

John and the Ghosts

By A. T. QUILLER-BOUCE ("Q.")

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In the Kingdom of Illyria there lived not long ago a poor woodcutter, with three sons, who in their youth went forth to seek their fortunes. At the end of three years they returned by agreement to compare their progress in the world. The eldest had become a lawyer and the second a merchant, and each of these had won riches and friends, but John, the youngest, who had enlisted in the army, could only show a cork leg and a medal.

"You have made a bad business of it," said his brothers. "Your medal is worthless, except to a collector of such things, and your leg a positive disadvantage. Fortunately we have influence, and since you are our brother we must see what we can do for you."

Now the king of Illyria lived at that time in his capital, in a brick palace at the end of a great park. He kept this park open to all and allowed no one to build in it. But the richest citizens, who were so fond of their ruler that they could not live out of his sight, had their houses just beyond the park, in the rear of the palace, on a piece of ground which they called palace gardens. The name was a little misleading, for the true gardens lay in front of the palace, where children of all classes played among the trees and flower beds and artificial ponds, and the king sat and watched them, because he took delight in children and because the sight of them cheered his only daughter, who had fallen into a deep melancholy. But the rich citizens clung to it, for it gave a pleasant, neighborly air to their roadway and showed what friendliness there was between the monarch of Illyria and his people.

At either end you entered the roadway (if you were allowed) by an iron gate. And each gate had a sentry box beside it and a tall beadle and a notice board to save him the trouble of explanation. The notice ran: "Private—The beadle has orders to refuse admittance to all wagons, tradesmen's carts, hackney coaches, donkeys, beggars, disorderly characters or persons carrying burdens." A sentry box had told so severely upon one of the two beads that he could no longer enter his box with dignity or read his newspaper there with any comfort. He resigned, and John obtained the post by his brothers' interest in spite of his cork leg.

He had now a bright green suit with scarlet piping, a gold lace hat, a fashionable address and very little to do. But the army had taught him to be active, and for lack of anything better he fell into deep thinking. This came near to bringing him into trouble. One evening he looked out of his sentry box and saw a mild and somewhat sad featured old gentleman approaching the gate.

"No admittance," said John.

"Tut, tut," said the old gentleman. "I'm the king."

John looked at the face on his medal, and, sure enough, there was a resemblance. "But, all the same, your majesty carries a burden"—here he pointed to the notice board—"and the folks along this road are mighty particular."

The king smiled and then sighed heavily. "It's about the princess, my daughter," said he. "She has not smiled for a whole year."

"I'll warrant I'd make her," said John.

"I'll warrant you could not," said the king. "She will never smile again until she is married."

"Then," answered John, "speaking in a humble way, as becomes me, why the dickens alive don't you marry her up and get done with it?"

The king shook his head. "There's a condition attached," said he. "Maybe you have heard of the famous haunted house in Pansby square?"

"I've always gone by the spelling and pronounced it Pansby," said John.

"Well, the condition is that every suitor for my daughter's hand must spend a night alone in that house, and if he survives and is ready to persevere with his wooing he must return a year later with his bride and spend the night of his marriage there."

"And very handy," said John, "for there's a wedding cake shop at the corner."

The king sighed again. "Unhappy none survives. One hundred and fifty-five have undertaken the adventure, and not a man of them but has either lost his wits or run for it."

"Well," said John, "I've been afraid of a great many men."

"That's a poor confession for a soldier," put in the king.

"—when they all happened to come at me together. But I've never yet met the ghost that could frighten me, and if your majesty will give me the latchkey I'll try my luck this very night."

It could not be done in this free and easy way, but at 8 o'clock, after John had visited the palace and taken an oath in the princess' presence (which was his first sight of her), he was taken down to the house beside the lord chamberlain, who admitted him to the black front hall and, slinging the door upon him, scuttled out of the porch as quickly as possible and into his brougham.

