

## AN EX-BRIGADIER.

BY S. B. ELLIOTT.

"KNOW General Stamper?" and the speaker looked at me with an expression of wonder in his eyes that amused me; then he smiled. "Know General Stamper—'old General Billy'? Of co'se I do. Where were you raised?"

"Not in Alabama," I answered.

"I thought as much," came with a ring of pity in the voice. "There's nobody in *this* State has to ask who is General Stamper."

We were standing outside the door of the only thing in Booker City that could be called a building—Booker City, that might have been described as a "wide place in the road."

Over the door of this building was the sign, "*G. W. S. Booker, General Merchant*"; a little lower down came a smaller sign, "Post-office." On either side the shop, and out behind it, stretched the unbroken pine-barren; in front the trees had been cut away, and the wheel tracks between the ragged stumps showed dimly the street of the future. Beyond the stumps came a ditch that cut through the sandy soil and deep into the red clay; across this ditch two old "cross-ties" made a bridge to the railway.

Across the railway there was a blacksmith's shed, and one or two shanties where some bloodless-looking people, with straight, clay-colored hair and vacant eyes, made shift to live. And this was Booker City.

The train had left me there ten minutes before this true story opens; my valise stood just inside the door of the shop; my overcoat was buttoned against the chill February wind. I had come straight through from New York, sent out by a great railway syndicate as a sort of private detective, to look into the merits of Booker City. By profession I am a civil engineer.

"We send you because you are a Southern man," my chief had said, "and will therefore understand the people and win their confidence. I want you to go down to this 'Booker City,' and see this 'General William Stamper.' Look the whole thing up incog; be anything you like, and draw for anything you may want. Here is a map of the city."

So I packed my portmanteau and start-

ed for Booker City. Arriving, I asked the only man I saw as to General Stamper, with the results given above.

"Where does General Stamper live?" I went on.

"Cross the railroad 'bout a mile. He owns moster this county; I own some, though. I own this store and down the railroad 'bout a mile; but our fam'lies were always friends, and me and General Stamper persuaded the railroad to have a station here. I've got Stamper in my name." This last was said proudly.

"And you got the station in order to make your land more valuable, I suppose?" in a mild tone.

My companion turned on me slowly. "Not exactly," he answered; "for it couldn't be made much more valuable"—putting a piece of tobacco in his mouth. "We've got coal and iron right back here in the hills, and a big syndicate behind us; we'll have five thousand people here by next month."

"Roosting on stumps," I asked, "and feeding on pine knots?"

"Maybe, and maybe not," he answered, quietly; "and maybe by that time you'll have money enough to come back and see."

"If not, will you have money enough to lend me a dollar or two?"

"I'll have it, you bet; but whether I'll lend it to *you* or not, that's another question; and yonder comes General Billy."

I looked in the direction indicated, and coming through the pines I saw a muddy old buggy, very much bent down on one side, and drawn by a gray mule; of course the harness was helped out with pieces of rope, and the slim, rascally looking negro boy who drove was ragged; so natural were these things to that kind of vehicle that I scarcely observed them; but the man pointed out as "General Billy" caught my attention instantly and firmly. When the buggy stopped I saw that his left arm and right leg were missing, but, in spite of that, he leaped out quite nimbly. He was a large, ruddy man, dressed in a baggy suit of gray jeans, with a soft black hat drawn well down on his head, and from under it some thin gray hair curled over his coat collar. His eyes were bright and deep set, and twinkled as merrily as if a third of him were not in

the grave. He swung himself along with great agility, and had a cheery voice.

"And how is the father of my country to-day?" he cried as he hopped into the shop. Then, balancing himself skilfully, he hit my friend Booker a pretty solid blow with his crutch. "George Washington Stamper Booker! By gad, man! if your name had done its duty it would have destroyed you long ago; every day I am expecting to hear that it has struck in and killed you. And your name?"—leaning on his crutches and eying me keenly. "You look very familiar somehow."

"Willoughby is my name," I answered.

"Willoughby? The devil! Kemper Willoughby?"

"John Kemper Willoughby," I amended, in some surprise.

"Oh, blast the John! Here, shake!" extending his one hand, that seemed to me to be marvellously small. "What kin are you to old Kemper Willoughby of Chilhowie?"

"Grandson."

"Bless my eyes, my *dear* boy!" and he wrung my hand painfully almost. "I wouldn't take a thousand dollars for this meeting; no, sir, not five thousand; no, not Booker City itself," throwing back his head with a ringing laugh.

It was a sweet laugh, and his voice had a tone in it that made me think of my father; his face was clean-shaven, too, like my father's, and his mouth and teeth and laugh reminded me of Joseph Jefferson.

"There was something in the cut of you," he went on, "and in the setting of your eyes, that took me back to some fig-trees in your grandfather's back yard. You looked as your father Kemper used to look when we were stealing figs—it was not really stealing, you know; only Mrs. Willoughby was saving the figs for something. God knows what women save things for, but they are always doing it. But you looked just like him—surprised, and amused, and a little disgusted with yourself. All the Willoughbys look alike—all cut out of the same piece of cloth. See here, General Washington Booker, look alive, and hand out the mail. I want to take the boy home," rattling on without drawing a breath. "Fifty years ago we were in those fig-trees. And your father?"

"I am the only one of the name left," I answered, briefly.

