FOR THE COMMUTER
La Touche Hancock
Lippincott's Monthly Magazine (1886-1915); Mar 1912; 89, 531; American Periodicals
pg. 506

FOR THE COMMUTER

By La Touche Hancock

'Tis the voice of the sluggard,
I hear him complain,
"You have waked me too early,
I shall catch the next train."

AFTER MANY YEARS
La Touche Hancock
Lippincott's Monthly Magazine (1886-1915); Apr 1907; 79, 472; American Periodicals
pg. 563

AFTER MANY YEARS

By La Touche Hancock

I loved you many years ago;
For you I swore that I would die—
Though, if you ask me, I don't know
Precisely why!

I think I have your portrait—yes!
It's here, or, maybe, it is there—
Though on my life I'd never guess
Exactly where!

You are the one I loved of all;
You may be Mary, Nan, or Sue—
Though really I cannot recall
Distinctly who!

Still in my heart you have a share,
And possibly the biggest niche;
You were my sweetheart—but I swear
I don't know which!

ACCEPTED AT LAST.

By LA TOUCHE HANCOCK.

I wrote a little piece of verse,
It really seemed quite cute to me,
I thought it would augment my purse
To some appreciable degree.

It came back once, it came back twice
It came back twenty times or so,
Each time with different device,
Which, stript of verbiage, meant "No!"

'Twas just as if I'd wooed a maid,
And she, not willing to offend,
An honest answer would evade
By saying she would be my friend.

Two negatives it's very clear
Will make—I picked this up at school --
A sure affirmative, but here
Exception proves the usual rule.

I've taken what revenge I could
By gath'ring each "Declined With Thanks'
You'll notice quite a numerous brood—
And placing them in serried ranks.

I must confess I'm glad sometimes
I'm treated with polite disdain,
There's "no reflection" on my rhymes,
While most of them say, "Write again!"

Brooklyn, N. Y

Tammany Hall

(BEING A SLIGHT TRAVESTY ON "LOCKSLEY HALL")

BY LA TOUCHE HANCOCK

COMRADES, leave me here a little, for I'm in a mournful state;
Leave me here, and, till I call you, let me calmly meditate.
This the place, and all around it, as of old, the Simons pure
Seeking favors and positions that would be a sinecure!
Tammany, that in the distance overlooks the City Hall,
While the crying need of office now and then begins to pall!
Many a night I've seen the Pleiads, when I've looked upon the wine,
Braided up in such a tangle that all liquor I'd decline!
Here about the rooms I've wandered, nourishing the youths sublime
With the fairy tales of office, which will surely come in time!
When I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the vision of the graft, and all the profit there would be!
In the fall a fuller color comes upon the Tiger's breast!
In the fall reform will surely take a well deserved rest!
In the fall, with great bravado, we will cut a livelier dash!
In the fall the young brave's fancy instantly will turn to cash!
His assurance then was boundless—how he got it, we all asked,
While in smiles of peers and princes he magnificently basked!
And we said, "Ah! tell us, Croker, speak and speak the truth to us;
Trust us, Chieftain, let us share it, and we will not care a cuss!"
Then he turned, his bosom shaken—well, you know how he can look
When on his return from Europe he brings renegades to book!
Saying, "I have hid the secret, I will hide it still for aye!"
Saying, "Quite sufficient for you is the boodle of to-day!"
Oh! our Croker, shallow-hearted! Oh, our Croker, ours no more!
Oh! the Club erstwhile so crowded, never now as 'twas before!
Louder than the loudest trumpet, harsh as harshest ophicleide,
Shall our objurgations reach you smiling on the other side!
Is it well to wish you happy? Having known you, we decline.
'Midst nobility we leave you in your glory to repine!
They will hold you, when your presence shall have spent its novel force.
Little better than an expert of a champion dog, or horse!
What is that? He is relenting? Don't believe it! Oh, no, no!
He's already said his farewell very many months ago!
He will answer to the purpose, living in another land!
Better he were building dairies than the leader of our band!
Better we should have a Shepard, or a Devery for our fate!
Better Sport, Two Spot, and Joke! Yes, better a triumvirate!
Cursed be the social wants that win away the democrat!
Cursed be the pomps alluring! Cursed be th' aristocrat!
Cursed be the maladies that made you take a frequent change!
Cursed be the ancient moat, and cursed be the moldy Grange!
* * * * * * * * * * *
Oh! 'tis well that we should bluster—much we're like to make of that—
And, maybe—there is no knowing—we are talking through our hat!
Shall it not be scorn for us to harp on such a great has-been?
We are shamed through all our nature for our weakness to be seen!
Weakness to be wroth with weakness! Party weakness! There's the rub!
Oh! for just another Croker, and for just another Club!
We're the lesser men, we know it: all his influence matched with ours
Is as China was defying all the other mighty powers!
Fools! again the futile fancy, and we know our words are wild,
Oh! that Pelion in November will not be on Ossa piled!
Comes a warning o'er the ocean—we have heard those tones of old—
And it makes the very marrow of our shaking bones grow cold!
See! it falls upon the Wigwam—"Figureheads may come and go.
I'm your Chief, altho at present I am merely 'lying low!'"

NEW YORK CITY.

HOW TO ANGLE FOR A SWEETHEART
La Touche Hancock
Puck (1877-1918); Jan 15, 1896; 38, 984; American Periodicals
pg. 6

HOW TO ANGLE FOR A SWEETHEART.

PUT ON your bait some beautiful things,
A peacock's tail and a butterfly's wings,
A dress of satin, a bracelet of pearl,
A piece of your hair done up in a curl,
A bottle of scent, some poetry, too,
In which you declare that you *will* be true!
Some flowers whose meaning each maid will guess,
And a ring of dazzling loveliness!
Then throw your line to its furthest extent,
And your hook with fair maids will be almost bent!

La Touche Hancock.

TO AN EMBRYO POET

La Touche Hancock

Puck (1877-1918); Jul 24, 1895; 37, 959; American Periodicals
pg. 355

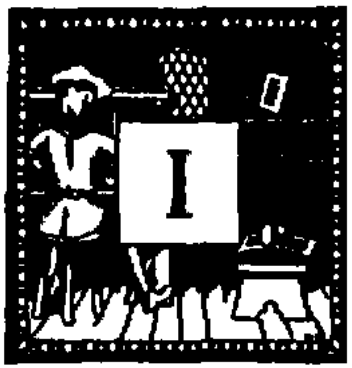
TO AN EMBRYO POET.

YOU ASK me how to write of love?
The subject 's quite extensive!
First, call Erato from above,
And then look dull and pensive.
Neglect your hair, dress like a tramp,
Sit down with pen and paper,
And, if you can't compose, well — vamp!
You 'll soon ignite "love's taper."
Recall that phrase at times — it 's good —
And don't forget "remember"
(When you 're in a poetic mood)
Will rhyme with "sweet September!"
Write "thou," of course, instead of "you,"
And talk of "little Cupid."
Though awkward, I 'm afraid it 's true,
That word best rhymes with "stupid."
Link "love" and "dove," and "lips" and "sips,"
Quote thrilling tales, like Circe's;
Blend "finger tips" with "shapely hips,"
You 'll rival Swinburne's verses!
From "rest" and breast," and "kiss" and "bliss,"
Glide on to "sweet caresses,"
You 'll find the word to rhyme with this
Most suitably is "tresses."
And, if you mix your "trees" and "seas,"
And "step a stately measure,"
Your readers will be hard to please
If they don't thrill with pleasure.
The ladies' names you can combine
With flowers, in ways untold —
If Jessie, call her Jessie-mine,
If Marie, Marie-gold.
That 's all I know, or ever knew;
Now, take my word — and heed it —
Don't write of love; but, if you do,
Don't ask me, please, to read it!

La Touche Hancock.

THE PASSING OF THE AMERICAN COMIC
Hancock, Ernest L
The Bookman; a Review of Books and Life (1895-1933); Sep 1905; 22, 1; American Periodicals
pg. 78

THE PASSING OF THE AMERICAN COMIC



IT may be an ingenious paradox to say that the American people do not support their comic papers, because they are so humorous, but the fact remains, that though as a nation we have *par excellence* the reputation of being humorous, the history of comic papers in this country is marked with no less than half a hundred tombstones.

This is possibly not an exact estimate. No doubt there have been others, of which there is no record, but certainly fifty publications have been started and failed since this phase of literature was initiated in the United States.

The history of these ephemeral efforts is varied and peculiar, and now that the species is not likely to have a prolonged existence in its singular style, a retrospection will be interesting.

