"HOLLY LEAVES"

THE CHRISTMAS NVMBER OF THE

ILLVSTRATED SPORTING & DRAMATIC NEWS

1891

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"A MAID OF LLANGOLLEN."—*By Maynard Brown.*

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THE ILLUSTRATED

Sporting and Dramatic News.

LONDON, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1891.

"LITTLE DAME DURDEN."

(OUR COLOURED PICTURE, PRESENTED WITH "HOLLY LEAVES," CHRISTMAS, 1891.)

OUR picture—by its title at all events—takes us back to earlier times. It was in the days before Free Trade, when farmers were prosperous, that Dame Durden flourished and her men and maids had so busy a life of it, according to the old song. It must also, we fear, have been rather a worrying time for them: for Mistress Durden was evidently "a wonderful manager," and alas! we know what a commotion in the household that makes sometimes. There is a suggestion about the song of Dame Durden which gives the idea that every one about her lived in an atmosphere of perpetual spring cleaning. But there is another suggestion, a more pleasant one, in the ditty. It seems to recall the country, when the country meant more than it does now to the dwellers in town. Then it was that poets wrote, and people read with envy, of birds and trees and green meadows and silvery streams. To the wearied worker among bricks and mortar the country then meant either enjoyment or repose. But, except to the sportsman, the country no longer holds the first place—almost the only place, it was then. The seaside—to put it Irishly—has come between us and the country. The best days of rural romance are over—the beauties of the country are there still, but their great charm for the multitude is gone; there are no new piers in the country, no new fashions, no bands on the promenade. At the same time we cannot, except in sheer ingratitude, forget what the country has been to us in the past. We leave it personally very much alone, but we like to think of it now and then, as of something in which we have a share. Our coloured plate this year will, it is hoped, serve as a reminder in this sense. It is to some extent a new departure in style, and in the method of production. The idea has been to avoid those lurid tones which have more or less prevailed in Christmas plates from the beginning, and—at a much greater expense, and considerable increase of labour—to appeal to the public on the merits of the picture as a production of high art work, in what is technically known as "the subdued palette" manner.

"A WRONG ONE."

BY ALFRED E. T. WATSON,

Author of "Sketches in the Hunting Field," "Race Course and Covert Side," "Types of the Turf," &c., &c.

CHAPTER I.

THE race for the Doncaster Stakes was being run, and the horses had neared the distance. Already there was a tail, for the pace had been good, but there were still three in it, and the favourite, Little Duke, was one of them. To all but eyes of exceptional acuteness his chance seemed to be at least as good as that of the animals that galloped to right and left of him; but on one of the stands were a couple of men side by side—one with a somewhat Hebraic cast of countenance, whose small dark eyes were hidden for the moment by his race-glasses, and the other of a Saxon type, with a neatly-trimmed, yellowish moustache, and it was the latter who, having keenly scrutinised the three horses, said in quiet but decided tone, "You win, Moss!"

Mr. Moss hesitated for a moment or two and then rejoined, "Yes, it's good! I knew it was—it's all right!"

Both the speakers had that peculiar gift of seeing what horses are doing which is bestowed upon, or acquired by, so very few. The trainer of the favourite, Little Duke, had indeed shut up his glasses and given it up, for he saw what would win, though the multitude of race-goers did not, and after the words quoted had been spoken and the trainer's glasses, as aforesaid, had been put away, a roar of "The favourite wins! Come on, Little Duke!" arose from the rings. Little Duke responded to the efforts of his jockey as best he could; he was game enough, and that is a great quality in these days; but to win a race speed also is required, and Little Duke's bolt was shot. His rider had up his whip, a washy chestnut on the rail side was also struggling on under difficulties, and Mr. Moss's bay mare Smeuse, a neck behind, was certainly going the strongest, for though his jockey was beginning to ride with his hands he had not yet resorted to any extreme measures. Half a dozen strides from the post the favourite, Little Duke, and the chestnut were being pressed to do all they knew, and the next moment the rider of Smeuse stuck in his spurs, the mare responded, and won cleverly by a neck.

Moss let loose a deep sigh of relief; he had been watching the struggle breathlessly, in spite of his confidence.

"That's all right!" he said to his companion, Cartwright, as he turned and made his way through the crowd to meet his mare as she reached the paddock. "I knew it was good, and I haven't won half enough. If I'd only been in luck I should have had a real good go, but I had no pluck!"

"Well, old chap, I'm very glad," Cartwright replied as they reached the stair and began to descend, "but I don't know that it's plucky to get out of your depth. She had a bit in hand, all the same."

"Oh, yes; she won in a canter," Moss responded, which was not quite the fact, nor indeed did he suppose it was; but it is thus that men sometimes like to magnify the achievements of the horses that carry their jackets.

By this time the friends were at the weighing-room door, Smeuse duly arrived, and the "All right" was called, to the immense satisfaction of Moss, who had, in fact, supported his mare with great confidence, and won little short of £5,000, irrespective of the stakes; money which at the time he wanted badly. Not many congratulations were bestowed upon him as he strolled through the paddock, for though many had suspected that the mare was better than past running made her out to be, few had known enough to venture on backing her for more than a trifle to save. Among those who had a pleasant word to say, however, was a young man, not much more than half way through the twenties, who had been standing in a somewhat pensive attitude and gnawing his lip—his fair moustache was scarcely long enough to be gnawable—before he caught sight of the owner of the winner.

"Well, I congratulate you, Moss!" he said. "I thought the favourite was winning till they were close on the post, but I'm very glad you pulled it off."

"Thanks, very much, and it's very good of you, my dear Dane, because I'm afraid you did not back it?" Moss replied.

Dane smiled, though the smile did not quite conceal the trouble in his face. "No, I couldn't very well, after what you told me about her, could I? I had a plunge on the favourite. I thought it was good."

"Well, my dear fellow, you know there's nobody I would have told so soon if I'd really fancied it, but I thought the favourite had a good 7lb in hand of me. Mine's only a moderate mare, you know, and I was very doubtful about beating Cockchafer. I'm sure you know I'd have told you just what I thought about it!"

"I'm sure you would, my dear fellow; and I'm just as much obliged as if I'd won. I only hope you've had a real good race," Dane warmly replied, his youthful generosity—we are so hearty when we are young, and, thank goodness, some men keep young to a great age—aroused by the apparent heartiness of the other's tone; and then with a kindly nod he moved off.

