

英美文学精品详注丛书

# **The Seventh Pullet and other short stories**

Saki

中国对外翻译出版公司

〔京〕新登字020号

**图书在版编目(CIP)数据**

第七只小母鸡:英文/(英)萨凯(Saki)著;史密斯(Smith,P.)

注释. —影印本. —北京:中国对外翻译出版公司,1994.10

(英美文学精品详注丛书;第二辑/李长杉编)

据意大利 Meravigli Editrice 原版影印

ISBN 7-5001-0315-8

I. 第… II. ①萨… ②史… III. ①小说—英国—阅读教学  
②英语—语言读物,小说 IV. H319.4

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(94)第14585号

责任编辑:李长杉

---

中国对外翻译出版公司出版、发行 北京市太平桥大街4号

邮编:100810 电话:6022134 电报挂号:6230

新华书店北京发行所经销

北京市顺义李史山胶印厂印刷

---

787×960毫米 1/32 2.875印张 字数60(千)

1994年12月第一版 1994年12月第一次印刷

---

中国对外翻译出版公司发行处 电话:6022124

---

ISBN7-5001-0315-8/H·106 定价:3.00元

## 出版说明

本丛书经中华版权代理总公司代理、由意大利 Meravigli Editrice 公司授权中国对外翻译出版公司独家出版,意在增加读者词汇量,提高读者阅读和写作水平,使读者的英语水平在短期内出现飞跃。

本丛书特点如下:

- 所选均为名家精品,未作任何删节
- 用英文详加注释,对同一生词不惜重复注释,以方便读者
- 注释编排方式与众不同,排在原作对页,且与原作平行,使读者不致分散注意力,又可免去翻查之苦,宛然读简易英文一般
- 注释可作单词表使用,检验、巩固读者的记忆,从而迅速扩大词汇量

## 《第七只小母鸡》

萨基(1870—1916) 是赫克托·休·门罗根据一首波斯诗歌取的笔名。他生在缅甸,父亲是苏格兰警官。早年被送往英格兰,和两个姑妈一起生活。在那里完成学业,然后去欧洲漫游。曾加入缅甸宪兵队,后因健康原因退役,进入新闻界,曾在几个国家任驻外通讯记者。之后返回英格兰,专门从事创作。他创作了130多个短篇小说,最著名的作品是短篇小说集《克洛维斯纪事》和《野兽与超级野兽》以及一些长篇小说。他44岁从军,在第一次世界大战期间阵亡。他的小说结构引人入胜,结局往往出乎意料。他通常创作讽刺性的作品,但也擅长写神奇故事。

## CONTENTS

The Seventh Pullet .....	2
Tobermory .....	18
The Stalled Ox .....	38
The Romancers .....	52
Gabriel-Ernest .....	62

## THE SEVENTH PULLET

*"Nothing extraordinary ever happens to me..."*

"It's not the daily grind that I complain of," said Blenkinthrope resentfully; "it's the dull grey sameness of my life outside of office hours. Nothing of interest comes my way, nothing remarkable or out of the common. Even the little things that I do try to find some interest in don't seem to interest other people. Things in my garden, for instance."

"The potato that weighed just over two pounds," said his friend Gorworth.

"Did I tell you about that?" said Blenkinthrope; "I was telling the others in the train this morning. I forgot it I'd told you."

"To be exact you told me that it weighed just under two pounds, but I took into account the fact that abnormal vegetables and freshwater fish have an after-life, in which growth is not arrested."

"You're just like the others," said Blenkinthrope sadly; "you only make fun of it."

"The fault is with the potato, not with us," said Gorworth; "we are not in the least interested in it because it is not in the least interesting. The men you go up in the train with every day are just in the same case as yourself; their lives are commonplace and not very interesting to themselves, and they certainly are not going to wax enthusiastic over

**PULLET:** type of chicken.

**grind:** work. **complain of:** lament.

**resentfully:** with bitterness. **dull:** boring. **sameness:** state of always being the same.

**remarkable:** unusual. **out of the common:** rare.

**I do try:** *note the use of do to reinforce the verb.*

**instance:** example.

**two pounds:** a little less than one kilo.

**took into account:** considered. **abnormal:** not ordinary.

**freshwater fish:** fish not from the sea. **after-life:** existence after death. **growth:** development. **arrested:** stopped.

**make fun of it:** ridicule it.

**fault:** defect.

**in the least:** at all.

**commonplace:** ordinary.

**wax:** become.

the commonplace events in other men's lives. Tell them something startling, dramatic, piquant, that has happened to yourself or to someone in your family, and you will capture their interest at once. They will talk about you with a certain personal pride to all their acquaintances. "Man I know intimately, fellow called Blenkinthroe, lives down my way, had two of his fingers clawed clean off by a lobster he was carrying home to supper. Doctor says entire hand may have to come off." Now that is conversation of a very high order. But imagine walking into a tennis club with the remark: "I know a man who has grown a potato weighing two and a quarter pounds."

"But hang it all, my dear fellow," said Blenkinthroe impatiently, "haven't I just told you that nothing of a remarkable nature ever happens to me?"

"Invent something," said Gorworth. Since winning a prize for excellence in Scriptural knowledge at a preparatory school he had felt licensed to be a little more unscrupulous than the circle he moved in. Much might surely be excused to one who in early life could give a list of seventeen trees mentioned in the Old Testament.

"What sort of thing?" asked Blenkinthroe, somewhat snappishly.

"A snake got into your hen-run yesterday morning and killed six out of seven pullets, first mesmerizing them with its eyes and then biting them as they stood helpless. The seventh pullet was one of that French sort, with feathers all over its eyes, so it escaped the mesmeric snare, and just flew at what it could see of the snake and pecked it to pieces."

"Thank you," said Blenkinthroe stiffly; "it's a very clever invention. If such a thing had really happened in my poultry-run I admit I should have been proud and interested to tell people about it. But I'd rather stick to fact, even



**events:** happenings.

**startling:** surprising. **piquant:** stimulating.

**capture:** get.

**pride:** self-respect.

**intimately:** closely. **fellow:** man.

**clawed:** cut. **clean off:** completely off.

**lobster:** prestigious type of shellfish. **entire:** complete, whole.

**have to come off:** be amputated.

**order:** level.

**remark:** saying.

**hang it all:** exclamation. **fellow:** man.

**remarkable:** surprising, unusual.

**prize:** object or money given if you win something.

**excellence:** a very high level. **Scriptural:** Biblical. **knowledge:** things known. **preparatory school:** private primary school. **licensed:** authorized. **unscrupulous:** without morals. **circle:** society. **Much might surely be excused:** certainly, people would excuse him many things. **mentioned:** talked about. **Old Testament:** first half of Bible.

**snappishly:** in a bad temper.

**snake:** serpent. **hen-run:** place where chickens are kept.

**pullets:** young chickens. **mesmerizing:** hypnotizing.

**biting:** cutting with teeth. **helpless:** unable to move or escape.

**feathers:** covering for birds.

**mesmeric:** hypnotic. **snare:** trap.

**pecked:** cut with its beak.

**stiffly:** rigidly, coldly.

**poultry-run:** place where chickens are kept. **proud:** honoured.

**stick to:** remain with.

if it is plain fact." All the same his mind dwelt wistfully on the story of the Seventh Pullet. He could picture himself telling it in the train amid the absorbed interest of his fellow-passengers. Unconsciously all sorts of little details and improvements began to suggest themselves.

Wistfulness was still his dominant mood when he took his seat in the railway carriage the next morning. Opposite him sat Stevenham, who had attained to a recognized brevet of importance through the fact of an uncle having dropped dead in the act of voting at a Parliamentary election. That had happened three years ago, but Stevenham was still deferred to on all questions of home and foreign politics.

"Hullo, how's the giant mushroom, or whatever it was?" was all the notice Blenkinthroe got from his fellow travellers.

Young Duckby, whom he mildly disliked, speedily monopolized the general attention by an account of a domestic bereavement.

"Had four young pigeons carried off last night by a whacking big rat. Oh, a monster he must have been; you could tell by the size of the hole he made breaking into the loft."

No moderate-sized rat ever seemed to carry out any predatory operations in these regions; they were all enormous in their enormity.

"Pretty hard lines that," continued Duckby, seeing that he had secured the attention and respect of the company; "four squeakers carried off at one swoop. You'd find it rather hard to match that in the way of unlooked-for bad luck."

"I had six pullets out of a pen of seven killed by a snake yesterday afternoon," said Blenkinthroe, in a voice which he hardly recognized as his own.

**plain:** simple. **dwelt:** remained. **wistfully:** with regret, wishing it had happened. **picture:** see.

**amid:** in the middle of.

**fellow-passengers:** people travelling with him. **Unconsciously:** without thinking. **all sorts of:** many kinds of. **improvements:** ways of making the story better. **Wistfulness:** regret. **mood:** feeling.

**attained:** got.

**brevet:** qualification.

**dropped:** fallen down.

**deferred to:** his opinion was asked. **home:** domestic, national.

**giant:** enormous. **mushroom:** fungus.

**fellow travellers:** people travelling with him.

**mildly:** a little. **speedily:** quickly.

**monopolized:** took for himself. **account:** story.

**bereavement:** death, loss.

**pigeons:** birds. **carried off:** taken away.

**whacking big:** enormous.

**size:** dimensions.

**loft:** part of house below roof.

**moderate-sized:** of normal dimensions.

**predatory:** for food.

**Pretty hard lines:** quite a disaster.

**secured:** made sure of.

**squeakers:** (*slang*) pigeons, birds. **at one swoop:** in one go.

**rather:** quite. **match:** equal. **unlooked-for:** not asked for.

**pullets:** young chickens. **pen:** group. **snake:** serpent.

**hardly recognized:** nearly did not recognize.

“By a snake?” came in excited chorus.

“It fascinated them with its deadly, glittering eyes, one after the other, and struck them down while they stood helpless. A bedridden neighbour, who wasn’t able to call for assistance, witnessed it all from her bedroom window.”

“Well, I never!” broke in the chorus, with variations.

“The interesting part of it is about the seventh pullet, the one that didn’t get killed,” resumed Blenkinthrope, slowly lighting a cigarette. His diffidence had left him, and he was beginning to realize how safe and easy depravity can seem once one has the courage to begin. “The six dead birds were Minorcas; the seventh was a Houdan with a mop of feathers all over its eyes. It could hardly see the snake at all, so of course it wasn’t mesmerized like the others. It just could see something wriggling on the ground, and went for it and pecked it to death.”

“Well, I’m blessed!” exclaimed the chorus.

In the course of the next few days Blenkinthrope discovered how little the loss of one’s self-respect affects one when one has gained the esteem of the world. His story found its way into one of the poultry papers, and was copied thence into a daily news-sheet as a matter of general interest. A lady wrote from the North of Scotland recounting a similar episode which she had witnessed as occurring between a stoat and a blind grouse. Somehow a lie seems so much less reprehensible when one can call it a lee.

For a while the adapter of the Seventh Pullet story enjoyed to the full his altered standing as a person of consequence, one who had had some share in the strange events of his times. Then he was thrust once again into the cold grey background by the sudden blossoming into importance of Smith-Paddon, a daily fellow traveller, whose little girl had been knocked down and nearly hurt by a car belonging to a musical-comedy actress. The actress was not in the car

**chorus:** speaking together.

**fascinated:** charmed, hypnotised. **deadly:** fatal. **glittering:** shining. **struck them down:** killed them.

**helpless:** unable to move or escape. **bedridden:** confined to bed. **witnessed:** saw.

**"Well, I never!":** (*exclamation*) incredible! **broke in:** interrupted.

**pullet:** young chicken.

**resumed:** continued.

**diffidence:** shyness, timidity.

**realize:** see. **safe:** secure, sure. **depravity:** wrong things.

**Minorcas:** type of chickens. **Houdan:** type of bird. **mop:** group.

**feathers:** covering for birds. **hardly:** nearly not.

**mesmerized:** hypnotized.

**wriggling:** moving like a serpent.

**pecked:** cut with its beak.

**I'm blessed!:** (*exclamation*) incredible!

**discovered:** found.

**gained:** got, earned. **esteem:** respect.

**poultry:** chicken and other birds. **papers:** newspapers.

**thence:** from there. **new-sheet:** newspaper.

**recounting:** telling. **witnessed:** seen.

**stoat:** small mammal which eats birds. **blind:** unable to see.

**grouse:** type of bird. **Somehow:** in some way. **lie:** something which is not true. **reprehensible:** wrong. **lee:** Scottish dialect word meaning lie. **adapter:** person who change. **altered:** changed.

**standing:** status. **of consequence:** important. **share:** part.

**thrust:** thrown.

**background:** out of attention. **blossoming:** flowering, development. **fellow traveller:** someone who travelled with him.

