

your body and use your skull for a flagon. Therefore, old toadstool, write quickly and the truth."

The Wayfarer offered him the crayon. The "preacher of false doctrines" trembled and shook his head, and his blue lips moved inarticulately. The Wayfarer took this for a refusal and became a mountain of wrath. He was going to grab the preacher, when the little man explained by nervous signs that he could not write, pointing excitedly ahead as the best information he could offer. This setback was the boiling point of the Wayfarer's rage. He grasped his ashplant, twirled it in the air and roared:

"Fly!"

Deaf or not deaf, the little man understood that word, and, with surprising alacrity, sped. He did not, in fact, stay his course for half-an-hour, and then offered up a mute prayer to God for delivering him.

A mood of ill-natured melancholy settled on the Wayfarer. He began to think it would have been better if he had forced the preacher to lead the road to the nearest village, and he had a momentary idea of going after him with that intent. The sun was setting, however, so he decided to push on. He stripped the trees of their taunting tracts, and savagely tore them into shreds. He was about to go when he noticed that the preacher had left his satchel behind.

"By the soul of Falstaff!" he said, "no more of those foul jests shall bring the blush to these fair virgin trees," and he took bundles of the notices from the bag.

"Aha! a fitting sacrifice to my most faithless Bacchus."

With his tinder-box and a strip of birch bark he fired his offering, and, sitting down, watched the flames, a half-smile on his mouth. His hand wandered, involuntarily, in the satchel; then it stopped, as a hand does stop when it meets the unexpected. He turned his eyes and his hand drew out a leathern flask. He looked at it with a disdainful sneer.

"I had never thought to foul my lips with water—what did that old prig call it? Ha! the wine of the righteous. Well, for a few moments I will be righteous, for my throat is a chimney-stack."

He raised the bottle to his lips. At the first taste he started, then took away the flask from his mouth, sniffed at it, eagerly replaced it, and swallowed the entire quart without pausing for breath.

It was old ale; ale so old that it was strong as wine. The Wayfarer tossed the flask away.

"O most perfect prig!" he shouted with delight.

Then he lay upon his back, and the valley echoed with his laughter.

The sun had gone, and the vale began to grow dusky. He changed his mind about going farther on, and decided to camp for the night. Some flickers remained in the sacrifice, so he gathered dry twigs and leaves, then searched around for larger sticks. Soon he had a brisk blaze, and, finding a dry, hollow log, he made a fire that would outlast the night. He wrapped his coat tightly about him, and threw himself down beside the fire.

Somewhere in the distance an owl laughed. The Wayfarer mocked the bird, and went to sleep with a smile on his lips.

## II

Who lives a life so free and fine  
As the roving devil-dodger who delights  
In cursing wine?  
He walks the hills and dainty dales,  
With a sanctimonious hammer and a bag  
Of pious nails;

He tacks his warnings on the trees  
And they prick the guilty consciences of  
butterflies and bees:  
And when he's feeling faint and pale,  
He restores his flagging spirits with a  
flask of nut-brown ale.

So toppers take a hearty swig,  
To revenge the crafty cunning of the old  
itin'rant prig.  
He does not work for Hope or pelf,  
But he thinks the less that others drink,  
the more's left for himself.