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Shining lights of society

Bricktop

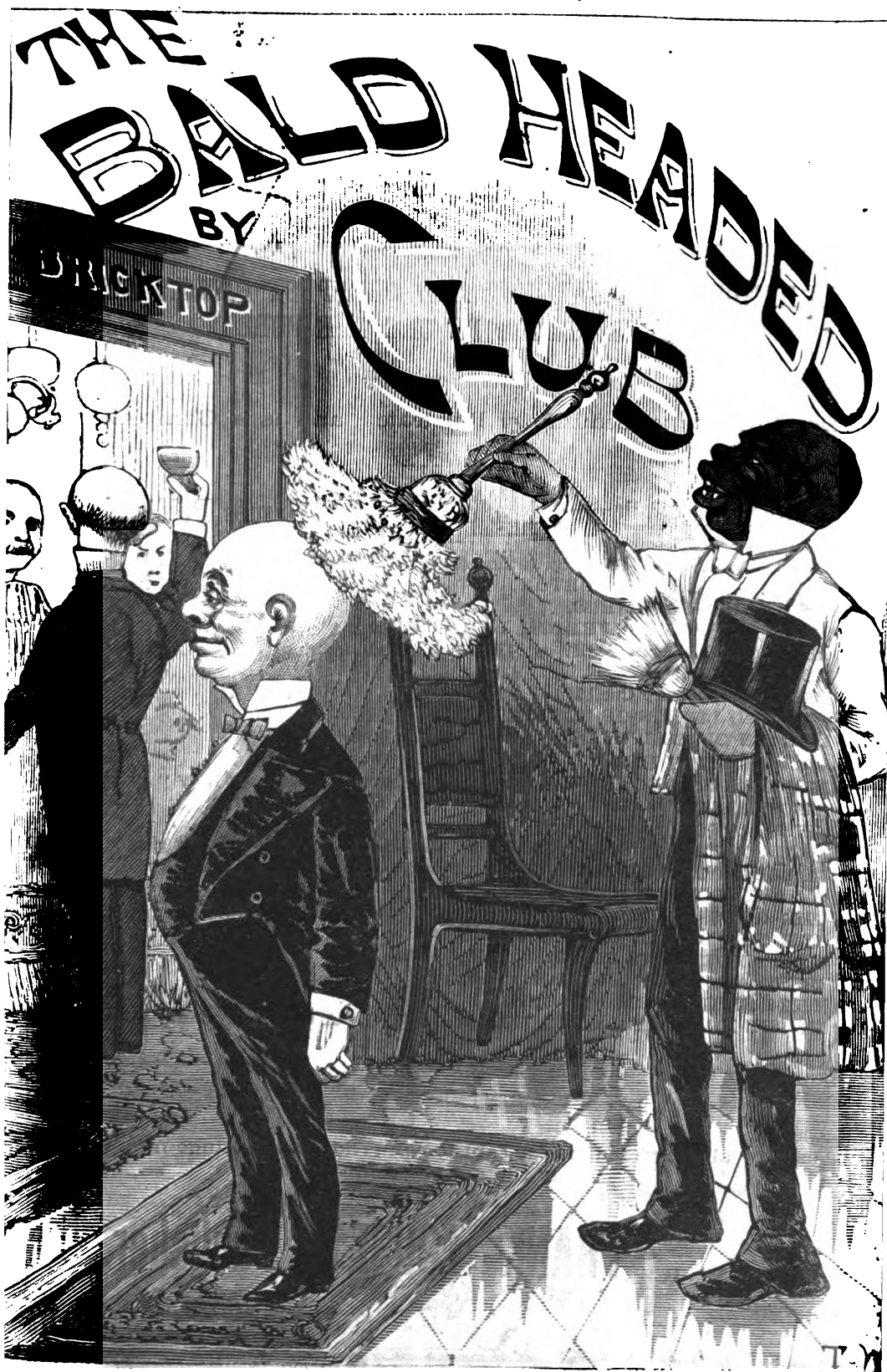
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Author of "A Quiet Fourth of July," "Red Hot," "Good Templars Exposed," "Going to the Country," "On a Jury," "My Wife's Mother," etc., etc.

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THE BALD-HEADED CLUB.

By "BRICKTOP."

*Author of "My Wife's Mother," "On a Jury," "Red Hot," "Good Templars Exposed,"
"A Quiet Fourth of July," "Going to the Country," Etc., Etc., Etc.*

CHAPTER I.

BALD heads have existed ever since Adam, and perhaps before Adam a long time; but the idea of a bald-headed club, an association of men, *sans capilleries*, was never thought of—at least history does not mention it—until a few uncovered brains conceived the idea of banding together for mutual protection and entertainment, the result being

THE BALD-HEADED CLUB,

of which Sir Tom Brown became president by virtue of his adaptability and the amount of exposed scalp.

Among the other members of the club, the names of Sir Dion Bossycolt, Sir William Birch, Sir Mamalia Buckhouse, Sir Ben Maginly, Sir Joseph Becker, Sir George Jones, Sir George Moses, Sir George Manson, Sir John Hoey, St. Sir Shed Shook, Sir Jack Adams, Sir John Peterson, Sir Thomas Pittman, Sir Dittenhoefer, Sir James Welsh, Sir Thomas Dunlap, Sir James Everhard, Sir Andrew Sheehan, Sir Edward Southy, Sir Roody Braddon, may be named, either with or without their permission.

And as the writer of this had outgrown his hair to a considerable extent, he was allowed to become a member of the club, and thereby hangs the following tale.

Tom Brown, the president, is fully entitled to the honor, not having a solitary hair above his shirt collar. But he is the proprietor of a celebrated "Hair Restorer," and of course is rich, and happy in the consciousness of having greatly benefited his fellow-beings, and he takes as much pains with his scalp as other people do with a fine head of hair, for he keeps it glistening like a well-kept billiard ball.

The other members of the club are either well known, or will be made so ere these records are finished.

Sir Joseph Howard, I forgot to mention, was chosen vice-president, to preside in the absence of the president, and that was very often.

I remember the first meeting after the organization. The best-looking person in the room called the meeting to order, and in an instant about fifty glistening pates were uncovered, increasing the light by the reflection of gas jets thereon, until the hall shone resplendent.

Somebody made a remark about their being the shining lights of society, but the joke was lost to everybody but the perpetrator.

"Gentlemen," began the organizer, "you all understand what the object of the meeting is, and having been requested to call you to order, I supplement that compliance by suggesting Sir Joseph Howard for temporary chairman."

A round of applause showed that this suggestion was a happy one, and Joseph did not prove so backward as did the one with Mrs. Potiphar. He took it.

"Gentlemen—brother Balds: We have come together this evening for mutual admiration and sympathy, and it is to be hoped that no spirit of envy will arise among those possessing a smaller portion of the womanish covering, known as hair, than others. We are popularly supposed to be men of brains, and hair should not make us proud, for it can be bought in any quantities at ridiculously low prices. Neither should those who wear wigs put on hairs. It has long been thought that we, the bald-headed men of New York; the men who are so easily distinguishable in theaters and other public places, should band together for social improvement and mutual protection; that so many shining marks should not revolve always in separate spheres, but band together into a milky way. We have come together for that purpose this evening, and now without giving the augur another turn, will you be good enough to indicate your pleasure?"

Sir John Webb perpendicularized himself.

"Mr. Chairman, I move that a committee of three be appointed to go around among the gang——"

"What!"

"The gang!" cried a dozen indignant voices.

"I beg pardon! Among the intellectual representatives of the bald-headed fraternity now present."

"Well, what?" asked somebody.

"Among the bald-headed gentlemen present, and find out which is the most bald-headist——"

"What?"

"Bald-headiest——"

"What? Say it slow."

"What I intended to say was——"

"Say it slow."

These remarks came from the assembly.

"What I intended to say was, I would have this committee go around among those present, and ascertain by actual observation which has the least hair on his head, and the one who is declared so blest shall be chosen president of the club."

"I would offer an amendment, Mr. Chairman," said Sir William Birch.

"Will the worthy bald give his amendment?"

"Instead of ascertaining by observation, I move that this committee ascertain by actual count who has the fewest hairs."

"No, no, Sir William wants the honor," cried several, during which confusion and laughter the original motion was put and carried, and the committee appointed.

Amid much merriment and dozens of comical suggestions from various quarters, this committee went around among those present, and finally selected Sir Thomas Brown for the office, it being plainly seen that he had no more hair on his head than there is on a glass bottle.

This decision was received with wild applause, during which the temporary chairman conducted the president elect to the chair, where he stood "blushing to the roots of his hair" while being greeted with an ovation.

"Gentlemen," said he, at length, "I can but thank you for this unexpected honor, for I regard it as not only a great personal compliment, but a tribute to that early piety that paved the way to this elevation."

"Hair—hair!" cried dozens of voices.

"Such remarks are hair-*owing*," said Sir George Manson.

"*Owing* to what?" asked Sir Washington Cook.

"Early piety, of course."

“Order—order!” suggested several balds, who were anxious to hear the continuation of the president’s speech.

“Gentlemen, I can see that my duties as presiding officer will be anything but light, however honorable, owing to the tendency to drop into punning which I see manifested. But I trust that severe laws will be enacted by the club to prevent these terrible missiles being let off in the club-room.” [Applause.]

“Yes, may the *clu-broom* sweep clean,” exclaimed Sir Joseph Howard, at which there was a general howl of derision, followed by cries of “order.”

“But, gentlemen and fellow balds, I congratulate you on the organization of the first bald-headed club in the history of the world. It is proposed to have weekly meetings, and we trust they will be strong in numbers and interest, and, above all, let us discountenance everything that partakes of wigs, toupees, and all such hypocrisy as unbecoming to the brain-power of which we boast.”

He said never a word about the sin of making the hair grow again by the use of his wonderful hair restorer, which he evidently had not tried himself.

“Gentlemen,” he continued, “we lay claim to much brains, and why not? Who, let me ask, are our greatest dramatists?”

“Bald-headed men!” was bawled.

“Who are our greatest editors and writers?”

“Bald-headed men!”

“Who are our greatest statesmen?”

“Bald-headed men!”

“Who are our most successful merchants?”

“Bald-headed men!”

“Who are our greatest artists?”

“Bald-headed men!”

“Who are our greatest lawyers?”

“Bald-headed men, though some of them wear wigs to prevent getting cold!”

“Who are our greatest reformers?”

“Bald-headed men—and women!”

“Finally, gentlemen, who are our greatest preachers?”

"*Ahra*—" there was a confused pause in the replies, and the different members of the club looked smilingly into each other's faces.

"Then it appears that bald-headed men take the lead in everything that is great and good, from selling whisky to reforming society. Let us not be proud, but at the same time make all we can out of the advantages which nature has bestowed upon us. It is not our fault that we are bald-headed any more than it is the fault of the rose because it is fragrant and beautiful."

Wild applause, because everybody appreciated the aptness of the simile.

This little speech put everybody in good humor with himself and his neighbor, after which the business of completing the organization of the club was proceeded with harmoniously, and before the expiration of two hours everything was gotten into ship shape, the decks cleared, and the *Bald-Headed Club* became a reality.

After this fact had become established, different members of the club (for they had all promised to sign their names) were called upon for little speeches or statements which might be edifying to the club, especially those facts relating to the history of the departure of their hair.

Brother Sir William Birch seemed to be uneasy, and so he was called upon to free his mind.