**knocked down:** run over by a car.

at the time, but she was in numerous photographs which appeared in the illustrated papers of Zoto Dobreen inquiring after the well-being of Maisie, daughter of Edmund Smith-Paddon, Esq. With this new human interest to absorb them the travelling companions were almost rude when Blenkinthroe tried to explain his contrivance for keeping vipers and peregrine falcons out of his chicken-run.

Gorworth, to whom he unburdened himself in private, gave him the same counsel as theretofore.

"Invent something."

"Yes, but what?"

The ready affirmative coupled with the question betrayed a significant shifting of the ethical standpoint.

It was a few days later that Blenkinthroe revealed a chapter of family history to the customary gathering in the railway carriage.

"Curious thing happened to my aunt, the one who lives in Paris," he began. He had several aunts, but they were all geographically distributed over Greater London.

"She was sitting on a seat in the Bois the other afternoon, after lunching at the Roumanian Legation."

Whatever the story gained in picturesqueness for the dragging-in of diplomatic "atmosphere," it ceased from that moment to command any acceptance as a record of current events. Gorworth had warned his neophyte that this would be the case, but the traditional enthusiasm of the neophyte had triumphed over discretion.

"She was feeling rather drowsy, the effect probably of the champagne, which she's not in the habit of taking in the middle of the day."

A subdued murmur of admiration went round the company. Blenkinthroe's aunts were not used to taking champagne in the middle of the year, regarding it exclusively as a Christmas and New Year accessory.

**numerous:** a lot of.

**inquiring:** asking. **well-being:** health.

**absorb:** involve. **rude:** impolite.

**contrivance:** invention.

**vipers:** snakes. **peregrine falcons:** type of bird eating other birds. **chicken-run:** place where chickens are kept.

**unburdened himself:** told his problems.

**counsel:** advice. **theretofore:** before.

**ready:** quick. **affirmative:** yes. **coupled:** combined.

**significant:** with meaning. **shifting:** moving. **ethical:** moral.

**standpoint:** position. **revealed:** showed.

**chapter:** part. **customary:** normal. **gathering:** meeting.

**Curious:** strange.

**several:** various.

**distributed:** to be found. **Greater London:** the area around London. **Bois:** Bois de Boulogne, a park in Paris.

**lunching:** having lunch. **Legation:** Consulate.

**picturesqueness:** interest.

**dragging-in:** forced inclusion. **ceased:** stopped.

**warned:** told. **neophyte:** student.

**triumphed:** been victorious.

**drowsy:** sleepy.

**subdued:** restrained, controlled. **murmur:** low sound.

**accessory:** something to accompany.

“Presently a rather portly gentleman passed by her seat and paused an instant to light a cigar. At that moment a youngish man came up behind him, drew the blade from a swordstick, and stabbed him half a dozen times through and through. ‘Scoundrel,’ he cried to his victim, ‘you do not know me. My name is Henri Leturc.’ The elder man wiped away some of the blood that was spattering his clothes, turned to his assailant, and said: ‘And since when has an attempted assassination been considered an introduction?’

Then he finished lighting his cigar and walked away. My aunt had intended screaming for the police, but seeing the indifference with which the principal in the affair treated the matter she felt that it would be an impertinence on her part to interfere. Of course I need hardly say she put the whole thing down to the effects of a warm, drowsy afternoon and the Legation champagne. Now comes the astonishing part of my story. A fortnight later a bank manager was stabbed to death with a swordstick in that very part of the Bois. His assassin was the son of a charwoman formerly working at the bank, who had been dismissed from his job by the manager on account of chronic intemperance. His name was Henri Leturc.”

From that moment Blenkinthrope was tacitly accepted as the Munchausen of the party. No effort was spared to draw him out from day to day in the exercise of testing their powers of credulity, and Blenkinthrope, in the false security of an assured and receptive audience, waxed industrious and ingenious in supplying the demand for marvels. Duckby’s satirical story of a tame otter that had a tank in the garden to swim in, and whined restlessly whenever the water-rate was overdue, was scarcely an unfair parody of some of Blenkinthrope’s wilder efforts. And then one day came Nemesis.



**portly**: robust, fat.

**paused**: stopped. **instant**: moment.

**youngish**: quite young. **drew**: took out. **blade**: sharp part of a knife. **swordstick**: weapon like a sword. **stabbed**: killed with a knife. **half a dozen**: six. **through and through**: from one side of the body to the other. **'Scoundrel'**: *expression of disdain*, person without value. **elder**: older. **wiped**: cleaned. **spattering**: marking. **assailant**: person who attacks.

**intended**: wanted to. **screaming**: shouting, crying.

**principal**: protagonist. **treated**: considered.

**impertinence**: rude behaviour.

**hardly**: not.

**put the whole thing down**: saw the whole thing as a result of.

**drowsy**: sleepy. **Legation**: consulate.

**fortnight**: two weeks.

**stabbed**: killed with a sword or knife. **swordstick**: type of sword.

**that very part**: exactly that part. **Bois**: park in Paris.

**on account of**: because of. **chronic**: long lasting. **intemperance**: abuse of alcohol.

**tacitly**: silently.

**Munchausen**: Baron Munchausen, hero of a fantastic (*and impossible*) series of adventures. **No effort was spared**: everything was done. **draw him out**: make him talk. **powers of credulity**: how much they could believe. **assured**: guaranteed. **receptive**: appreciative. **waxed**: continued, prospered. **industrious**: with hard work. **ingenious**: with clever inventions. **marvels**: incredible events. **tame**: opposite of wild. **otter**: type of mammal living in rivers. **tank**: glass receptacle. **whined**: made a sad noise. **restlessly**: in an agitated way. **water-rate**: tax on water. **overdue**: late in paying. **scarcely**: not really. **parody**: joking imitation. **wilder efforts**: more fantastic stories. **Nemesis**: disaster.

Returning to his villa one evening Blenkinthroe found his wife sitting in front of a pack of cards, which she was scrutinizing with unusual concentration.

"The same old patience-game?" he asked carelessly.

"No dear; this is the Death's Head patience, the most difficult of them all. I've never got it to work out, and somehow I should be rather frightened if I did. Mother only got it out once in her life; she was afraid of it, too. Her great-aunt had done it once and fallen dead from excitement the next moment, and mother always had a feeling that she would die if she ever got it out. She died the same night that she did it. She was in bad health at the time, certainly, but it was a strange coincidence."

"Don't do it if it frightens you," was Blenkinthroe's; practical comment as he left the room. A few minutes later his wife called to him.

"John, it gave me such a turn, I nearly got it out. Only the five of diamonds held me up at the end. I really thought I'd done it."

"Why, you can do it," said Blenkinthroe, who had come back to the room; "if you shift the eight of clubs on to that open nine the five can be moved on to the six."

His wife made the suggested move with hasty, trembling fingers, and piled the outstanding cards on to their respective packs. Then she followed the example of her mother and great-grand-aunt.

Blenkinthroe had been genuinely fond of his wife, but in the midst of his bereavement one dominant thought obtruded itself. Something sensational and real had at last come into his life; no longer was it a grey, colourless record. The headlines which might appropriately describe his domestic tragedy kept shaping themselves in his brain.

"Inherited presentiment comes true." The Death's Head patience: Card-game that justified its sinister name in three

**villa:** house.

**pack of cards:** set of 52 playing cards.

**scrutinizing:** looking at, examining.

**patience-game:** game of cards played alone, solitaire. **careles-**

**sly:** without interest. **Death's Head patience:** particular kind of

card game, presumably very unlucky! **got it to work out:**

managed to finish it, finished it with success. **somehow:** in some

way. **rather:** quite. **got it out:** solved it, finished it.

**great-aunt:** grandparent's sister.

**in bad health:** ill.

**such a turn:** a strange shocking feeling.

**five of diamonds:** particular card (*the four suits are spades, hearts, diamonds, clubs*). **held me up:** delayed, stopped.

**shift:** move. **eight of clubs:** particular card.

**hasty:** in a hurry. **trembling:** shaking, moving involuntarily.

**piled:** put. **outstanding:** remaining.

**respective:** corresponding. **packs:** piles. **followed the exam-**  
**ple:** imitated, here: died.

**genuinely:** truly. **fond of:** affectionate.

**midst:** middle. **bereavement:** loss of a relation or friend who dies. **obtruded itself:** came out. **sensational:** fantastic.

**no longer was it:** it wasn't any more note inversion after no longer. **record:** list of facts. **headlines:** titles of newspaper articles. **kept:** continued. **shaping:** forming. **brain:** mind.

**Inherited:** passed on from one generation to the next. **presen-**  
**timent:** bad feeling or prediction. **comes true:** is realised.

**sinister:** mysterious.

generations." He wrote out a full story of the fatal occurrence for the *Essex Vedette*, the editor of which was a friend of his, and to another friend he gave a condensed account, to be taken up to the office of one of the halfpenny dailies. But in both cases his reputation as a romancer stood fatally in the way of the fulfilment of his ambitions. "Not the right thing to be Munchausening in a time of sorrow," agreed his friends among themselves, and a brief note of regret at the "sudden death of the wife of our respected neighbour, Mr John Blenkinthroe, from heart failure," appearing in the news column of the local paper was the forlorn outcome of his visions of widespread publicity.

Blenkinthroe shrank from the society of his erstwhile travelling companions and took to travelling townwards by an earlier train. He sometimes tries to enlist the sympathy and attention of a chance acquaintance in details of the whistling prowess of his best canary or the dimensions of his largest beetroot; he scarcely recognizes himself as the man who was once spoken about and pointed out as the owner of the Seventh Pullet.

**fatal**: ending in death.

**occurrence**: event. **Essex Vedette**: local newspaper. **editor**: most important journalist. **condensed**: summarised.

**account**: version. **halfpenny**: costing half a penny.

**dailies**: daily papers. **romancer**: person telling stories which are not true. **fatally**: with a negative effect. **in the way**: as an obstacle. **fulfilment**: realisation. **Munchausening**: exaggerating. **brief**: short.

**regret**: sadness about the past.

**column**: section of newspaper.

**forlorn**: sad. **outcome**: result. **widespread**: vast.

**shrank**: withdrew himself, avoided. **society**: company. **erstwhile**: former, previous. **took to**: made a habit of. **townwards**: to the city. **enlist**: get.

**sympathy**: compassion. **chance**: casual. **acquaintance**: person he knew. **whistling**: making a noise with air coming out of the mouth. **prowess**: skill, ability. **beetroot**: red vegetable. **scarcely**: almost not. **pointed out**: indicated.

**owner**: proprietor. **Pullet**: chicken.

## TOBERMORY

*Only imagine that your cat could talk...*

It was a chill, rain washed afternoon of a late August day, that indefinite season when partridges are still in security or cold storage, and there is nothing to hunt—unless one is bounded on the north by the Bristol Channel, in which case one may lawfully gallop after fat red stags. Lady Blemley's house-party was not bounded on the north by the Bristol Channel, hence there was a full gathering of her guests round the tea-table on this particular afternoon. And, in spite of the blankness of the season and the triteness of the occasion, there was no trace in the company of that fatigued restlessness which means a dread of the pianola and a subdued hankering for auction bridge. The undisguised open-mouthed attention of the entire party was fixed on the homely negative personality of Mr. Cornelius Appin. Of all her guests, he was the one who had come to Lady Blemley with the vaguest reputation. Someone had said he was 'clever', and he had got his invitation in the moderate expectation, on the part of his hostess, that some portion at least of his cleverness would be contributed to the general entertainment. Until tea-time that day she had been unable to discover in what direction, if any, his cleverness lay. He was neither a wit nor a croquet champion, a hypnotic force nor a begetter of amateur theatricals. Neither did his exterior suggest a generous

**chill:** cold. **rain washed:** rainy.  
**partridges:** bird which is hunted.  
**cold storage:** fridge. **unless:** if not.  
**bounded:** limited. **Bristol Channel:** sea between England and South Wales. **lawfully:** legally. **gallop:** go very fast on a horse.  
**stags:** male deer (*kind of animal living in forest*).  
**hence:** so. **gathering:** meeting.

**blankness:** boring nature.  
**triteness:** banality. **trace:** sign.  
**fatigued:** tired. **restlessness:** agitation. **dread:** fear.  
**subdued:** timid. **hankering:** desire. **auction bridge:** card game.  
**undisguised:** not hidden, open. **open-mouthed:** incredulous.  
**entire:** complete. **homely:** ordinary.

**hostess:** woman giving a party.  
**portion:** part. **cleverness:** intelligence.  
**entertainment:** amusement.

**cleverness:** intelligence. **wit:** good speaker. **croquet:** kind of garden game. **hypnotic:** irresistible. **begetter:** producer. **amateur:** not professional. **Neither did his exterior:** note use of inversion after neither. **exterior:** appearance.

measure of mental deficiency. He had subsided into mere Mr. Appin, and the Cornelius seemed a piece of transparent baptismal bluff. And now he was claiming to have launched on the world a discovery beside which the invention of gunpowder, of the printing-press, and of steam locomotion were inconsiderable trifles. Science had made bewildering strides in many directions during recent decades, but this thing seemed to belong to the domain of miracle rather than to scientific achievement.