Passing over the many comic alma-

nacks in vogue, especially during the '30's (one of which, by the way, had to fall so low as to adopt the designation of "All-my-Nack"), we come to the first actual comic paper published in New York, which was called *The Pictorial Wag*. This was brought out in 1842, being under the auspices of Robert H. Elton, and the editorship of Thomas Nichols. The former was a wood engraver, and the latter a water-cure physician. In twelve months' time Elton found that the manufacture of comic valentines was more profitable than running a comic paper, so he gave up *The Wag*, and profiting by his devotion to St. Valentine, who was held in a great deal more honour then than now, he built up the village of Morrisania, and had the honour of giving his name to the adjacent village, Eltonia. A copy of this publication does not seem to be in existence, but two years afterwards appeared another humorous journal, a volume of which is extant. *Yankee Doodle* came to town with the motto, "Take the goods the gods provide thee." The preface to this paper was, to say the least, confident. "Children shall be born laughing; urchins shall gulp down Greek and Latin with a hearty guffaw" (they were more classical in those days than we are now), "maidens shall laugh a blessing on lovers' comical distress, as Yankee Doodle, father-like, when the wine is brought in, parades his first born with honest pride!" Apparently this comic millennium was not absolutely reached, for the paper did not last many months. Some of its numbers contained youthful caricatures of Horace Greeley, and there were a good many old-fashioned designs shockingly executed. The humour was rather mild, and the pun formed by no means a small part of the jokes. Frogs, for instance, were suggested as an excellent substitute for "spring" chickens, while fun was even then poked at the state of Broadway. There was a cartoon, some small joke pictures and a little verse. Perhaps the best joke one can take away from a cursory glance at the only volume extant is "Yankee Doodle *Do*— Barnum's exhibition of Tom Thumb in England."

Some few weeks after the appearance of *Yankee Doodle* a facsimile of London *Punch* came into existence with the title of *Judy*. The frontispiece was an extremely bad imitation of the English publication, and the price was six cents. The editor of this publication seems to have been Harvey Grattan Plunkett, who was assisted by W. K. Northall, a writer of burlesques for the Olympic Theatre. This comicality died about the same time as *Yankee Doodle*. The pun was again rampant in its columns. "Can the Ethiopian change his colour?" receives the answer, "We presume so, since the Ethiopians at the Museum are a set of sorry *wights!*" and the horrible statement is made, though not verified, that when Mr. James Gordon Bennett took his departure for Europe, he left his paper in the charge of the Devil and Two Sticks!

Somewhere about this period another comicality was in existence, called *The Bubble*, but details are lacking, and it is not until 1847 that we come to another worthy of mention—*The New York Picayune*. This lasted till 1858, which was a record indeed in those days for a comic periodical. It was meant originally by its proprietor, Dr. Hutchings, as a medium for the advertisement of his patent medicines, but these seemingly became so funny that the journal developed into a comic paper. Joseph A. Scoville was the editor till 1854, when he left his position to start an opposition weekly entitled *The Pick*, which lasted just one year. *The Picayune* was edited at different times by Robert N. Levison, John Harrington, and John D. Vose. Mortimer Thompson, who rejoiced in the soubriquet of "Philander Q. K. Doesticks," must also be added to the list. Although this publication was in existence eleven years, copies of it are not to be found in the libraries, but a feature of the fun seems to have been some negro sermons delivered by "Professor Julius Cæsar Hannibal."

In 1850 started up *The Figaro*, which was originally a theatrical journal. It was bought up by David Russell Lee and Thomas Powell, and under the editorship of "Wit and Wisdom," apparently a misnomer, it lasted only a few months.

January, 1852, brought in *Yankee No-*

tions, with an introduction to its "Beloved and Honoured Reader," in which the intentions of the proprietors are outlined. "It is our intention to issue the Funny Magazine of the age," they wrote, "or the compendium of the wit of all nations. We have engaged all the funny people of the world to be our contributors. Cupid is specially engaged at a salary too immense to be really stated in figures." This periodical consisted of 32 pages, and was illustrated by Strong The same distinction applies to this paper as to its fellows about this period. One cannot get away from the pun, which appears in prosaic and illustrative guise so continually that it becomes very wearisome. The price of this paper was 12½ cents (merely "a trifle," or "little bit," as it was probably referred to). It was crowded with horrible illustrations of crinolined women, and men with tall hats, which afford more fun nowadays pos sibly than they did then. In one of the earlier numbers we are confronted with our old friend the "kiss" joke. We are solemnly assured, as we have been time and again since that day, that a kiss is a noun both proper and common. It might be worth the while of some person with plenty of time on his hands to find out really where that pleasantry originated. The valentine again is very much in evidence, and, like the kiss, was both common and proper.

Diogenes, Hys Lanterne also commenced a life of eighteen months in January, 1852. The editor of this was John Brougham. The frontispiece had for its subject an owl with a cap and bells on its head, and the paper was crowded with small pictures, initials, etc., besides the usual cartoon. There were, too, a quantity of small boy jokes, such as Leech made famous in the volumes that have survived. The following may be taken as a sample of the humour of the day. "Can you cut my hair rightaway?" The barber answers in the affirmative, and proceeds. There is an interval, and then after the operation the victim in the chair looks into the mirror, and says in horror, "Why, it's all off!" "Yes," replies the barber, "you said, 'cut it right away.'" Nowadays an editor would certainly welcome a spring poem in place of such a flight of wit. There is a certain amount of atonement in the following, though even this grates: "What is the best maxim for the salad season?" Answer, "Two heads are better than one!"

Young Sam, which appeared in the same year, has the reputation of being a "very inferior publication," and, no doubt, deserves the obscurity surrounding it. It is only worth mentioning because it was edited by Thomas Powell, who was said to be the original of Pecksniff and Micawber. It ran twelve months.

In 1853 and 1854 appeared *Reveille, The Hint, The City Budget, Young America,* and *O. K.,* all of which are entitled to swell the roll of comic papers. *Reveille* lasted about a year and was published and edited by Cornelius Matthews, the artist of the paper being T. B. Gunn. *The Hint,* edited and illustrated by William North, was a daily comic paper, of which six numbers were published. It was then turned into a weekly, and lived exactly one fortnight. Of the *City Budget* and *O. K.* little information can be gathered, except that the former was edited by a Mr. "Jones," and published by Radway and Company. *Young America* was published by an engraver of the name of Thomas W. Strong, and edited by Charles Gaylor, the dramatist. It was illustrated by John McLennon, and ran over a year. Its demise was hastened by an action for libel on the part of a druggist, who considered he had been maligned by the paper.

Now came a pause presumably, but on the last day of the year 1859 appeared *Vanity Fair.* This periodical consisted of 16 pages, was published by W. H. Stephens, and edited at first by Frank Wood, the burlesque writer. The cartoons were drawn by Henry L. Staples, Bellew, E. F. Miller, and Sol Eytinge At the end of 1862 the paper failed. Two monthly numbers were issued in January and February, 1863, and on June 1st of the same year it was revised and appeared again as a weekly, but died absolutely on July 4th. There were various editors during its existence, amongst whom were Stephen Shanley, Artemus Ward, and

Charles Godfrey Leland, the latter of whom contributed "The Telegraph Tour of Ralph Peyton de Accornac." The writers included William Winter, Richard Henry Stoddard, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, and others of more or less note. This paper was more satirical than comical. It purported to be not so much exterminative as reformative, and appealed to its readers as a knight of the old chivalric days. There is a profuse imitation of Leech's small boy in this paper, and the pun is terribly eminent. An Irish wake is described as "a spree du corps," and that dear familiar old butler just before leaving gives his master "the sack" instead of his usual bottle of wine! Brooklyn came in for its share of ridicule, and apparently the city was just as unfinished then as now, judging by the appropriate pleasantries.

In 1860 three more humorous journals were in circulation. The first, called *Momus,* started as a daily, was then turned into a weekly and promptly gave up the ghost. *John Donkey,* and *The Innocent Weekly Owl* shared the disastrous honours of the same twelve months, and thoroughly deserved their fate for their ridiculous titles.

Now came a more pretentious weekly, *Mrs. Grundy,* which appeared in July, 1865. This was originally edited by Dr. Alfred Carroll, while Stephens and Tom Nast drew the cartoons. Later on Howard Irving, Ashley W. Cole, and George Phoebus tried their hands at conducting the venture, which expired in eleven months. The motto of *Mrs. Grundy* was "Malice toward none, but charity to all;" there was a preface in verse, and on the cover was depicted an old woman in the usual crinoline etceteras giving weekly lectures to a crowded theatre. The cars were even crowded in those days, as is shown by the following: "Aw, dwiver, is there any woom there?" "Rear platform, sir, room for one to hang on to the brake-handle!" The phraseology of this witticism seems to denote that civility was more rife then than nowadays. In the first number are only two pictures besides the cartoon. The paper consisted of twelve pages, and was full of terrible conundrums. "When does a prize fighter weigh least?" "When he is down!" and similar atrocities give a good idea of what was thought good copy for editors in those days, while "Advice to persons who can't sleep—Change your clergyman" seems to have the earmarks of a still older period.

The Phunniest Of Phun and *The Galaxy* distinguished the years 1865 and 1866. The former was edited by Frank Bellew, and illustrated by Frank Beard. It lived about three years, while *The Galaxy* came out twice a month. At one time it was edited by Mark Twain. It was taken over in 1871 by Don Piatt, and in 1872 transferred to Kate Sanborn.

An intermittent journal, *The Kaleidoscope,* published by G. W. Carleton, was the comic star feature of 1869. It passed away almost immediately, unmourned and unsung. About this time also came *The Little Joker,* and *The New York Humorist,* details of which are lacking.

