

"I shall tell you," replied Peter, pointing to a chair

He changed his mind. Peter sat down, and seemed about to look at him curiously.

"Perhaps," Peter said at last, "you know my reasons for requesting an interview with you here?"

"I cannot say that I do," answered Tom.

There was another pause, during which the ticking of the clock could be distinctly heard.

"You have no idea?" inquired Peter.

"I have no idea," replied Tom.

"Do you remember," asked the older man, a little nervously, "that when old John Vansittart disappeared so suddenly from the Grange there were some persons who believed that he had been foully murdered?"

(Tom passed his hand through his hair. "John Vansittart," he muttered to himself.

"The affair," continued Peter, "was never cleared up."

"It was never cleared up," said Tom. "But why," he added, "do you return to this subject?"

"You may well ask," said Peter, "why I return to it."

And so on. There is so much of this kind of thing in my recent novels that if all the lines of it were placed on end I daresay they would reach around the world. Yet I am never charged with padding now. My writing is said to be beautifully lucid. My shipwreck has made several intelligent critics ask if I have ever been a sailor, though I don't mind saying here, that like Douglas Jerrold, I only dote upon the sea from the beach. I have been to Dover, but no further, and you will find my shipwreck told (more briefly) in *Marryatt*. I dashed it off less than two months ago, but for the life of me I could not say whether my ship was scuttled, or went on fire, or sprang a leak. Henceforth I shall only refer to it as the shipwreck, and my memory will do all that is required of it if it prevents my mistaking the novel that contains the shipwreck. Even if I did that, however, I know from experience that my reputation would be as safe as the lives of my leading characters. I began my third novel, meaning to make my hero something of a coward, but though I worked him out after that pattern for a time, I have changed my plan. He is to be peculiarly heroic henceforth. This will not lose me my reputation. It will be said of my hero that he is drawn with no ordinary skill, and that the author sees the two-sidedness of every man's character. As for the fourth story, it is the second one over again, with the shipwreck omitted. One night when I did not have a chapter to write—a rare thing with me—

I read over the first part of this fourth tale—another rare thing—and found it so slipshod as to be ungrammatical. The second chapter is entirely taken up with a disquisition on bald heads, but the humor of it will be said to increase my reputation. Sometimes when I become despondent of ever losing my reputation, I think of taking a whole year to write one novel in, just to see what I really could do. I wonder whether the indulging public would notice any difference? Perhaps I could not write carefully now if I tried. The small section of the public that guesses which of the four-in-hand writers I am may think for a moment that this story of how I tried in vain to lose my reputation will help me toward the goal. They are wrong, however. The public will stand anything from us now—or they would get something better.—J. M. Barrie, in "A Holiday in Bed."

A SPRINKLE OF SPICE.

(Money talks, yes, but never gives itself away.

A man is judged by the cigars he gives to his friends.

Mrs. R.—Why, Mr. H., isn't that Miss M?

Mr. H.—That was her name I believe.

Mrs. R.—Ah, she's married then! And, pray do tell me what narrow-brained, simpering idiot you have married her?

Mr. H.—You refer to the minister who performed the ceremony, I presume, as I am her husband.

A YOUNGSTER'S DEFINITION OF A SNORE.

Mother.—"Paul, just step into the next room and see if grandpa is asleep."

Paul (returning after a short time)—"Mamma, the whole of grandpa is asleep, only his nose keeps awake yet."—*Humoristische Blätter*.

Ambiguous.—She—"How was your speech at the club received the other night?"

He.—When I sat down they said it was the best thing I ever did."

WENT TO A GOOD PLACE.

Dentist: No; I've no objection to your sitting in my office during my extracting hours, but why do you want to do such a peculiar thing?

Young Man.—I've been delegated by our class to get points for a new college yell.

She filled her new puffed sleeves with gas, And when the wind was right, Toward the World's Fair she lit out, And soon was out of sight.

IMPORTED WIT.

A LIVELY DOSE.

A worthy doctor, residing in the Rue des Carottes, told his man to take a box of pills to one of his patients, and at the same time deliver a cage containing six canaries, at the house of a friend of his. By a strange oversight the man presented the cage to the patient, with the following prescription: "Swallow a couple every half-hour."—*Esprit des Autres*.

SEMPER IDEM.

Drowning Man:—"Help! Do throw me a life-belt!"

Passenger (a tailor)—"Most happy to oblige. What size round the waist, please?" —*Leber Land und Meer*.

Just as soon as the moon has quarters enough, she always gets full.

Little Florence Wheeler is the only girl in a big family of boys. Some one asked her when she was to begin going to school. "Dust as soon as I dots into pants!" was the solemn and sincere answer.

Farmer (in pawnshop, surprised at the diversity)—"Pon my soul!

Freiballstein—How much you want on it?

"Did you advise Howler to cultivate his voice?" "Yes." Oh mercy! What for?" "A rain-producing machine.

AN INCURABLE CASE.

A certain celebrated New York doctor is noted for his gruffness. Not long ago an elegantly dressed lady belonging to the Four Hundred called at his office. "What can I do for you?" asked Dr. Gruff, not looking up from his writing. "Sir, I am Mrs. Sturvenant Knickerbocker Van Astorblit."

"Do you want to be treated for it?"

"Are the Misses Dumahoe in?" he asked. "She are," returned Bridget, "but the young ladies is out."