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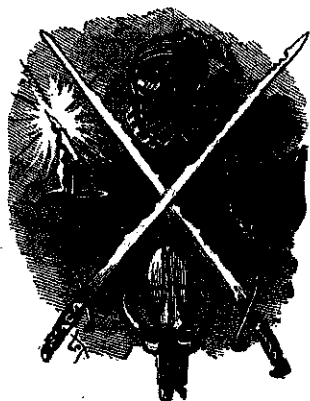
KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS

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SHOWN UP.

By **BRICKTOP.**

George V.



89

PUBLISHED BY

COLLIN & SMALL, 113 FULTON STREET, NEW YORK.
1873.

S.B. pr.

16 Knights of Pythias



THE REAR ADMIRAL
FRANKLIN HANFORD, U. S. N.
COLLECTION IN THE
NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
1929

year 1872, by
Washington.

PRESS OF WYNKOOP & HALLENBECK,
113 Fulton Street, N. Y.

THE KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS SHOWN UP.

CHAPTER I.

"ORDER, gentlemen, order!"

"I tell you it is the best order in the world."

"What do you know about it?"

"I'm one of 'em, I am."

"Shake."

"Put it in there, old party, and grip."

"Good enough! Count on me, young fellow. If there's a riot, I'm yer kittydid."

"Come! All hands take something."

* * * * *

The above dialogue and scene greeted me one afternoon as I stepped into a well known hostelry on Dutch Street, in New York.

There were about a dozen persons standing in front of the bar, who appeared to be wrangling over something, and it was the loudness and warmth to which their argument waxed which brought forth the "Order, gentlemen, order!" from the proprietor.

Making my way through the crowd, I approached the fat and jolly son of Bacchus who presided behind the bar. I breathed this in his ear:

"Asa, bright gilding of our spirit world, a terrible thirst has come upon me like a thief in the night. Build me an allaying lemonade in return for this fluttering fragment of a dollar."

"I build," he whispered. And he built.

The trouble of thirst being over, I inquired whether or no a caucus was being holden in his place.

"No, they are Knights of Pythias, the most of them, and,

just as you entered, they were having some argument with an outsider," he replied.

"Knights of Pythias! Who are they!" I asked.

"Who are they! Who are they! Well, I thought you was better posted than that. Why, it is one of the greatest, brightest, truest orders that has ever existed."

"Oh!"

"By the by, Bricktop, you ought to join them."

"Are you a Knight?"

"Bet your remotest dollar on it, old man! But I am serious; it would be a big thing for you to join them."

"Well, Asa, I am not so certain about that. I have joined the Masons, the Odd Fellows, the Sons of Malta, the Good Templars, and the Daughters of Rebecca, but I never had very good luck with them. People would go and write exposes of them and lay it to my charge, and in various ways make it somewhat busy for me. No, I guess I won't join the Knights of Pythias," I replied, turning away.

"I'm telling you that you had better do it," he persisted.

"No, I've been bounced enough in my time."

"The boys told me to speak to you about it. They want you with 'em very much. Better make up your mind to do it, old man. Don't make any mistake!"

"I'll try not to," I replied, and I left the place.

As I went out I heard such expressions as this from the party:

"That's him." "Asa has buzzed him." "We must have him, sure," etc.

So it was a put-up job I concluded, but, at the same time I also concluded that it would miscarry, for, if I knew myself, I had enjoyed all the initiations at hands of secret societies that I cared to indulge in. Besides, I at once made up my mind that it was simply the revival of that great and long to be remembered fun-vehicle, the Sons of Malta, so I girded up my loins and mentally said, "Not any in mine, if you please."

THE BAIL IS SET IN MOTION. "DON'T MAKE ANY MISTAKE, OLD MAN, YOU SHOULD JOIN THE KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS," SAID ASA, POINTING TO THE CROWD WHO HAD SET THEIR AFFECTIONS UPON ME.



As I passed along towards my place of business I met my friend Hopkins, and I related my adventure to him, and expected to enjoy with him a hearty laugh at their failure to rope me into the Knights of Pythias. But, to my great astonishment, Hop at once drew a very sombre skin over the front of his head and shook it deprecatingly.

"Don't make any mistake, old man, that is a good order to belong to. It is vigorous, growing, earnest, true, and, what is more, they are brothers indeed," said he.

"Gammon, my boy, gammon!" quoth I.

"See that you don't make any mistake."

"Correct! But I believe I am not egotistic when I say that I feel convinced that you might examine my optics to their most hidden and remote recesses and fail to find anything of an emerald hue reveling there—anything that showed the slightest resemblance to vegetation."

"That all may be true, and yet you might make a mistake regarding the benefits of this order, this brotherhood of true and abiding hearts."

"Are you one of them?"

"Happy am I in the knowledge that I am."

"That accounts for it. You are prejudiced. Good day!"

"Don't make any mistake!" rang in my ears as I hurried away.

"Join the Knights of Pythias! I'd sooner join the Young Men's Christian Association," I said to myself, as I entered my sanctum.

In a short time the affair passed entirely from my mind, but it was destined to be revived again, for, not long after that, my friend Teusch happened in with his regular contribution to *Wild Oats*, and, after business was over, we indulged in some light conversation on various points. As a natural consequence, we spoke of the great success of *Freemasonry Exposed*, and the many good jokes which had resulted from its publication.

"Ah, by the by, that reminds me. Have you ever heard of this new order, the Knights of Pythias?" he asked, suddenly interrupting the tide of conversation.

"Well, yes, I believe I have," I evolved.

"You ought to join that order."

"So I have been told."

"I am sure of it. It is destined to be a greater order than the Masons, in fact, every Mason of any note is joining the Knights, well knowing that their own old order will soon go to pieces. Why, all the fellows belong to it," he added, energetically.



MY FRIEND HOPKINS ALSO ADVISES ME NOT TO MAKE ANY MISTAKE, BUT TO BE SURE AND JOIN THE KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS.

"What fellows?"

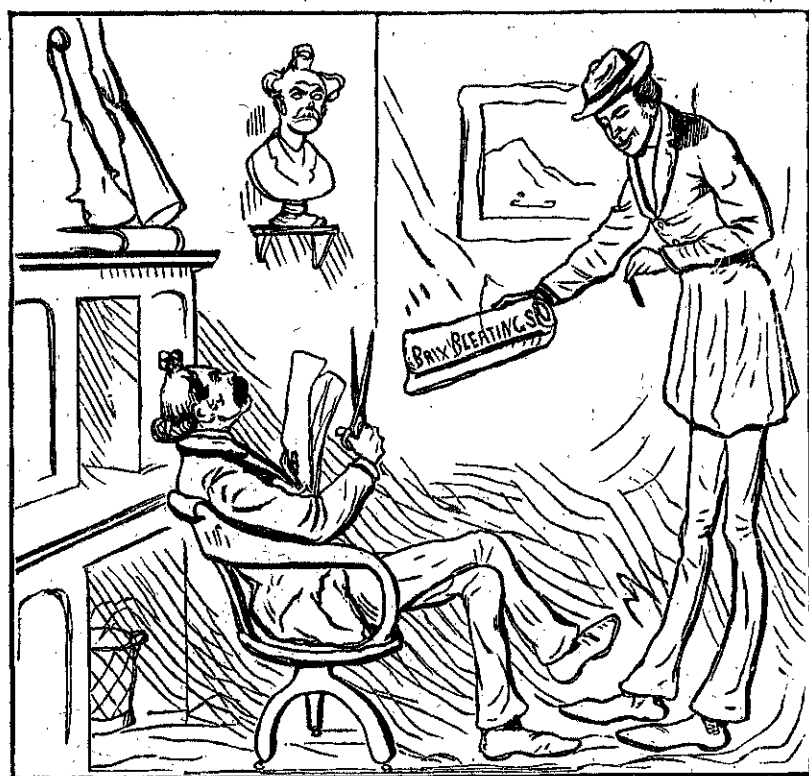
"Why, newspaper men."

"Oh, it's a kind of paper order, eh?"

"Not altogether."

"Did they ever order you up?"

"Yes, but I was forced to play it alone. But I am serious—it is a splendid order to belong to."



THE SEDATE AND SOLEMN TEUSCH PRESENTS HIS EFFUSIONS AND HIS COMPLIMENTS, AND ALSO ADVISES ME TO BECOME A KNIGHT OF PYTHIAS.

"Is there any penalty for *not* belonging to it?"

"Yes, the penalty of being in the dark."

"Well, here is a good chance to quote Shakspeare, the first one I have had to-day. 'Where ignorance is bliss 'twere folly to be wise.' Don't it?"

"That does not always apply. But you make a great mistake if you neglect to join 'em."

"So I've been told twice before to-day. Now, tell me, what benefits should I derive from joining them?"

"It would benefit your paper, your widows and orphans."

"Ah! I haven't begun to worry for them yet."

"You will never lack friends."

"I do not lack them now if I have any money."

"And you will not lack them without money if you join this order."

"Do those who join pledge themselves to be drummers for the purpose of extending the business?"

"You trifle, my dear sir."

"Perhaps so. But you are the third person who has drummed me to join that order within the last two hours. It may not be drumming, but it sounds like it."

"Well, you will live long enough to see your folly I hope. I believe in them."

"Teusch, you are young and green. If you was only ivory you would be valuable. Did you ever hear of that man who was talked to death? I am a man more chinned against than chinning."

"Well, if you keep on that way, I shall begin to think that you are insinuating regarding an immediate personal evacuation of these premises."

"Don't be so sensitive, my dear boy. A reporter should be the last person in the world to be troubled that way."

"Well, good-by. But don't make any mistake about the Knights of Pythias."

I simply smiled as he passed out of sight. He was a good fellow, but he was evidently biased. I made up my mind that he had been initiated too much and wished to restore the equilibrium by sharing it with some one else. That's how we used to feel in the good old Sons of Malta times, wern't it?

The next day the whole thing was again forgotten amid the whirl and racket of business, but, along towards noon, I received the following letter :

"DEAR SIR—The Knights of Pythias admire you. They know your record. Will you join our order?"

"MANY KNIGHTS."

My waste-basket didn't happen to be full, and so there was room for this anonymous invitation.

It was evidently a put-up job by Asa, or the other two with whom I had conversed, and, of course, I paid no further attention to it. But if there was anything needed to keep me from joining them, it was this continual teasing and soliciting.

