

THE —  
LAND OF  
WHERISIT



H. E. BOOTE

REPRINTED FROM "THE AUSTRALIAN WORKER,"  
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THE JUDD PUBLISHING CO.,  
SYDNEY.

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# THE LAND OF WHERISIT

A Cycle of Tales that Begins at the End and  
Ends at the Beginning; told by a Graduate  
of All Fools' College for the Entertainment  
of His Kind.

H. E. BOOTE.

SYDNEY:  
THE JUDD PUBLISHING CO.

1919

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## God's Joke.

THIS BOOK is one of the most Foolish examples of the art of authorship that ever was perpetrated.

If you should read it, you'll find it crammed with the wildest improbabilities and the topsyturvyest notions. And to make matters worse, the scene of the tales is laid in a Land that is not to be found on any authentic map; while the nearest approach to a date I can give for the queer happenings related is Once Upon a Time.

These preliminary observations may determine you to proceed no further, in which case you are not the Fool I took you to be, and the sooner you are gone the better I shall be pleased, for my Tales would only be wasted upon you.

The Land of Wherisit, at the period I have mentioned, existed under the providence of a God

who was a Great Humorist. He dearly loved a practical joke, and in that dubious line of humor was probably without an equal in the whole wide universe.

All through eternity, before the creation of Wherisit, he had occupied himself thinking out practical jokes, and, as a matter of fact, had brought Wherisit and its people into existence with no other object than to put those jokes into execution.

For eons and eons he had been satisfied to enjoy them in imagination; for millions and millions of years he had chuckled at the thought of them, and desired no other pleasure.

Then suddenly the idea flashed into his mind: "How much funnier it would be to see the jokes performed—to actually watch them in operation, instead of merely gloating over them in theory!"

Wherisit was created straight away, and populated with a highly civilised race of men; and God gave it a Social System that tickled his fancy immensely, for everything in it was as it should not be—Vice laughed aloud and had a glorious time, and Virtue went about with a glum face, looking like a convicted criminal.

For a period that I can only describe as Ever So Long, God revelled in this practical joke. To behold Truth standing on her head, and all the people running after Falsehood to kiss the hem of her robe, was a sight so comical that he roared with delight, and the noise of his mirth was so great that the devils in the world's stokehole left off shovelling to ask one another in surprise what the row was all about.

Then this humorous deity sprang on Wherisit the primest joke of the lot.

"Listen, my creatures!" he cried. "I have a grand conundrum to put to you."

"Oh, let us hear it!" rose in chorus to his throne the voices of the people.

"It is this," said God. "Who is the Most Powerful Person amongst you?"

And he hid his face in the clouds, for it was not meet that his creatures should observe their Maker grinning.



The King of Wherisit was mightily pleased when he heard the conundrum propounded.

"Who is the Most Powerful Person?" he repeated. "Why, I AM, to be sure!"

No sooner did he give this answer than he found himself in a strange city, in the midst of a race of men who knew him not. He felt very tired, as though he had walked a great distance, and was so hungry that he knocked at the door of a house and begged for food.

"In this city they only eat who earn," said the man who opened the door. "What can you do?"

Now the King had been taught to regard it as beneath his dignity to earn anything whatever, so he drew himself up proudly, and declared that he could do nothing.

"Then there's no food here for you," said the man; and slammed the door in his face.

Wherever the King went he had the same mortifying experience. No one was the least

impressed by the crown upon his head and the rich clothes that he wore.

So desperately hungry did he become that he accosted a pieman and offered his crown for a hot pie, the savory smell of which tormented him with a passionate desire.

"That thing's no good," said the pieman, glancing contemptuously at the crown, and passed on, calling out his wares.

The King sat down in a quiet spot and burst into tears.

No sooner did he do so than he was back in his palace at Wherisit, seated before the sweetest meal he had ever tasted.

"Who is the Most Powerful Person in the world?" said the voice of God.

And the King did not answer. His mouth was full; but that was not the only reason for his silence.



Then the Right Reverend Dr. Pomp, D.D., High Priest of Wherisit, swelling with sacerdotal pride, stepped from the great altar, saying:

"I, O God, am surely the Most Powerful Person under heaven!"

The words had hardly passed his lips before he, too, found himself in that strange city where no one eats who has not earned, as weary and as hungry as the King had been.

Humbly he begged at the door of a house. Asked what he did that entitled him to food, he replied: "I speak God's truth."

"In this city," he was told, "God's truth speaks for itself." And the door was slammed on HIM.

The famished and despairing prelate broke down completely, and the Practical Joker in the sky, laughing to himself, brought him back to the episcopal residence, where the cooks were soon running round in the episcopal kitchen, preparing the sort of dinner that a prelate loves.

"Who is the Most Powerful Person in the world?" said God.

The High Priest was dumb.

But the Moneylord spoke up and said, "Even I, O God!"

Immediately, like his predecessors in pride, he was in the strange city, and in similar evil case—very, very hungry, and every bone in body aching with weariness.

Like them, too, he knocked at a door and besought food.

"What can you do to earn it?" he was asked.

"Find capital to employ labor," he replied.

"In this city labor employs capital," said his interrogator. And the slamming of the door was the sound of doom to the unfortunate Moneylord.

But again the watching God above did not press the joke too far, and the Moneylord, back in the Land of Wherisit, with obsequious servants ministering to the cravings of his stomach, soon got over his misadventure.

When, however, God once more said, "Who is the Most Powerful Person in the world?" the man of capital discreetly held his tongue.

Indeed, no one now put forward a claim, and this was not attributable to modesty, but to the fear which the experiences of the King, the High Priest and the Moneylord had produced.

"Well," said God, laughing to himself behind the clouds, "since you are all so silent, I will tell who is the Most Powerful Person in the world. It is that man, there, whom you have crucified!"

A ray of light came out of heaven and fell upon a figure nailed to a cross.

"That Rebel—that Law-breaker!" cried all the Rulers of Wherisit, astounded and incredulous.

"Even so," said God.

And the sight of their consternation amused him greatly.



There was a Grand Council of the Rulers after that, and the King presided, and the High Priest moved a resolution, and The Moneylord seconded it, and The Lawyer and The Soldier supported it, and it was put to the Council and carried without a single dissentient voice.

And the resolution declared that if God persisted in making the Rebel the Most Powerful Person in the world, the Grand Council of Wherisit would be compelled to take prompt action to change the official religion, and appoint a new God, one more in accord with the established institutions and venerable traditions of the country.

When the applause following on the vote had subsided, the King rose and said:

"Let the Rebel now be taken down from the cross, and be buried in unconsecrated ground, and let a heavy stone be rolled upon the grave to keep him there. Thus will we prove to God the folly of his choice."

And it was done as the King commanded. Very deep was the grave dug, and the stone that was placed upon it was so heavy that seven asses could not draw it.

"Now, God!" cried the Rulers of Wherisit, "admit that the Rebel is impotent, and we will offer up sacrifice to thee, and thine ear shall be filled with the praises of the Very Best People."

No answer came from the sky, to which all eyes were turned. But there happened the Strangest Thing That Ever Was Known.

A vast commotion arose in the land. The common people poured in tens of thousands into the streets, and their faces were angry, and their manner was threatening, and the Rulers quailed at the sight of them.

The King hastened to his palace, to awe them with his majesty; but the sceptre turned to a rush in his hand, and when he placed the crown upon his head it became a dunce's cap.

The High Priest hurriedly donned his vestments; but behold, they were filthy rags, stained with the foulness of centuries and the blood of many victims.

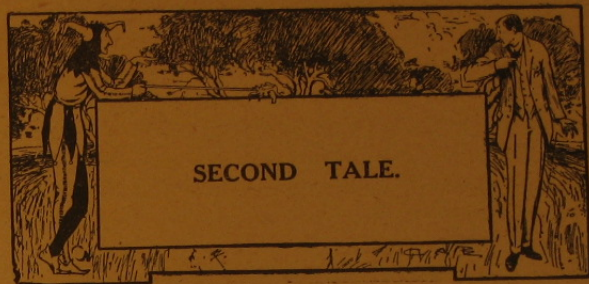
The Moneylord made for his gold, that never had failed him in a crisis; but where it had been was a heap of dust and ashes.



Then the voice of God was heard:

"You have slain the Rebel, and buried him deep, but the truth he uttered you could not slay, and no grave could contain it. Who, now, is the Most Powerful Person in the world?"

And North and South, and East and West, the heavens resounded with his laughter.



## SECOND TALE.

### The Rebel.

I HAVE just told you a very Foolish Tale. Here is another, and one you should really have heard first, for it narrates events that formed a prelude to those already made known to you.

It's about the people of Wherisit, and the perplexing situation in which they found themselves.

They were the victims of the strangest paradox that ever was. The land in which they lived was a fertile one; in fact, it produced the most wonderful crops. When the seeds were cast into the earth they sprang to life as though by magic. The orchards were an ever-recurring miracle of fecundity, the trees, each in its season, being weighted to the ground with fruit.

Moreover, the Land of Wherisit was famous all over the world for the iron and copper and coal it yielded; while as for precious stones, never was anything seen to equal the splendor of its diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires, opals and pearls.

Yet—this is where the paradox comes in—in spite of the richness of their country the people of Wherisit were Shockingly Poor.

And do what they would, they were unable to discover the reason of this anomalous state of affairs.

The fact itself was so obvious that the most careless observer could not fail to note it. It was the theme of constant discussion amongst every section of the community, and some of the explanations offered were as fantastic as they were futile.

The Drought was blamed, though it occurred but once in twenty years, and during the other nineteen the rain was permitted to run to waste. The Flood was blamed, though it came along rarely, and left behind it in regenerated soils abundant compensation for the temporary damage that it did.

Prayers were addressed to God to turn on the rain, and prayers were addressed to him to turn it off; and God, who dearly loved a joke, as you are aware, enjoyed these silly supplications very much.

Neither Drought nor Flood was the cause of the people's poverty, for the fat years were many times more numerous than the lean, and in the Bureau of Statistics prosperity was chronicled in ever-swelling figures.

But the higher the national wealth was piled, the deeper in poverty the people sank. And nobody could understand why it was so.

"It's Drink!" cried a Whiskered Wiseacre.  
"If you saved the money you spend on Booze you

could buy yourselves and families more to eat and better clothes to wear."

But in a neighboring country the people Did Not Drink, and they were even poorer than the people of Wherisit; so the eloquence of the Whiskered Wiseacre fell very flat.

"It's Improvidence!" a Professor of Political Economy declared. "You squander your wages instead of practising Thrift and learning the profitable art of Doing Without."

But this made no impression on the people, either, for already they Did Without so much that life was one long struggle with destitution.

"It's Irreligion!" stormed the Very Reverend Dr. Pomp, D.D., High Priest of Wherisit, shaking his fist from the great altar. "You are wicked. You do not come to church. You put nothing on the collection plate for the clergy; therefore the curse of God is upon you."

The people read this in their evening papers, and it failed to convince them, for if God cursed THEM for not supporting the clergy, he would curse the clergy for not supporting them.