John struck a match and as he did so heard the carriage roll away. The walls were bare and the floor and great staircase ahead of him carpetless. As the match flickered off he caught a glimpse of a pair of feet moving up the stairs; that was all—only feet. "I'll catch up with the calves on the landing maybe," said he, and striking another match he followed them up.

The feet turned aside on the landing and led him into a room on the right. He paused on the threshold, drew a candle from his pocket, lit it and stared about him. The room was of great size, bare and dusty, with crimson hangings, gilt panels and one huge gilt chandelier, from which and from the ceiling and corners long cobwebs trailed down like creeping plants. Beneath the chandelier a dark smoky man along the boards. The feet crossed to toward the fireplace, and as they did so John

saw them stained with blood. They reached the fireplace and vanished. Scarcely had this happened before the end of the room opposite the window began to glow with an unearthly light. John, whose poverty had taught him to be economical, promptly blew out his candle. A moment later two men entered, bearing a coffin between them. They rested it upon the floor and, seating themselves upon it, began to cast dice. "Your soul," "My soul," they kept saying in hollow tones, according as they won or lost. At length one of them, a tall man in a powdered wig, with a face extraordinarily pale, clung a hand to his brow, rose and staggered from the room. The other sat waiting and twirling his black mustache, with an evil smile. John, who by this time had found a seat in a far corner, thought him the most poisonous looking villain he had ever seen. But



John thought it time to interfere.

As the minutes passed and nothing happened he turned his back to the light and pulled out a penny dreadful. His literary taste was shocking, and when it came to romance he liked the incidents to follow one another with great rapidity.

He was interrupted by a blood curdling groan, and the first ruffian broke into the room, dragging by its gray locks the body of an old man. A young girl followed, weeping and protesting, with disheveled hair, and behind her entered a priest with a brazier full of glowing charcoal. The girl cast herself forward on the old man's body, but the two scoundrels dragged her from it by force. "The money!" demanded the dark one, and she drew from her bosom a small key and cast it at his feet. "My promise!" demanded the other and seized her by the wrist as the priest stepped forward. "Quick—over this coffin—man and wife!" She wrenched her hand away and thrust him backward. The priest retreated to the brazier and drew out a red-hot iron.

John thought it was about time to interfere. "I beg your pardon," said he, stepping forward, "but I suppose you really are ghosts?"

"We are unhalloved souls," answered the dark man impressively, "who return to blight the living with the spectacle of our awful crimes."

"Meaning me?" asked John.

"Aye, sir, and to destroy you tonight if you contract not upon your soul to return with your bride and meet us here a twelvemonth hence."

"Sign!" said John to himself. "They are three, and after all it's what I came for. I suppose," he added aloud, "some form of document is usual in these cases?"

The dark man drew out pen and parchment. "Hold forth your hand," he commanded, and as John held it out, thinking he meant to shake it over the gate, the fellow drove the pen into his wrist until the blood spouted.

"Now, sign!"

"Sign!" said the other villain.

"Sign!" said the lady.

"Oh, very well, miss; if you're in the swindle, too, my mind is easier," said John, and signed his name with a flourish. "But a bargain is a bargain, and what security have I for your part in it?"

"Our signature!" said the priest terribly, at the same moment pressing his branding iron into John's ankle. A smell of burnt cork arose as John stooped and clapped his hand over the scorched stocking. When he looked up again his visitors had vanished, and a moment later the strange light, too, died.

But the coffin remained for evidence that he had not been dreaming. John lit a candle and examined it. "Just the thing for me!" he exclaimed, finding it to be a mere shell of pine boards, loosely nailed together and painted black. "I was beginning to shiver." He knelt at the coffin to pieces, crammed them into the fireplace and very soon had a grand fire blazing, before which he sat and finished his penny dreadful and so dropped off into a sound sleep.

The lord chamberlain arrived early in the morning and, finding him stretched there, at last broke into lamentations over the fate of yet another personable young man, but soon changed his tune when John sat up and, rubbing his eyes, demanded to be told the time.

