FEATURES OF LIBEL LAWS.

Curious Technicalities Which Are Taken Advantage Of.

Amusing Legal Distinctions—Cases That Reveal Humorous Though Successful Defenses That Have Won Damages—Some Queer Conclusions.

There are a great many curious features in the laws relating to libel, as readers of the *Herald* who have noticed the discussions following its suggestions that the laws upon the statutes of the State be amended to comply with the enlightened sense of the present time have discovered. A good many odd instances have been brought to light during the consideration of the proposed changes that is now under way all over the State. Many queer cases have been given in the *Herald*.

Altogether, aside from the serious aspect of some of the ridiculous chapters now upon the books, a multitude of cases with which authorities on the subject are filled, reveal such—to the laymen—absurdities that it is a wonder there has not long before this been a reform in the methods of the procedure and a recast of the penalties involved in the innocent circulation of libelous matter.

To successfully defend a suit under present conditions the justification must be as broad as the charge, and proof must justify the precise charge, else the defendant is bound to be adjudged guilty, technically at any rate, and, as it generally happens when a newspaper is the unfortunate defendant, damages in good round sums are more often assessed than otherwise, however small the degree of technical guilt. But many incongruities are the result.

NEWSPAPERS GREAT TARGETS.

The newspapers are looked upon as a fair mark by a large number of lawyers and their eager clients. Cases without number might be cited to show the absolute lack of foundation for an enormous number of libel suits that have cumbered the courts of every State.

One Pennsylvania paper has paid out more than $20,000 within the last fourteen years to defend libel cases in which its litigious readers had involved it, and a judgment of acquittal has been rendered in each case.

Suits involving an aggregate of $500,000 were brought against a Brooklyn daily paper in one year by a gentleman who didn't feel happy apparently unless he could find some alleged cause of action daily. The whole lot were compromised for $20. This same paper had a record of but two successful suits against it in thirty years, and in each of these but six cents were awarded the plaintiff. One of these litigants paid $250 and the other from $10,000 to $15,000 for the fun of suing.

It is easy to find a vast amount of humor in the various cases that have gone through the courts within a few years, and their ridiculous features are many. Fine distinctions have been created by Judges and odd quibbles over technicalities have made libel suits to the untaught reader seem as curiously constructed as a patchwork quilt.

SOME ODD LIBEL CASES.

There are a great number of these humorously absurd cases, from which the experts who make up the law books have quoted copiously. They occur in this country and in Europe. I have picked out a few of the more grotesque as they have been reported.

Laymen will enjoy a synopsis of them. Some are positively funny to everybody except the mulcted defendant. One unfortunate newspaper referred to a man as a mere embezzler. Well, this man, it happened, had really been convicted at one time of arson, and he had served a term of imprisonment for forgery. Either of these offenses was more serious than the embezzlement with which he was charged, but, according to the curious provisions of the law of libel, the newspaper was not permitted to prove these graver offenses and the jury gave him $1,200 damages as a plaster for the questionable wound inflicted upon him in the charge that he was guilty of a comparatively mild felony of which he did not happen to be technically guilty.

Here is another case of a clergyman who had been asked to resign his charge on account of certain grave charges laid against him, and a paper in this city published a five-line item stating that he had been accused of kissing his Sunday-school teachers. He lived 400 miles from New York, but he promptly sued the paper for libel, and when it came to a trial of the case the newspaper was unable to prove that he had actually kissed any of the school teachers or anybody else. As a matter of fact, the real offense, which had not been even hinted at by the defendant paper and to which this clergyman afterward actually pleaded guilty, was not of such a trivial nature as kissing pretty "school marms," but the intelligent jury gave a verdict against the newspaper for $1,200—twice the amount of the preacher's yearly salary.

How true it is that the innocent often suffer while the guilty go scot free.

NAMED THE WRONG COUNTRY.

I have in mind another libel suit against a newspaper brought by a well known local business man. It has not yet, however, come to trial, though technically, perhaps, the law is with the plaintiff. The newspaper in question charged him with being interested in claims against a certain South American State and with apparently using his influence as a public man to compel their settlement. Well, it comes out that the South American State named is the wrong one—it is another republic to the south of it, in whose claims he is interested. If any guilt there be what difference is it what particular Government is interested? Yet suit has been brought because the name of the foreign power is in the first instance incorrectly given. Under the present crude libel statute the newspaper is technically guilty of libel and will probably be so adjudged upon the trial.

One curious libel case was tried not very long ago in Louisville, Ky. A man had been in the habit of beating his wife whenever under the influence of liquor, and after one debauch he so ill-treated her that she left the house and disappeared. There was a hue and cry about this, and when a searching party found in his yard a newly dug hole that had been freshly filled in, excitement was at fever heat. It was opened and the carcass of a dog was found beneath the surface. One of the local papers reported all these facts, which carried their own insinuation. The wife later reappeared, and the man sued the paper. It seems a peculiarly intelligent—or was it otherwise—jury heard the evidence and rendered a verdict of technical guilt, with damages at only one cent.