He seemed like a full moon rising from the ocean as he struggled slowly to his feet.

There was a "smoile" upon his extensive phiz as he balanced himself, addressed the chair, and glanced around upon the expectant brotherhood.

"Fellow balds!" he began. "I really don't know why I have been called upon to present my good points, unless it be that some curly-haired darling present wishes to know how I have preserved such a magnificent head of hair through all the vicissitudes I have passed. But perhaps there are others present, who, on the principle that greatness loves misery, or words to that effect, would like to know how I managed to achieve my *bald* greatness. The story of my great good fortune is quickly told. I loved a red-haired maiden."

Wild applause and much interest manifested.

"It was warm work, my friends, but exceedingly pleasant. I was then possessed of a fine head of hair, long, curly, luxuriant. But in a moment of absent-mindedness I made love to another girl; in fact, attempted the mod-

ern practice of having more than one string to my bow. This red-haired maiden caught me at it. *My hair never grew out again!*" he added, with a sigh.

Amid a convulsion of laughter, he sat down with the happy consciousness of having cleared up a mystery. And he smole a smile of happiness that was good to behold.

In this way the Bald-Headed Club came into existence.

At the next meeting a set of by-laws were adopted, including a statement of objects and governing regulations, and as the rules may be interesting, I give them, leaving out the preamble.

RULE 1.—No man shall become a member of this club who is not bald-headed, and not ashamed of it. N.B.—No children taken.

RULE 2.—No man who wears a wig, or who is continually trying "restoratives," in the hope of making his hair grow again, shall be eligible for membership.

RULE 3.—No man shall be held in good standing who is not willing to tell the club how he became bald, to the best of his knowledge and belief.

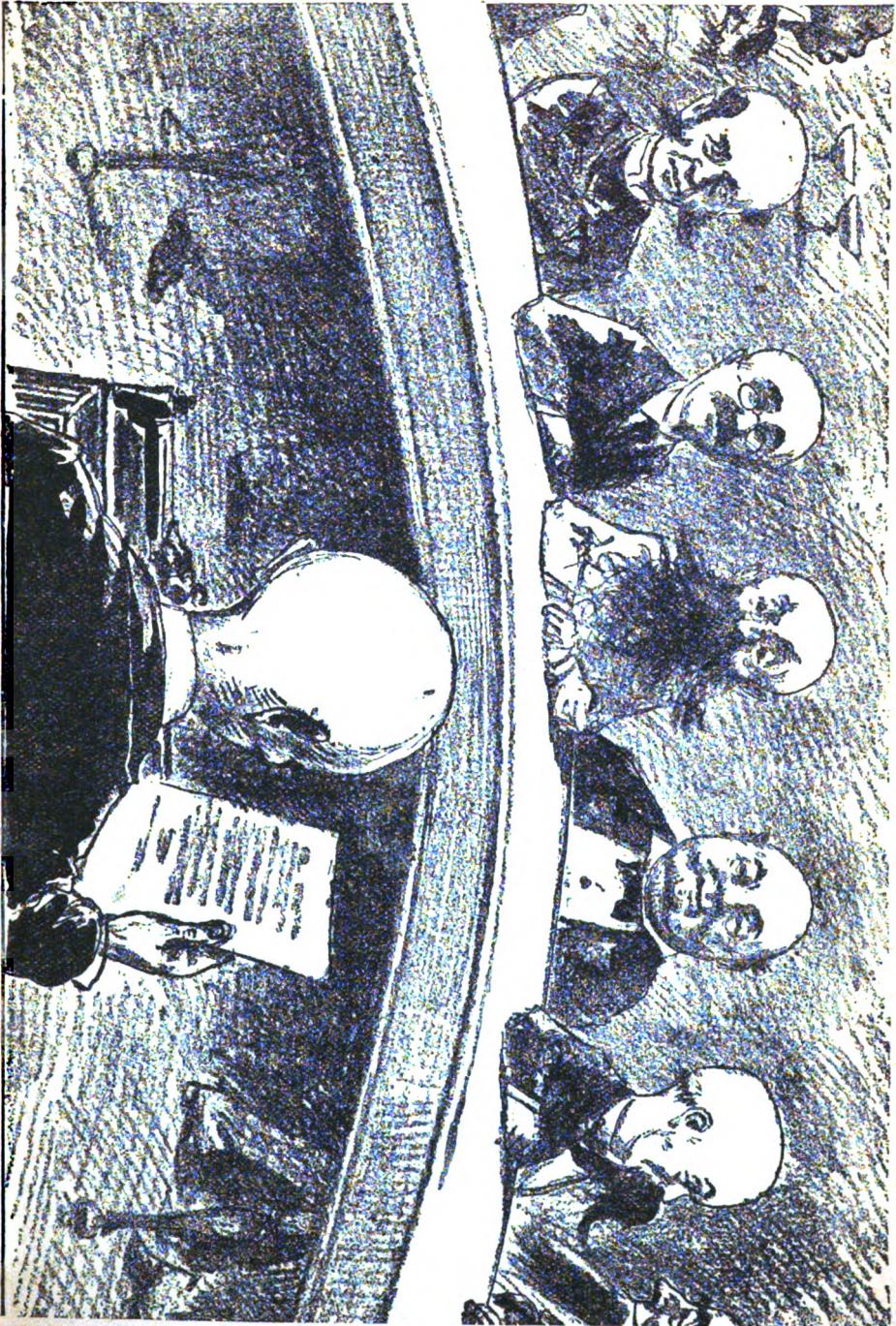
RULE 4.—It shall be regarded as a misdemeanor for any member of the club to acknowledge that he has a cold in the head, as we all hold that "brainy" men are always bald, and that the natural activity thereof would naturally prevent taking cold in the head.

RULE 5.—In order to nullify the deceptive effects of "the fringe of hair below the hat," it is agreed that every bald-headed member, wishing to ascertain if a man he may meet is also a member, shall raise his hat, and the answering signal shall be a corresponding raise, that both heads may be exposed. If a member shall refuse or neglect to so expose his head when so challenged he shall be expelled from the club.

RULE 6.—Any member showing his bald spot to a known member who does not respond in the same manner, said member shall be fined one dollar, which shall be covered into the treasury for the benefit of the club.

RULE 7.—The rules to be added to the present number shall not exceed one hundred in number, and we pledge our wives and sacred honors to see that these rules are honestly complied with.

Nobody objecting, these rules were declared adopted, and all hands put their names to them, and the social ship was completely launched.



They finally selected Sir Thomas Brown for the office, it being plainly seen that he had no more hair on his head than there is on a glass bottle.

The news of the organizing of such a club got into the papers as a general announcement, but it was an understood thing that no reporters should be admitted to their meetings, and that nothing which transpired at them should be given to any of these literary ghouls, so we rested happy in the belief that our more immediate relations would never know of the secrets which were there brought to light.

At the third meeting there was a full attendance, owing to the fact that it was understood that Sir Dion Bossycolt was to make a statement, and that Sir Judge Dittenhofer would also tell how it happened to be so with him.

CHAPTER II.

THE regular business of the meeting was first attended to, and then the members leaned back in a very natural sort of a way, leisurely partaking of the various "braces" which the colored steward (also bald-head, of course) had placed before them, and waited to hear from their renowned brother, Sir Dion Bossycolt, who was to make a "statement" for the edification of the club.

Sir Judge Dittenhofer was also there, and stood ready to come in second.

The renowned Sir Dion was evidently feeling in fine feather, and when called upon arose with smiling dignity, and was received with a round of applause.

"Brother Balds, allow me to suggest that this business is not proceeding right. We confided our faith in a committee who selected for our president the baldest-headed man, and I think that he should first be called upon to state how he happened to shoot up through his hair."

"The worthy brother will bear in mind that the president, on taking the chair, hinted at early piety as the cause," said the president.

"Ah, I am aware of that; the hint was given, but there are wild and tragic rumors afloat that it was caused by experimenting with a certain celebrated hair restorer, and I think it is due to the club that it be given a chance, if these rumors be true, to honor the self-sacrificing spirit of the man who will take such chances in the interest of uncovered scalps."

A wild burst of laughter greeted this, for it will be remembered that the president was the inventor and manufacturer of a hair restorer.

The president blushed like a baby, and struggled to his feet.

"The point is well taken, and at some future time the president will unfold."

"'Tis well!" was the response of the club.

"Will the renowned brother proceed?"

"He will—he will!"

"Well, gentlemen, brother balds, so long as our worthy president has agreed to expose himself at some future time, I see no reason why I should not waive my objections and come to the point at once," said Sir Dion.

A round of cheers rewarded him for his resolution.

"Brothers, I once had flowing locks."

A strange silence brooded over the club at this wonderful announcement.

"But a change came over the spirit of my dream. The spirit of poesy fell upon me. Thespia whispered in my ear, and Mercury said to me 'Go in!' I glanced around for a field of labor, and, boy that I was, I saw that the tree of dramatic literature was pining for the want of several grafts. A party by the name of Shakespeare had written a few tolerably fair plays, but people had begun to tire of them. I caught the divine afflatus, and produced a comedy in two hours that has holden the stage for thirty years, and is still superior to anything that Shakespeare ever wrote. You may call this 'Assurance,' and so it is, speaking in the London sense. I woke up the next morning after its production, and found myself famous, but my ambition was not satisfied. Nothing short of writing four times as many dramas and comedies as any other ten men had written would appease my literary flight, and even then I had to show the actors how to act them. Well, I kept on turning out one or two dramas per day, writing sometimes with both hands at once, and dictating to an amanuensis, who was working on a third drama. But it was terrible on the hair; in fact, it fell out so fast when I was at my work that my pen caught up the hairs, and as they clung to its nib, they soon transformed it into a swab, or marking-brush."

The members of the club looked into each other's faces with wild inquiry. Could this be true? Was this a bald-headed club or a "lying club?"

The worthy brother proceeded.

"But of course this could not last long, and at the completion of my one hundredth drama it ceased to fall out simply for want of supply. This, then, in short, is the secret of my Godlike dome. Brain-work made the scalp sc

hot that hair could not grow, and I take this opportunity of refuting the low scandal that has been traded in by venial critics who envied my greatness, that the loss of my capillaries is owing to my having two wives during my life-time, and not to excessive brain-work."

Cheers and other encouragements.

"And I also take this opportunity to refute the atrocious slander that I borrow or adapt other people's notions. I am original and never stole a line from any other author."

"What, never?"

"Well, hardly ever," said he, in a slightly lower tone of voice. "During my remarkable career, I have of course come upon many stories of some little value, and have polished them into gems of purest ray serene, but as for cribbing anything—never—never! What should we do for diamonds were it not for the lapidary's skill?"

"Hi—hi—hi!"

"What would have become of these literary rough diamonds had there been no Bossycolt?"

"Hi—hi—hi!"

"Thanks; I know I have the sympathy of bald-headed men, for they are always just and truthful, as well as brainy."

"Hi—hi—hi—*hi*!"

"Well, now that I have explained the cause of the baldness of this imperial dome of thought, and refuted a few of the slanders that envious critics have flung at me, I trust you will allow me to enumerate a few of the great dramas I have written."

"I trust the club will excuse the worthy brother," said Sir Thomas Dunlap. "He has entertained us right royally, and I think it will be asking too much of him to have him enumerate all of his works."

