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PROLOGUE.
"Seventeen" is a literary thing of beauty and a joy for all the time you are reading it. Booth Tarkington never wrote a story that equaled it for fun and entertainment and character drawing. If you are twenty-seven or thirty-seven or seventy-seven you will at once hark back to seventeen—to when YOU were seventeen and in love with some beautiful Miss Pratt of the same age. There's a smile in every few words and a laugh in nearly every line.

CHAPTER I.
William.
WILLIAM SYLVANUS BAXTER paused for a moment of thought in front of the drug store at the corner of Washington street and Central avenue, considering what kind of an ice cream soda he would have, when he was roused by the blurt greeting of an acquaintance not dissimilar to himself in age, manner and apparel.

"Hi, Silly Bill!" said this person, halting beside William Sylvanus Baxter. "What's the news?"
William showed no enthusiasm. On the contrary, a frown of annoyance appeared upon his brow. The nickname "Silly Bill," long ago compounded by merry child comrades from William and Sylvanus, was not to his taste, especially in public, where he preferred to be addressed simply and manfully as Baxter. Any direct expression of resentment, however, was difficult, since it was plain, that Johnnie Watson intended no offense whatever and but spoke out of custom.

"Don't know any," William replied coldly.
"Dull times, ain't it?" said Mr. Watson, a little depressed by his friend's manner. "I heard May Parcher was comin' back to town yesterday, though."
"Well, let her!" returned William, still severe.
"They said she was goin' to bring a girl to visit her," Johnnie began in a confidential tone. "They said she was a regular ringdinger, and—"
"Well, what if she is?" the discouraging Mr. Baxter interrupted. "Makes little difference to me, I guess!"
"Oh, no, it don't! You don't take any interest in girls! Oh, no!"
"No, I do not!" was the emphatic and heartless retort. "I never saw one in my life I'd care whether she lived or died!"

"Honest, is that so?"
"Yes, honest!" William replied sharply. "They could all die; I wouldn't notice!"
Johnnie Watson was profoundly impressed. "Why, I didn't know you felt that way about 'em, Silly Bill. I always thought you were kind of 'em!"
"Well, I do feel that way about 'em!" said William Sylvanus Baxter, and, outraged by the repetition of the offensive nickname, he began to move away. "You can tell 'em so for me, if you want to!" he added over his shoulder. And he walked haughtily up the street, leaving Mr. Watson to ponder upon this case of misogyny, never until that moment suspected.

It was beyond the power of his mind to grasp the fact that William Sylvanus Baxter's cruel words about "girls" had been uttered because William was annoyed at being called "Silly Bill" in a public place and had not known how to object otherwise than by showing contempt for any topic of conversation proposed by the offender.

William meanwhile made his way toward the "residence section" of the town. He walked in his own manner, using his shoulders to emphasize an effect of carelessness which he wished to produce upon observers, for his consciousness of observers was abnormal, since he had it whether any one was looking at him or not, and it reached a crucial stage whenever he perceived persons of his own age, but of opposite sex, approaching.

inner curve of her right arm—a tiny dog with hair like cotton and a pink ribbon round his neck, an animal staked with indulgence.
William did not see the dog, for it lay in the plain, anatomical truth that when he saw how pretty the girl was his heart—his physical heart—began to do things the like of which, experienced by an elderly person, would have brought the doctor in haste. He suffered from breathlessness and from pressure on the diaphragm.

Afterward he could not have named the color of the little parasol she carried in her left hand, and yet as it drew nearer and nearer a rosy haze suffused the neighborhood, and the whole world began to turn an exquisite pink. Beneath this gentle glow, with eyes downcast in thought, she apparently took no note of William even when she and William had come within a few yards of each other. Yet he knew that she would look up and that their eyes must meet, a thing for which he endeavored to prepare himself by a strange weaving motion of his neck against the friction of his collar, for thus instinctively he strove to obtain greater ease and some decent appearance of manly indifference.