"Didn't you tell him to back it?" Cartwright asked his friend with an inclination of the head towards the retreating Dane.

"Not me!" Moss replied with a derisive chuckle. "I knew she'd go back at the finish, and I wanted to have a bit more on myself. He'd have had a thousand on, and a nice price I should have got!"

"Yes; only you wouldn't have had that bit more on if it had not been for your win over his filly in the Maiden Plate yesterday; and he went out of his way to tell you about that. He hadn't backed it at the time either, and, by Jove, your monkey shortened the price about his beast. You got evens and he had to lay 7 to 4 on, I know."

"It's rather amusing to find you setting up as a moralist, or whatever you call it. He's a silly young cub, and he's got to buy his experience as I've had to buy mine," Moss replied with a contemptuous sneer. "Come and have a drink, and don't talk rot. You've won a bit, and that ought to be good enough for you without concerning yourself about a young fool like that."

"All right," Cartwright replied; "though, all the same, I don't see that a fellow's a fool for thinking that a pal—or a man he believes to be a pal—wouldn't put him in a hole if he could help it. I do think you might have told him, as he'd done you a real good turn; however, it's not my business. Have a cigarette?"

Cartwright produced his case and the emollient influence of tobacco was called into requisition to soothe their nerves, nor did it spoil the flavour of the brand of champagne with which Moss rashly thought proper to celebrate the victory of his mare. Cartwright was not a very scrupulous person; contact with Moss, an old school friend with whom he seemed to have been more or less mixed up all his life, had not tended to render his feelings more sensitive or refined, and he was of weaker will than his constant associate; but all sentiments of honour and good fellowship were not extinct in Cartwright's nature as they appeared to be in Moss—assuming that he ever had any, which is perhaps a somewhat daring assumption. Cartwright, moreover, was a poor man and was under an obligation to Moss which he could not repay, though in truth, as Cartwright knew decent people and belongings, was a member of two or three good clubs, and had generally the *entrée* into places where Moss could not appear, the obligation, if it could have been properly assessed, would have been not a little on the side of Cartwright.

Dane for his part wandered off slowly, and the gloom again fell upon his countenance. He had dissipated the greater half of his inheritance in something less than three years. Succeeding at the death of his father to a fair estate of some £6,000 a year, which cost about £8,000 to keep up, he also found a nice round sum of close upon £80,000 waiting for him, and this had seemed boundless wealth. He had also become an enthusiast about racing, and after all, if a man gives close on six thousand guineas for a couple of yearlings, what appreciable effect has that upon £80,000? Then his trainer had advised him to buy a plater—not a common beast, but one for which the owner bid up to 1,250 guineas. Surely it was good business to go fifty more, and have a real plunge? A plunge, indeed, was the only way of getting home, and it was certainly arranged with skill, a starting-price job that would have half closed a dozen prosperous establishments, and severely shaken many others. Perhaps there never was a commission more cleverly planned, and if all had gone well the remainder of the £80,000 would have grown to considerably over six figures; but—fatal but!—a brute trained by Mr. Arthur Yates, that started without a price, and was ridden by a jockey no one had ever heard of, just got up in the last few strides, and won by a head, the more irritating because the measure of everything else in the race had been so accurately taken—and all came out right to an ounce—only no one had bothered about the unknown creature from Bishop's Sutton. The yearlings turned out still worse than the plater, for the one never ran, and the other, having become a bad roarer after an attack of cold, could never get even second in a selling plate. Dane betted as a rule on every race: he had a temporary fancy for yachting, and hired a boat; he was fond of shooting, and went in for the sport in a manner which made his father's old keeper stand aghast. Dane, in fact, played the game all round, and was invariably astonished whenever he looked at his bank book to discover that he had so many hundreds or thousands less than he had confidently expected to find. One cannot eat one's cake and have it, as we all know, but Dane ordered slices of different sizes to be brought him by means of requests on oblong slips of green paper, and did not realise how the luxury was diminishing. He had a right to live up to a liberal sum, and he had lived up to about three times the amount; and this was the more unfortunate, as he had lately perceived the fact, mirrored in the bright eyes of his pretty cousin, Violet, that life has in it worthier ambitions than winning races or leaving the card table with a few hundreds to the good—a fate which would in all probability be more than balanced by the loss of that amount and a good deal more in the course of the week. The Towers were going to wreck and ruin, and how sweet Violet would look tripping about the place, wandering round the old world gardens, with their wealth of scent and colour, behind the sheltering walls of peach blossoms and purple plums, and in fact—but his reverie was interrupted by the sight of his trainer, old Bill Weekes, across whom he stumbled while his thoughts were far away.

"Good day, sir. Had you a bet? I'm afraid you did not back the winner. You would have been sure to be on the favourite,"—his owner was a special friend of Dane's, as Weekes knew—"and certainly Smeuse had no chance on her public running since the spring. She's a nice mare, too," the old man added.

"Yes, Mr. Moss did not fancy her much, he told me, and won very little. He thought the favourite was certain to beat him," Dane replied, and Weekes looked at him shrewdly.

"Is Mr. Moss a friend of yours, sir?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, he's a great friend of mine," Dane answered with youthful simplicity. At his age the line between acquaintance and friends was indefinite, and in his pleasant, easygoing way he liked most people he came in contact with if they were affable to him, as they usually were, he found. He had lost £1,500 on the Stakes, and mainly because Moss, a good judge, had so confidently assured him that the favourite could not possibly be beaten. That he had been "put in the cart" he had no sort of idea.

"I asked because I wondered whether he would let us have a gallop with his mare," Weekes continued. "I like trying with horses that we know are in form; we have nothing to gallop ours with, and if Mr. Moss would lend us his mare to tell us something about our Cesarewitch horses, we should know where we were."

"I've no doubt he'd be very glad; he's a very good fellow and always ready to do one a turn," Dane answered; "and by Jove there he is! I'll ask him at once," he continued, as looking around he caught sight of Moss making his way through the crowd. Moss answered the beckoning finger by stopping, and was joined by Dane and Weekes.

"I wanted you to do something for me, old fellow, if it isn't asking too much," Dane began. "The fact is, Weekes wants to know something more about our Cesarewitch horses than he can find out, and we thought that perhaps you wouldn't mind lending us your mare to gallop them with. I'm afraid it's asking you a great favour, but—" Dane was not used to making such requests and ended rather vaguely with an observation about "knowing what a good chap you are."

