

paper?" "Ya-as, gimme a paper—an' say, lookee here, boy." "Yes, sir," said the boy, handing him a paper, and looking up in some surprise.

"Can you tell me where a fellow can get a drink?"

"Why, yes—course—come along an' I'll show you."

The boy led through the crowd a little distance downward, and pointed to a drinking fountain. "There," said he, "you can drink all you want there."

The stranger gazed motionless on the boy for a few minutes, and then gasped, "Well, I'll be blowed!"

"You will, eh? Why?"

"Why? I'll mighty soon tell you why. When a fellow has bin in limbo for twenty years for suthin' he done when he was blind drunk—an' in all that time ha'int never got a taste of anything that can bite, do you suppose its cold water he's a-hankerin' after?"

"Oh! well, I guess not—guess you want to go down to that coffee-house, you'll get coffee or tea there hot enough to bite, and only five cents a cup, too, with a roll," said the boy, with the air of a pleasant recollection on his face.

Again the man gazed at the boy with intensified wonder. "Well, if you ain't the greenest coon for a boy of your age! Look here—you've got to understand me, or by —, —what are you scared at? Where is the nearest saloon? I want a drink o' whiskey. I bin wanderin' up an' down this hour, ever since I cum off the train, lookin' fur a bar, an' I'm blessed if I can strike a blamed one."

"Is a saloon a place where folks used to get drunk in?" inquired the boy, running the man over with his eye.

"That's it," cried the man, slapping his greasy thigh, "you struck it then—you ain't so slow as I tuk ye for. Show me a saloon an' I'll gie ye a nickel."

"I can't."

"You can't, eh! Why?"

"'Cause there ain't any saloons any more. The year I was born the saloons were all shut up."

The man leaned faintly against a lamp-post and glowered at the boy in speechless astonishment. The boy in equal wonder looked at him, nodded and added—

"True's you're born."

"What'r ye givin' us?" he inquired, hoarsely—then he sprang on the boy with the roar of a famished lion. "Who're ye foolin'—tell me this minit where's a saloon, where's any place at all where I can get a drink. I'm bound to have a blow out if I tramp the whole blamed city for it."

The boy dodged the large hand outstretched to clutch him—and said, "Tramp then—mighty good job you can't get it—if you're like that sober."

"Hey! ye would, would ye? I tell ye there ain't any saloons an' no whiskey nor anything to make a beast of ye in this city. The year I was born was Prohibition year, an' my name's John Prohibition Thompson. Now will ye believ' me—mother christened me that 'cause father used always to be drunk—and she was so glad, 'cause he'd be sober all the time—an' he is too—can't help it."

"Well, I swan! Say, kin you direct me to Paddy Rat's place?"

The boy shook his head.

"Don't you know Paddy Rats?"

"Was that the fellow that was hung a long time ago?" asked the boy.

"My gum! I dunno—how could I know, shet up in that there penitentiary? Well, here's a rummy go—no

whiskey—no saloons—no chance of a treat—Paddy Rats gone—an' me here on New Year's day—sober! Think I'll go to the Central Prison, and p'raps I might get a glimpse of some of the jail boys I remember. Say, is there lots of fellows in the jail now?"

"No! they're talking about turning it into a children's hospital, or an old folks' refuge or something—'cause its empty most the time."

"P'lice court every mornin' though?"

"No, the police court is only once a week now, an' then there's nothin' to do—lawyers all emigratin'."

"You don't say!—well, I s'pose there's nothing for it but coffee," said the man, with a sigh of resignation, "but it will seem lonesome without the boys and without a blow out once in a while, and—oh say, Bob—where's the police?"

"Oh! round somewhere I guess—there ain't only a few now—force been reduced twice in the last ten years—no use for them."

"Well! well! this country must be going to the dogs altogether; why, in my time they were always increasin' the force. The drunks alone kept the police court busy all morning. Black Maria was always on the go in my time, an' the murders, an' the fights, an' the people found dead, an' suicided with drink, kept reporters busy I tell ye. An' the newsboys, well sonny you ain't like a news-boy in my time—not much, Mary Ann—they'd got to hustle in them days, for most all their parents drank, and if they didn't bring in the spondulicks they'd got to tell why. It makes me sad and weary—I'm not used to them slow-going times, and I don't know as I like it. Say, where did you say that coffee-house was?"

"There," said the boy, indicating an open door immediately behind the man.

The man turned and walked in, and opened the inner door. For a moment he stood irresolute. "Oh Lord!" he muttered in dismay as he saw the long clean hall, the snowy linen, the cozy little seats at the dining tables, and in consternation he was about to beat a retreat, when a bright little waitress stepped up to him and said, with a smile, "Come in, sir, coffee or tea?"

"Coffee," said he, huskily, and sat down awkwardly, while the paper boy, looking after him, nudged a companion and said, "Oh man, what a funny coon has just gone in there—regular Rip Van Winkle—wanted to find a saloon!" "A saloon! what's that, Johnny?" "A place to drink stuff in that makes you drunk, out of your mind."

"Oh pshaw! What do you take me for?" "Fact, Really." "Great Cæsar! Morning paper, sir?"

## WHAT NEXT?

GRIP found on his desk the other day a little paper-covered book called "A Christmas Chat." With some curiosity he opened it and found to his astonishment that it was all about Love and Religion; and to his still greater astonishment that it was by Mr. Arnold Haultain. GRIP had imagined that Mr. Haultain was chiefly employed in setting the teachers of Ontario by the ears on educational matters; and to find him writing glibly and, yes, interestingly, on love and religion was a surprise. And an agreeable surprise, too, for Mr. Haultain's "Chat" has some very good things in it,—amongst others his opinion of the "out-and-out flirt," as he calls her. Get it, reader, by way of spice to your Xmas dish.