Another man sued a paper for a misstatement due to a typographical error in the printing. The mistake was promptly corrected the following day, but even this did not stave off a suit for libel, and after the jury had assessed the damages at $200, plaintiff and attorney divided the money on the spot, before leaving the court-room.

RATHER FAR-FETCHED.

A local reporter was one day, not so long ago, informed semi-officially, that three men in a certain city department were to be discharged for malfeasance in office. The information was apparently authentic and he wrote the story, but used no names in its narration. It was published. Three men were discharged the following week, and then the news of their discharge was published, with the names, but without charges against them. The men sued for the two stories and recovered verdicts.

One curious case was tried some years ago, and it resulted from the statement published that a man who had been concerned in a duel had sat up the night previous practicing with his revolver. There was no question at all about the fact of the duel, or that this man had been tried on a charge of murder in consequence of it. The incidents and persons connected with it were subjects of common gossip, and these were likewise published, but the plaintiff objected to the story that he had been engaged in preliminary practice with his revolver beforehand, and sued for the circulation of that particular part of the story—and he secured a verdict in his favor.

In the case of libel it had been charged that a man with two daughters had been guilty of a grave offense, in connection with which his daughter Mary's name was used. Well, the man sued, and then it was discovered that the daughter Maria was the one involved instead of Mary. The defendant was promptly found guilty, and though the damages assessed were merely nominal the rigorous technicalities of this curious law were served. I do not recollect that these are the correct names of the daughters, but the principle of the legal anomaly is the same in any event. In still another case a lawyer sued for damages—and got them—because the statement was made that his name had been "struck off the rolls," whereas he had been suspended for two years for some questionable transaction.

One very curious case is often cited as showing the odd features of English law. It was charged that the ex-Mayor of a small English town had, during his two terms, purchased coal at six pence a bushel and had then charged it at four pence to the poor and four pence to the town corporation, pocketing two pence by the operation. When suit was brought a plea was entered that the official had really been guilty of this during one Mayoralty, even though in the second he had only charged the coal at three pence to the corporation and three to the poor, but the Judge before whom the case was heard decided that there was a cause of action, as justification was not a broad as the charge.

QUEER CONCLUSIONS IN LAW.

An authority on the subject of libel law, who has written a volume that is widely quoted as a text-book, has summed up very conveniently a multitude of decisions in this country and England bearing upon what an ordinary reader might term the "differences without distinctions" in the statutes. I quote some of the unique conclusions of law therein set forth:

"A charge that the plaintiff had stolen defendant's shingles is not justified by the fact that the plaintiff had sold defendant's shingles without his authority and afterward denied that he knew anything about them.

"A charge of committing one offense is not justified by showing the commission of another offense, although of the same or even greater enormity.

"A claim that plaintiff stole a 'pot and waiter' is not justified by the fact that he stole a waistcoat.

"To prove a forgery to the amount of $80 does not justify a charge of forgery to the amount of $250 (or even $81).

"Nor is the charge of carrying on smuggling as a business justified by proof of a single act of smuggling. So a charge of smuggling during the war is not justified by showing a smuggling before the war.

"A charge that plaintiff, a clergyman, had asserted that the blood of Christ had nothing to do with our salvation more than the blood of a hog is not justified by the fact that the plaintiff had denied the divinity of Christ and the doctrine of the atonement, and asserted that Christ was a creature, a perfect man, but there was no more virtue in His blood than that of any creature."

These sample instances are the results of decisions upon trial of cases extending over many years, but just as peculiar cases come up every day now in various parts of the country. And the far-reaching effect of them is peculiarly exhibited in the verdict of $12,000 rendered against a news company in this city that in the ordinary course of business had handled a periodical in which there happened to be a libel, although the officials of the company were as ignorant of it as a child.

True enough, the Court of Appeals threw out the case, but it was on a technicality, and the Judges then laid down the law that the company was responsible because it had circulated the libel, which would apply equally to the waif upon the street selling papers, if he had any money to justify a suit against him.
—New York Herald.

THE FASCINATING GOTHAM GIRL.

Five strangers met by chance one day, and as men often do,
They entered a discussion on the women that they knew.
With gesture that was earnest, and with eye that sparkled bright,
The Colonel from Kentucky said, "Our girls are out of sight.
You ought to see our blue-grass belles, you ought to hear them talk,
To catch a glimpse of one of them full fifty miles I'd walk."

"Yes," said the blithe Chicago man, "your girls are pretty fair,
But you should see Chicago, and the ones we have out there.
In all of the accomplishments of art and beauty they
Are equaled by the products of no other place, I say.
They're up and down and all around, in every way complete;
I think I'm right in saying that they get there with both feet."