Punchinello enlivened the spring of 1870, appearing on April 2d of that year. It was to have been called *Tommy Dodd,* but the latter name was rejected on account of the "superfluously aristocratic aroma that surrounded the name." The title-page represented a kind of a *Punch,* the drawing being taken from a painting of Meissonier, the celebrated French artist. The reason for its publication on the day after All Fools' Day was, according to the preface, because by that means the paper left all fools and jesters behind. Therefore it was first in the race for comic laurels. The writers of the introduction talk themselves all the way to Delmonico's, where they ask for rooms, and the artists are immediately shown into the "drawing" room. Passing over this enormity and several others, such as "Ode to my Washerwoman—$2.50," "The beginning and ending of a chicken's life—Hatchet," and "In England they have a Bleak House and in New York a Bleecker Street," the paper seems to have been well edited as a whole, under the management of Charles D. Stanley. It only lived till the following December, but it included amongst its contributors several noted men. R. H. Newell, "Orpheus C. Kerr," burlesqued Dickens's

The Mystery of Edwin Drood, which was afterwards published under the title of *The Cloven Foot,* and W. L. Alden's name is conspicuous amongst the rest.

The year 1871 boasts of two, or, maybe, three more comics, *Champagne, The Chip Basket,* and *The Comic Times.* The former came from the publishing house of Frank Leslie, and was edited by Isaac G. Reed, while little or nothing is known of the others.

Now came a perfect hurricane of comic papers. An avalanche of humour overwhelmed the year 1872. *The Brickbat, The Cartoon, Frank Leslie's Budget of Fun, The Jolly Joker, The Nicknax, Merryman's Monthly, The Moon, The Phunny Fellow,* and *The Thistle,* are some of the more prominent, though there were, doubtless, others which had a short and merry life. *The Brickbat* appeared in the month of February, and was appropriately edited by "Bricktop," which was the soubriquet chosen by George W. Small. It contained a flattering notice of James Fisk, Jr., and only survived one number. *The Cartoon* was published by Frank Leslie, but consisted merely of reprints of the other Leslie publications. *Leslie's Budget of Fun* followed at the end of the year, as did also *The Jolly Joker* from the same house.

Wild Oats came from the house of Winchell and Small. This was a semi-monthly, having been originally a "flash" monthly, which was seized by Mayor Oakley Hall for a cartoon, entitled "Too Thick." The ubiquitous "Bricktop" also edited this venture. Tom Worth, now with Tousey's, was one of the artists engaged on the illustrations. *The Thistle* had for its motto, "Qui s'y frotte, s'y pique," and was written entirely by Francis S. Saltus, although the articles were signed by various names.

From this period till the present time something like fifteen more comic papers have appeared. Little can be gathered of *Grip,* a name, by the way, that in these days immediately suggests some sort of breakfast food, *Uncle Sam, Brick Pomeroy's Democrat, Peck's Sun,* or *Judge and Jury,* except that they were ephemeral. *Chic,* however, which appeared in 1880, seems to have been a superior kind of periodical. It was well printed, and the cartoons were coloured. It contained also a quantity of advertising matter, and a very fair imitation of Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures. A few short jokes, several long screeds, and more than a modicum of verse made up its contents.

Drake's Family Magazine, which originally was a kind of railway magazine interspersed with jokes, also came into being in the middle of the '70's. It was edited by Stanley Hunter, who wrote *The Spoopendyke Papers,* and also by Benjamin Northrup, who was afterwards editor of the *Mail and Express.* After a time the time tables were cut out of the paper, and it blossomed forth into a family magazine, losing its comic nature almost entirely. A crowd of eminent writers contributed to its pages from time to time, including Bill Nye, Eugene Field, Burdette, Walter Cooper, Munkittrick, etc.

Texas Siftings appeared in 1884, bringing into notice for the first time James Whitcomb Riley amid half a hundred other contributors, who have since become better known. A. Miner Griswold, "the fat contributor," J. Armory Knox, author of *The Devil of a Cruise,* Alexander Sweet, David Curtis, Phil Welsh and others swelled a crowd of wits, whose fun was rollicking, and appreciated. Alexander Sweet edited the paper in 1892 and 1893. This was by far the most amusing paper published up to that period. It consisted of sixteen large pages absolutely crammed full of hilarity and fun. With the exception of one poem a week it clipped its verse from other periodicals, of course with due acknowledgment, and utilised the space usually devoted to aspiring bards with really comic pictures, funnily drawn. This was a good ten cents' worth of humour, and its decease was widely regretted. What passed for fun then, and the majority of it *was* fun, differed widely from the days of *Punchinello,* for instance, though the pun still clung on, e.g. "Santa Claus—Well, what of it? So does a cat!" and many a poet in his one dollar room will

still appreciate this ominous couplet, which rings out with the bells every year:—

Now is the winter of our discontent—
Christmas coming without a cent!

Hallo was started at the end of September, 1893, at the price of five cents. It consisted also of sixteen pages, and was edited by Karl Hauser and Stepher Fiske. It had for its frontispiece a cartoon, and another double-paged one inside, while the reading matter, though not so strikingly funny as *Texas Siftings*, ought to have insured it a longer life It failed in 1895. Baron de Grimm was the artist, and it was contributed to by a goodly portion of the wits, who made *Texas Siftings* what it was in its palmy days. *Time*, which also appeared about this period, had a short existence, and was meant to take the wind out of the sails of *Life*. Its remnants finally passed into the hands of Munsey. Nast was the illustrator. The last on the list is *Truth*, which had a varied existence, but failed to meet the appreciation of an exacting public.

Three comic papers are now being issued in NewYork, *Life*, *Puck*, and *Judge*. *Life* came to light on January 4, 1883, and was conducted by John Ames Mitchell, who is still at the head of the paper, and Edward S. Martin, while Andrew Miller was business manager. It consisted of twelve pages, in which were two cartoons, a few joke pictures, illustrated headings, etc. One of these drawings was devoted to the illustration of that extraordinarily old pleasantry, where the guest having spilled some salt on the tablecloth pours claret on it to take away the stain! *Puck* appeared in March, 1877, Sydney Rosenfeld being the first editor. H. C. Bunner followed and held the chair till he died in 1896. Now it is apparently edited by a syndicate. *Judge* was initiated in 1881, being edited by George T. Small in partnership with Frank Tousey. George Jessop was the next editor, then Gregory, and now in the chair of authority sits one of the best wits of the day, R. K. Munkittrick.

Such, then, is the tale of the comic papers of New York. Publication after publication with almost every conceivable name as bait for the public has failed, until at last we are left practically with three only, which are fighting hand in hand with the daily papers and Sunday comic supplements to maintain an existence. Herein we differ from the humorous publications in England. *Punch* with all its proverbial dulness has been supported for more than half a century, while *Fun*, *Judy*, and *Ally Sloper*, which have been in existence for years, show no signs of decay. And yet there are thousands of would-be humourists, and the public is laughter-loving enough to support half a dozen comic journals, if they chose. Whether it is the rule of "payment on publication," which is enforced by two of the comicalities now running that stops the outflow of really good humour, certain it is that this system is a red rag to the contributor. He can make his joke, have it accepted, if it is good enough, see it published, and get his money in a week, if he sends it to a daily paper, which reserves space for quips and cranks, whereas an acceptance by most comic papers may, and probably will, mean a payment deferred for months. Added to this is the fact that the pictures are fast crowding out the reading matter. In olden times this was not the case.

It may be interesting to note in conclusion that hundreds of men, who afterwards became distinguished in medicine, law, diplomacy, the pulpit, and the sciences, wooed the Muse in these comic papers, amongst whom may be mentioned Longfellow, Ex-Ambassador Phelps with the "Ode to the White River Junction," Captain Brownell, "The Old Cove," and William Allen Butler with various efforts. There are many others, but that is another story. Despite their contributions the comic papers make a sorry showing.

Whatever the cause, the tombstones are there. Half a hundred, and more of these stimulants of fancy, titillators of imagination, and awakeners of risible faculties have arisen only to disappear again, and, if we drop a tear over their

decease, they can but say with Scarron, who retorted to his weeping domestics on his death bed,

"Ah! you will never cry half so much as I have made you laugh!"

Ernest L. Hancock.