When I went out to lunch, I found my friend Green seated at the table to which I was assigned. Green is a nice fellow, a perfect gentleman. *Sunny* Green, I always called him, owing to his profession.

"Sunny Green, my dear boy, I am delighted at seeing you. How have you been?" I asked.

"First rate, thank you. Allow me to press your hand! Delighted! Take a seat."

"Thanks. How shines the *Sun* now-a-days?"

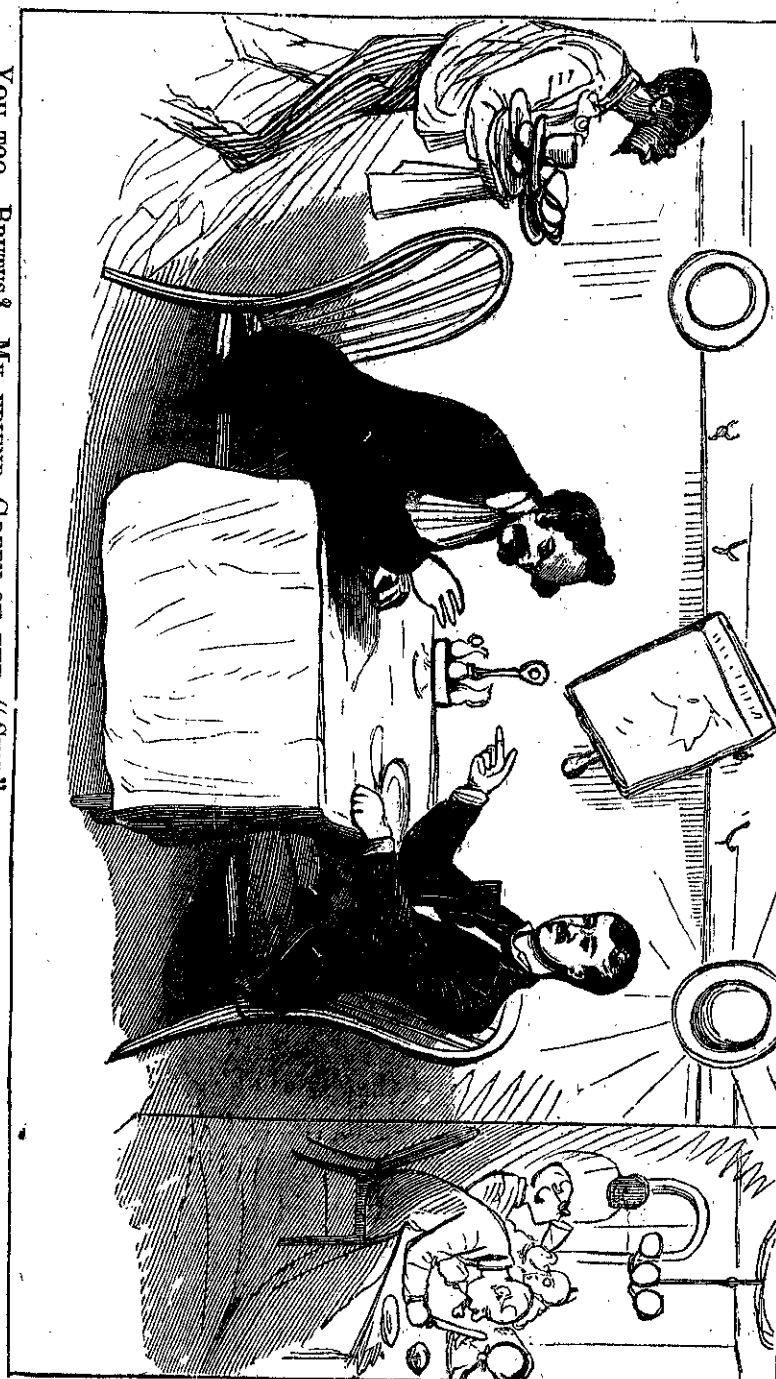
" Warm, very warm, which you know is good for *Oats*. How are things?"

"All that a Christian could wish. Somebody or other—guess it was Teusch—told me that you had been getting married. Is that so?"

"Oh no, that is a bit of bogus news. I'll tell you what he must have had reference to; I've lately joined the Knights of Pythias," said he.

I started as though the waiter had spilt a dish of hot soup down my spinal column. It struck me at the time that I had heard nearly all I wanted to hear about that order. It was becoming slightly monotonous, if I rightly understood myself.

YOU TOO, BRUTUS? MY FRIEND GREEN OF THE "SUN" ALSO GIVES THE BALD A PUSH, AND WARNS ME AGAINST MAKING ANY MISTAKE. "THAT IS THE ORDER YOU SHOULD BELONG TO, OLD MAN."



"Yes, sir, I'm a Knight," he added, proudly.

"What do you think of the election?" I asked, for you see I was bound to change the subject right away.

"Oh, that's all right. We all expected it. Funny how these things will work. But, by the way, Brick, you should join those Knights of Pythias."

Flesh and blood! I got red in the face, but held my tongue and looked at the bill of fare.

"It's one of the most beautiful orders that ever was."

I glanced up at him, but addressed my conversation to the waiter, who, by this time, had come to interview me.

"Been to the theatre lately?" I asked, again making an effort to get him away from his subject.

"No, I don't care to go since I joined the Knights. The fact is, there is so much more attraction in the lodge-room than in the theatre that I prefer to go there."

"Yes, it used to be so in Sons of Malta times. If you remember that order hurt the theatres very much."

This was intended not only to be sarcastical, but to be insinuating as well.

"But, my dear sir our glorious order is nothing like the Sons of Malta."

"Perhaps not."

"Oh, don't make any mistake about it."

"Allow me to ask you two questions?"

"Certainly, a dozen."

The reader will observe that I was gradually being drawn into the subject in spite of myself. But I had a few hot shot left yet.

"Well, in the first place, does the term, 'Don't make any mistake' belong peculiarly to your Pythias order?"

"By no means. Why?"

"Because everybody who has ever spoken to me regarding the order has made liberal use of the term."

"Purely circumstantial, I assure you."

"Well, in the next place, will you be kind enough to tell me how long you were bored upon the subject before you joined it?"

Not long. I became convinced that it was a good order, and so allowed myself to be scooped in by it."

"And so you didn't suffer long?"

"Oh, no. Why?"

"Nothing, only I've been asked several or more times to join the order, that's all."

"Well, that's right. Of course you will do so."

"Yes, I have made up my mind to do so."

"Allow me to congratulate you," said he, extending his hand for a shake.

"Well, no, we won't shake just now; it might be thought somewhat premature."

"How so; you intend to join us?"

"Yes, in about a hundred years from now."

"Oh, you are prejudiced."

"Yes, in favor of time. But let us change the subject, what is the newest thing out?"

"The Knights of Pythias," replied my tormentor.

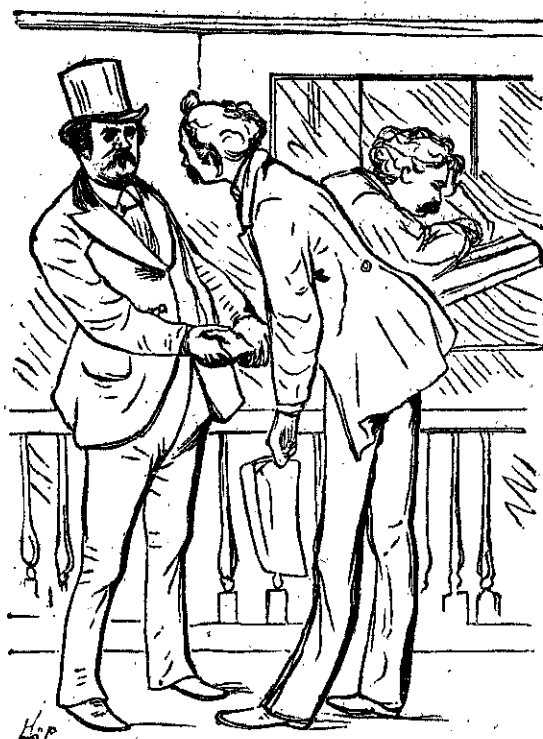
"Good day, Mr. Green."

I vanished; I flew on the wings of indignation back to my sanctum, leaving my dinner half eaten and not any paid for. I wanted to be alone; I wanted to express myself as I felt, where there were none to hear me, and I did it.

Confound the Knights of Pythias! What had I done that this torment should follow me?

I gave the conundrum up and tried to compose myself to composition. I felt just like saying something of a withering nature regarding these Knights, and, seizing my pen, I ground out the following squib:

"THE KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS.—We believe this order to be the embodiment of disorder, a snare and a delusion. Those of our readers who remember the Sons of Malta, will give it a good wide berth."



TONY PASTOR CALLS TO PAY HIS RESPECTS, AND SAYS I MAKE A GREAT MISTAKE IF I FAIL TO BECOME A KNIGHT OF PYTHIAS. THESE SOLICITATIONS BECOME A TRIFLE MONOTONOUS.

"There," said I, throwing it into the copy-box with a feeling of relief, "I guess they won't want me to join them any more after they read that."

Vain delusion! Had I known then what I now do I should have comprehended the fact that they would want to initiate me all the more. But I was blind and bent on retaliation.

A few moments after, my friend Tony Pastor came in to mix a little business with a friendly call. We chatted about actors, actresses, showmen, literature, dramatists, and several other things, and I inwardly congratulated myself that I had found one friend who was not a Pythian, or at least a Knight of Pythias. So we chatted.

"By the way, Tony, I think the Elks should be congratulated on their splendid ball the other night."

"Wasn't it splendid? That is a fine order, old boy."

"Yes, I believe it is, and a worthy one, too."

"True but, between you and I, the best order in this or any other country is the Knights of Pythias. Nearly everybody belongs to it."

I groaned in spirit.

"I joined it some time ago, and you should do the same thing," said he, earnestly.

After remaining silent a few moments I asked:

"Are you acquainted with Asa, over in Dutch Street?"

"Slightly but I haven't seen him for years."

"Have you seen Hopkins lately? or Green? or Teusch?"

He said No to them all and then asked me why.

"Oh, nothing, only I didn't know but there was a conspiracy."