Quoth he who dwelt in Michigan: "'Tis evident to me
You've never seen the daisies of the Erie Belt," cried he.
"They're full of grace and beauty; they can dance and they can sing;
They take to horseback riding as a bird takes to the wing.
If you have not gazed on our girls of course your not to blame,
But I can tell you Venus isn't in it with the same."

Then with a pitying smile up spoke the man from Boston town:
"Superfluous to mention is the Boston girl's renown.
A certain beauty that is wild, of course, the Western maid
Is generally admitted to possess, but I'm afraid
When placed besides the highest product of the Hub, you know,
In classic art and culture she would be, ahem, quite slow.

But what think you?" he questioned to the stranger by their side,
And with fine grace and courtesy the fifth man quick replied:
"I'm always interested in discussions of this kind,
But of course I never join them, which I trust you will not mind.
For me to argue with you—well, it would not be quite fair,
That I'm from New York, gentlemen, you may not be aware."

Then quickly rose the Bostonite, the man from Michigan,
The Colonel from Kentucky and the blithe Chicago man.
They gathered round the silent one and grabbed him by the hand,
Exclaiming as they did so: "Oh, we did not understand."
And then with unanimity they formed them into line
And chorused to their conqueror, "Say, stranger, what's your wine."
—New York Sun.

Religion of the Persians.

In Persia the population is mainly Aryan—Iranian—with some infusion of Armenians, Jews, Turks and Arabs; and just as the Persian language has been infused with many Arab words, while retaining its own grammar and vocabulary derived from the ancient speech, so Islam has been grafted on a people who have never quite forgotten their ancient national beliefs, and who have refused to abandon their earlier customs.

Among Persians of the middle class there are many devout Moslems, though their beliefs are not those of the majority in Islam. The upper class is often openly infidel; and infidel literature—especially poetry—circulates unchecked, while European education (of French origin, especially) is diffused among the higher officials. The dervishes are disliked and despised, though treated with respect in public. The Mullahs or mosque scholars are reported to be hypocritical, and are very often skeptics at heart. The cruelties perpetrated in the name of justice are often barbarous in the extreme. The Jews are persecuted. The dirty and drunken Armenians of the North are only protected by European influence.

The Persians are a pleasure-loving people, and the morality of the towns is bad. Intrigues are common among married women, and secret poisoning is the result. Gambling and card-playing, though discountenanced by the respectable class, are as common as drinking, and even Mullahs drink wine when it can be secretly obtained. The persecution of the Babis was, perhaps, mainly due to their attempt on the life of the Shah, but even descendants of the prophet were put to death and their property seized when they were known to be follower of the Bab. On the other hand, no punishment falls on such as profess philosophic skepticism, and the turban is often discarded by Persian Moslems in favor of the older national head-dress without reproof.

Superstitions are rife among the lower classes; hands and charms and amulets are worn to ward off the evil eye. Spells are sold against disease, and auguries are taken at the tomb of Hafiz by the same people who strictly observe the great feast of Ramadan, and who mourn the death of Hosein.—The Scottish Review.

THE SONG OF SHIPS.

The sky made a whip of the wind and lashed the sea into foam,
And the keen-blowing gales tore the flags and the sails of the ships that were plunging home;
Of the ships that were tossing home on the black and billowy deep,
But who shall reach to the wrecks, the wrecks where the ships and their captains sleep?

Oh, wrecks, by the black seas tossed,
In the desolate ocean nights!
Lost, lost in the darkness, lost
In sight o' the harbor lights!

The sky made a veil o' the clouds, and a scourge o' the lightning red,
And the blasts bowed the masts of the ships that fared where love and the seagulls led;
Of the ships that were faring home with love for the waiting breast;
But where is the love that can reach to the wrecks where the ships and their captains rest?

Oh, ships of our love, wave-tossed
In the fathomless ocean nights!
Lost, lost in the blackness, lost
In sight o' the harbor lights!

There was once a ship of my soul that tossed o'er a stormy sea,
And this was my prayer, when the nights gloomed drear: "Send my soul's ship safe to me!
Send my soul's ship safely home, from billows and blackened skies!"
But where is the soul that can reach to the depth, the depths where my soul's ship lies?

Oh, ship of my soul, storm-tossed
In the far and fearful nights,
Lost, lost in the blackness, lost
In sight o' the harbor lights!
—Frank L. Stanton in Atlanta Constitution.

MY WIFE'S BROTHER.

My wife's brother's been vis'tin' us,
An' he's the excit'nest little cuss
'At ever drawed the breath of life
Er whittled my desk with a big jack-knife.

Fust day he kim he tuk the cat
An' hitched 'er to my ol' silk hat;
He bored a hole right thro' the brim
To make a hoss and cart fer him.