Moss regarded all requests from two points of view: Would the thing desired do him any harm? Would it do him any good? Rapidly revolving these queries in his mind he came to the conclusion that all his interests were in a cordial affirmative. He would ascertain what Weekes, a very shrewd hand, thought about the great "back-end" handicaps and would at any rate know what chance his lot possessed, for Weekes had four horses entered for the big race, Jovial, a good animal but harshly treated with 8st 4lb; The Caliph, a three-year-old who had shown some form but never quite done what was expected of him, at 6st 10lb; Brown Shoes, a five-year-old mare that on some running was let off with two pounds less, 6st 8lb; and Gardenia, a weed of no account, at the bottom of the handicap but too slow to win with the proverbial postage stamp on her back. "She stays; but it takes her a long time to do it," a famous jockey had once answered when asked a question as to the capacity of the mare, after a race in which he had ridden her.

"I shall be delighted, whenever you like, of course! Very pleased to be useful, my dear Dane," Moss replied. "You can have her when you like—and I'll come over myself and see the gallop, if I may? I dare say I can get a bed at the hotel in the town?" he added.

This was not in the least what Weekes wanted. He knew rather more of Moss than his employer did, and was aware that the owner of Smeuse had fancied his mare, and had a good win; but he did not bother himself about matters that did not concern him. His stable had been out of form, but the horses were pleasing him more and more every day, only he wanted to make sure. Smeuse would not deceive him, whatever his owner might have been inclined to do had money depended on it, only he had not bargained for Mr. Moss's presence, and feared that it would be expensive in the way of shortening the price if they determined to back anything they ran. Still, if you borrow a man's horse you cannot possibly refuse to let him see it gallop,

to the music halls—and stay—are quickly steeped to the core in music hall ways. It would perhaps be going too far all at once to say that by the year 1901 the music hall will, like the theatre, be regarded with sufficient liberality to be worthy of civic honours. But, by way of compromise, I suggest the possible shrievalty of Sir Dan Leno, who so respectably represents both. I find that I have reached the end of my space before I have touched upon half my prophecies. I will conclude by promising another farewell appearance of Mr. Sims Reeves, that Mrs. Keeley will deliver an appropriate address by Mr. Clement Scott at her own centenary, and that Mr. J. L. Toole will be entertained at a farewell dinner before he proceeds to fulfil an imperative engagement at the North Pole. I do not agree that Mr. Bancroft will succeed Mr. Booth as commander-in-chief of the Salvation Army. I think that by 1901 the true value of the Salvation Army will be found out, and that a good many generous people like Mr. Bancroft will have decided, with the victims at Eastbourne, that the less they hear about it the better.

A. CLEMENTS.

THE JUDGE'S HOUSE.

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BY BRAM STOKER.

WHEN the time for his examination drew near Malcom Malcomson made up his mind to go somewhere to read by himself. He feared the attractions of the seaside, and also he feared completely rural isolation, for of old he knew its charms, and so he determined to find some unpretentious little town where there would be nothing to distract him. He refrained from asking suggestions from any of his friends, for he argued that each would recommend some place of which he had knowledge, and where he had already acquaintances. As Malcomson wished to avoid friends he had no wish to encumber himself with the attention of friends' friends, and so he determined to look out for a place for himself. He packed a portmanteau with some clothes and all the books he required, and then took ticket for the first name on the local time-table which he did not know.

When at the end of three hours' journey he alighted at Benchurch, he felt satisfied that he had so far obliterated his tracks as to be sure of having a peaceful opportunity of pursuing his studies. He went straight to the one inn which the sleepy little place contained, and put up for the night. Benchurch was a market town, and once in three weeks was crowded to excess, but for the remainder of the twenty-one days it was as attractive as a desert. Malcomson looked around the day after his arrival to try to find quarters more isolated than even so quiet an inn as "The Good Traveller" afforded. There was only one place which took his fancy, and it certainly satisfied his wildest ideas regarding quiet; in fact, quiet was not the proper word to apply to it—desolation was the only term conveying any suitable idea of its isolation. It was an old rambling, heavily-built house of the Jacobean style, with heavy gables and windows, unusually small, and set higher than was customary in such houses, and was surrounded with a high brick wall massively built. Indeed, on examination it looked more like a fortified house than an ordinary dwelling. But all these things pleased Malcomson. "Here," he thought, "is the very spot I have been looking for, and if I can only get opportunity of using it I shall be happy." His joy was increased when he realised beyond doubt that it was not at present inhabited.

From the post-office he got the name of the agent, who was rarely surprised at the application to rent a part of the old house. Mr. Carnford, the local lawyer and agent, was a genial old gentleman, and frankly confessed his delight at any one being willing to live in the house.

"To tell you the truth," said he, "I should be only too happy, on behalf of the owners, to let any one have the house rent free for a term of years if only to accustom the people here to see it inhabited. It has been so long empty that some kind of absurd prejudice has grown up about it, and this can be best put down by its occupation—if only," he added with a sly glance at Malcomson, "by a scholar like yourself, who wants its quiet for a time."

Malcomson thought it needless to ask the agent about the "absurd prejudice"; he knew he would get more information, if he should require it, on that subject from other quarters. He paid his three months' rent, got a receipt, and the name of an old woman who would probably undertake to "do" for him, and came away with the keys in his pocket. He then went to the landlady of the inn, who was a cheerful and most kindly person, and asked her advice as to such stores and provisions as he would be likely to require. She threw up her hands in amazement when he told her where he was going to settle himself.

"Not in the the Judge's House!" she said, and grew pale as she spoke. He explained the locality of the house, saying that he did not know its name. When he had finished she answered:

"Aye, sure enough—sure enough the very place! It is the Judge's House, sure enough." He asked her to tell him about the place, why so called, and what there was against it. She told him that it was so called locally because it had been many years before—how long she could not say, as she was herself from another part of the country, but she thought it must have been a hundred years or more—the abode of a judge who was held in great terror on account of his harsh sentences and his hostility to prisoners at Assizes. As to what there was against the house itself she could not tell. She had often asked, but no one could inform her; but there was a general feeling that there was *something*, and for her own part she would not take all the money in Drinkwater's Bank and stay in the house an hour by herself. Then she apologised to Malcomson for her disturbing talk.