LABOUCHÈRE AND LONDON "TRUTH"

When Henry Labouchère announced his intention of producing and editing a new periodical, which he called *Truth*, society smiled. People thought the union of the two names a paradox. They were mistaken, for they found they had to take into consideration a very different man from what they had expected. Up to this period, 1877, Labouchère had scarcely been taken seriously. Every one knew of his escapades, and there was rarely an amusing story lacking an author which was not immediately placed to his credit. Labouchère, however, was in earnest. Just before this period he had been the principal contributor to the *World*, then owned by Edmund Yates, supplying the weekly financial article. The paragraph age was just beginning. People were tired of long-winded editorials. They wanted short, snappy paragraphs. Edmund Yates was the first to feel the public pulse, and before many months had passed Labouchère had followed his example. The *World* would probably never have had the success it achieved had it not been for Labouchère's weekly strictures and criticisms on commercialism, a fact that Labouchère very shortly recognised. Telling Yates that he did not see the equity of doing all the work while the editor took in all the money, he left the *World* and started a similar publication, which actually paid from its first number. Such an unusual beginning was probably due to the fact that people knew that Labouchère could easily afford to carry on such a venture for an indefinite period. Besides which, they were only too glad to welcome such peculiar talent in a different field. Beyond and above this, Labouchère was sharp enough to engage the services of a *fidus Achates*, Horace Voules, who had served a varied apprenticeship with several literary ventures, and a peculiar one with Baron Grant on the *Echo*, the first halfpenny paper published in London. In the office besides Voules was a dapper young man, who was, so his master said, "the only gentleman in the place." Labouchère explained later why he kept this modified Beau Brummel. It is the law in England to have the name of the publisher and printer at the end of the paper, presumably to fix the responsibility of any delinquency in the shape of libel, etc. Not wishing the real name of his printer and publisher to be known, Labouchère had this young gentleman's name affixed to *Truth*, so that, as he cheerfully explained, if any trouble did arise this youth could go to prison! A story is told of Labouchère at the very beginning of his editorial career. A friend came in one day, and, seeing a quantity of books around, which had been sent in for review, offered to bet Labouchère that there was one book he had not got in the office. Labouchère inquired the name of the book, and his friend promptly answered, "A Bible." With a laugh, Labouchère offered to bet ten pounds that he had even that book. Turning the conversation in another direction, he furtively sent a note out into the clerk's office, telling the boy to go downstairs and ask the booksellers underneath for the loan of a Bible. Presently he returned to the subject of the bet, and, calling his assistant in, asked him whether he had a Bible in the office. The clerk produced the book, which Labouchère handed over to his friend, giving himself away, however, as he did so by saying *sotto voce* to the clerk: "I hope to goodness you didn't forget to cut the leaves!" The humour of the story lies in the fact that in those days, at all events, no Bible had ever been published with uncut leaves

When *Truth* first appeared it was popularly supposed that Labouchère wrote nearly the whole of the paper. This was not so, although he certainly did contribute a great deal more then than in these later days. The columns headed "Scrutator" were and are now written by his pen; so was the financial article, which has since been delegated to other writers, and so, too, were many of the paragraphs. Though libel suit followed libel suit, Labouchère made it his boast for years that he never lost a case. His greatest disappointment was, perhaps, when the jury could not agree on a verdict in the case of Levy Lawson *v.* Himself. Lawson was

his deadly enemy, and of his enemies he often used to say that they never came to a good end. Of late years he has not been so successful in his litigation, which is not to be wondered at, when one considers how many scoundrels and swindles he has attempted to unmask. He confesses that he has often been in a quandary; for in the generality of cases his victims have left him in the lurch by going to gaol or the bankruptcy court, leaving him to pay the costs. Probably his expenses in defending the suits brought against him have exceeded sixty thousand pounds, while against this must be placed, besides his private income, a princely profit from the paper over which he presides.

Truth brought out qualities in Labouchère for which he never before had credit. He was known to have had a good education at Eton and Cambridge, and to be well off financially, and his vagaries in the Foreign Office and as a newspaper correspondent were common talk, but people were not prepared for such a fearless onslaught on all sorts and kinds of evils as Labouchère began. It is not generally known that this intensity of purpose was inherited; and yet, if Labouchère is to be believed, his father was just as strenuous in purpose. One illustration is supplied by the son, which the latter vouches for as true in every particular. It appears that John Labouchère, the father, was in his youth a clerk in the banking house of Williams, Deacon and Company. Once they wished to send some important papers to a rich client in Paris, and entrusted John Labouchère with the task of taking them and settling what matters pertained thereto. While transacting his business with the millionaire, the bank clerk employed his spare time in making violent love to the daughter of the house. His business being done, John Labouchère asked for a private interview with the old man, and there and then asked the hand of his daughter in marriage. The father was indignant. A mere bank clerk! It was absurd. "Well," said Labouchère's father, "supposing I was a partner in the bank, would that make any difference?" The answer was that most certainly it would. Back went John, and after being congratulated on the successful issue of his work, asked for an interview with the partners, at which he begged to be taken into partnership. The request was, of course, laughed at. Nothing daunted, Labouchère's father asked if it would make any difference if he was the son-in-law of the millionaire to whom he had been sent. The answer was similar to the one he had received in Paris; so somehow or other, though history does not say which he did first, Labouchère's father married the girl and became a partner in the banking firm.

Early in life Labouchère entered the diplomatic service, and his great boast has always been that he is the only man who has ever got the best of the English Foreign Office. To instance this he tells the following tale, which possibly has the elements of a certain amount of accuracy. He was always, he confesses, drawing or trying to draw some of his salary in advance, so on receiving instructions from the Foreign Office to go from where he was stationed, Paris, to St. Petersburg, he promptly wrote back for some money in advance. To this request he received no reply, and to all intents and purposes disappeared. For six weeks he was not to be found. Finally he was discovered to be at Homburg, and on being asked to explain, he replied that, as he had received no reply to his letter and having no money for his travelling expenses, he had started out to walk to St. Petersburg, and at the present moment had got as far as Homburg. This retort so staggered his superiors that they forgave him for the misdemeanour.

Still another story that he is fond of telling, and which is certainly characteristic of his *sang froid*, if nothing else, runs that, while he was attached to the British Embassy at Washington, an Englishman strode into the office in all his glory and demanded to see his country's representative. Labouchère explained that he was out, and offered his services in lieu. The visitor was indignant. He would have nothing to do with any understrapper. The word hurt Labouchère, who politely invited him to take a chair and wait. The man waited and waited till over an hour had gone by. Then he inquired when Lord Lyons, the ambassador, would be in. "I really don't know," said Labouchère. "He went to Europe this morning, and may not be back for three months!"

There are many, many more tales told

of Labouchère, enough indeed to fill a volume: of how he posed as a doorkeeper of a travelling circus; how he joined a party of Chippewa Indians, with whom he roamed about for six months; of how he was mistaken for the Emperor of Mexico, and how he was actually, according to his own account, elected President of the French Republic by mistake during the Commune. There is, in fact, no yarn of amusing audacity which has not at some time or another been fathered upon the ubiquitous Labby.

His political career commenced somewhat paradoxically, when he was returned to Parliament from, of all places, the seat of royalty, Windsor. In a natural sequence he was unseated on petition, and again met a similar fate when he stood for Middlesex some years later. In 1880 he was elected for Northampton in conjunction with Charles Bradlaugh, and he has represented that constituency ever since. Be it said that Labouchère is consistent in his political views. He may be anti-everything, and chockful of persiflage, but he is always worth listening to, for, though he is oftentimes wrong-headed, he is always profoundly in earnest. When making his last cabinet, Gladstone sent for him, not with the intention of offering him a portfolio, but merely to hoodwink the public that some official position had been offered him, leaving him the task of saying that he had declined to accept it. Instead of allowing the public to be thus comfortably humbugged, Labouchère somewhat stupidly published the whole truth about the matter, thereby holding himself up to ridicule. He is feared, liked and detested in the House of Commons, but he has at all times to be reckoned with.

In private life Labouchère is the acme of geniality. Besides a mansion in London, he has a beautiful house on the Thames—once Pope's villa. The lawn runs down to the river, which elicited a remark from him in answer to a guest who had dilated on the beauty of the place: "Yes," said his host, "I have a lawn on the river in summer, and a river on the lawn in winter!" He smokes cigarettes incessantly, using a long holder so that the smoke may not get into his eyes while he is writing, and he is popularly supposed to be the only man alive who can keep a cigarette evenly burning during a high wind! He is utterly indifferent to private feeling as he is to public strictures, and, though popularly supposed to have been hand and glove with King Edward when the latter was Prince of Wales, he has presumably a deep contempt for royalty.

Apropos of this friendship, he was once asked what he called the Prince of Wales when he dined at Marlborough House. "Well," said Labby, "when the soup comes on I address him as 'Your Royal Highness.' The fish softens the reserve and I get a little chummier, and often as not I call him 'Wales,' while during the *entrées* and joints I get quite familiar and he becomes 'Eddie,' while he slaps me on the back and dubs me 'Labby'!"

Labouchère, in short, is a complete paradox. Rich, he despises the wealthy, clever without judgment, unsentimental yet wrong-headedly emotional, thoroughly in earnest, yet always regarded as a trifler. He used to give out that he had really no time to get married, and yet he espoused Miss Henrietta Hodson, an actress of some note in her day, and he has managed a theatre, from which he gained a good many amusing experiences without any monetary profit. He has played many parts, but has never achieved success in any particular one.

"Father," said a child, when Labouchère was standing for Northampton, "did God make Labby?"

"Yes, my dear," answered the smiling parent.

"What for, father?"

The question was not and probably never will be answered.

Ernest L. Hancock.