"But are you really alive? We must drive back and tell his majesty at once."

"Stay a moment," said John. "There's a brother of mine, a lawyer, in the city. He will be arriving at his office about this time, and you must drive me there, for I have a document here of a sort and must have it stamped to be on the safe side."

So into the city he was driven beside the lord chamberlain and there had his leg stamped and filed for reference and, having purchased another, was conveyed to the palace, where the king received him with open arms.

He was now a favored guest at court and had frequent opportunities of seeing and conversing with the princess, with whom he soon fell deeply in love. But as the months passed and the time drew near for their marriage he grew silent and thoughtful, for he feared to

expose her, even in his company, to the sights he had witnessed in the haunted house.

He thought and thought until one afternoon he snapped his fingers suddenly and after that went about whistling. A fortnight before the day fixed for the wedding he drove into the city again, but this time to the office of his other brother, the merchant.

"I want," said he, "the loan of £1,000."

"Nothing easier," said his brother. "Here is £500. Of the remainder I shall keep £50 as interest for the first year at 5 per cent, and the odd £190 should purchase a premium of insurance for £2,000, which I will retain as security against accidents."

This seemed not only fair, but brotherly. John pocketed his £500, shook his creditor affectionately by the hand and hurried westward.

The marriage was celebrated with great pomp, and in the evening the king, who had been shedding tears at intervals throughout the ceremonies, accompanied his daughter to the haunted house. The princess was pale. John, on the contrary, who sat facing her father in the state coach, smiled with a cheerfulness which under the circumstances seemed a trifle ill bred. The wedding guests followed in twenty-four chariots. Their cards of invitation had said "2 to 5.30 p. m.," and it was now 8 o'clock. But they could not resist the temptation to see the last of "the poor dear thing," as they agreed to call the bride.

The king sat silent during the drive. He was preparing his farewell speech, which he meant to deliver in a few days. But, arriving and perceiving a crowd about it, and also, to his vast astonishment, a red haze carpet on the peron and a butler bowing in the doorway, with two footmen behind him, he coughed down his exordium and led his daughter into the hall amid showers of rice and confetti. The bridegroom followed, and so did the wedding guests, since no one opposed them.

The hall and staircase were decorated with palms and pot plants, flags and emblems of Illyria, and in the great drawing room—which they had entered when John persuaded the king to a seat—they found many rows of mosaic covered chairs, a miniature stage, with a drop representing the play scene in "Hamlet," a row of footlights, a boulder grand piano and a man seated at the keyboard, whom they recognized as a performer in much demand at suburban dances.

The company had scarcely seated itself before a strange light began to illuminate the room at the end of which the stage stood, and immediately the curtain rose to the overtune of M. Offenbach's "Orpheus aux Enfers," the pianist continuing with great spirit until a round of applause greeted the entrance of the two spectral performers.

His effect upon them was in the highest degree disconcerting. They set down the coffin, and after a brief and hurried conference in undertone, the black mustachioed ghost advanced to the footlights, singled out John from the audience and, with a terrific scowl, demanded to know the reason of this extraordinary gathering.

"Come, come, my dear sir," answered John. "Our contract, if you will study it, allows me to invite whom I choose. It merely insists that my bride and I must be present, as you see we are. Pray go on with your past, and assure yourself it is no use to try the high horse with me."

The dark ghost looked at his partner, who shuffled uneasily. "I told you," said he, "we should have trouble with this fellow. I had a presentiment of it when he came to spend the night here without bringing a bulldog. That frightening of the bulldog out of his wits has always been our most effective bit of business."

Hereupon the dark ghost took another tone. "Our fair but unfortunate victim has a sore throat, and he has pronounced. 'The performance is consequently postponed.' And he seated himself sulkily upon the coffin, when the limelight man from the wings promptly bathed him in a flood of the most beautiful rose color. 'Oh, this is intolerable!' he exclaimed, starting to his feet.