"It's Slowing Down!" shouted the Moneylord, orating at the annual dinner of the Ancient Order of Unconvicted Swindlers. "The workers don't produce enough. Let them increase their output fifty per cent. and we'll get one of our Judges to raise the living wage eighteenpence a week."

But the people knew that already their lives were shortened by excessive toil, and that whenever the Judges raised the living wage the bosses reduced

it again by the simple expedient of Putting Up Prices. So they read the speech in the press with a dull unconcern.

Then WHY were they always poor? Why were the wolves of want forever scratching at their doors? Why were they shabbily dressed, and meanly housed, and sparsely fed, and not half educated?

They looked at the land. It was golden and green with plenty. They looked at the stores. They were crammed with all that the heart of man desired. They looked at the heavens. There were no signs of a malevolent Fate. They looked at their hands. They were thickened and calloused with labor. They looked at their faces. They were seamed with anxiety and effort.

And yet their poverty was an incessant evil, afflicting them relentlessly—darkening their childhood, oppressing their youth, turning their mature years to an inexplicable mockery, and their old age to a tragical anti-climax.

They couldn't understand it at all, and every explanation they attempted was unsatisfactory.

"All I know," said the Oldest Inhabitant, "is this—it has been so since the memory of man; an' in my opinion it will be so until the end."

"It's in the nature of things, if you ask me," said the Boss's Pet. "Someone must work, d'you see, an' if there wasn't no poverty no one would work at all."

"It's good to be poor," said the Abject Crawler. "It makes yer humble an' chastens yer

pride. Bear it patiently an' you'll be rewarded in the next world."

These were the prevalent views among the people of Wherisit. They summed up the philosophy of the crowd, and ignorance and hunger could reason no further.

But one day there rose from the ranks of the workers a young man who spoke Strange Things.

"I can tell you why you are poor," said he.

"Tell us!" they cried.

"You are poor BECAUSE YOU ARE ROBBED!"

And the young man proceeded to point out that the Ruling Class of Wherisit took so much of the products of their labor that there was not enough left for them to live upon in decency and comfort.

"They produce nothing themselves," he said, "and they take what is justly yours. It is for them you glean in the fields. It is for them you delve in the mines. It is for them you fell the forests and drain the marshes and wrest from the wilderness a wonder of wealth. For them you build palaces, and the hovels in which you and your children dwell are death-traps for body and soul. You gather for them the choicest fruits, and weave for them the costliest raiment; and the food YOU eat is coarse, and the clothes YOU wear are shoddy."

Then raising his voice to a pitch of vibrant intensity, he said:

"Keep what is yours, and poverty you shall know no more. God is not to blame for your

sufferings. Drought and Flood are not to blame. The soil is not to blame. Drink is not to blame. Improvidence is not to blame. Irreligion is not to blame. YOU only are to blame, for you are plundered, and do honor to the thieves."

Now this speech caused a great sensation among the people. They had never heard anything like it before, and the idea that they were robbed by their Rulers was one that staggered and bewildered them.

Every instinct of their being revolted from the thought, and yet at the same time it stirred them like a revelation.

They hated to believe it; AND KNEW IT WAS TRUE.

"Who are you?" they demanded.

And the young man answered with proud confidence:

"I am the voice of your secret soul. I am the wisdom of the ignorant. I am the courage of the cowardly. I am the pride of the meek. I am the Rebel."

And the people brooded over what he had said. And wheresoever the Rebel went in the land, uttering his astounding, disturbing words, crowds followed him, and the excitement grew and deepened, till the very air seemed tremulous with tempestuous possibilities.

The Grand Council of the Rulers of Wherisit was summoned to consider the situation.

The King presided on his golden throne, with the great mace on the table before him, and the Very Reverend Dr. Pomp, D.D., High Priest of Wherisit, opened the proceedings with the Most Terrible Curse in the repertory of the Church, reserved for special occasions and grave crises.

He cursed the Rebel to the end of the world and back again. He cursed him to the bottomest bottom of Hell, and left him there. He cursed him in every hair of his head and in every bone of his body and in every drop of his blood. He cursed so loud and so long that all the milk in Wherisit turned sour, and the grass was withered for miles around.

"Order!" shouted the King at last, for the Curse was getting on his nerves. "What is the pleasure of the Council with this Rebel?"

"He must die," snarled the High Priest, "because he has uttered truth."

"He must die," snapped The Moneylord, "because he has preached justice."

"He must die," mumbled The Lawyer, "because he has violated precedent."

"He must die," hissed The Soldier, "because he has praised peace."

"He must die," spat The Politician, "because he has lost me votes."

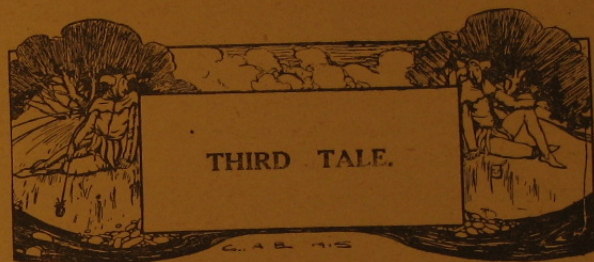
So armed men went forth and took the Rebel, and he was put to death upon a Cross, in the sight of the multitude.

But the words he had spoken were like sprouting seeds in the minds of the people, and they now knew why, in the midst of plenty, they were poor,

and why, with the sunlight all about them, they were wretched.

In the royal palace the Ruling Class rejoiced greatly. The King, the High Priest, The Moneylord, The Lawyer, The Soldier and The Politician pledged one another in wine as red as the Rebel's blood.

But God laughed softly behind the clouds, for he knew that the Rebel in his defeat had conquered them, and that even whilst they made merry their doom was sealed.



## The Making of the Rebel.

HERE is another Tale, as Foolish as the two that have preceded it. Indeed, the three are really chapters in one continuous story, only somehow I have got them back to front.

Not that it matters much. A story that is worth telling is none the worse told backward, and may even gain in force and interest by being narrated in that unusual order.

Anyway, this Tale is all about the making of that Rebel whom we have already seen crucified and buried.

A man who is destined for the Cross has got to be trained for it. Few are able to qualify for such a distinction. It is easier to take degrees in any of the learned professions than to fit one's self

for crucifixion, and the laurel of scholastic renown is more readily won than the crown of thorns.



The Rebel was born of poor parents. His father toiled in the fields of a great Landowner, and the wage he received was barely sufficient to provide his family with the rudest means of life.

The Rebel's mother was a shrewd woman, and endowed with a temper that ill-brooked oppression.

"John," she often said to her husband, "it is a shame you should toil so hard and get so little. Let us try our fortune in another land."

But his was the spirit of the slave. Or perhaps he was too weary to shake off the chains of servitude, for seldom is a sturdy soul found in a jaded body. He went on drudging in the Landowner's service, and as children were born to him poverty deepened in the home, and he labored still harder, and grew ever more abject in dependence on his job.

The Rebel was the eldest of a numerous brood, and early was sent into the fields to work beside his father, and but for the mother's intervention toil would soon have misshapen his tender limbs and chilled the heat of his young blood. She however insisted that he should work only half-time, and be free for several hours a day to play in the meadows, and wander about the countryside whithersoever his fancy led him.

Of this liberty he took the fullest advantage. He was a creature of the open air. He loved the

bright sunshine, but the rain was equally dear to him, and all the seasons in their turn moved him to delight.

He rambled in a wood at the back of his father's house with eager curiosity. All he met there fascinated him. When he heard a Bird sing he divined exactly what its music meant, and thus came to know many wonders, and things that puzzled the Wiseacres of Wherisit were quite clear to the strange child.

In the wood was a Pool, and it was deep; and when he bent over the still water, and peered into it, it was a mirror in which he saw the future.

The Frogs that dwelt by the margin of the Pool were very friendly, and gave him the benefit of their uncommon experience and their unique knowledge, so that he became almost uncannily precocious, for the Frogs are an ancient and observant folk.

The Moon also displayed a great liking for the child, and though, of course, he was not permitted to go out at midnight, at which hour the Moon is in her most communicative mood, she thought nothing of climbing in at his window, and relating to him, as he sat up in bed, gazing with shining eyes at her, many marvellous events of bygone days, which she had personally witnessed.

So that, with the Pool showing him the future, and the Moon revealing the past, and the Birds solving problems for him with their songs, and the Frogs imparting to him Facts Not Generally Known, he grew up different from the people about him, who knew little and sought to know nothing, accepting

things as they found them in their wretched world with a stolid unconcern.



But it was the Old Poet who acted as chief instructor to the boy.

Nobody in the part of Wherisit in which he lived was aware he WAS a Poet, and in the other parts his very existence was unknown. Nor had he ever written a verse, nor composed one in his head; and had he done so it is certain that the lines would have had the wrong number of feet in them, and the rhymes would have sounded like cracked cowbells, and the rhythms have staggered all over the place.

God often perpetrates a joke of that sort. He gives a man a singing soul wedded to a stumbling tongue, and the result is highly diverting. He enjoys it vastly behind the curtain of the clouds, and when the Spring comes, with all its urgent incitements to expression, and the clumsy tongue make woful attempts to repeat the music it hears in the soul, God has great fun.

Our Old Poet was a joke of another description. He had wit enough to keep his tongue under firm control, and when the soul within him sang he sat quite still in a quiet spot, and stared at something beautiful a long way off, that nobody else could see, sometimes with a grave face, and sometimes with the tenderest smile upon his lips.

People thought him touched with an amiable madness, and regarded him with a pity that was half condescension and half contempt.

And it was at THEM that God laughed, for he knew they were completely taken in.

Now the Old Poet was very fond of the Young Rebel. He frequently met him in the wood, and soon discerned in him a receptive mind and a responsive spirit. He taught him the wood-lore he had gathered in a lifetime; instilled in him a sense of kinship with all the gentle wild things, familiarised him with the language they speak, and encouraged him to converse with them.

Then gradually he led him on to the knowledge of savage civilised things, and told him how the workers suffered; how they were plundered by the Rulers of Wherisit, and how this crime brought discord into a world that otherwise would have been exquisitely harmonious.

And the boy listened, the lessons thus imparted sinking deep into his heart and brain.

When he attained to manhood there awoke within him a passionate desire to set the workers free, and make of the world the beautiful dwelling place it was so well fitted to be.

The Old Poet, now very old indeed, felt a thrill of pride in his breast. He realised that he had not lived in vain. This Young Rebel was the Poem of which he had dreamed in silence. The silence would become song, ringing throughout the earth, and magical would be its effects.

"Before you can save others you must save yourself," he said. "You must know Pain, you must know Courage, you must know Love. Go forth, and find them."

Forth the Rebel went.

"You're a Fool to chuck up your job," growled his father.

"Come home again some day," wailed his mother.

His heart was sore at leaving, yet he would not stay. And when God saw him taking his departure he laughed at the back of the clouds, for this was part of the Practical Joke he had long planned to play on the Rulers of Wherisit.

