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The Strange Metamorphosis.

Mr. Bultitude fell back into his seat with a gasp. It was hard to be accused of caricaturing one's own self, particularly when conscious of entire innocence in that respect, but even this was slight in comparison with the discovery that he had been so blindly deceiving himself.

The doctor evidently had failed to penetrate his disguise, and the dreaded scene of elaborate explanation must be gone through after all.

The boys (with the exception of Kiff-fer) still found exquisite enjoyment in this extraordinary and original exhibition, and waited eagerly for further experiments on the doctor's patience.

They were again gratified. If there was one thing Paul detected more than another, it was the smell of peppermint—no less than three office boys had been discharged by him because, as he alleged, they made the clerks' room reek with it—and now the subtle, searching odor of the hated confection was gradually stealing into the compartment and influencing the atmosphere.

He looked at Coggs, who sat on the seat opposite to him, and saw his cheeks and lips moving in slow and appreciative absorption of something. Coggs was clearly the culprit.

Do you encourage your boys to make common nuisances of themselves in a public place, may I ask, Dr. Grimestone? he inquired, fuming.

"Some scarcely seem to require encouragement," said the doctor, pointedly. "What is the matter now?"

"If he takes it medicinally," said Paul, "he should choose some other time and place for his complaint. If he has a depraved liking for the abominable stuff, for heaven's sake make him refrain from it on occasions when it is a serious annoyance to others."

"Will you explain? Who and what are you talking about?"

"That boy opposite," said Paul, pointing the finger of denunciation at the astonished Coggs, "he's sucking an infernal peppermint lozenge strong enough to throw the train off the rails."

"Is what Bultitude tells me true, Coggs?" demanded the doctor, in an awful voice.

Coggs, after making several attempts to bolt the offending lozenge, and turning scarlet meanwhile with confusion and embarrassment, stammered huskily something to the effect that he had bought the lozenges at a chemist's, which he seemed to consider, for some reason, a mitigating circumstance.

"Have you any more of this pernicious stuff about you?" said the doctor.

Very slowly and reluctantly Coggs brought out of one pocket after another three or four neat little white packets, made up with that lavish expenditure of time, string and sealing-wax, by which the struggling chemist seeks to reconcile the public mind to a charge of two hundred and fifty per cent on cost price, and handed them to Dr. Grimestone, who solemnly unfasted them, one after the other, glanced at their contents with infinite disgust, and flung them out of the window.

Then he turned to Paul with a look of more favor than he had yet shown him. "Bultitude," he said, "I am obliged to you. A severe cold in the head has rendered me incapable of detecting this insidious act of insubordination and self-indulgence, on which I shall have more to say on another occasion. Your moral courage and promptness in denouncing the evil thing are much to your credit."

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"So, Coker? (Coker wore a blue necktie) said the doctor, "you emulate the mad ass in not recognizing that those of stupidity and stubbornness, do you? You lash out with your hind legs at an inoffensive school-fellow with all the viciousness of a kangaroo, eh? Write out all your sins in Buffon's Natural History upon those two animals a dozen times, and bring it to me tomorrow evening. If I am to be stable wild asses, sir, they shall be broken in!"

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"Well," said Paul, thinking to banter them a little, "here you are, young men! eh? Holidays all over now! Work while you're young, and then—Gad, you're walking me off my legs. Stop! I'm not as young as I used to be."

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Paul got out with the others, and walked forward to the guard's van, where he stood shivering in the raw night air by a small heap of portmanteaux and white clamped boxes. "I should like to tell him all about it now," he thought, "if he wasn't so busy. I'll get him to go in a cab alone with me, and get it over before we reach the house."

Dr. Grimestone certainly did not seem in a very receptive mood for confidences just then. No flies were to be seen, which he took as a personal outrage, and, visited upon the station-master in not indignation.

"It's scandalous, I tell you," he was saying; "scandalous! No cabs to meet the train. My school reassembles to-day, and here I find no arrangements made for their accommodation. Not even an omnibus! I shall write to the manager and report this. Let someone go for a fly immediately. Boys, go into the waiting-room till I come to you. Stay—there are too many for one fly. Coker, Coggs and, let me see—yes, Bultitude, you all know your way. Walk on, and tell Mrs. Grimestone we are coming."

Mr. Bultitude was perhaps more relieved than disappointed by this postponement of a disagreeable interview, though if he had seen Coker dig Coggs in the side with a chuckle of exultant triumph, he might have had misgivings as to the prudence of trusting himself alone with them.

As it was, he almost determined to