When he got out fust thing he did
He licked our next door neighbor's kid,
An' bled his nose an' blacked his eyes—
An' then I had ter 'pologize.

Nex' day it rained. He tuk his ball
An' played a game in our front hall;
He used the hatrack fer first base
An' smashed the hall clock in the face.

Then yesterday he went ter play,
An' first we knowed he runned way;
A p'liceman found him arter dark
Up with the monkeys in the park.

Fer seven days he's been our guest,
An' each days been the excit'nest;
To-morrow he's a goin' hum,
An' nex' time—we won't hev no room!
—Evening Sun.

Explosion by Sympathy.

Musicians are well aware of the fact that if any note of the gamut be clearly sounded or sung within vibration range of any suitable musical instrument—say a harp or piano—that the string, which ever it may be, tuned to the same note, will begin to sound upon its own account, or "respond," as it is termed. If the singer then refrains from repeating the note he began with, but sings another one, the "speaking" string instantly relapses into silence, while another responds to the new note. In the same way an organ pipe will respond, as, indeed, will a vase, a hollow vessel with thin sides, or even an apartment, if the particular note to which they are respectively "tuned" be first sounded.

Now, it will be noticed by many that in constructing stores for the reception of explosives it is very much the fashion to build a series of exactly the same dimensions, and to place them, with almost mathematical accuracy, at equal distances apart. They are filled with explosives; one day an "accident" explodes their contents, and everybody is surprised when, despite the next building being "much too far off," and with "intervening walls twelve feet thick," some or all the other stores blow up in due sequence. What other result could ensue?

All the buildings are identical in size and capacity; hence the "note" sounded in the first—whether it be one of triumph or of tragedy—finds immediate "response" in No. 2, when, reinforced by a second explosion, the next store cannot do otherwise than follow the example of the other two; and so the mischief spreads. It is important to bear in mind that we are now dealing with the influence of sympathetic musical vibrations only, not with the mechanical impulse of a detonic tremor or "jar." For it is assumed in this case that the buildings are so far apart and otherwise "protected" that, if they are inharmonic, the material in one cannot be fired simply by detonating the contents of another adjacent thereto.

The foregoing proposition has its origin in some experiments with iodide of nitrogen and fulminate of mercury, in the course of which the writer found that small quantities of the sensitive explosives placed in "sounding boxes" of precisely the same dimensions could be exploded by the detonation of one of them at greater distances from the detonator than, *coeteris paribus*, was possible in the open, or when in boxes (of other shapes) not "relatively harmonic" to the detonator box.—The Nineteenth Century.

Roman Standards.

In the Roman army there was a very highly developed system of military ensigns, which, just as among modern nations, were regarded not merely as a rallying point for a given body of men, but as an emblem of the State, and were therefore surrounded with a veneration which degenerated into idolatry. From a tactical point of view the Roman standards were of more importance than the flag at the present day, for the movements of the troops were entirely regulated by them.

According as they were raised and carried forward, planted in the ground, or turned toward the rear, in obedience to the sounds of the horns of the "cornicines," the army broke up its camp and marched, or retreated and halted. In the camp the standards were planted before the General's tent, where their presence sanctified the spot as though it were a temple, and rendered it a safe depository for the booty collected by the legion. It was to the standards the soldiers swore allegiance, and the first step of a pretender who sought to become Emperor was to seize the standards, as he thereby secured the fidelity of the legion.

On feast days the "dusty, awe-inspiring standards," as Pliny calls them, were anointed with perfumes and decorated with garlands; on days of mourning they were stripped of their ornaments, and if, when the order to march was given, their bearers found it difficult to loosen them from the earth, it was looked upon as a fatal omen.—All the Year Round.

The Author of "Molly Bawn."

The sweetest temper in the world can be ruined, and therefore I would have you take heed to your ways, writes "The Duchess" in answer to the question, "What Constitutes a Good Husband?" in the *Ladies' Home Journal*. If you have the luck to chance on a good-tempered man, and gain him for your husband, see that you prize the gift, and that you do not abuse it. Give him smile for smile, and bear with him as he is sure to bear with you. I have seen one or two cases where a fretful girl, relying too much upon the sweetness of her husband's temper, has ended at last by turning that sweetness into gall.

Therefore, if God gives into your keeping a bright and kindly spirit, take care that you do it no injury.

A QUESTION OF IDENTITY.

Mr. H. Howard Welles arrived at his club one morning for breakfast filled with a devout sense of peace and good-will to himself. As a general rule, except when some such evil as a corn, a shiny collar, or a burnt chop afflicted him, he was firm of trust in these glad tidings. Latterly, indeed, certain mysterious occurrences had tempted him to repine, but the optimistic habit for forty odd years—of which the odd were dangerously near to changing the order of the forty—still encouraged him to regard these as mistakes, and even possible delusions. When one's path has been thoroughly cleared and leveled by provident ancestors, and for so many years has been kept swept by eager prosperity, a stub of the toe is more apt to be attributed to a misstep than to the presence of an actual pebble.