And then, in the instant of panic that befell, when her dark lashed eyelids slowly lifted, he had a flash of inspiration.
He opened his mouth somewhat, and as her eyes met his, full and staffing, he placed three fingers across the orifice and also offered a slight vocal proof that she had surprised him in the midst of a yawn.
"Oh, hum!" he said.
For the fraction of a second the deep blue spark in her eyes glowed brighter, gentle arrows of turquoise shot him through and through, and then her glance withdrew from the ineffable collision. Her small, white shoe feet continued to bear her onward, away from him, while his own dimmed shoes peregrinated in the opposite direction.



When Her Dark Lashed Eyelids Slowly Lifted, He Had a Flash of Inspiration.
William necessarily, yet with execratable reluctance, accompanying them. But just at the moment when he and the lovely creature were side by side, and her head turned from him; she spoke—that is, she murmured, but he caught the words.
"You Flopit, wake up!" she said in the tone of a mother talking baby talk. "So indifferink!"
William's feet and his breath halted spasmodically. For an instant he thought she had spoken to him, and then for the first time he perceived the duffy head of the dog bobbing languidly over her arm with the motion of her walking, and he comprehended that Flopit, and not William Sylvanus Baxter, was the gentleman addressed. But—but had she meant him?

He stood gazing after her while the glamorous parasol passed down the shady street, catching splashes of sunshine through the branches of the maple trees, and the cottony head of the tiny dog continued to be visible, bobbing rhythmically over a filmy sieve. Had she meant that William was indifferink? Was it William that she really addressed?
He took two steps to follow her, but a suffocating shyness stopped him abruptly, and in a horror lest she should glance round and detect him in the act, he turned and strode directly to the gate of his own home before he dared to look again. And when he did look, affecting great casualness in the action, she was gone, evidently having turned the corner.

William rested an elbow upon the gatepost and with his chin resting in his hand gazed long in the direction in which the unknown had vanished. And his soul was tremulous, for she had done her work but too well.
"Indifferink!" he murmured, thrilling at his own exceedingly indifferent imitation of her voice. "Indifferink!" that was just what he would have her think—that he was a cold, indifferent man. It was what he wished all girls to think. And "sarcastic!" He had been envious one day when May Parcher said that Joe Bullitt was "awfully sarcastic." William had spent the ensuing hour in an object lesson intended to make Miss Parcher see that William Sylvanus Baxter was twice as sarcastic as Joe Bullitt ever thought of being, but this great effort had been unsuccessful, because William failed to understand that Miss Parcher had only been sending a sort of message to Mr. Bullitt. It was a device not unique among her sex.

"So indifferink!" murmured William, leaning dreamily upon the gatepost. "Indifferink!" He tried to get the exact cooling quality of the unknown's voice. "Indifferink!" And, repeating the honeyed word, so entrancingly distorted, he fell into a



Kind of stupor, vague, beautiful pleasure rising before him, the one least blurred being of himself on horseback, sweeping between Flopit and a racing automobile. And then, having restored the little animal to its mistress, William sat carelessly in the saddle (he had the guardsman's seat) while the perfectly trained steed wheeled about, forelegs in the air, preparing to go.

"But shall I not see you again to thank you more properly?" she cried, pleading. "Some other day—perhaps," he answered and left her in a cloud of dust.
"Oh, Will-ee!"
Thus a shrill voice, to his ears hideously different from that other, interrupted and dispersed his visions. Little Jane, his ten-year-old sister, stood upon the front porch, the door open behind her, and in her hand she held a large slab of bread and butter covered with apple sauce and powdered sugar. Evidence that she had sampled this compound was upon her cheeks, and to her brother she was a repulsive sight.

"Will-ee!" she shrieked. "Look! Good!"
And to emphasize the adjective she delicately patted the region of her body in which she believed her stomach to be located. "There's a slice for you on the dining room table," she informed him joyously.
Outraged, he entered the house without a word to her, and proceeding to the dining room, laid hands upon the slice she had mentioned, but declined to eat it in Jane's company. He was in an exalted mood, and though in no condition of mind or body would he refuse food of almost any kind, Jane was an intrusion he could not suffer at this time.