"A conspiracy? For what?"

"To rope me into the Knights of Pythias. Everybody whom I know has recommended it to me lately."

"That's all right. They have learned that you are worthy."

"Then there is a concert of action in the case?"

"Not necessarily so. When it becomes generally understood that a man is worthy—"

"And they think he would make a good victim—"

"No no it is a great honor to be thus importuned, and don't make any mistake about it."

There was that expression again, "Don't make any mistake." I mentally resolved to write another squib against them.

"All right, Tony, I'll think about it."

"That's good. I can recommend it to you. But I must be going Ta ta."

We parted at the sanctum door and I went back and began tearing my hair. Was ever a poor wretch so bored! The apple of life began to show specks. The world began to look cold and



BEING WROUGHT UP TO A PITCH OF DESPERATION, I TEAR MY HAIR AND CURSE THE FATES THAT FOLLOW ME.

uninviting. The good that was in me began to leak out. The thread of life began to tighten and I felt that one more opportunity would snap it.

I wanted something to settle my nerves, and not wishing to encounter Asa again, I sent the office-boy over for a cocktail. It came nicely wrapped up in a paper, but when I removed it I found a card on which was written:

"Don't make any mistake, old man, you had better join the Knights of Pythias."

The fiend! But I swallowed his cocktail at a gulp, and tried to feel its restoring and quieting effects.

"Come in!" I said, in response to a rap on my door.

It was Bisbee, the artist. We had business together, and after remarking that I looked flurried we proceeded to transact it, and he was again on the point of leaving.

"I saw a beautiful photograph, in costume, in Brooklyn, as I came over," said he.

"Ah! what was it like?"

"It was a Knight of Pythias in full armor."

I instantly began thinking how much I could lift.



ANOTHER FIEND IMPORTUNES ME, AND I THROW HIM HEADLONG INTO THE STREET.

"You ought to join that order," he added.

I seized him bodily and threw him into the street. That ended his recommendations. I began to feel that nothing thinner than blood would appease my anger, and I resolved to strew my office

with the mortal remains of the next man who mentioned Knights of Pythias to me.

This contretemps had completely unfitted me for business and so I went out for a walk. This was for a few moments unmolested and soothing. I walked up Nassau street towards the Park Hotel. Ah! happy thought! Here was my old friend, everybody's old friend, Tom Higginson, the barber. A shave, a hair-cut, and a shampoo would fix me all right again. I entered his shop.

"Ah, Brick, glad to see you, devilish glad. Come in! Here, Billy, take this gentleman's coat and hat. Ah, this seems like old times. Come over here and I will fix you myself. This way. Just the man I wanted to see for all the world."

Everybody who is acquainted with Tom knows how he rattles on with a friend and customer.

"Well, Tom, I'm somewhat nervous, and if you will go over my face in the usual way, and over my head in two ways I think it will do me good," said I.

"All right, of course it will. If there is anybody in the wide world that can quiet a man, I am that one. Why, I can talk a man into a sound sleep in five minutes by the watch. It's the magnetic way I have with me. Here, Bob, lather this gentleman."

Tom went away to some other part of the shop, leaving me to be lathered by an apprentice. I should certainly have fallen asleep under the operation had the boy not done so so often and insinuated the lather-brush up my nostrils.

But Tom soon came to the rescue.

"Well, Brick, how are things working!" he asked, as he proceeded to place a finer edge on the thin side of his razor.

"I guess I am ready for reaping. Your boy has been all over the visible part of my head I believe."

"Oh, he's a good, faithful boy about such things. I won't keep a boy in my place that cheats a customer in lather. A great many men come to my place just because I am so free with my



MY FRIEND, TOM HIGGINSON, ALSO TAKES IT UPON HIMSELF TO RECOMMEND ME TO BECOME A KNIGHT OF PYTHIAS. I ESCAPE HALF SHAVED.

lather. Did you notice that tall, fine-looking man who just went out as you came in? Well, he's one of that kind," he added, taking me by my nose and commencing business. "Nice man that. He's the big gun in our lodge—Knights of Pythias."

In an instant I was bolt upright in the chair.

"What's the matter? Razor dull, or did I clip a wart?" he asked, looking at me with amazement.

I looked at him a moment, but without making any reply I again laid back in the chair.

"Little nervous, arn't you, old man?"

"Yes, I feel like spilling somebody's blood whenever I hear the name of that order mentioned," said I, sourly.

"Nonsense! one of the finest orders in the world. By the by, you ought to join that order, Bricky."

Again I sprang to a sitting posture and looked savage.

"Only think how the brotherhood would go for *Wild Oats!*"

I waited to hear no more. Seizing a towel I wiped the remaining lather from my face and bolted from the shop without looking behind or answering a question.

Going to a colored barber I astonished him quite as much as I did Tom by requesting him to finish shaving me. But there was one consolation, that ebon reaper was not a Knight of Pythias.

After calming myself somewhat I started for my boarding-house to partake of the soothing hash.

Heretofore I had blamed myself for remaining in a house whose only occupants were three old maids, a homely cook, and an aged landlady. But now I began to see what a cosy little heaven it was, because there were no Knights of Pythias there to annoy or importune me.

After dinner I went out to walk, with a little flower in my buttonhole. The night was balmy and there was a sense of relief which I highly prized. I strolled along and before I was aware of it I found myself opposite the house of Miss Matilda Himm.

This young lady was beautiful to look upon. I had never broken out into poetry over her, but at the same time I felt perfectly willing to join in the good work that I knew she had very near to her heart, that of changing her name. She wanted to change the Himm of her name for a "him" she had in her eye.

She espied me, and I thought I'd spider across the street, for a little informal call.

She was real glad to see me, she was so lonely. And being afraid that she would crush the flower in my buttonhole, I removed it and placed it in her hair.

Then she said how poor the gas was, and she guessed she



ICALL UPON MISS MATILDA HIMM. I DECORATE HER WITH MY BOUQUET, AND SHE ALSO BESEECHES ME TO BECOME A KNIGHT OF PYTHIAS.

would turn it off altogether—it was so bad for the eyes. She was about to do so, when her mother came into the room, and the idea was abandoned.

But we talked and said cunning things to each other for an hour or more, when I arose to go. Then she said what a hurry I was in; that she never went to sleep before twelve o'clock, and she should be so lonely if I went then. So I tarried.

"Now, Brick, I want you to do something for me. I know you will, you are such a great splendid fellow. You will, won't you?"

"Well—I—perhaps so?"

"I want you to join the Knights of Pythias."

"What!" I exclaimed, leaping from my seat and overturning an aquarium that stood by the window.

"Brother Bill has joined them, and he says it is just simply splendid, and he wanted me to ask you to join."

In silence and in tears I gathered up those fishes and other varmints and placed them in my pocket.

"Tell me you will, Brick?" she protested, without noticing what I was doing.

"Matilda, good night! I shall never visit you again until join that order. Good night!" and without waiting to see if her lips tasted any different from what they did when I came in, I strode from her presence.

Good heavens! was the foul fiend pursuing me? Was there no nook or corner to which I could fly for safety? I removed my hat and wiped the perspiration from my heated brow; I smote my chest and sighed—sighed for a lodge in some vast wilderness. What had I done that I should be thus persecuted?

I gave the conundrum up, and went to the nearest saloon. I was unknown and all alone. I bathed my person in forgetfulness. I bathed often, rapidly. I kept that bartender busy for the next half hour concocting forgetfulness, and then I started for home.



THE RESULT OF MY INTERNAL LETHEAN BATHS. AND ALL BECAUSE OF THOSE TERRIBLE KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS.

The baths had produced the desired effect and I had forgotten everything—forgotten where I lived. I bought a lot of newspapers of a boy, and resolved to become a humble citizen; to begin at the bottom of the ladder and work up; to make a self-made man of myself. I made a bargain with a lamp-post, to hold me up, and began to cry out my stock in trade.

Presently, a policeman, seeing evidently that I was perfectly harmless, came up to take a look at me. The sight of his uniform brought on my fever again, I mistook him for a Knight of Pythias, and, in my madness, I demanded that he avault, that he quit my sight. I told him that I would not be roped in, that it was no use.

He merely suggested that I "had 'em" pretty bad, and at



MY TAILOR, WHILE MEASURING ME FOR A NEW COAT, TAKES THE OPPORTUNITY TO SAY THAT I SHOULD MAKE NO MISTAKE; THAT I SHOULD JOIN THE KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS.

once seized me by the coat-collar. Then I thought I was in for it, sure enough. The Knights of Pythias had got me at last and would probably put me through.

"Houz-it, ole man, hic! G-give it tum pretty bad?" I inquired.

"Oh, I guess ten dollars and costs will fix it," said the officer, bracing himself up against me.

"What have you here?" asked the Sergeant, as I was marched up in front of the desk.

"Pretty full," was the officer's laconic reply.

"Go through him," said the Sergeant.

The officer did so, and brought forth, among other things, the contents of Matilda's aquarium.

I have a dim recollection of a loud laugh that was indulged in by several people.

The Captain was called in and he laughed. Then he looked at me and laughed some more. He and I were old friends, but I had forgotten so much that I was not aware of the fact. I asked him if he was chief boss of the Knights, and he said he was.

"Well, I'm ready—'gon with 'netiation."

The Captain said he thought I had been pretty well initiated already, and, after making some inquiries of the officer, he took me by the arm and led me home; but, during the whole tramp, I imagined that I was being "put through" by the Knights of Pythias.

Quite enough of the affair came to mind the next day to give me a good head-ache, and again I bemoaned my sad lot. I also bemoaned my coat. Matilda's fishes and things had completely ruined it, and about the first thing I did after breakfast was to call on my tailor to be measured for a new one.

Of course he was glad to see me. Why shouldn't he have been? One of my weaknesses is paying tailors' bills. And what a lot of pleasant things a pleased tailor will have at his tongue's end to say to such a customer.

"Never saw you looking better in the world," said he, as he proceeded to measure me. "Enjoying good health, I guess."

I hadn't the heart to undeceive him.

"Colonel Astor was in here just a moment ago, and we were speaking about you. Curious, wasn't it?"

"Very; for I scarcely know him."

"Well, he knows you. Fact is, we are both of us Knights of Pythias, and—"

"Silence, Mr. Clip, or I will never darken your door again," yelled I.



