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***THE RETROACTIVE EXISTENCE  
OF MR. JUGGINS***

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*The Retroactive Existence of Mr. Juggins*

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**I** FIRST met Juggins, really to notice him, years and years ago as a boy out camping. Somebody was trying to nail up a board on a tree for a shelf and Juggins interfered to help him.

“Stop a minute,” he said, “you need to saw the end of that board off before you put it up.” Then Juggins looked round for a saw, and when he got it he had hardly made more than a stroke or two with it before he stopped. “This saw,” he said, “needs to be filed up a bit.” So he went and hunted up a file to sharpen the saw, but found that before he could use the file he needed to put a proper handle on it, and to make a handle he went to look for a sapling in the bush, but to cut the sapling he found that he needed to sharpen up the axe. To do this, of course, he had to fix the grindstone so as to make it run properly.

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This involved making wooden legs for the grindstone. To do this decently Juggins decided to make a carpenter's bench. This was quite impossible without a better set of tools. Juggins went to the village to get tools, and, of course, he never came back.

He was re-discovered, weeks later, in the city, getting prices on wholesale tool machinery.

After that first episode I got to know Juggins very well. For some time we were students at college together. But Juggins somehow never got far with his studies. He always began with great enthusiasm and then something happened. For a time he studied French with tremendous eagerness. But he soon found that for a real knowledge of French you need first to get a thorough grasp of Old French and Provençal. It proved impossible to do anything with these without an absolutely complete command of Latin. This Juggins discovered could only be obtained, in any thorough way, through Sanskrit, which of course lies at the base of it. So Juggins devoted himself to Sanskrit until

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he realised that for a proper understanding of Sanskrit one needs to study the ancient Iranian, the root-language underneath. This language however is lost.

So Juggins had to begin over again. He did, it is true, make some progress in natural science. He studied physics and rushed rapidly backwards from forces to molecules, and from molecules to atoms, and from atoms to electrons, and then his whole studies exploded backward into the infinities of space, still searching a first cause.

Juggins, of course, never took a degree, so he made no practical use of his education. But it didn't matter. He was very well off and was able to go straight into business with a capital of about a hundred thousand dollars. He put it at first into a gas plant, but found that he lost money at that because of the high price of the coal needed to make gas. So he sold out for ninety thousand dollars and went into coal mining. This was unsuccessful because of the awful cost of mining machinery. So Juggins sold his shares in the mine for



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eighty thousand dollars and went in for manufacturing mining machinery. At this he would have undoubtedly made money but for the enormous cost of gas needed as motive-power for the plant. Juggins sold out of the manufacture for seventy thousand, and after that he went whirling in a circle, like skating backwards, through the different branches of allied industry.

He lost a certain amount of money each year, especially in good years when trade was brisk. In dull times when everything was unsaleable he did fairly well.

Juggins's domestic life was very quiet.

Of course he never married. He did, it is true, fall in love several times ; but each time it ended without result. I remember well his first love story, for I was very intimate with him at the time. He had fallen in love with the girl in question utterly and immediately. It was literally love at first sight. There was no doubt of his intentions. As soon as he had met her he was quite frank about it. "I intend" he said, "to ask her to be my wife."

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“When?” I asked; “right away?”

“No,” he said, “I want first to fit myself to be worthy of her.”

So he went into moral training to fit himself. He taught in a Sunday-school for six weeks, till he realised that a man has no business in Divine work of that sort without first preparing himself by serious study of the history of Palestine. And he felt that a man was a cad to force his society on a girl while he is still only half acquainted with the history of the Israelites. So Juggins stayed away. It was nearly two years before he was fit to propose. By the time he *was* fit, the girl had already married a brainless thing in patent leather boots who didn't even know who Moses was.

Of course Juggins fell in love again. People always do. And at any rate by this time he was in a state of moral fitness that made it imperative.

