife and I decided upon what was, after all, the only rational course--I should try out the gyro-hat myself.

I admit here that I am not much of a drinker. Although not so by principle, I am by action a teetotaller. I consider that the highest good of a hat shop demands it. As a matter of fact I had never up to this time tasted intoxicating liquor, but it was evident to my wife and me that the time had arrived when the hat business demanded this sacrifice on my part. Evidently, if a gyro-hat is meant to keep a staggerer and reeler steady on his keel, the only test of the gyro-hat must be on the head of a man who, without the hat, could not help staggering and reeling--a thoroughly intoxicated man.

We did not, of course, admit Anne into our little conspiracy, and we chose a restaurant where we were sure intoxicants would be sold. We proceeded to the restaurant about the dinner hour; and after studying the waiters carefully, I selected one that seemed likely to know something about intoxicants, and we seated ourselves at his table. I placed the gyro-hat carefully across my knees, first setting the starter, and beckoned the waiter to us.

"My good fellow," I said, when he had approached with his pencil and order card in hand, "I desire to become intoxicated this evening, and I presume you know something about intoxicating liquors."

"Yes, sir," said the waiter.

"Tell him, Henry," said my wife, "that we also wish to eat, but that as our principal object in coming here is to secure intoxicants, we wish him to be particular about them."

"You have heard what the lady said," I told the waiter, "and you will be guided accordingly."

"Yes, sir," said the waiter, politely. "Does the lady desire to become intoxicated also?"

"Heavens, no!" exclaimed my wife.

"Certainly not," said the waiter.

"Now," I said to the waiter, "you doubtless have different kinds of intoxicating liquors here--some strong and some not so strong--and I do not desire to drink a great quantity to obtain the result I desire. What would you recommend to give the required reeling and staggering condition as quickly as possible?"

"Well, sir," he said, "if you will let me advise, I would advise a certain brandy we have. Of that brandy, sir, a little goes a long way. I have seen it work, sir, and I can assure you that a small quantity of that will make you stagger and reel to your heart's content."

"Very well," I said, "you may bring me some. I suppose a quart would be enough."

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, "but have you ever tried the brandy of which I speak?"

"I have not," I said.

"Then, sir," said the waiter apologetically, "unless you are a very heavy drinker I would not advise a quart of that brandy. A quart of that brandy, sir, would, if I may so speak, lay you out flat. You would not reel and stagger, sir. You would be paralyzed stiff, sir, dead to the world."

I thanked the waiter warmly.

"You observe," I said, "that I am not used to this sort of thing, and I appreciate the interest you are taking. I am inclined to leave the matter entirely in your hands. I may not know when I have had exactly the right quantity, but you, with your larger experience, will know, sir."

"Yes, sir. And I think the lady will know, sir," said the waiter.

I found the brandy most unpleasant to the taste, but certain symptoms assured me that the waiter had not belied its effectiveness. Long before the waiter was satisfied that I would stagger and reel, my long lost vocal prowess returned and I caroled gaily some songs that had been favorites of my youth. Many of these were affectionate songs, and when I sang them I had a great longing to hold my wife's hand, and did so; but as she would not let me kiss her, I felt the need of kissing the waiter. Here again I was repulsed, but it did not make me angry. I merely slid down into my chair and waved my hand at him coquettishly.

"If you please, sir," said the waiter, when I had finished another burst of song, "I think you are pretty ripe, now. If you would just get up and walk a few steps I can tell more definitely."

My wife smiled at me reassuringly and nodded to me that what the waiter proposed had her full sanction; but even so, I was filled with a fear that we were about to be parted forever, and for a few minutes I

clung to her neck, weeping bitter tears. I then tore myself away, and I did indeed stagger and reel. I believe I knocked over two small tables and ended by seating myself in the lap of a young man who was dining alone. He accepted my apology before I had spoken more than fifteen minutes of it, and then he aided the waiter in steering me back to my table.

Whatever may have been my past opinion of Walsingham Gribbs--for it was he--I loved him most dearly at that moment, and in my incoherent manner I tried to tell him so. I think he understood. At any rate, he spoke to my wife like a true gentleman.