BROUGHT DOWN TO A SICK BED, MY PHYSICIAN ALSO RIDICULES MY NERVOUS FEARS, AND TELLS ME TO JOIN THAT NOBLE BROTHERHOOD, THE KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS.

"Why, my dear sir, I meant—"

"Yes, I understand it all. You meant to solicit me to join your confounded order."

"True, but there is no harm in that; it is one of the best societies in the world."

"I am willing it should be so, but none of it for me. I have been driven almost mad by people asking me to join them. Confound you all, you are a lot of drummers, and I'll none of you."

"Don't make any mistake, my dear sir."

"No, sir, I will not" I replied, getting into my old coat and vanishing from the door.

Would this soliciting persecution never stop? Was there no

limit to it? I started for my office, mentally resolving to sell out and go into the interior of Africa. I am not certain but I should have done so on the spur of the moment had I been sure that no Pythian Stanley would have sought me out.

On my desk I found at least five letters from unknown parties, informing me that I had been selected as a fit person to become a Knight of Pythias. I tore my hair and stamped my No. 10s. My partner rushed into the sanctum to see what the trouble was, for my piety was evident to everyone within hearing.

I poured my sorrows into his ears; I showed him the letters I had received, I figured out the doctor's bills I should have to pay if this thing continued. He proceeded to soothe me by saying that he had joined the order the night before, and suggested that it would be a good thing for me to do the same thing.

This was too much. I fainted; I raved after I got through with my faint and offered to sell out my share in our business for a cent. But he only laughed, and told me not to make any mistake.

The fates were against me. I was seized with the brain fever and went home. I became a driveling imbecile.

"Don't make any mistake" rang in my ears to the exclusion of everything else.

My physician came and took charge of me. He was a nice sensible fellow, and understanding my case at the outset, he soon had me all right again. I told him all about it and he laughed at me. He said it was only an absurd prejudice on my part, that I had no occasion to be worried, for he was himself a Knight and could recommend me to join them.

This was the straw that broke the mule's back; I proceeded into a relapse out of which he could not bring me until a week had passed. But by careful nursing he saved my life.

Once more on my feet and again able to attend to business I began to ponder on the subject. What was the use of living if I did not become a Knight of Pythias? They would certainly

be the death of me if I did not join them, and how much worse could it be if I gave way and became one?

I counseled with the originator of my troubles, Asa. He seized me by the hand and congratulated me on my becoming interested.

"I'm your friend, old man; count on me, I'll see you safe through this, and if you don't say that it is one of the biggest things you ever saw you may shoot me on sight."

Reluctantly I gave him permission to propose me for initiation, and from that hour became resigned to whatever fate had in store for me. I was told how to proceed, and now that I have enjoyed it, I propose to tell the world how the old thing worked.

CHAPTER II.

TERRIBLE DOINGS.

I AM fully convinced that a man whose knees are naturally weak, and whose backbone lacks the quality of stiffness, may,



FOLLOWING PREVIOUS INSTRUCTIONS, I KNOCK, THAT IT MAY BE OPENED UNTO ME. IT IS OPENED, AND SO ARE MY EYES.

under certain circumstances, be worked up to a pitch of reckless bravery and do deeds of heroism that might make a Modoc blush.

But I am not reflecting on myself at all. I went to the meeting-room of the Knights of Pythias with eyes open and a reckless heart. I felt confident that my future happiness depended upon my becoming a Knight, and if they killed me in putting me through it would be only a trifle ahead of what they would certainly do if I refused to submit.

The entrance for candidates is not the general one used by the initiated, and, consequently, I found myself in a little ante-room, in one end of which there was a closed wicket. I had been instructed to knock and it should be opened unto me, but I was not to knock until eight o'clock.

The room was dimly lighted, and the whole place was as gloomy as the vestibule of a prison. I looked around and found



BY THE AID OF A LASSO I AM "ROPED IN," SOMEWHAT TOO LIVELY TO MAKE IT AGREEABLE.

that the door through which I had entered was closed by a spring lock on the outside, and I was unmistakably "in for it," in whatever shape it might be. But I braced up and resolved not to show the white feather.

At precisely eight o'clock I knocked at the wicket, and it was instantly opened unto me.

"What means this alarm?" asked a quadruple bass voice, through the opening.

"Well, I was told to knock and it should be opened unto me," I replied, carelessly.

"What do you desire?"

"Desire? Well, I should like to get out of this."

"There is only one avenue of escape."

"Only one? Have you got such a thing as a guide-board about you?"

"Beware of trifling, Sir Outsider!" roared the mouth at the wicket.

"Anything else?"

"What brought you here?"

"A pair of large feet."

"Beware!"

"Oh, for that matter I'll be anything you say to get out of this. What next?"

"For what purpose did you give the alarm at this wicket?"

"Because I was told to do so."

"But what object did you have in view?"

"Why, to follow instructions, of course."

"But what did you come here for?"

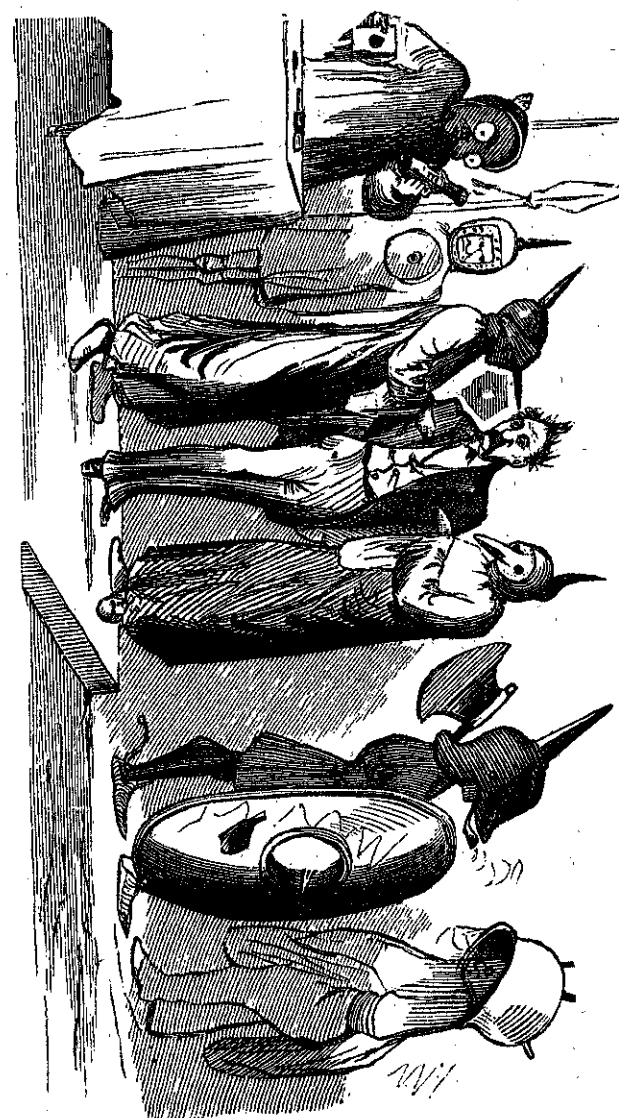
"Because I was told to."

"You were told to come, but for what purpose?"

"To get rid of persecution."

"Beware of the fate of triflers! You are now in the enfolding arms of one of the most severe and yet noble orders that the sun of time ever shone upon. You must state the object of

HERE THE CANDIDATE IS MET BY AN INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE, WHO PROCEED TO RELIEVE HIM OF ALL HIS VALUABLES. THIS IS DONE IN THE ANTE-ROOM, WHERE ALL ARE OBLIGED TO "ANTE" BEFORE THEY CAN PROCEED IN THE LITTLE GAME.



your visit and avoid all trifling as you value your life. Speak! What did you seek in coming here?"

"Well, some of my friends or enemies wish to make a Knight of Pythias of me."

"Is it your wish to escape your present confines by going through the ordeal of initiation?"

"Yes, if there is no other way of doing it."

"Tis well. Come in."

As he pronounced these words a lasso was thrown over my head, and in the twinkling of a sheep's tail I was roped into another and a larger room where I was met by about a dozen armored and disguised members of the brotherhood, who were evidently waiting for me.

I breathed freer when the noose was removed from my neck, for I found it very difficult to respire through the noose of the order.

"Who have we here, Sir Knight Conductor?" asked one of the waiters.

"One from the outer world, unregenerated and full of the vanities and unsteadfastness of mankind in general," replied the wretch who had snaked me in.

"What does he here?"

"He is tired of the selfishness of the world and would learn the virtues of true friendship and real brotherhood."

"Comes he well recommended?"

"Yea, verily."

"And his unknightly name is—"

"Bricktop."

"How is he known in the outer world?"

"As a graceless editor."

"What!" exclaimed the whole crowd.

"Who proposed this man?" demanded the chief.

"Here is the record of the knightly counsel, signed by brothers Whitelaw Reid, Jno. A. Green, Asa Crandall, Hamilton



AND THIS IS THE WAY THEY SOFT-SOAP A CHAP, CLAIMING IT AS AN ANCIENT AND HONORED CUSTOM.

Fish, John A. Dix, Joe Howard, J. G. Bennett, George Francis Train, Wemyss Jobson, George the Count Johannes, and several other true and worthy knights.

"Then it must be well, but we greatly fear that our great and glorious order is on the decline when such persons are proposed for membership," said the leader of the banditti. "But proceed. Go through him!"

"You must deliver up everything of value that you may have on your person," said another Goth, approaching and entering my various pockets.

"Tell me, gentle Hun, is it one of your time-honored customs to leave a candidate anything?" I asked, a trifle taken aback at such goings in.

"Yes, we leave him his character."

"Ah, thanks! I might have doubted it had you not told me. Proceed."

"Has the candidate been properly gone through?"

"Worthy Sir Knight Conductor, he stands before you as innocent as an oyster-shell."

"Tis well. Man of the outer world, what is your dearest wish at this moment?"

"To be restored to my native element," I replied.

"Beware of trifling."

Chorus by the others: "Beware!"

"All right, you have hinted as much to me before."

Chorus: "Don't make any mistake!"

There it was, again: "Don't make any mistake!" I had found the fountain-head of this expression at last.

"Are you ready to proceed in your search for higher aims and grander truths?"