"It is too bad of me, sir, and you—and a young gentleman, too—if you will pardon me saying it, going to live there all alone. If you were my boy—and you'll excuse me for saying it—you wouldn't sleep there a night, not if I had to go there myself and pull the big alarm bell that's on the roof!" The good creature was so manifestly in earnest, and was so kindly in her intentions, that Malcomson, although amused, was touched. He told her kindly how much he appreciated her interest in him, and added:

"But, my dear Mrs. Witham, indeed you need not be concerned about me! A man who is reading for the Mathematical Tripos has too much to think of to be disturbed by any of these mysterious 'somethings,' and his work is of too exact and prosaic a kind to allow of his having any corner in his mind for mysteries of any kind. Harmonical Progression, Permutations and Combinations, and Elliptic Functions have sufficient mysteries for me!" Mrs. Witham kindly undertook to see after his commissions, and he went himself to look for the old woman who had been recommended to him. When he returned to the Judge's House with her, after an interval of a couple of hours, he found Mrs. Witham herself waiting with several men and boys carrying parcels, and an upholsterer's man with a bed in a cart, for she said, though tables and chairs might be all very well, a bed that hadn't been aired for mayhap fifty years was not proper for young bones to lie on. She was evidently curious to see the inside of the house; and though manifestly so afraid of the 'somethings' that at the slightest sound she clutched on to Malcomson, whom she never left for a moment, went over the whole place.

After his examination of the house, Malcomson decided to take up his abode in the great dining room, which was big enough to serve for all his requirements; and Mrs. Witham, with the aid of the charwoman, Mrs. Dempster, proceeded to arrange matters. When the hampers were brought in and unpacked, Malcomson saw that with much kind forethought she had sent from her own kitchen sufficient provisions to last for a few days. Before going she expressed all sorts of kind wishes; and at the door turned and said:

"And perhaps, sir, as the room is big and draughty it might be well to have one of those big screens put round your bed at night—though, truth to tell, I would die myself if I were to be so shut in with all kinds of—of 'things,' that put their heads round the sides, or over the top, and look on me!" The image which she had called up was too much for her nerves, and she fled incontinently.

Mrs. Dempster sniffed in a superior manner as the landlady disappeared, and remarked that for her own part she wasn't afraid of all the bogies in the kingdom.

"I'll tell you what it is, sir," she said; "bogies is all kinds and sorts of things—except bogies! Rats and mice, and beetles; and creeky doors, and loose slates, and broken panes, and stiff drawer handles, that stay out when you pull them and then fall down in the middle of the night. Look at the wainscot of the room! It is old—hundreds of years old! Do you think there's no rats and beetles there! And do you imagine, sir, that you won't see none of them? Rats is bogies, I tell you, and bogies is rats; and don't you get to think anything else!"

"Mrs. Dempster," said Malcomson gravely, making her a polite bow, "you know more than a Senior Wrangler! And let me say, that, as a mark of esteem for your indubitable soundness of head and heart, I shall, when I go, give you possession of this house, and let you stay here by yourself for the last two months of my tenancy. For four weeks will serve my purpose."

"Thank you kindly, sir!" she answered, "but I couldn't sleep away from home a night. I am in Greenhow's Charity, and if I slept a night away from my rooms I should lose all I have got to live on. The rules is very strict; and there's too many watching for a vacancy for me to run any risks in the matter. Only for that, sir, I'd gladly come here and attend on you altogether during your stay."

"My good woman," said Malcomson hastily, "I have come here on purpose to obtain solitude; and believe me that I am grateful to the late Greenhow for having so organised his admirable charity—whatever it is—that I am perforce denied the opportunity of suffering from such a form of temptation! Saint Anthony himself could not be more rigid on the point!"

The old woman laughed harshly. "Ah, you young gentlemen," she said, "you don't fear for naught; and belike you'll get all the solitude you want here." She set to work with her cleaning; and by nightfall, when Malcomson returned from his walk—he always had one of his books to study as he walked—he found the room swept and tidied, a fire burning in the old hearth, the lamp lit, and the table spread for supper with Mrs. Witham's excellent fare. "This is comfort, indeed," he said, as he rubbed his hands.

When he had finished his supper, and lifted the tray to the other end of the great oak dining-table, he got out his books again, put fresh wood on the fire, trimmed his lamp, and set himself down to a spell of real hard work. He went on without pause till about eleven o'clock, when he knocked off for a bit to fix his fire and lamp, and to make himself a cup of tea. He had always been a tea-drinker, and during his college life had sat late at work and had taken tea late. The rest was a great luxury to him, and he enjoyed it with a sense of delicious, voluptuous ease. The renewed fire leaped and sparkled, and threw quaint shadows through the great old room; and as he sipped his hot tea he revelled in the sense of isolation from his kind. Then it was that he began to notice for the first time what a noise the rats were making.

"Surely," he thought, "they cannot have been at it all the time I was reading. Had they been, I must have noticed it!" Presently, when the noise increased, he satisfied himself that it was really new. It was evident that at first the rats had been frightened at the presence of a stranger, and the light of fire and lamp; but that as the time went on, they had grown bolder and were now disporting themselves as was their wont.

How busy they were! and hark to the strange noises! Up and down behind the old wainscot, over the ceiling and under the floor they raced, and gnawed, and scratched! Malcomson smiled to himself as he recalled to mind the saying of Mrs. Dempster, "Bogies is rats, and rats is bogies!" The tea began to have its effect of intellectual and nervous stimulus, he saw with joy another long spell of work to be done before the night was past, and in the sense of security which it gave him, he allowed himself the luxury of a good look round the room. He took his lamp in one hand, and went all around, wondering that so quaint and beautiful an old house had been so long neglected. The carving of the oak on the panels of the wainscot was fine, and on and round the doors and windows it was beautiful and of rare merit. There were some old pictures on the walls, but they were coated so thick with dust and dirt that he could not distinguish any detail of them, though he held his lamp as high as he could over his head. Here and there as he went round he saw some crack or hole blocked for a moment by the face of a rat with its bright eyes glittering in the light, but in an instant it was gone, and a squeak and a scamper followed. The thing that most struck him, however, was the rope of the great alarm bell on the roof, which hung down in a corner of the room on the right-hand side of the fireplace. He pulled up close to the hearth a great high-backed carved oak chair, and sat down to his last cup of tea. When this was done he made up the fire, and went back to his work, sitting at the corner of the table, having the fire to his left. For a little while the rats disturbed him somewhat with their perpetual scampering, but he got accustomed to the noise as one does to the ticking of a clock or to the roar of moving water; and he became so immersed in his work that everything in the world, except the problem which he was trying to solve, passed away from him.