So he fell in love—deeply in love this time—with a charming girl, commonly known as the eldest Miss Thorneycroft. She was only

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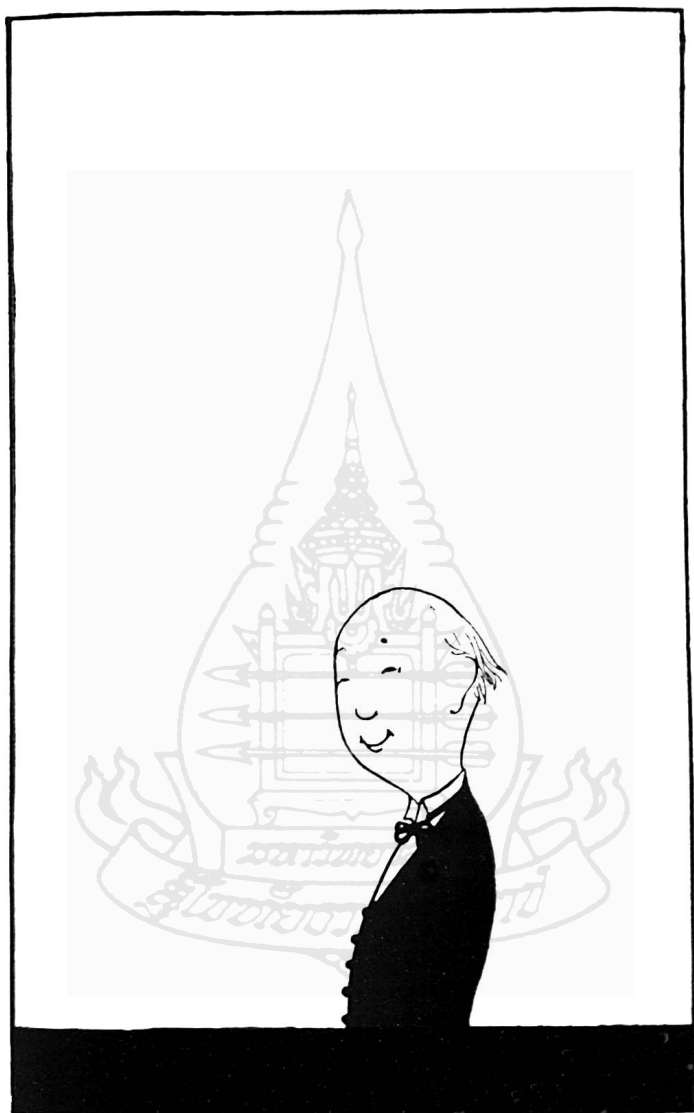
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called eldest because she had five younger sisters; and she was very poor and awfully clever and trimmed all her own hats. Any man, if he's worth the name, falls in love with that sort of thing at first sight. So, of course, Juggins would have proposed to her; only when he went to the house he met her next sister, who, of course, was younger still, and, I suppose, poorer, for she made not only her own hats but her own blouses. So Juggins fell in love with her. But one night when he went to call, the door was opened by the sister younger still, who not only made her own blouses and trimmed her own hats, but even made her own tailor-made suits. After that Juggins backed up from sister to sister till he went through the whole family, and in the end got none of them.

Perhaps it was just as well that Juggins never married. It would have made things very difficult because, of course, he got poorer all the time. You see, after he sold out his last share in his last business he bought with it a diminishing life annuity, so planned that



MEANWHILE HE HAD BECOME A QUIANT-LOOKING ELDERLY MAN

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he always got rather less next year than this year, and still less the year after. Thus, if he lived long enough, he would starve to death.

Meantime he has become a quaint-looking elderly man, with coats a little too short and trousers a little above his boots—like a boy. His face too is like that of a boy, with wrinkles.

And his talk now has grown to be always reminiscent. He is perpetually telling long stories of amusing times that he has had with different people that he names.

He says, for example—

“I remember a rather queer thing that happened to me in a train one day——”

And if you say “When was that, Juggins?” he looks at you in a vague way as if calculating and says, “In 1875, or 1876, I think, as near as I recall it.”

I notice, too, that his reminiscences are going further and further back. He used to base his stories on his recollections as a young man, now they are further back.

The other day he told me a story about himself and two people that he called the

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Harper brothers, Ned and Joe. Ned, he said, was a tremendously powerful fellow.

I asked how old Ned was and Juggins said that he was three. He added that there was another brother not so old, but a very clever fellow about—here Juggins paused and calculated—eighteen months.

So then I realised where Juggins' retroactive existence is carrying him to. He has passed back through childhood into infancy, and presently, just as his annuity runs to a point and vanishes, he will back up clear through the Curtain of Existence and die, or be born, I don't know which to call it.

Meantime he remains to me as one of the most illuminating allegories I have met.