"Madame," he said, "I can sincerely sympathize with your husband, and if you will allow me, I will gladly help you assist him to a cab. I beg you not to be frightened by his condition. I myself am subject to the same trouble, and although he may seem drunk---"

"Seem drunk!" exclaimed my wife. "Seem drunk! I beg you to know that my husband is as drunk as a man can become without being senseless. Either that, or we have been defrauded by this waiter!"

Walsingham Gribbs looked at my wife, and then smiled.

"Very well," he said, "if what you wanted was to have him drunk, I'll admit that he is about the drunkest man I have ever seen. I only spoke as I did in order that I might spare your feelings, for most wives object to seeing their husbands stagger and reel. I myself stagger and reel continually, and I have never tasted intoxicating liquor in my life, but I can share the feelings of one who staggers and reels, or who has a relative that staggers and reels."

At this my wife said:

"Are you not Walsingham Gribbs? If you are I am delighted to have

met you, even in this unconventional manner, for what brought us here will interest you."

She then told him of the gyro-hat I had invented, and explained just why I had come to this place and had swallowed the strong brandy. I took no part in this conversation, but Walsingham gladly agreed to accompany us, and he put my gyro-hat on my head.

The result was indeed marvelous. Instantly the vacuum pump began to work and the gyroscope to revolve. My head, which had been lying on one side, straightened up. The rubber sweat band gripped my head tightly with a slight pulling sensation. Without assistance I arose from my chair and stood erect. My brain was still confused, but I walked as straight as a string direct to the door of the restaurant, and stood holding it open while my wife and Walsingham passed out.

The gyroscope was revolving at the rate of three thousand revolutions a minute, and the slight humming was hardy noticeable. I did not stagger and I did not reel. When I reached Gramercy Park I was full of glee. I had been walking on the edge of the curb, but now I desired to climb atop of the iron fence that surrounds the park, and walk on the points of the pickets.

My wife and Walsingham tried to dissuade me, but I climbed to the top of the fence. I not only walked on the points of the pickets easily, but I was able to place the end of one toe on the point of one picket, and thus balanced wave the other leg into the air. My wife and Walsingham Gribbs coaxed me to come down to the level of the walk, but as I saw no reason to do so, I flatly refused, and at last Walsingham reached up and took me by the hand and pulled me.

Ordinarily a man that had imbibed a quantity of brandy would have fallen to the street if pulled by one hand while standing on the top of a row of pickets, but I did not. When Walsingham pulled by hand I

inclined gently toward him until I was at right angles to the picket fence, with my feet still on top of the pickets; and when he released my hand I slowly swung upright again, without any effort whatever on my part. I got down off the fence when I was ready, and not before.

There could be no doubt whatever that I was far more intoxicated than Walsingham Gribbs, and all the way home I gave vent to tremendous bursts of laughter over the idea that while Walsingham thought he was seeing me safely home I walked as straight and true as a general, and he staggered and reeled except when he clung closely to my arm.

Many persons stopped and looked at us, and I cannot wonder at it. For Walsingham is a young man of most dignified countenance, and it must have seemed strange to see a young man of such sober mien reeling drunkenly, while a dignified and steadily walking hatter laughed and shouted drunkenly. It was as if the two of us had been able to afford but one spree, and had divided it in that way, he taking the stagger and I taking the boisterousness.

My wife was much touched by the kind attentions of Walsingham, and when we reached home she invited him in, and while I found a little harmless amusement in walking up the stair banisters and sliding down them standing on my feet, which I was enabled to do because of the steadying effect of the gyro-hat, she took Walsingham into the parlor and introduced him to Anne formally.

My poor daughter was quite overcome with embarrassment and pleasure, but when Walsingham was sitting he showed no evidence of his stagger and reel whatever, and they managed to become quite well acquainted while my wife was assisting me to bed.

Unfortunately I had neglected to arrange any method for letting the vacuum out of the gyro-hat, and although my wife tugged and pulled

at the hat, the suction held fast to my head and it refused to come off unless my scalp came with it. My wife decided that I must sleep in the hat, since I was in no condition of mind to do anything about it myself.

I was dying for sleep, and my wife tumbled me into bed and pulled the sheet over me, and that same instant I fell into a heavy slumber, but the moment my wife released her grasp on me I began arising to my feet, irresistibly drawn to the perpendicular by the action of the gyro-hat. I continued to arise until I was standing upright. I can only liken the manner in which I arose to the way a man might raise a stiff arm slowly until it pointed straight upward.