He carried the reflection to his own room and, locking the door, sat down to eat, while, even as he ate, the spell that was upon him deepened in intensity.
"Oh, eyes!" he whispered softly in that cool privacy and shelter from the world. "Oh, eyes of blue!"
The mirror of a dressing table sent him the reflection of his own eyes, which also were blue, and he gazed upon them and upon the rest of his image the while he ate his bread and butter and apple sauce and sugar. Finally he rose and approached the dressing table to study himself at greater advantage.

Beyond doubt he was acting a little scene of indifference. Other symbolic dramas followed, though an invisible observer might have been puzzled for a key to some of them. One, however, would have proved easily intelligible. His expression having altered to a look of pity and contrition, he turned from the mirror and, walking slowly to a chair across the room, used his right hand in a peculiar manner, seeming to stroke the air at a point about ten inches above the back of the chair. "There, there, little girl," he said in a low, gentle voice. "I didn't know you cared."

Then, with a rather abrupt dismissal of this theme, he returned to the mirror and, after a questioning scrutiny, nodded solemnly, forming with his lips the words, "The real thing—the real thing at last!"
He meant that, after many imitations imposed upon him, Love—the real thing—had come to him in the end. And as he turned away he murmured, "And even her name—unknown!"
Seating himself at a small writing table by the window, he proceeded to express his personality in something he considered a poem.

Three-quarters of an hour having sufficed for its completion, he solemnly signed it and then read it several times in a state of hushed astonishment. He had never dreamed that he could do anything like this:
MILADY.
I do not know her name
Though it would be the same
Where roses bloom at twilight
And the lark takes his flight
It would be the same anywhere
Where music sounds in air
I was never introduced to the lady
So I could not call her Lass or Sadie
So I will call her Milady
By the sands of the sea
She always will be
Just Milady to me.
-William Sylvanus Baxter, Esq., July 14

Suddenly again that voice:
"Will-ee!"
To William, in his high and lonely mood, this piercing summons brought an actual shudder, and the very thought of Jane (with tokens of apple sauce and sugar still upon her cheek, probably seemed a kind of serenade. He fiercely swore his favorite oath, acquired from a hero of a work of fiction he admired, "Ye gods!" and concealed his poem in the drawer of the writing table.

"Will-ee! Mamma wants you!" Jane hammered on the door.
"What you want?" he shouted.
Jane explained, certain pauses indicating that her attention was partially diverted to another slice of bread and butter and apple sauce and sugar.
"Will-ee, mamma wants you—wants you to go help Genesis bring some washtrubs home—and a tin clo'es boiler—from the secondhand man's store."
"What?"
Jane repeated the outrageous message, adding, "She wants you to hurry—and I got some bread and butter and apple sauce and sugar for comin' to tell you."
His refusal was direct and infuriating, but there was a decisive tapping upon the door, and his mother's voice interrupted:
"Hush, Willie! Open the door, please." He obeyed furiously, and Mrs. Baxter walked in with a deprecating air,

while Jane followed, so profoundly interested that, until almost the close of the interview, she held her bread and butter and apple sauce and sugar at a sort of way station on its journey to her mouth.
"That's a nice thing to ask me to do!" stormed the unfortunate William.
"Ye gods! Do you think Joe Bullitt's mother would dare to?"
"Wait, dearie!" Mrs. Baxter begged pacifically. "I just want to explain—"
"Explain!" Ye gods!
"Now, now, just a minute, Willie!" she said. "What I wanted to explain was why it's necessary for you to go with Genesis for the—"
"Never!" he shouted. "Never! You expect me to walk through the public streets with that awful lookin' old nigger!"
"Genesis isn't old," she managed to interpolate. "He!"
But her frantic son disregarded her. "Secondhand washtrubs!" he vociferated. "And tin clothes boilers! That's what you want your son to carry through the public streets in broad daylight! Ye gods!"