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***MAKING A MAGAZINE***  
***(The Dream of a Contributor)***

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*VI.—Making a Magazine.—The Dream  
of a Contributor*

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I DREAMT one night not long ago that I was the editor of a great illustrated magazine. I offer no apology for this : I have often dreamt even worse, of myself than that. In any case I didn't do it on purpose. Very often, I admit, I try to dream that I am President Wilson, or Mr. Bryan, or the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, or a share of stock in the Standard Oil Co. for the sheer luxury and cheapness of it. But this was an accident. I had been sitting up late at night writing personal reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln. I was writing against time. The presidential election was drawing nearer every day and the market for reminiscences of Lincoln was extremely brisk, but, of course, might collapse any moment. Writers of my class have to



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consider this sort of thing. For instance, in the middle of Lent, I find that I can do fairly well with "Recent Lights on the Scriptures." Then, of course, when the hot weather comes, the market for Christmas poetry opens and there's a fairly good demand for voyages in the Polar Seas. Later on, in the quiet of the autumn, I generally write some "Unpublished Letters from Goethe to Balzac," and that sort of thing.

But it's a wearing occupation, full of disappointments, and needing the very keenest business instinct to watch every turn of the market.

I am afraid that this is a digression. I only wanted to explain how a man's mind could be so harassed and overwrought as to make him dream that he was an editor.

I knew at once in my dream where and what I was. As soon as I saw the luxury of the surroundings: the spacious room with its vaulted ceiling, lit with stained glass; the beautiful mahogany table at which I sat writing with a ten-dollar fountain pen—the gift of the

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manufacturers—on embossed stationery—the gift of the embosser—on which I was setting down words at eight and a half cents a word and deliberately picking out short ones through sheer business acuteness;—as soon as I saw this I said to myself—

“I am an editor, and this is my editorial sanctum.” Not that I have ever seen an editor or a sanctum. But I have sent so many manuscripts to so many editors and received them back with such unfailing promptness, that the scene before me was as familiar to my eye as if I had been wideawake.

As I thus mused, revelling in the charm of my surroundings and admiring the luxurious black alpaca coat and the dainty dicky which I wore, there was a knock at the door.

A beautiful creature entered. She evidently belonged to the premises, for she wore no hat and there were white cuffs upon her wrists. She had that indescribable beauty of effectiveness such as is given to hospital nurses.

This, I thought to myself, must be my private secretary.

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“I hope I don’t interrupt you, sir,” said the girl.

“My dear child,” I answered, speaking in that fatherly way in which an editor might well address a girl almost young enough to be his wife, “pray do not mention it. Sit down. You must be fatigued after your labours of the morning. Let me ring for a club sandwich.”

“I came to say, sir,” the secretary went on, “that there’s a person downstairs waiting to see you.”

My manner changed at once.

“Is he a gentleman or a contributor?” I asked.

“He doesn’t look exactly like a gentleman.”

“Very good,” I said. “He’s a contributor for sure. Tell him to wait. Ask the caretaker to lock him in the coal cellar, and kindly slip out and see if there’s a policeman on the beat in case I need him.”

“Very good, sir,” said the secretary.

I waited for about an hour, wrote a few editorials advocating the rights of the people,



WITH ALL THE LOW CUNNING OF AN AUTHOR STAMPED ON HIS FEATURES

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smoked some Turkish cigarettes, drank a glass of sherry, and ate part of an anchovy sandwich.

Then I rang the bell. "Bring that man here," I said.

Presently they brought him in. He was a timid-looking man with an embarrassed manner and all the low cunning of an author stamped on his features. I could see a bundle of papers in his hand, and I knew that the scoundrel was carrying a manuscript.

"Now, sir," I said, "speak quickly. What's your business? What do you want?"

"I've got here a manuscript," he began.

"What!" I shouted at him. "A manuscript! You'd dare, would you! Bringing manuscripts in here! What sort of a place do you think this is?"

"It's the manuscript of a story," he faltered.

"A story!" I shrieked. "What on earth do you think we'd want stories for! Do you think we've nothing better to do than to print your idiotic ravings. Have you any idea, you idiot, of the expense we're put to in setting up our fifty pages of illustrated advertising?"