"I am ready for anything."

"What ho! sound the alarm-gong! Bid the herald approach the pickets and proclaim us in waiting."

This evidently meant business.

The next thing that greeted my waiting senses was a most infernal whanging of gongs and hewgags, followed by a cavalry-call blast upon a bugle or an unlicensed fish-horn, and then an answer came from another in the distance.

I didn't, of course, know then how the thing was done, but I do now—although it might lessen the interest in my narrative were I to enter too closely into an explanation thereof. So let us pass; they hold the cards.

Well, all this racket died away at last, and the herald approached the ante-room party.

"Herald, what greeting?"

"The Most Worthy Grand Commander has been informed that you are in waiting with a stranger who desires admission to our ranks, and it is his pleasure that you approach his headquarters."

"Thanks. Knightly guards, form the cordon!"

They did it; they formed it and placed me on the inside.



AFTER WHICH HE IS HANDED OVER TO THE KNIGHT OF THE BATH, AND HE IS RINSED OFF WITH THE FROUZY END OF A BROOM. EVEN THIS FAILS TO SATISFY THEIR FIENDISHNESS OR TO MAKE THE CANDIDATE HAPPY.

Then the noise of horns, hewgags, and broken glass began again, and, when at its height, the cordon moved towards the entrance to the hall or encampment. Then everybody silenced.

Arriving in front of it, the herald again tooted, and was answered from within. Then a hole in the door opened and a mug became visible. It was a talking mug.

"Who comes here?"

"The Herald, on his way to the headquarters of the Most Worthy Grand Commander, followed by Sir Knight Conductor and a cordon of guards encircling a man from the outer world, who thus approaches in quest of higher aims and greater truths."

"Have you the countersign?"

"We have."

"Whisper it."

The Herald threw up his beaver and approached the hole in

the wall. The confab appeared to be satisfactory, for he of the inside said "All right!" to we of the outside.

Then heavy bolts flew back, chains rattled, the gong gave out a dreadful wail, and the huge doors flew open. We forwarded.

Once inside, the doors were again closed and the regular business of the evening commenced. The organist struck up a march, and, stepping out to the time of it, we circled around the hall three times, during which I had an opportunity of scrutinizing my future companions. And such a lot of odds and ends of animation as they were!

It certainly seemed as though the antipodes of creation had been brought together to see how they felt in each other's company. Black spirits and white, red spirits and gray would not express it by half. Every conceivable uniform, from the complete Knight of Edward II. to a Bloomer of the period, was there, standing up in mask to inspect me.



THIS DONE, HE IS TOLD TO INTERVIEW HIMSELF IN A MIRROR. THIS IS CLAIMED TO CARRY WITH IT A GREAT MORAL LESSON.



HE IS WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE AND FOUND WANTING. IN FACT, HE IS WANTING ALL THE WAY THROUGH—WANTING TO GET AWAY.

As the music died away, we halted in front of the Worthy Grand Commander, before whom they all saluted, and to whom I was presented.

"Sir Knight Conductor, whom have you here?" asked that armored dignity.

"Most Worthy Grand Commander, one of the world's Awkward Squad," replied the Conductor.

"Upon what business does he come to us!"

"He is tired of the world's selfishness, and seeks an asylum in our brotherhood."

"Is he tried, true, perfect in physique, and comes he here well vouched for?"

"He has been vouched for by several Sir Knights, and they pronounce him made of good material."

"Tis well. Let that material be wrought upon by our

forms and ceremonies until he is pronounced a polished jewel. Away!"

We proceeded to a way. That way lay directly opposite, and led to the tent of the Vice Grand Commander, before whom I was immediately placed.

"Who bring you here?" asked the V. G.

"One of the world's Awkward Squad, whom the Worthy Grand Commander ordered me to place before you, that the oath of secrecy and fealty might be administered."

"Let the candidate kneel."

I was forced upon my marrow-bones.

"Place him in due position."

I was made to grasp the blade of an undressed sword.

"Now repeat after me, inserting your full name after the pronoun 'I': 'I, Bricktop, in the presence of this august assemblage, do solemnly swear that I will be a Knight of Pythias to the best of my ability, my knowledge, and belief, and that I will emulate the godlike example of the olden Pythias, as typified by our brother, F. B. Conway. I further promise and swear to maintain the secrets of this order until otherwise ordered, and that I will do my level best to add new recruits to the noble army of Knights, and that I will take good care that each one whom I may recommend shall be as good as I am myself; that I will help swell the bank account of this Lodge by paying my regular dues. I furthermore swear that I will patronize every worthy Knight of Pythias, and never ask him to "hang it up" so long as I have a dollar's worth of personal property about me. I swear to be true to every worthy Knight of Pythias; to lend him my hand or my money as he may elect. I swear also to look out for every widow and orphan of a worthy Knight of Pythias and to take no greater advantage of any situation than any other man would under the same circumstances. So help me, St. Pythias, and keep me true."

Response by the Brethren: "And don't make any mistake!"



IN ORDER TO MAKE UP FOR HIS SCANTY WEIGHT, THEY PROCEEDED TO FILL UP THE POOR VICTIM WITH LINKED MYSTERY, LONG DRAWN OUT.

"Arise! Go to the Worthy Grand Commander for further instructions." And away I was marched again.

"The candidate, having taken the prescribed oath, is again brought before you for further disposition."

"Let him be purified after our ancient custom."

Here was a go! I was hurried into another room and hurried out of my garments by the attendant Modocs. A fiend, in a long black robe and Scallawagian mask, approached with a scrubbing-brush. Two others hoisted me upon the edge of a barrel of soft soap, while a third wretch trailed a howitzer upon me.

I have often been soft-soaped in my life, but this was the worst dose I ever submitted to. I howled and asked to be excused. I told them I had seen quite enough, and experienced more than enough. The fiend laughed and repeated the squib that I had written in my paper against the order. I groaned

in spirit and began to see why they had manifested so much anxiety to initiate me.

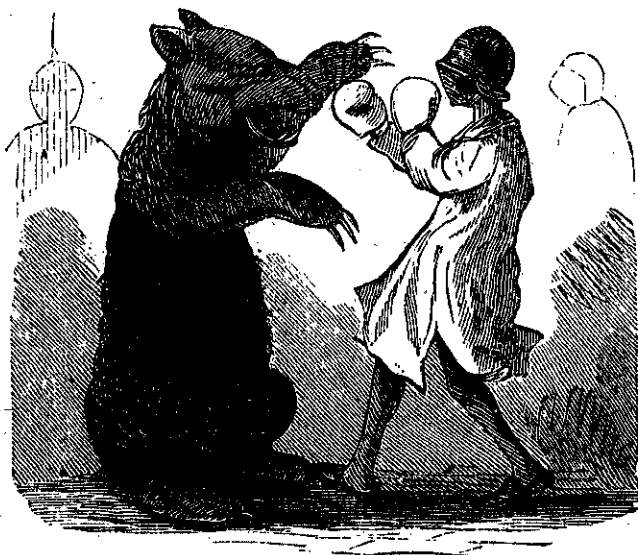
As soon as I had been gone over with the scrubbing-brush and soft-soap I was hurried around the room at a dog-trot, scattering the lather in the track behind me. This was my first luxury; but what did they intend to do with me next?

I was soon enlightened.

"Ho! send him to bath," said the Conductor, and before I could comprehend the movement I was tumbled into a bath-tub half full of some liquid, and another Vandal went for me with a broom. I know I have taken greater liquid luxuries than this one was, and I have seen attendants who were more careful.

But I held my peace the best I could, feeling all the while that my hour for revenge would come. What do the Knights of Pythias think about it now?

I will not dwell long on this part of the initiation, this



A SPARRING-MATCH IS NEXT IN ORDER WITH A BEAR. THE BARE IDEA OF SUCH A THING! AND YET THEY CLAIM THAT THIS IS A TIME-HONORED CUSTOM.



AS IN MY OWN CASE, THE CANDIDATES GENERALLY COME TO GRIEF, AND THE REGULAR "HUG" IS GOT UPON THEM WITH GOOD PROSPECTS OF BROKEN BONES.

ancient custom of purification, for they didn't keep me long in it at the time, but, as they hurried me, so will I hurry the reader along towards the finale of this terrible ordeal.

Another disguised Modoc in command entered the room to see how they were getting along with me.

"Is he purified?" he asked in a down-cellar voice.

"We have soft-soaped him and put him through the lye."

"Did his worldly dirt adhere with much tenacity?"

"It did, but we removed it. A few pieces of skin came off, but not so much as might have been expected, considering his profession."

"Tis well. Robe him for the mirror!"

A loose gown or bag was drawn over me, and tied around my neck, and again above my head.

"Bricktop, you will now interview yourself in the mirror," said he, as a glass was held before me.

Not being able to see anything, I didn't say anything.

"You appear to have nothing to say to yourself."

"Not a word; I'll do it all in thinking," I replied.

"That is right. This is done to teach you that you must keep yourself to yourself, and be careful about casting reflections. Will you remember the lesson?"

"I will." The hood was removed from my head.

"So far, so good. Now let the candidate be weighed."

Up to this point I didn't like their ways; but I kept my temper down, and braced up to see what this weigh was like. I did not have to wait long.

Again I was trotted around the room, and then out of it into another, where there was suspended from the ceiling overhead a huge pair of balances, on one end of which hung a human skeleton.

Into the other end of this scale I was assisted by two armored knights while a weigher with a repulsive mask stood by to note the result.

But this, like all their ways, was dark and deceitful. The party who originally occupied that skeleton had either got away from it on account of taking too much mercury, or he shook it because it was made of pig-iron and was too heavy to carry about, or—well, there was something extraordinary about it, any way, or about the beam of the scale, for it pulled down my healthy one hundred and seventy-five with the greatest of ease.

"What say the scales?"

"That he is wanting."

"Wanting what?"

"Moral gravity."

"How much?"

"Enough to make at least two men."

"We are sorry, for the remainder of the initiation will go harder with him. Let us weep!"

For the next five minutes there was a weep; there was a wailing and gnashing of false teeth. They howled. They reproduced the original water-shed, and I began to think they would take pity on me.

There was where I made a mistake.

"Man of the outer world! you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting," intoned one of the cusses.

I felt that I really was wanting.