"Oh, I assure you it will not inconvenience me in the least. As some obscure writer has said: 'The labor we delight in physics pain.' So, if you please, I——"

"I insist upon it that it will be taxing the illustrious brother too much, and I move that we excuse him," said Dunlap.

"Second the motion," said Sir Andrew Sheehan, "for," he added, in lower tone, "life is short."

"But, my friends——" put in Bossycolt.

"Question—question!" was the general cry, amid which the illustrious bald-headed dramatist sat down.

The president arose to his feet.

"Brothers, you have heard the motion made and seconded. All those in favor of excusing the illustrious brother from enumerating the list of his successful dramas and comedies will manifest the same by saying 'Ay.'"

A tremendous response came forth.

"Contrary minded 'No.'"

There was only one response, and that came from the great dramatist himself.

"That settles it. The brother is excused. But I trust that he will regard it more as a compliment than a discourtesy, and feel that we have his interests at heart in not allowing him to fatigue himself. What is your loss, Brother Bossycolt, is our gain—no, what is our gain is your loss—no, that isn't it exactly, but there is some kind of a sentiment that might be slung in here with propriety, although I can't exactly get hold of it just now."

Strange as it may appear, the renowned dramatist couldn't exactly get the hang of the intended compliment either, and to this day he is in a quandary as to whether he was choked off or not. At all events he subsided for the time being, and is working up a comedy now, that shall embody the affair as one of its points.

Of course, if there had been any gorilla reporters present, they would instantly have been at work under flaming head-lines, writing up a prejudiced account of the affair, and attempting to make it out that that prolific dramatist had been directly snubbed. That was one object we had in keeping reporters from our meetings, that our little confidences might not get into the papers.

Well, after this had been satisfactorily arranged, the little judge, with a noble head, and almost hairless enough to be the president of the club, assumed the perpendicular at the call of several members.

"Mr. President, brother balds," he began, "the history of the rise and fall of my hair varies in many particulars from that of the illustrious brother who has preceded me. I never heard the voice of inspiration in my auricu-

lar appendages, and I never wrote a drama or a comedy in my life; I am, however, a victim of 'opinions.'"

This created interest and surprise.

"The opinions I refer to were those I have been obliged to deliver when upon the bench.

A prolonged "oh!" showed that the members of the club understood it.

"Yes, gentlemen, I am a living instance of a man's being made bald-headed by his own opinions. But, after all, I doubt sometimes whether or not the tremendous amount of legal chin which I have been obliged to listen to before these opinions were given, has not had something to do with it. I verily believe that two of our city lawyers when fully warmed up on a case they are both trying to win, will talk a buffalo robe bald in less than a week."

Hearty applause greeted him as he again took his seat. Then the president spoke:

"I have the pleasure to convey to you an invitation from worthy brother bald Sir Sheridan Shook, to partake of some wet goods at his expense. When we adjourn he will be pleased to meet us at the Union Place Hotel and see that we are properly 'balled off,' and all interesting vacuum filled."

Loud and animated applause.

"Mr. President, I wonder how a motion to adjourn would take now?" asked brother Ben Maginley.

A smacking of lips and a few pathetic "yum yums" from different parts of the club room told what the result of such a motion would be.

"I trust somebody will try the experiment," said Ed Southy.

"How much for first choice?" asked Jim Webb.

"Order, brother balds," put in the president. "I trust the members will confine themselves to the question, as it is a very important one. What is your pleasure, gentlemen?"

"Ahem!" This was from John Everhard.

"What would the worthy bald propose?" asked the president, looking at the brother who seemed so confused over what he had said.

"I—I—that is, I move we adjourn," said he, with more than an ordinary effort.

"I second the motion," said Sir Thomas Pittman.

"Gentlemen, it is moved and seconded that we now adjourn. As many as are in favor of will signify it by saying 'Ay.'"

The response would lead a person to believe that everything in the room had tongues and lungs.

"Contrary minded, 'No.'"

A solemn silence pervaded the hall.

"The motion prevails, but before we separate, I wish to announce that at our next meeting, your worthy president and vice-president will try to entertain you with true, unvarnished tales of how they attained their bald-headed greatness, but we trust there will be only a few members present, for we are both of us very modest and do not like notoriety. Shall we be favored?"

"You shall—you shall!"

"For this condescension much thanks. I have now the honor to promulgate that this meeting of the Bald Headed Club stands adjourned until one week from to-night, and may your walk have mercy on your soles!"

As the official gavel fell the members arose, and there was a hasty covering of bald heads, and a rush made for the Union Place Hotel, where the Right Honorable Sir Sheridan Shook proposed to add fresh nails to their coffins by the effervescing wine.

In fifteen minutes from the time of adjournment the members were all ranged in front of Tom Ryan's bar, and there was a row of delicate glasses strewn on top of it, indicating something decidedly "pourous" in the immediate future.

Finally, the report from the necks of bottles, highly charged with carbonic acid gas, rang through the room, and "the gang" stood up like little men, and lifted the "nectar."

"Gentlemen, we are under the 'Shed' of a man who never 'Shook' a friend in his life," said Sir Joseph Becker. "Long may he wave."

"Long—long—long!" was the response, and the clink of glasses that followed was something marvelous.

"Shook—Shook—Shook!"

"Balds, drink!" said the entertainer, displaying his "skating rink," and a "Hi—hi—hi!" greeted him as the toast went around, and the drink went down.

CHAPTER III.

THE next meeting was a very full one, for there was a general desire on the part of the club to hear the experiences of the president and vice-president, relative to what had caused the falling out of their hair, and left them in such a glistening state of baldness.

The president called the meeting to order, and the boss singer, Sir George Manson, started off with a song, chorus by "the gang," this being a favorite way they had of harmonizing each other before getting down to the sober business of the meeting.

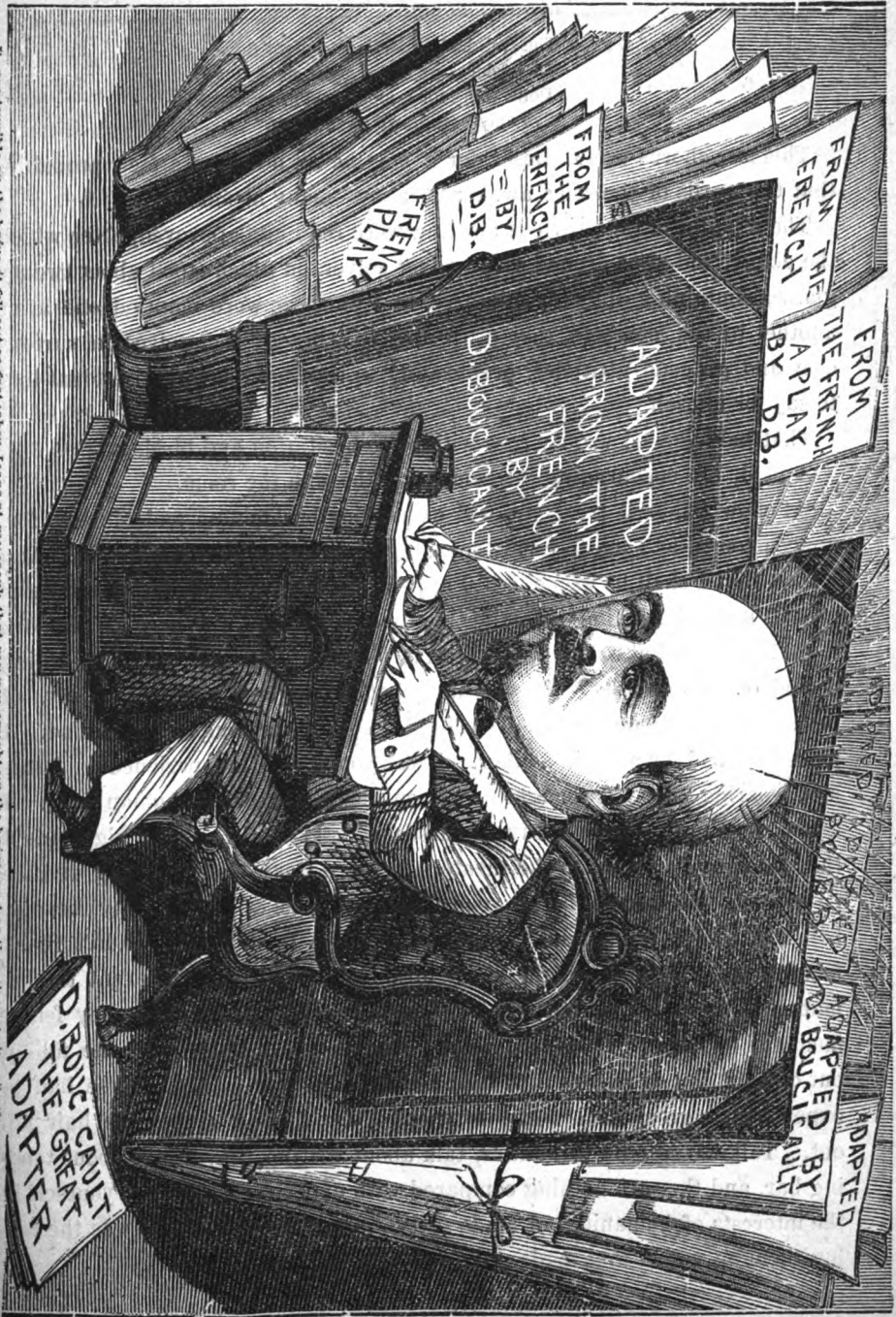
Last night I was out rather late—
 'Twas only an innocent spree—
 My wife for my coming did wait,
 When sleeping I thought she would be;
 I found her in temper and tears,
 "Oh!" she cried, "it's a sin and a shame,"
 And she scratched both my eyes and my ears,
 But I told her I would soon explain:

Chorus—"The 'Balds' had a meeting to-night, love,
 Of business we had a great sight, love,
 Don't think for a moment I'm tight love,
 I've only been down to the club."

My boots I left down in the hall,
 And softly I crept up the stairs,
 I kept rather close the wall,
 And thought to get in unawares;
 But just as I got to the door,
 I seemed to get lost in the dark,
 I stumbled and fell on the floor,
 And just then I could only remark:

"The Balds," etc.

She sobbed, and she wept, and she screamed,
 And said she'd go back to her ma,
 While I on the mantel-piece leaned,
 And tried to finish my cigar;
 I promised to buy her a dress,
 - If she'd let me alone for a while,
 Then I gave her a delicate kiss,
 And I saw her beginning to smile. So I thought it would be a favorable opportunity to get in some more of my fine work, and to assure her again that:



It was terrible on the hats; it fell out so fast when I was at my work that my pen caught up the hats, and as they clung to us now, they soon disappeared into a stove, or marling-brush.

Chorus—"The club had a meeting to-night, love,
Of business we had a great sight, love;
Don't think for a moment I'm tight, love,
I've only been down to the club."

This last chorus was a rouser, for it may be set down as a fact, probably, that the words of the song awakened many—many memories.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved, after which the ebony bald went around with a silver salver, on which stood about twenty glasses containing different mixtures, and as these were emptied one after another by the members, they proceeded to "brace" themselves in various easy and graceful attitudes, preparatory to hearing what the president had to say for himself.

That bald-headed worthy rose with some hesitation and blushes.

A bald, but encouraging "Ahem!" ran through the room.