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Look here," I continued, seizing a bundle of proof illustrations that lay in front of me, "do you see this charming picture of an Asbestos Cooker, guaranteed fireless, odourless, and purposeless? Do you see this patent motor-car, with pneumatic cushions, and the full-page description of its properties? Can you form any idea of the time and thought that we have to spend on these things, and yet dare to come in here with your miserable stories? By Heaven!" I said, rising in my seat, "I've a notion to come over there and choke you. I'm entitled to do it by the law, and I think I will."

"Don't, don't," he pleaded. "I'll go away. I meant no harm. I'll take it with me."

"No you don't," I interrupted; "none of your sharp tricks with this magazine. You've submitted this manuscript to me, and it stays submitted. If I don't like it, I shall prosecute you, and, I trust, obtain full reparation from the courts."

To tell the truth, it had occurred to me that perhaps I might need after all to buy the

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miserable stuff. Even while I felt that my indignation at the low knavery of the fellow was justified, I knew that it might be necessary to control it. The present low state of public taste demands a certain amount of this kind of matter distributed among the advertising.

I rang the bell again.

"Please take this man away and shut him up again. Have them keep a good eye on him. He's an author.

"Very good, sir," said the secretary.

I called her back for one moment.

"Don't feed him anything," I said.

"No," said the girl.

The manuscript lay before me on the table. It looked bulky. It bore the title *Dorothy Dacres, or, Only a Clergyman's Daughter*.

I rang the bell again.

"Kindly ask the janitor to step this way."

He came in. I could see from the straight, honest look in his features that he was a man to be relied upon.

"Jones," I said, "can you read?"

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“Yes, sir,” he said, “some.”

“Very good. I want you to take this manuscript and read it. Read it all through and then bring it back here.”

The janitor took the manuscript and disappeared. I turned to my desk again and was soon absorbed in arranging a full-page display of plumbers' furnishings for the advertising. It had occurred to me that by arranging the picture matter in a neat device with verses from “Home Sweet Home” running through it in double-leaded old English type, I could set up a page that would be the delight of all business readers and make this number of the magazine a conspicuous success. My mind was so absorbed that I scarcely noticed that over an hour elapsed before the janitor returned.

“Well, Jones” I said as he entered, “have you read that manuscript?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And you find it all right—punctuation good, spelling all correct?”

“Very good indeed, sir.”



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“And there is, I trust, nothing of what one would call a humorcous nature in it? I want you to answer me quite frankly, Jones—there is nothing in it that would raise a smile, or even a laugh, is there?”

“Oh, no, sir,” said Jones, “nothing at all.”

“And now tell me—for remember that the reputation of our magazine is at stake—does this story make a decided impression on you? Has it,” and here I cast my eye casually at the latest announcement of a rival publication, “the kind of *tour de force* which at once excites you to the full *qui vive* and which contains a sustained *brio* that palpitates on every page? Answer carefully, Jones, because if it hasn’t, I won’t buy it.”

“I think it has,” he said.

“Very well,” I answered; “now bring the author to me.”

In the interval of waiting, I hastily ran my eye through the pages of the manuscript.

Presently they brought the author back again. He had assumed a look of depression.

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“I have decided,” I said, “to take your manuscript.”

Joy broke upon his face. He came nearer to me as if to lick my hand.

“Stop a minute,” I said. “I am willing to take your story, but there are certain things, certain small details which I want to change.”

“Yes?” he said timidly.

“In the first place, I don’t like your title. *Dorothy Dacres, or, Only a Clergyman’s Daughter* is too quiet. I shall change it to read *Dorothea Dashaway, or, The Quicksands of Society.*”

“But surely——” began the contributor, beginning to wring his hands.

“Don’t interrupt me,” I said. “In the next place, the story is much too long.” Here I reached for a large pair of tailor’s scissors that lay on the table. “This story contains nine thousand words. We never care to use more than six thousand. I must therefore cut some of it off.” I measured the story carefully with a pocket tape that lay in front of me, cut off three thousand words and handed them back to the author. “These

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words," I said, "you may keep. We make no claim on them at all. You are at liberty to make any use of them that you like."

"But please," he said, "you have cut off all the end of the story: the whole conclusion is gone. The readers can't possibly tell——"

I smiled at him with something approaching kindness.