"You have been weighed against the relics of mortality, and found sadly lacking," toned another.

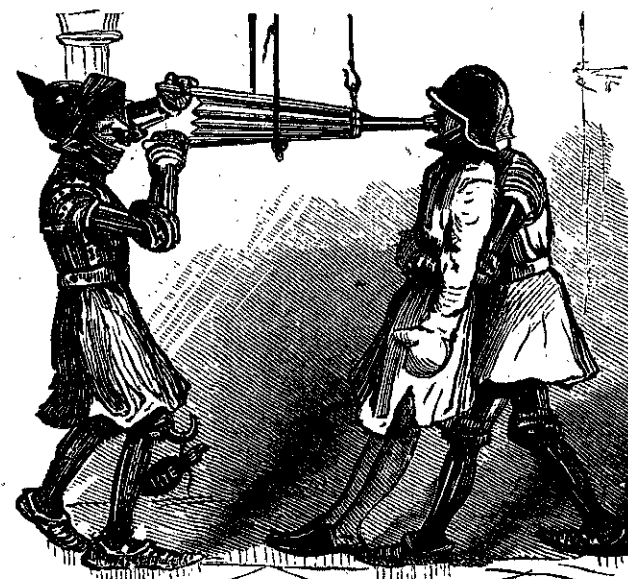
"What shall be done with him?" asked a third.

"He must be brought up to the required weight," said a fourth Vandal.

"In what way?"

"Turn him over to the butcher."

"O Lord!" I groaned.



AND THIS IS THE WAY THEY RESUSCITATE A VICTIM WHOSE BREATH HAS BEEN HUGGED OUT OF HIM. ANOTHER TIME-HONORED CUSTOM.

But groaning did not count. The butcher of the order approached with a basket and pitchfork. He set the basket down, and elevated his pitchfork.

It was a trying moment with me now, for that butcher proceeded to pitch a lot of sausages into my open mouth, with a view of bringing me up to the required weight.

It was a supreme moment with my appetite, also a moment of supreme contempt. You can lead a mule to drink, but you can't make him eat linked mystery in the shape of sausages.

I resolved on a change of tactics—I resolved on imitating that butcher a little. So I seized his fork, and, jerking it out of his hands, I proceeded to stir him up about the ribs with it. I banged him over the iron-pot helmet with it, and he howled for help. Then I jabbed the tines into his big foot, pinning him to the floor, after which I rushed from the room.

But my triumph was only brief—only temporary, so to speak, for the howls of the forked butcher roused the other Comanches and they bore down upon me in hosts. Four or five of them took turns at knocking me down with war-clubs and battle-axes, after which the Worthy Grand Commander and several of the other officers sat upon me and asked me if I felt sorry—much, if any.

I couldn't reply, owing to a press of business; and, after enjoying me for a while, they got up, and four or five ruffians dragged me before the tent of the Worthy Grand Commander, in the main camp.

"Thou belligerent barbarian, thy spirit argues well, but it should not be manifested in this place in such a manner. To give a free rein to your pugilistic humor, we will allow you to practice upon our fighting bear."

"No, thank you," said I. I don't care for any more practice."

"But you must develop yourself. Bring forth Bruin!"

There was evidently trouble brewing for me, but before I could interpose any further objections a huge black bear trotted into the room, and came directly towards me.

THE WAY POOR CANDIDATES ARE SUSPENDED BY THE ELEPHANT OVER A DEEP AND YAWNING CHASM UNTIL THEY PROMISE TO DO EVERYTHING THE ORDER REQUIRES. THIS THEY PLAYFULLY CALL "SEEING THE ELEPHANT."



The Conductor approached me with a pair of boxing-gloves. Bruin was on time, and by this time had risen upon his hind legs, directly in front of me. The bare idea of fighting such a monster with gloves! I begged to be excused.

"Fight or take the consequences," howled the Conductor.

Not being in want of any consequences, I concluded to try my luck in a set-to, and so pulled on the gloves. The bear came towards me.

"Time!" shouted somebody.

I felt like making time.

But the idea occurred to me that the bear, after all, might be that butcher in another disguise, and so I put up my hands and stood on guard. Old Bill Tovee had given me a few lessons in the manly art some time before, and I resolved to show what I had learned.

The bear reached for my nut with his right, but I stopped it neatly, and gave him one on his sheep-trap that made his chops rattle.

"Bravo!" grunted the assembled Knights.

Bruin shook his head and showed his teeth. He also pawed for me again, but I got out of the way and patted him on the other side of his ugly mug. This was the best sport I had enjoyed thus far, and I felt zesty about keeping it up. So I danced around and sent in my awful left wherever there was a chance left open. I reached him under the chin with my right mawley, and made him shut up. I tried his ribs two or three times, and got away without a scratch, and the brethren appeared to think that their champion was sick. I was determined to make him so, at all events, and peppered away until I was nearly out of breath.

Round Second.—We both came to time, and I proceeded at once to business. I reached for that bear some more, but, somehow or other, that bear had the longest reach and got at me first. He fastened one of his claws into my hide and things and drew me towards him in a very patronizing way.

A BLINDFOLDED JUGGLER PROCEEDS TO TEST THE CANDIDATE'S NERVE BY PRACTICING THE IMPALEMENT ACT UPON HIM, AND IF HE ESCAPES UNPUNCTURED THEY CONGRATULATE HIM ON POSSESSING COURAGE ENOUGH TO UNDERGO FURTHER TESTS, ALL OF WHICH IS VERY PLEASANT FOR THE CANDIDATE.



I yelled "No fair!" but Bruin evidently thought that his time had come now. I know I thought so. I attempted to get away by all the dodges that Old Bill had learned me, but the old man probably never thought about providing against such a contingency as this. I would have rapped for assistance, but my club was too short, or something, and so I didn't do anything but struggle.

But this failed to help me any, and, before I knew what was coming next, the bear had taken me to his embrace. In other words, he was coming the "hug" on me in terrible earnest. The more I tried, the more he did, and I imagined that I could even then hear my ribs and bones crack, well knowing that he hadn't hardly begun to hug me yet.

"Enough!" I yelled, with what breath I had left.

"Call off the purp!" said the Worthy Grand.

The "purp" released his hold, and I fell all in a heap upon the floor. For a moment or two I lost my individuality and failed to see which way my antagonist went. My next distinct recollections were concerning a small stream of very good brandy trickling down my throat. Another sweet amid the bitters!

"Brace up, old man," whispered the Conductor.

It was all very well to say "brace up," but doing it was quite a different thing. That confounded bear had squeezed me like a lemon, and, in spite of the brandy, I gasped for breath.

Four of 'em lifted me, one at each corner of my anatomy, and carried me into one of the ante-rooms. Here I was placed before a huge bellows, the nozzle of which was inserted into my mouth, and, while one fellow held me up, the Conductor blew my lungs full of wind and got me into shape again. They have resuscitation down to a fine thread.

"Can you brace up, now, old party?"

"I'll try," I faintly breathed.

"Then follow back to the august presence of our Most Worthy Grand Commander.



ACTING THE PART OF PYTHIAS, HE IS REQUESTED BY DAMON, IN PRISON, TO TAKE HIS PLACE WHILE HE GOES OUT TO "SEE A MAN."

I did as requested; I followed meekly, for my spirit was fractured and my pugnacity all gone.

I went into that august presence; I went in and wilted becomingly before his majesty.

"Worthy candidate," said he, addressing me. "You have been put through thus roughly in our most sacred and holy order to show you the folly of taking on airs and of resisting those above you in authority. Let the lesson sink deep into your heart."

I felt that it had sank quite deep enough to touch my liver and unjoint my spinal column.

"You have encountered but one of our animals, and it is necessary that you become acquainted with more of them, in order to fully understand the great and high-toned lessons which knighthood teaches."

"Beg pardon, but, if it suits you just as well, I would rather

be excused. I have seen quite as much of your menagerie as I care to," I whispered.

"Ha! he talks back! Drag him to the dreadful amphitheatre and there let him behold the elephant in all his majesty!" roared the Worthy Grand, unsheathing his sword and whirling it within an inch of my poor nose.

About twenty hirelings seized me and hurried me—I hardly knew where (I have found out since). But it was a strange place, at all events; a sort of theatre, the galleries of which were occupied exclusively by dead-heads. The whole affair was but dimly lighted and wholly unappreciated, at least by me.

On an elevated platform stood a huge elephant, and he looked quite as happy as the bear had when he came to stand up with me about that set-to.

The Conductor marched me up to and around this menageretic monster, and formally introduced me to him. I told the Conductor that I didn't care about it, that I wasn't making any new acquaintances; but while I was thus remonstrating the elephant reached out his trunk and lifted me by that portion of the body by which a chap balances the most easily.

I howled my protestations as before, but all to no purpose. That elephant appeared to know his business and proceeded to put me through his part of the initiation. He walked around with me for a while and then threw me up fifteen or twenty feet, catching me on his tusks as I came down again. Then he threw me astride of his back and trotted around with me some more.

While this was going on neither the spectators or the elephant said anything to me. In fact, I was having it all to myself. But finally the climax came. This order is chock full of climaxes. The elephant walked out upon a long spring-board, still holding me where I balanced well, and reaching the



I AFTERWARDS LEARNED THAT THIS WAS THE MAN MR. DAMON WENT OUT TO SEE, BUT I WAS NOT FULLY INITIATED WHILE THIS WAS BEING ENACTED AT MY PUTTING THROUGH.

and he held me suspended over what appeared to be a deep and yawning chasm.

"Dost thou repent?" came from somebody's cellar.

"Yes, I take it all back," I moaned.

"And will submit humbly, hereafter?"

"I'll take water from anybody."

"Restore him, Damon," said the voice.

Damon minded better than I was afraid he would, for with great science and caution he proceeded to raise himself upon one of his hind legs and to swing around, end for end, after which he marched back to the stage and deposited me carefully upon my feet, after which he retired from sight.

The Conductor approached me.

"Old party, how do you feel?"

"As though I would like to go home. Let me out. This is



NOT SATISFIED WITH THE TORMENTS THEY HAD HEAPED UPON MY DEFENSELESS PERSON, THEY NOW SENT A CROWD OF REPORTERS TO "INTERVIEW" ME, AND SOME ARTISTS TO TAKE SKETCHES OF ME IN MY HELPLESS CONDITION. COULD DIABOLICAL INGENUITY GO ANY FURTHER?

the worst scrape I ever got into yet. It's worse by half than the Sons of Malta," said I.