"It is not first rate, I agree," said John, "but such as it is we had better go through with it. Should the company doubt its genuineness I can go around afterward and show the brand on the cork." Here he tapped the leg which he had been careful to bring with him.

Before this evidence of contract the ghosts' resistance collapsed. They seated themselves on the coffin and began the casting of dice. The performance proceeded, but in a half hour and perfumery manner, notwithstanding the vivacious efforts of the limelight man.

The tall ghost struck his brow and fled from the stage. There were cries of "Call him back!" but John explained that this was part of the drama, and no encores would be allowed, whereupon the audience fell to hissing the villain, who now sat alone, with the most lifelike expression of malignity.

"Oh, hang it!" he expostulated after awhile. "I am doing this under protest, and you need not make it worse for a fellow. I draw the line at hissing."

"It's the usual thing," explained John affably.

But when the ghostly lady walked on and in the act of falling on her father's body was interrupted by the pianist, who handed up an immense bouquet, the performers held another hurried colloquy.

"Look here," said the dark brooding villain, stepping forward and addressing John. "What will you take to call it quits?"

"I'll take," said John, "the key which the lady has just handed you, and if the treasure is at all commensurate with the fuss you have been making about it we'll let bygones be bygones."

Well, it was not a favored guest at court and had frequent opportunities of seeing and conversing with the princess, with whom he soon fell deeply in love. But as the months passed and the time drew near for their marriage he grew silent and thoughtful, for he feared to

NEW SHORT STORIES

When Read Worked.

Opie Read, the novelist, recently attended a press club reception given in honor of F. Hopkinson-Smith. The author of "Colonel Carter's Valley" was surrounded by a group of women, who felt it a great privilege to come into the presence of a real literary lion and were making the most of the opportunity. "When," inquired one of them, "do you write your delightful stories?"

"I am a very consistent worker," answered the artist-engineer-author. "My literary work is done regularly between the hours of 11 and 2 o'clock. There was a murmur of polite 'Ohs!' and when, Mr. Read, said one of the group, turning to the author of "The Kentucky Colonel," "do you do your work?"

Running his fingers through his thatch of brown hair, the tall humorist solemnly responded, "Between anxiety and necessity—invariably!"

Then Mr. Smith began to talk of the difficulties of lighthouse building.—Success.

Surely Nonpartisan.

Congressman Richard Barthold of Missouri, chairman of the congressional committee which acted the role of host to the visiting peace delegates, is an old New York newspaper man. From 1878 until 1884 he was a reporter and a good one too. That is the other way he was remembered of an incident in his newspaper career. It was apropos of the control of affairs in St. Louis by the Democratic party.

"Things in St. Louis are very much as one of the Tammany representatives in the legislature would have had



"FOUR DEMOCRATS, OF COURSE."

them in New York back in 1880," he said. "This particular brave, to the great surprise of his colleagues, took down the floor one day and made an impassioned appeal for a law to provide for nonpartisan election commissioners."

"I want four nonpartisan men in each district," he declared earnestly.

"One of his brother members interrupted him, scolding something wrong."

"What do you mean by four nonpartisan commissioners?" was asked.

"Four Democrats, of course," came the somewhat unexpected reply.—New York Times.

Emerson Stories.

Emerson enjoyed quoting certain sayings of Thoreau, as: "Some circumstances of life are very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk." "The club is soft fish and tastes like boiled brown paper salted."

When Thoreau was in Concord jail because he refused to pay his taxes Emerson called upon him and remarked, "Henry, I am very much surprised to see you here. To which Thoreau replied, 'I am very much surprised that you are not here.'"

Emerson told the story of Mrs. Thoreau's call on his Aunt Mary. Observing that Mrs. Thoreau wore pink ribbons, Miss Emerson closed her eyes for a time. Presently she observed, "Mrs. Thoreau, I don't know if you have observed that my eyes are shut." "Yes, madam, I have observed it." "I don't like to see a person of your age guilty of levity in dress."—Christian Register.