"Fellow Balds: I trust you will excuse my bashfulness and blushes, for, unaccustomed as I am to public speaking, it is not to be wondered at. And I trust that I shall be excused if I appear a trifle personal, for, speaking of myself, it is almost impossible for me to be otherwise. Where I was born it matters not, but suffice it to say that I had no hair at that interesting period of my existence. I grew up—that is perhaps needless to say. I became gradually ambitious—I wanted to do something for mankind. I looked around for a field of labor. I was young and inexperienced. I saw men wearing wigs. I thought deeply on the falling out of human hair. I attended church, where I saw hundreds of bald heads. Sorry sight (as I then thought). I went to the theaters. There I saw the gleaming of bald pates, and felt grieved, being young, and my ideas of art, nobility, beauty, being of course crude, and I began to ponder; to think if I hadn't really found a field of labor worthy of my hire. If I could only prevent the human hair from falling out what a benefit I could confer upon my fellow men and women! I resolved to try, and not only to prevent the falling out of hair, but to restore it to bald heads. To do this I of course had to experiment a great deal. Ah, my friends, that's what makes the hair fall out. Talk about editorial duties, talk about writing plays, talk about tending bar, and they are nothing compared with experimenting upon yourself in the interests of humanity. I made several preparations, and it was the trying them on myself that made my hair come out."

Faint applause.

"But, gentlemen, I succeeded at last. Earnest patience is sure to be rewarded. I finally concocted a remedy that would make the hair grow on the baldest scalp. In fact, I raised a good crop on an old leather-covered trunk, so powerful are its operations. Why, I actually raised a good growth of blonde hair on a bald-headed monkey. Yes, it really makes not the slightest difference how old or how bald a person is, my lotion will revive and restore it in all its pristine glory. If any brother is desirous of possessing a sealskin overcoat, let him have a coat made of calfskin and bring it to me, and with one bottle of my lotion, I will raise a hairy coat of fur that has few if any equals in the market. No joke, gentlemen, no joke, I assure you. Neither is it an advertising job of mine, or an ordinary lie."

"That's so. It's no ordinary lie," said several, speaking among themselves.

"No, brother balds, for in that respect I regard myself as superior to Washington. He *could* not tell a lie; *I can*, but I won't. Now I trust that I have made myself thoroughly understood, and that the mystery which has hitherto hung like a halo around my bald head is a mystery no longer. Mental application did not do it, but an application of quite another kind."

The honest president accommodated himself to his official chair, and the members of the club drew breaths of relief. Some of them actually so far forgot themselves as to smile and wink.

Sir John Peterson bobbed up like a cork.

"Fellow balds, I move a vote of thanks to and confidence in our worthy president."

"I second the motion," said Sir Jim Webb.

The vice-president, Sir Joseph Howard, was of course the person to fill the gap and come to the front at this point, to save the president any blushes that might creep over his face if left to put the motion himself.

"Brother Balds, you have heard the appropriate motion for a vote of confidence in our modest and straightforward president, the modern, bald-headed Washington. Those favoring it will signify the same by saying 'Ay!'"

There was one grand enthuse, and several hats were swung or thrown into the air, and when he called for the sentiments indicative of a contrary

state of feeling there was not a sound; you might have heard a pin or a tin kettle drop.

The president arose, blushed, bowed, and sat down without saying a word. His feelings were, doubtless, overcome. But after a moment's hesitation he arose again.

"Brethren, we will now listen to the experience of our worthy vice-president, and trusting that he will make as good an impression as I was fortunately enabled to do, I call upon him to state his case."

The worthy vice arose and glanced lovingly through his glasses upon the sea of polls before him.

"Well," he began, with a slight stammering. "I sincerely trust that I shall be able to make as great a hit as our worthy president has made, but I fear that I shall be unable to stick so close to the truth. Besides, my life has not been filled with so many romantic and startling situations as his has. But, by your leaves, I will a plain, unvarnished tale deliver of my whole course of life, and what has united to glorify this polished knob. I was born young—born without hair, but nature appeared to want to experiment with me, and at last gave me a royal flush of hyperion curls. But after a few years she evidently became ashamed of herself, and gradually began to undo the mischief she had done. And yet I must admit that circumstances and conditions have had much to do with the uncovering. For instance, I have always been strictly temperate, virtuous, domestic, modest, patriotic, have kept regular hours; and I have always been true to my trusts, although I might, perhaps, say that *telling* may have taken off many of my locks—that is, the writing of 'telling' editorials. But, my friends, in spite of all this, in spite of what I have endured, this shell is not yet an 'M. T. Jugg,' by any manner of means."

Generous applause from all who remembered the *Star* in its golden age.

"In fact, nature and the claws of fate and fortune have conspired to produce the fine polish with which you have become so familiar.

"But, my friends, I must admit, and you probably all know it by this time, that among the unæsthetic we are not only not appreciated, but baldness is a positive drawback, and a trig to our social advancement.

"I remember a funny incident that illustrates the point. It happened to me while on the road from New York to New Haven. I found myself seated

opposite to a couple of charming young ladies, whom I had often met before on the street, and been introduced to once or twice. They were really beautiful, and, as a natural consequence, I was especially taken with my seat and the occupants of the seat opposite. I proceeded to make myself agreeable by first speaking to them, and reminding them of the time when we were introduced, by whom and where; and after mentioning a few mutual friends, whom my good memory served me with, we became very good traveling companions at least.

“I was charmed, and proceeded to become poetic and agreeable, and after an artistic ‘buzz’ of about half an hour, I fancied they had become somewhat interested in me. In fact, I regarded it as a ‘mash’ of the first magnitude. We dliated upon the weather, the crops, the delightful country scenery, the peculiarities of our friends, and everything seemed exceedingly lovely.

“Finally, they assured me that they had a number of friends on the train, as they believed, and if I would only excuse them for a few moments, they would go through the train and speak with them, after which they would return to their seats and my delightful company again. Meantime they requested me to keep my eye on their bags and bundles. I believe there were not more than fifteen or twenty of these between them, and, of course, I promised to see that none of them got away, and so they started through the car to find their friends.

“Now, I suppose it is no news to you that I am a newspaper man; and that my duties often keep me out late at night. It so happened that I had been up nearly all of the two previous nights, and as a natural consequence I was feeling somewhat sleepy. Left alone by myself it is but natural that I should begin to doze. I looked at the bags and bundles, and seeing no disposition on their part to fly out of the window or put themselves in other people's hands, and knowing from long experience what a time it took for young ladies to get through with what they might have to say, even if they had only parted with each other an hour before, I concluded that I had ample time for a nap, and leaning my head back upon the seat, I was not long in making connection with the sleepy god.

“It may not have been just the right thing to do; not the proper caper, situated as I was, but I was very sleepy and concluded to make the most of

the little time I had on hand and let the bags and bundles watch themselves, or me, I didn't care which.

"And as though my natural gallantry refused to desert me even in my sleep, I dreamed of the two charming creatures whose personal property I had been appointed the guardian of, and with one of whom I had become so especially sweet that in my dreams I was on the point of proposing to her, when a little double shriek near by aroused me.

"I glanced up. There stood the two beauties, pictures of astonishment and alarm.

"'Ah, ladies,' said I, 'glad you have returned. Delighted to——'

"'Oh, you old bald-headed reprobate!' said one of them, while the other held up her hands and put in 'oh—oh!' several times, as though punctuating something for an editorial paragraph.

"'Ladies, P—I beg pardon,' I stammered, for just then I discovered that during my somnolency I had dropped my hat from my head, and my glistening bald pate was showing in all its effulgence.

"'Oh—oh! we thought you were a young man, but you are evidently a grandpap.'

"'But, my dear young ladies, I——'

"It was no use. They gathered up their bags and bundles, refusing to listen to either reason or explanation, and started for the car where their friends were. Of course they were young and their tastes were uneducated, but this only goes to show, my friends, that the paths of bald-heads are not always strewn with tuberose and honeysuckles, on account of which I invite you all to take something with me."

That invitation was accepted.

CHAPTER IV.

So enthusiastic were the members of the club to accept the invitation of Sir Joseph Howard, that an adjournment was effected before any announcement was made as to who should be the entertainers at the next meeting.

Consequently there was hardly so large an attendance as usual, although there was a goodly company gathered together. Brains enough, in fact, to run the whole nation.

The president being absent, on account of having a cold in his head, the vice-president, Sir Joe Howard, occupied the chair.

After the routine business had been disposed of, remarks by the chair were in order.

"I am extremely sorry, as you all are, doubtless, to learn that our worthy president has a cold in his head. Figuratively speaking, the club itself gives forth a wheezy sound and talks through its nose. This, of course, is anything but dignified, therefore we mourn."

"It seems to me that the club is not now talking through its nose to any great extent," said Sir William Birch.

"Ah, the worthy bald will please remember that I said that the club was *figuratively* talking through its nasal organ."

"Figures of speech are all very nice, but they don't *foot* up well."

"Well, there is something to 'boot' in the subject, at all events."

"Oh, hush!" from a dozen voices.

"But, to continue, we are undoubtedly sorry for the cold existing in the club's head. Some folks may think that having a cold in the head is nothing to be sneezed at, but I assure that it *is*, more especially when a club has it bad. I think that, perhaps, it might be well for the club to pass resolutions of condolence, and transmit them to his afflicted landlady."

"With all due deference to the chair, I would suggest that a bottle of hot drops might be much more appropriate," said the worthy bald, Sir George Moses.

This proposition seemed to take, and Sir George reduced it to a motion, which, being duly seconded, was put and carried without an opposing voice.

"The motion having prevailed, the chair will appoint the mover and seconder of the motion a committee of two to procure a bottle of hot drops and deliver it to our suffering president, and assist in administering it to him."

A hearty laugh greeted this announcement, and the rather crestfallen balds started forth on their errand.

"Now as there is no regular programme for our entertainment, I suggest that we hear what our worthy bald brother, Frank Casey, has to say for himself," said the chair.

"Good—good!" was the general response.

"Brother Casey, you see what the feeling is, what have you to say in reply?"

Brother Casey popped up like a cork out of the water, but he was so diminutive that no one a few seats back could see him.

"Get a step-ladder!"

"Stand up in your chair!"

"Go to the platform!" and other cries greeted him the moment he commenced to speak.

"You are too short."

"Not a-tall."

"Love me little."

"No, love you long," the chaffing went on.

"Will our worthy brother who is seated next the count, make himself of more account by taking the rostrum?" asked the chair.

"I don't want any rostrum, hot rum's good enough for me," replied Casey. "But the little I have to say in response to the call can as well be said here as up in the chandelier."

He attempted to proceed, but the call became so loud and urgent that he was obliged to go upon the platform. The explanation being, that he is a remarkably small man, not much over four feet high, and weighing about one hundred pounds. But his head is very bald, and altogether he's a very pleasant, even comical fellow.