"And do you really ask us to believe," Sir Wilfrid was saying, "that you have discovered a means for instructing animals in the art of human speech, and that dear old Tobermory has proved your first successful pupil?"

"It is a problem at which I have worked for the last seventeen years," said Mr. Appin, "but only during the last eight or nine months have I been rewarded with glimmerings of success. Of course I have experimented with thousands of animals, but latterly only with cats, those wonderful creatures which have assimilated themselves so marvellously with our civilization while retaining all their highly developed feral instincts. Here and there among cats one comes across an outstanding superior intellect, just as one does among the ruck of human beings, and when I made the acquaintance of Tobermory a week ago I saw at once that I was in contact with a "Beyond-cat" of extraordinary intelligence. I had gone far along the road to success in recent experiments; with Tobermory, as you call him, I have reached the goal."

Mr. Appin concluded his remarkable statement in a voice which he strove to divest of a triumphant inflection. No one said "Rats", though Clovis's lips moved in a monosyllabic contortion, which probably invoked those rodents of disbelief.

"And do you mean to say," asked Miss Resker, after a



**subsided**: become (*negative*). **mere**: simple.

**baptismal**: at birth. **bluff**: exaggeration. **claiming**: saying.

**launched**: started. **discovery**: invention.

**gunpowder**: explosive substance. **printing-press**: machine used to print books etc. **steam**: water vapour. **inconsiderable**: unimportant. **trifles**: small things. **bewildering**: strange. **strides**: progress. **decades**: periods of ten years. **belong**: correspond to. **domain**: world, area. **achievement**: results.

**discovered**: found out. **means**: way. **instructing**: teaching.

**speech**: talking.

**proved**: been shown to be. **pupil**: student.

**rewarded**: compensated.

**glimmerings**: small signs.

**latterly**: recently.

**wonderful**: marvellous. **assimilated themselves**: adapted.

**retaining**: keeping.

**feral**: like a wild animal.

**outstanding**: exceptional.

**intellect**: intelligence. **ruck**: mass.

**made the acquaintance of**: met.

**at once**: immediately. **Beyond**: outside normal limits.

**goal**: objective.

**concluded**: ended. **remarkable**: surprising. **statement**: declaration. **strove**: tried very hard. **divest**: say without. **triumphant**: victorious. **inflection**: tone. **"Rats"**: I don't believe you.

**monosyllabic**: of one syllable. **invoked**: referred to. **rodents**: rats and mice etc. **disbelief**: opposite of belief.

slight pause, "that you have taught Tobermory to say and understand easy sentences of one syllable?"

"My dear Miss Resker," said the wonder-worker patiently, "one teaches little children and savages and backward adults in that piecemeal fashion; when one has once solved the problem of making a beginning with an animal of highly developed intelligence one has no need for those halting methods. Tobermory can speak our language with perfect correctness."

This time Clovis very distinctly said, "Beyond-rats!" Sir Wilfrid was more polite, but equally sceptical.

"Hadn't we better have the cat in and judge for ourselves?" suggested Lady Blemley.

Sir Wilfrid went in search of the animal, and the company settled themselves down to the languid expectation of witnessing some more or less adroit drawing-room ventriloquism.

In a minute Sir Wilfrid was back in the room, his face white beneath its tan and his eyes dilated with excitement.

"By Gad, it's true!"

His agitation was unmistakably genuine, and his hearers started forward in a thrill of awakened interest.

Collapsing into an armchair he continued breathlessly: "I found him dozing in the smoking-room, and called out to him to come for his tea. He blinked at me in his usual way, and I said: 'Come on Toby, don't keep us waiting,' and, by Gad! he drawled out in a most horribly natural voice that he'd come when he dashed well pleased! I nearly jumped out of my skin!"

Appin had preached to absolutely incredulous hearers; Sir Wilfrid's statement carried instant conviction. A Babel-like chorus of startled exclamation arose, amid which the scientist sat mutely enjoying the first fruit of his stupendous discovery.

**slight:** short.

**wonder-worker:** miraculous person.

**savages:** uncivilised people. **backward:** retarded.

**piecemeal:** gradual. **fashion:** way. **solved:** resolved.

**developed:** evolved.

**halting:** hesitating.

**“Beyond-rats!”:** completely impossible!.

**Hadn't we better:** shouldn't we.

**in search of:** to look for.

**settled:** prepared. **languid:** insipid.

**witnessing:** seeing. **adroit:** agile, clever. **drawing-room:** room used to receive guests. **ventriloquism:** talking without moving one's lips.

**tan:** colour caused by exposure to sun. **dilated:** enlarged.

**Gad:** exclamation.

**unmistakably:** without doubt. **genuine:** real, true. **hearers:** people listening. **started:** moved in surprise. **thrill:** shock.

**awakened:** woken up. **Collapsing:** falling. **breathlessly:** without air. **dozing:** sleeping.

**blinked:** open and shut his eyes.

**Gad!:** exclamation. **drawled:** said in a lazy way.

**dashed well pleased:** (*offensive*) when he felt like it.

**jumped out of my skin:** died from shock.

**preached:** spoken. **incredulous:** who didn't believe him.

**statement:** declaration. **instant:** immediate.

**Babel-like:** very confused. **chorus:** everybody speaking together. **startled:** surprised. **arose:** was generated. **amid:** in the middle of. **mutely:** silently. **stupendous:** fantastic. **discovery:** find.

In the midst of the clamour Tobermory entered the room and made his way with velvet tread and studied unconcern across to the group seated round the tea-table.

A sudden hush of awkwardness and constraint fell on the company. Somehow there seemed an element of embarrassment in addressing on equal terms a domestic cat of acknowledged mental ability.

"Will you have some milk, Tobermory?" asked Lady Blemley in a rather strained voice.

"I don't mind if I do," was the response, couched in a tone of even indifference. A shiver of suppressed excitement went through the listeners, and Lady Blemley might be excused for pouring out the saucerful of milk rather unsteadily.

"I'm afraid I've spilt a good deal of it," she said apologetically.

"After all, it's not my Axminster," was Tobermory's rejoinder.

Another silence fell on the group, and then Miss Resker, in her best district-visitor manner, asked if the human language had been difficult to learn. Tobermory looked squarely at her for a moment and then fixed his gaze serenely on the middle-distance. It was obvious that boring questions lay outside his scheme of life.

"What do you think of human intelligence?" asked Mavis Pellington lamely.

"Of whose intelligence in particular?" asked Tobermory coldly.

"Oh, well, mine for instance," said Mavis, with a feeble laugh.

"You put me in an embarrassing position," said Tobermory, whose tone and attitude certainly did not suggest a shred of embarrassment. "When your inclusion in this house-party was suggested Sir Wilfrid protested that you

**midst:** middle. **clamour:** noise and confusion.  
**velvet tread:** walking very silently and calmly. **studied:** deliberate. **unconcern:** not caring about anything. **seated:** sitting.  
**hush:** silence. **awkwardness:** not knowing what to do. **constraint:** restriction. **Somehow:** in some way.  
**addressing:** talking to.  
**acknowledged:** recognised.

**strained:** under stress.  
“I don’t mind if I do”: Certainly. **couched:** said.  
**even:** stable, unchanging. **indifference:** not caring about anything. **shiver:** thrill, shock. **suppressed:** not expressed.  
**pouring:** moving a liquid. **saucerful:** quantity contained in a little plate. **unsteadily:** nervously.  
**spilt:** not put where it should be. **a good deal:** lot.  
**apologetically:** in a sorry way.  
**Axminster:** expensive type of carpet.  
**rejoinder:** reply.

**district-visitor:** nurse. **manner:** way.

**squarely:** directly into the eyes. **fixed his gaze:** looked constantly. **serenely:** tranquilly. **middle-distance:** things not near and not far away. **scheme:** plan.

**lamely:** without much enthusiasm.

**feeble:** weak.

**shred:** little piece.

were the most brainless woman of his acquaintance, and that there was a wide distinction between hospitality and the care of the feeble-minded. Lady Blemley replied that your lack of brain-power was the precise quality which had earned you your invitation, as you were the only person she could think of who might be idiotic enough to buy their old car. You know, the one they call "The Envy of Sisyphus", because it goes quite nicely up-hill if you push it.

Lady Blemley's protestations would have had greater effect if she had not casually suggested to Mavis only that morning that the car in question would be just the thing for her down at her Devonshire home.

Major Barfield plunged in heavily to effect a diversion. "How about your carrying-on with the tortoise-shell puss up at the stables, eh?"

The moment he had said it everyone realized the blunder. "One does not usually discuss these matters in public," said Tobermory frigidly. "From a slight observation of your ways since you've been in this house I should imagine you'd find it inconvenient if I were to shift the conversation on to your own little affairs."

The panic which ensued was not confined to the Major. "Would you like to go and see if cook has got your dinner ready?" suggested Lady Blemley hurriedly, affecting to ignore the fact that it wanted at least two hours to Tobermory's dinner-time.

"Thanks," said Tobermory; "not quite so soon after my tea. I don't want to die of indigestion."

"Cats have nine lives, you know," said Sir Wilfrid heartily.

"Possibly," answered Tobermory; "but only one liver."

"Adelaide!" said Mrs. Cornett, "do you mean to encourage that cat to go out and gossip about us in the servants' hall?" The panic had indeed become general. A narrow ornamen-

**brainless:** stupid. **of his acquaintance:** that he knew.  
**wide distinction:** big difference. **hospitality:** entertaining guests.  
**care:** looking after. **feeble-minded:** mentally ill.  
**lack:** state of being without. **brain-power:** intelligence.  
**earned:** obtained. **as:** because.  
**idiotic:** stupid.

**Envy of Sisyphus:** a car which Sisyphus, who in Greek mythology was condemned to roll a stone to the top of a mountain for all eternity, would have wanted.

**casually:** without thinking.

**just the thing:** right for her.

**Devonshire:** region in the south-west of England.

**plunged in:** entered the conversation. **heavily:** aggressively.

**effect a diversion:** change the subject. **carrying-on:** having an illicit love affair. **tortoise-shell:** type of colouring for a cat. **puss:** cat. **stables:** place where horses are kept. **blunder:** mistake.

**frigidly:** coldly. **slight:** little.

**if I were to shift:** if I changed, *note the subjunctive "were"*.

**ensued:** followed. **confined:** limited.

**cook:** the servant responsible for making meals.

**hurriedly:** in a hurry. **affecting:** pretending.

**it wanted:** there were.

**heartily:** with vigour.

**liver:** organ which purifies the blood.

**gossip:** talk about personal details.

**indeed:** really. **narrow:** opposite of wide.

tal balustrade ran in front of most of the bedroom windows at the Towers, and it was recalled with dismay that this had formed a favourite promenade for Tobermory at all hours, whence he could watch the pigeons — and heaven knew what else besides. If he intended to become reminiscent in his present outspoken strain the effect would be something more than disconcerting. Mrs. Cornett, who spent much time at her toilet table, and whose complexion was reputed to be of a nomadic though punctual disposition, looked as ill at ease as the Major. Miss Scrawen, who wrote fiercely sensuous poetry and led a blameless life, merely displayed irritation; if you are methodical and virtuous in private you don't necessarily want every one to know it. Bertie van Tahn, who was so depraved at seventeen that he had long ago given up trying to be any worse, turned a dull shade of gardenia white, but he did not commit the error of dashing out of the room like Odo Finsberry, a young gentleman who was understood to be reading for the Church and who was possibly disturbet at the thought of scandals he might hear concerning other people. Clovis had the presence of mind to maintain a composed exterior; privately he was calculating how take to procure a box of fancy mice through the agency of the *Exchange and Mart* as a species of hush-money.

Even in a delicate situation like the present, Agnes Resker could not endure to remain too long in the background. "Why did I ever come down here?" she asked dramatically.

Tobermory immediately accepted the opening.

"Judging by what you said to Mrs. Cornett on the croquet-lawn yesterday, you were out for food. You described the Blemleys as the dullest people to stay with that you knew, but said they were clever enough to employ a first-rate cook otherwise they'd find it difficult to get anyone to come down a second time.



**ornamental**: just for decoration. **balustrade**: outside decoration.  
**the Towers**: name of their house. **recalled**: remembered.  
**promenade**: walk.  
**whence**: from where. **pigeons**: type of birds. **heaven knew**:  
exclamation, whatever. **besides**: also. **become reminiscent**:  
talk about his memories. **outspoken**: polemic. **strain**: mood,  
vein. **disconcerting**: worrying.  
**toilet**: dressing table. **complexion**: skin. **was reputed**: had the  
reputation of. **nomadic**: variable.  
**ill at ease**: unhappy. **fiercely**: wildly.  
**sensuous**: instinctive. **blameless**: with no bad actions. **merely**:  
simply. **displayed**: showed.