He suddenly looked up, his problem was still unsolved, and there was in the air that sense of the hour before the dawn, which is so dread to doubtful life. The noise of the rats had ceased. Indeed it seemed to him that it must have ceased but lately and that it was the sudden cessation which had disturbed him. The fire had fallen low, but still it threw out a deep red glow. As he looked he started in spite of his *sang froid*.

There on the great high-backed carved oak chair by the right side of the fireplace sat an enormous rat, steadily glaring at him with baleful eyes. He made a motion to it as though to hunt it away, but it did not stir. Then he made the motion of throwing something. Still it did not stir, but showed its great white teeth angrily, and its cruel eyes shone in the lamplight with an added vindictiveness.

Malcomson felt amazed, and seizing the poker from the hearth ran at it to kill it. Before, however, he could strike it, the rat, with a squeak that sounded like the concentration of hate, jumped upon the floor and, running up the rope of the alarm bell, disappeared in the darkness beyond the range of the green-shaded lamp. Instantly, strange to say, the noisy scampering of the rats in the wainscot began again.

By this time Malcomson's mind was quite off the problem; and as a shrill cock-crow outside told him of the approach of morning, he went to bed and to sleep.

He slept so sound that he was not even waked by Mrs. Dempster coming in to make up his room. It was only when she had tidied up the place and got his breakfast ready and tapped on the screen which closed in his bed that he woke. He was a little tired still after his night's hard work, but a strong cup of tea soon freshened him up and, taking his book, he went out for his morning walk, bringing with him a few sandwiches lest he should not care to return till dinner time. He found a quiet walk between high elms some way outside the town, and here he spent the greater part of the day studying his Laplace. On his return he looked in to see Mrs. Witham and to thank her for her kindness. When she saw him coming through the diamond-paned bay window of her sanctum she came out to meet him and asked him in. She looked at him searchingly and shook her head as she said:

"You must not overdo it, sir. You are paler this morning than you should be. Too late hours and too hard work on the brain isn't good for any man! But tell me, sir, how did you pass the night? Well, I hope? But, my heart! sir, I was glad when Mrs. Dempster told me this morning that you were all right and sleeping sound when she went in."

"Oh, I was all right," he answered smiling, "the 'somethings' didn't worry me, as yet. Only the rats; and they had a circus, I tell you, all over the place. There was one wicked looking old devil that sat up on my own chair by the fire, and wouldn't go till I took the poker to him, and then he ran up the rope of the alarm bell and got to somewhere up the wall or the ceiling—I couldn't see where, it was so dark."

"Mercy on us," said Mrs. Witham, "an old devil, and sitting on a chair by the fireside! Take care, sir! take care! There's many a true word spoken in jest."

"How do you mean? 'Pon my word I don't understand."

"An old devil! The old devil, perhaps. There! sir, you needn't laugh," for Malcomson had broken into a hearty peal. "You young folks thinks it easy to laugh at things that makes older ones shudder. Never mind, sir! never mind! Please God, you'll laugh all the time. It's what I wish you myself!" and the good lady beamed all over in sympathy with his enjoyment, her fears gone for a moment.

"Oh, forgive me!" said Malcomson presently. "Don't think me rude; but the idea was too much for me—that the old devil himself was on the chair last night!" And at the thought he laughed again. Then he went home to dinner.

This evening the scampering of the rats began earlier; indeed it had been going on before his arrival, and only ceased whilst his presence by its freshness disturbed them. After dinner he sat by the fire for a while and had a smoke; and then, having cleared his table, began to work as before. To-night the rats disturbed him more than they had done on the previous night. How they scampered up and down and under and over! How they squeaked, and scratched, and gnawed! How they, getting bolder by degrees, came to the mouths of their holes and to the chinks and cracks and crannies in the wainscoting till their eyes shone like tiny lamps as the firelight rose and fell. But to him, now doubtless accustomed to them, their eyes were not wicked; only their playfulness touched him. Sometimes the boldest of them made sallies out on the floor or along the mouldings of the wainscot. Now and again as they disturbed him Malcomson made a sound to frighten them, smiting the table with his hand or giving a fierce "Hsh, hsh," so that they fled straightway to their holes.

And so the early part of the night wore on; and despite the noise Malcomson got more and more immersed in his work.

All at once he stopped, as on the previous night, being overcome by a sudden sense of silence. There was not the faintest sound of gnaw, or scratch, or squeak. The silence was as of the grave. He remembered the odd occurrence of the previous night, and instinctively he looked at the chair standing close by the fireside. And then a very odd sensation thrilled through him.

There, on the great old high-backed carved oak chair beside the fireplace sat the same enormous rat, steadily glaring at him with baleful eyes.

Instinctively he took the nearest thing to his hand, a book of logarithms, and flung it at it. The book was badly aimed and the rat did not stir, so again the poker performance of the previous night was repeated; and again the rat, being closely pursued, fled up the rope of the alarm bell. Strangely too, the departure of this rat was instantly followed by the renewal of the noise made by the general rat community. On this occasion, as on the previous one, Malcomson could not see at what part of the room the rat disappeared, for the green shade of his lamp left the upper part of the room in darkness, and the fire had burned low.

On looking at his watch he found it was close on midnight; and, not sorry for the *divertissement*, he made up his fire and made himself his nightly pot of tea. He had got through a good spell of work, and thought himself entitled to a cigarette; and so he sat on the great carved oak chair before the fire and enjoyed it. Whilst smoking he began to think that he would like to know where the rat disappeared to, for he had certain ideas for the morrow not entirely disconnected with a rat-trap. Accordingly he lit another lamp and placed it so that it would shine well into the right-hand corner of the wall by the fireplace. Then he got all the books he had with him, and placed them handy to throw at the vermin. Finally he lifted the rope of the alarm bell and placed the end of it on the table, fixing the extreme end under the lamp. As he handled it he could not help noticing how pliable it was, especially for so strong a rope, and one not in use. "You could hang a man with it," he thought to himself. When his preparations were made he looked around, and said complacently:

"There now, my friend, I think we shall learn something of you this time!" He began his work again, and though as before somewhat disturbed at first by the noise of the rats, soon lost himself in his propositions and problems.

