

CONFESSIONS OF HIGGS.

I have sad, very sad, recollections of a visit which I paid a year ago to some relatives of mine who live at Turnipton, a small country village. Not that my friends did not do all they could to make my stay with them a pleasant one; on the contrary, they exerted themselves to the utmost to please me. Uncle Simon would insist upon my taking at least five of his fine fresh eggs and three cups of tea, bowls I would call them, for breakfast. No, it was not that which made matters unpleasant; it was those little imps, with straw hat, red shirt, and pantaloons hung with one suspender. They remembered me before I had gone to the city, and was not quite so polished as I am now.

Uncle Simon met me at the station with his hay wagon. He had just been putting in a load of hay, and had come on with the wagon for my box. My cousin Tim was with him. That young scamp was leader of the gang which brought me all my trouble. Not having seen me for years, he stood for a moment gazing with open-mouthed astonishment at my white cravat and bull-dog collar. I was rather pleased at this effect. The greetings over, we mounted the cart and started off to the farm, which is a little outside the village. Aunt Sue received me with open arms, and told me I had "grewed."

After tea, putting on a little side, I drew out my new two dollar cigar-case and offered Uncle Simon a weed. I abused the brand a good deal, (they were two-for-twenty-five. It is rarely I indulge in so good a cigar, but I was bent on making a good impression). Uncle took me out to admire the stock, and after a little conversation about the city, the family retired early, as the next day was Sunday, and my relatives were very observant of the Sabbath.

Next morning I went with my uncle and Aunt to church. Tim had gone up into the gallery, where he joined five or six congenial spirits. On entering the family pew I was surprised and delighted to find Juliana Swinger there. She noticed me as I entered, and turning smiled sweetly upon me. Miss Swinger is the young lady for whom I have entertained tender feelings. What a happy hour I spent in that old church! I am afraid I heard very little of the sermon.

As soon as church was over I joined my dear Juliana. She said she was staying with her mother at the village hotel until her father should call for them, and then they were all going on to T—.

I was delighted at this news, as I would be able to spend a few days in her company. At the gate of the churchyard that rascal Tim had arranged all his *confreres* in a line, and as we passed, raising their hands and opening their mouths and eyes to the full extent, they exclaimed: "Great Scott! Ain't he a swell! Just look at the size of his collar!" I had liked the effect that my dress had produced on Tim at the station, but this was rather overdoing it, and I disliked it especially as I was walking

with Juliana. I made arrangements for an afternoon stroll with Miss Swinger, and went home to dinner.

Juliana came down to the parlour dressed in white muslin. How fresh and sweet she looked! I remember it even now. We walked out by the brook, and talked of poetry and flowers. Coming to a shady hollow where the stream bent its course we stopped and sat down. There, owing, I suppose, to the surrounding scene and that beautiful being, my companion, I gradually became spooney, and, after a while, just as I was raising her shapely hand to my lips, following as closely as I could remember the manner of Lord B—, in one of the Duchess' novels, I suddenly heard a shout of "Ah! drop that!" Raising my head quickly I saw behind a bush not ten yards ahead, Tim and two other scapegraces with fishing rods in their hands.

Confusion! they had been sitting there fishing and watching us all the time. Off they scampered. Miss Swinger, blushing a deep crimson, rose and said coldly: "I think we had better be moving, Mr. Higgs." We turned back, but soon the coldness vanished, and all was bright again. I gathered water lilies for her, and she twined them into a girdle for her waist. There was one large beauty at the end of a log reaching out into the creek, which she particularly wished to have. Now I am a nervous man, the most nervous in Spiff & Co.'s gents' furnishing establishment. When nearing the lily, and balancing myself on the log as best I could, I heard a shout: "Look out! There's a bull dog climbin' out arter yer!" Losing my balance, I fell floundering into a mass of floating weeds. When I rose up again, full of wrath, indignation and slimy water, through the foul weeds straggling over my head and down my face, I could catch a glimpse of Miss Swinger shrieking with laughter, and those three scoundrels up on the bank enjoying it. Imagine the dismay and confusion I was in, and, worse than all, before Juliana.

Of course I could not accompany Miss Swinger to her hotel in that plight. The weeds were straggling over my white vest; my two and a-half inch collar clung to my neck; my hat had fallen off and floated down the stream. I was dripping and miserable.

I felt too much ashamed to be seen by Juliana after that. Her father joined her the next day, and she went off with him. I returned to the city broken-hearted. I saw Juliana, my adored one, a month afterwards in town. Oh, joy! rapture! Did she smile at me? Alas! no. It was my hated rival, Smithers, who stepped past me and joined her. I hear she is going out to Turnipton again this year. I shall try to get a week's holiday from my employer, and will visit my uncle's while she is there, but I shall take good care to arrange for that scamp Tim.