**depraved**: with very bad habits.  
**given up**: stopped. **dull**: not shining.  
**gardenia**: type of flower. **commit the error**: make the mistake.  
**dashing**: running.

**composed**: calm. **exterior**: appearance.  
**procure**: get. **fancy**: exotic. **mice**: plural of mouse, small animal.  
**Exchange and mart**: magazine dealing with buying and selling.  
**hush-money**: money paid to keep someone quiet.

**endure**: tolerate. **background**: out of public attention.

**croquet-lawn**: area with grass used for playing croquet.  
**dullest**: most boring.  
**first-rate**: top quality.  
**cook**: servant preparing meals. **otherwise**: in other circumstances.

"There's not a word of truth in it! I appeal to Mrs. Cornett—" exclaimed the discomfited Agnes.

"Mrs. Cornett repeated your remark afterwards to Bertie van Tahn," continued Tobermory, and said "That woman is a regular Hunger Marcher; she'd go anywhere for four square meals a day," and Bertie van Tahn said—

At this point the chronicle mercifully ceased. Tobermory had caught a glimpse of the big yellow Tom from the Rectory working his way through the shrubbery towards the stable wing. In a flash he had vanished through the open French window.

With the disappearance of his too brilliant pupil Cornelius Appin found himself beset by a hurricane of bitter upbraiding, anxious inquiry, and frightened entreaty.

The responsibility for the situation lay with him, and he must prevent matters from becoming worse. Could Tobermory impart his dangerous gift to other cats? was the first question he had to answer. It was possible, he replied, that he might have initiated his intimate friend the stable puss into his new accomplishment, but it was unlikely that his teaching could have taken a wider range as yet.

"Then," said Mrs. Cornett, "Tobermory may be a valuable cat and a great pet; but I'm sure you'll agree, Adelaide, that both he and the stable cat must be done away with without delay."

"You don't suppose I've enjoyed the last quarter of a hour, do you?" said Lady Blemley bitterly. "My husband and I are very fond of Tobermory—at least, we were before this horrible accomplishment was infused into him but now, of course, the only thing is to have him destroyed as soon as possible."

"We can put some strychnine in the scraps he always gets at dinner-time," said Sir Wilfrid, "and I will go and drown the stable cat myself. The coachman will be very sore at

**appeal to:** ask.

**discomfited:** worried and upset.

**Hunger Marcher:** someone prepared to demonstrate because they were hungry, a political movement of the 1930s. **square:** substantial. **chronicle:** story. **mercifully:** luckily. **ceased:** ended. **caught a glimpse:** seen. **Tom:** male cat.

**Rectory:** where the local priest lived. **shrubbery:** low trees. **stable wing:** part of the house where the stables were. **In a flash:** very quickly. **vanished:** disappeared. **French window:** both door and window. **pupil:** student.

**beset:** attacked. **hurricane:** dangerous and violent storm. **bitter:** unhappy. **upbraiding:** criticism. **anxious:** worried. **entreaty:** supplication.

**impart:** pass on, give.

**initiated:** told. **stable puss:** cat living in the area where horses were kept. **accomplishment:** skill. **unlikely:** improbable. **wider range:** greater dimensions. **valuable:** useful, to be treasured.

**done away with:** destroyed, killed.

**delay:** waiting.

**bitterly:** angrily.

**are very fond of:** like very much.

**accomplishment:** skill. **infused:** transmitted.

**destroyed:** killed.

**strychnine:** poisonous substance. **scraps:** pieces of food.

**drown:** kill in water.

**stable cat:** cat living in area where horses are kept. **coachman:** man who drives a carriage. **sore:** unhappy.

losing his pet, but I'll say a very catching form of mange has broken out in cats and we're afraid of it spreading to the kennels."

"But my great discovery!" expostulated Mr. Appin; "after all my years of experiment—"

"You can go and experiment on the short-horns at the farm, who are under proper control," said Mrs. Cornett, "or the elephants at the Zoological Gardens. They're said to be highly intelligent, and they have this recommendation, that they don't come creeping about our bedrooms and under chairs, and so forth."

An archangel ecstatically proclaiming the Millenium, and then finding that it clashed unpardonably with Henley and would have to be indefinitely postponed, could hardly have felt more crest-fallen than Cornelius Appin at the reception of his wonderful achievement. Public opinion, however, was against him—in fact, had the general voice been consulted on the subject it is probable that a strong minority vote would have been in favour of including him in the strychnine diet.

Defective train arrangements and a nervous desire to see matters brought to a finish prevented an immediate dispersal of the party, but dinner that evening was not a social success. Sir Wilfrid had had rather a trying time with the stable cat and subsequently with the coachman. Agnes Resker ostentatiously limited her repast to a morsel of dry toast, which she bit as though it were a personal enemy; while Mavis Pellington maintained a vindictive silence throughout the meal. Lady Blemley kept up a flow of what she hoped was conversation, but her attention was fixed on the doorway. A plateful of carefully dosed fish scraps was in readiness on the sideboard, but sweets and savoury and dessert went their way, and no Tobermory appeared either in the dining-room or kitchen.

**pet**: domestic animal. **catching**: contagious. **mange**: disease of animals. **broken out**: started. **spreading**: increasing.  
**kennels**: where dogs are kept.  
**expostulated**: protested.

**short-horns**: type of cows.

**creeping**: moving secretly.

**so forth**: etcetera.

**archangel**: highest level of angel. **ecstatically**: happily. **Millennium**: a thousand year period when happiness will reign. **clashed**: coincided negatively. **unpardonably**: in an unforgivable way. **Henley**: famous regatta on the River Thames. **indefinitely postponed**: changed to another date which is unknown. **hardly**: not. **crest-fallen**: unhappy, disappointed. **achievement**: result. **consulted**: asked.

**strychnine**: poisonous substance.

**Defective**: incorrect. **desire**: wish.

**dispersal**: breaking up, departure.

**rather**: quite. **trying**: difficult.

**stable cat**: cat living in the area where horses are kept. **subsequently**: later, then. **coachman**: man who drove the carriages. **ostentatiously**: so that everyone could see. **repast**: dinner. **morsel**: small piece. **bit**: ate. **as though**: as if. **enemy**: opposite of friend. **vindictive**: wanting revenge. **throughout**: during all. **kept up**: maintained. **flow**: constant quantity. **carefully dosed**: with the exact quantity of poison added. **scraps**: pieces of food. **in readiness**: waiting, prepared. **sideboard**: piece of furniture. **savoury**: part of a meal which is not sweet.

The sepulchral dinner was cheerful compared with the subsequent vigil in the smoking room. Eating and drinking had at least supplied a distraction and cloak to the prevailing embarrassment. Bridge was out of the question in the general tension of nerves and tempers, and after Odo Finsberry had given a lugubrious rendering of 'Mélisande in the Wood' to a frigid audience, music was tacitly avoided. At eleven the servants went to bed, announcing that the small window in the pantry had been left open as usual for Tobermory's private use. The guests read steadily through the current batch of magazines, and fell back gradually on the 'Badmington Library' and bound volumes of *Punch*.

Lady Blemley made periodic visits to the pantry, returning each time with an expression of listless depression which forestalled questioning.

At two o'clock Clovis broke the dominating silence.

"He won't turn up tonight. He's probably in the local newspaper office at the present moment, dictating the first instalment of his reminiscences. Lady What's-her-name's book won't be in it. It will be the event of the day."

Having made his contribution to the general cheerfulness, Clovis went to bed. At long intervals the various members of the house-party followed his example.

The servants taking round the early tea made a uniform announcement in reply to a uniform question. Tobermory had not returned.

Breakfast was, if anything, a more unpleasant function than dinner had been, but before its conclusion the situation was relieved. Tobermory's corpse was brought in from the shrubbery, where a gardener had just discovered it. From the bites on his throat and the yellow fur which coated his claws it was evident that he had fallen in unequal combat with the big Tom from the Rectory.

**sepulchral**: ghostly, depressing. **cheerful**: happy.  
**subsequent**: later. **vigil**: wait.  
**supplied**: given. **cloak**: something to hide the details.  
**prevailing**: general. **Bridge**: card game. **out of the question**:  
to be excluded. **tempers**: moods.  
**lugubrious**: miserable. **rendering**: performance.  
**frigid**: unemotional. **tacitly**: silently.

**pantry**: room where food was kept.

**steadily**: at a constant rhythm. **batch**: collection.  
**fell back gradually on**: when they had finished the current ma-  
gazines they had to read older collections. **'Badmington Libra-  
ry'**: series of classics. **bound volumes**: several magazines  
collected into a book. **Punch**: humorous magazine. **periodic**:  
regular. **pantry**: room where food was kept. **listless**: without  
energy. **forestalled**: prevented, rendered unnecessary.  
**turn up**: appear.

**instalment**: part. **reminiscences**: memoirs, autobiography.  
**What's-her-name**: vague idea of name.  
**cheerfulness**: happiness.

**uniform**: identical.

**function**: event, ceremony.

**relieved**: improved. **corpse**: dead body.  
**shrubbery**: low trees. **discovered**: found.  
**bites**: marks of teeth. **throat**: passage for food and air under  
mouth. **fur**: hair. **coated**: covered. **claws**: sharp part of animal's  
legs. **evident**: obvious. **fallen**: died. **unequal**: not fair. **combat**:  
fight. **Tom**: male cat. **Rectory**: house where local priest lived.

By midday most of the guests had quitted the Towers, and after lunch Lady Blemley had sufficiently recovered her spirits to write an extremely nasty letter to the Rectory about the loss of her valuable pet.

Tobermory had been Appin's one successful pupil, and he was destined to have no successor. A few weeks later an elephant in the Dresden Zoological Garden, which had shown no previous signs of irritability, broke loose and killed an Englishman who had apparently been teasing it. The victim's name was variously reported in the papers as Oppin and Eppelin, but his front name was faithfully rendered Cornelius.

"If he was trying German irregular verbs on the poor beast," said Clovis, "he deserved all he got."



**quitted:** left. **the Towers:** name of the big house.

**recovered:** got back.

**nasty:** unpleasant.

**valuable:** precious.

**destined:** fated. **successor:** someone to follow him.

**Dresden:** city in Germany.

**broke loose:** escaped.

**apparently:** it seemed. **teasing:** irritating.

**faithfully:** rightly.

**rendered:** reported.

**deserved:** merited.

## THE STALLED OX

*"Please, help me! There's an ox in my garden!"*

Theophil Eshley was an artist by profession, a cattle painter by force of environment. It is not to be supposed that he lived on a ranch or a dairy farm, in an atmosphere pervaded with horn and hoof, milking-stool, and branding-iron. His home was in a park-like, villa-dotted district that only just escaped the reproach of being suburban. On one side of his garden there abutted a small, picturesque meadow, in which an enterprising neighbour pastured some small picturesque cows of the Channel Island persuasion. At noonday in summertime the cows stood knee-deep in tall meadow-grass under the shade of a group of walnut trees, with the sunlight falling in dappled patches on their mouse-sleek coats. Eshley had conceived and executed a dainty picture of two reposeful milch-cows in a setting of walnut tree and meadow-grass and filtered sunbeam, and the Royal Academy encourages orderly, methodical habits in its children. Eshley had painted a successful and acceptable picture of cattle drowsing picturesquely under walnut trees, and as he had begun, so, of necessity, he went on. His "Noontide Peace," a study of two dun cows under a walnut tree was followed by "A Mid-day Sanctuary," a study of a walnut tree, with two dun cows under it. In due succession there came "Where the Gad-Flies Cease from Troubling," "The Haven of the

**STALLED:** in its stall, a structure where cows are kept. This refers to the Biblical proverb: better a dinner of herbs where love is than a stalled ox and hatred therewith, that is it is better to be poor and happy than rich and miserable. **OX:** a male cow used for pulling heavy things.

**cattle:** cows and bulls.

**by force of:** because of. **environment:** surroundings, what was around him. **dairy:** farm for making milk and butter.

**pervaded with:** full of. **horn:** sharp part growing out of head of bull. **hoof:** feet of cows or horses. **milking-stool:** chair with three legs and no back where a person sat to milk the cows. **branding-iron:** metal utensil heated and used to mark cows with owner's sign. **villa-dotted:** with villas here and there. **reproach:** criticism. **abutted:** was positioned. **meadow:** grassy field. **enterprising:** full of initiative. **neighbour:** person living near. **Channel Island persuasion:** of the type coming from the Channel Islands, islands between France and England. **noonday:** midday. **knee-deep:** up to half their leg. **meadow-grass:** particular type of grass. **shade:** shelter from the sun. **walnut:** type of nut. **dappled:** variegated, alternating. **patches:** sections. **mouse-sleek:** shining and smooth like a mouse. **coats:** skins of an animal. **conceived:** thought of. **executed:** carried out. **milch-cows:** cows used for milking. **filtered:** coming through the clouds. **sunbeam:** ray from the sun. **Royal Academy:** official organization regulating the world of Art. **orderly:** tidy. **methodical:** systematic. **drowsing:** sleeping. **walnut:** type of nut. **went on:** continued. **Noontide:** midday. **Sanctuary:** shelter, safe place. **dun:** brown. **due succession:** natural order.