"Don't make any mistake. These little trials have been placed upon you, not in a spirit of mischief, but for the purpose of nerving you up so that you may not falter during the coming ordeals. Come!"

"What the devil are you going to do with me next?"

"Finish you."

"What, take my life?"

"Perhaps not, if you are strong and obedient. But it is not for me to answer. I will take you before the Worthy Grand Commander for further instructions."

"Take me out of this and I'll make a millionaire of you; I'll give you my brown-stone house; I'll give you my wife and all of her relations. Only let me get out of this den of savages and I'll make a man of you."

"Hold! would'st thou bribe me, an old Castilian? I know my duty better. Come!"

I bowed and followed him back to the lodge-room. Here I was again taken before the Worthy Grand.

"Conductor, have you seen the candidate put over the usual course?"

"Most Worthy Grand, he has been so put."

"Have all our ancient forms and honored ceremonies been faithfully observed?"

"Most faithfully."

"And is the candidate sufficiently humble?"

"He takes water, Worthy Grand."

"Will he always take it?"

Here the conductor turned to me: "Will you always take water?"

"Yes, if it is properly doctored."

"No levity!"

"This is a strictly temperance order; not one of its millions

of members has ever been known to taste or smell of anything spirituous. Do you promise?"

"Oh, certainly."

"Then let him be taken before the Grand Chancellor for further progress in our order."

Here the organ struck up and we marched around the hall and back again to where the Grand Chancellor sat in complete armor and with his beaver down.

"Whom have you here, Sir Knight Conductor?"

"A candidate who has seriously indulged in all of the luxuries of our ancient order up to seeing the elephant, and who comes before you for further instruction and initiation."

"Is he happy in what he has thus far experienced?"

"Thus far he appears perfectly satisfied."

The knightly rascal!

"But does he thirst for more knowledge and light?"



THE JAILOR INFORMS THE CANDIDATE THAT THE TIME IS UP. DAMON FAILING TO RETURN, HE MUST DIE IN HIS STEAD.

"He says he is stil. athirst."

Yes, I was very much athirst. By the way, I thought I recognized the voice of the Chancellor as belonging to my friend Green.

"Candidate, what business or profession are you engaged in in the outer world?"

"I am an editor, sir."

"An editor

Here somebody in the audience rose to his feet and said.

"Worthy Grand Commander, I must still enter my protest against this dilution."

"What dilution do you refer to, Sir Knight Sabin?"

"This dilution of our noble and ancient order with the membership of mere editors."

"I must also enter my protest?" said another.

"Against what, Sir Knight Phil Sheridan?"

"Against these unknightly admissions into our order. By and by a barber or a tailor will be proposed."

This was followed by speeches, pro and con, from some of the most distinguished men in the country, and I began to think that I was in grand company. But after hitting right and left for some time, the question as to whether the initiation should proceed or not, was put to a vote and decided in favor of continuing. I wish it hadn't.

"Candidate, you have heard what has been said, and from it you can judge something of the distinguished honors that are now hovering over your head. But I feel it to be my solemn duty to show this lodge that they have been mistaken in you; that you are indeed worthy of being counted as a knight, even though you are only an editor. To do this I will direct that you undergo the impalement test, which, if you have the nerve to go through you may yet be counted worthy. What, ho! call forth the Indian juggler and let the candidate be placed in due position."

I was placed against the wall and pinioned there securely. The members, in their different disguises, gathered around to watch the sport.

That sport consisted in seeing a blindfolded juggler throw knives and axes at me. Oh, it was such fun! The knives just cleared my person and stuck into the wall, fastening me against it in the most diabolical manner imaginable. But he was a skillful cuss, that juggler, for two of the young swords which he threw at me, actually went between my body and my arms, and yet, in spite of his skillfulness, I was not happy.

Finally, after pinning me around about with knives, he ceased his flings, and the entire lodge applauded me—in fact, seemed delighted to know that I had withstood the ordeal and had escaped for future fun. Then they unpinioned me and shook me by the hand somewhat.

I felt glad, quite as glad as they did, to think that my hide was still whole, that I was still unhashed and in my own senses.

I was again taken before the Chancellor.

"Worthy brother, for so I may almost call you, in the name of this great and universal brotherhood, I offer you hearty congratulations. You have acquitted yourself nobly, and those who doubted your mettle before now bow to your nerve and extend to you the mailed hand of fearless knighthood."

Response by all hands: "We do, and we don't make any mistake."

"We have tested your fortitude, now your friendship must be put to the test. You will now be robed in the proper costume to enact the part of Pythias, the noble youth whose virtues we emulate and whose name we bear. Brace up, my friend, and display those same qualities that have thus far distinguished you, and all will yet be truly lovely. But falter not at your peril. Away!"

I was once more removed to an ante-room where I was robed in a tunic and told that I looked the character of Pythias to a

dot. I possibly felt a trifle better at this bit of flattery, but still I can't say I felt entirely happy.

Then there was some more music on the organ, and again the Conductor took me by the arm and tramped me around the lodge-room.

Halting before a door at the other end of the room, we were met by a sentinel on duty there.

"Halt! Who are you and what do you seek?"

"We have a dear friend here imprisoned, with whom we would chin a few words," said the Conductor.

"His name?"

"Damon, the Syracusian Senator."

"You can not see him."

"But this young man is his bosom friend."

"Not if he were his twin."

"Art thou dry?"

"Nearly choked."

"Torment thy throat through thy nostrils; smell of this," said the Conductor, handing him a flask.

"Ah, ha! Blue Grass whisky."

"Let us pass to Damon's cell and it shall all be thine."

"Pass! I take it up," said the guard, closing his mouth over the neck of the flask.

We passed into the cell.

A man sat there on a three-legged stool, heavily ironed, and chained to the floor. He wore his beaver up and was drawing consolation from a short-handled pipe. He seemed to know me right away.

"Hello, Pyth, how de do?" said he.

I faintly suggested that I was as well as could be expected.

"Alas! and must you die without seeing your wife and family?" moaned the Conductor, for me.

"Oh, I don't think so much about that, but if I only had a

friend who would take my place here while I go out and see a man, I could die happy," said Damon.

"Damon, that friend stands before you," said the Conductor.

"Impossible! Who is he?"

"Tis I, your friend Pythias."

"Good enough, young fellow, but will Dionysius agree to it?"

"He has agreed to keep me as a hostage for your safe return."

"That settles it. Here, I resign these bracelets."

The jailor entered, and unlocking the chains from Damon he proceeded to lock them upon me.

"Good-by, young fellow, I am only going out to see a man. Ta, ta!" and in another moment I was left alone.

This somehow failed to come up to my ideal of how Damon should have acted under the circumstances, seeing that he was on the point of being executed, but as I had unlimited confidence in the old fellow, I took a seat upon his stool and began to cogitate. But I afterwards learned that Mr. Damon went out to see a man who stood behind a bar, and that he threw his beaver up and moistened his throat with something.

What was the next act on the programme? I didn't have to bother myself with the conundrum long, for the door swung open upon its iron hinges and a lot of reporters and artists for illustrated papers filed in.

Two reporters, one from the *Sun* and another from the Brooklyn *Union* approached me with their note-books.

"Ah! Mr. Pythias, I presume?" said the *Sun* chap.

"You are on the eve of being interviewed, my dear sir," put in the Charcoal-Mark of the *Union*, in whose hat there was a little flag with an interrogation point painted upon it.

"To what degree of torment will this crowd of Modocs descend next?" I asked. "Was it not enough to satisfy your malignity, the treatment I have already received, without inflicting this outrage upon me?"

THE SOLEMN PROCESSION TO THE HEADSMAN'S BLOCK. A DECIDEDLY "SICK TRANSIT," VIA UNDERGROUND R. R. OBSERVE THE POOR CANDIDATE, MOUNTED ON A WHEELBARROW, A VICARIOUS SACRIFICE ON THE ALTAR OF FRIENDSHIP.



"Sir, you are expected to answer questions, not ask them. You have voluntarily taken the place of Mr. Damon, who is condemned to death, have you not?"

I nodded.

"Of course you are aware of the fact that in case he does not return that you will have to die in his stead—in other words, that you will be made a vicarious sacrifice?"

"No, I wasn't aware of that."

"Do you believe that Damon will return?"

"I do. He said he was only going to see a man."

"Do you know the man he went out to see?"

"No."

"Do you begin to feel sick?"

"Yes."

The artists were also busy at work sketching me.

"What is your opinion of this order, judging by what you have had revealed to you?"

"I consider it a diabolical excrescence."

"Oh, you do not hanker after its beauties, then?"

"I have, as yet, seen none to hanker after."

"Have you ever reflected upon the mode of death that you would prefer if you could have your choice?"

"I wouldn't mind, so long as I was not interviewed to death."

"Are you willing to die for your friend Damon?"

"I'm reckless."

"Is your life insured, and, if so, please state in what company and for what amount?"

"Nary a cent."

"Have you any word to send to your family?"

"Yes, don't tell them what a fool I made of myself in thus attempting to join these Knights of the Lava Beds."

"And you would like the world to know that you died game?" continued the literary mosquito.

"Are you reporting for the *World*?"

"Bless your soul, no; I'm from the Brooklyn *Union*."

"Are you interviewing us or are we interviewing you?"

"You appear to be the most numerous nuisance, so I guess you are doing it."

"You appear to have none of the milk of human kindness oozing from your pores," said he of the *Union*.

"Did you come for milk or for an article?"

Here the two reporters held a whispered conversation for a moment, until, at last, one of them spoke.

"Well, he knows he has only a few moments to live, and, of course, he feels a trifle short."

"Have you anything else to express?"

"Only the remainder of my contempt."

"Oh, then there is an end to it, is there?"

"There shortly will be," said the *Sun* man, *sotto voce*

"How is your appetite?"

"Good, for some things."

"Do you have all the exercise you want here?"

"No, I would like to take some over you fellows."

"You do not appear to regard our lofty calling with any great feeling of love. Have you any directions regarding your body after death?"

"Yes, give me a thousand dollar funeral."

"Have you any further request to make at this time?"