AGAIN THE BANANA
La Touche Hancock
Lippincott's Monthly Magazine (1886-1915); Apr 1911; 87, 520; American Periodicals
pg. 530

AGAIN THE BANANA

By La Touche Hancock

The lawyer fell, and he tore his clothes,
And the mishap made him feel
That, as the phraseology goes,
He 'd lost a suit on appeal!

THE SLEIGH BELLE
La Touche Hancock
Lippincott's Monthly Magazine (1886-1915); Mar 1911; 87, 519; American Periodicals
pg. 400

THE SLEIGH BELLE

By La Touche Hancock

Hear the sleigh belle, how she chatters
With her beau!
How she chatters, chatters, chatters
Of innumerable matters,
Quite heedless of the spatters
Of the snow.

Though the weather for this riding
May be rough,
Yet the sleigh belle loves the gliding,
And quite adores the sliding
With her fifteen fingers hiding
In her muff!

IN A HAMMOCK
La Touche Hancock
Lippincott's Monthly Magazine (1886-1915); Aug 1909; 84, 500; American Periodicals
pg. 261

IN A HAMMOCK

By La Touche Hancock

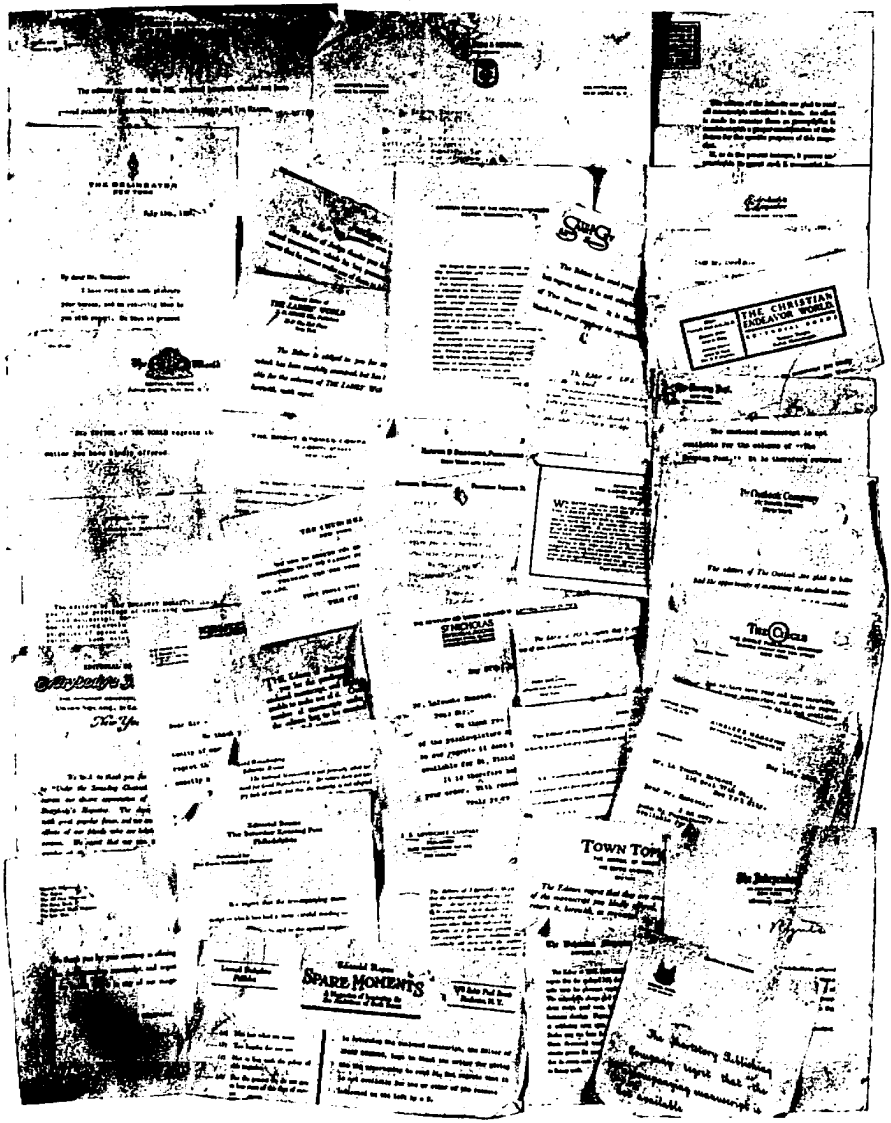
Two in hammock
Tried to kiss,
Quickly landed
¡sıɥʇ ǝʞıl ʇsnſ

DECLINED WITH THANKS
La Touche Hancock
The Bookman; a Review of Books and Life (1895-1933); Apr 1909; 29, 2; American Periodicals
pg. 178

DECLINED WITH THANKS

Oh! "Declined with thanks"—oh! "Declined with thanks!"
Are all these editors merely cranks?
Here are rejections—I have plenty more—
Don't tell it in Gath— I've many a score!
"Surplus of matter"—"accept if we could!"
(Very polite, but that's no earthly good!)
Keep it for months, if it happens to suit,
Meanwhile I'm starving—it's Dead Sea Fruit!
"This is too clever"—"that's not good enough!"
(They think they can gauge the right kind of stuff!)
Well, if in life's lottery I've drawn the blanks,
Engrave on my tombstone—"Declined with Thanks!"

La Touche Hancock.



DECLINED WITH THANKS

The Fool Wish

BY LA TOUCHE HANCOCK

Of all the wishes that one hears
  What makes me really very wild
Is when a man of fifty years
  Says, "Would I were again a child!"
I'm fifty, but I would not care
  To have my boyhood back again.
In fact, the prospect's apt to scare,
  When I recall the birch and cane,
The lessons, and the lines I had
  To write in Latin and in Greek—
I must have been extremely bad,
  With oh! what quantities of cheek!

The opportunities I missed,
  When I was starting out in life,
The girls I flirted with and kissed,
  The one I—didn't—make my wife!
Such things and half a hundred more
  I think of with no trace of joy,
Nay, I most heartily deplore
  I ever was a little boy!
So now I've given life a test,
  I hate to hear that fool refrain,
Tho some may wish it, I'll be blest
  If I would be a child again!

New York City.

Cupid's Birthday

BY LA TOUCHE HANCOCK

'Tis Cupid's birthday! Yet I hesitate
To tempt my fortune even on this date.
What shall I send her—bracelets, or a ring
As precious as the ransom of a king?
A pair of gloves, some jewels, or a muff?
Ah, no! of baubles such as these she'll have enough.
I'll send her what she may appreciate,
I'll send my love—and boldly challenge fate!

New York City.

The Common Man
LA TOUCHE HANCOCK
*The Independent ... Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and Economic Tendencies, His...*Jul 19, 1906; 61,
American Periodicals
pg. 146

The Common Man

BY LA TOUCHE HANCOCK

ONCE on a time—no matter when—
  There lived a man—no matter where—
His name, it might be Jack or Ben,
  But which I really can't declare.

His age, I think, was—I don't know—
  I somehow quite forget how old!
He died, well, several years ago;
  At least that's what I have been told!

He had a son I'm almost sure,
  And naturally he had a wife.
He had, it may be, several more,
  I do not know, upon my life!

Who, when, or how, or where, or what
  It's quite impossible to say;
There is no record of his lot;
  At all events, he had his day.

My friend, this tale to you appears,
  No doubt, ridiculous and tame,
But probably in after years
  Of you and me they'll say the same!

BROOKLYN, N. Y.

IDEALS: METROPOLITAN

LA TOUCHE HANCOCK.
Current Literature (1888-1912); Dec 1902; VOL. XXXI, No. 6.; American Periodicals
pg. 728

IDEALS. . . . . .LA TOUCHE HANCOCK. . . . . .METROPOLITAN

Brocades shall breathe, and arabesques
Shall be instinct with soul!
Designs run riot with grotesques,
And jacinth stud the bowl!
O'er moonlit cloisters Merlin's spell
Shall brood in peacefulness,
And every scene a dream foretell
Of fabled Lyonesse!

To a Lady Doctor
La Touche Hancock
Life (1883-1936); Sep 22, 1921; 78, 2029; American Periodicals
pg. 21

To a Lady Doctor

MADAM, I've seen you laying low
The wild, intractable bronchitis;
Fierce morbilli you've forced to go,
And devastating parotitis!
Before you hordeolum flees,
And, doubtless, you could give a praxis
For stemming the intricacies
Of complicated epistaxis.

Mayhap your practiced skill disdains
The milder ills we call neuralgic,
But, though you conquer subtle pains,
Otalgic, ay! and odontalgic,
And though your art may be displayed
In curbing rapid ecchymosis,
My case is one in which you've made
An inefficient diagnosis!

Whene'er your Æsculapian lore
You exercise in my direction,
You seem to utterly ignore
My fervent cardiacal action,
And only you can cure it, miss,
Or give relief in any measure;
A neat prescription, such as this,
I'd take with something more than pleasure:

As, "Recipe; Infus. amor;
Of banns 3; or license single;
Of parsons 1; of bridesmaids 4;
Of ushers 6; together mingle.
Then drop in speeches till they're done,
And, as the marriage takes to starting,
Of trunks a heap; a carriage 1;
And *aqua ad*—the tears at parting!"