More Bowing Harmsless.

His former parishioners in this city recall now many just and smart observations of the late Rev. Dr. George Lorimer in his private intercourse. A few weeks before he left for Europe on that ill-fated journey he met at her residence a wealthy and capable New York woman, who, under the influence of one of the oriental propagandists among us, had fallen into curious religious practices. She received him in a room where rested on a pedestal a hideous Indian idol.

"Do you object, doctor, to idols as half?" she asked, half deprecatingly, half in the tone of challenge.

"Not at all, madam, not at all."

"You would be shocked, I suppose, to see me bow before mine?"

"Certainly not. Bow as often as you please before your idol, so long as you do not forget that it is an idol."—New York Mail.

A Good Rule.

Delegate McGuire of Oklahoma tells of a conversation between two Irishmen living in that territory. The one was lecturing the other upon his frequent exhibitions of ill temper, which often led him into fistful encounters, in which he did not always get the best of it.

"Remember, Mulcahy," said the first Celt, with an oracular air, "that when you're angry you ought never to say a word. Bear in mind the saying, 'Silence is golden.'"

"'Tis a good rule," replied Mulcahy, "waste no words, smash 'im!"—Harper's Weekly.

Two of a Kind.

Said the young clerk who had been trotting in double harness for nearly two weeks, "I've got a boss wife."

"Well, you have my sympathy," rejoined the man who had come in to buy a bottle of hair restorer. "I've got that kind of a wife too."—Chicago News.

The man who always stops to think before he speaks may not say much, but he seldom has to take any of it back.—Somerville Journal.

MENTAL PROPS.

Various Things That Give Us Confidence in Ourselves.

We each have the need of our mental "prop." One woman tells me that when she wishes to give decided orders to her cook she always puts on her hat and gloves, then, as she floats into the kitchen surrounded by a cloud of dignity and courage, she feels equal to the occasion.

Good and well fitting clothes are props to us all and bring about a certain confidence in ourselves, a sort of mental pat you on the back, which says, "Brace up, old boy; the shell is perfect; let's hear from the kernel."

To the little school miss on the day of the entertainment what a prop is the bristling blue sash.

The doctor depends much upon his gloves. He can be busy with them when vital or difficult questions are asked. They are a sort of moral safety valve.

The bashful boy who is deprived in the hall of hat and gloves before entering the room filled with people if some good fairy would only hand him a book to occupy his hands so he need only look after his feet what a prop it would be to him!

A clergyman's prop lies in well fitting vestments.

As for the writer of this article—I can speak with the authority of most intimate acquaintance—she must have her hair arranged in the way she affects it and her shoes on to cope with life's emergencies. She finds the waggish old world rather a jolly place and loves to watch frail humanity leaning gently upon "mental props," while they happily put up unconscious of her scrutiny.—Jeannette Young in Critic.

THE ROBIN.

He is an Adaptive Bird, but He is not a Mover.

The robin is a very adaptable bird certainly. It adjusts itself readily to new conditions, but it falls far short of the intelligence that is often ascribed to it. Thus there are persons who seem to believe that when mud is scarce the robin will bring water in its beak to the dust of the road and so make the mortar that it needs. This notion is, of course, absurd. How could the robin know that water and dust will make mud? This knowledge is the result of reflection and experiment and is not within the reach of an animal. More than that, if the robin could find the water he could certainly find the mud somewhere. I have known them to use a substitute for mud furnished by the crows.

Another equally absurd claim for the robin comes from a correspondent. A robin had her nest in a tree under his chamber window in such a position that he could see all that happened in the nest. He says that when the young robins were nearly grown he saw the mother bird take them one by one, by the nape of the neck and hold them out over the rim of the nest to teach them to use their wings! I suppose "our modern school of nature study" would accept this statement without question. It is such preposterous natural history as this that furnishes the stock in trade of these "special occasions" in the field where, and not a few, I am convinced, are deliberate falsifiers.—John Burroughs in Outlook.