"Good heavens!"—taking up the one

letter that Booker laid on the counter—"only one, and there used to be such lots of them—Willoughbys world without end; only one left—only one!" and, leaning on his crutch, he looked at me sadly. "The war, I suppose?" he said.

"Yes."

"And at the last we went under, all for nothing; and now we must be patient, and say we were wrong, or, at the least, unwise, and forget those who lie under the sod! Never! And, by gad, sir, I'll make something out of them—something! Forget, sir? No, sir. There's too much of me under the sod—me, myself. I'll not forget. But come, my boy, we'll have some supper and a talk, and maybe some 'condensed corn,' ha! ha!—'will you have sugar in yourn?'—and I'll tell you about those figs your dear grandmother did not save. Ah, we had ladies and gentlemen in those days—ladies from afar. I have a little girl at home, God bless her! She keeps house for me. Come on: where are your traps? Here, look alive, you young imp!"—to the negro. "Get out, sir, and put this gentleman's bag in, and you hang on behind; and don't you dare to drop off, or to get hurt. Get in, my boy"—to me. Then, calling back: "Don't answer any telegrams without consulting me, Booker; not about your own land even. Do you hear?"

"All right, general."

"Now we are off," as with wonderful ease he got into the buggy. "You can drive, of course, and will not be afraid of a runaway," laughing. "Booker City has not made my fortune yet, so I drive a mule; but just wait a little bit—just wait. I will sell every stump and tree before long, and come out on top. Have you anything to invest?"

"No," I answered, leaning forward to thrash the old mule, and for the first time realizing my position—almost a spy! Well, I need not be; but how to get out of it? Write that I preferred not to report? That would kill Booker City as dead as Hector. Write what had come to me from the general's talk? Die the thought and the thinker! Besides, *what* had come to my knowledge? Nothing, really; but one thing was certain—I *could not* be his guest, and at the same time hold my present position. I thrashed the mule again, but a wave of the ears was the only answer; then the general turned to the back of the buggy.

"Get down, there, you miserable rascal!" he cried. "How dare you ride at ease, and let a gentleman exhaust himself on this beast! Get down, sir; yes, and be in a hurry." The riding at ease meant that Jupiter was hanging on to the back of the seat with his hands, while his feet were clinging to the springs of the vehicle.

He dropped off now as nimbly as a monkey, and picking up a stick as he ran, came abreast of the jogging mule very easily.

"Hi! hi! Git up, you w'ite debbil; git up!" he cried, prodding the mule as he ran. "Hi! hi! I'll make you know; I'll make you go; I'll poke you troo an' troo—hi! hi!"

"That's you, Jupiter," cried the general; "poke him lively. You'll be President of these United States yet—ha! ha! Get up now, quick, you lazy dog," as, with a grin that seemed to meet at the back of his head, Jupiter made a dash at the buggy, and swung himself into place once more. It was a wild race we were having then. The mule was cantering, with his ears backed, and his tail going round and round like a windmill.

"Negroes and mules were made for each other," the general said, as he pulled his hat on more firmly. "They understand each other in a way that can be explained only by affinity; and to see a negro on a mule is like hearing a mocking-bird sing on a moonlight night in summer—the 'eternal fitness' is satisfied."

While he talked we had come at a rattling pace through the pine woods, and now were moving more slowly along a red clay road, that, fringed with blackberry briars, ran narrow and deep between rail fences. Presently we began a long ascent, still between rail fences, and the mule settled down into a walk once more.

"We are nearing home now," the general went on, "and soon we'll see the ancestral roof-tree, which will be turned into a foundry shortly, I hope. I used to have some sentiment, sir, but poverty unscrews the spinal column of sentiment. I'll be hanged if I can stand living from hand to mouth here, where once I lived on the fat of the land. No, sir. I'll sell every stick of timber, and every foot of land, and throw in the malaria for nothing. I've starved long enough on 'befo' de wah' memories. I'm sick of it, and it is not wholesome. I want to take my child away from this African atmosphere.

Her blood and breeding will show anywhere, sir; and with a few shekels to put a halo around her head, why, she can do and be what she likes—God bless her! And I'll make those shekels; I have a few already. But just after the war, I'll give you my word, sir, I was an absolute beggar. I borrowed money, and went to Mexico—well, that is a story."

We had reached the brow of the hill by this, and half-way down the other side I saw an oasis in the red fields and a glimpse of a white house. A square white house it proved to be, with deep piazzas, and a long wing running back, and an old garden in front, with cedar-trees and flags, and woodbine on trellises; there were some oak-trees and locust-trees, all bare of leaves; and the fence and gate were on their last legs. I had seen innumerable places like it in the inland South, felt familiar with the gullied gravel-walk and the "corn shucks" door mat, even with the red clay footmarks that extended into the hall, and felt that I knew quite well the slim, fair-haired girl who greeted us with "How are you, pappy darling?" Then she stopped, looking at me frankly from a pair of handsome brown eyes.

"A friend of my youth, Agnes, my dear; a Willoughby of Chilhowie, where my happiest holidays were spent. Kemper Willoughby, his father, was my boyhood friend, and this afternoon I found him stranded in Booker City. I knew him by his eyes—good eyes. Shake hands; both hands, if you like. If he is true to his blood, you'll never find an honest gentleman."