"My dear sir," I said, "they *never* get within three thousand words of the end of a magazine story. The end is of no consequence whatever. The beginning, I admit, may be, but the end! Come! Come! And in any case in our magazine we print the end of each story separately, distributed among the advertisements to break the type. But just at present we have plenty of these on hand. You see," I continued, for there was something in the man's manner that almost touched me, "all that is needed is that the last words printed must have a look of finality. That's all. Now, let me see," and I turned to the place where the story was cut, "what are the last words here: 'Dorothy sank into a chair.

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There we must leave her !' Excellent !. What better end could you want ? She sank into a chair and you leave her. Nothing more natural."

The contributor seemed about to protest. But I stopped him.

"There is one other small thing," I said. "Our coming number is to be a Plumbers' and Motor Number. I must ask you to introduce a certain amount of plumbing into your story." I rapidly turned over the pages. "I see," I said, "that your story as written is laid largely in Spain in the summer. I shall ask you to alter this to Switzerland and make it winter time to allow for the breaking of steam-pipes. Such things as these, however, are mere details ; we can easily arrange them."

I reached out my hand.

"And now," I said, "I must wish you a good afternoon."

The contributor seemed to pluck up courage.

"What about remuneration ?" he faltered.

I waived the question gravely aside. "You will, of course, be duly paid at our usual rate.

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You receive a cheque two years after publication. It will cover all your necessary expenses, including ink, paper, string, sealing-wax and other incidentals, in addition to which we hope to be able to make you a compensation for your time on a reasonable basis per hour. Good-bye."

He left, and I could hear them throwing him downstairs.

Then I sat down, while my mind was on it, and wrote the advance notice of the story. It ran like this:

"NEXT MONTH'S NUMBER OF THE MEGALOMANIA  
MAGAZINE WILL CONTAIN A THRILLING  
STORY, ENTITLED

*DOROTHEA DASHAWAY, OR, THE  
QUICKSANDS OF SOCIETY.*

"The author has lately leaped into immediate recognition as the greatest master of the short story in the American World. His style has a brio, a poise, a savoir-faire, a je ne sais quoi, which stamps all his work with the cachet of literary superiority. The sum paid for the

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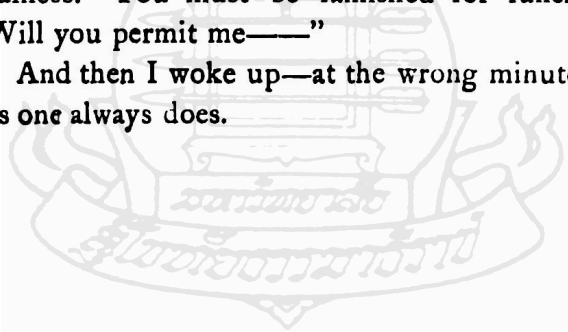
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story of *Dorothea Dashaway* is said to be the largest ever paid for a single MS. Every page palpitates with interest, and at the conclusion of this remarkable narrative the reader lays down the page in utter bewilderment, to turn perhaps to the almost equally marvellous illustration of Messrs. Spiggott and Fawcett's Home Plumbing Device Exposition which adorns the same number of the great review."

I wrote this out, rang the bell, and was just beginning to say to the secretary—

"My dear child, pray pardon my forgetfulness. You must be famished for lunch. Will you permit me——"

And then I woke up—at the wrong minute, as one always does.





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**HOMER AND HUMBUG**  
*An Academic Suggestion*

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*Homer and Humbug.—An Academic  
Suggestion*

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**T**HE following discussion is of course only of interest to scholars. But as the public schools returns show that in the United States there are now over a million coloured scholars alone, the appeal is wide enough.

I do not mind confessing that for a long time past I have been very sceptical about the classics. I was myself trained as a classical scholar. It seemed the only thing to do with me. I acquired such a singular facility in handling Latin and Greek that I could take a page of either of them, distinguish which it was by merely glancing at it, and with the help of a dictionary and a pair of compasses, whip off a translation of it in less than three hours.

But I never got any pleasure from it. I lied about it. At first perhaps I lied through vanity. Any coloured scholar will understand



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## *Homer and Humbug*

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the feeling. Later on I lied through habit ; later still because after all the classics were all that I had, and so I valued them. I have seen thus a deceived dog value a pup with a broken leg, and a pauper child nurse a dead doll with the sawdust out of it. So I nursed my dead Homer and my broken Demosthenes, though I knew in my heart that there was more sawdust in the stomach of one modern author than in the whole lot of them. Observe, I am which it is that has it full of it.