A round of applause and laughter greeted him as he took his station near the president's chair, acknowledging which, he proceeded:

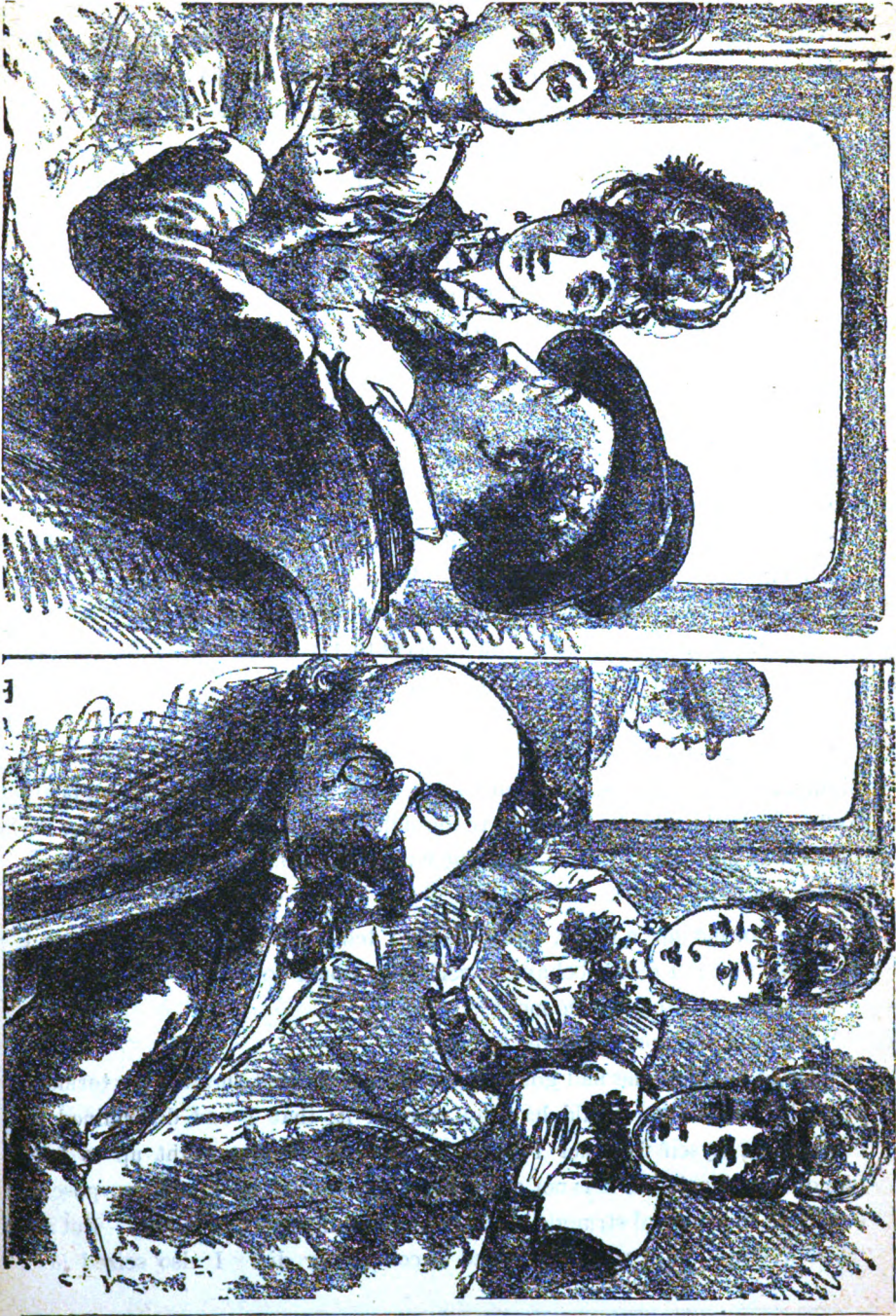
"Fellow Balds, I hardly understand why I, the smallest of you all, should be called upon to furnish you amusement," said he, in a piping voice.

"Ah! *not a—muse—meant*, unless you are a poet," said the chair, at which the members of the club shook each other by the hand, tacitly acknowledging that it was the best pun ever made.

"I don't like to have such things flung at me, for being unaccustomed to public speaking, I am easily confused and broken up. Besides, my narration will be so tragic and mournful that anything in the shape or spirit of levity will seem entirely out of place."

"Perhaps we had better have a hymn sung before he commences to bring us all en rapport with each other," suggested Sir Brother Ed Southy.

"Oh, you old bald-headed reproach!" said one of them, while the other held up her hands and put in "oh—oh!" several times, as though punctuating something for an editorial paragraph.



"Yes—yes—yes," responded many, and in spite of all the rappings of the chair, they actually struck up "Old Hundred" with fine feeling.

Casey stood while it was being sung, and at its conclusion, proceeded with his story.

"Thank you, brothers, thank you. That nerves me to the task," said he, bowing.

"Of course I understand that any remarks that I might make would fall heavily upon your ears, unless I confined myself to speaking of the causes which have made me bald-headed! Brothers, I can sum it up in a very short sentence. I am the victim of a mother-in-law."

A sad—sad wail swept like the sigh of the autumn wind through the room, showing that poor Casey was not alone in his household woe.

"Yes, I have a mother-in-law. Shall I proceed further, or is this simple announcement enough?"

"No—no, work it up and give us the horrible particulars," said Jim Webb.

"Well, I presume I shall receive all the more sympathy if I illustrate the affair. As I said before, I have a mother-in-law. She is healthy. She is strengthly. She loves me not. She objects to my being out nights; to my being even a member of the Bald-headed Club."

"Shame—shame!"

"She took my night-key away from me, and ordered me to stay at home nights. I objected, and she went for me. She has a tongue that appears to flap at both ends, and hang in the middle. She first began by telling me that I was married. I thought I knew that, but she made it a point to reassure me of it.

"She got me into a chair, and began to tell me what a sinful wretch I was, and that if I didn't behave myself there would be trouble in the family.

"She aroused the lion in me."

"Bully for the lion!" shouted several.

"I told her that she had got to leave my house; that she was the torment of my life, and that I would have no more of it; that I had determined to emancipate myself from her rule, and ended by bracing right up to her. She did not flinch. She is not a flincher. She seized me for the purpose of engaging in a mortal struggle, or a Græco-Roman wrestling match. But my blood was up, and I was determined to conquer or die. I also seized her.

The struggle was hefty. Backwards and forwards, around and around we went, striving for the mastery. If I had possessed the hair that I boasted of before she came to live with me, she would most likely have seized me by those locks. But, as I was saying, we struggled. We struggled heartily. We went for each other's gore. But fortune favors the brave. I managed to force her back into a chair, and to place myself at right angles with her lap, and to hold her in that position, while she vented her spleen—her paralyzed spleen—by taking her slipper from her foot and childishly belaboring me with it, upon that portion of my anatomy which it takes the largest amount of cloth to cover. I could but laugh at this venting of her foolish spleen, and allowed her to keep on until she become exhausted, although, mind you, I did not give her a chance to escape from the chair into which I was holding her with my might and weight. But presently she stopped from sheer exhaustion, and after recuperating for a moment, she threw me upon the floor. Of course, I was not prepared for such a sudden manifestation of physical strength, and before I could recover myself, she had placed one of her big feet up on me, and struck an attitude.

“ ‘Do you weaken?’ she yelled.

“ ‘I weaken,’ said I, but it must be borne in mind that I recognized the fact that I had my hand in the lion's mouth, and was trying to get it out as easily as possible. I also felt certain that my hour of triumph was near at hand, for the lion was aroused within me; war was in actual existence, and I was bound to crush her. All I wanted was a little more time and a better opportunity. But after she found out how resolute I was, that I actually dared to force her into a chair and hold her there, she behaved herself better, and we did not meet so often. In fact, she rather appeared to avoid me, as though she dreaded what I might be provoked into doing.

“ ‘And being of a very forgiving nature myself, I finally began to treat her as one of the family again. But no sooner did she see that the roused lion had lowered his mane than she began to jaw and badger me as before. I tried to keep my temper and expostulate with her.

“ ‘What is that, sir?’ she replied to my soft and friendly words, ‘do you dare to argue with me? Do you dare to talk back to me? If you are not careful, I will take you over my knee again, just as I did the other day!’

“ ‘Did you ever in the whole course of your experience, Brother Balds, did

you ever hear of such cheek? Actually trying to make it out that she got me over her knee and spanked me!"

The members agreed that it was a piece of assurance on her part.

"Well," continued Casey, "I love peace in my family so well that I concluded to let her have her own way, and see if it would improve her any. But it did not. In fact, it only seemed to make her all the worse. Thought I was afraid of her. See? And so I was obliged, in order to maintain my dignity, to put on the brake again. I said to her: 'Madame, you disturb the peace of my family, and I want you to quit my house. Your everlasting gab will drive me crazy, as it has already driven me bald-headed.'

"She tried to singe the little hair I have left with a red-hot sneer.

"'You had best be careful,' said she. 'The idea of my talking everlastingly! Why, I don't speak once an hour, and if you are around it is utterly impossible for me to get in a word edgewise. And as for your baldness, that comes from dissipation and late hours, sir, and you have only yourself to thank. Pity you hadn't remained at home with your wife and mother-in-law, and listened to their conversation instead of going off to those nasty clubs; it would have been much better for you, and your hair would have been as good as ever it was; put that in your pipe and smoke it.'

"Well," he continued, "my good nature and love of peace has kept me in check ever since, for rather than have a row in the family and again be obliged to force my mother-in-law into a chair and throw myself upon her lap to keep her down, and allow her to think she was spanking me, I have made up my mind to let her have her own way, hoping that she will eventually talk herself to death. But you can now perceive the cause of my baldness, and why this extensive 'skating rink' ornaments my roof. Unlike the majority of bald-headed men, I do not attribute my baldness to an excessive stock of brains. It comes solely from too much mother-in-law."

Casey wiped away a tear and walked back to his seat, while a groan went up which again told how many of the members were either in the same box, or understood the situation well enough to sympathize with him.

"Brother Balds, I take it for granted," spoke the chair, "that you have been highly entertained by the pathetic recital of our worthy brother, and I may as well take it for granted while I am about it, that few if any of you will acknowledge as much as he has done, because of the popularity

connected with the general excuse for baldness—the presence of so much active brain power. It is now getting to be nearly eleven o'clock. I would suggest that some other member regale us with the history of his hair's departure, only that a suggestion that I have just received from Brother Paterson, that we partake of his hospitality at Kirk's, on Broadway, occupies a larger space in the mind of the chair, as it undoubtedly will in yours, and, therefore, any suggestion on the part of any member looking to an adjournment will instantly be seized upon by the chair and put to a vote."

A motion to adjourn was made by at least ten members and seconded by twenty more, and carried by an overwhelming majority. Fifteen minutes afterwards the same majority was being "carried" by hacks and cabs in the direction of the popular establishment alluded to.

CHAPTER V.

It must be borne in mind that the objects of the Bald-headed Club were strictly social, and besides getting acquainted with each other, and learning the story of their baldness, they of course indulged in all sorts of social rackets, such as most social, brainy clubs indulge in when free from restraint.

You all know what "restraint" means.

We have all been there, probably.

On the occasion of the next meeting of the club, there were any number of "rackets" indulged in, and any amount of fun had.

The president was in the chair, having recovered from his ailing of a cold in the head, supposed to be on account of his baldness, and was presiding with great tact and genius.

The regular routine business was gone through with after the fashion of such things, during which the bald-headed darkey brought in various orders on a silver salver, and the members present braced themselves for what might possibly come, after which the president assumed a perpendicular position.

"Fellow balds," he began, "I do not believe that it is well for man to be alone, and as we have in our midst a very recent sample of a brother turned Benedick, I propose that he give us some of his inside history; something of his experience in doubling up, for who can enter into such a social state without having experiences which must be decidedly interesting?"

"No one!" was the response.