So we shook hands, smiling the while, and I was glad of my blood when I looked in her eyes, and hated, without reason, my good chief in far-away New York.

A Willoughby of Chilhowie—poor old Chilhowie, lost in the war, and now great phosphate-works. The old name had a goodly sound to it, and the brown eyes took a reverent expression almost. Evidently she had heard stories of the old place and people. The rooms were carpetless—desolate expanses rather—but the fires were grand, and the few homely chairs were most comfortable. After a while we had a good country supper, then Agnes brought some tumblers and sugar, and Jupiter appeared with a kettle, that soon was singing on the fire, and the general hopped over to a cupboard in the

wall and brought out a black bottle. My case was full of cigars, but the general preferred his pipe.

"I got that pipe in Mexico," he said—"a long story."

"A disgraceful story, pappy," his daughter added, bringing her work-basket from a far table—"a story that will shock Mr. Willoughby." She was seated now, with the fire-light playing on her delicate features and fair hair, and as her little hands filled the battered old pipe, she looked up lovingly at the old man. "You must give Mr. Willoughby your pedigree before you tell that story."

"Oh, confound the pedigree! Willoughby *is* a gentleman, therefore he knows one under any disguise. Will you 'have sugar in yourn,' my dear boy, and the story of the pipe, or rather of the time when I got the pipe? It is the joy of my life—that time; it was life! And that old pipe was the beginning of the first comfort I had after the war. I had fought for four years in the cavalry, part of the time with Forrest. We were not what you would call a godly set, Agnes; but good fellows, who would die, or worse, would come near to lying, for a friend—brave fellows: God bless every man of them! We were a reckless set, and death meant nothing to us; but we lived, ye gods! Life since has seemed a faded rag. Well, I lost my leg first. I had a hand to hand scuffle for it, and I will not say how many I sent to their long homes—it hurts Agnes—but—well, my leg went; and not a year after, my arm. I killed the rascal who shot me in the arm. Then came the surrender"—his voice losing its cheery ring—"and I was fit to murder right and left. I could not stand it, or I thought I could not, and trundled off to Mexico. Beautiful country, my dear fellow, lovely, but the lowest down nation on the face of the earth to call themselves Christians, not morals enough in the whole nation to satisfy one respectable old-time dorky. I could not stand it, and determined to come home, no matter what was the state of the country. But how to get here. I had the whole kingdom of Texas to cross, and no money and no railways, and only half rations in the way of legs. I worked my way to the Rio Grande on a broken-down old mustang. About ten miles from the river I came to a Mexican jacal, and hesitated about going in, they are such treacherous

villains. But I was hungry, and pausing outside the door I heard a groan. Somebody in distress, I thought, and cocking my pistol, I pushed my way in. An Englishman lay there; he had passed me two days before, travelling across country with a party of Mexicans, but I had caught him up again, and at the last gasp. The place was empty, save for him, and a pot of tomalis steaming near the fire. I looked at the Englishman first, but he was dead. I had heard his last groan probably, and his murderers had been run off by my approach. His pockets were rifled of everything save this pipe—a good pipe in its day; meerschaum, you see, and had a fancy stem; but I prefer a joint or two of cane. I was glad of the tomalis; but I did not think it safe to linger, as I did not know the number of the Mexicans. My clothes and shoe were too ragged, however, to leave a dead man as well clothed as that Englishman was, so I helped myself to a part of his wardrobe. I had not been so well dressed in years, and I laughed a little at myself. 'You look as nice as a preacher,' I said. Then folding up my old clothes, I left them near the dead man, and taking some more extra tomalis, I left the house. 'As nice as a preacher,' the words came to me again: it had been a phrase in the army when a fellow was extra well dressed. 'As nice as a preacher?' Why not? Who had a better time than preachers? Why not be a preacher? I could not help laughing a little at the thought. Why not be a preacher for the time? And visions of fried chicken and hot biscuit came over my mind, and fiery steeds furnished by adoring flocks—why not? I laughed out loud as I jogged on in the darkness. A preacher? What kind? What kind? Out on the border that did not matter. As far as my experience in that country went, all one had to do was to swear one had had a call; then preach and eat. That was more than twenty years ago, you see. So I did not come to any decision, but left it all to chance.

"I was so much entertained by my thoughts that I was surprised when I found myself at the river. It was day-dawn, and, as luck would have it, I found some Mexicans with a boat just where I reached the bank. I seemed to strike terror into most of the party, and I shrewdly suspected that it was the Englishman's clothes that did it; most prob-

ably they had been among his murderers. Some ran away, but two remained, and agreed to put me across. Of course they thought I had money, but I kept my pistol lined on them, and when we reached the other bank, my pay was to jump ashore, and tell them in their own language that I was to meet a party of Americans there, and that they had better skip with my blessing and the old mustang. They did.

"I shall never forget my first day as a preacher. I thought of the character so much that at last I began to imagine myself one. I arranged sermons with the utmost facility, and all that I had ever learned of catechism and hymns and prayers came back to me. The day passed swiftly enough, although hopping along on crutches was such weary work that I began to think longingly of even my old mustang.

"About sundown I reached a settlement—a cattle ranch—but evidently not of the highest character. Yes, they would take me in. The woman of the house had a pathetic face, and looked at me searchingly, almost suspiciously.