My wife immediately pushed me down onto the pillow again, but it was unavailing. Again the gyro-hat drew me to a standing position, and my wife was forced to let me continue my night's rest in that position.

The next morning I did not feel very well, but I never saw my wife in better spirits. She told me she was sure Walsingham had taken a great fancy to Anne, for he had asked permission to call again that evening, and my wife said that in her opinion it would be well to take up the matter of the marriage with Walsingham at once, before it went any further. If he meant business he would be glad to wear the hat and be rid of his stagger and reel; and if he meant nothing it would be a good thing to know it, and the sooner we were rid of him the better. I agreed with her fully, but I spent the day perfecting the vacuum outlet on the hat.

I must admit that Walsingham seemed somewhat surprised when I made the suggestion to him that evening. For a few minutes he did not seem to know what to say. Perhaps it was a little overcoming to have the parents of Anne suggest the idea of marriage in this offhand manner and at the same time propose the wearing of a gyro-hat; but Walsingham was a gentleman, and when he glanced up, after his first

surprise, and saw Anne gazing at him appealingly, with her hands clasped, I could see that love had won. But instead of acquiescing immediately, Walsingham Gribbs took one of Anne's hands in his, and after patting it, spoke directly to me.

"Sir," he said, "I cannot but appreciate the delicate manner in which you have handled this matter, but if I am only too glad to find that there is a hat that will correct my unfortunate staggering and reeling, and if I am glad to accept your offer of that hat, I feel it due to myself to assure you that liquor has nothing whatever to do with my staggering and reeling. I am the victim of an unfortunate experience of my youthful days.

"My father was a man of many ideas, and always trying to make the world better. He had a neighbor that had a mule. It was a mouse-colored mule and very stubborn, and it used to wring my father's heart to see the neighbor belabor that mule with a heavy whip, trying to make the mule proceed in a direction in which it did not wish to go. The mule was quite willing to go toward the barn, where the feed was kept; but it often refused to go in the opposite direction, although it would go well enough if it once started.

"My father, therefore, conceived the idea of what he called the Gribbs Mule Reverser. This was a circular platform large enough to hold a mule and his loaded wagon, and beneath the platform was a motor capable of revolving the platform. All that was necessary was to place the mule and the wagon on the platform and start the mule in the direction of home, and then suddenly turn the platform in the direction the mule was desired to go, and the mule would proceed, unwittingly in that direction."

"A very excellent idea," I said.

"Except that it would not work in the least," said Walsingham. "In the

first place, it was necessary to dig a pit five feet square beneath the revolving platform to contain the motor, and this was not always convenient. In the second place, the platform and motor would hardly ever happen to be where the mule balked, and it would have been a great deal easier to load the mule on a wagon than to load the platform and motor on three wagons. And in the third place, if the mule would not start homeward, neither would it start onto the platform of the Mule Reverser.

"So, after my father had tried the platform in our back yard, with a mule on it, and the revolutions had thrown the mule up against the side of the barn, breaking both the mule and the barn, he decided that other things were better to invent and abandoned the platform. I and the lads of the neighborhood found this a good place to play, and one day I was standing exactly in the center of the platform when one of the boys happened to start the motor. I had sense enough to remain exactly in the center of the platform, or I would have been thrown off, and possibly killed, for the platform was revolving at the rate of eight thousand revolutions a minute. The motor had power to revolve the platform slowly when loaded with a mule and loaded wagon, so it was capable of immense speed with only a small boy on it.

"When my companions saw what they had done," continue Walsingham, "they all ran away, and for four hours I remained in the center of that platform, being revolved at an enormous speed, and when my father came home and stopped the platform I staggered and reeled and fell in a heap at his feet. That is how I acquired my unfortunate stagger and unpleasant reel, and I have only told you this that you may have no unjust suspicions."

"But why," asked my wife, who had been greatly interested by Walsingham's story, "do you not revolve in the opposite direction,

and 'unwind' yourself, as we used to say?"

"Madame," said Walsingham, "I have. Every night, for one hour before I go to bed I revolve, but it requires an immense number of revolutions to overcome such a spin as I had in my youth." He waited a moment and then said: "But I am now ready to try the gyro-hat."