Mr. Welles, then, was wont to belittle the cares and the ills of life, and to say that he didn't see why people shouldn't take things as easily as he did. People might have retorted that they would have been very glad to take had fortune been as generous in proffering, and that then they, too, might each have become a sleek, selfish and fussy old bachelor. But such remarks, concerning one so begirt with dignity and splendor, are of the sort that console the would-be utterer, not discomfit the potential auditor, and Mr. Welles, unconscious of any dissent, continued to bear himself erect and pompous, with back so stiff that its quality fermented the neck above and the legs below. Perhaps, though, this exuberance was not a sign of strength, but rather of the easy burdens which had thus far been superimposed.

Mr. Welles' seat by the club window might have been an incorporal hereditament it was so sacredly regarded by members and servants. Before it, each morning, the accessories of his breakfast, the fruit, the iced soda, the newspaper, were laid, and when nature was properly comfortable, from the upper Venetian blind there descended just an adequate amount of sunshine. On this day in question, Mr. Welles was affably preparing his orange, pondering the while that the peel was to the pulp as his circumstances were to his excellence, when his eyes, wantonly wandering, were punished by becoming fixed on a paragraph in the personal column of the paper, for never before by looking thither had they admitted the possibility of having anything to seek. The item was in bold type and read as follows:

"Whereas some man resembling me has obtained goods, moneys and credits in my name, all persons are hereby warned against trusting the impostor, and I do hereby offer a reward of $50 for his apprehension. (Signed) Peter Kopper, Brewer, Higg's Docks."

Mr. Welles read, and straightway the orange lost its flavor, the steaming coffee its aroma, and those mysterious occurrences whose reality he had so bravely doubted gained in substance. Pete Kopper! Why, that was the objectionable, the impossible individual who in some grotesque way must look like him. The idea was preposterous, beyond credence; but yet, how often had he been accosted on the street by some inebriated wretch crying: "Hello Pete! Aren't you going to buy?" How often had publicans leaning against the portals of their dens called after him, "Hey there, Kopper! Just one moment. Here's a keg not quite up to standard."

Had there not been a dreadful day—too dreadful to be recalled except in the present dreadful stress—when he was promenading through the Park, yes, and looking most fit for the word, even if syllables longer, when a rubicund and corpulent woman whisked around his shoulders an appalling red shawl, and to him thus detained had screamed: "Oh, brother Pete, how high and mighty you are, to be sure!" while at the same fatal instant a horde of infantile ruffians had besieged his immaculate trousers, demanding "a penny from uncle." Ah, a horrible instant, indeed! For, in its very fullness, had not Mrs. Lescelles, that divine widow, whom he destined to be his—not his widow, mind you, but his consort—swept by in her carriage, smiling, as well she might?

Mr. Welles had never seen this Peter Kopper. He had been loath to admit to himself that such a likeness could exist. There was something appropriate in his own tall, slender form, clean-shaven face and sharp-cut features. They might well be deemed the attributes of wealth, blood and station. Was it possible that at the same time they could stand for beer? But how this advertisement seemed to indicate a complication yet more inconceivable. Was indignant fate striving to degrade him through a succession of parodies, or had this presumptuous Kopper, irritated by some secret pilferings, and informed by hearsay of a chance resemblance, dared to associate these facts in his stupid mind, and then, in the more stupid paper, with the result?

Ah, what results might not spring from an ignorance sure to be even more obstinate than crass! They had never met; suppose now they should? Would not this violent Kopper, instead of being impressed with the elegance, be incensed by its presumption? Instead of perceiving one who was really suffering from being burlesqued, would he not see the certain personator? In his mind's eye Mr. Welles beheld an encounter, a blow, fight, capture, the Police Court, disgrace! He scanned the servant suspiciously, lest within the livery there might be concealed a detective with a clue. He left his breakfast untasted and hurried to his rooms by a circuitous route, resolved to go out only after nightfall and to let his beard grow. From all of which it must appear that the stiffness in Mr. Welles' back did not depend on the absence of ordinary burdens.

About the same hour Mrs. Eliza Lescelles and her niece Ethel Vincent were also engaged in a luxurious breakfast-room with fruit and rolls and coffee. The former was a jolly, mirth-loving, plump and pretty widow, young enough to realize what a fool she had been to marry an old man for his money and too old to ever repeat the financial stroke. The latter was cold, stately and handsome; in repose an elegant lay figure—that is to say, always an elegant lay figure. The one was a practical "Allegro," the other a thoughtless "Penseroso." Mrs. Lescelles was too fond of bits of gossip to go without her morning newspaper. It always lay by her plate, so folded, in accordance with her taste, as to present the marriages and deaths. It chanced that the personals were directly next to these, an appropriate position truly for "the agony column," and thus it happened that her bright eyes lighted on the paragraph which had so perturbed Mr. Welles.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the widow, "Poor Mr. Kopper, and poor, poor Mr. Welles!" At this latter name Ethel raised her languid eyes with the ghost of an interested expression.