"But what makes it still more interesting, is the fact that the brother I am about to call upon is bald-headed; one of the first water balds, so to speak, and how such a person could get married, under the circumstances, is not only a mystery, but a subject of interest that must come home to us all."

"Name him!" was the shout.

"I trust the brother will not be offended if I call upon him, knowing that all experiences are for the benefit of the club, and that the little he may say may be very valuable, for

Lives of great men all remind us,
 We can make our lives sublime,
 And, in dying, leave behind us,
 Footprints on the sands of time.
 Footprints that perchance another,
 Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
 A forlorn and shipwrecked brother—
 Seeing, may take hope again,

and to exemplify this I call upon worthy Brother Andy Sheehan to state to the club such portions of his experience as he may think beneficial."

A round of applause greeted this, and "blushing to the roots of his hair," Brother Andy arose up slowly, and gradually came "to the front."

"Fellow balds, I don't understand it," said he. "My hair fell off so gradually that I scarcely noticed it, and never could for the life of me tell what made the hair forsake my head, unless, as I have sometimes suspected, that it was on account of my total abstinence."

A determined round of encouraging applause greeted this, for which he bowed, and again proceeded "to blush to the roots of his hair."

"In fact, I have often been told that extract of corn, judiciously applied internally, would prevent my hair falling off, but fearing I might lose the coating of my stomach if I took such medicine, I concluded that I had rather lose the coating of my skull, especially since undress heads are now all the rage and fashion. No, my friends, I have made it the rule and guide of my life never to taste of whisky. I admit that it is good to bathe a fellow's feet in, if he has a walking match on hand, but I don't believe in it as a beverage. Beware, my friends, of whisky. Touch it not, handle it not, save for medical purposes, and then always apply it below the chin. Neither do I

believe in lager beer or any of the other malt liquors. They may foam and look beautiful, but so does the salt water at Coney Island, and yet it isn't considered healthy to drink in large quantities."

A stirring round of applause.

"No, could I have preserved my hair by drinking whisky, I would not have done it; I really dislike the taste of whisky—I always drink brandy and champagne."

This produced a hurrah, for he had denounced whisky with such severe language and in such a sober tone that the members began to grow uneasy, and to fear that they were doomed to listen to a temperance lecture.

"Gentlemen, never drink whisky, unless you like it," he added, and took his seat.

Brother Howard struggled slowly to his feet, as though weighted by a big joke.

"I would suggest," he began, "that the worthy brother bald might have prevented his hair from falling out if he had used a bottle or two of our beloved president's infallible hair restorer, he being himself a light and shining example of its marvelous powers; a walking, smiling advertisement, in fact."

Joe generally provokes a laugh, but this appeared to take the cake, and the president also "got red to the roots of his hair."

"If we were not all so well satisfied with our polished polls, I should engage you all to use my restorer, and then use you as references," said the proprietor of the wonderful medicine.

"Not much; I have too much respect for the fringe of hair I have left, for when my hat is on, I easily pass for an Adonis with hyperion curls, and in that way enjoy the felicity both of being bald and possessing a head of hair."

Thus upspoke Brother Joe.

This brought Brother Shook to his feet.

"I trust the worthy brother bald does not intend to cast an insinuation upon the merits of that wonderful restorer; I myself have tried it and found it excellent," and he sat down.

"Excellent for what—cleaning clothes?"

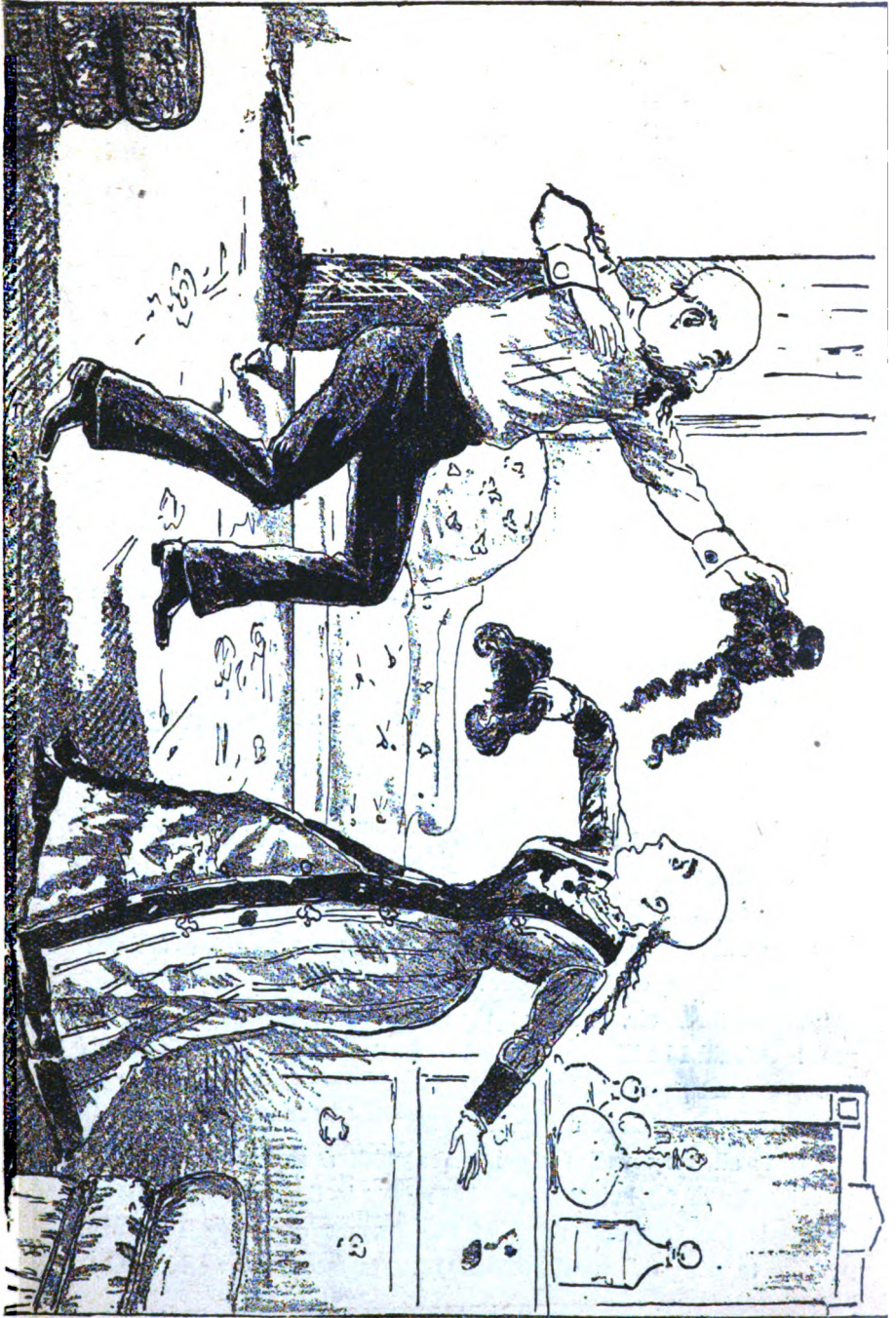
"No, it is really an excellent polish for the scalp. I am serious."

"Perhaps every person is who uses it."



She got me into a chair and began to tell me what a sinful wretch I was, and that if I didn't believe myself there would be trouble in the family.

"Oh, that's all right, darling, I knew you wore a wig, and of course knowing that I wore one myself, I concluded we would make a good match."



"Order, gentlemen!" said the president, at the same time bringing down his gavel with a decided whack.

"All right, I'll take a bottle," said Brother Joe.

"I'll take two," said Roody Braddon.

"I'll order a case;" this from Ben Maginley, and there issued forth great laughter.

"I would like to ask if that is not ordering one bad case for another," asked Ed Southy.

"Well, supposing it to be so, perhaps he orders it on the homeopathic principle that like cures like," suggested Brother Tom Dunlap, whereat there gushed forth more laughter, even exceeding what had preceded it.

"Gentlemen, the chair *called you to order*—"

"Well, we are ordering."

"What shall it be, gemmen?" asked the steward, who had overheard something about ordering.

This was, however, a happy thought on the part of the "coon," for it at once assisted in restoring the order which the president sought, and while the brothers were busy with the steward, by a rapid and vigorous application of his gavel he managed to get them-quieted down.

"Gentlemen, I pay for no such advertising," said he, finally. "My restorer is a first-class remedy, and I don't like to have jokes about it. I assure you that is no joke."

"There's *no choke* in this remedy, either," said Jim Webb, drinking a glass of wine.

"Gentlemen, do you suppose that I would go to the great expense of getting up an almanac about my restorer if it wasn't a first-class article?"

"The almanac, or the restorer?"

"The restorer, sir. Look at the amount of advertising that I do every year! Would I be likely to expend so much money in such a way if the restorer was not genuine? Never!"

"Never!" shouted the gang.

"It is all very well for gentlemen with a superabundance of humor to make fun of my hair restorer, but money is the test! Yes, my friends, money is the test, and think of the amount of money I have put out in order to bring this wonderful hair restorer before the world. Ah, there's

the test. Millions have been spent upon it, every dollar of which goes to prove that the restorer is great. But this is wandering from the subject. What we want to hear is the experiences of friends regarding how they lost their hair, and not how they may or may not restore it after it is lost. Taking all this into consideration, I call upon our friend and bald-headed brother, Charley Flynn, to state his case for the benefit of the club."

"Hi—hi—hi," was the general response.

Brother Flynn proceeded to blush to the roots of his hair, as the others had done, and arose slowly from his seat, while a general clapping encouraged him, for he is a right royal favorite.

"Fellow Balds: I don't know why the president should call upon me, for I certainly cannot contribute anything to the amusement of the club," said he, bashfully.

"But you are married!" suggested the president.

"Oh, yes."

This sounding like a sigh.

"Well, tell us your experience."

"Alas!"

"Oh, of course; there must have been a *lass* mixed up in the matter, somehow, else why did you get married?"

"I beg to suggest that she might have been a widow," said Ed Dunn.

"No, I understand that she was a maiden."

"*A-lass!*" they all shouted.

"Will the brother proceed?"

"He will—he will!"

"Brother balds, I am not sure that the history of my courtship will interest you, but by your gracious leave, I will a plain, unvarnished tale deliver of my whole course of love, what drugs, what charms, what mighty magic—for with such things am I charged withal—I won the old man's daughter with."

Uproarious applause consequent upon his reading *Othello* so well.

"We met. 'Twas at a picnic. We eyed each other all the way to the grove where the thing was to be held. I was mashed, and so was she. • I wore a wig at that time—"

A groan ran through the room.

"And consequently I did not strike for a high order of beauty, although I

thought that she was the finest in the land, as Tommy Lynch says. At the ground we approached each other nearer. We spoke; we gushed; we spooned; and before half the round of refreshments, scups, side shows, and the various entertainments consequent upon such an occasion had been indulged in, we were not only friends; but engaged lovers. I don't believe in picnics. Well, after that great occasion we were in each other's company twenty-three hours out of a possible twenty-four. We went to all sorts of entertainments; we became more and more spoony on each other, and I urged her to set the happy day. She set it. We approached that day on the wings of butterflies. It seemed to be Heaven on the half shell, and we were hungry. Finally we came to the scratch, and the minister raised the old scratch with us after asking us a few questions, and we were then pronounced man and wife. I must confess that I might have been happier than I was. Had I not foolishly disguised my head with a wig; had I gone for her bald-headed, I should have felt much better. But the fact of my having courted her under a mask; the fact of my having pretended to have hair when I had none, made me miserable, and the question was, would she repudiate me when she found that I bought my hair instead of growing it?