La Touche Hancock.

If?
La Touche Hancock
Life (1883-1936); Apr 18, 1918; 71, 1851; American Periodicals
pg. 630

If?

IF you have heard the breezes sigh
Your loved one's name in passing by;
If you have heard the pearly shell
The tale of distant regions tell;
If you have heard the ocean cry
Defiance to the cloudy sky;
If you have heard the gentle stream
Sing songs of peace as in a dream;
If you have heard the woods complain
Because the year is on the wane;
If you have heard the rocks reply
To waterfalls, that shouted high—
I would not rudely say you lie;
But—you've heard a good deal more
than I!

La Touche Hancock.

AT TABLE D'HOTE
La Touche Hancock
Lippincott's Monthly Magazine (1886-1915); Nov 1910; 86, 515; American Periodicals
pg. 644

AT TABLE D'HÔTE

By La Touche Hancock

If you can't pronounce the name
Of the entrée or the joint,
As your French is rather lame,
Point!

THE TYPICAL TOPICAL SONG

By La Touche Hancock

In the midst of the craze for these musical plays
  Which hold such remarkable sway,
When an item like plot does n't matter a jot,
  And art has a very small " a,"
At times it will hap that the usual snap
  Is lacking, and something goes wrong;
Still, you can reply it will " go " by and bye
  With a typical topical song!

Here 's a subject, or two, that often will do,
  If sung with a confident nous—
The high price of meat the people will greet
  With shouts that will bring down the house!
If the tariff you chaff, 't will elicit a laugh,
  And the subway 's especially strong,
And a touch on divorce can't be missing, of course,
  From the typical topical song!

Then the suffragette cause will win great applause,
  The comet will prove a big draw,
Joy riding, a strike, chauffeurs, and the like,
  They 'll all of them bring a guffaw!
It won't matter a bit, if the play 's not a hit;
  You 'll find that the public will throng
To the musical piece, which will take a new lease
  With this typical topical song!

The Metamorphosis of Love

IS there a speech so asinine
As "Let me be your valentine?"
One sees this very silly phrase
Even in these enlightened days.
I'd rather be a cocakatoo,
A rat, a cow, a kangaroo,
A bird, a cow, a porcupine,
Than be a maiden's valentine!
If you for just a moment think
Of being, say, a Cupid pink,
A bow of ribbon, filmy lace,
Which, as a rule, these fancies grace,
And, worst of all, to be that crime,
A bit of maudlin loving rhyme!
Now where in goodness' name's the bliss
Of such a metamorphosis?

La Touche Hancock.

A Modern Dilemma

ADVANCES have been made in everything except religion and the formula for proposing. Soon we shall all be flying, and know all the germs by name, so that when we call them they will come and feed out of the hand.

But to find any new words to tell a very old story is, apparently, an impossibility.

It would not matter much, possibly, if young girls were not so keenly alive to the situation. But they read all the latest novels and they are pretty likely to know what is coming.

What is the use of strolling into the conservatory under a potted palm and starting to hold her fluttering hand in yours, to the tune of the "Merry Widow Waltz," when the whole thing is down in one of Chambers' books?

Then, again, the vocabulary is limited. You can't ask a girl to marry you in many more ways than the following:

"Darling, I love you."

"Will you be mine?"

"Say yes."

"Only tell me that you do not love another."

You can, should you think best, throw yourself frankly on the mercy of the girl, and announce beforehand the author in whose language you intend to propose. If she is a sweet girl graduate and has been studying Kant and Spenser, you can say:

"Darling, I feel within me the stern voice of the catagorical imperative. Will you be my phenomena of existence? Can I walk with you intuitively as well as imperially?"

Or you can tempt her with a rendition a la Jacobs' sea stories:

"Darling, I have laid to in the offing long enough. Shall we henceforth sail together with a light ten-knot breeze over the quarter into the Southern Ocean while you take your trick at the wheel? Oh, say that henceforth I can be your first mate!"

Or, in the language of Lloyd Osborne's auto tales:

Darling! Henceforth may our engines beat as one. You shall be my carbureter, and I will be your differential. No limousine shall part us if you will only explode the word, and I promise you that for life I will be muffled down."

Henry James is, perhaps, too common:

"Darling—that is to say dearest—something subtle, intuitive, evanescent, tells me that you—may I, indefinably yet unutterably, be permitted to——"

But these, after all, only show to what straits *lovers may be driven. We await some hitherto* unknown genius who will invent new terms—some one who can give us the cue really to mystify, surprise and to charm the sophisticated maiden of this blasé to-day.

Similes for Suitors

(*Dedicated to those who wish to give adequate expression to their sentiments*)

IN your presence my heart beats as lively as the bass drummer in a circus band.

Your hair gleans in the sunlight like the upturned bottom of a copper kettle.

Your lips are as red as the printing on a circus poster.

Your voice is as soft as the step of a burglar.

Your teeth are whiter than newly placed marble tombstones.

Your words are more winning than those of a patent medicine advertisement.

You are dearer to me than an afternoon off when the home team wins.

Vance C. Criss.

My System

I TRY to teach Aurelia
The Art of Song.
To mark each cadence rightly
I kiss her—quite politely—
And Art is long.
My system is a clever thing,
But she will never learn to sing.

I try to teach Aurelia
The stars to call.
To mark each one exactly
I kiss her—quite abstractly—
I've named them all.
My system is correct, but she
Will never learn astronomy.

I wonder what Aurelia
Has learned from me.
I've lately felt a knowledge
I didn't get in college
With my degree,
And sometimes have the startling thought:
Is this a case of teacher taught?

D. K. Stevens.

FIRST ENGLISHWOMAN: You were away from home all last month, weren't you?

SECOND ENGLISHWOMAN: Yes.

FIRST ENGLISHWOMAN: Sanitarium, Winter Resort or Prison?

ON THE RIGI
La Touche Hancock
Lippincott's Monthly Magazine (1886-1915); Aug 1909; 84, 500; American Periodicals
pg. 280

On the Rigi

The following notice meets the eyes of travellers at a hotel half way up the Rigi.

Misters and voyagers are advertised that, when the sun him risen, a horn will be blowed!

This announcement sufficiently prepares tourists for the following entry in the wine-list:

In this hotel the wines leave the traveller nothing to hope for.

La Touche Hancock

THE EVIDENCE
La Touche Hancock
Lippincott's Monthly Magazine (1886-1915); Jun 1909; 83, 498; American Periodicals
pg. 773

THE EVIDENCE

When she shed torrents of tears, she evidently had a cataract in her eye.

La Touche Hancock

AN APT ADVERTISEMENT

La Touche Hancock

Lippincott's Monthly Magazine (1886-1915); May 1909; 83, 497; American Periodicals
pg. 648

An Apt Advertisement

Boy wanted, who has fully rested himself, and is not too intellectual.

La Touche Hancock

THE MAIDEN'S CONFESSION

By La Touche Hancock

I met him—I must n't say where!
'T was—no! I 've forgotten the spot!
His name?—no, that would n't be fair!
I told him—I must n't say what!
We kissed—but I said I 'd not tell!
We vowed—but 't was quite *entre nous!*
And I 'm to be married to—well,
To some one—I must n't say who!

A Plea for "Vers de Societe."

BY LA TOUCHE HANCOCK.

A POET is born, not made. A writer of *vers de société* is bred. The phrase. *vers de société*. as literally translated, is misleading. There is no precise English equivalent. Society implies artificial life as opposed to natural life. *Vers de société* must be written by a poet, who is educated by the influence of society to produce it. He is not confined, by any means, to the topics of artificial life. Any subject of an exalted or trivial character may suggest a theme, but it must have, first and last, the elements of refinement. Such a poet must dwell and mix with the world. He must share the tastes he mirrors. He need not be exempt from the weaknesses he ridicules, but it is imperative that he be a man of the world, cultured and able to move in any circle of society. He should be an egotist; that is, his individuality should be pre-eminent, and he should not so much seek the Muse as let the Muse come to him.

Vers de société is extremely easy to write badly, and very difficult to write well. The creation may be a matter of hours, but the polish is the labor of days. Truth to tell, there are few minds playful enough to write light verse of this kind. The patience necessary for such a thoro execution as is needed is very rare. The labor is quite misproportioned to the lightness of the load and the seriousness of the result. This is probably the reason why hardly one recognized poet in this country tries to write *vers de société*. One may well ask, Where are your Praeds, your Calverleys, your Lockyers, your Dobsons, your Holmeses, your Pennells, your Leigh Hunts, your Carrolls, your Leighs, not to speak of a score of earlier writers in a similar vein? Honestly speaking, in the United States today there is not one native poet who is worthy to be classed as a writer of respectable *vers de société*.

In England, despite the ill-timed jeers and jibes at the British comic papers, the one man who has the right to be enrolled among the names mentioned is Owen Seaman, the editor of London *Punch*. His *vers de société* is quoted from one end of the United States to the other. In our own land we look in vain for those triplets, rondels and rondeaus, with their characteristic "gay wisdom." The playful tendencies of rhyme seem to be swallowed up by the terrible seriousness of money-making!