Again he was called to his immediate surroundings suddenly. This time it might not have been the sudden silence only which took his attention: there was a slight movement of the rope, and the lamp moved. Without stirring, he looked to see if his pile of books was within range, and then cast his eye along the rope. As he looked he saw the great rat drop from the rope on the oak arm-chair and sit there glaring at him. He raised a book in his right hand, and taking careful aim, flung it at the rat. The latter, with a quick movement, sprang aside and dodged the missile. He then took another book, and a third, and more, and flung them one after another at the rat, but each time unsuccessfully. At last, as he stood with a book poised in his hand to throw, the rat squeaked and seemed afraid. This made Malcomson more than ever eager to strike, and the book flew and struck the rat a resounding blow. It gave a terrified squeak, and turning on his pursuer a look of terrible malevolence, ran up the chair-back and made a great jump to the rope of the alarm bell and ran up it like lightning. The lamp rocked under

the sudden strain, but it was a heavy one and did not topple over. Malcomson kept his eyes on the rat, and saw it by the light of the second lamp leap to a moulding of the wainscot and disappear through a hole in one of the great pictures which hung on the wall, obscured and invisible through its coating of dirt and dust.

"I shall look up my friend's habitation in the morning," said the student, as he went over to collect his books. "The third picture from the fireplace; I shall not forget." He picked up the books one by one, commenting on them as he lifted them. "*Conic Sections* he does not mind, nor *Cycloidal Oscillations*, nor the *Principia*, nor *Quaternions*, nor *Thermodynamics*. Now for the book that fetched him!" Malcomson took it up and looked at it. As he did so he started, and a sudden pallor overspread his face. He looked round uneasily and shivered slightly, as he murmured to himself:

"The Bible my mother gave me! What an odd coincidence." He sat down to work again, and the rats in the wainscot renewed their gambols. They did not disturb him, however; somehow their presence gave him a sense of companionship. But he could not attend to his work, and after striving to master the subject on which he was engaged gave it up in despair, and went to bed as the first streak of dawn stole in through the eastern window.

He slept heavily but uneasily, and dreamed much; and when Mrs. Dempster woke him late in the morning he seemed ill at ease, and for a few minutes did not seem to realise exactly where he was. His first request rather surprised the servant.

"Mrs. Dempster, when I am out to-day I wish you would get the steps and dust or wash those pictures—specially that one the third from the fireplace—I want to see what they are."

Late in the afternoon Malcomson worked at his books in the shaded walk, and the cherfulness of the previous day came back to him as the day wore on, and he found that his reading was progressing well. He had worked out to a satisfactory conclusion all the problems which had as yet baffled him, and it was in a state of jubilation that he paid a visit to Mrs. Witham at "The Good Traveller." He found a stranger in the cosy sitting-room with the landlady, who was introduced to him as Dr. Thornhill. She was not quite at ease, and this, combined with the doctor's plunging at once into a series of questions, made Malcomson come to the conclusion that his presence was not an accident, so without preliminary he said:

"Dr. Thornhill, I shall with pleasure answer you any question you may choose to ask me if you will answer me one question first."

The doctor seemed surprised, but he smiled and answered at once, "Done! What is it?"

"Did Mrs. Witham ask you to come here to see me and advise me?"

Dr. Thornhill for a moment was taken aback, and Mrs. Witham got fiery red and turned away; but the doctor was a frank and ready man, and he answered at once and openly:

"She did: but she didn't intend you to know it. I suppose it was my clumsy haste that made you suspect. She told me that she did not like the idea of your being in that house all by yourself, and that she thought you took too much strong tea: in fact, she wants me to advise you if possible to give up the tea and the very late hours. I was a keen student in my time, so I suppose I may take the liberty of an old college man, and, without offence, advise you not quite as a stranger."

Malcomson with a bright smile held out his hand. "Shake! as they say in America," he said. "I must thank you for your kindness and Mrs. Witham too, and your kindness deserves a return on my part. I promise to take no more strong tea—no tea at all till you let me—and I shall go bed to-night at one o'clock at latest. Will that do?

"Capital," said the doctor. "Now tell us all that you noticed in the old house," and so Malcomson then and there told in minute detail all that had happened in the last two nights. He was interrupted every now and then by some exclamation from Mrs. Witham, till finally when he told of the episode of the Bible the landlady's pent-up emotions found vent in a shriek; and it was not till a stiff glass of brandy and water had been administered that she grew composed again. Dr. Thornhill listened with a face of growing gravity, and when the narrative was complete and Mrs. Witham had been restored he asked:

"The rat always went up the rope of the alarm bell?"

"Always."

"I suppose you know," said the Doctor after a pause, "what the rope is?"

"No!"

"It is," said the Doctor slowly, "the very rope which the hangman used for all the victims of the Judge's judicial rancour!" Here he was interrupted by another scream from Mrs. Witham, and steps had to be taken for her recovery. Malcomson having looked at his watch, and found that it was close to his dinner hour, had gone home before her complete recovery.

When Mrs. Witham was herself again she almost assailed the doctor with angry questions as to what he meant by putting such horrible ideas into the poor young man's mind. "He has quite enough there already to upset him," she added. Dr. Thornhill replied,

"My dear madam, I had a distinct purpose in it! I wanted to draw his attention to the bell rope, and to fix it there. It may be that he is in a highly overwrought state, and has been studying too much, although I am bound to say that he seems as sound and healthy a young man, mentally and bodily, as ever I saw—But then the rats—and that suggestion of the devil." The doctor shook his head and went on. "I would have offered to go and stay the first night with him but that I felt sure it would have been a cause of offence. He may get in the night some strange fright or hallucination; and if he does I want him to pull that rope. All alone as he is it will give us warning, and we may reach him in time to be of service. I shall be sitting up pretty late to-night and shall keep my ears open. Do not be alarmed if Benchurch gets a surprise before morning."

"Oh, doctor, what do you mean? What do you mean?"

"I mean this; that possibly—nay, more probably—we shall hear the great alarm bell from the Judge's House to-night," and the doctor made about as effective an exit as could be thought of.