“We embarked for a honeymoon tour, and, oh, such ‘happy Jacks’ as we were made everybody jealous and envious of us and our happiness. We stopped at a hotel at Cape May; we were assigned the best room in the house, and felt delighted, of course. Who wouldn't have been under the circumstances? Well, you all know how it is yourselves just after such a ceremony; but I doubt if you know how it works in a case like mine. I had made up my mind to make a big confession regarding my wig; to tell her that it was a misfortune, not a design on my part to appear thus undressed, and to ask her forgiveness for having deceived her, and throw myself upon her generosity. It was a delicate piece of business, but I braced up to it.

“I lifted my wig from my head and began my little speech. She smiled. I held my wig in my hand, I tried to look sorry, but she would laugh in spite of all. I know I wasn't half handsome as I stood there, but my nerve and cheek sustained me.

“‘Darling,’ said I, ‘I am forced to confess that I have deceived you

regarding my personal appearance; but my mad love urged me on and made me almost a villain.'

"She laughed merrily, and lifted her own wig from her head.

" 'What!' I exclaimed, starting back.

" 'Oh, that's all right, darling, I knew that you wore a wig, and of course knowing that I wore one myself, I concluded that we would make a good match.' "

CHAPTER VI.

THE experience of Brother Bald Flynn, who, being bald and wearing a wig, married a woman in similar circumstances, produced quite a sensation of good humor, and the meeting broke up in the best of spirits.

The next meeting was well attended, for it had come to be understood that when there was an uncertainty regarding what the evening's entertainment was to be, it was sure to bring out quite as large a gathering as when there was a cut and dried programme announced.

The president of the club was at home in the chair, and after the regular routine business had been gone through with, he projected his bald dome into the open air and opened his gush-box.

"Brother balds: allow me to overflow a little, for I feel so happy; I am glad to see so many of the shining lights of society present this evening. It shows that you all feel it is good to be here; I certainly cannot promise you what your evening's entertainment will be, but in the presence of so much brain power, I think I can safely assure you something worthy of your club. I am sorry to note the fact that two or three members so far forget their own and the dignity and good name of the club as to appear in public outside of the club-room with their wigs on."

"Shame—shame!" cried several.

"Yes, friends, it is a shame, and without being in the least personal, I trust that Brother George Jones and Brother William Birch will take due notice and govern themselves accordingly."

"But you would not expect me to blacken the top of my head and play without a wig, would you? It is a wigned proposition," said the oleaginous rattler of the bones.

“And, most worthy president, you certainly would not expect me, as an actor appearing in public, or as a counselor of the Supreme Court of New York, to appear without a wig?” said the great Jones. “When I was in England, enjoying the hospitality of my personal friend, His Royal Highness, Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, who, it will be remembered, is also nearly bald enough to join our intellectual coterie, he said to me: ‘Count, I think it eminently proper that we great ones should wear wigs in public. No matter what we may do in private, I think we should remember our dignity enough in public to appear with the head becomingly clothed, and I have ordered my wig-maker to build me a set. If you would like to patronize him, why, just mention my name, that’s all.’ I of course made my obeisance to his highness, and the wig I wear while playing my great Shakspearian parts and pleading my great cases in the Supreme Court is the gift of my imperial friend. Therefore, I trust that the club will not object to my wearing it.”

“Well, really,” said Brother Pittman, “I don’t know as it makes much difference, for it certainly does not prevent it being known that you are bald, and so long as there is no deliberate, or at least successful attempt, at concealing the condition of baldness, why, I don’t see why the club should object.”

This seemed to be the general opinion.

“Ah, I salute my learned and legal brother of the wig and gown. As Lord Beaconsfield, the present head of the English government, said to me, on one occasion while we were drinking together: ‘There is nothing so graceful as the witty compliment of a friend.’ And I remember that Earl Russell quite agreed with my friend on the point, and at the same time the Duke of Northumberland addressed a personal remark to me, to the effect that I was the embodiment of all that was chivalric, witty, and complimentary, and in return, and to show the distinguished company how keenly I appreciated the compliment, I recited several of my Shakspearian mental efforts. The most aristocratic applause that was ever bestowed upon a great elocutionist was my reward. In fact, I——”

“I beg pardon, Mr. President, but as I happen to know that our illustrious brother has been engaged all day upon a laborious case in the Supreme Court, and consequently and very naturally he is very much exhausted by

his mental and forensic efforts, therefore I move that he be excused from telling his story until some other and more fitting occasion," said Brother Becker.

"I second the motion," said Ben Maginly.

"But I——" began the wiggid nobleman.

"One moment, illustrious bald," said the president. "There is a motion before the meeting."

"I submit with my usual chivalry and grace," replied Brother Jones, taking his seat.

The motion was put and carried without a dissenting voice.

"I am pleased to inform the illustrious brother, in my official capacity, that the club has kindly taken his age into consideration, together with the labor already performed by him in the Supreme Court to-day, has voted to excuse you from any further mental effort, and at the same time allow me, as the presiding officer, to thank you for what you have already done for us."

The illustrious excused arose in his seat and waved his hand with one of those pleased and lofty sweeps for which he is famous, and which is inimitable, after which he resumed his seat, and was rewarded with applause.

He regarded it as highly complimentary, and it pleased him quite as much as it would had the club allowed him to finish his narration, and it pleased the club ever so much better.

"Will worthy Brother Bald, Sir Shed Shook, favor us with an account of how he became bald. There must be a long story connected with it, for there is a good deal of ground to go over," said the president.

Encouraging applause Shook the building.

The dome of thought moved slowly upwards and blushed.

"Mr. President—fellow Balds, I hardly know how it is myself," he began.

"Ah—ah—ah!" came from all parts of the room.

"Well, that is, I never——"

"What, never?"

"Well, sometimes. What I was about to say was, that I can scarcely tell when or how my hyperion curls took their leave of me. I once had as fine a head of hair as any gentleman present, but of course I cared nothing for it, any more than the gentlemen present do."

There was no applause at this point, and the members looked foolishly in each other's faces.

"But to come right down to facts, the first time I ever knew that my hair was 'getting thin on top,' I was told so by a barber in a very confidential tone of voice. He said he was sorry to see it on so young and handsome a man, 'but, fortunately,' said he, 'I have a remedy.'

"A few applications of my 'Infallible Restorer' will soften the scalp and give renewed vigor to the roots of the hair.' Of course I told him to go ahead, and of course he did. He went ahead on my head. Well, a few applications brought my hair 'out' just as he said it would. In fact, it came out by the handful every day.

"I called his attention to the fact that my hair was 'coming out' faster than I wanted it to, but he assured me that it was all right; that my hair was dead, and that nothing could revive it; that it might all fall out, but a new crop would certainly follow that would be even more luxuriant than the one I was losing. So I let him go on.

"I thought he knew what he was up to, and perhaps he did, but my head was soon as bald as an onion. My scalp was undoubtedly 'softened,' just as he said it would be, and the first application must have done it, or I should never have allowed him to make a second one.

"Yes, the scalp was softened undoubtedly, but I don't think there was anything renewed, unless you call a bald head a *nude* head—renude.

"I went for that fiend of a barber, but he said it wasn't his fault. He didn't think the scalp needed so little softening, and so the Restorer overdid the business. But this was the first time the thing had ever been known to fail. Such, my friends, is the brief history of the rise and fall of my poll-covering. I do not say who invented this diabolical 'restorer,' but of course it couldn't have been invented by our worthy president, for we see entirely different effects in his case."

This produced a regular yell, amid which the narrator sat down.

"Allow me to impress it upon the mind of the worthy Brother Bald that it is utterly impossible that could have been my hair restorer, for haven't I said it never fails? the proof of which is that I have advertised it in a thousand different ways, and even got out almanacs by the million. Think of it! By the million! And does any man possessing brains enough to have a

That hat she went for. Handful after handful did she extract from his sleepy mug, and yet he slept on, happy and unconscious.



bald head suppose that I would have advertised so extensively if it had not been a great remedy and restorer?"

"Not much—not much!" cried they all.

"Thanks. Of course not. Now that this point is settled, we will proceed with our evening's entertainment. I trust the club will pardon any little feeling I may have shown, but a great hair restorer should not be brought into the discussion of a bald-headed company, much less be introduced in its presence. Will Brother Manson pour oil upon the troubled mineral-waters by relating his bald-headed experience?"

The applause of personal friends, together with the manifestation of a general interest, escorted and encouraged the little brother to rise from his seat into view.

"Brother Balds: I am in quest of a dog at the present time, and as that overshadows everything else, I beg you will excuse me if I do not, for your entertainment, enter upon anything personal. My mind is full of the canine. If anybody has a dog for sale, I am the person to approach. I have enjoyed everything that fortune awards to poor mortals here below, but still I am not happy. I am in quest of a dog, and until I find one that suits me, I am all at sea, and not responsible for my acts; but I know the history of another poor bald head, and if it makes no difference, I will give you snatches of it, and which may be of interest."

"Give us the snatches," said several.

"I will. He is a bashful—really a crushed member of our club. Let us not judge him, for there may be other members of the club who will recognize the situation. He is married."

"Oh—oh—oh!"

"Too bad—too bad!"

"Yes, too bad, but it cannot be helped. He thought he loved her, and would have her. He braced up, and considered himself one of the 'gang.' He got married, poor fool! Yes, he got married. His wife was muscular—very muscular. And for the first six months nothing but love and yum-yum marked their existence. Had he belonged to the Bald-headed Club all might have been well, but, unfortunately, he belonged to an *ordinary* club, and his membership took him out late at night, and he frequently went home 'braced,'—braced to a wild extent. Finally the honeymoon was over

and they settled down to the realities of housekeeping and real life. My friend—for such I am bound to call him—was about as good as they will average, but every night or every morning he would return home 'braced' to a fuller extent than before, and presently his wife, his fond young wife, began to 'kick.'

"Light housekeeping was all very well, but as he had promised to get up every morning and build the fire, it was only natural that she should 'kick' when he came home so 'staving full' that he didn't know whether he was a bag of potatoes or a prize poodle. She began to get wild. Having a temper of her own, she 'kicked' at first, but presently she became more demonstrative. My poor friend would return home at all hours of the night or morning, and go to bed in all conditions; sometimes with his boots on, sometimes with only one boot on; sometimes with his clothes on. But virtue at length ceased to be a patience, and she went for his hair. She would get up in the morning, leaving him snoring in bed; build the fire; get breakfast ready, and yet my budgy friend would linger beneath the sheets until the hours were very late. His wife, rash, impetuous woman, got it into her head that she was an injured being; that he went out nights and got drunk. She resolved to put forth her strength upon him, and what more potent hold could she get than his hair?

"That hair she went for. Handful after handful did she extract from his sleepy mug, and yet he slept on happy and unconscious.

"You may ask what it is that makes *him* bald-headed, but how can you ask it in seriousness after this explanation? He was *snatched* bald-headed, fellow balds, he was *snatched*! But perhaps I am personal in asking you to think of it, but I trust that few if any of you have ever had the same experience as has had the brother bald to whom I allude. Brothers, the causes of baldness are various, but let us all hope, let us all pray, like good men and brainy men, that we may none of us be 'snatched' bald-headed."