So, as I say, I began to lie about the classics. I said to people who knew no Greek that there was a sublimity, a majesty about Homer which they could never hope to grasp. I said it was like the sound of the sea beating against the granite cliffs of the Ionian Esophagus, or words to that effect. As for the truth of it, I might as well have said that it was like the sound of a rum distillery running a night shift on half time. At any rate this is what I said about Homer, and when I spoke of Pindar—the dainty grace of his strophes—and Aristophanes—the delicious sallies of his wit, sally after sally, each sally explained in a

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## *Homer and Humbug*

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note calling it a sally—I managed to suffuse my face with an animation which made it almost beautiful.

I admitted, of course, that Virgil, in spite of his genius, had a hardness and a cold glitter which resembled rather the brilliance of a cut diamond than the soft grace of a flower. Certainly, I admitted this: the mere admission of it would knock the breath out of anyone who was arguing.

From such talks my friends went away sad. The conclusion was too cruel. It had all the cold logic of a Syllogism (like that almost brutal form of argument so much admired in the Paraphernalia of Socrates). For if—

Virgil and Homer and Pindar had all this  
grace, and pith and these sallies,—  
And if I read Virgil and Homer and Pindar,  
And if they only read Mrs. Wharton and  
Mrs. Humphry Ward,  
Then where were they?

So continued lying brought its own reward in the sense of superiority, and I lied more.

When I reflect that I have openly expressed regret, as a personal matter, even in the

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presence of women, for the missing books of Tacitus, and the entire loss of the *Abracadabra* of Polyphemus of Syracuse, I can find no words in which to beg for pardon. In reality I was just as much worried over the loss of the *ichthyosaurus*. More, indeed: I'd like to have seen it; but if the books Tacitus lost were like those he didn't, I wouldn't.

I believe all scholars lie like this. An ancient friend of mine, a clergyman, tells me that in Hesiod he finds a peculiar grace that he doesn't find elsewhere. He's a liar. That's all. Another man, in politics and in the legislature, tells me that every night before going to bed he reads over a page or two of Thucydides to keep his mind fresh. Either he never goes to bed or he's a liar. Doubly so: no one could read Greek at that frantic rate: and anyway his mind isn't fresh. How could it be? he's in the legislature. I don't object to this man talking freely of the classics, but he ought to keep it for the voters. My own opinion is that before he goes to bed he takes whisky: why call it Thucydides?

I know there are solid arguments advanced

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in favour of the classics. I often hear them from my colleagues. My friend the professor of Greek tells me that he truly believes the classics have made him what he is. This is a very grave statement if well founded. Indeed, I have heard the same argument from a great many Latin and Greek scholars. They all claim, with some heat, that Latin and Greek have practically made them what they are. This damaging charge against the classics should not be too readily accepted. In my opinion some of these men would have been what they are, no matter what they were.

Be this as it may, I for my part bitterly regret the lies I have told about my appreciation of Latin and Greek literature. I am anxious to do what I can to set things right. I am therefore engaged on, indeed have nearly complete, a work which will enable all readers to judge the matter for themselves. What I have done is a translation of all the great classics, not in the usual literal way but on a design that brings them into harmony with modern life. I will explain what I mean in a minute.

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The translation is intended to be within reach of everybody. It is so designed that the entire set of volumes can go on a shelf twenty-seven feet long, or even longer. The first edition will be an *édition de luxe*, bound in vellum or perhaps in buckskin, and sold at five hundred dollars. It will be limited to five hundred copies, and, of course, sold only to the feeble-minded. The next edition will be the Literary Edition, sold to artists, authors, actors and contractors. After that will come the Boarding House Edition, bound in board and paid for in the same way.

My plan is so to transpose the classical writers as to give, not the literal translation word for word, but what is really the modern equivalent. Let me give an odd sample or two to show what I mean. Take the passage in the *First Book of Homer* that describes Ajax the Greek dashing into the battle in front of Troy. Here is the way it runs (as nearly as I remember) in the usual word-for-word translation of the classroom, as done by the very best professor, his spectacles glittering with the literary rapture of it.