They had built up a colossal barricade of custom, tradition and privilege, and behind this barricade believed themselves secure in their criminal splendor.

And lo! here was a Mere Youth who with a word would level the mighty wall.

The Divine Humorist chuckled as he contemplated the climax of the Joke, now rapidly approaching.

For what are human years to one whose measure is Eternity?



The Young Rebel was soon in the Big City that is the capital of the Land of Wherisit; and then for many winters and summers he was lost to those who had known him in his native village.

The Old Poet never heard of him, but he knew that the threefold lesson of Pain, Courage and Love was being learnt, and that the marching chant of the Revolution that was to liberate the people of Wherisit would be the song he had longed to sing.

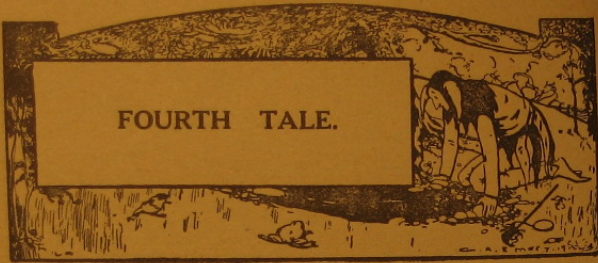
And when one dawn he was discovered dead, sitting by the side of the Pool in the wood, his eyes appeared to be peering at something a far way off, that nobody else could see, and on his lips was the tenderest smile imaginable.



In the Big City the Young Rebel first found Pain; then he found Courage; and last he found Love.

Later on I expect to tell you HOW he found them. But don't be surprised if I forget.





## FOURTH TALE.

### The Priest's Adventure.

THE Very Reverend Dr. Pomp, High Priest of Wherisit, was a person of vast erudition. The things that that man knew, if they could have been realised in material form, would have filled the largest lumber room that ever was built right up to the ceiling, and bulged out the walls to bursting point.

He was learned in every description of futility, and so crammed with the incomprehensible that there wasn't an inch of space left in his head for the common truths of life.

He laid claim to a great familiarity with God, declaring himself his minister, and professing to speak in his name, but as a matter of fact God regarded him as one of his primest jokes, and was never done laughing at him.

As for the temple in which the High Priest presided in gorgeous vestments, and from the carven

### THE PRIEST'S ADVENTURE.

pulpit of which he was wont to deliver ponderous discourses, God considered that a rather wearisome form of humor, and gave it a wide berth.

It is possible to carry a joke TOO far, and when God saw his facetiousness translated into long steeples and even longer sermons it wasn't as funny as he expected, and sometimes in a hilarious moment the thought of it would flash into his mind, and he would suddenly become grave with a sense of failure.

Dr. Pomp, however, was always a droll circumstance, he was so completely out of touch with the substantial world and so thoroughly at home with fantastic shadows.

He could tell you in minute detail all about places that didn't exist, and describe the clothes that impossible beings wore, and the musical instruments they never played upon; and he could depict with unctuous ferocity the fabulous fate in store for those who dared to differ with him, and the tortures that awaited them on the other side of Nowhere.

But of what was happening at the end of his very reverend nose, and of the conditions under which real people lived, he knew so little that he dwelt amongst strangers and moved in the midst of phantom forms.

Not that he was utterly insensible to material things. Oh, no! It was only outside the range of his own interests that they turned to mists and spectral shapes. Let them fall within the orbit of his selfish concern and no one in all Wherisit was more keenly conscious of their presence and their nature.

Anything that contributed to his advantage appealed to him powerfully, and his grip upon it was surprisingly tenacious. To the pleasures of the table he was very sensitive, and rich foods and rare wines had expanded his waist to a goodly girth, and imparted to his countenance a complexion of ruby and purple.

You would never have thought, to look at his plump red flesh, that gaunt want existed in the same land. Could the ordained representative of Providence feast and swill, with hungry multitudes around him? It would never have entered your head, as you gazed in admiration at the palace in which he lived and the temple in which he officiated, that the people's homes were mean and squalid, and haunted by disease.

Yet such was the case.

Once on a time, when he was a young priest, and had not begun to climb to greatness in the temple, these disparities worried him, and his Soul often spoke to him about them.

"It isn't right," his Soul would say. "The people suffer because they are plundered, and ministers of God should protest against the crime."

And the young priest would answer: "What you say seems true, but the elders of the temple tell me it is false. They say it is part of the divine scheme that the many should toil for the few; and that hunger keeps them meek, and ignorance renders them obedient to the will of the Rulers, which also is the will of God."

Many a discussion he had with his Soul on the subject, and his Soul would speak very boldly, and

urge him to disregard the teachings of the elders on these matters, and range himself on the side of the people, and demand justice for them, that misery might no longer defile the beauty of the land.



It was during this period of spiritual unrest that a great adventure befell the young priest.

He was making his way through a meadow near the temple, as the sun declined and the darkness began to rise from the ground, when suddenly he became aware that Christ was walking by his side.

He was afraid at first, thinking it a sign that the end was near. But Christ spoke to him, and the voice was so sweet and gentle that fear left him and his veins tingled with a strange delight.

"Good evening, brother," said Christ, just like you or I might say it.

"Good evening, Christ," the young priest said in tremulous tones.

They walked on a little while in silence, till the temple loomed up hugely before them.

Then Christ spoke again: "There is something you are wanting to ask me, brother."

"Yes," said the young priest. "What shall I do to save myself?"

"Save others," said Christ.

"Whom shall I save?"

And Christ replied: "Save the people from those who oppress them; and save the oppressors from themselves."

"The elders of the temple teach that the world is as God wills it," said the young priest.

"They have made God's house a den of thieves," said Christ, "and that which they teach is the thieves' gospel."

"Then where shall I find the truth, if not in the learning of the elders?"

And Christ told him that truth was in his own Soul, and that all would be well if he followed its guidance.

As the words were uttered the shadow of the temple fell upon the young priest, and turning to speak again, he found he was alone.



But the adventure was not ended yet.

Entering the temple door, he came face to face with Satan; only he didn't know him, for Satan had assumed the form of a well-known theologian.

"Oh, Father!" cried the young priest, "I have just been talking with Christ!"

"Hush!" said Satan, "or men will think you mad."

"But it's true."

"Truth," said Satan, "is for the few. Put it into the hands of the many and the order of the world would be upset, and the commands of the Rulers unheeded."

"Why should there be Rulers? Why should the people not rule themselves? Why should they not keep all that they earn? There would be no poverty then, and no pain, and the people would

turn to God in their happiness, and praise him in the beauty of their lives."

"A most pernicious doctrine," said Satan, speaking like the well-known theologian delivering a lecture to his class of divinity students. "Power is permitted by God, and where it is imposed upon the people it is in accord with the providential plan. The King of Wherisit is the Lord's anointed, and his ministers are the natural leaders of the people in secular affairs, and his High Priest and the Hierarchy of the temple their proper guides in all that appertains to faith and morals."

"But——" said the young priest.

Satan laid a kindly hand upon his shoulder.

"Be advised by one who has studied deeply and had experience of the world. Put this nonsense about Christ out of your head, and read theology. Stick to the precepts of the doctors of divinity and the ritual of the temple; and remember that there must be want and suffering on earth in order that the depraved spirit of mankind may be chastened, and the great virtue of charity have subjects to work upon."

Satan said no more, for he knew that his words were seeds which would germinate. But he put it into the minds of the temple authorities to promote the young priest, and advance him rapidly to important and lucrative positions.

For a long time the thought of his meeting with Christ remained with him. A new note came into his discourses. He hinted at the triumph of a universal Brotherhood, based upon industrial co-

operation and social justice, and whenever he preached the people flocked to the temple to hear him.

As he rose in office, however, this democratic fervor subsided. He grew cautious. He temporised; qualified all he said with "ifs" and "buts," and surely though almost imperceptibly hardened into a cold and implacable conservatism.

Throughout this process his Soul never ceased to reproach him and exhort him to repent. On the very eve of his becoming High Priest it troubled him greatly.

"Christ told you to take the side of the people," said his Soul. "He told you to save them from those who oppress them, and impeach the Rulers of Wherisit. He told you to——"

The High Priest elect turned savagely upon his Soul and strangled it. And when it was dead he buried it in a secret place.

Then, entering the sacristy of the temple, he was robed in costly vestments for the ceremony of induction, and presently sat enthroned on the great altar, with incense all about him, and the jubilant music of the choir.



In the middle of the service a strange sound came from the heavens. Everybody said it was an indication of divine favor.

I happen to know better.

It was God, laughing behind the clouds at a joke he had brought off successfully.



## FIFTH TALE.

### The Moneylord's Adventure.

WHEN the Moneylord was born, Satan disguised himself as a Right-Thinking Person, and attended the party that was given by the proud parents in honor of the event.

All the guests brought presents for the child, and each laid his gift at the foot of the cradle with a few remarks appropriate to the occasion.

Satan came forward with a smiling face, and bowed to the father and mother in an ingratiating manner that made them think: "What a perfect gentleman this is! Who can he be?"

"I have here, for your darling child," said Satan, "a present of the highest value; one which will win for him great honor, power and dominion, and is therefore, I venture to say, worthy of his distinguished parentage."

"Really a most charming person!" thought the delighted mother.

"Must cultivate his acquaintance!" the equally flattered father murmured to himself, returning Satan's bow.

All the other guests gathered round, wondering what on earth this marvellous present could be.

Satan uttered a secret word, and at once one of his imps appeared, dressed as a page, and bearing a salver on which was something covered with rich brocade.

The supposed page laid the salver at the foot of the cradle, and then, at a sign from his master, drew the covering away.

A cry of astonishment went round the room.

Lying on the salver was a heap of nuggets of the brightest metal that had ever been seen. It shone in a way that fascinated everybody, and its color was a yellow so alluring that there was not a man or woman present who did not covet it.

"This," said Satan, with an air of unctuous importance, "is GOLD, a metal not yet known. It is endowed with magical properties. He who possesses it commands the world. Whatever he desires he shall have. Men will labor to provide him with the best that nature and art can produce. The Great Ones of the kingdom will pay homage to him. He shall rule the rulers!"

Everybody who heard this stared at one another in amazement. Then they stared at the magic metal; and then at the Baby who had received such a splendid gift; and then at the father and mother who were blessed with such a lucky child.

And then they turned their eyes again to the Stranger who had caused this sensation. Wonder on wonder—he was gone!

Yes, he and his page had both disappeared.

But there was the shining yellow metal, glittering in the most astounding fashion; and the guests, crowding about it, and touching it with exclamations of pleasure and surprise, in their admiration of the gift soon forgot the giver and the mysterious manner of his departure.



On his twenty-first birthday the Moneylord was handed the pieces of gold by his father.

"The time has come," said he. "Go forth, my lad, and with this wondrous talisman subdue the world to your will."

The young Moneylord doubted the virtue of the metal, though its gleaming bewitched him, as it did everybody who beheld it. But he was keen to try his fortune in the royal city, so putting the pieces of gold into a bag with the rest of his belongings, and bidding farewell to his parents, he set out cheerfully on his adventure.