"Mr. Welles?" she repeated. "Why should any one speak of him as poor?"

"Listen," said the other, and she read aloud the notice. "Now, don't you see? Those two men are as like as two—as two chestnuts, shall I say? Now, only supposing Peter should suspect Mr. Welles, and—and—only supposing Mr. Welles should be suspected! Oh, ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't see it at all," retorted Ethel. "No one could possibly take a refined gentleman like Mr. Welles for that coarse brewer."

"Tut, tut," expostulated the widow. "Don't be ungrateful. Think how devoted that coarse brewer is, how he yearns with all his worldly vats to thee endow. Let me tell you, my dear, you might go further and fair worse. Icicles are all very well in their place, but I would prefer a cozy chimney nook to clinging to the eaves of a house."

"Why, Aunt Eliza! When every one thinks that you and Mr. Welles are engaged! Such a comparison is Hyperion to a Satyr."

"Well," persisted the dauntless widow, "a Satyr has some blood in him, at all events. But, Ethel, just think of it; it's as good as a play. Neither one knows the other, nor knows that there is a third; for there is a third, you know. Oh, I can see it all. Some one has personated Peter, and that some one can be no one else but my scapegrace nephew, Charlie Vincent. Don't you remember the last time he came here with his latest lie; as he came up the stoop you thought he was Peter Kopper, and I was sure he was Mr. Welles? Yes, yes, the rogue has been at his old tricks again, and we could make $50 were it not for giving a relative away. I think there's fun ahead, ha, ha! And if those two men reach the Kilkenny-cat stage, why, I can bring the real culprit to the scene. Remember, I have the string of an allowance on him."

"I don't recognize that horrible Charlie Vincent as a relation," said Ethel. "Very likely he does look like Mr. Kopper—the vulgar are more or less similar; but he is utterly distinct from Mr. Welles."

"My dear," replied her aunt, firmly, "he is your cousin, all the same; you see, your ancestors happened to have the say in the matter. And, as for being 'utterly distinct' believe me, if Mr. Welles should meet Charlie dressed like a prig, he'd vow that he was gazing into a mirror."

At about this hour, too, in the attic of a lodging house far less clean and comfortable than "the cold, cold ground," that soldier of fortune, Charlie Vincent, was unwrapping a bit of newspaper from his breakfast—a split "bologna," sustained by bread and mustard. As he did so his eye caught the dollar sign and rested instinctively.

"Fifty dollars reward!" he muttered. "By Jove, I'd give myself up if I thought old Slope would pay. As it is, I think that business of urgent importance calls me from the city and will actually prevent my getting shaved. I can write a tearful letter to the old lady, and brace her for an advance. She's a good soul, but, Lord, how soft!"

Meanwhile the thrower of this "personal" pebble which had caused such circles of agitation and interest—Peter Kopper, in a word—was very angry. He was deemed, and justly, a full-hearted, generous man; but he had worked for his fortune and he did not relish having any portion of it worked from him. He chose to be the agent of his own charity, and when he found that some one had assumed that office he was so unappreciative of the altruistic quality that he swore that this some one should be punished if it cost twenty times the amount of the reward. Vindictiveness in such a man rarely springs solely from the wrong suffered; more likely it is the result of the laying of the last straw. Rogues are far more safe in the open sunshine of smiles than in the obscurity of frowns.

Peter was in a fretful, nervous state, too, which rage might prove a lightning rod. He counted his blessings, and they were ninety and nine; but the one without the fold exceeded all in value. How beautiful she was, his Ethel; "his," only, alas, in that unreal world of fancy where one has no wishes, since one possesses everything; how beautiful, yet how cold, how disdainful! Why was it that his neck was never so red, nor his feet so clumsy, nor his hands so stationary on the wrists as when he was in her presence? Could she not see his good qualities through this embarrassment? Could she not perceive that it was an evidence of the very best of them, his love for her?

Other ladies found him agreeable, he was sure. There was Mrs. Lescelles, the aunt; no old has-been by any means, but a mighty fine, slap-up woman, and all there, by George! She treated him as a man deserved to be treated who, if he asked much, was willing to give his all in exchange. And, then, into the very midst of Mr. Kopper's love-sickness would steal a certain vague uncertainty, increasing its qualms. He loved Ethel, oh, yes; from his boots to his bald spot, there was not a "fiber of his being"—a phrase quite original with Mr. Kopper, by the way—that did not quiver in response to those sweetest of two syllables; but yet, when he pictured her in the most winning colors of his imagination, then unaccountably she became like unto her aunt, Mrs. Lescelles.