History of the "Five Minutes" Bell.

There is a history attached to the tolling of a single bell after a peal which is not generally known. Popularly it is described as the "five minutes" bell, and it is thought to be a final warning to the people that if they do not really hurry up at the end they will be late. As a matter of fact, it has a far older history. In earlier days it was not customary to have sermons so frequently as is now the case. On special occasions an instruction was given or a sermon was preached, and on these special occasions the little bell was tolled after the peal in order that the faithful might understand that it was one of the special occasions on which the clergy would address their flocks.—London Globe.

Words Without Rhyme.

Bull, has no rhyme. Culin, cusp, recumb, gulf, month, doth, amonget, are other rhymeless words having the sound of u as in but. Few patrician words in the language have this vowel sound, so commonplace and without dignity; hence poets turn to it only for blood, food and a few similar turbulent monosyllables. They use it often, however, in forcing the accent from the dependent syllable to the final, where its unpleasant sound is concealed by the softened stress. Thus has many rhymes, such as felicitous, mysterious, inglorious, etc.—London Chronicle.

A Pleasant Prospect.

He—Here is good news for women. A high medical authority says that the little toe will gradually disappear. She—Why is that good for women? He—Why, if the little toe disappears, why not the others? And if they all disappear women will be able to wear smaller shoes.—Brooklyn Life.

Not Up to the Mark.

Bragg—No man can call me a liar with impunity. I'd fight him if he was seven feet high.

Queries—I said you were a liar. What are you going to do about it? Bragg—Huh! You're not seven feet high.—Philadelphia Ledger.

Pat's Trouble.

An Irishman came to a doctor complaining that he had noises in his head.

"O! have them air the toime," he said, "an' sometimes O! can hear them fifty feet away!"—Lippincott's Magazine.

A Man's Opinion.

Lady Customer—Do you think that a photograph of a woman in order to be good should necessarily be deceiving? Photographer—If it is a true likeness—yes.—Detroit Free Press.

When Marguerite Proposed to Me. Oh, subtly she did the deed, And not as mankind did she plead, When Marguerite proposed to me. She uttered not a single word, Her drooping eyelids happily closed, But well I knew, though naught I heard, When Marguerite proposed to me.

When Marguerite Proposed to Me. She used her own persuasive arts, And power that love alone imparts, When Marguerite proposed to me—Proposed to me that I propose—But it is needless to disclose, How I to the occasion rose, When Marguerite proposed to me?—Lippincott's Magazine.

A Typographical Error.

A pompous Englishman entered a fashionable New York restaurant and ordered a meal. While disposing of his soup he discovered a needle in the soup and registered his complaint with the head waiter.

"I say, old chap, that's rather hard on a fellow. There's a needle in the soup," exclaimed the head waiter.

"Oh, not so bad, after all," replied the head waiter; "not so bad, simply a typographical error. It should have been a noodle."

Thinking is the talking of the soul with itself.—Plato.

HUMOR OF THE HOUR

Paradise Found.

Little Willie's father, being a kind man, had taken him to the circus. It was the child's first experience, and with his eyes bulging he watched the performers, in dazzling lights, as they did their wonderful turns high in the air, and he gasped, clutching at his father's hand, as if to thus protect the daring one from going down to destruction. Then came suddenly upon the scene a milk white steed, and sitting upon his broad back was a smiling, beautiful creature, all in pink and ivory and fluffs. She was kissing her hands to the people, the band having suddenly switched to a soul stirring air that added to the unreality of it all. The ringmaster said something; then he snapped his whip, and the one in pink and ivory and fluffs stood upon the toes of one foot on the back of the milk white charger and seemed about to float away. Little Willie excitedly rose and, placing his lips near his father's ear, asked:

"Papa, is she an angel?"—Chicago Record Herald.