"'I am a man of peace,' I said, in answer to her look, 'and I have lost my way.'

"'You look like a preacher,' one of the men said.

"I bowed my head.

"'I thought as much,' he went on, turning to the woman, whose face had brightened up.

"'I ain't seen a preacher in five years,' she said. 'Ain't you hungry?'

"'I am, indeed, my sister,' I said; 'as hungry as your spirit must be.'

"'Now you're shoutin'!' the man cried, slapping his leg. 'That's the way to talk it. I've heard 'em a hund'ed times; an' mammy would always come to me an' say, sof'ly, 'Go kill fo' chickens, Billy.' I'd know that talk anywhere. Golly! go kill something, 'Liza—a horse—the baby—anythin', an' call in all the fellers; bound to have somethin' to eat. Gosh! your stomach thinks your throat's cut, don't it, mister?'

"I was wild to laugh, by gad, sir! the rascal hit the nail so squarely on the head; but I answered quietly enough, 'I *would* like a little food,' adding, meekly, 'if you have anything to spare.'

"The man went out roaring with laughter, and the woman came close to me.

"'Did you ever marry anybody?' she asked.

"It gave me a sort of chill for a minute.

"'No,' I answered; 'I am not married.'

"'That ain't what I mean,' she said. 'Me an' Billy have changed rings, an' promised befo' the boys, an' mean it, too; but we ain't had no minister nor no magistrate, an' somehow I'd ruther have some words said. It's been three years gone now sence we changed rings.'

"'And you wish me to say a few words?' I asked, my compunctions fading as the woman's story went on.

"'Yes, if Billy's willin', but he don't like preachers much. He don't believe in 'em; but I do. I'll ask him,' and she went out.

"This was a position I had not counted on, for the official acts of the clergy had not occurred to me, and for a few moments I wished myself well out of the dilemma; but I must go on now, for to show these men that I was deceiving them might mean death. So while I waited I trumped up, or tried to trump up, the Episcopal marriage service; but something else would come instead, and looking into the matter afterward, I discovered it to be the catechism; but then I knew only that it would not serve my purposes, and I was still at sea when the woman returned.

"This time she was followed by several men, among them 'Billy.'

"'Come in, boys,' he cried; 'we're goin' to have a weddin', me an' 'Liza, an' that means a supper; don't it, 'Liza? An' to-morrer we'll have to loan Brother—What's your name, mister?'

"'Stiggins,' I answered, with a back glance at Mr. Weller.

"'Stiggins,' Billy repeated. 'We'll have to loan Brother Stiggins a horse. I tell you, boys, it's a good thing we've got somethin' to drink to-night, an' me an' 'Liza 'll change rings again.'

"It was a trying moment. To save my life I could not remember anything to begin with, and as the couple took their places in front of me I felt puzzled to death; but I *could* not fail, and I made a mad dash.

"'What is your name?' I asked, solemnly.

"'Billy Sprowle,' was answered promptly.

"'What is your name?'—to the woman.



“ ‘Liza Dobbs.’

“ ‘Who gave you that name?’ was the thing that seemed to come next, somehow, but I realized at once that it would not do, so determined on a common-sense question, and asked: ‘Are you both of one mind in this matter? Answer as you shall answer at the last great day!’ and I let my voice fall into profound depths.

“ ‘Yes,’ came from the couple; and from the subdued expression of the company I saw that my voice had impressed them. This encouraged me, and I made another grab among my memories.

“ ‘William, will you have this woman to be thy wedded wife, to have and to hold until death us do part?’ And the words tumbled out so glibly, once I got started, that I left the ‘us’ unchanged, and recklessly plighted my troth along with them. But they did not notice this, and Billy’s ‘Yes, sir,’ came like a shot. ‘Eliza, will you have this man to be thy wedded husband, to have and to hold until death us do part?’ I said once more.

“ ‘Yes.’

“ ‘Change rings,’ I went on, ‘and both of you say, “With this ring I thee wed, from this day forth for evermore.”’ They obeyed, Billy looking meeker and meeker as the service went on; then joining their hands, I looked at the company sternly, saying, ‘I pronounce William and Eliza Sprowle to be man and wife.’

“ ‘By this time lots more of the service had come to me, but somehow I could not bring myself to say it; it seemed to stick in my throat. But what I *had* said had made an immense impression. Every man there looked at me with something of awe in his eyes, and I heard one whisper, ‘A rale sho-’nuff preacher’; and the answer, ‘You bet; he crawls me.’

“ ‘The ceremony over, I sat down by the fire to wait for further developments, and the men stood about awkwardly. By this time, however, I felt quite in character, and said, in a mild tone, ‘Have you much of a settlement here?’

“ ‘Not much,’ the oldest man of the group answered, ‘an’ the nighest neighbors is ten miles off. It’s a right lone-some country.’

“ ‘Yes,’ I answered, ‘but good grass.’

“ ‘That’s so, an’ free. Billy Sprowle has made a right good thing of comin’ out here, him an’ these boys; I ain’t been here long.’

“ ‘Do the Mexicans trouble you much?’ I went on.

“ ‘Not as much as they’d like to.’ Then, with an effort, ‘Do you think killin’ a Mexican is any harm?’

“ ‘No,’ I answered, promptly, then cleared my throat slowly—‘no, not if they molest your property.’