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## *Homer and Humbug*

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“Then he too Ajax on the one hand leaped (or possibly jumped) into the fight wearing on the other hand yes certainly a steel corslet (or possibly a bronze under tunic) and on his head of course yes without doubt he had a helmet with a tossing plume taken from the mane (or perhaps extracted from the tail) of some horse which once fed along the banks of the Scamander (and it sees the herd and raises its head and paws the ground) and in his hand a shield worth a hundred oxen and on his knees too especially in particular greaves made by some cunning artificer (or perhaps blacksmith) and he blows the fire and it is hot. Thus Ajax leapt (or, better, was propelled from behind) into the fight.”

Now, that's grand stuff. There is no doubt of it. There's a wonderful movement and force to it. You can almost see it move, it goes so fast. But the modern reader can't get it. It won't mean to him what it meant to the early Greek. The setting, the costume, the scene has all got to be changed in order to let the reader have a real equivalent to judge just how good the Greek verse is. In my translation I alter it just a little, not much, but just enough to give the passage a form that

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## *Homer and Humbug*

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reproduces the proper literary value of the verses, without losing anything of the majesty. It describes, I may say, the Directors of the American Industrial Stocks rushing into the Balkan War cloud :—

“Then there came rushing to the shock of war  
Mr. McNicoll of the C.P.R.

He wore suspenders and about his throat  
High rose the collar of a sealskin coat,  
He had on gaiters and he wore a tie  
He had his trousers buttoned good and high.  
He had his trousers buttoned good and high.  
About his waist a woollen undervest  
Bought from a sad-eyed farmer of the West,  
(And every time he clips a sheep he sees  
Some bloated plutocrat who ought to freeze),  
Thus in the Stock Exchange he burst to view,  
Leaped to the post, and shouted, ‘Ninety-two.’”

There! That’s Homer, the real thing! Just as it sounded to the rude crowd of Greek peasants who sat in a ring and guffawed at the rhymes and watched the minstrel stamp it out into “feet” as he recited it!

Or let me take another example from the so-called *Catalogue of the Ships* that fills up nearly an entire book of Homer. This famous passage names all the ships, one by one, and

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names the chiefs who sailed on them, and names the particular town or hill or valley that they came from. It has been much admired. It has that same majesty of style that has been brought to an even loftier pitch in the *New York Business Directory* and the *City Telephone Book*. It runs along, as I recall it, something like this :—

“And first indeed Oh yes was the ship of Homistogetes the Spartan, long and swift, having both its masts covered with cowhide and two rows of oars. And he, Homistogetes, was born of Hermogenes and Ophthalmia and was at home in Syncope beside the fast flowing Paresis. And after him came the ship of Preposterus the Eurasian, son of Oasis and Hysteria”—and so on endlessly.

Instead of this I substitute, with the permission of the New York Central Railway, the official catalogue of their locomotives taken almost word for word from the list compiled by their superintendent of works. I admit that he wrote in hot weather. Part of it runs :—

Out in the yard and steaming in the sun  
Stands locomotive engine number forty-one



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## *Homer and Humbug*

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Seated beside the windows of the cab  
Are Pat McGaw and Peter James McNab  
Pat comes from Troy and Peter from Cohoes  
And when they pull the throttle off she goes,  
And as she vanishes there comes to view  
Steam locomotive engine number forty-two.  
Observe her mighty wheels, her easy roll  
With William J. Macarthy in control  
They say her engineer some time ago  
Lived on a farm outside of Buffalo  
Whereas his fireman Henry Edward Foy  
Attended school in Springfield, Illinois.  
Thus does the race of man decay or rot  
Some men can hold their jobs and some can not.

Please observe that if Homer had actually written that last line it would have been quoted for a thousand years as one of the deepest sayings ever said. Orators would have rounded out their speeches with the majestic phrase, quoted in sonorous and unintelligible Greek verse, "some men can hold their jobs and some can not": essayists would have begun their most scholarly dissertations with the words "It has been finely said by Homer that (in Greek) 'some men can hold their jobs'": and the clergy in mid-pathos of a funeral sermon would have raised

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## *Homer and Humbug*

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their eyes aloft and echoed "Some men can not"!

This is what I should like to do. I'd like to take a large stone and write on it in very plain writing—

"The classics are only primitive literature. They belong to the same class as primitive machinery and primitive music and primitive medicine," and then throw it through the windows of a University and hide behind a fence to see the professors buzz!



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