The Hopeful Young Man.

The hopefulness of some young men is unbounded. At a dinner table the other night some one said to a medical student:

"Don't you despair of ever building up a practice in medicine?"

"Indeed, no," he answered.

"But you will admit that the profession is already overcrowded?"

"Oh, perhaps it is," said the young man, and then, with a laugh, he added, "But I propose to graduate in medicine just the same, and those who are already in the profession will have to take their chance."—Baltimore Sun.

The Return Invitation.

"Please, Mrs. Smith, mamma says she'll be glad if you'll come to tea on Monday."

"With pleasure, Bessie. Tell your mother it's really too kind."

"Oh, no! Mamma says she'll be glad when it's over."



When Old Age Comes.

Gray hairs do not a patriarch make Nor wrinkled brows a sage; In subtler ways we doffly take The finger marks of age.

Censuring to love; forgetting friends— When the warm heart turns cold— Then the receding angel bends And writes, "He's growing old!"—Woman's Life.

WHERE UNCLES RULE.

Peculiar custom that prevails in Northern Australia.

Uncles rule among the native tribes bordering Torres Strait, where the relationship between maternal uncle and nephew is regarded as being closer than that between father and son. There a man is bound to stop fighting when ordered to do so by his mother's brother, and the uncle is entitled to bid his sister's husband cease any hostilities in which he may be engaged. Moreover, the quelled combatant is required to make a present to the uncle or brother-in-law, as the case may be, who stops him.

When a man marries in these parts his father provides the wherewithal to purchase the bride, but it is the maternal uncle who makes the actual payment and who acquires the credit attached thereto.

A man in those parts may not utter the names of his wife's relations, and when he speaks to his father or mother-in-law he must lower his voice and speak humbly, the underlying idea being probably a pretense that he has carried his spouse away forcibly from her home and must sue for peace.

POINTED PARAGRAPHS.

Business, like your salary, might always be better.

The croquet is the old fashioned hash ball after it gets into socks.

Some people are too insistent on the right to be fools in their own way.

When a young man refuses to work, that is the beginning of all his other troubles.

When you abuse a boy for being worthless, remember how worthless you were at his age.

Some people say farming is so much easier than it used to be. Still, if a farmer does his duty even in these days he knows he has a job.

There is a good deal in print about the contagious laugh, but how often do you hear it? The writer of this knows but two people of all his acquaintance who have a laugh that is contagious.—Acheson Globe.

The Kicker's Trademark.

In the English hunting field it is the custom to mark kicking horses by tying a piece of red ribbon around their tails. Experienced hunters are on the careful lookout for all such animals, and should it happen that the steeds are running close to one another the equine with the ribbon bedecked tail is given a wide berth, as it is more than probable that it will lash out with its hind legs to the serious disadvantage of its neighbors. In the excitement of the chase horses almost lose their heads, and an animal that is naturally not in any way vicious or inclined to be bad tempered will do the most unexpected things in the way of kicking, rearing and biting.—London Telegraph.

Not That Kind of a Dog.

Friendly Old Lady (to little girl sitting on porch beside dog)—Ah, my dear, your dog is a setter, isn't he? Little Girl—Oh, no, ma'am. He gets up an' plays around sometimes.—Harper's Weekly.

Spawning a Civer.

"He is considered a clever financier, is he not?"

"Why, where did you get that idea? He never beat anybody out of anything in his life!"—Cleveland Leader.

Gems In Verse

Paradise Found.

Hark to the bird in the willow singing—
Sings in the fullness of joy to the air,
Hark to the lark in the blue heaven singing—
Bringing the weary heart listen and share,
Music flung free as the air heaves cleaving,
Joy mingled strains in a wonderful weaving,
Of melody. Hush, then, my heart and its grieving,
Hark to the wild bird and banish thy care.