“ ‘The man passed his hand over his face, looking at me curiously, while I gazed sadly into the fire. After a moment’s reflective scanning of me he drew nearer, and putting his hands in his pockets, stood looking down on me.

“ ‘You’ve got common-sense, mister,’ he said, ‘if you *are* a preacher, an’ you answered mighty lively at first ’bout killin’ Mexicans; you *know* they oughter be wiped off the face of the earth?’

“ ‘I gave him look for look. ‘My brother,’ I said, ‘I fought for four years in the war, and, as you see, half of me is in the grave. I don’t stand back on killing or on being killed when it is necessary. And I like hunting too,’ I went on, ‘but I don’t like to hunt buzzards.’

“ ‘Shake!’ he cried, holding out his hand; ‘that’s good ’bout buzzards; Mexicans an’ buzzards *is* one. Sakes-er-mussy!’—turning to the rest—‘that’s sense, boys, preacher or no preacher.’

“ ‘They all drew near after this, and sat down near the fire: they had fought too, and war stories were plenty, and before supper was over we were the firmest friends.

“ ‘Next morning, however, after the night’s reflection, Billy came to me, confidentially.

“ ‘Are you a sho-’nuff preacher?’ he said; ‘or did you jest put it up on the old girl? It won’t make no diffrunce to us boys, you know, an’ Liza’s done eased off ’bout bein’ married, an’ we won’t make her onressless by tellin’ her no better—but *are* you a preacher?’

“ ‘Why not?’ I asked, drawing myself up. ‘What have I done that a preacher should not do?’

“ ‘Oh, nothin’—nothin’!’ rather hurriedly; ‘only you’ve got so much horse-sense, an’ preachers, you know—’

“ ‘My brother,’ I said, gravely, and I laid my hand on his shoulder in a way that would have done credit to an archbishop, ‘you don’t understand; I got my sense before I was called to be a preacher; I was a man first, and then a preacher. Do you see?’

“‘You bet; an’ you’ll *always* be a man?’

“‘Always.’

“‘That’s good,’ heartily. ‘I’d like to hear you preach.’

“‘Well, those fellows could not do enough for me; they lent me a horse that was to be left at the next town; they rode a long way with me, and Billy gave me a Mexican dollar as a marriage fee. But poor ‘Liza, her gratitude was pathetic, and she brought her little child for me to bless. That got me, rather, but I gave him the best I had; it was the last blessing my dear old mother gave me; ‘The Lord bless and keep you, my boy, and bring you home at last,’ she had said. I gave it to the little fellow, and the mother cried. And I did not feel mean a bit for deceiving them, for I had done good. I had made that woman happy, and had raised the clergy in the estimation of these men. To tell you the truth, I felt myself a missionary.

“‘About sundown I reached a little town, a very small affair, and stopped at the largest house I saw, and the hardest-looking case I had ever seen came to the door. I asked if I could stop there; he said he would see, and went back into the house. Then a woman came—harder-looking than the man, if that were possible. I told her I was a man of peace, and wanted to spend the night; that I made a point of going to the houses of the best people in the town, because they would have the most influence, and could help me in my work. That woman’s face was like a flint when I began, but before the end of my speech the whole expression had changed.

“‘I ain’t no ‘Piscopal,’ she said, the defiance that had left her face still lingering in her voice.

“‘Of course not,’ I answered, glibly. ‘I take you to be a wash-foot Baptist.’

“‘How’d you know that?’ she cried.

“‘There’s a look in your face,’ I said.

“‘My soul an’ body! Come in,’ and she flung the door wide. She put me in a very decent room, and presently I heard wild shouting and a cannonade of sticks and stones. As I had distrusted both the man and the woman, I was startled for a second, but the screech of a chicken restored my equilibrium. ‘Fried chicken for the preacher,’ I said to myself, and determined that I must become accustomed to that side of the ministerial life—and a very good side too. In a marvellously short time I was called to supper.

“‘‘Is’pose you don’t mind havin’ a bate,’ the woman said; ‘so I jest killed a chicken, and knocked up a few biscuit.’

“‘I did have a little feeling that the chicken was scarcely dead, and that the biscuit had rather a jaundiced look; but I had been intimate with starvation too long to be fastidious, and I ate with a will; and as I remember it now, the coffee was not bad.

“‘‘Is you goin’ to have a meetin’?’ was the woman’s first question as I took my seat at table. ‘I ’member you said somethin’ ’bout your work, an’ we ‘ain’t had nothin’ but ‘Piscopal religion here for a long time.’

“‘And you don’t like it?’ I parried.

“‘No, I don’t; there ain’t no grit to it; I want my religion to have some sperrit; I’d ruther have a revival now than money; an’ the ‘Piscopals jest keep right along quiet an’ easy, an’ I ‘ain’t got no mo’ patience with ‘em. I’m tired.’

“‘Is there a clergyman here?’

“‘No; he’s dead. He come for his health, an’ worked, an’ died ‘bout a month ago; we ‘ain’t had nothin’ sence; but if you’re a Baptist preacher, there’s nothin’ henders why you can’t have a meetin’.’

“‘If you think so—’

“‘Yes, I *do* think so: you look like you kin preach.’

“‘Yes, I think I can.’

“‘Then I’ll send John out. John! I say, John!’