**Gad-Flies:** flies attacking animals. **Cease from:** stop. **Troubling:** causing problems. **Haven:** refuge.

Herd," and "A Dream in Dairyland," studies of walnut trees and dun cows. His two attempts to break away from his own tradition were signal failures: "Turtle Doves Alarmed by Sparrow-hawk" and "Wolves on the Roman Campagna" came back to his studio in the guise of abominable heresies, and Eshley climbed back into grace and the public gaze with "A Shaded Nook Where Drowsy Milkers Dream.

On a fine afternoon in late autumn he was putting some finishing touches to a study of meadow weeds when his neighbour, Adela Pingsford, assailed the outer door of his studio with loud peremptory knockings.

"There is an ox in my garden," she announced, in explanation of the tempestuous intrusion.

"An ox," said Eshley blankly, and rather fatuously; "what kind of ox?"

"Oh, I don't know what kind," snapped the lady. "A common or garden ox, to use the slang expression. It is the garden part of it that I object to. My garden has just been put straight for the winter, and an ox roaming about in it won't improve matters. Besides, there are the chrysanthemums just coming into flower."

"How did it get into the garden?" asked Eshley.

"I imagine it came in by the gate," said the lady impatiently, "it couldn't have climbed the walls, and I don't suppose anyone dropped it from an aeroplane as a Bovril advertisement. The immediately important question is not how it got in, but how to get it out."

"Won't it go?" said Eshley.

"If it was anxious to go," said Adela Pingsford rather angrily, "I should not have come here to chat with you about it. I'm practically all alone; the housemaid is having her afternoon out and the cook is lying down with an attack of neuralgia. Anything that I may have learned at school or

**Herd:** group of cows or other animals. **Dairyland:** country where milk and butter are produced. **break away:** change.

**signal:** complete. **Turtle Doves:** type of bird with a gentle voice.

**Alarmed:** scared. **Sparrow-hawk:** bird of prey, killing other birds. **Wolves:** wild dogs. **Campagna:** countryside. **guise:** shape, appearance. **abominable:** terrible. **heresies:** things against religious tradition. **climbed back:** got back. **grace:** God's love. **gaze:** eye, attention. **Shaded:** with refuge under the trees. **Nook:** nice little place. **Drowsy:** sleepy. **Milkers:** milk-cows. **finishing touches:** last details. **meadow:** field. **weeds:** plants which are of no value. **neighbour:** person living next door. **assailed:** attacked. **peremptory:** aggressive. **knockings:** noise on the door.

**tempestuous:** violent. **intrusion:** invasion.

**ox:** cow. **blankly:** without expression. **fatuously:** stupidly.

**snapped:** said irritably.

**common or garden:** normal. **slang:** dialect, substandard English.

**put straight:** organized, arranged. **roaming:** walking without direction. **improve matters:** make things better.

**chrysanthemums:** type of flowers. **coming into flower:** beginning to bloom.

**by the gate:** through the door into the garden.

**climbed:** moved over.

**dropped it:** let it fall. **Bovril:** famous beef extract with an ox on the label. **advertisement:** piece of publicity for a commercial product.

**was anxious:** really wanted. **rather:** quite.

**chat:** talk.

**housemaid:** female servant.

**cook:** servant responsible for preparing meals.

**neuralgia:** painful illness.

in after life about how to remove a large ox from a small garden seems to have escaped from my memory now. All I could think of was that you were a near neighbour and a cattle painter, presumably more or less familiar with the subjects that you painted, and that you might be of some slight assistance. Possibly I was mistaken."

"I paint dairy cows, certainly," admitted Eshley, "but I cannot claim to have had any experience in rounding up stray oxen. I've seen it done on a cinema film, of course, but there were always horses and lots of other accessories; besides, one never knows how much of those pictures are faked."

Adela Pingsford said nothing, but led the way to her garden. It was normally a fair-sized garden, but it looked small in comparison with the ox, a huge mottled brute, dull red about the head and shoulders, passing to dirty white on the flanks and hind-quarters, with shaggy ears and large blood-shot eyes. It bore about as much resemblance to the dainty paddock heifers that Eshley was accustomed to paint as the chief of a Kurdish nomad clan would to a Japanese tea-shop girl. Eshley stood very near the gate while he studied the animal's appearance and demeanour. Adela Pingsford continued to say nothing.

"It's eating a chrysanthemum," said Eshley at last, when the silence had become unbearable.

"How observant you are," said Adela bitterly. "You seem to notice everything. As a matter of fact, it has got six chrysanthemums in its mouth at the present moment."

The necessity for doing something was becoming imperative. Eshley took a step or two in the direction of the animal, clapped hands, and made noises of the "Hish" and "Shoo" variety. If the ox heard them it gave no outward indication of the fact.

"If any hens should ever stray into my garden," said Adela,

**after life:** life after school. **remove:** take away.

**cattle:** cows and oxen. **presumably:** I suppose. **familiar:** knowing about.

**slight:** small. **assistance:** help. **mistaken:** wrong.

**dairy:** milk and butter.

**claim:** say. **rounding up:** catching, bringing together.

**stray:** lost. **oxen:** irregular plural of ox, type of cow.

**accessories:** utensils.

**pictures:** images, films.

**faked:** not real.

**led the way:** took him to.

**fair-sized:** quite big.

**huge:** enormous. **mottled:** with patches of different colours. dull: not shining.

**flanks:** sides. **hind-quarters:** back part. **shaggy:** hairy.

**blood-shot:** red. **bore:** had. **resemblance:** similarity.

**dainty:** delicate. **paddock:** enclosed field. **heifers:** female cows.

**accustomed:** used. **chief:** head, boss. **Kurdish:** from Kurdistan in the Middle East. **nomad:** people not living always in the same place. **demeanour:** behaviour.

**chrysanthemum:** type of flower.

**unbearable:** intolerable.

**observant:** intelligent, alert. **bitterly:** with sadness and anger.

**imperative:** very strong. **took a step or two:** walked one or two paces. **clapped hands:** struck his hands together to make a noise. **“Hish” and “Shoo”:** noises used to move animals.

**variety:** type. **outward:** visible.

**hens:** type of chickens. **stray:** get lost.

"I should certainly send for you to frighten them out. You 'shoo' beautifully. Meanwhile, do you mind trying to drive that ox away? That is a *Mademoiselle Louise Bichot* that he's begun on now," she added in icy calm, as a glowing orange head was crushed into the huge munching mouth.

"Since you have been so frank about the variety of the chrysanthemum," said Eshley, "I don't mind telling you that this is an Ayrshire ox."

The icy calm broke down; Adela Pingsford used language that sent the artist instinctively a few feet nearer to the ox. He picked up a pea-stick and flung it with some determination against the animal's mottled flanks. The operation of mashing *Mademoiselle Louise Bichot* into a petal salad was suspended for a long moment, while the ox gazed with concentrated inquiry at the stick-thrower. Adela gazed with equal concentration and more obvious hostility at the same focus. As the beast neither lowered its head nor stamped its feet Eshley ventured on another javelin exercise with another pea-stick. The ox seemed to realize at once that it was to go; it gave a hurried final pluck at the bed where the chrysanthemums had been, and strode swiftly up the garden. Eshley ran to head it towards the gate, but only succeeded in quickening its pace from a walk to a lumbering trot. With an air of inquiry, but with no real hesitation, it crossed the tiny strip of turf that the charitable called the croquet lawn, and pushed its way through the open French window into the morning-room. Some chrysanthemums and other autumn herbage stood about the room in vases, and the animal resumed its browsing operations; all the same, Eshley fancied that the beginnings of a hunted look had come into its eyes, a look that counselled respect. He discontinued his attempt to interfere with its choice of surroundings.



**drive:** send. **Mademoiselle Louise Bichot:** type of chrysanthemum. **icy:** very cold.

**glowing:** luminous, shining. **crushed:** broken. **huge:** enormous. **munching:** eating.

**Since:** because. **frank:** honest. **variety:** type.

**Ayrshire:** part of Scotland.

**icy:** cold. **broke down:** finished.

**instinctively:** without thinking. **feet:** English measure, 1 foot is about 30 cm. **pea-stick:** piece of wood. **flung:** threw.

**mottled:** spotted. **flanks:** sides.

**mashing:** breaking up. **petal:** part of flower.

**suspended:** interrupted. **gazed:** looked intensely.

**inquiry:** questioning expression. **stick-thrower:** person who threw the stick. **hostility:** unfriendliness.

**lowered:** moved down.

**stamped:** beat against the ground. **ventured on:** tried. **javelin:** type of spear, an Olympic sport. **realize:** understand.

**at once:** immediately. **was:** had. **hurried:** urgent. **pluck:** pull.

**chrysanthemums:** flowers. **strode:** walked. **swiftly:** quickly.

**head it:** direct. **gate:** door into garden.

**quickenings:** making quicker. **pace:** rhythm.

**lumbering:** heavy. **trot:** fast walk. **air:** appearance.

**tiny:** very small. **strip:** piece. **turf:** grass. **charitable:** compassionate. **croquet lawn:** grass area used for playing croquet.

**French window:** door and window. **morning-room:** sitting room. **herbage:** green plants.

**resumed:** continued. **browsing:** eating.

**fancied:** imagined, thought.

**hunted:** persecuted.

**counselled:** advised. **discontinued:** stopped.

**surroundings:** things around it.

"Mr Eshley," said Adela in a shaking voice, "I asked you to drive that beast out of my garden, but I did not ask you to drive it into my house. If I must have it anywhere on the premises, I prefer the garden to the morning-room."

"Cattle drives are not in my line," said Eshley; "if I remember, I told you so at the outset."

"I quite agree," retorted the lady, "painting pretty pictures of pretty little cows is what you're suited for."

Perhaps you'd like to do a nice sketch of that ox making itself at home in my morning-room?"

This time it seemed as if the worm had turned; Eshley began striding away.

"Where are you going?" screamed Adela.

"To fetch implements," was the answer.

"Implements? I won't have you use a lasso. The room will be wrecked if there's a struggle."

But the artist marched out of the garden. In a couple of minutes he returned, laden with easel, sketching-stool, and painting materials.

"Do you mean to say that you're going to sit quietly down and paint that brute while it's destroying my morning-room?" gasped Adela.

"It was your suggestion," said Eshley, setting his canvas in position.

"I forbid it; I absolutely forbid it!" stormed Adela.

"I don't see what standing you have in the matter," said the artist; "you can hardly pretend that it's your ox, even by adoption."

"You seem to forget that it's in my morning-room, eating my flowers," came the raging retort.

"You seem to forget that the cook has neuralgia," said Eshley; "she may be just dozing off into a merciful sleep and your outcry will waken her. Consideration for others should be the guiding principle of people in our station of life."

**shaking:** trembling, agitated.

**drive:** send.

**premises:** house and garden.

**Cattle:** cows. **drives:** movements. **not in my line:** not my speciality. **so:** this. **outset:** beginning.

**retorted:** replied.

**suited for:** appropriate for.

**sketch:** drawing.

**making itself at home:** acting as if it were in its own home.

**morning-room:** sitting-room. **the worm had turned:** he had lost his temper. **striding:** walking fast.

**screamed:** shouted.

**fetch:** get.

**implements:** utensils. **lasso:** piece of rope used for controlling cows. **wrecked:** destroyed. **struggle:** fight.

**marched:** walked in a determined way. **couple:** two.

**laden with:** carrying. **easel:** support for paintings. **sketching-**

**stool:** seat for painters while they are drawing.

**brute:** beast.

**gasped:** said in surprise.

**setting:** putting. **canvas:** material which painters paint oil paintings on.

**forbid:** refuse, prohibit. **stormed:** said in a very bad mood.

**standing:** status, influence.

**hardly:** really not.

**raging:** very angry. **retort:** reply.

**neuralgia:** a painful illness.

**dozing off:** going to sleep. **merciful:** compassionate.

**outcry:** explosion, noise. **waken:** wake.

**station:** level, position.

"The man is mad!" exclaimed Adela tragically. A moment later it was Adela herself who appeared to go mad. The ox had finished the vase-flowers and the cover of *Israel Kalisch*, and appeared to be thinking of leaving its rather restricted quarters. Eshley noticed its restlessness and promptly flung it some bunches of Virginia leaves as an inducement to continue the sitting.

"I forget how the proverb runs," he observed; "something about 'better a dinner of herbs than a stalled ox where hate is.' We seem to have all the ingredients for the proverb ready to hand."

"I shall go to the Public Library and get them to telephone for the police," announced Adela, and, raging audibly, she departed.

