

Mr Copland would and did talk. Soon everybody in the red-roofed town knew the old Castle-gentleman. Soon it was difficult to think that the castle had ever been without this well-dressed, chatty, and urbane guest.

He looked quite a distinguished old buck, in his Tyrolean hat, violet silk muffler, fur coat and white gloves, as he waited at the porch for the bath chair and stout pony that used to take him down the hill for his morning perambulation; and his flourishing bows to clergyman or clerk, as he passed through the narrow street, were examples of a gentler style of courtesy that is rare in this decadent age. He and his pony lingered every day outside the old curiosity and furniture shop next the post office. Mr Wamsley, the curio-dealer, was a letterer who never grew weary: it was an honour to him the lightest words of the great Mr Copland—late of Oxford Street, London. Mr Copland, leaving his bath chair, often sat and chatted in the shop itself, overhauled its scanty contents, gave an expert opinion on every article—from a margin-trimmed, foxy engraving, to a three-cornered, fatally damaged washing-stand. Gladys had some slight reason to believe that Papa became a secret backer of Mr Wamsley and his funny little shop. Certainly, since Papa's advent, the shop seemed to have burst into unusual enterprise and vigour: the stock grew larger and larger: new and special lines were frequently introduced. And Papa, when he came to dinner, seemed often to be insidiously pushing the shop wares.

"Gladys, my dear, I—ah—'appened to be passing Wamsley's this morning—and was struck, really struck, by some Sheffield plate he has picked up—soup tureen and sauce boats. I told him frankly I considered them cheap"; and Papa coughed. "Ah—'e also 'ad a little bit of 'Oniton lace——"

Papa used to drop his h's now—and whatever his faults, this was not one of them in the past. But now he was old and feeble: there could be no doubt that his health was really broken. He was asthmatic. He would have been short of breath even if he had not talked so much; and, talking incessantly, he could not muster strength for what in philological terms is called "the hard breathing." By the time he got to the end of a long sentence, and especially if he coughed, bang went all the h's. Gladys winced when she first missed the expected aspirate: she was so anxious that dear Papa, sitting at dinner in the Family house, should always