“‘The man who had opened the door for me came in.

“‘I want you to go round this town, John,’ she began, ‘an’ tell the folks that Brother— What’s your name?’

“‘Stiggins.’

“‘That Brother Stiggins will have a meetin’ to-morrer, startin’ right early.’

“‘John looked at me slowly, then said the one word, ‘Piscopal’

“‘No!’ and the woman looked as amiable as a sitting hen. ‘‘Ain’t you got *no* sense, John Blye? Did you *ever* see a ‘Piscopal look like him? He looks like he’s got grit. Go ‘long an’ tell Brother Williams to come over an’ help ‘range ‘bout it; go ‘long.’

“‘I must confess I felt rather queer as the combat thickened round me. After all, suppose I could not preach? And I said, mildly, ‘Is Brother Williams a good preacher?’

“‘No, he ain’t’—frankly; ‘but he’s a mighty good prayer. I’ve heard him

pray right along for a hour, an' it never seemed like he drew a breath. Yes, he's a mighty upliftin' prayer; he'll help you, don't you fret. Jest you preach, an' hit hard too, an' Brother Williams he'll raise all the hymns an' do the praying; an' he does line out hymns beautiful.'

"This made me more comfortable, and it was easy enough to arrange matters with Brother Williams, a small, red-headed man—a druggist—a fussy, nervous little creature, with a long red nose that he used as a speaking-trumpet. Very soon he and Sister Blye had arranged all the details; even the hymns were chosen, and nine o'clock the hour fixed on. I was awfully tired; but I chose my text, and dreamed out my sermon, for by morning the whole thing was in my mind—a grand thing, with enough fire and brimstone in it to destroy the universe. 'Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched'—that was my text. I tell you, Willoughby, I have often thought that I missed my vocation in not being a preacher. If you could hear me once, I believe you would be converted yourself. By Jove, sir! all the town was there the next morning, in a big place like a barn, which all creeds used in common. Brother Williams was there, and his nose looked longer and redder than before.

"We started them off with a hymn; then Brother Williams prayed: such a prayer! It was ridiculous, sir! I was dying to laugh. If you could have heard his instructions to the Almighty, and his fault-finding too: it was awful. But Sister Blye—the way in which she groaned and grunted over Brother Williams's presentation of the shortcomings of the Lord was edifying in the extreme. Then we had another hymn—a regular dynamite fuse; but nobody showed any signs of religion except Sister Blye. Then I began. I began quietly, but in the deepest voice I could muster. First, I gave a picture of heaven, quoting Milton copiously; but my audience was quiet under that, and I realized that they were in a coolly critical frame of mind. Further, I realized that I had no idea of heaven, or eternal bliss, or *anything* eternal for that matter. I could not conceive of eternal bliss, for the happiest moments of my life had been passed in battle. I tell you there's nothing like the rush and madness of a charge, and you know that is no vision of heaven. I think I failed in my descrip-

tion of heaven; so, according to my plan, I came down to this life. I knew that through and through, and I flayed humanity alive and rubbed salt in. Then they began to prick up their ears, and Sister Blye looked uneasy. I liked to see it, and a determination came over me to do a little good, if possible. And I believe I did. I gave them the devil for a good half-hour, straight from the shoulder. Then I dropped down to hell, and *then* I made the fur fly! I knew sin and remorse;" and the general's face grew grave, and he laid his hand on his daughter's shoulder. "Yes, I knew hell better than heaven; it came easy, and I drew it strong. In twenty minutes that place was like Bedlam. I have never heard or seen anything like it, and never want to again. Such howls and screams and shouting! I did not know what to do exactly, for nobody could hear me, so I stopped and sat down. Well, sir, little Williams, who had been lying flat on the floor, howling, hopped up as spry as a cricket, and lined out a hymn. It was the best thing he could have done; it served as a vent for the excitement, and they sang with a will. Then he prayed, and exhorted people to come up and be prayed for; in fact, he got up a first-class revival on top of my sermon; then he took up a collection, to pay my expenses, he said. I don't know how much was given him, but I think he and Sister Blye got a very good return for their labors; they gave me five dollars. I refused to preach any more that day, and told them I must go on. Well, sir, people followed me to the next town—followed to hear me preach again, they said. There was a real Baptist preacher there, a very good fellow, who kept a shoe shop. He was delighted with the thought of a revival; and he and Sister Blye and little Williams arranged the programme. I had caught on to their methods by this time, and determined to take up my own collections. I did the work, and was determined to get my pay. We were in that town three days, and every one of them field-days. You never saw the like; such a raging, tearing time I have never conceived of. But the funny part was that when the collecting time came, and I started out on my own hook, Sister Blye and Williams and the other preacher all dashed after me full tilt, and it was simply a race; but many refused to give to any one but me, which made me have



fewer compunctions about taking the money, for it showed me that they understood each other.

"By Jove, sir, at the end of three days everybody wanted to be baptized, and I nearly exploded when their own preacher told them that there was not enough water anywhere short of the Gulf to wash away their sins, but that he would do the best he could for them in the water-hole outside the town.