Some minutes later the ox, awakening probably to the suspicion that oil cake and chopped mangold was waiting for it in some appointed byre, stepped with much precaution out of the morning-room, stared with grave inquiry at the no longer obtrusive and pea-stick-throwing human, and then lumbered heavily but swiftly out of the garden. Eshley packed up his tools and followed the animal's example and "Larkdene" was left to neuralgia and the cook.

The episode was the turning-point in Eshley's artistic career. His remarkable picture, "Ox in a Morning-room. Late Autumn," was one of the sensations and successes of the next Paris Salon, and when it was subsequently exhibited at Munich it was bought by the Bavarian Government, in the teeth of the spirited bidding of three meat extract firms. From that moment his success was continuous and assured, and the Royal Academy was thankful, two years later, to give a conspicuous position on its walls to his large canvas "Barbary Apes Wrecking a Boudoir." Ashley presented Adela Pingsford with a new copy of

**cover:** outside of a book.

**Israel Kalisch:** German book. **rather:** quite.

**restricted:** limited. **quarters:** living space. **restlessness:** agitation. **promptly:** quickly. **flung:** threw. **bunches:** groups.

**Virginia:** Virginia creepers, climbing plant. **inducement:** encouragement. **sitting:** session. **proverb:** saying. **runs:** goes.

**herbs:** plants used in cooking. **stalled:** in its stall, construction where animals are kept before being killed and eaten. *Note this is a proverb from the Bible.* **ingredients:** components. **proverb:** saying.

**raging:** expressing anger. **audibly:** you could hear her.

**departed:** left.

**awakening:** waking up.

**suspicion:** idea. **oil cake and chopped mangold:** food for cows. **appointed:** designated. **byre:** building for cows. **stepped:** walked. **precaution:** care. **morning-room:** sitting room. **stared:** looked. **grave:** serious. **inquiry:** questioning state. **obtrusive:** irritating. **pea-stick-throwing:** that threw missiles at it. **lumbered:** moved in a deliberate way. **swiftly:** quickly. **packed up:** put away. **tools:** utensils. **"Larkdene":** name of the house. **neuralgia:** painful disease.

**episode:** event. **turning-point:** decisive change.

**remarkable:** interesting, unusual.

**sensations:** most interesting items.

**Salon:** exhibition. **subsequently:** later.

**Munich:** town in Germany.

**in the teeth of:** despite, in spite of. **spirited:** lively. **bidding:** offers. **meat extract:** type of concentrated food made from meat.

**firms:** companies. **assured:** certain. **Royal Academy:** institution regulating the world of British painting. **thankful:** grateful.

**conspicuous:** prominent. **canvas:** oil painting. **Barbary Apes:** type of monkeys. **Wrecking:** ruining, destroying. **Boudoir:** bedroom.

*Israel Kalisch*, and a couple of finely flowering plants of *Madame André Blusset*, but nothing in the nature of real reconciliation has taken place between them.

***Israel Kalisch***: book. **couple of**: two. **finely**: well.

***Madame André Blusset***: type of plant.

**reconciliation**: forgiveness.

## THE ROMANCERS

### *An Afghan in an English Park*

It was autumn in London, that blessed season between the harshness of winter and the insincerities of summer; a trustful season when one buys bulbs and sees in the registration of one's vote, believing perpetually in spring and a change of Government.

Morton Crosby sat on a bench in a secluded corner of Hyde Park, lazily enjoying a cigarette and watching the slow grazing promenade of a pair of snow-geese, the male looking rather like an albino edition of the russet-hued female. Out of the corner of his eye Crosby also noted with some interest the hesitating hoverings of a human figure, which had passed and repassed his seat two or three times at shortening intervals, like a wary crow about to alight near some possibly edible morsel. Inevitably the figure came to an anchorage on the bench, within easy talking distance of its original occupant. The uncared-for clothes, the aggressive, grizzled beard, and the furtive, evasive eye of the new-comer bespoke the professional cadger, the man who would undergo hours of humiliating tale-spinning and rebuff rather than adventure on half a day's decent work.

For a while the new-comer fixed his eyes straight in front of him in a strenuous, unseeing gaze; then his voice broke out with the insinuating inflection of one who has a story



**ROMANCERS:** story-tellers, liars.

**Afghan:** someone from Afghanistan.

**blessed:** happy.

**harshness:** difficulty. **insincerities:** not meaning what one appears to mean. **trustful:** accepts what others say as true. **bulbs:** type of plants which flower in spring. **sees in:** deals with. **perpetually:** forever.

**bench:** wooden seat. **secluded:** lonely.

**Hyde Park:** park in London. **lazily:** in a relaxed way.

**grazing:** eating grass. **promenade:** walk. **snow-geese:** type of bird. **albino:** without colour. **russet-hued:** red-brown coloured. **noted:** saw.

**hesitating:** undecided. **hoverings:** movements.

**shortening:** getting shorter each time. **wary:** careful. **crow:** black bird. **alight:** land. **edible:** can be eaten. **morsel:** piece of food. **Inevitably:** of course. **anchorage:** stop, rest. **bench:** seat. **uncared-for:** not looked after.

**grizzled:** grey. **beard:** facial hair under mouth. **furtive:** indirect. **evasive:** dishonest. **new-comer:** new arrival. **bespoke:** indicated. **cadger:** person who lives on money got from others. **undergo:** suffer. **tale-spinning:** telling stories. **rebuff:** refusal. **rather than:** in preference to. **adventure on:** try.

**For a while:** for a short time. **new-comer:** person just arrived. **straight:** directly. **strenuous:** difficult. **gaze:** look. **broke out:** started to speak. **insinuating:** cunning, persuasive.

to retail well worthy any loiterer's while to listen to.

"It's a strange world," he said.

As the statement met with no response he altered it to the form of a question.

"I dare say you've found it to be a strange world, mister?"

"As far as I am concerned," said Crosby, the strangeness has worn off in the course of thirty-six years.

"Ah," said the greybeard, "I could tell you things that you'd hardly believe. Marvellous things that have really happened to me."

Nowadays there is not demand for marvellous things that have really happened, said Crosby discouragingly; "the professional writers of fiction turn these things out so much better. For instance, my neighbours tell me wonderful, incredible things that their Aberdeens and chows and borzois have done; I never listen to them. On the other hand, I have read *The Hound of the Baskervilles* three times."

The greybeard moved uneasily in his seat; then he opened up new country.

"I take it that you are a professing Christian," he observed.

"I am a prominent and I think I may say an influential member of the Mussulman community of Eastern Persia," said Crosby, making an excursion himself into the realms of fiction.

The greybeard was obviously disconcerted at this new check of introductory conversation, but the defeat was only momentary.

"Persia. I should never have taken you for a Persian," he remarked, with a somewhat aggrieved air.

"I am not," said Crosby; "my father was an Afghan."

"An Afghan!" said the other, smitten into bewildered silence for a moment. Then he recovered himself and renewed his attack.

**retail:** tell. **worthy:** good enough. **loiterer:** person doing nothing.  
**while:** time.  
**altered:** changed.

**I dare say:** I suppose.

**worn off:** disappeared gradually.  
**greybeard:** man with grey beard.  
**hardly:** nearly not. **Marvellous:** incredible.

**Nowadays:** at the present time. **demand:** need.  
**discouragingly:** opposite of encouragingly.  
**fiction:** stories and novels. **turn these things out:** arrange things. **instance:** example.

**Aberdeens, chows, borzois:** types of dogs.  
***The Hound of the Baskervilles:*** Sherlock Holmes story.

**greybeard:** man with grey beard. **uneasily:** uncomfortably.

**professing:** practising. **Christian:** person following the teaching of Christ. **prominent:** important. **influential:** with important influence. **Mussulman:** follower of the Muslim religion or Islam.  
**Persia:** country in Asia, corresponding to Iran. **realms:** areas.  
**fiction:** stories, unreality.  
**greybeard:** man with grey beard. **disconcerted:** worried, surprised. **check:** obstacle. **defeat:** opposite of success.  
**momentary:** lasted a moment.  
**taken you for:** thought you were.  
**somewhat:** quite. **aggrieved:** irritated, annoyed. **air:** behaviour, expression. **Afghan:** someone from Afghanistan.  
**smitten:** struck. **bewildered:** puzzled, surprised.  
**recovered:** got control again.  
**renewed:** started again.

“Afghanistan. Ah! We’ve had some wars with that country; now, I dare say, instead of fighting it we might have learned something from it. A very wealthy country, I believe. No real poverty there.”

He raised his voice on the word “poverty” with a suggestion of intense feeling. Crosby saw the opening and avoided it.

“It possesses, nevertheless, a number of highly talented and ingenious beggars,” he said; “if I had not spoken so disparagingly of marvellous things that have really happened I would tell you the story of Ibrahim and the eleven camel-loads of blotting-paper. Also I have forgotten exactly how it ended.”

“My own life-story is a curious one,” said the stranger, apparently stifling all desire to hear the history of Ibrahim; “I was not always as you see me now.”

“We are supposed to undergo complete change in the course of every seven years,” said Crosby, as an explanation of the foregoing announcement.

“I mean I was not always in such distressing circumstances as I am at present,” pursued the stranger doggedly.

“That sounds rather rude,” said Crosby stiffly, considering that you are at present talking to a man reputed to be one of the most gifted conversationalists of the Afghan border.”

“I don’t mean in that way,” said the greybeard hastily; “I’ve been very much interested in your conversation. I was alluding to my unfortunate financial situation. You mayn’t hardly believe it, but at the present moment I am absolutely without a farthing. Don’t see any prospect of getting any money, either, for the next few days. I don’t suppose you’ve ever found yourself in such a position,” he added.

“In the town of Yom,” said Crosby, “which is in Southern

**I dare say:** I suppose.

**wealthy:** rich.

**poverty:** state of being poor.

**raised:** increased volume of.

**opening:** opportunity.

**avoided:** did not take.

**nevertheless:** in any case, however. **highly talented:** with a lot of talent, skilful. **beggars:** people asking for money or food in the street. **disparagingly:** in a negative way.

**camel-loads:** quantity that a camel can carry. **blotting-paper:** paper used to absorb ink.

**curious:** strange.

**apparently:** seeming to. **stifling:** suffocating, repressing. **desire:** wish.

**undergo:** experience.

**foregoing:** previous, preceding. **announcement:** declaration.

**distressing:** sad.

**pursued:** continued. **doggedly:** with determination.

**rude:** opposite of polite. **stiffly:** rigidly, coldly.

**reputed:** with the reputation of.

**gifted:** talented. **conversationalists:** good talkers.

**border:** frontier.

**hastily:** in a hurry.

**alluding to:** talking about.

**hardly:** nearly not.

**farthing:** coin of very small value (*4 farthings to one penny*).

Afghanistan, and which also happens to be my birthplace, there was a Chinese philosopher who used to say that one of the three chief human blessings was to be absolutely without money. I forget what the other two were."

"Ah, I dare say," said the stranger, in a tone that betrayed no enthusiasm for the philosopher's memory, "and did he practise what he preached? That's the test."

"He lived happily with very little money or resources," said Crosby.

"Then I expect he had friends who would help him liberally whenever he was in difficulties, such as I am in at present."

"In Yom," said Crosby, "it is not necessary to have friends in order to obtain help. Any citizen of Yom would help a stranger as a matter of course."

The greybeard was now genuinely interested. The conversation had at last taken a favourable turn.

"If someone, like me, for instance, who was in undeserved difficulties, asked a citizen of that town you speak of for a small loan to tide over a few days' impecuniosity—five shillings, or perhaps a rather larger sum—would it be given to him as a matter of course?"

"There would be a certain preliminary," said Crosby; "one would take him to a wine-shop and treat him to a measure of wine, and then after a little high-flown conversation, one would put the desired sum in his hand and wish him good-day. It is a roundabout way of performing a simple transaction, but in the East all ways are roundabout."

The listener's eyes were glittering.

"Ah," he exclaimed, with a thin sneer ringing meaningly through his words,—"I suppose you've given up all those generous customs since you left your town. Don't practise them now, I expect."

"No one who has lived in Yom," said Crosby fervently,

**birthplace:** place where I was born.

**chief:** main. **blessings:** advantages, joys.

**I dare say:** I suppose so. **betrayed:** showed.

**practise what he preached:** follow his own moral principles.

**resources:** property.

**liberally:** generously.

**citizen:** person living in a place or country.

**stranger:** unknown person. **as a matter of course:** automatically. **greybeard:** man with grey beard. **genuinely:** really.

**taken a favourable turn:** developed in the way he wanted.

**for instance:** for example.

**undeserved:** not merited.

**loan:** money lent or borrowed. **tide over:** help to survive.

**impecuniosity:** poverty. **shilling:** one twentieth part of a pound sterling. **rather:** little. **sum:** quantity of money. **as a matter of**

**course:** automatically. **preliminary:** action happening before this. **treat him to:** offer him. **measure:** glass.