He was footsore and weary, and very, very hungry, when he reached his destination. What to do he did not know. In the whole city he had neither friend nor acquaintance, and the ways of travellers were unfamiliar to him.

He resolved to test the efficacy of the magic metal without delay. Approaching a well-dressed man in the street, he said: "Excuse me, sir, but I am unknown in your city, and I desire food and shelter."

The man glanced at him haughtily, and did not halt his steps, passing on without a word. The young Moneylord hastened after him, and taking a small lump of gold from his bag, held it out on his open palm.

"Help me," said he, "and I will give you this."

The manner of the man changed instantly. Eagerly seizing the glistening nugget, he broke into a gracious smile and said:

"I mistook you for another person. Pardon my seeming rudeness. If my humble home will content you, the best that it contains is at your service."

"I shall be well content," said the young Moneylord, secretly rejoicing at the success of his talisman.

The man took him straight to his house, and introduced him to his family, and gave him of the choicest to eat and drink; and that night he slept in a soft bed, and dreamt of further triumphs on the morrow.



After that, he had only to produce a piece of gold to win his way and achieve his will. His fame spread far and wide. Multitudes congregated about the house, clamoring to be shown the miraculous metal. And from every part the Great Ones of Wherisit came, to offer their friendship and service to its happy owner.

The first to call upon him was the High Priest of the temple.

"This wealth," he said, "is from God. He has entrusted it to you, that you may become the benefactor of his children and the pillar of his church."

The young Moneylord was right glad to hear this, so he gave the High Priest a rather large lump of the shining stuff, and they parted very pleased with each other.

Then the Soldier called.

"With this bright marvel," he said, "you can set up a vast army and build a great navy, and the kingdom of Wherisit will then subdue the world, and you will be the Chief Citizen of the greatest Empire that ever was known."

This also was pleasant to hear, so the young Moneylord presented the Soldier with a piece of gold, and he also went away delighted.

The Lawyer was next shown in.

"This metal," said he, "is entirely without precedent. I have searched the authorities through and through, and can find no reference to it anywhere. I interpret this to mean that you are bound by no law, restricted by no constitution, but can do just what you wish, and so, by your usages, customs and desires, lay the foundation of a new jurisprudence."

And he, too, was presented with a precious nugget, and took his departure in the best spirits imaginable.

Soon after the King himself commanded the young Moneylord to attend at court, and bring him the glittering treasure.

He was received in state. The Ministers and courtiers and guards stood at each side of the throne, and the King sat in his ceremonial robes, looking very grand indeed.

At the sight of the gold, several pieces of which the young Moneylord, on bended knee, presented to him, the monarch was strangely moved.

"This," he said, "is the true symbol of power. Something tells me that Gold will be greater even than I—that it will exercise a wider sway, and win the allegiance of men in lands where the splendor of my name is less than the shadows that pass."

It was then that the owner of the magic metal received his title. I have called him the young Moneylord from the commencement of this story, but up to this point in his fortunes he really bore another name, which I have not mentioned because I forget whether it was Smith, Jones, or Robinson. However, it doesn't matter, for henceforth the world was to know him as The Moneylord, and his humble origin was to be lost forever in the blaze of a later glory.

The King took the pieces of gold into his hand, gazed long and earnestly upon them, and in a voice of deep emotion said:

"Truly a royal gift. For this I name you The Moneylord; and of all the Great Ones of Wherisit none shall take precedence over you!"



Now The Moneylord was giving away his gold so freely that you might conclude that he would

soon have very little left. But there is something that I have not yet told you. It is this, that howsoever lavishly he scattered his gold about, the stock did not diminish!

When he made this astonishing discovery he began to indulge in the most ambitious enterprises, and presently had tens of thousands of men employed in his service. They built beautiful palaces for him, and surrounded them with the loveliest gardens in all Wherisit. They made sumptuous carriages for him to ride in, and wove for his apparel the richest fabrics that ever came from the loom.

Sculptors carved their finest statuary to earn his gold, and painters depicted in exquisite colors and faultless forms the glowing imaginations of their minds.

Workmen of every description toiled for his pleasure and profit, so universal was the passion which his gold had aroused in the hearts of men.

In this way nearly everybody came to possess the metal, though in infinitely varying measures; and then they trafficked in it among themselves; cheated one another for it; fought one another for it; schemed and conspired to plunder their neighbors' stores and augment their own.

The whole social system of the country was affected by the obsession. Laws were made governing all kinds of transactions in gold. A gold-owning class grew up, wielding great authority and influence by virtue of their accumulations of the

metal, and holding in subjection those who had but little of it.

Tyranny became rampant; poverty made its appearance in the midst of plenty; in the struggle for gold many crimes were committed, and the seeds of hatred and avarice, sown wide through the land, produced a ghastly harvest of dissension, disease, and degradation.



One day The Moneylord was sitting in his favorite garden when an elderly gentleman, attired in the very latest style, and proclaiming self-satisfaction in the creases of his pants, and prosperity in the glossiness of his tall hat, approached him and said:

"Good day! I have called to thank you for your highly valued assistance."

"Indeed," said The Moneylord. "And pray, who may you be?"

"Well," said the elderly gent, smoothing his hat with an expert elbow, "to be perfectly candid, I'm the Devil, though now—thanks to you—retired from active participation in the business I once carried on under my personal supervision."

"This is disgraceful levity!" cried The Moneylord.

"Nothing of the sort is intended, I assure you," said the bland visitor. "I am actuated by no other sentiment than gratitude when I say what I do. In the old days my work was very heavy, the hours

long, and—strictly between ourselves—the results by no means commensurate with the energy and intelligence expended. To-day all that is changed. By the agency of the gift I gave you in your cradle, you have corrupted the world and put enmity between men. And Hell, which was in rather a bad way, is now a really prosperous concern, a first-class investment—what you might call a gilt-edged security. As a consequence I am able to take my ease, and cultivate the graces of life, for which, I think I may observe without undue vanity, I have always had a natural aptitude. All this is attributable to my fortunate discovery of the power of gold to dazzle the senses and deprave the soul of man; and also—permit me to repeat—to your help in distributing the sinister metal broadcast through Wherisit."

The Moneylord, choking with rage, shouted for his servants, several of whom came hurrying on the scene.

"Throw him out!" he snarled, and pointed to the Devil; or rather, to the spot where the Devil had been, for now, behold, there was nobody there! . . .

"What an awful smell!" exclaimed one of the flunkeys, standing exactly where the Devil had bowed and scraped and polished his hat a moment before.

"I hear someone laughing in the sky!" said another.

They all heard it, and stood staring fearfully at the heavens. A sound as of a person chuckling in

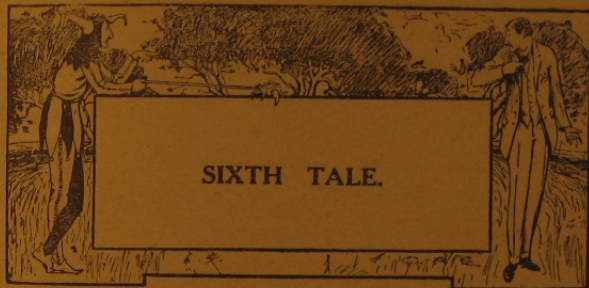


enjoyment of a good joke issued from behind a veil of cloud.

"You're a pack of fools!" snapped The Moneylord. "I did not want you. I was dreaming. You can go."



When he was alone again, he took some pieces of gold from his pocket, and holding them close to his eyes, looked for a long, long time upon them, with a troubled countenance.



## The Soldier's Adventure.

HE loved war. Conflict, he held, was the thing most worthy of a man. It brought out all the finer qualities of his nature. It inspired him with courage, it imbued him with fortitude; it gave to his thought and action an intrepid sweep, and to his imagination a boundless range.

He regarded with a tolerant contempt those who were wedded to the ways of peace. They were necessary, he supposed, if only to support the warrior—to grow the food he ate, to weave the clothes he wore, to forge the weapons with which he fought.

But certainly they belonged to an inferior order, and as against the warrior caste had neither rights nor privileges deserving of consideration.

Even as a child The Soldier had loved the insignia of strife. He ran beside the marching

regiments in the street, feasting his eyes upon the splendid uniforms, the gleaming arms, the prancing steeds; and enchanted by the blaring trumpets and the rolling drums.

He longed for the time when he, too, should carry a sword by his side, and sally forth to slay men.

"Whom would you slay, dear?" his mother said one day, delighted at the martial ardor of her son.

"The enemies of the King," the boy answered proudly.

"And who are the King's enemies?"

"All who will not obey the King's commands."

So pleased was the mother that she bought the boy a plumed hat and a toy sword, and with these he swaggered around, fighting imaginary foes and striking them to the earth relentlessly.



When he grew up, however, his mother did not want him to adopt a military career. Killing the sons of other women was quite right, but what if her own son should be killed?

The bare possibility was so terrible that she would not listen to his entreaties. It was a proper thing to slay the King's enemies, but those wretches were so wicked that they did not quietly permit the King's men to destroy them, as in all decency they ought, but actually strove to save themselves by destroying the King's men!

Under such circumstances she could not dream of letting him be a soldier. It was far too dangerous an occupation for her darling boy.

He would have been apprenticed to a tradesman of some useful sort had it not been for the Devil, who at this juncture waited upon the mother in the guise of a fervent patriot, and urged her to assent to the boy's wish.

"It's a duty you owe to your country," said the Devil. "It is the glorious mission of Wherisit to carry the blessings of civilisation to the other nations of the earth, and it cannot do this without a strong army to force those nations to accept what is good for them, and pay homage to its flag."

"If it's for their good, they will not need to be forced to accept it," said the mother.

"My dear lady," said the Devil, "you don't realise the depravity in which those nations are sunk. They actually prefer their own institutions to ours, and have the audacity to resist when we send troops to take possession of their lands and rearrange their governments. We are obliged to crush them for their own benefit, and to this noble purpose it is the duty of every patriotic mother to dedicate a son."

So persuasively did the Devil speak that the opposition of the mother was completely broken down, and her son soon afterwards took service under the King's colors. And when she saw him in his regimentals, with a real sword, sharp and shining, by his side, her heart was filled with pride, for now, she thought to herself, he will kill the King's enemies wherever they are to be found; nor was she

any longer afraid, because, as she said, it was inconceivable that even the King's enemies should be so horrid as to want to kill her boy.



I am not going to tell you of the brilliant career that The Soldier had. You will find it printed in large type in all the authentic histories of Wherisit. And if you study the poets of Wherisit you will come across numerous poems extolling his prowess, while in the public art galleries there are many pictures showing him in the act of bestowing the blessings of civilisation upon other nations with great slaughter.

My task is to relate an adventure of The Soldier's that did not get into the official chronicles, and up to the present has not been made known in any way whatever.

As a matter of fact, no living man is aware of this strange episode but myself, so that what you are about to hear is something which, save through me, could never come to your knowledge.