"I did not take any hand in that: the official acts I did not touch, nor did I ever pray in public; but I did not see any harm in telling them their sins, and in making them wish they had never been born because of the fright I put them in. It was pitiful. But I did good; I know I did good; and I made money. By this time I had learned all the tricks of the trade, and my brother preacher proposed that we should agree to work Texas for three months, I doing the preaching, and he doing everything else; that we should dismiss Sister Blye and Williams immediately, and divide the proceeds into two parts instead of four. That fellow—Stallings was his name—was something of a wag, and he told Williams and Sister Blye that we had entered into a partnership, and did not want them any more; that we had concluded to stop the circus business and teach religion.

"It was astonishing how much money we made after that, and how wonderfully successful we were. The papers took us up: 'Stallings and Stiggins,' and their grand revivals; their preaching and praying and singing, and the rest of it. We went from town to town in style, lived on the fat of the land, and had as many horses as we wanted. And I added a postscript to my sermons that any people who changed their creeds under stress of excitement were renegades and fools. I wish you could have seen Stallings's face the first time I tacked that on; but it took like wildfire. All the preachers in that town came to hear me, and thanked me for my sermons; and after that Stallings and I gave something always to every Protestant church in every town, with always the proviso that it was to go to the preacher's salary—that much extra. Well, that got out, and the effect was miraculous: money flowed in. Don't you see that I did good? Then the scoldings I gave! By gad, sir, they should have taken the skin off. Bless your heart, how

I went for the people for not doing their duty by the ministry! Why, Dante's lowest round was nothing to what I promised them if they did not do better.

"But the end of it all was wonderful. We were at a little town not far from the Louisiana line, and I was preaching fire and brimstone for dear life, when a face in the congregation caught my eye. It was the saddest face I had ever seen; past middle age, with sunken cheeks and silver hair. But it was the eyes that took hold of me—big, pitiful brown eyes that looked hunted and starved.

"After I had seen that face I could not preach anything but comfort and hope: I could not say anything hard to that woman. When I came out she was waiting at the door.

"'I want to speak to you,' she said, and took hold of my arm. 'You come from my part of the country—I know it by your voice—and you are a gentleman, if you are—' And she paused.

"'If I *am* an itinerant preacher,' I put in.

"'Yes; it does seem strange to me,' she answered, frankly; 'but you *are* a gentleman, and you come from the South Atlantic coast.'

"'Yes,' I admitted, beginning to feel thoroughly ashamed of my position; 'and is there anything I can do for you?'

"'I have come to you for help,' she answered, tremulously, 'because I seemed to recognize you in some way; and yet your name is not a coast name—Stiggins—I have never heard it.'

"'Outside of *Pickwick*,' I amended. 'But where do you live? Can I go home with you and talk to you?'

"'Just around the corner. We have one room. Yes, you can come: my daughter is there.'

"In five minutes we reached the room—a poor miserable little place, but absolutely clean—and sitting there sewing, a young girl, not more than eighteen. She looked up in surprise.

"'Mamma!' she said, and I seemed to hear my own little sister speaking, so familiar were the accents.

"'This is Mr. Stiggins, dear, the preacher; he comes from home, and will help us.' Then motioning me to a seat, she went on: 'My name is Vernon—one of the South Carolina Vernons, you know.'

"'And your maiden name?' I asked, rising in astonishment.

“ ‘Asheburton.’

“ ‘Marion Asheburton?’

“ ‘Yes,’ her eyes dilating with wonder.

“ ‘And a long time ago, when I was a little boy, you were engaged to Jack Stamper, and he died?’

“ ‘Yes—oh yes! Who *are* you?’

“ ‘Willie,’ I said—‘Willie Stamper, the little brother: don’t you remember?’

“ ‘How, then, is your name Stiggins?’ said the daughter, severely. But the mother asked no questions, needed no proofs; she simply fell on my neck, and cried as if her heart would break. You see she had gone back to her first love, and her first sorrow—had gone back to days when prosperity and luxury were the rule. Poor thing! poor thing! Then our stories came out—hers pitiful beyond compare; mine, that seemed to grow more vulgar and disgraceful as I told it. The telling of that story was an awful grind until the girl laughed—the sweetest laugh I had ever heard. God bless her! They were destitute—these Vernons—had moved to Texas, and the father had died, leaving the mother and child to struggle alone, poor things! When I met them they had not tasted food for twenty-four hours. I took charge of them at once, and sent them over to New Orleans to wait for me. I had a good deal of money by that time, but could not break my engagement with Stallings, and it lacked a month of being out. But I preached for all I was worth that last month, and tears and dollars came like rain; and at the last I had literally to run away from Stallings. He said we would make our fortunes if we staid together; but I explained to him that I was not so anxious about making money as I was about looking up some heathen I knew across the Mississippi. So we parted, and I left Texas with two hundred dollars in my pocket, besides what I had sent Mrs. Vernon.

“ ‘Well, we were married—the girl and I—and came home here to Alabama, where I have managed to live ever since. But I have never been as rich as I was when I was a preacher, for all my expenses were paid, I had horses to ride, I lived on the fat of the land, and had more clothes made for me by adoring sisters than ever since. It was a wonderful time. Agnes here thinks it was disgraceful, but she laughs sometimes when I tell the old story, just as her mother did. They are forgotten now, those happy-go-lucky old

days, and my little wife lived only a year—only a year.’”

The fire seemed to burn low as the old gentleman paused, and the girl laid her head on his shoulder.

