

If anyone in reading this volume should feel that the very cream of your jesting has been omitted, some consolation may be found in the suggestion that a reading of what is here will dry up the worst case of lamentation. As a second hint—if one of these unfortunates must have that forgotten *pièce de résistance*, it is still probably available in its original setting, and for him who shall say it alone is not worth the price of the entire volume?

An interesting fact came to notice in the making of this collection of your best work. Before doing so we had written to a dozen or more of the sharpest and wittiest minds of our day, telling them that we were planning this book as a sort of surprise package to you in honor of your twentieth year as an author and your sixtieth as a citizen in a world the happier for your laughter and good fun. We asked each of these distinguished gentlemen, among other things, what his favorite Leacock story or essay might be and, curiously enough, the piece of yours which has been most often requested is not humorous at all but a most shrewd discussion of present-day education, under the caption of "Oxford as I See It." Apparently the old tradition that a humorous man must always be funny has been broken. But not for long; the second most popular sketch you ever wrote is that irresistible account of your first experience in banking. And the most famous single incident in your entire literary career occurs in the story of "Gertrude the Governess,"—more specifically in the description of the phenomenal departure of the disinherited young man and the manner in which he disperses himself from the immediate proximity of his home. All three of these high-spots, of course, will be found in the present volume.

A moment ago I confessed that before making this selection we dropped a hint to some of your friends that this