Jealousy, too, had stirred its bile into Peter Kopper's geniality. His wealth was gradually acquiring for him definite social consideration, but as yet it was more of a favor than a right. With whole-souled people like Mrs. Lescelles he was as good as any one else, perhaps better; but, then, who were like unto her? The vast majority of those who had crossed the river and now occupied the Elysian Fields as if they had never heard of the other side were apt to sniff as if through the precious unguents they detected the odor of malt. Mr. Kopper didn't like to be sniffed at. He had heard that Mr. H. Howard Welles had most aristocratic nostrils, and he had kept out of their range. He had heard, too, that this gentleman's name was frequently linked with the widow's. Of course, he was after the niece, as he himself was, but, alas, how far after? Peter had never seen him and hoped he never would. Should he, he knew that he would recognize him at a glance. "My direct opposite," he would muse, bitterly, resembling his rival the closer for the thought.

Thus it was that Mr. Kopper, with ire foreign to his nature, determined to ferret out the imposture. "Meanwhile," he resolved, "I will keep a little dark, and let my beard grow, and thus frustrate any future attempts."

Weeks passed by, and Mrs. Lescelles had seen nothing of her two friends, so similar in person, so distinct in knowledge and character. Only the advertisement in the daily paper continued to pique her curiosity and finally to arouse feelings of neglect. Ethel, too, had become abnormally silent, which denoted an intensity which could be felt, and most disagreeably so. The widow was grateful for the sunshine of her life; but she realized, too, that it called for the making of hay; if she delayed, these two pleasing possibilities might grow remote.

She proposed to banish one, after she had chosen the other truly; but before any banishment there must come a choice. Perhaps a crisis might be achieved by bringing them face to face. While considering this contingency Mrs. Lescelles received a letter from her nephew sufficiently repentant in tone and dubious in appearance to have been written from the very midst of the Slough of Despond. Veiled but not hid by florid references to the variant qualities of mercy and of the husks which the swine do eat, was a direct appeal for help. Whereupon the widow took off her cap and prepared for business. She replied to the rogue by inclosing a small sum and enjoining him, by all his hopes of its increase, to be at her door (in the rear) on that day week at 7 P. M. She then dispatched one of her prettiest notes in duplicate to Mr. Welles and to Mr. Kopper, asking each to dine with her on that evening, "quite en famille," she expressed it, owing, doubtless, to a paucity of the English language.

Mr. Welles received the missive, and, construing that he would be the sole guest, decided that he might with safety break his self-imposed quarantine of fear. Mr. Kopper received his missive and rejoiced exceedingly. "Quite in the family," he soliloquized. "If she thinks I am now, I wonder what she'll think after? Yes, by George! I'll go, and I'll pop." As for Ethel, when she heard of the acceptances, she said, "How nice!" and that she "hoped it wouldn't rain;" and, having thus broken silence she held her peace or its pieces.

The evening of the dinner came, and with it came Charlie Vincent to the rear door. Barely had he time to analyze the various delicious fumes wafted from the kitchen with an epicureanism reminiscent, yet acute, when Mrs. Lescelles greeted him: "What! Charlie Vincent," she cried, "with a beard. How provoking you are! I believe you raised it just as you do Cain, to bring my gray hairs to the grave."

"I don't see what my beard has to do with your hair," he complained, sulkily enough. "My throat is tender."

"It will need to be tough," interrupted the widow, with a vicious shake of the head. "But there, go into the library, and stay there until I want you. But will I want him?" she soliloquized, as the man wonderingly obeyed, and indeed her nephew with a beard seemed as far away from his part as a Roman soldier in a linen duster.

The plan which the widow had formed was a good-natured one, or it wouldn't have been hers. She had intended to confront her guests with the real culprit, to settle at once suspicion and fear with a laugh, and thus gain their eternal gratitude. She well knew that love can have no firmer foundation than this sentiment, since one who has received much always wants more. She was really not yet certain which one she would choose; after all, it made no great difference, since Ethel could take the one that was left, and thus he would be all right. As for her nephew, the exposure would be a bitter pill for him to swallow, but it might cure him; was there not always wondrous kindness toward a fellow-feeling, and had not feeling in other people's pockets been this poor fellow's fault?

Thus Mrs. Lescelles had schemed, but now it seemed that Charlie could "beard the lion in his den" with impunity and make a hairbreadth escape. No wonder that when she noiselessly turned the key in the door she was like him, "in a brown study"—for such was the prevailing tone of the library. No wonder that she had failed to notice that he was in that chronic state of inebriety which is only prevented from becoming uproariously acute by frequent uninterrupted potations.