**high-flown:** refined.

**desired:** wanted. **sum:** money.

**roundabout:** complicated. **performing:** doing.

**transaction:** deal, affair.

**glittering:** shining.

**thin:** unpleasant. **sneer:** horrid smile. **ringing:** sounding.

**meaningly:** significantly. **given up:** renounced.

**customs:** habits. **Don't practise:** you don't practise.

**fervently:** with enthusiasm.

“and remembers its green hills covered with apricot and almond trees, and the cold water that rushes down like a caress from the upland snows and dashes under the little wooden bridges, no one who remembers these things and treasures the memory of them would ever give up a single one of its unwritten laws and customs. To me they are as binding as though I still lived in that hallowed home of my youth.”

“Then if I was to ask you for a small loan—” began the greybeard fawningly, edging nearer on the seat and hurriedly wondering how large he might safely make his request, “if I was to ask you for, say—”

“At any other time, certainly,” said Crosby; “in the months of November and December, however, it is absolutely forbidden for any one of our race to give or receive loans or gifts; in fact, one does not willingly speak of them. It is considered unlucky. We will therefore close this discussion.”

“But it is still October!” exclaimed the adventurer with an eager, angry whine, as Crosby rose from his seat; “wants eight days to the end of the month!”

“The Afghan November began yesterday,” said Crosby severely, and in another moment he was striding across the Park, leaving his recent companion scowling and muttering furiously on the seat.

“I don’t believe a word of his story,” he chattered to himself; “pack of nasty lies from beginning to end. Wish I’d told him so to his face. Calling himself an Afghan.”

The snorts and snarls that escaped from him for the next quarter of an hour went far to support the truth of the old saying that two of a trade never agree.



**apricot:** soft orange fruit.

**almond:** type of nut. **rushes:** runs.

**caress:** embrace. **upland:** mountain. **dashes:** moves quickly.

**treasures:** regards as precious. **give up:** renounce.

**unwritten:** not explicitly written anywhere, but understood.

**binding:** valid. **as though:** as if. **hallowed:** sacred, holy.

**youth:** younger days.

**if I was to ask you:** if I asked you. **loan:** money to borrow.

**fawningly:** in a friendly but insincere way. **edging:** moving

slowly. **hurriedly:** quickly. **wondering:** asking himself. **safely:** in security.

**forbidden:** prohibited. **race:** nation. **loans:** money borrowed or lent. **willingly:** wanting to.

**therefore:** for this reason. **close:** end.

**eager:** enthusiastic. **whine:** high cry. **rose:** got up. **wants:** there are still.

**striding:** walking in a determined way.

**scowling:** making horrible faces.

**muttering:** speaking to himself. **furiously:** very angrily.

**chattered:** spoke quickly.

**pack of nasty lies:** a series of horrible and untrue things.

**Wish I'd told him so:** I wish I'd told him. **to his face:** directly.

**snorts:** sound of air escaping through nose. **snarls:** angry sound like an animal.

**saying:** proverb. **two of a trade:** two people in the same business.

## GABRIEL-ERNEST

### *The boy and the beast...*

"There is a wild beast in your woods," said the artist Cunningham, as he was being driven to the station. It was the only remark he had made during the drive, but as Van Cheele had talked incessantly his companion's silence had not been noticeable.

"A stray fox or two and some resident weasels. Nothing more formidable," said Van Cheele. The artist said nothing.

"What did you mean about a wild beast?" said Van Cheele later, when they were on the platform.

"Nothing. My imagination. Here is the train," said Cunningham.

That afternoon Van Cheele went for one of his frequent rambles through his woodland property. He had a stuffed bittern in his study, and knew the names of quite a number of wild flowers, so his aunt had possibly some justification in describing him as a great naturalist. At any rate, he was a great walker. It was his custom to take mental notes of everything he saw during his walks, not so much for the purpose of assisting contemporary science as to provide topics for conversation afterwards. When the bluebells began to show themselves in flower he made a point of informing everyone of the fact; the season of the year might have warned his hearers of the likelihood of such an

**wild beast:** animal that is not domesticated. **woods:** forest.

**remark:** comment.

**incessantly:** without stopping.

**noticeable:** clear, observable.

**stray:** lost. **fox:** red animal. **resident:** local. **weasels:** small animals. **formidable:** dangerous.

**platform:** where people wait for the train.

**rambles:** walks. **woodland:** forest. **stuffed:** dead animal preserved. **bittern:** type of bird. **quite a number:** lots.

**naturalist:** expert on Nature. **At any rate:** in any case.

**custom:** habit. **mental notes:** thoughts.

**purpose:** aim. **contemporary:** present-day.

**topics:** subjects. **bluebells:** type of flowers.

**made a point of:** insisted on.

**warned:** told. **likelihood:** probability.

occurrence, but at least they felt that he was being absolutely frank with them.

What Van Cheele saw on this particular afternoon was, however, something far removed from his ordinary range of experience. On a shelf of smooth stone overhanging a deep pool in the hollow of an oak coppice a boy of about sixteen lay asprawl, drying his wet brown limbs luxuriously in the sun. His wet hair, parted by a recent dive, lay close to his head, and his light-brown eyes, so light that there was an almost tigerish gleam in them, were turned towards Van Cheele with a certain lazy watchfulness. It was an unexpected apparition, and Van Cheele found himself engaged in the novel process of thinking before he spoke. Where on earth could this wild-looking boy hail from? The miller's wife had lost a child some two months ago, supposed to have been swept away by the mill-race, but that had been a mere baby, not a half-grown lad.

"What are you doing there?" he demanded.

"Obviously, sunning myself," replied the boy.

"Where do you live?"

"Here, in these woods."

"You can't live in the woods," said Van Cheele.

"They are very nice woods," said the boy, with a touch of patronage in his voice.

"But where do you sleep at night?"

"I don't sleep at night; that's my busiest time."

Van Cheele began to have an irritated feeling that he was grappling with a problem that was eluding him.

"What do you feed on?" he asked.

"Flesh," said the boy, and he pronounced the word with slow relish, as though he were tasting it.

"Flesh! What flesh?"

"Since it interests you, rabbits, wild-fowl, hares, poultry, lambs in their season, children when I can get any; they're

**occurrence:** event.

**frank:** honest.

**far removed:** very distant.

**shelf:** horizontal section. **overhanging:** over.

**pool:** expanse of water. **hollow:** empty part inside. **oak:** type of tree. **coppice:** group of trees. **aspawl:** with arms and legs stretched out. **limbs:** arms and legs. **luxuriously:** with pleasure.

**parted:** divided. **dive:** throwing oneself into the water.

**tigerish:** like a tiger. **gleam:** shining.

**watchfulness:** state of being alert.

**unexpected:** surprising. **apparition:** sight.

**engaged:** involved. **novel:** new.

**hail from:** come from. **mill:** person who makes flour.

**swept:** carried. **mill-race:** water near the mill.

**a mere baby:** only a baby. **lad:** boy.

**demanded:** asked.

**sunning:** sunbathing.

**woods:** forest.

**touch:** hint, suggestion.

**patronage:** way of talking to social inferiors.

**busiest:** most occupied.

**grappling:** struggling, dealing. **eluding:** escaping.

**feed on:** eat.

**Flesh:** meat.

**relish:** pleasure. **as though:** as if.

**rabbits:** small mammal with long ears. **wild-fowl:** birds. **hares:** animal similar to rabbit. **poultry:** chickens. **lambs:** young sheep.

usually too well locked in at night, when I do most of my hunting. It's quite two months since I tasted child-flesh." Ignoring the chaffing nature of the last remark, Van Cheele tried to draw the boy on the subject of possible poaching operations.

"You're talking rather through your hat when you speak of feeding on hares." (Considering the nature of the boy's toilet, the simile was hardly an apt one.) "Our hillside hares aren't easily caught."

"At night I hunt on four feet," was the somewhat cryptic response.

"I suppose you mean that you hunt with a dog?" hazarded Van Cheele.

The boy rolled slowly over on to his back, and laughed a weird low laugh, that was pleasantly like a chuckle, and disagreeably like a snarl.

"I don't fancy any dog would be very anxious for my company, especially at night."

Van Cheele began to feel that there was something positively uncanny about the strange-eyed, strange-tongued youngster.

"I can't have you staying in these woods," he declared authoritatively.

"I fancy you'd rather have me here than in your house," said the boy.

The prospect of this wild, nude animal in Van Cheele's primly ordered house was certainly an alarming one.

"If you don't go I shall have to make you," said Van Cheele.

The boy turned like a flash, plunged into the pool, and in a moment had flung his wet and glistening body half-way up the bank where Van Cheele was standing. In an otter the movement would not have been remarkable; in a boy Van Cheele found it sufficiently startling. His foot slipped as he

**locked in:** closed in their houses.

**hunting:** going after animals. **quite:** completely. **tasted:** ate.

**child-flesh:** the meat of a child. **Ignoring:** not listening to.

**chaffing:** joking. **remark:** comment. **draw the boy:** make him

speak about. **poaching:** illegal hunting and trapping of animals.

**talking through your hat:** don't know what you're saying.

**feeding:** eating. **hares:** animals like rabbits.

**toilet:** dress and condition. **simile:** comparison. **hardly:** not

really. **apt:** suitable, appropriate. **hillside:** living in the hills.

**caught:** trapped, hunted. **somewhat:** a little. **cryptic:** myste-

rious. **response:** answer.

**hazarded:** guessed.

**rolled:** moved.

**weird:** strange. **chuckle:** laugh.

**disagreeably:** unpleasantly. **snarl:** noise like an animal.

**uncanny:** strange. **strange-tongued:** who spoke strangely.

**youngster:** young person.

**declared:** said.

**authoritatively:** with authority.

**fancy:** think.

**prospect:** idea. **nude:** without any clothes on.

**primly:** impeccably. **alarming:** frightening.

**flash:** very quickly. **plunged:** jumped. **pool:** expanse of water.

**flung:** thrown. **glistening:** reflecting light.

**bank:** edge of river or lake. **otter:** type of marine mammal.

**remarkable:** unusual.

**sufficiently startling:** surprising enough. **slipped:** moved out of control.

made an involuntary backward movement, and he found himself almost prostrate on the slippery weed-grown bank, with those tigerish yellow eyes not very far from his own. Almost instinctively he half-raised his hand to his throat. The boy laughed again, a laugh in which the snarl had nearly driven out the chuckle, and then, with another of his astonishing lightning movements, plunged out of view into a yielding tangle of weed and fern.

"What an extraordinary wild animal!" said Van Cheele as he picked himself up. And then he recalled Cunningham's remark, "There is a wild beast in your woods."

Walking slowly homeward, Van Cheele began to turn over in his mind various local occurrences which might be traceable to the existence of this astonishing young savage.

Something had been thinning the game in the woods lately, poultry had been missing from the farms, hares were growing unaccountably scarcer, and complaints had reached him of lambs being carried off bodily from the hills. Was it possible that this wild boy was really hunting the countryside in company with some clever poacher dog? He had spoken of hunting "four-footed" by night, but then, again, he had hinted strangely at no dog caring to come near him, "especially at night". It was certainly puzzling. And then, as Van Cheele ran his mind over the various depredations that had been committed during the last month or two, he came suddenly to a dead stop, alike in his walk and his speculations. The child missing from the mill two months ago—the accepted theory was that it had tumbled into the mill-race and been swept away; but the mother had always declared she had heard a shriek on the hill side of the house, in the opposite direction from the water. It was unthinkable, of course, but he wished that the boy had not made that uncanny remark about child-flesh



**involuntary**: not conscious.

**prostrate**: lying on the ground.

**tigerish**: like a tiger.

**instinctively**: without thinking. **half-raised**: started raising. **throat**: passage for food and air under mouth. **snarl**: wild noise.

**chuckle**: laughing noise.

**astounding**: incredible. **lightning**: very fast. **plunged**: disappeared. **yielding**: soft. **tangle**: confusion. **weed**: common plants. **fern**: green plants.

**picked himself up**: got up again. **recalled**: remembered.

**remark**: comment. **woods**: forest.

**homeward**: towards home.

**turn over in his mind**: consider. **occurrences**: events.

**traceable**: connected. **astonishing**: surprising.

**savage**: wild thing.

**thinning**: reducing the number. **game**: animals hunted. **lately**: recently. **poultry**: chickens etc. **missing**: disappeared. **hares**: animals like rabbits. **growing**: becoming. **unaccountably**: for no reason. **scarcer**: rarer. **complaints**: laments. **reached him**: been communicated to him. **lambs**: baby sheep. **bodily**: completely. **poacher**: illegal hunter.

**hinted**: suggested. **caring**: wanting.

**puzzling**: very strange.

**ran his mind**: thought about.

**depredations**: crimes. **committed**: carried out.

**alike**: both, similarly.

**speculations**: thoughts. **missing**: disappeared. **mill**: place where flour is made.

**tumbled**: fallen. **mill-race**: water near a mill. **swept**: carried.

**declared**: said. **shriek**: terrible cry.

**unthinkable**: unimaginable. **wished**: wanted.

**uncanny**: strange. **child-flesh**: meat from a child.

eaten two months ago. Such dreadful things should not be said even in fun.