The Soldier was in a foreign country at the head of a vast army, engaged in civilising the inhabitants, who, as usual, were obstinately opposing his efforts to improve them.

He had accordingly been put to the necessity of convincing them of his good intentions by devastating their lands, burning their villages and cities, and wiping them off the face of the earth in large numbers.

In this way he had brought a measure of tranquillity to the country. The armies of the enemy had been reduced to scattered remnants lurking in the mountains, not strong enough to take the open field; and the civil population were cowed into sullenly submitting to the benefits about to be conferred on them.

All was quiet one afternoon, as The Soldier walked forth alone. The sky was so radiant, and the birds sang so sweetly, that he was filled with a feeling of elation, and stepped out briskly, scarcely noting where he went.

Very soon he had lost his way, and knew not in which direction to turn to regain the camp.

Pushing through the fringe of a wood, he came upon a clearing in the midst of which stood a farmhouse, and advancing to the door, knocked loudly.

"Come in," said a quavering voice; and entering, The Soldier found himself in a large, old-fashioned kitchen, in the presence of an elderly couple sitting at a table.

The man rose as the door opened, and asked The Soldier his business.

"I have lost my way, and am hungry," he said; and the woman immediately went to a cupboard and commenced to set out food. They did not recognise him as an enemy, for he wore civilian clothes, and the sword by his side told them nothing, for every traveller was armed in view of the possibility of being attacked by prowling bands of robbers.

"Make yourself at home," said the man. "We live in sad times, and the people of this unhappy

land should be friendly with each other, wheresoe'er they meet."

"Things are not the same here since we lost our son Paul," said the woman. "He was a good lad, and when he went to fight the enemy he looked so beautiful and strong."

"He must have been killed," said the man, "for the army he was in was bloodily defeated, and naught has been heard of him since. Many of his mates have called here, but none could tell us of our Paul, except that he fought like a hero in the thickest of the battle."

"He was a brave lad," said the woman, and sat down weeping.

"As fine a son as ever lived," said the man, and shed tears, too.

All through the meal they talked to their guest of Paul, dwelling lovingly upon his virtues and bemoaning his loss.

"I care not what happens now," said the man. "Life no longer allures me, and if it pleased God to take my poor wife and me, most gladly would we leave this ruined land of ours, from which all happiness fled when the cruel enemy invaded it."

The Soldier had not heard talk like this before. He had listened only to the voices of warriors, excited with battle or exultant with victory; or to the acclamations of crowds rejoicing in his triumphs.

There was something in the sorrow of this elderly couple, mourning for a son whose death he had caused, that touched an unsuspected chord in his nature, and when he thanked them for their

hospitality and bade them good-bye he was strangely moved.

All about him, now, he saw the signs of desolation, to which before he had been blind. He saw that the crops were trampled into the mire; that the once prosperous villages lay in ruins; that rapine and murder had ravaged the quiet homes.

And in an uncontrollable emotion of grief he plucked his sword from its sheath and dashed it to the ground, exclaiming:

"War is a curse, and never again will I wage it!"



Then a great wonder happened.

The scene was suddenly transformed. The villages that had been silent and deserted were now the centres of peaceful activities. The farmers' waggons rumbled along the roads; the cattle lowed in the meadows; the fields were golden with corn; the reapers and gleaners sang at their tasks; from the chimneys of the peasants' cottages the blue smoke rose, to tell of cheerful hearths within.

No sign of strife was anywhere visible. The army of the invader had apparently melted away. And this circumstance caused no concern to The Soldier who had so recently been its commander. He strode along like one in an ecstasy, and to every-body he met he gave a pleasant greeting.



Now the Devil was much disturbed by what had taken place. Without hatred between men he could not thrive, and war was his most profitable industry.

So he put himself in the way of The Soldier, first assuming his favorite disguise as a patriot.

They travelled together, and as they walked the Devil breathed poisonous words into his companion's ear.

"Yes," he said, "the land seems beautiful enough, as you say, but under this smiling exterior there is concealed a savage spirit. The people are not civilised like the people of Wherisit. They do not speak the same language as us, a sure sign of depravity; and their manners and customs and institutions are different from ours, thereby affording evidence of a most deplorable lack of culture."

"They are happy," said The Soldier.

"Hogs are happy, wallowing in the mud," the Devil replied. "We of Wherisit have a higher standard of happiness than hoggish contentment, and it is our destiny to govern and guide those races less liberally endowed."

"Let them live their own lives," said The Soldier. "At least they do us no harm."

"There's where you are mistaken," the Devil cried. "They hate us because of our superior civilisation, and all the time are planning to get together a great army to subjugate Wherisit and enslave its citizens."

"If I thought that . . ." said The Soldier, the poison beginning to work upon him.

"I assure you it is so," urged the Devil. "I will give you, in proof, some things that have come under my own observation."

He then proceeded to exercise his utmost ingenuity as the Father of Lies, and slandered the people of that country so convincingly, and represented them in such a villainous light, that the blood of The Soldier grew hot within him, and instinctively his hand went to his side.

While the conversation was going on the Devil had cunningly contrived to lead The Soldier back to the farmhouse, halting at the spot where he had flung down his sword.

"I see your weapon lying there," he said. "Shame, that a patriotic son of the great Kingdom of Wherisit should cast away the instrument of its glory!"

The Soldier stooped and picked up the sword; and at that moment there issued from the farmhouse a strapping young man, with an elderly couple laughing and talking behind him.

At sight of The Soldier sword in hand the young man rushed back into the house, to return in an instant similarly armed.

"There is your enemy!" said the Devil.

With cool courage The Soldier advanced, to be met half way by the no less valorous youth. The fight was fierce, but it was soon ended. Experience and skill prevailed over mere impetuosity, and the young man fell to the ground mortally wounded.

As he did so, another wonder occurred.

Again the scene was transformed. The fields were desolated as before. Black ruin lay

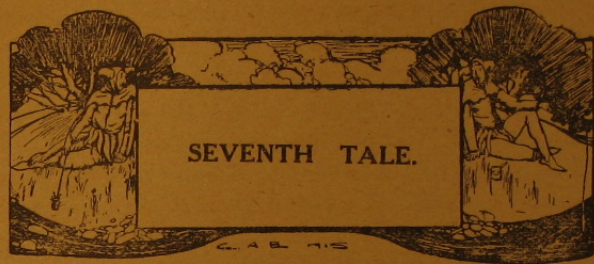
around. The villages were but heaps of debris. Anguish and horror brooded over all.

From a distant camp the notes of a bugle floated, to mingle with the wail of a heartbroken mother.

The Soldier started eagerly at the bugle's sound.

"Your country calls you!" cried the Devil.

And, as he uttered these words, from somewhere in the calm heavens there came a peal of laughter.



## The Lawyer's Adventure.

WHEN the God who dearly loved a joke created Wherisit, he fashioned it on lines of law and order, and then let loose in it a lawless and disorderly spirit.

From this circumstance the most humorous inconsistencies arose, and not a day passed without the Supreme Joker deriving exquisite satisfaction from his ingenious contradiction.

The sun and the moon and the stars never for a moment deviated from the course laid down for them. THEY had no irresponsible impulses. THEY went on doing the same old things exactly as it was ordained they should; no one could ever accuse THEM of being actuated by wilful and wanton motives.

But how different was the state of that mankind upon which they gazed down with a mild surprise,

even while they shed their rays of warmth and light with irreproachable regularity for its benefit.

Mankind did very little that it was supposed to do, and, on the other hand, was continually doing the things that were not mapped out for it.

This erratic streak in its character, when opposed to the unfailing reliability of natural phenomena, was productive of some really funny situations, and God enjoyed them greatly. It was good sport to see men striving to turn night into day, and then day into night; and to observe the queer devices by which they sought to keep cool in the summer and warm in the winter was most amusing.

There were other ways in which Nature's orderliness and Man's waywardness had comic results when they clashed together. But, after all, there was not a great deal of variety in the joke, and before many thousands of years had passed God rather wearied of it.

So he pondered the matter for an eon or two; and then there flashed into his mind an idea so replete with humorous possibilities that he chuckled over the very thought of it for several centuries.

The idea was this: To give a certain section of mankind an interest in inventing laws, and implant in the minds of another section a passion for maintaining them.

To you it may not appear to promise much amusement, but God sees below the surface of things, and the entertaining possibilities that the scheme

disclosed in the course of time were obvious to him in the instant of its conception.

Presently, in conformity with his will, there arose among mankind a class that by the practices of exploitation grew wealthy, and with the object of protecting their wealth began to suggest that anyone who interfered with or jeopardised their possessions was guilty of an offence against God and humanity, and ought to be punished for it.

And almost simultaneously there came into existence another class that devised measures to safeguard the Rich from the danger of losing by force what they had gained by fraud. And among these The Lawyer was first and foremost.

So enamored of law was he that he divided the human race into those who kept the law and those who broke it.

And he built up a great legal system, full of the most amazing inconsistencies and absurdities, but invested with sacred sanctions and surrounded with secular solemnities; and to this system he made human nature subservient; and when human nature grew restive or rebelled he brought into operation a code of penalties that quickly repressed it, and turned it into a degraded semblance of itself.



Thus endowed and buttressed, the Rich became the Rulers of Wherisit.

And then the joke began.

The poverty caused by the depredations of the Rich brought into being many petty offenders

against the law, and it was highly diverting to the Supreme Joker to watch the anomalous encounters that ensued—the big thieves laying violent hands on the little ones, and gravely indicting as enemies of society those who were less criminal than themselves.

The Lawyer was exceptionally stern in his attitude towards those who were charged with theft. He had no mercy for them whatever. And when he was made a Judge the sentences he inflicted on all such offenders were characterised by a ruthless severity.

He would not listen to the plea of extenuating circumstances. He held that the most powerful of human emotions should be respect for the law, and was in the habit of saying that if he and those whom he loved were starving he would not steal bread, though it lay within his reach.

In this connection a remarkable adventure once befel The Lawyer, and I'm going to tell you about it.



He was about to pass sentence on a man who had been found guilty of breaking into a house and stealing food. Addressing him, he said:

"The jury have recommended you to mercy because, at the time, you were hungry, and your wife and children were starving. I cannot allow such a plea to have any weight with me. The laws of the land are superior to all private considerations, and must be observed under every circumstance, or their

violation punished, otherwise the very foundations of society would be shaken, and orderly government become impossible."

"The thought of my famishing wife and little ones made me desperate," murmured the man.

The Lawyer bent upon him an implacable eye.

"Prisoner," he said, "the greater the temptation to break the law, the more firmly should we abide by it. No misfortune, no suffering, would ever induce ME to offend against the laws of my country."

As these words fell from his lips he heard a sound of distant laughter, that seemed to come from the heavens. At the same moment the court-room and everybody in it faded away. . . .

The Lawyer found himself sitting by a roadside, on the outskirts of the city. . . .



He felt that something extraordinary had happened to him, and his heart was filled with fear. He was no longer attired in an ermine robe, with a wig upon his head, but wore the clothes of a laborer—shabby, dirty, and patched.

