

# THE ANTIDOTE

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## A MESS OF POTTAGO.

Of course we have all, as children, had related to us the story how Esau sold his birthright, and were taught to look upon that sale as a very grievous sin, which no doubt was strictly proper in the interests of religion and so forth. Nevertheless we will frankly confess, that, in spite of our tuition we had always a kind of pity for poor hungry Esau, and can remember being strongly reprimanded upon one occasion, for calling his smooth-faced brother a mean sneak, and his mother not much better. The days of childhood are now long past, and we do not find ourselves giving way to a foolish ebullition of feeling when the barter for the mess of pottage is re-enacted as it is every day we live. No, when our brother is metaphorically, if not actually, half famished, we take advantage of his condition to drive a hard bargain, without our blood being stirred to scorn or indignation in the least. A man comes down in the world—has a tough time of it so to speak—and we treat him as Esau was treated, taking all he has, and giving him a meagre plateful in return. Who wastes his compassion upon him at whose vitals misfortune is gnawing? It is true we may express sorrow, but if the opportunity offers which make his talents (i.e. his birthright) available, we consider them from a purely business point of view, and present him in exchange the mess of pottage, to which "his

poverty not his will consents." We know the value of his birthright, but we also know the necessities of its owner, and we trade upon the latter, even as Esau was traded with. The fellow is tired and hungry, and as a child we might have taken him by the hand and—but pshaw! when we became men we "put away childish things," and do not hesitate to accept, nay seize, his all for—a mess of pottage.

What is the meaning of this savage allegory, we hear some kindhearted reader exclaim? We answer that perhaps we have the rheumatism, or the weather is bad, and when the pain is over, or the clouds pass away, we may tell another tale showing how virtuous and charitable the world has become, and how when a man steals our cloak we beg of him to take our coat also. Then, we promise that butter will not melt in our mouth, and that nowadays a hungry Esau is never tricked out of his birthright.

## Midnight Adventures.

I am a Tom-cat, and my feline feelings have lately been strung up to such a pitch that the unfolding of my tale has been rendered necessary.

I reside in the back garden of No. 10, Caterwaul Crescent, and I feel that my one mission on earth is to annoy the old gentleman at No. 11. There is some spell that causes me nightly to get on to the garden-wall near his bedroom window and disturb his sleep with the best examples of my voice production. What he does during the day I do not know, but he has never slept at night for more than a month. Up to the time of going to press, he has broken in his endeavours to hit me, three large-sized water jugs, a basin, two glass bottles, and a glass. Near the window there stands a valuable old Indian vase, and when he breaks that my end will be accomplished, and my serenade will cease.

It so happened that I kept in attendance at the garden-wall pretty regularly, but one night I caught cold and could not sing, so I stayed away.

All through that night, a friend informs me a figure in a night-cap, holding a revolver, might have been seen peering at intervals round the corner of the open window, anxiously awaiting my arrival.

I was really sorry for him that night, as he might have got to sleep all the time.

My cold got better, my voice came back, and my mission started again; but now that he possessed a pistol I deserted the wall and took up my position on one side of his wash-house roof, where no bullet from him could reach me.

My end is now accomplished. The valuable old Indian vase still stands in the same old place near the window, but the old gentleman has met his fate. One night when I was finishing up a fine movement with a brilliant cadenza, a pistol report put an abrupt termination to my song, and I well knew what had happened.

Two days after they bore him to his grave. Mournful faces followed the hearse to the graveyard, where he now sleeps undisturbed. They say he died of a broken heart, but a bullet in the brain is nearer the truth.

—♦♦♦—  
DAVID AND ABSALOM.

Hopkins the father, and Hopkins the son,  
Loved blindly the self-same world;  
But, although her young heart by the  
sire was won,

Yet in vain for her hand he prayed:  
"Old Hopkins! Old Hopkins!" in grief  
she sighed,

"I would fain be your wife, I swear;  
But I cannot—I cannot—through life be  
tied

To a fellow with carrot hair!"  
So Hopkins the elder was deeply pained,  
But it tempered his woe to cry,  
"He! she can't by my cub of a son be  
gained—

He's more gingery-haired than I!"

But Hopkins the father, with anguish dire,  
Heard the news ere a month had run,  
That the maid who'd rejected the Hopkins  
sire

Was to marry the Hopkins son.  
And, on asking what'er had induced the  
fair

To become a red-wooled one's pet,  
He was told that the stripling had changed  
his hair

To the glossiest, shiniest jet!  
So Hopkins the elder was quite undone,  
And an ocean of tears he shed,  
As he blubbered, "Young Hopkins, my  
son, my son,

Would Heaven I had dyed in thy stead!"

—Pick-me-up.