But what is *vers de société?* It may be said to rank next to the epical and lyrical art of an age, and will sometimes even excel it in its interpretative power. It is an expression of common sentiment and feeling in graceful and familiar rhyme. It excites no wonder, and apparently pleases without an effort. It is a dilettante conception. It is friendly persiflage; or, to put it into more colloquial language, it is "poking fun." It may be half melancholy, but even then should not excite more tears than a pocket handkerchief can absorb. If a bit of the serious side of life peeps out, it should be hidden as quickly as possible, with a laugh at the exposure. It is a play at bo-peep with the feelings.

In fine, *vers de société* is in a class by itself—a light, humorous talk, consisting of banter, of jets of wit and satire. It is a summer lightning produced by the collision of electrical natures. It is made up of studies, minute but delicate, drawn from every rank of society, and appealing to different tastes. It stands in the same relation to audiences in the salon as rag-time to admirers in the saloon. It is characteristic of gentle manners, without the seduction of cheap smartness and the ostentation of shabby gentility, which, as Lord Byron says somewhat emphatically, is "far worse than downright blackguardism!"

Further than this, it should have a veil over it dense enough to avert any risk of being styled preachy. It should have the sparkle and fizz of champagne, and never be flat. There is a constant danger of the poet falling into trivialities, but the smallest blemish takes off the whole value, like a flaw in a jewel. As finely wrought as a filagree, and as polished as a cameo, it should have under control wit, humor, irony (especially irony), satire, sentiment and sensibility. The writer of *vers de société* must not only possess all these qualifications, but also have the skill to use them in proportion and subordination to elegance. Brevity, buoyancy, frequent crisp and sparkling rhyme and delicious piquancy, are all necessary attributes. With these qualifications granted, you have *vers de société*.

It may well be asked, is it at all wonderful that poets of this sort are few and far between? Not wonderful, but regrettable. The specimens of verse published in the newspapers and magazines are anything but *vers de société*. The modern minor poet in the magazine strives to be as unintelligible as possible. He succeeds, apparently, in mystifying his editor, and certainly the public. The ephemeral bard, who is lucky enough to occupy a corner in the daily or Sunday newspaper, has but one object in view. He has an idea, which he wishes to spring on his readers at the end of his effort, and he gets to that idea as fast as he can, rushing, leaping and steeplechasing, and as often as not he lands safely with a "hoop-la!" a "gee-wizz!" or a "wow!" Variation in metre is poohpoohed, rimes are distinguishable by their infrequency, but — oh! ruinous phrase to art!—he "gets there just the same" and collects his few dollars at the end of the week. So far so bad, but it is deplorable to think that now and then from the balderdash a carefully polished verse stands out, which gives evidence of a right vein, and of a promise that will never be fulfilled, simply because, in the mad rush and hurry to be in advance of his neighbor, care and studied skill are thrown aside, and a latent talent is prostituted to an evident carelessness and negligence!

This is so much the more deplorable as there is absolutely no necessity for this rabid haste. Now and then, of course, a brilliant idea flashes on the brain and is instantly put in black and white. The inspiration may be carried out satisfactorily in a few minutes, but such things happen but occasionally.

Comparisons have a bad name, and in this case would be disastrous, but it is only necessary to recall any effort of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Locker, Calverley, Dobson, *et hoc genus omne*, to acknowledge the scathing truth that our minor poets are sadly deficient in nearly every attribute of *vers de société*. Do they curb fancy by truth, or speculation by sense? Are they capable of teaching any moral lesson in a light way? Is there one of them who would or could attempt to attain the perfection of society verse as is shown in the following examples:

"I recollect a nurse, called Ann,
Who carried me about the grass,
And one fine day a fine young man
Came up and kissed the pretty lass!
She did not make the least objection.
Said I, 'Aha!
When I get old, I'll tell mama!'
And that's my earliest recollection!"

To what can we compare for frankness, insouciance, airiness and ease this extract from one of Calverley's delicious flights?

"Love me, ah! or love me
Not, but be my bride!
Do not simply shove me
(So to speak) aside!
P'rhaps it would be dearly
Purchased at the price,
But a hundred yearly
Would be very nice!"

Then again, for a delicate touch of wit and playful tendency, can anything match these lines from "From a Nice Correspondent," by Frederick Locker:

"Today in my ride I've been crowning
The beacon; its magic still lures,
For there you discoursed about Browning,
That stupid old Browning of yours!
His vogue and his verve are alarming,
I'm anxious to give him his due,
But, Fred, he's not nearly so charming
A poet as you!"

On the common subjects of the day the persifleur is at his best. He will transform a nettle into a budding flower, and make you think there is inspiration in an ordinary brick. How often has, for instance, "tobacco" been rhymed to, and yet it remains for a master of *vers de société* to bring the whiff of the cigar to your nostrils, the tobacco smoke to your gratified senses. Listen:

"Sweet, when the morn is gray,
Sweet, when they've cleared away
Lunch; at the close of day
Possibly sweetest!"

Then, plunging into light caricature, he continues:

"Jones (who, I'm glad to say,
Asked leave of Mrs. J.)
Daily absorbs a clay
After his labors."

In their light play of fancy, as distinguished from imagination, these poets are noted for their distinction of rhyme. Even where this is not the case, the rhymes have a freshness about them which excuses their habitual use. In the following every rhyme is hackneyed, but not one that has not its evident excuse. As a lesson to those who vitiate the poetry of the present day it is useful and appropriate:

"Oh! if billows and pillows, and hours and flowers,
And all the brave rhymes of an elder day
Could be furl'd together this genial weather,
And carted or carried on "wafts" away,
Nor ever again trotted out, ah, me!
How much fewer volumes of verse there'd be!"

It is of little use to multiply quotations. The minor poets, who could give us dainty verses, don't or won't read what their masters wrote. There is evidence in their writing of a five-dollar bill hanging before their eyes and a rhyming dictionary lying at their side!

Lastly, it may be asked of what use is *vers de société? Cui bono?* Pasing over the sage formality and dishearteningly monitory dullness which some saturnine moralists are ever opposing to mirth and recreation, it may be said that all relaxation has its use. Even such light essays as these are a service to literature. Their study teaches versification and the use of words. They discipline the "sucking poet." He must subject himself to the powers and dictates of decency and human kindliness. Isaac D'Israeli says that the possession of genius is not always sufficient to impart that grace of amenity so essentially characteristic of verse consecrated to the amusement of society. That must be bred in the poet. It isn't born or made.

Vers de société should and does give a varied and vivid picture of cotemporary life and manners. It shows the sympathy between class and class, and at times exposes the standards of morality. It blends the sympathy of fellow hearts, and wreathes a gay and sweet nosegay from the soothing plant of humor. It must be clever to gain an audience. When the audience is once attracted, and the task is pronounced satisfactory, the author may well congratulate himself that not only is he acknowledged as a writer of *vers de société*, but also necessarily as a decent member of society!

STATEN ISLAND.

THE BROOKLYNITE'S FAREWELL.

I'M GOING to New York, my dears, kiss me, and say goodbye,
But, prithee, wipe away those tears, I would not have you cry!
I hope that I 'll be back to-night, if things don't go amiss,
Though one can never tell, of course, in such a town as this!
Some accidents upon the "El" will happen now and then,
But matters will be remedied, though goodness knows just when!
A block or two upon the Bridge I really do not mind,
Though I promise to be careful, if I see a
train behind!
The crossing at the Park, no doubt, is
scarcely safe to take,
With cars ahead and cars behind, and
others in their wake!
The office elevator has been overhauled
this week,
So there really is no danger, dears, at least
none, so to speak!
And, though I leave the office in the hours they call
"the rush,"
And certainly will have to bear the push and shove
and crush,
I 'll try and save myself quite whole to welcome
you to-night,
It is n't very probable, but still with care I might!
Goodbye, my dears, just one last kiss, you 're per-
fectly secured,
If any accident occurs, for I am well insured.
And, if the worst does happen, an action then
will lie.
Be sure to bring it, darlings, and get the cash —
goodbye!

La Touche Hancock.

The Only Valentine We Get

BY LA TOUCHE HANCOCK

WRITTEN ON RECEIVING THE USUAL NOTICE ON FEBRUARY 14.

Now swains their loving strains indite,
Or paint the sufferings they can't write!
Two bosoms burn with amorous fire,
Or else the youth and maid expire,
Transfixed with little Cupid's darts
In their dear pinky-colored hearts!
But you and I are past that age,
For we have long since turned the page,
When we were only twenty-one,
And used to worship Venus' son!
We don't expect a valentine!
We get a courteous "decline,"
Or else this trying intimation:
"Accepted—pay on publication"!

BROOKLYN, N. Y.