The hour set had arrived, and still Ethel lingered over her toilet. Mrs. Lescelles felt nervous and glanced uneasily out of the window. Yes, some one was coming, had turned in at the gate, and was slowly pacing up the graveled walk. Could she mistake that pompous strut? No; all the kid gloves in the world could not make an Esau out of this Jacob. It was Mr. Welles. But with a beard? Well, she never would have supposed it was in the man! Charlie and he were now so amazingly alike that Peter Kopper would likely suspect them of concerted action. "How shall I ever get at the root of this matter?" moaned the widow, clutching her fluffy poll in despair.

A moment later she was congratulating her guest on his changed appearance. "I think it's so becoming," she said, passing her hand over her face.

"Becoming?" sighed Mr. Welles. "It is becoming a nuisance I assure you. Why, I dream every night that the mattress has burst. But my lungs are delicate, and my physician—" Here a series of rude noises emanated from the library denoting, if anything, impatience and urgency.

"It's nothing," explained the widow. "It's the cat, I think, with his tail caught in the door. If you will excuse me for a moment. Yes, Charlie, coming!" and away she flew.

"The cat!" ruminated Mr. Welles. "Thank goodness, it isn't a Russian one with nine tails caught in the door! 'Yes, Charlie!' I wonder why she didn't say, 'Yes, Tom!'" and he turned on to the veranda to enjoy the freshness of the evening.

At this instant there was a heavy approaching tread, and the two guests for the first time faced each other. As Mr. Kopper was also bearded the resemblance between them was indeed startling, though Father Time would have shrewdly judged that in old age he would have to lengthen the stroke of his scythe for the one and shorten it for the other. But now there was no round and rosy jollity about Peter. He took in the similarity at once, and concluded that luck had saved him just $50. Mr. Welles, though, remained oblivious to the situation. He had not studied his mirror for those forty odd years, not to retain a smooth-face conception of himself. He merely saw an unpleasantly aggressive stranger, and, true to the judgment of Father Time, he shrunk.

"You have the advantage of me, sir," said Mr. Welles, coldly.

"It's quite the other way," growled Peter.

"I am at a loss," resumed Mr. Welles.

"The loss is mine," roared Peter, "and you know it."

"I'm sure I have never seen or heard of you before, continued Mr. Welles.

"I've heard of you behind—behind my back, you sneak, you scoundrel!" exploded the frantic Peter, "and now I've got you," and he sprang forward with upraised fist. But that fist fell not; for down the stairs there glided a fair young girl. She sprang between the two men, so wrathful, so scared. She threw one arm protectingly around Mr. Welles, with the other she waved his assailant away. "Back, coward!" she cried inconsequently, "would you strike an unarmed man?"

Ethel had at last found her tongue. Inconsequently—but Mr. Welles recognized the true proper feeling of admiration, and felt grateful for it. He then and there resolved that one who evidently had his interest so much at heart should also forever have them at hand. Inconsequently—but Mr. Kopper, then and there, concluded that the niece would never attain the winning colors of the aunt.

And while they remained in this contemplative tableau a wild-eyed man with a beard staggered out of the door.

"Here's one me," he gasped, "and here's anozer me. Which one am I? O, Lord, I've got 'em again," and he rolled off the veranda and out into the darkness.

And then the widow appeared, and explanations and apologies followed. And the dinner was finally served and heartily eaten—not the less heartily because Mr. Welles had just whispered a vow to Ethel and Mr. Kopper had just breathed a sigh to the widow. Of course the harmonious four became still more harmonious twos, and lived forever afterward in certain bliss, for when Mr. Kopper had shaved prudent Ethel insisted Mr. Welles should retain his beard.

As for Charlie Vincent he was never seen again, that is, in similarity. Perhaps the shock changed his personal appearance. Perhaps in giving alms to a distorted and grotesque vagabond, the good-natured aunt still unwittingly assists her nephew.

When a man finds a nice old-fashioned well, he also discovers that not long ago a cat fell in it.—Atchison Globe.

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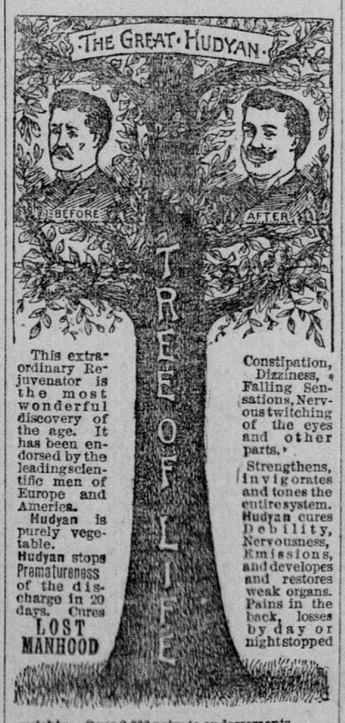

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