"Yes, leave me alone."

"Having done our duty, we will retire. Good-by, Pyth. Brace up, and meet your fate like a man. Day, day!"

"Death will have no terrors for me, if I get clear of you."

The artists had by this time finished their sketches, and the reporters had nearly finished me. They all came closer, and shook my hand warmly, each one taking special pains, seemingly, to rattle my chains as loudly as he could. But finally I was left alone, and fell to drawing sighs of relief. I drew several.

But I was not destined for a lengthy rest, for in less than a minute the jailer came swaggering into the cell.

"What is the news, boss?" I asked.

"If Damon does not return, you have only fifteen minutes longer to live. But it serves you right for being such a soft fool as to take his place."

"Why, I'd do anything to serve a friend. But, between you and I, it does seem as though the old man had been gone about long enough to be back."

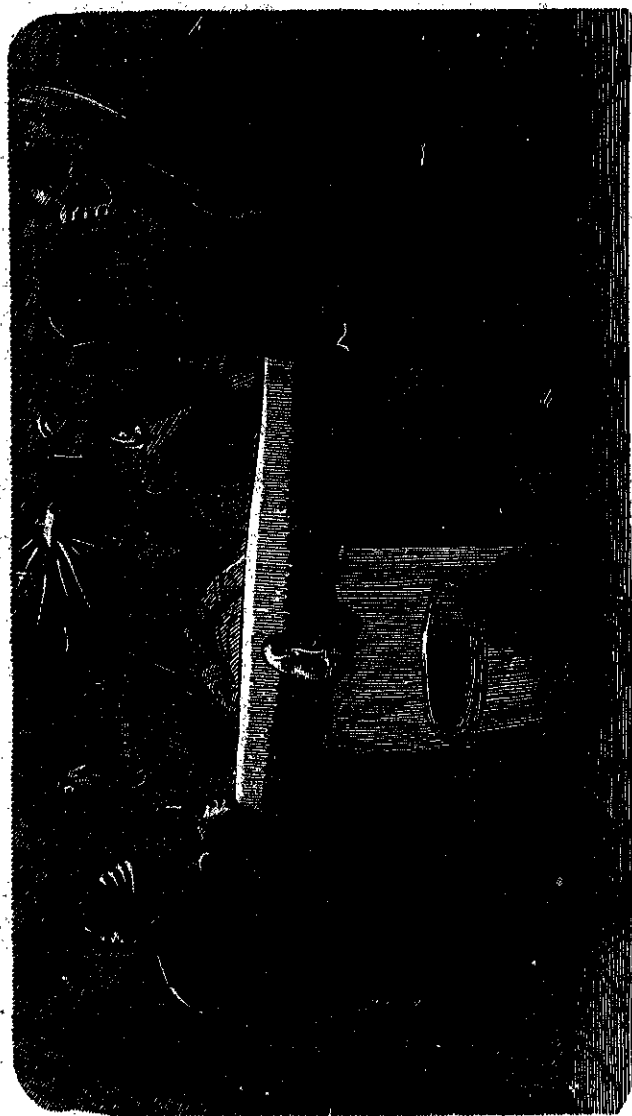
"I guess he has gone back on you."

"Yes, it slightly resembles a thing of that kind."

"Do you want a priest?"

"Nary."

"Good enough! Die game."



THE RESULT OF GOING IT BLIND ON SOMEBODY ELSE'S DEAL. THE POOR WRETCH AT LENGTH COMES TO THE DISSECTING TABLE, WHERE THEY PROCEED TO SHORTEN HIS STATURE AND HIS DAYS AT THE SAME TIME. IF YOU WISH TO ESCAPE THIS PART OF THE INITIATION, YOU MUST NOT TAKE DAMON'S PLACE WHILE HE GOES OUT TO SEE A MAN.

"Then it's a settled thing that I am going to die, eh?"

"To be sure. How fresh you are!"

"I think they have salted me pretty well."

"Five minutes more!"

"Isn't your watch a trifle fast? It seems so to me."

"You have no cause to get anxious. Everything in this place goes on time, and you shall not be cheated a moment one way or another. Come!"

Here he approached and unlocked my fetters, after which he led me into another apartment, where a band of Knights stood waiting for me. One of them had a coffin, and another was harnessed to a wheelbarrow, while others had cross-cut saws, battle-axes, spears, swords, and pruning-hooks. They were all deeply masked, and, somewhere about the premises, that infernal gong was tolling in a dreadful way; putting in the funereal thorough bass, as one might say.

Somebody howled through the grates of his beaver:

"The law seeks a victim: is this the one?"

"This is he," intoned another somebody, and then that confounded gong sent in a young clap of thunder.

"Ain't there some mistake here?" I ventured to ask.

"We make no mistakes!"

Everybody seemed to have a double-bass voice on this occasion.

"But I am not Mr. Damon."

"Justice is blind. The king demands a victim."

"Well, go on with your show," I said, sullenly.

"Mount him on the funeral car."

I was placed upon that wheelbarrow. Then the man who worried the gong gave it another whack.

"Forward to the block!"

The man with the coffin led off, and I was wheeled along in the dismal procession. In some portion of the establishment the organ was playing a dirge, and the gong was putting in the solemn punctuation points with sturdy effect. I actually began to feel a trifle melancholy myself, out of pure sympathy for those around me.

At last we reached the block, or rather it looked much more like a dissecting-table, and I was placed upon it as a subject for manipulation and shortening.

"Justice should be tempered with mercy. Let the Grand Surgeon approach and administer chloroform to the unhappy



THE CANDIDATE IS MADE TO SWEAR BY THE GREAT HORN SPOON THAT HE WILL KEEP EVERYTHING TO HIMSELF, AND BE A GOOD KNIGHT IN HIS DAY AND GENERATION.

culprit, that the pain of parting with his head may not be so acute."

Somebody approached me as I lay upon that table, and administered just chloroform enough to quiet my fears, but not enough to make me entirely oblivious to what was going on.

Then the two men with the cross-cut saw came forward, and commenced operations. I could feel the sharp teeth at my throat, but just then some more chloroform sent me into Lethe, and I was not at all certain but that I had actually passed from one world to another. The only thing that made me question it, was that I felt no increase of temperature.

When I returned to consciousness, I found myself in the lodge-room, the lights burning brightly, and the entire party standing around me. I felt for my head and found it still on my body. The Worthy Grand Commander proceeded to address me.

"Worthy brother, I congratulate you on your fortitude and

nerve. You have now passed through the last ordeal of initiation, and it only remains for you to take the great oath, and then we will extend to you the right hand of fellowship and dub you a Knight of Pythias."

I made an inward chuckle for myself, and then I began to think who of my friends of the outer world I could divide my sufferings with. Such is human nature, don't you know? The moment a man gets too much of a good thing, he always wants to share it with somebody else.

I was next mounted upon a barrel marked "Powder," by the side of which stood a man with a lighted candle. In my embrace was placed a tremendous spoon—a spoon that might have originally been used in the milky way. This I was requested to hug to my heart and look solemn.

The High Priest next approached me. He had a large open book in his hands, and at once began to read me one of Sylvanus Cobb's stories of the Middle Ages. I listened for a moment, but it was a fearful ordeal.

"O, Lord!" I groaned, "I thought I had passed through all the ordeals of this initiation. I want more chloroform."

"Let the torments cease," shouted the Worthy Grand. "Proceed with the oath."

"All right. Candidate, gaze at the top of the emblem you now hold, and assume a serious expression. Repeat after me. I swear by the Great Horn Spoon that I will in all things behave myself like a Knight; that I will encourage others to join this brotherhood; that I will not mention the roughness of my initiation, but give all to understand that its character is downy in the extreme; that I will look serious whenever the name of the order is mentioned, and if I find a brother knight in trouble I will fly to his aid, if fully convinced that there is no danger attending it. I also swear to adopt a martial bearing whenever I am in the company of the uninitiated, that they may have a good opinion of knighthood as practiced in the present age. All of which I swear to over again. So help me, St. Pythias, and keep me well braced up."

I kissed the spoon and everybody chanted "Bully!" Then they came around and squeezed my hand and congratulated me.

This ceremony over, the organ, minus the gong, struck up a lively step and all hands fell in and began to march around the hall, headed by the Worthy Grand Commander and the minor officers. There appeared to be something of a re-

markable nature up, for at no time during the entire proceedings of the evening had I seen so much real enthusiasm manifested. "Halt!" shouted the Worthy Grand.

It was a spring halt.

"Sir Knights and brothers, we will now proceed from labor to refreshment. March!"

That explained it. I was sure it was something other than labor that animated the throng.

In a few moments we left the lodge-room and filed into a banquet hall, where the tables were groaning, and the hot stuff steaming. Armorers stood by ready to receive the armor of the knights, and, before I was fully aware of it, I found myself surrounded and confronted by familiar faces.

The fellows who had taken such particular pains to rope me into the concern now approached with smiling mugs and extended hands. They shot out their hearty congratulations on my becoming a Knight of Pythias, and I said yes, and pretended to be happy.

There was jovial Tony Pastor; fat and sleek Asa Crandall, looking his gaudiest; Hopkins, with his remarkable side-whis-



AND THIS IS THE MARCH FROM LABOR TO REFRESHMENT—ONE OF THE PLEASANTEST FEATURES OF THE INITIATION.



"AFTER HAVING MADE A KNIGHT OF OUR FRIEND, LET US NOW PROCEED TO MAKE A NIGHT OF IT."

kers and trifling feet; Teusch, the reportorial charcoal-mark, tall, grand, and happy; Green, of the *Sun*, with his fine black eye and absorbing mustache; Bisbee, with his smile and his muscle; Sabin, with his good looks and his good appetite; and Ben Woolley, with his huge knowledge-box and his night-key.

For a moment I felt that it was kind of good to be there after all. The boys had had their fun and now they were going to wad and wash it down. I forgave them for what they had done to me.

The first toast broke the ice, if any existed. It was this:

"Sir Knights, having made a knight of our friend here, let us now proceed to make a night of it."

This was drank with all the honors, and then we drew up to the table and proceeded to grub up.

As this was the most interesting part of my experience it is perhaps best that the curtain should drop here, and let the world judge how well I have been avenged and what it is to become, by due and ancient process, a full-fledged KNIGHT OF PYTHIAS.

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