His hands, once soft and white, were now coarse and knotted, and his face, that had been so carefully shaven, was covered with a stubble of hair.

He was not himself! . . . He was somebody else! . . . Who was he?

The question was no sooner asked than answered. He was that man he was about to sentence when this inexplicable and terrible change took place!



He knew he had been the Judge; and now was conscious of being that miserable criminal.

"I am faint with hunger," he muttered, "and my wife and children are starving at home. I must get food from somewhere."

Rising to his feet, he approached a house near by, and knocking at the door, mumbled his pitiful tale and begged for bread.

"We have nothing for you," said the housewife, and turned within.

Broken and despairing, he walked slowly along the verandah, when, chancing to glance in through an open casement, he saw a table spread for a substantial meal.

There was nobody in the room. . . . The neighborhood was a quiet one.

Obeying a primal impulse, he entered swiftly by the window, grasped a loaf of bread, and cramming other eatables into his pockets, made his escape from the room.

Alas, he was observed! A man saw him climbing out of the window with the loaf in his hand, and seized him as he was emerging from the gate, attempting to conceal the evidence of his guilt beneath his coat.

He struggled with his captor, but weak with privation was easily overcome and dragged off to the police station, where he was charged with house-breaking, and locked in a cell.

How he hated the law that treated him so unjustly! He was the helpless victim of a monster

called Society, that denied him the opportunity to work for his livelihood, punished his wife and children for being dependent upon him, threatened them all with starvation, and when he took bread to save their lives, flung legal meshes around him, and confronted him with the hypocritical austerity of an ethical code.

"Ten thousand curses on the law!" . . .

A tremor passed through his body as he uttered this malediction, for he realised that in some occult way he was still the Judge as well as the criminal.

But now he held in detestation principles that had been to him the very texture of his mind and spirit. He saw now that they were not devised for the good of the community, but for the aggrandisement and protection of a predatory class.

The law was the pillar of an evil social system. Upon it there was reared an edifice of fraud, corruption and injustice.

How clear it had all grown to him! Want and suffering had sharpened his perception of the truth. Never again would he reverence law till it ceased to be the mainstay of oppression and became the support of a free and happy people; not founded on terror, but on love.

These rebellious thoughts calmed the turbulence of his soul. He fell asleep that night with a smile upon his lips.



Next morning, when he awoke, to his great astonishment he was once more seated on the bench

in the court, wearing his robe of ermine, and on his head a wig; with the barristers, policemen and jury before him, and in the dock, waiting to be sentenced, the man who had stolen food.

And still there surged in his brain the words: "Ten thousand curses on the law!"

Still there lurked in his heart the truth—that the law was compounded of cant and cruelty, and that the whole complex system of statutes and precedents had been invented in the interests of an exploiting class.

But what was that to him—now?

Again he was the Judge who had been reared in the law; who for long years had expounded the law; who was regarded as an eminent authority on the principles of jurisprudence; and who, moreover, was a member of that class that looked to the law to suppress all who interfered with their comfort or threatened their security.

Addressing the prisoner, he said:

"I should be wanting in my duty to my country if I permitted my feelings of compassion to influence me in dealing with transgressions against the law, which is the sheet-anchor of our civilisation. In the interests of public order, and in vindication of the rights of property, I must be just rather than merciful. The sentence of the court is ten years' imprisonment with hard labor."

"You're a canting hypocrite, and you know it!" cried the man.

The court was thrown into a state of consternation. . . . The Judge turned as white as the ermine on his robe. . . . Policemen laid hands on the man, and dragged him away. . . .

And again, from the sky that was visible through the windows of the court, there came the sound of laughter.

It was God, enjoying a joke that only he could see.



## How the Young Rebel Found Pain.

I HAD almost forgotten that Young Rebel with whom I began this roundabout cycle of tales. So many other things have occupied me in the meantime. But having nothing else to think of just at present, back he has popped into my mind, clamoring for attention.

And of course he's a very important character in the drama I am somehow unfolding. Not only does it commence with his death, but I rather fancy it will end with it, too; though you mustn't hold me to that, for I haven't decided the point yet.

My immediate purpose is to relate the adventures he met with in the big city that is the capital of Wherisit, whither the Old Poet had sent him to find Pain, Courage and Love, because without these he could not save the oppressed workers.

It will not take me long to tell you what I know, but you must not conclude that things happened in this flashlight fashion to our Young Rebel. He was years experiencing the events that I throw upon the screen in a few minutes.

That is the difference between Life and Literature. Life covers every inch of the ground, much of it dull and uninteresting. Literature leaps to illuminated climaxes.

And now, lest I should be too lifelike, and bore you, I'll get along with the story of how the Young Rebel found Pain.



You might imagine he'd have no trouble in finding THAT, and if you do it shows that you haven't learned what Pain is.

Falling downstairs and dislocating your collarbone doesn't teach you what it is. Barking your shins against a sharp corner, and doing a dance of torture on one leg, leaves you in ignorance of its essential nature.

It isn't physical suffering, at all. It's something related to it in a sort of way, and yet it is entirely different. It's a sense of the sorrows of others, with a good, big pang of your own thrown in.

Now in this way the Young Rebel had never known Pain. He was a thoughtful lad, but even his soberest thoughts were shot with golden threads of pleasure. The world was a very nice place to live in. The Old Poet had told him of the woful condition of the workers, and he had a natural hatred of injustice that made him burn with indigna-

tion when he dwelt upon their wrongs. Yet he was never sad.

In spite of oppression; in spite of hard labor, and poverty, and sickness, and all the squalid circumstance of servitude, there were pleasant features of existence, and Youth was a harp that thrilled into music with every passing wind.

Even when he went to work as a laborer in an iron foundry, and for many hours a day his life was encompassed by filth and fire, and the stark grimness of toil—even then, in his heart there was always a note of exultation; and when his body was wearied to the point of exhaustion his mind still gloried in a universe of beauty, as though he were one of an Olympian race, condemned to earthly tasks, yet rejoicing in his immortality.

He hated the physical degradation of his job, nevertheless. And, as the days passed, this feeling gained upon him, and bodily fatigue grew to be so insistent that he felt himself in danger of losing his grip upon the splendid verities of life, and subsiding into a dreaming drudge.

"This won't do!" he said.

So one day he stayed away from the foundry, ignoring the strident summons of its whistle, and went into the wooded country on the outskirts of the city.

He wanted to hear a bird's song, for he knew that in this there was more true wisdom than whole libraries of learning could impart. And when presently he stood listening to a Lark trilling its raptures in the blue and silver morning, the message

of the music illumined the deepest recesses of his being.

"You, too, have wings!" sang the Lark. "Spread them! Don't stay too close to the earth, lest its soil get into your soul."

Then he wandered into a thicket, and coming on a tree-shadowed Pool, peered into the gleaming blackness of its mirror till he saw the future therein, in dim colors and wavering forms.

And his old friends, the Frogs, with their usual readiness to oblige, gave him the benefit of their advice.

"Never get into a hole you can't climb out of!" they croaked.

He thanked them warmly, understanding the application of their words; for in the cryptic utterances of this stolid folk there is always a hidden meaning of great practical value.

By this time the day was nearing its end, and in the twilight sky the Moon rose with a gracious splendor, smiling to see him waiting for her. No need to tell HER what he wished to know. The Moon, from her great altitude, sees into the hearts of men as the aeronaut into the deeps of the sea. Before he could speak she answered:

"Better to starve in freedom than eat in slavery!"

"But——" said he.

"True," interrupted the Moon, who divines what you are going to say ere you can say it. "Only the slaves can save the slaves. But first the

gospel of liberty must inflame their minds; and no slave can preach it."

"I will never go back to the works!" said the Young Rebel firmly.

As he voiced this determination, fraught with a destiny he did not suspect, a loud peal of laughter came from the heavens.

He thought it was the Moon, and felt hurt at her levity.

"You are mistaken," she said; "it wasn't me."

"Who, then?" he asked.

But not another word could he get from her.

After that he did only casual labor—no more than sufficed to provide him with the barest necessities of existence. The remainder of his time he devoted to the work of agitation, talking at the street corners, or wheresoever a crowd could be gathered together.

It happened to be a troublous period. The hands of the exploiters lay heavily upon the workers. They were subjected to intolerable sweating; wages were so low that they and their families were ill-fed, ill-housed and ill-clad. Misery was the common lot; and this condition, brought as it often was into glaring contrast with the ostentatious wealth of those who oppressed them, had created widespread discontent and a smouldering fire of anger.

Such a state of affairs could not last. The tension was too great for human nature to bear.

It was an absolute relief when, one day, something gave way and broke, and the men streamed out of the places of toil—on strike!

For a while the enthusiasm was overwhelming. Huge mass meetings were held. Torchlight processions were organised. Fiery resolutions were passed; and the Moon, gazing down on excited multitudes, saw the Young Rebel holding forth, and heard the cheers evoked by his eloquent declamation.

But it was not long before Hunger knocked ominously at the doors of the strikers. They were not provisioned for a siege. Their powers of resistance had been sapped by continuous poverty and will-destroying labor.

Loudly Hunger knocked.

And at that terrifying sound the children began to cry. And the wives went white with fear. And the fire died down in the strikers' hearts and turned to ashes; and they listened sullenly to the exhortations of their leaders; and the eloquence of the Young Rebel aroused no answering spirit in them.

This was the Devil's opportunity. He seized it with the consummate skill of one who has had unnumbered centuries of experience in the arts of deceit.

Disguised as a gray-haired worker, he climbed upon the platform after the Young Rebel had addressed an immense meeting, and spoke as follows:

"Comrades, don't be misled by what you've just heard. What does that bit of a lad know about

our wrongs an' rights? Has HE suffered as we have? No. Has HE a wife and children crying for food, as we have? No. Was HE born an' bred here, as we were? He was not. Nobody knows where he comes from. (Voices: "That's true!") Maybe he's a foreigner. There's some of 'em prowling about in Wherisit, spying for them foreign Powers that envy us our greatness, an' would like to rob us of this glorious land of ours." (Loud cries of "Down with the foreigners!")

Seeing he was making an impression, the Devil continued in his most insinuating manner:

"An', after all, mates, what's this trouble all about? We think we've been hardly used, but our masters have their worries, don't forget. They haven't been making much money lately. An' what's the cause of it? Foreign competition! That's our enemy, not the masters. Foreign competition, an' these agitators who seldom do any work themselves, but go around stirring up discontent an' battering on those who are fools enough to listen to 'em."

Prolonged applause greeted this statement from a section of the crowd, while another section shouted curses at the Young Rebel, who stood looking on, astounded and dazed by an exhibition of mob fickleness such as he had not thought possible.

They were so obviously the victims of a terrible injustice, too, that he could have wept at the sight of their haggard features, and the marks of wretchedness they bore all over them.