"Well, there isn't anybody else," she said. "Please don't rave so, Willie, and say 'Ye gods' so much. It really isn't nice. I'm sure nobody'll notice you!"
"Nobody!" His voice cracked in anguish. "Oh, no! Nobody except the whole town! Why, when there's anything disgusting has to be done in this family—why do I always have to be the one? Why can't Genesis bring the secondhand washtrubs without me? Why can't the secondhand store deliver 'em? Why can't?"
"That's what I want to tell you," she interposed hurriedly, and as the youth lifted his arms on high in a gesture of ultimate despair and then threw himself miserably into a chair she obtained the floor. "The secondhand store doesn't deliver things," she said. "I bought out an auction, and it's going out of business, and they have to be taken away before half past 4 this afternoon."

"Genesis can't bring them in the wheelbarrow because he says, the wheel is broken, and he says he can't possibly carry two tubs and a wash boiler himself. And he can't make two trips because it's a mile and a half, and I don't like to ask him, anyway. And it would take too long, because he has to get back and finish cutting the grass before your papa gets home this evening. Papa said he had to! Now, I don't like to ask you, but it really isn't much. You and Genesis can just slip up there and—"
"Slip!" moaned William. "Just slip up there! Ye gods!"

"Genesis is waiting on the back porch," she said. "Really it isn't worth your making all this fuss about."
"Ye gods!" He clasped his head in his hands, crushed, for he knew that the curse was upon him and he must go. "Ye gods!"
Genesis and his dog were waiting just outside the kitchen door, and of all the world these two creatures were probably the last in whose company William Sylvanus Baxter desired to make a public appearance. The aged, grayish, sleeveless, neckless garment which sheltered Genesis from waist to collar bone could not have been mistaken for a jersey.

Upon the feet of Genesis were things which careful study would have revealed to be patent leather dancing pumps long dead and several times buried, and upon his head pressing down his markedly criminal ears, was a once derby hat of a brown not far from Genesis' own color, though decidedly without his gloss. A large ring of strange metal, with the stone missing, adorned a finger of his right hand, and from a corner of his mouth projected an unlighted and spreading cigar stub.

And Genesis' dog, scratching himself at his master's feet, was the true complement of Genesis, for, although he was a youngish dog, he was a dog that would have been recognized anywhere in the world as a colored person's dog.
(To be Continued.)

RYAN.
Mr. and Mrs. Joe Cody have as their guest a nephew from Dubuque.
Mary Welter and Laure Swanson were Dubuque visitors during the week.
Mrs. Towne spent Monday with her mother out on the farm.
Mr. Charles Worley and family also Mrs. Connor are home from Sturgis, Kansas, and while there they spent a day at the Charles Miller home and found them all well.
Donald Merriam was a visitor here last Thursday.
Mae Coakley was shopping in Manchester recently.
Mrs. Susie Devine was shopping in Manchester last Saturday.
Howard Houlihan is taking his father's place as rural mail carrier during Mr. Houlihan's vacation.
W. H. Ward and E. E. Coakley were in Manchester Friday.
Mrs. Theo. Swerzler and little niece are home from Ft. Dodge.
John Brayton was a business visitor in the northern part of the state last week.
A. J. Keegan family are entertaining a cousin from Cascade.
Miss Rogue, a professional nurse, was a visitor at the Ward home several days.
M. J. Britt spent a few days at P. F. McElliott's last week.
Will and J. R. McElliott were in Manchester Thursday.
Dan McElliott was mixed up in a runaway Friday, one of his horses becoming frightened. No one was injured.
W. J. McEnany was a business caller in Cedar Rapids on Thursday.
Mrs. James Donahue was a business caller in Manchester last Monday.
Mr. and Mrs. Will Hines and son William attended the funeral of the former's sister-in-law, at Masonville. C. E. Dunlap from Manchester was calling on friends here Friday.
Fred McKeever was a Waterloo visitor recently.
Frank Foley and son were Toledo visitors during the week.

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