I looked out the window, and hesitated. A thin rain was falling, and was freezing as it fell, and I hated to have a good, silk, gyro-hat go out in such weather; but as a leading hatter I felt that it would never do for me to seem small and picayunish in regard to hats. I remembered that a really good silk hat should not be ruined by a few drops of water; and I saw that if anything could convince Anne and Walsingham that the gyro-hat held their happiness, it would be a trial on such slippery walks as the evening had provided.

So I brought down a hat and pressed it on Walsingham's head. Instantly the vacuum creator began to work and the hat clung fast to his head. He arose to his feet and walked across the parlor in a perfectly steady manner, and out into the hall. I held open the front door and he stepped out.

Walsingham crossed the porch with as steady a tread as ever any man crossed the porch of a high-class hatter, but when he reached the top step his foot struck the ice and he slipped. He did not stagger or reel. If he fell, he fell steadily. I can best liken his fall to the action of a limber reed when the wind strikes it. He inclined slowly, with his feet still on the top step, and continued to incline until his head touched the walk below with considerable violence, and then his feet slipped down the edges of the steps until they rested on the walk.

I never saw a more graceful fall, and I was about to congratulate Walsingham, when he began to incline toward the perpendicular again, in the same slow manner. But this was not the reason I held my

words. The reason was that the gyro-hat and Walsingham were behaving in the most unaccountable manner. Walsingham was revolving.

I discovered later that the fall had jammed the gyroscope on the pivot so that the gyroscope could not revolve without revolving the whole hat, and as the hat was firmly suctioned to Walsingham, the hat could not revolve without revolving Walsingham. For an instant Walsingham revolved away from us down the walk, and Anne gave a great cry; but almost at that moment Walsingham regained the upright and began to revolve rapidly. The icy walk offered no purchase for his feet, and this was indeed lucky; for if it had, his head would have continued to revolve none the less, and the effect would have been fatal.

I estimated that Walsingham was revolving at a rate of perhaps fifteen hundred revolutions a minute, and it was some minutes before my wife was able so far to recover from the shock of seeing her prospective son-in-law whirl thus as to ask me to stop him. My first impulse was to do so, but my long training as a hatter had made me a careful, thoughtful man, and I gently pushed my wife back.

"My dear, " I said, "let us pause and consider this case. Here we have Walsingham revolving rapidly. He is revolving in one of the only two directions in which he can revolve--the direction in which he revolved on the Mule Reverser, or the opposite direction. If it is the opposite direction all is well, for he will be unwound in a few hours, if his neck is not wrung in the meantime. If it is in the same direction it is no use to stop him now, for by this time he will be in such a condition of reeling and staggering that we would not have him as a son-in-law on any terms. I propose, therefore, to let him spin here for a few hours, when he will have had a full recovery or be permanently too dizzy for any use."

My wife, and Anne too, saw the wisdom of this course, and as it was

very miserable weather outside we all withdrew to my parlor, from the window of which we could watch Walsingham revolve. Occasionally, when he seemed about to revolve off the walk, I went out and pushed him on again.

I figured that by six o'clock in the morning he would be sufficiently revolved--provided he was revolving in the right direction--and at midnight I sent my wife and Anne to bed. I fear Anne slept but little that night, for she must have had a lover's natural anxiety as to how all was to turn out.

At six in the morning I called Anne and my wife, and we went into the yard to stop Walsingham, and it was not until I had carefully walked down the porch steps that it came to me that I had no way of stopping him whatever. To add to my dismay I knew that when the sun arose the thin ice would melt, and as Walsingham's feet could no longer slip easily, he would in all probability be wrenched in two, a most unsatisfactory condition for a son-in-law.

But while I was standing in dismay love found a way, as love always will, and Anne rushed to the cellar and brought out the stepladder and the ice pick. Placing the stepladder close to Walsingham she climbed it, and holding the point of the ice pick at the exact center of the top of the hat she pushed down. In a moment a sizzing sound told us that she had bored a hole in the hat, letting the vacuum escape, and the hat flew from Walsingham's head.

Slower and slower he revolved, until he stood quite still, and then, without a reel or a stagger he walked up to me and grasped my hand, while tears told me the thanks he could not utter. He had revolved in the right direction! He was cured!