When Malcomson arrived home he found that it was a little after his usual time, and Mrs. Dempster had gone away—the rules of Greenhow's Charity were not to be neglected. He was glad to see that the place was bright and tidy with a cheerful fire and a well-trimmed lamp. The evening was colder than might have been expected in April, and a heavy wind was blowing with such rapidly-increasing strength that there was every promise of a storm during the night. For a few minutes after his entrance the noise of the rats ceased; but so soon as they became accustomed to his presence they began again. He was glad to hear them, for he felt once more the feeling of companionship in their noise, and his mind ran back to the strange fact that they only ceased to manifest themselves when that other—the great rat with the baleful eyes—came upon the scene. The reading lamp only was lit and its green shade kept the ceiling, and the upper part of the room in darkness, so that the cheerful light from the hearth spreading over the floor and shining on the white cloth laid over the end of the table was warm and cherry. Malcomson sat down to his dinner with a good appetite and a buoyant spirit. After his dinner and a cigarette he sat steadily down to work, determined not to let anything disturb him, for he remembered his promise to the doctor, and made up his mind to make the best of the time at his disposal.

For an hour or so he worked all right, and then his thoughts began to wander from his books. The actual circumstances around him, the calls on his physical attention, and his nervous susceptibility were not to be denied. By this time the wind had become a gale, and the gale a storm. The old house, solid though it was, seemed to shake to its foundations. and the storm roared and raged through its many chimneys and its queer old gables, producing strange, unearthly sounds in the empty rooms and corridors. Even the great alarm bell on the roof must have felt the force of the wind, for the rope rose and fell slightly, as though the bell were moved a little from time to time, and the limber rope fell on the oak floor with a hard and hollow sound.

As Malcomson listened to it he bethought himself of the doctor's words, "It is the rope which the hangman used for the victims of the Judge's judicial rancour," and he went over to the corner of the fireplace and took it in his hand to look at it. There seemed a sort of deadly interest in it, and as he stood there he lost himself for a moment in speculations as to who these victims were, and the grim wish of the Judge to have such a ghastly relic ever under his eyes. As he stood there the swaying of the bell on the roof still lifted the rope now and again; but presently there came a new sensation—a sort of tremor in the rope, as though something was moving along it.

Looking up instinctively Malcomson saw the great rat coming slowly down towards him, glaring at him steadily. He dropped the rope and started back with a muttered curse, and the rat turning ran up the rope again and disappeared, and at the same instant Malcomson became conscious that the noise of the rats, which had ceased for a while, began again.

All this set him thinking, and it occurred to him that he had not yet investigated the lair of the rat or looked at the pictures, as he had intended. He lit the other lamp without the shade, and, holding it up, went and stood opposite the third picture from the fireplace on the right-hand side where he had seen the rat disappear on the previous night.

At the first glance he started back so suddenly that he almost dropped the lamp, and a deadly pallor overspread his face. His knees shook, and heavy drops of sweat came on his forehead, and he trembled like an aspen. But he was young and plucky, and pulled himself together, and after the pause of a few seconds stepped forward again, raised the lamp, and examined the picture which had been dusted and washed, and now stood out clearly.

It was of a judge dressed in his robes of scarlet and ermine. His face was strong and merciless, evil, crafty, and vindictive, with a sensual mouth, hooked nose of ruddy colour, and shaped like the beak of a bird of prey. The rest of the face was of a cadaverous colour. The eyes were of peculiar brilliance and with a terribly malignant expression. As he looked at them, Malcomson grew cold, for he saw there the very counterpart of the eyes of the great rat. The lamp almost fell from his hand, he saw the rat with its baleful eyes peering out through the hole in the corner of the picture, and noted the sudden cessation of the noise of the other rats. However, he pulled himself together, and went on with his examination of the picture.

The Judge was seated in a great high-backed carved oak chair, on the right-hand side of a great stone fireplace where, in the corner, a rope hung down from the ceiling, its end lying coiled on the floor. With a feeling of something like horror, Malcomson recognised the scene of the room as it stood, and gazed around him in an awestruck manner as though he expected to find some strange presence behind him. Then he looked over to the corner of the fireplace—and with a loud cry he let the lamp fall from his hand.

There in the judge's arm-chair, with the rope hanging behind, sat the rat with the judge's baleful eyes, now intensified and with a fiendish leer. Save for the howling of the storm without there was silence.

The fallen lamp recalled Malcomson to himself. Fortunately it was of metal, and so the oil was not spilt. However, the practical need of attending to it settled at once his nervous apprehensions. When he had turned it out, he wiped his brow and thought for a moment.

"This will not do," he said to himself. "If I go on like this I shall become a crazy fool. This must stop! I promised the doctor I would not take tea. Faith, he was pretty right! My nerves must have been getting into a queer state. Funny I did not notice it. I never felt better in my life. However, it is all right now, and I shall not be such a fool again."

Then he mixed himself a good stiff glass of brandy and water and resolutely sat down to his work.

It was nearly an hour when he looked up from his book, disturbed by the sudden stillness. Without, the wind howled and roared louder than ever, and the rain drove in sheets against the windows, beating like hail on the glass; but within, there was no sound whatever save the echo of the wind as it roared in the great chimney, and now and then a hiss as a few raindrops found their way down the chimney in a lull of the storm. The fire had fallen low and had ceased to flame, though it threw out a red glow. Malcomson listened attentively, and presently heard a thin, squeaking noise, very faint. It came from the corner of the room where the rope hung down, and he thought it was the creaking of the rope on the floor as the swaying of the bell raised and lowered it. Looking up, however, he saw in the dim light the great rat clinging to the rope and gnawing it. The rope was already nearly gnawed through—he could see the lighter colour where the strands were laid bare. As he looked the job was completed, and the severed end of the rope fell clattering on the oaken floor, whilst for an instant the great rat remained like a knob or tassel at the end of the rope, which now began to sway to and fro. Malcomson felt for a moment another pang of terror as he thought that now the possibility of calling the outer world to his assistance was cut off, but an intense anger took its place, and seizing the book he was reading he hurled it at the rat. The blow was well aimed, but before the missile could reach him the rat dropped off and struck the floor with a soft thud. Malcomson instantly rushed over towards him, but it darted away and disappeared in the darkness of the shadows of the room. Malcomson felt that his work was over for the night, and determined then and there to vary the monotony of the proceedings by a hunt for the rat, and took off the green shade of the lamp so as to insure a wider spreading light. As he did so the gloom of the upper part of the room was relieved, and in the new flood of light, great by comparison with the previous darkness, the pictures on the wall stood out boldly. From where he stood, Malcomson saw right opposite to him the third picture on the wall from the right of the fireplace. He rubbed his eyes in surprise, and then a great fear began to come upon him.