“ ‘But I *have* lived,” and he drew a long sigh. “ ‘Yea, verily, life was worth living when I first set out; and the war’”—shaking his head—“ ‘I would not take anything for those years of excitement; by gad, sir, that was life, sure enough! And just after the war it was not so very bad; there was some novelty in being poor, just at first, before we learned to strive and grind; but now the grind is awful, perfectly awful! For everybody is grinding now, rich and poor, old and young. Rich people do not stop to enjoy, because they want more, and poor people cannot stop to enjoy, because they have nothing. We have lost the art of being satisfied—an art the South used to possess to a ruinous extent. We are losing the art of having fun, the art of enjoying simple things. We are learning to be avaricious, for now in the South position is coming to depend on money; so all grind along together; and I hate it.’”

“ ‘But when you sell Booker City, papa,” suggested the daughter, with an earnest faith in word and look, “then you will have enough?’”

The twinkle came back to the general’s eye, and he tossed off the last of his toddy with a wave of the hand.

“ ‘That is true, little girl—when I sell Booker City.’”

But I did not want to talk of Booker City, and the keen old fellow noticed it, and cocking his head on one side, he said,

“ ‘You don’t believe in Booker City?’”

“ ‘I don’t know anything about it,’” I answered; “ ‘but I believe in *you*.’”

“ ‘And you *may*, my boy’”—heartily; “ ‘and I tell you Booker City has a grand future.’”

I lifted my hand. “ ‘Don’t tell me,’” I said, “ ‘until I tell you.’” Then I blurted out my story. “ ‘Of course I will resign,’” I finished, “ ‘and they may send another man.’”

The general rubbed his chin. “ ‘Don’t be rash,’” he said. “ ‘Write your chief the whole story; let him recall you; let him come out himself if he likes. To resign because I happen to be a friend of your father is a ‘befo’ de wah’ sensitiveness which we cannot afford now. That fine

old sensitiveness! it was silly sometimes, but exquisite. We cannot afford it now, however; and by the time we can afford it we will have been made so tough in the grind for money that we will have lost the cuticle necessary to it. That is the reason it takes three generations to make a gentleman. For myself, I don't think he can be made under five or six. However, accepting the proposition, the first generation cannot afford to be a gentleman; the second generation might be able to afford it, but don't know how; the third generation can afford it, and maybe has learned the outward semblance, and so the saying has come. But to have all the 'ear-marks,' to have the thing come naturally, to have it so bred in the bone that a man can't help being a gentleman, and has hands and feet and ears all to match—that kind of thing takes five or six generations. And even after six generations I have seen the 'old Adam' crop out in broad thumbs or big ears.

"Now you have all the points, Wil-loughby, but you cannot afford that 'befo' de wah' sensitiveness. Don't resign, but tell your story, and give your honest impressions; for the first generation cannot afford even a comfortable lie; it requires 'a hundred earls' to let a man lie with impunity. Humanity is still too crude—all except the French and Africans—to put up with a lie, except under very extraordinary circumstances of success or position. So after you have seen Booker City, and have heard all my plans, then write; but don't resign because you happen to find a friend in me, and so may be suspected of collusion. If you

have no idea of collusion, don't be afraid of suspicion. Tell him that I am your friend; then, if he suspects you, he will send another fellow down; but if he has any sense he will not send to supersede *you*. If he does, why, you come over to my party—me and George Washington Stamper Booker"—laughing—"and by gad, sir, we'll work those fellows for all they are worth; we'll never let them rest until our fortunes are made, and Booker City is the London and Paris and New York and Chicago and Rome and Athens and everything else of the South all rolled into one, not to leave out Pittsburgh and Boston—yes, sir; and we'll invite your chief down, and we'll take him to drive with Jupiter and the mule, and tell him about those palmy days in Texas over a good hot toddy, and by Jove, sir, he'll be one of us in twenty-four hours. We'll make him build a memorial for Sister Blye, and save a corner lot for Stallings. Just let him dare to supersede you, and so help me over the fence if I am not such a friend to him as will make him wish he'd never been born. I have not forgotten how to preach, and I'll make that old Dives think he's reached an infinite prairie on an infinite August day and not a water-hole in sight; but don't you resign."

I took the general's advice; but it was a hard letter to write, and I am afraid it was a little stiff. But the general was right; I was not superseded, and in time my chief did take a drive with Jupiter and the mule, and heard the story of the Texas days told as no pen on earth can write it.

## THE EVOLUTION OF HUMOR.

BY PROFESSOR S. H. BUTCHER, LL.D.

**T**WO psychological facts have, more than any others, offered resistance to evolutionary theory, the sense of the sublime and the sense of the ludicrous; and of these the ludicrous in particular, to which I will now confine myself. How has this perception aided the survival of the fittest? In its developed form it is easy to see how it may ally itself with other faculties and become a factor in progress. But, according to strict Darwinian doctrine, it must have had a utilitarian value at each and every stage

of its growth; otherwise it could not have come into being. The difficulty therefore presents itself when we go back to its early beginnings, and seek to connect them with the rudimentary wants of primitive man. What was the use of the ludicrous in the struggle for existence? To the savage, life is earnest, roots are scarce, foes and reptiles are many. In Cooper's novels one reads of the noiseless laughter of the savage as he makes his way through the bush. He feels no inclination to awake tigers by peals of laugh-