Far, far above the dull earth he is soaring—
Drifts the song downward from heaven to me,
Floods of sweet, unstudied music are pouring—
Tides ebb and swell of his rare melody,
Ebbing now fainter, returning now nearer,
God made these careless that thy entranced hearer
Forget his grief when he listens to thee.

What careth he of the world? He is singing—
He's born of some source of delight to the air,
God bade him flood earth with rapturous singing—
This the soul, weary, might listen and share,
Heaven, if thou hast me with melody giving—
Teach me the heights where the wild bird is lifted,
Let my song like the lark song be drifted
Into some sad heart to banish its care.
—J. W. Foley in New York Times.

The Man Who Is Twelve Years Old.

There's a man that I know, and he lives near you
In a town called Everywhere;
You might not think he's a man from his hat
Or the clothes he may chance to wear,
But under the jacket with many a patch
Is a heart more precious than gold—
The heart of a man "neath the coat of a boy."
A man who is twelve years old.

He only is waiting to wear the crown
That is already made for his brow,
And I pray that his mind will always be
Clear as the sky and as bright as the sun,
His body as pure as snow,
His heart always fresh and sunny and warm,
And free from life's canker and mold,
And may he be worthy his waiting estate,
This man who is twelve years old!

When Old Age Comes.

Gray hairs do not a patriarch make
Nor wrinkled brows a sage;
In subtler ways we doffly take
The finger marks of age.

Censuring to love; forgetting friends—
When the warm heart turns cold—
Then the receding angel bends
And writes, "He's growing old!"
—Woman's Life.

WHERE UNCLES RULE.

Peculiar custom that prevails in Northern Australia.

Uncles rule among the native tribes bordering Torres Strait, where the relationship between maternal uncle and nephew is regarded as being closer than that between father and son. There a man is bound to stop fighting when ordered to do so by his mother's brother, and the uncle is entitled to bid his sister's husband cease any hostilities in which he may be engaged. Moreover, the quelled combatant is required to make a present to the uncle or brother-in-law, as the case may be, who stops him.

When a man marries in these parts his father provides the wherewithal to purchase the bride, but it is the maternal uncle who makes the actual payment and who acquires the credit attached thereto.

A man in those parts may not utter the names of his wife's relations, and when he speaks to his father or mother-in-law he must lower his voice and speak humbly, the underlying idea being probably a pretense that he has carried his spouse away forcibly from her home and must sue for peace.

POINTED PARAGRAPHS.

Business, like your salary, might always be better.

The croquet is the old fashioned hash ball after it gets into socks.

Some people are too insistent on the right to be fools in their own way.

When a young man refuses to work, that is the beginning of all his other troubles.

When you abuse a boy for being worthless, remember how worthless you were at his age.

Some people say farming is so much easier than it used to be. Still, if a farmer does his duty even in these days he knows he has a job.

There is a good deal in print about the contagious laugh, but how often do you hear it? The writer of this knows but two people of all his acquaintance who have a laugh that is contagious.—Acheson Globe.

The Kicker's Trademark.

In the English hunting field it is the custom to mark kicking horses by tying a piece of red ribbon around their tails. Experienced hunters are on the careful lookout for all such animals, and should it happen that the steeds are running close to one another the equine with the ribbon bedecked tail is given a wide berth, as it is more than probable that it will lash out with its hind legs to the serious disadvantage of its neighbors. In the excitement of the chase horses almost lose their heads, and an animal that is naturally not in any way vicious or inclined to be bad tempered will do the most unexpected things in the way of kicking, rearing and biting.—London Telegraph.

Not That Kind of a Dog.

Friendly Old Lady (to little girl sitting on porch beside dog)—Ah, my dear, your dog is a setter, isn't he? Little Girl—Oh, no, ma'am. He gets up an' plays around sometimes.—Harper's Weekly.

Spawning a Civer.

"He is considered a clever financier, is he not?"

"Why, where did you get that idea? He never beat anybody out of anything in his life!"—Cleveland Leader.