Van Cheele, contrary to his usual wont, did not feel disposed to be communicative about his discovery in the wood. His position as a parish councillor and justice of the peace seemed somehow compromised by the fact that he was harbouring a personality of such doubtful repute on his property; there was even a possibility that a heavy bill for damages for raided lambs and poultry might be laid at his door. At dinner that night he was quite unusually silent. "Where's your voice gone to?" said his aunt. "One would think you had seen a wolf."

Van Cheele, who was not familiar with the old saying, thought the remark rather foolish; if he *had* seen a wolf on his property his tongue would have been extraordinarily busy with the subject.

At breakfast next morning Van Cheele was conscious that his feeling of uneasiness regarding yesterday's episode had not wholly disappeared, and he resolved to go by train to the neighbouring cathedral town, hunt up Cunningham, and learn from him what he had really seen that had prompted the remark about a wild beast in the woods. With this resolution taken, his usual cheerfulness partially returned, and he hummed a bright little melody as he sauntered to the morning-room for his customary cigarette.

As he entered the room the melody made way abruptly for a pious invocation. Gracefully asprawl on the ottoman, in an attitude of almost exaggerated repose, was the boy of the woods. He was drier than when Van Cheele had last seen him, but no other alteration was noticeable in his toilet.

"How dare you come here?" asked Van Cheele furiously. "You told me I was not stay in the woods," said the boy calmly.

**dreadful:** terrible.

**in fun:** as a joke.

**contrary to:** in contrast to. **wont:** habit behaviour.

**feel disposed:** want.

**wood:** forest. **parish councillor:** local church official.

**justice of the peace:** local magistrate. **somehow:** in some way.

**compromised:** ruined. **harbouring:** looking after, giving hospitality to. **doubtful:** dubious. **repute:** reputation. **heavy bill:** lot of money. **raided:** stolen. **lambs:** baby sheep. **poultry:** chickens etc. **laid at his door:** given to him.

**wolf:** wild dog.

**was not familiar with:** did not know.

**remark:** comment. **foolish:** stupid.

**tongue:** organ used for speaking.

**busy:** occupied. **subject:** matter for conversation.

**was conscious:** realised.

**uneasiness:** discomfort.

**wholly:** completely. **resolved:** decided.

**neighbouring:** near. **hunt up:** find.

**prompted:** caused. **remark:** comment.

**resolution:** decision. **cheerfulness:** happiness. **partially:** in part. **hummed:** sang without words. **bright:** happy. **sauntered:** walked slowly. **morning-room:** kind of sitting room. **customary:** habitual. **made way:** was followed by. **abruptly:** suddenly. **pious:** religious. **invocation:** prayer. **asprawl:** lying. **ottoman:** type of sofa.

**woods:** forest.

**alteration:** change. **was noticeable:** could be seen.

**toilet:** appearance, dress.

**furiously:** very angrily.

**I was not:** (*incorrect or uneducated English*) I should not.

"But not to come here. Supposing my aunt should see you!"

And with a view to minimizing that catastrophe Van Cheele hastily obscured as much of his unwelcome guest as possible under the folds of a *Morning Post*. At that moment his aunt entered the room.

"This is a poor boy who has lost his way—and lost his memory. He doesn't know who he is or where he comes from," explained Van Cheele desperately, glancing apprehensively at the waif's face to see whether he was going to add inconvenient candour to his other savage propensities. Miss Van Cheele was enormously interested.

"Perhaps his underlinen is marked," she suggested.

"He seems to have lost most of that, too," said Van Cheele, making frantic little grabs at the *Morning Post* to keep it in its place.

A naked homeless child appealed to Miss Van Cheele as warmly as a stray kitten or derelict puppy would have done.

"We must do all we can for him," she decided, and in a very short time a messenger, dispatched to the rectory, where a page-boy was kept, had returned with a suit of pantry clothes, and the necessary accessories of shirt, shoes, collar, etc. Clothed, clean and groomed, the boy lost none of his uncanniness in Van Cheele's eyes, but his aunt found him sweet.

"We must call him something till we know who he really is," she said. "Gabriel-Ernest, I think; those are nice suitable names."

Van Cheele agreed, but he privately doubted whether they were being grafted on to a nice suitable child. His misgivings were not diminished by the fact that his staid and elderly spaniel had bolted out of the house at the first incoming of the boy, and now obstinately remained shive-

**Supposing:** if.

**with a view to:** with the aim of. **minimizing:** reducing. **catastrophe:** disaster. **hastily:** in a hurry. **obscured:** hid, concealed. **unwelcome:** not wanted. **guest:** someone receiving hospitality. **fold:** pages. ***Morning Post*:** newspaper. **lost his way:** forgotten how to get home.

**desperately:** with difficulty. **glancing:** looking. **apprehensively:** in a worried way. **waif:** poor creature. **whether:** if. **inconvenient:** embarrassing. **candour:** frankness, honesty. **savage:** wild. **propensities:** characteristics. **underlinen:** clothes worn underneath.

**frantic:** desperate. **grabs:** attempts to pull.

**naked:** without any clothes. **homeless:** without a home. **appealed to:** attracted. **stray:** lost. **kitten:** baby cat. **derelict:** without a home. **puppy:** baby dog.

**dispatched:** sent. **rectory:** house of local religious figure. **page-boy:** servant. **pantry:** kitchen. **accessories:** accompanying objects. **collar:** part of shirt worn round neck. **groomed:** made beautiful, prepared. **uncanniness:** strange nature.

**suitable:** appropriate. **doubted:** was not sure. **whether:** if. **grafted on to:** attached to. **suitable:** appropriate. **misgivings:** worries. **diminished:** reduced. **staid:** calm. **elderly:** old. **spaniel:** type of dog. **bolted:** run. **incoming:** entrance. **obstinately:** refusing to change its mind.

ring and yapping at the farther end of the orchard, while the canary, usually as vocally industrious as Van Cheele himself, had put itself on an allowance of frightened cheeps. More than ever he was resolved to consult Cunningham without loss of time.

As he drove off to the station his aunt was arranging that Gabriel Ernest should help her to entertain the infant members of her Sunday-school class at tea that afternoon. Cunningham was not at first disposed to be communicative.

"My mother died of some brain trouble," he explained, "so you will understand why I am averse to dwelling on anything of an impossibly fantastic nature that I may see or think that I have seen."

"But what did you see?" persisted Van Cheele.

"What I thought I saw was something so extraordinary that no really sane man could dignify it with the credit of having actually happened. I was standing, the last evening I was with you, half-hidden in the hedgeregrowth by the orchard gate, watching the dying glow of the sunset.

Suddenly I became aware of a naked boy, a bather from some neighbouring pool, I took him to be, who was standing out on the bare hillside also watching the sunset. His pose was so suggestive of some wild faun of Pagan myth that I instantly wanted to engage him as a model, and in another moment I think I should have hailed him. But just then the sun dipped out of view, and all the orange and pink slid out of the landscape, leaving it cold and grey. And at the same moment an astounding thing happened—the boy vanished too!"

"What! vanished away into nothing?" asked Van Cheele excitedly.

"No; that is the dreadful part of it," answered the artist; "on the open hillside where the boy had been standing a second

**shivering:** shaking with the cold. **yapping:** making little crying sounds. **orchard:** field for fruit trees. **canary:** type of bird. **vocally industrious:** saying as much. **allowance:** what is permitted. **cheeps:** small bird-like sounds. **resolved:** decided. **consult:** talk to, ask for advice. **arranging:** organizing. **entertain:** amuse. **infant:** child. **Sunday-school:** religious activity for children on Sundays. **disposed:** prepared.

**brain trouble:** mental illness.  
**averse to:** against. **dwelling on:** thinking about.

**persisted:** continued.

**sane:** in good mental health. **dignify:** give it importance.  
**actually:** really.  
**half-hidden:** nearly invisible. **hedgework:** type of low trees.  
**orchard:** field of fruit trees. **gate:** outside door. **dying glow:** light which got weaker. **sunset:** when the sun goes down. **became aware of:** noticed. **naked:** with no clothes. **bather:** swimmer. **neighbouring:** near. **pool:** expanse of water. **bare:** without trees. **pose:** position. **suggestive of:** similar to. **faun:** half-man, half-animal. **myth:** legend, ancient story. **instantly:** immediately. **engage:** use. **hailed:** called. **dipped out of:** disappeared from. **slid:** moved. **landscape:** scene. **astounding:** surprising. **vanished:** disappeared.

**excitedly:** in an emotional state.  
**dreadful:** terrible.

ago, stood a large wolf, blackish in colour, with gleaming fangs and cruel, yellow eyes. You may think—”

But Van Cheele did not stop for anything as futile as thought. Already he was tearing at top speed towards the station. He dismissed the idea of a telegram. “Gabriel-Ernest is a werewolf” was a hopelessly inadequate effort at conveying the situation, and his aunt would think it was a code message to which he had omitted to give her the key. His one hope was that he might reach home before sundown. The cab which he chartered at the other end of the railway journey bore him with what seemed exasperating slowness along the country roads, which were pink and mauve with the flush of the sinking sun. His aunt was putting away some unfinished jams and cake when he arrived.

“Where is Gabriel-Ernest?” he almost screamed.

“He is taking the little Toop child home,” said his aunt.

“It was getting so late, I thought it wasn’t safe to let it go back alone. What a lovely sunset, isn’t it?”

But Van Cheele, although not oblivious of the glow in the western sky, did not stay to discuss its beauties. At a speed for which he was scarcely geared he raced along the narrow lane that led to the home of the Toops. On one side ran the swift current of the mill-stream, on the other rose the stretch of bare hillside. A dwindling rim of red sun showed still on the skyline, and the next turning must bring him in view of the ill-assorted couple he was pursuing. Then the colour went suddenly out of things, and a grey light settled itself with a quick shiver over the landscape. Van Cheele heard a shrill wail of fear, and stopped running.

Nothing was ever seen again of the Toop child or Gabriel-Ernest, but the latter’s discarded garments were found lying in the road, so it was assumed that the child had fallen



**wolf:** wild animal like a dog. **blackish:** more or less black.  
**gleaming:** shining. **fangs:** teeth.  
**futile:** useless.  
**tearing:** running very fast. **top:** maximum.  
**dismissed:** decided against.  
**werewolf:** person who changes into a wolf after dark. **hopelessly:** without hope, useless. **inadequate:** not good enough.  
**effort:** attempt, solution. **conveying:** communicating. **omitted:** forgotten. **key:** solution. **reach:** arrive.  
**sundown:** darkness. **cab:** taxi. **chartered:** hired.  
**bore:** took. **exasperating:** frustrating.

**mauve:** purple. **flush:** red light. **sinking:** going down.

**screamed:** shouted, cried.

**safe:** secure.

**sunset:** when sun goes down.

**oblivious:** unresponsive. **glow:** light.

**western sky:** the sun goes down in the west.

**scarcely:** not really. **geared:** prepared. **raced:** went very fast.

**narrow:** opposite of wide. **lane:** country road. **led:** went.

**swift:** fast. **current:** flow. **mill-stream:** water used to turn mill-wheel and make flour. **rose:** went up. **stretch:** surface.

**bare:** without trees. **dwindling:** disappearing. **rim:** edge. **sky-**

**line:** horizon. **turning:** curve in road. **in view of:** able to see. **ill-**

**assorted:** not well matched. **couple:** two people. **pursuing:** run-

ning after. **settled:** came down. **shiver:** tremble, shake. **land-**

**scape:** scene. **shrill wail:** high cry. **fear:** state of being afraid.

**latter's:** of the second. **discarded:** thrown away. **garments:** clothes. **assumed:** thought.

into the water, and that the boy had stripped and jumped in, in a vain endeavour to save it. Van Cheele and some workmen who were near by at the time testified to having heard a child scream loudly just near the spot where the clothes were found. Mrs Toop, who had eleven other children, was decently resigned to her bereavement, but Miss Van Cheele sincerely mourned her lost foundling. It was on her initiative that a memorial brass was put up in the parish church to "Gabriel-Ernest, an unknown boy, who bravely sacrificed his life for another."

Van Cheele gave way to his aunt in most things, but he flatly refused to subscribe to the Gabriel-Ernest memorial.

**stripped:** taken off his clothes.

**vain:** useless. **endeavour:** try.

**testified:** affirmed.

**scream:** shout, cry. **spot:** place.

**was resigned to:** accepted with philosophy. **bereavement:** loss of a relation. **mourned:** cried for. **foundling:** orphan, child without parents. **brass:** metal plaque.

**parish church:** local church.

**gave way to:** did what she said.

**flatly:** completely. **subscribe:** give money.