In the centre of the picture was a great irregular patch of brown canvas, as fresh as when it was stretched on the frame. The background was as before, with chair and chimney-corner and rope, but the figure of the judge had disappeared.

Malcomson, almost in a chill of horror, turned slowly round, and then he began to shake and tremble like a man in a palsy. His strength seemed to have left him, and he was incapable of action or movement, hardly even of thought. He could only see and hear.

There, on the great high-backed carved oak chair sat the Judge in his robes of scarlet and ermine, with his baleful eyes glaring vindictively, and a smile of triumph on the resolute, cruel mouth, as he lifted his hands with a *black cap*. Malcomson felt as if the blood was running from his heart, as one does in moments of prolonged suspense. There was a singing in his ears. Without, he could hear the roar and howl of the tempest, and through it, swept on the storm, came the striking of midnight by the great chimes in the market-place. He stood for a space of time that seemed to him endless still as a statue, and with wide-open, horror-struck eyes, breathless. As the clock struck, so the smile of triumph on the Judge's face intensified, and at the last stroke of midnight he placed the black cap on his head.

Slowly and deliberately the Judge rose from his chair and picked up the piece of the rope of the alarm bell which lay on the floor, drew it through his hands as if he enjoyed its touch, and then deliberately began to knot one end of it, fashioning it into a noose. This he tightened and tested with his foot, pulling hard at it till he was satisfied, and then making a running noose of it, which he held in his hand. Then he began to move along the table on the opposite side to Malcomson, keeping his eyes on him until he had passed him, when with a quick movement he stood in front of the door. Malcomson then began to feel that he was trapped, and tried to think of what he should do. There was some fascination in the Judge's eyes, which he never took off him, and he had, perforce, to look. He saw the Judge approach—still keeping between him and the door—and raise the noose and throw it towards him as if to entangle him. With a great effort he made a quick movement to one side, and saw the rope fall beside him, and heard it strike the oaken floor. Again the Judge raised the noose and tried to ensnare him, ever keeping his baleful eyes fixed on him, and each time by a mighty effort the student just managed to evade it. So this went on for many times, the Judge seeming never discouraged nor discomposed at failure, but playing as a cat does with a mouse. At last in despair, which had reached its climax, Malcomson cast a quick glance round him. The lamp seemed to have blazed up, and there was a fairly good light in the room. At the many rat-holes and in the chinks and crannies of the wainscot he saw the rats' eyes; and this aspect, that was purely physical, gave him a gleam of comfort. He looked around and saw that the rope of the great alarm bell was laden with rats. Every inch of it was covered with them, and more and more were pouring through the small circular hole in the ceiling whence it emerged, so that with their weight the bell was beginning to sway.

Hark! It had swayed till the clapper had touched the bell. The sound was but a tiny one, but the bell was only beginning to sway, and it would increase.

At the sound the Judge, who had been keeping his eyes fixed on Malcomson, looked up, and a scowl of diabolical anger overspread his face. His eyes fairly glowed like hot coals, and he stamped his foot with a sound that seemed to make the house shake. A dreadful peal of thunder broke overhead as he raised the rope again, whilst the rats kept running up and down the rope as though working against time. This time, instead of throwing it, he drew close to his victim, and held open the noose as he approached. As he came closer there seemed something paralysing in his very presence, and Malcomson stood rigid as a corpse. He felt the Judge's icy fingers touch his throat as he adjusted the rope. The noose tightened—tightened. Then the Judge, taking the rigid form of the student in his arms, carried him over and placed him standing in the oak chair, and stepping up beside him, put his hand up and caught the end of the swaying rope of the alarm bell. As he raised his hand the rats fled squeaking, and disappeared through the hole in the ceiling. Taking the end of the noose which was round Malcomson's neck he tied it to the hanging-bell rope, and then descending pulled away the chair.

* * * * * *

When the alarm bell of the Judge's House began to sound a crowd soon assembled. Lights and torches of various kinds appeared, and soon a silent crowd was hurrying to the spot. They knocked loudly at the door, but there was no reply. Then they burst in the door, and poured into the great dining-room, the doctor at the head.

There at the end of the rope of the great alarm bell hung the body of the student, and on the face of the Judge in the picture was a malignant smile.

ON TOUR.

THE world has changed since the times from which our artist has taken his subject. The actor is no longer a vagabond according to law and—very often—according to fact. *Hamlet* in a barn would not in these days imply a suggestion of reproach. There would be nothing derogatory to the actor's profession in the connection; on the contrary the barn would be exalted by the mere fact of its dramatic associations. We make a great deal of actors and actresses now. They give the artistic stamp to fashionable society, their sayings and doings have more interest then Cabinet Ministers', their *coiffures* rule our fashions in hair, and their good or bad taste in dress dictates the course of our millinery. There is every enducement for our youth to become actors in these days, and even the fool of the family deserts for the stage the more chequered clerical profession. It has, however, taken a good many years to bring this state of things about, and it is a pity perhaps that the young gentleman of our picture could not have waited. He is a gentleman evidently, and has thrown away position, fortune, perhaps everything, in his wild ardour for a career which can bring him little except disappointment. He is still young in his art and retains some of the buoyancy with which he started; he is handsome also, and so cannot resist the temptation, not unknown among handsome young actors, to play Romeo off the stage as well as on it.

OH, YOU FUNNY MAN!

A REPUTATION for wit and humour ought to be easily earned from a critic of six years old who has not yet heard all the half-dozen or so stories on which satirists declare all other stories are more or less founded if one traces them back to the fountain head. At the moment the funny man in the picture has an excellent audience, and that is more than half the battle. The audience is evidently enjoying herself; it is only grown-up people who politely pretend to be pleased, when in reality they are exceedingly bored, and say, "Thank you very much indeed. Quite charming! What *is* that?" when some one has afflicted them sorely by slaughtering an inoffensive piece of music. He looks a funny man too, though gazing at his face carefully we are inclined to wonder whether he is not afflicted by a lingering fear that he may be making himself too popular, that the child will want to stay and hear more stories and jokes, whereas metal more attractive in the shape of an elder sister or an aunt is in the room. Is there not just the least suggestion in his eye that his true sentiments at the moment are to the effect that children are never so nice elsewhere as in their own nurseries? We seem to detect it.

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