"Mates," went on the Devil, looking the very picture of a bluff and honest workman, "let us go to the masters an' talk the matter over. They'll give us a fair deal, I'm sure. They're men, like us, an' not foreign spies. All their interests are in Wherisit, an' it follows—doesn't it?—that the more prosperous they make this country the better for them. (Cheers.) I hear they're willing to give us a Judge to fix a livin' wage for us, an' decide how many hours a day we shall work——"

THE YOUNG REBEL (interjecting bitterly): "Yes, one of their own class, at thirty pounds a week, to say whether we shall have thirty shillings!"

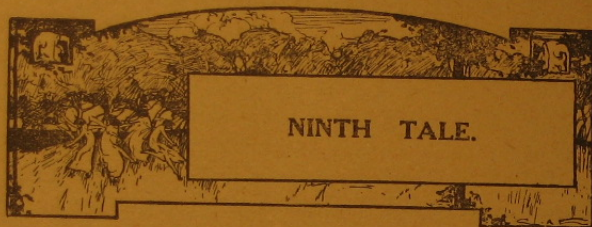
THE DEVIL (pointing a good imitation of a toil-twisted finger at him): "Hearken to the foreigner!" (Uproarious applause.)

Then, craftily seizing the psychological moment, the Devil leapt from the platform exclaiming:

"The masters are holding a conference now. Let's go and interview them, an' call the strike off. Follow me!"

With one accord, cheering lustily, the crowd swept behind the Devil; and in a few minutes the meeting place was deserted, save for a disillusioned agitator, standing there with a brain bewildered and a heart filled and brimming over with mortification and anguish.

And that was how the Young Rebel found Pain.



## How the Young Rebel Found Courage.

AFTER the strike the Young Rebel could get employment nowhere. He appeared to be known at every place he applied for a job.

"We want no agitators here!" was the curt answer he invariably received, sometimes accompanied with a bitter sneer or a brutal smile.

Before long he was in danger of starvation.

"It's a big world," said the Moon significantly, peeping in at his window one night as he sat dejected and despairing.

He took the hint, and tramped into another part of the country. Here he obtained work as a laborer on a farm; and then for many months the daylight was spent in arduous toil and the darkness in heavy sleep.

He had made up his mind to concern himself no more with the wrongs of the working class; to give no further thought to the theories of social

justice that the Old Poet had taught him. Why should he sacrifice himself for such an ignorant and ungrateful crowd?

He would work long enough in the country, where nobody knew him, to save up a goodly sum of money, and then—oh, for the city, and some at least of the joys which youth demands as its sovereign right.

But he had forgotten one thing. Drudgery destroys the will to pleasure. It benumbs the brain; it dulls the nerves. Desire falls into a slumber that is almost stupefaction.

As the days passed, he lost the inclination to break away from his servitude. Out into the fields he went with the dawn, but scarcely lifting his head to the glorious pageant of the heavens, and mowed with the scythe or delved with the spade till his arms ached and his back was straightened with difficulty, and his mind was a weary chaos in which nothing existed but a medley of thoughts about toil, food and sleep.

"Shake yourself up!" said the Moon, rising over the horizon before he had left the field, "or you're a slave forever."

The Lark, singing its hymn to the departing day, circled high above his head.

"Spread wings!" it shrilled, "or your soul will get clogged with the dust."

And one of the elders of the Frog tribe, on its way to the dewy wood, stayed for a moment to solemnly remark:

"Climb out of the hole, brother, before you slip too deep!"

He flung down the sickle he had been wielding, as the venerable Frog resumed its leaping course for home. Something stirred suddenly in his brain, and set its torpid molecules in motion.

"To-morrow," he said resolutely, looking up at the Moon, "I shall return to the big city. I feel that I am needed there."

At the instant that he uttered these words a loud burst of hilarity pealed through the sky.

"I see nothing to laugh at," he muttered, flushing with injured pride.

"Wrong again," said the Moon. "It wasn't me."



You and I know Who it was, though the Moon had never breathed the secret to a living creature.

It was God, enjoying another step forward in the great practical joke he was going to play on the Rulers of Wherisit.

He knew that the hour had come for the Young Rebel to find Courage as he had already found Pain, and it amused him very much to contemplate the near approach of a comic climax he had planned out millions and millions of years before.



By the time the Young Rebel reached the big city he had cast off the lethargy that incessant labor had laid upon him, and his faculties were as alert and keen as in the days when he played the difficult role of an agitator.

The city was at its gayest.

Since the breaking of the strike the working class had given no further trouble. An advance of a few shillings a week, granted by an industrial court which had been instituted under the King's seal, completely deluded them.

They now worked harder than ever, to compensate the employers for this increase in the wages bill; for always at the back of the worker's mind there is the fear that he is taking the boss down.

There was consequently more wealth in the big city than at any previous period of its history. (See on this interesting point an admirable brochure entitled, "Comparative Statistics of Wherisit," by Professor Fatuous, D.O., N.K.Y., obtainable at any self-respecting public museum.)

But the Young Rebel soon discovered that, under the surface prosperity and gaiety, there were seething depths of misery—depths so abysmal that no one could plumb them and survive.

In the constant contemplation of this mass of wretchedness he quickly lost all appetite for pleasure. The smouldering passion for justice leapt into flame in his breast once more.

"What can I do for them?" he kept on murmuring to himself. "What can I do for them?"

The Moon, sailing far above the roofs, made answer:

"You can die for them."

The words pierced his heart like a knife-thrust from a trusted hand.

"I want to live for them!" he cried.



"Only in death can you live for them," said the Moon, and her face was gray with grief.



The time had now come for the Young Rebel to find Courage.

'Tis a rare virtue. Don't confound it with physical heroism. That is common enough, even in its highest manifestation on the battlefield. Under the stimulus of excitement and public applause, and the goad of retaliation, men are heroes all.

Courage exhibits itself in very different conditions. It is that which impels a man forward without the hope of victory, without the support of approbation; to certain defeat, to the hatred and contempt of his fellows.

A rare virtue, indeed! Not one in a thousand is afflicted with it. Yet over and over again it has saved the race.

When the Young Rebel stood up at the street corner few would listen to him. Working men, with slavery branded on their brows, turned away, scoffing and sneering at one who spoke a message of freedom.

Wherever he went insult, or what was worse, indifference, was the experience that awaited him. He was taunted with the failure of the strike. He was called a foreigner. And grown men who had never left off being childish asked jeeringly:

"Can a boy like this teach US?"

But in the course of months of seemingly hopeless propaganda there gathered about him a little band of fearless followers. These attended

all his meetings, and some of them spoke in support of the gospel of Unity that he preached.

"No man can be free by himself," he said. "Freedom is fraternity. No man can be saved alone. Salvation is mutual aid."

Day after day he and his friends spoke thus to the people, and although few seemed to heed, and the great majority were hostile or apathetic, the seeds of truth sowed in this unpromising soil did not perish utterly, but germinated in many hearts, and put forth roots, and struggled into leaf and bud.

Revolutionary ideas, in fact, became so prevalent, and made themselves manifest in such unlikely places, that the Rulers of Wherisit became alarmed, and wondered what they should do.

"Leave it to me," said the Devil, figuring in their councils as a distinguished diplomat.

And assuming the disguise of the honest old workman, which had served him so well before, he made for a public park where he knew the Young Rebel would be speaking.



"There are thieves in power in this land," were the first words he heard, as he mingled with the crowd the Young Rebel was addressing.

"Then why don't you go and accuse them?" the sham old workman interjected.

Voices: "Hear, hear! That's the sort of talk!"

Sham Old Workman: "Give the thieves a chance to answer you."

More Voices: "He ain't game! He talks behind their backs!"

This was as the Devil had foreseen. He chuckled under cover of his disguise. The Young Rebel was discredited again!

But not so fast, O Fox of the Ages! Cunning may overreach itself and ingenuity foil its own plots.

"I am going straight up to the palace now!" said the Young Rebel calmly. "Let who will come with me, and hear the thieves impeached. And let all who hear make it known throughout Wherisit, that the people may decide the issues and deliver the judgment."

He descended from the platform, and began to move towards the King's palace.

The crowd of workers, astounded at this dramatic turn of affairs, followed him, marvelling what would happen next.



Now the Young Rebel knew that he was going to his doom. He knew that what the Moon had told him was about to be fulfilled.

And though never had he loved life as at that hour; though the blue of the sky filled him with a poignant desire for its beauty, and the very taste of the air tempted him like wine to the paths of pleasure, and the sights and sounds of Nature were sirens luring him to live, he went steadily on to defeat and death, not for an instant faltering in his determination.

And that was how the Young Rebel found Courage.



## How the Young Rebel Found Love.

THE news spread quickly to the palace that a mob was coming, headed by the notorious Young Rebel who had been the principal fomentor of the strike.

The King, a very nerry man, got into a flutter of fear at once.

"What can the wretches want?" he cried, and kept running to the window to watch for the dreaded approach. "It's a trying situation for one like me, who has never been trained to argue."

"I'll call out the troops!" said The Soldier. "Rifles are more convincing than reasons."

"I'll threaten them with Hell!" said The High Priest. "The next life has more terror for them than this."

"I'll read a proclamation!" said The Lawyer. "The extreme penalty has power to deter the boldest."

"I'll buy their leader!" said The Moneylord. "Gold succeeds where gods, guns, and gallows fail."

But at this point the Devil intervened. (It was he, by the way, who had hurried ahead to carry the news to the palace.) Assuming the character of Chief of the Diplomatic Staff, and First Lord of the Grovel Department, he thus addressed the King:

"Pardon me, your Majesty, for presuming to offer a suggestion to one whose wisdom the whole world admires. But I perceive that it is already your royal intention to grant an audience to this infamous Rebel, and by the simple device of encouraging him to speak, get him to furnish us with direct evidence for a charge of high treason. I think that that would be a stroke of strategic genius worthy of your Majesty's great intellect, and although I know your Imperial will needs no prompting from one of the humblest of your servants, I am proud to be able to discern, however inadequately, what is in your Majesty's unparalleled mind. As your Majesty has so sagely remarked, there is no better way of deluding the people than by a show of justice."

Now of course the King had made no such remark, nor had he any plan whatever in his head. But, like most persons of fastidious appetite, he could swallow the grossest flattery with pleasure,

and was therefore much impressed by the foregoing speech, and more particularly by the manner of its delivery, for the Devil is an adept in the art of persuasion, as you doubtless have reason to know.

He can persuade an ugly woman that she is handsome, and a dull man that he is clever, and a sinner that he is a saint.

He does this, not by telling lies, which is a very amateur form of deceit, but by a skilful manipulation of the truth. In the ugliest there is some beauty; in the dullest some wit; in the wickedest some good; and the Devil understands how to make the most of this universal fact, and twist it to his own ends.

"You are right," said the delighted King. "I have decided to receive the Rebel in the State Room, and entrap him with fair words."

By this time the crowd had reached the door of the palace, and were vigorously ringing the bell.

So confident had the King now grown in his own sagacity that he went down to the door himself. Opening it wide he said, "Walk right in!" with a heartiness that was really surprising under the circumstances.

And when the crowd saw who it was that stood there, with a smile on his face and a crown on his head, they were so astonished that they became quite timid and tame, and backed away, touching their caps.