VADE MECUM OF THE CONDENSER.: SUN
LA TOUCHE HANCOCK.
Current Literature (1888-1912); Jan 1904; VOL. XXXVI, NO.1; American Periodicals
pg. 126

VADE MECUM OF THE CONDENSER. . LA TOUCHE HANCOCK. . .SUN

If you wish in the world to advance
In a literary sort of a way,
You must follow the fashion,
And bow to the passion
That's rife among authors to-day.
Get hold of an early romance,
As clever as clever can be,
Then boldly revise it,
That is, "bowdlerize" it,
And you'll jump to the top of the tree.

For example, take "Vanity Fair,"
And correct all the old-fashioned trash.
Then cut it, and slash it,
And modernly mash it,
Into some sort of feasible hash.
Then call it—that is, if you dare,
"Becky Sharp," or a similar name,
The matter's not vital,
But give it a title
Which shows that the book is the same!

With "Pickwick," and "Dombey and Son,"
Your course is as plain as can be.
There's nothing that suits
The latter like "Toots,"
While "Sam Weller" will do—with a "We!"
And when your condensing is done,
How much further you'll go who can tell?
You capture the glory
Of any old story,
Why not call yourself author as well?

THE COSEY CORNER

By La Touche Hancock

A LITTLE cosey corner in a little cosey flat,
With scimitars and Turkish pipes and every kind of hat;
With pictures, guns of various sorts, and bric-a-brac galore,
And a multi-colored carpet upon a polished floor;
Electric lights, rose-colored lamps, and everything in trim
To please her spouse's oft-expressed and comfortable whim.

He wore a quiet smile of joy, as peacefully he sat
In the little cosey corner in the little cosey flat.

"Of course, you know, you mustn't smoke, for it would be too bad
To spoil the lovely curtains, which were brought from Hyderabad;
No drinking either. You won't mind, for you are sure to spill
Your B. and S. upon the floor. You won't? Oh, yes, you will!
And off the sofa you'll take care, I hope, to keep your shoes.
Now, darling, these are little things I'm sure you can't refuse."

He wore a sickly smile of joy, but you'll be sure at that
He "blessed" the cosey corner in the little cosey flat.

THE WAY TO PROPOSE
La Tonche Hancock
Puck (1877-1918); Feb 12, 1896; 38, 988; American Periodicals
pg. 2

THE WAY TO PROPOSE.

TELL HER that she is like the moon,
(You mean that she will change as soon;)
Say, "dark would be the night without her,"
(In spite of satellites about her!)
Vow that she is just like a rose,
(A simile that always "goes",)
And praise her eyes and clustering locks,
(And find out all about her "stocks";)
Say that you court her for herself,
(But keep your eye upon the pelf!)
Quote all the poetry that you know,
(And bring in "love and Cupid's bow";)
"You never saw a waist so slender!"
(A ticklish subject—don't offend her!)
And, if she will not have you then,
Why—change your girl, and try again!

La Touche Hancock.

OUR FOOLISH CONTEMPORARIES: THE PITH OF THE PROGRAMME.

La Touche Hancock

Life (1883-1936); Dec 24, 1903; 42, 1104; American Periodicals
pg. 658

THE PITH OF THE PROGRAMME.

He searched the programme through and through,
And came across a joke or two.
It was an easy task to find
By whom the costumes were designed,
Who made the wigs, and who supplied
The drinking water, purified;
From whom the carpets were obtained,
And who the floor so nicely stained;
The exclusive piano used—nay, more,
He learned the name of every store
Which he had never known before.
"Patrons," he saw, "desired," "invited,"
"The management would be delighted."
And many other compliments,
Worthy anything from 50 cents;
And then—he came across at last
What he was searching for—the Cast!

—*La Touche Hancock, in New York Sun.*

The Literary Zoo

Is Reading Beneficial or Necessary to Writing?

"IS READING beneficial or necessary to writing?" There is apparently only one obvious answer. If there are no new ideas in the world, still old ideas can be clothed anew, and, as idea suggests idea, reading old books, at all events it would be thought, must be conducive to an expansion of the brain. The Irish "bull" was in existence several years B. C. Yet it is in evidence now in various different and peculiar forms. Surrounded by different circumstances, clothed in another dress, the same joke can be made to last centuries. Therefore it can be argued it is as well to dip into Joe Miller even as a benefit at all events to one's humorous inventions. So with fiction and more serious work.

Shirley Brooks, one of the old editors of London *Punch*, used to say that whenever he wanted an idea for an article he would invariably look through "Hayden's Dictionary of Dates." When Emerson was at a loss he would fall back on the Hindoo philosophy, which he called his "mental gymnasium." Rudyard Kipling has been found studying the dictionary for ideas, and so on. When the brain is dull and flaccid, surely some sort of reading will renew its vigor and be beneficial, if not necessary for a renewed attack with the pen. The very atmosphere of books has a somewhat similar effect on an author as the society of his fellow writers.

As a matter of fact, there is a varied and peculiar difference of opinion on the subject. Looking at the thesis seriously, and all the writers who have favored with their ideas have done so, there is a great deal more in the topic than appears at first sight.

The following symposium threshes out the subject pretty thoroughly. They are all well-known literary people, and are well able to speak for themselves. This they do in their own characteristic fashion.

Gertrude Atherton is emphatic and philosophic. She says: "Judicious reading is as much a part of one's education as mathematics or languages. All the reading one can do will not interfere with the workings of the creative faculty, and the sooner those who lack this faculty become atrophied from the pressure of too much mental accumulation the better. We have too many manufactured authors anyway."

Ella Wheeler Wilcox is of opinion that "originality of thought and expression are injured by much reading. Imagination, observation and meditation," she avers,

"bring inspiration. Constant reading brings only imitation."

There is, of course, a touch of humor in George Ade's views. He hasn't any definite opinion, he declares, as to the wisdom of keeping up a course of reading while doing a protracted job of writing. When a man gets to working on a job under pressure, he doesn't want to read anything except ball scores. Mr. Ade ends by remarking: "I think a little reading on the side would not hurt under any conditions, and, when a man is writing plays, it will help him to read from good modern plays every day in order to remind himself of the importance of keeping dialogue boiled down."

Owen Wister, on the other hand, ridicules the whole idea and contents himself with remarking that the question in itself is so humorous he can give it no adequate answer. *C'est tout!*

Robert W. Chambers says: "While reading no doubt aids one to understand the technique of writing, it is not usually the source of ideas. This is merely my opinion."

John Kendrick Bangs is explicit and illustrative in his exposition of the subject. This is what he has to say: "Just as human intercourse with a large variety of men is beneficial to a man's mind, so do I think reading is a great help to a writer, provided he reads the stimulating authors and does not waste his time on drivel. Association with men of high ideals is strengthening to character, and equally intellectual association through their books with great authors cannot help having an invigorating influence upon one's own literary style. To one who devotes himself to the literary life, reading, in my judgment, is necessary. To the many writers of one book growing out of their own experience, who write just for the fun of it, it is not necessary. In recent years a fair example of a book which fell short of the highest excellence in fiction because its author had not read enough of other people's work is Charles Major's *When Knighthood Was in Flower*. It was a story with a certain amount of grip, full of action, and teeming with human interest, and if it had been written by one who had been careful to acquaint himself with the manner of speech of the time it was presumed to paint it would have had a more permanent value. As it stands, it is a tale of the time of the Tudors presented in the very best Indianapolese, which, however vigorous and forceful and useful it may be in the expression of modern ideas, is hardly as adequate as English for the limning of a convincing picture of the days of Mary Tudor. A few years' devotion to the study of Thackeray by Mr. Major would have given to the novel an instrinsic worth commensurate to its popular success."

And finally Tudor Jenks winds up the symposium with the following: "I should

say that the best of all writing comes from life direct. But few writers can see life direct, and reading is the next best thing—the substitute. The conclusion from this would be that writers must, according to their opportunities, choose direct or indirect knowledge. Thoreau is an example of the direct, Charles Reade of the indirect. Both were able to open new worlds to the mind. It is a pity that writing has become a thing apart. It is as artificial as 'speechifying,' or after-dinner oratory. The only good writing is done for a purpose—as Shakespeare's work was done to please the audiences of the Globe. The ornament can safely be left to the craftsman's delight in his skill."

Thus the writers. They leave the question still in abeyance to a great degree. The question, or rather the answer, seems to be on the whole more or less a matter of disposition and temperament. Just as one author prefers perfect quiet when he feels the *cacoethes scribendi* upon him, so can another collect his thoughts with a barrel organ on the sidewalk grinding out popular airs. As W. S. Gilbert says: "It all depends!" Some one once said, "Put beeswax on your chair and remain there until ideas come," while the author across the way differed with him entirely and advised a walk in the town or country, where he could observe, and then work on his imagination.

When doctors disagree there is little hope. When writers are at variance there need be no anxiety. Perhaps it would be as well to wait for the coming—will he ever come?—great American novelist to settle the question whether reading is really beneficial and necessary to writing.

But whether it is or not, one thing is certain. Every author, in his heart, says with Bennoch:

I love my books! They are companions dear,
Sterling in worth, in friendship most sincere!
Here talk I with the wise in ages gone,
And with the nobly gifted of our own.
If love, joy, laughter, sorrow please my mind,
Love, joy, grief, laughter in my books I find!

La Touche Hancock.