Not, however, the Young Rebel. He entered the palace without a moment's hesitation, and with

no word nor gesture of servility. And the few who believed in him, followed at his heels.



Into the State Room the King led them.

Then, seating himself on the throne, with the Devil on his right to prompt him, and on his left the High Priest, The Soldier, The Lawyer and The Moneylord to support him, and at his back an array of picked troops to protect him, and Courtiers and other flunkeys all around to applaud him, he turned to the Young Rebel and said:

"You are trying to breed dissension in this happy realm of Ours. You are stirring up the people against Us. What have you to say for yourself?"

The Young Rebel replied: "For myself I have nothing to say. It is for the people I would speak."

"Speak, then!" commanded the King.

So the Young Rebel spoke.

He said that the people were hungry, because thieves were permitted to plunder them.

He said that the people were ignorant, because teachers were employed to delude them.

He said that the people were broken with toil, because they had to feed and clothe an idle class.

He said that this idle class had to be maintained in luxury and splendor, and grand houses built for them, and many privileges accorded them; and that they monopolised all the honors of the land, all the positions of dignity and power, and set themselves up as a superior caste, made of a finer clay than the people, with a blood of different color flowing in their veins.

The Devil, standing deferentially beside the King, thought the moment had come to bring matters to a head, and lure the Young Rebel to utter the incriminating word for which they were all waiting.

"What his Majesty wants to know," he said, cringing towards the throne, "is this. How do you propose to remedy that which you complain of?"

The Young Rebel was well aware of the object of this question. He perceived in it the gaping jaw of a trap that would close upon him fatally the instant that he touched it. Yet he did not hesitate. The Courage he had found braced him to the crisis.

Not looking at the Devil, nor at the High Priest, The Soldier, The Lawyer, and The Moneylord, but fixing his gaze unflinching on the countenance of the King, the Young Rebel made answer:

"I would remedy the evils of which I complain by sweeping away their causes. I would rescue the people from hunger by compelling the thieves who rob them to earn an honest living."

The Moneylord flushed with rage.

"I would redeem the people from ignorance by discrediting the false teachers and endowing the truth."

The High Priest muttered angrily to himself.

"I would relieve the people of body-breaking drudgery by calling upon the idle class to cease their burdensome toll on the labors of others, and perform their just share of useful service to the community."

The Courtiers and other flunkeys gasped indignantly.

"I would repeal all statutes bolstering up the evil state of things existing, and acknowledge no law but the will of the workers and their welfare."

The Lawyer turned pale as parchment with wrath.

"I would abolish the army, the navy, and all the instrumentalities of force—(The Soldier clapped hand to his sword)—which only the reign of injustice renders necessary, and rely for the preservation of peace on the sense of brotherhood and fair-dealing and orderliness that is inherent in human nature, but up to now has never been given a chance."

"Yes," said the Devil, smirking obsequiously at the King. "But in your new State you must have some representative of authority, some recognised sovereignty of power, to which all citizens would loyally yield obedience. Who or what would it be?"

The Young Rebel saw that the teeth of the trap were about to close upon him. Yet he did not flinch.

"In the new State," he said quietly, "there will be no authority, no sovereignty, save that of the People!" . . . .

As with one accord a loud shout of "Treason!" went up from the King's supporters.

"Seize him!" cried The Soldier.

In a moment the troops were swarming round the Young Rebel, and he was a prisoner in their midst. His faithful few made a desperate effort to

defend him, but the armed men swept them aside, and in a little while they were driven out of the palace into the road, where the fickle mob received them with hoots and groans.

"This Rebel," said the King, "merits no consideration at Our hands; nevertheless Our intentions towards him shall be guided by Our merciful thoughtfulness rather than by that detestation of his criminal utterances which was the first impulse of Our royal heart. Take him away and guard him well. He shall be indicted before the Supreme Court of Wherisit, and punished in due accordance with the law and the constitution."



The time had now come for the Young Rebel to find Love.

What IS Love?

Is it the affection of husbands and wives? Of parents and children? Of brothers and sisters? Is it being fond of those who are fond of us?

Ah, Love is not such an easy thing as that. Love is not a reciprocity of regard. Love is a feeling of tenderness for those who use us despitefully—who abuse us and injure us, and foment hatred against us.

The Young Rebel, sitting in his cell, could hear the crowd outside clamoring for his death.

And he was filled with a great pity for them; for he knew that their ignorance, their degradation, their cruelty, their inconstant passions were due, not

to any natural depravity in them, but to their pernicious environment and the influence of many generations of perverted heredity. . . .

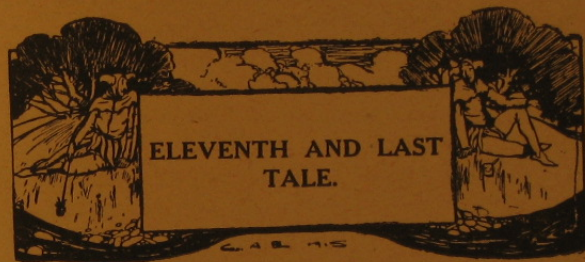
At night the Moon peered in through the prison bars with a sad face.

"Only by dying for the people can you live for the people," she said.

"I am ready," was the firm response.



And that was how the Young Rebel found Love.



## The Return to the Starting Point.

THIS cycle of tales is rapidly drawing to a close—if that can be called the close which is also the beginning.

You may think that by bringing you back by a circuitous route to the place where we began I am playing it rather low down on you. But my mind is perfectly at ease on the matter.

These tales were bound to start at the end, and end at the start, for they deal with life; and what is life but a circus ring, with a whip to keep things jogging, and a clown to relieve the sadness with a jest almost as melancholy?



I have nothing more to tell you about the Young Rebel except that they tried him for sedition, found him guilty, and condemned him to be crucified.

The trial, of course, was a mere mockery. All trials for sedition are. Judge Bygone sits on the bench, and passes sentence on the Future.

And it's a silly thing to do, because the Future cannot be prevented from happening. It may be nailed on the Cross to-day; but to-morrow it is in our midst, superintending the funeral of its enemies.

That is where the Devil is always liable to fall in. He is unable to see a single inch in front of his nose. In the direction indicated by his tail his vision is wonderful. But it's no use looking back when you've got to deal with God, and the Devil's extensive surveys of the rear did not save him from tumbling into the hole that lay immediately before him.

That was the cream of God's joke.

He knew that the Rulers of Wherisit, prompted by the Devil, would strain their eyes on the scenery of the Past, and believe themselves secure if no foe was visible there. And it pleased him mightily to foresee the Future, embodied in the Young Rebel, digging a pit of doom for their unsuspecting feet.

When the Rulers of Wherisit saw the Cross raised on a hill outside the city walls, and the Young Rebel dead upon it, they congratulated one another, and the King conferred on the Devil the greatest honor in the royal gift; that is to say, he made him Grand High Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of Mischievous Meddlers.

"You have saved the Kingdom of Wherisit," said the King. "And I am sure we are all of us

very willing to acknowledge our indebtedness to you."

"Undoubtedly," said the High Priest, bowing to the Devil. "Your wisdom shall henceforth be incorporated in the Canon of the Temple."

"I shall always think of you when I draw the sword," said The Soldier.

"Whilever there is a Criminal Code you shall not be forgotten," said The Lawyer.

"I shall have your image cast in gold," said The Moneylord.

"You are all extremely flattering," returned the Devil. "And as for Your Majesty—(turning to the King with a profound obeisance)—the generosity of your sentiments is a proverb in the mouths of men."

It was at the very moment when the Rulers of Wherisit and the Devil were thus exchanging compliments that the voice of God was heard propounding the momentous question, "Who is the Most Powerful Person in the World?" as related in the first tale of this veracious cycle.

I need not repeat what happened then. I need not tell you how the King exclaimed, "I AM, to be sure!" and of the humiliating experience that taught him otherwise.

Nor need I remind you of the humbling of the High Priest, The Soldier, The Lawyer, and The Moneylord, and of the bitterness of soul that was theirs when the Supreme Joker, shaking the skies with his laughter, transfigured the crucified Rebel

with a ray of light, and said, "THERE is the Most Powerful Person in the World!"

All this I have already placed on record; and I may mention, by the way, that the original MS. is to be preserved in the archives of All Fools' College. And, really, I think I have nothing more to impart to you.

You know how the Revolution came to pass. I have shown you the common people pouring out of their hovels into the streets, with the truth that the Young Rebel had spoken burning in their breasts like a flame.

You have witnessed the downfall of the Rulers. You have seen the King's sceptre become a rush and his crown a dunce's cap.

You have seen the gorgeous vestments of the High Priest change to filthy rags, stained with the foulness of centuries and the blood of many victims.

You have seen the gold of The Moneylord turn to dust and ashes.

And you know that when all this was done God's joke was consummated, for you heard his voice come out of the heavens, taunting the fallen Rulers of Wherisit.

"You have slain the Rebel," said God. "You have buried him deep, with a great stone upon his grave. But the Truth he uttered you could not slay, and no grave could contain it."

And then you heard the Supreme Jester's mocking query, "Who is the Most Powerful Person in the World?" and the sound of his hilarity you heard also, reverberating through the universe.

I would tell you more if I knew it, but I don't. I would tell you what became of the people who had cast the Rulers down.

Were they happy ever after?

I am dying to know myself, but Time alone can answer, and all that can be got from HIM is a sly smile and "Wait and see!"

Did poverty disappear from the land when the people were no longer plundered?

Did they become intelligent when teachers were not paid to keep them dull?

Did war cease when the power of the predatory class was broken, and the workers owned the earth?

These, I am sorry to admit, are questions to which I have no reply. I am like a man in a house of locked doors, with no key, nor any means of forcing an entry into rooms that excite an insatiable curiosity.

Yet though unable to say what followed on the Revolution in Wherisit, three things I believe:

(1) That the people elevated humanity to heights never known before.

(2) That they set all mankind free, for the first time since the world began; and imbued them with a passion for truth and justice; and established a Confraternity of Nations, each enjoying the sun above it, and envying not its fellows what share of the sunlight fell to them.

(3) That happiness became as common and as sweet as the air, so that every creature was able to inhale it deeply and feel it quickening all the faculties of life.



And let me add, to dispel the least vestige of doubt, that my faith is sustained by the high authority of the Moon.

"There's a meaning in God's joke, you may depend on it," said she, when I met her by appointment the other night, long after every Wiseacre had gone to bed, and Respectability had doused its glim. "He did not bring the Rebel into existence merely to cast down wicked Rulers, but to create a new world of Love, Liberty, and Joy."

I was delighted to hear her say this, for I have the highest opinion of her sagacity—especially when it confirms my own view—and I am sure no one is better able to plumb the depths of the divine humor, and perceive in the abyss the secret significance of it all.

Anyway, I have done what I can for you.

I have told you the story of the practical joke that was played by God on the Rulers of Wherisit. I have told it as it came to my knowledge, and have assured you it is true.

Whether you believe it or not is no concern of mine.