"Let us all hope not!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE story told of the man who had been "snatched" bald-headed created quite a sensation, and the meeting broke up in a gloomy mood, each member

feeling that *he* had not been "snatched," and regarding some other fellow as the victim.

"Oh, it is so-and-so," said they all.

Of course not a soul of them would own up to ever being "snatched." Brains was what made them bald.

And after the meeting broke up and the members gathered at a neighboring "hotel," they got into groups of two or three, and somebody had it down for a certainty that he knew who the certain somebody was who had been "snatched."

As for the author of the story, he only smiled—in two ways—and refused to say positively who he had alluded to, so the whole thing was gradually forgotten and "braced" aside.

At the next meeting the president was smiling and happy, even to glistening. After the routine business had been gone through with, he bobbed into a perpendicular position, and said:

"Brother Balds, I have a very pleasant announcement to make to you this evening; a juicy one, in fact. Our worthy brother with the shining pate, John Peterson, has an 'opening' this evening of his new saloon, and we have all an invitation to partake."

"I move we adjourn!" cried out at least twenty members at the same time.

"I second the motion," yelled as many more.

"Question—question!" shouted others.

"Well," said the president, as soon as he could be heard, "it looks as though there would be no difficulty in getting a majority, therefore I will call for a popular vote on a popular question. Those in favor of adjourning to accept the hospitalities of Brother Peterson will please signify——"

"Ay!" came from every throat in the room, even before the question was fairly put, and then a grand rush was made for the door.

That settled this particular meeting in the most decided manner, and in fifteen minutes the entire club were gathered and shaking hands with Brother Peterson at his new saloon.

In a few minutes there arose the sound of popping corks, and dozens of fine cut glasses were receiving the nectar which Jupiter and the natty

Frenchmen sip. Plain Americans call it champagne. Keep "Mumm" about it, though.

This introductory overture being over with, the company retired to an inner room, where a delicate repast was trying to make a long table groan, and at it they went like men who knew their duty, and knowing, dare perform it, even to the bone.

There jokes and compliments and little speeches and lots of other little things got mixed up in beautiful confusion, and the spirit of friendly jollity reigned supreme all around.

Then, in the name of the Bald-Headed Club, President Brown ordered Johnny to set 'em up again, and he set 'em.

Then out marched that bald-headed throng to the bar, for the room where they were was too small for them to "hoist" in, and ranged itself before the bar, leaving their hats behind to increase the effect.

"Gentlemen, are you all loaded?"

"Not yet, but we hope to be."

"Good! In the name of brains, drink!" and with the precision of soldiers, each man crooked his elbow at the same moment, threw back his head and drank his "cham."

The effect was exceptionally fine, not to say unique, for this uniform movement and the display of bald heads all in a row was a sight only seen once, and often less, in a lifetime. And what was more, they all seemed to have the same absorbing powers, for the glasses were drained and set down with the same military precision. But the artist has caught a very good idea of the scene.

And so it went on until some one mentioned something about private supper rooms, when two or three bald-headed angels began to laugh, and as many more began to blush and try to turn the subject of conversation.

This being noticed, occasioned quite a little ripple of interest, and, finally, there was a general demand to know what those laughs and blushes meant, and as they were by this time in that mellow mood that nectar builds, they insisted upon knowing the full particulars.

And so Brother Sir William Birch was prevailed upon to relate "a little story."

"This narrative, gentlemen," said he, "may remind you of *Pink Domi-*

noes to a certain extent, but I assure you, on the honor of a bald-headed man, that it took place even before *Pink Dominoes* did. To observe the Golden Rule, to do to others as I would have them do to me, I will not mention the names of the parties figuring in this little drama, and let it go upon the bills without a cast, so that if the characters are discovered, it is no fault of mine."

The same few blushed, and the same few laughed as before.

"Gentlemen, I am sorry to be obliged to preface my story with a statement that my heroes were *bald*. I state this in advance, for fear it might not be believed after my story is finished. And while I am about it, I may as well state that such things don't often happen to bald-headed men; or, at the worst, not more than twice as often as they do to men wearing hair."

Interest manifested, together with well-defined symptoms of applause, although the dread uncertainty of what was coming made the whole company act very cautiously.

"Gentlemen, the dreadful story runs about as follows: Two bald-headed men, of uncertain age, of course two bald-headed *married* men, rejoiced in 'summer girls.' Their wives were away in the country in quest of health and a new place to show their last summer's clothes, while their husbands remained at home, toiling, broiling, and bread-winning, to enable their wives to show off and be happy in the belief that people with whom they came in contact regarded their brilliants as diamonds and their last year's dresses as new and of the latest cut. Noble husbands, generous men! (in your mind). Well, some envious angel, either in pantaloons or clinging-skirts, saw fit to explode this charming bubble, so that the echo of it might fall on the tympanum of those rustivating wives; those wives in search of health and warmed-over sensations. They immediately proceeded to get their bustles on their backs, and to return to the city for the purpose of wiping the sweat of toil from the brows of their toiling husbands, and to make these attentions all the sweeter, and to form a pleasant surprise for them, they returned all unannounced. It was evening when they arrived, and when they naturally expected to find their exhausted husbands at home after the toil of the day. But their homes were closed and dark, and inquiry at the next door neighbor's provoked a reply to the effect that the house had been closed ever since the trusting wives went away, with the exception of one night,

when it was open from cellar to garret, and a mixed party held high carnival there. Those two trusting wives looked at each other, and winked. The 'bread-winners' labors did not seem to be so very exhaustive after all. But where were they? Not knowing where the 'bread-winners' had their headquarters, they concluded to go to a hotel and spend the night, and take a closer survey of the situation on the morrow, but without exposing their presence.

"So they went to a hotel where men of means have many privileges, and took a room for the night, being assigned one on the same floor where there are several private supper-rooms, but of which they, of course, knew nothing, being honest wives, and simply engaged in keeping up ten thousand dollar style on one thousand a year, in light installments at that.

"They retired to their room, commenting, of course, upon the 'extraordinariness' of the matter, and wondering where their liege lords could have gone. Perhaps to Coney Island for a plunge and tumble in the surf after the day's hard work was done; perhaps a sailing down the bay in quest of refreshing breezes; perhaps up at Central Park, where the fresh air invigorates so many of the city's toiling poor. But what did that carnival mean? Well, perhaps they received some members of the club. (Shall I say 'Bald-Headed Club.')

Perhaps their fellow-members, seeing how lonely they were, had made them a surprise visit, and who could blame them for having a good time?

"Well, after they had figured it down just about as fine as they could, and had given their husbands about all the credit-chalks they were entitled to, and were on the point of retiring to their one-sided couches, a burst of gladsome laughter in an opposite room attracted their attention. They listened, and one of them felt certain that she recognized a familiar voice. There were at least two male and two female voices, but the male voices seemed the most familiar.

"Then there arose another laugh, accompanied by a clink of glasses. There was certainly something very familiar about those voices. Who were they? Provoked, until minding their own business ceased to be a virtue, they finally opened their doors and listened further. The voices became more and more familiar, and finally the dread conviction rang in their ears that those voices belonged to their husbands.

“What did it, what could it mean? And those female voices whose music made harmony as bass with treble, what was the occasion of that blending, and how did it happen that the melody was punctuated by the popping of champagne corks and accompanied by the chimes of clinking glasses!

“What should they do? They glanced at the door which shut in their bread-winners. It was locked beyond a question. What then? should they proceed to get hysterical and make a noise and smash things, and call names, and call for the police? Well, they were actually trying to decide which of these things they should do, when they espied a painter's double step-ladder at the other end of the hall. There was a transom window over the door, and it was turned at right angles with the door so as to admit the air. They went for that ladder. They lifted that ladder and carried it noiselessly to the door that shut them from their bread-winners. They mounted it silently, but, oh! who shall say how silent it was under their corsets!

“They thrust their heads in at the transom, and obtained a good view of the interior, and, oh! what a view there was! There sat their bald-headed husbands, and by the side of each a blonde daisy, dressed in the height of the first and the nobby, while for fear they might be blown away or something, those bald-headed husbands were holding them with an arm around their waists. The table was covered with a dainty cold lunch, and the second quart bottle of champagne was already on the wane, and every now and then, as if to see if her lips tasted as nice as his wife's, each would sample them. So, taken all in all, it was a delightful scene, one which nobody but a wife would think of breaking up, for they are dreadful envious creatures, you know.

“But this was too much for them, and they squealed: ‘Oh, you villains, we have caught you! Oh, you awful—awful rascals! This is the way you suffer martyrdom in the hot city, is it? Oh, you—oh—oh—oh!’ and then they both proceeded to tumble down and hurt themselves, but managed to limp to their room without being seen.

“But how about those husbands? How about that little picnic? What the devil did it mean, anyhow?

“Fortunately, however, there was a balcony leading around the house, upon which the window of their room opened, and leaving the feast unfin-

With the precision of soldiers, each man crooked his elbow at the same moment, threw back his head and drank his "cham."



ished, they followed it until they found another room through which they could pass out of doors unobserved, and they 'passed,' you bet.

"Well, those husbands did have some hair on their heads at that time, that is to say there was a 'goodly fringe, such as worthy Brother Howard wears, and which made them look like ordinary mortals when their hats were on, but look at them now!"

Everybody looked around as though they expected to meet those naughty husbands face to face, and about one-half of those present "blushed to the roots of their hair," just as though it was possible that they might be suspected.

The affair created a jolly good laugh, and any number of "bots" were decapitated on the strength of it, although Billy would not positively give them away.

But like the other story of the member who was "snatched" bald-headed, everybody felt sure that he knew who the unfortunate bread-winners were, and of course each one claimed that it was his neighbor and not himself at all.

But that "opening" was declared a success, and, finally, as the hours began to spread out in the morning, those of the "Balds" who understood what was going on, joined in a song and chorus, called "My Pretty Red Rose."

And they all had "roses" on their noses the next afternoon.

CHAPTER VIII.

WELL, that Bald-Headed Club managed to extract about as much fun from their surroundings as any body of men in the world. Indeed, it is a question whether the same number of men with hyperion curls could have had more.

But the next event of any importance that I think of now which should go into the record of its doings, was a visit in body, or in bulk, to Coney Island — "Coney Island down the bay."

They received an invitation from the proprietors of the Manhattan Beach Hotel, personal friends of nearly every member of the club, to visit the beach on a certain day, and there partake of the hospitalities of the magnificent

caravansary, where liquors of a sparkling nature would be provided for their internal washings, while old Neptune was to do the external washing.

"I trust there doesn't exist in our club the slightest notion of rejecting or even slighting this invitation," said Tom Dunlap.

"Well, judging from what the Chair knows of the different members, it would suggest that no such fear need be entertained by the boss of the jurors."

"I think it put a little too stiff," said Shed Shook. "I would suggest that the Chair should state it something like this: 'The Chair believes he knows the obliging and gentlemanly instincts of the club sufficiently well to warrant that it would never slight such an invitation, even if it had to bodily partake of green turtle soup, and drink champagne.'"

A ripple of applause greeted this.

"The Chair stands corrected."

"I trust, Mr. President, if we do accept, as of course we are bound to, this invitation, that there will be a full attendance," said Ed Southy.

"I beg to suggest that the attendance will most undoubtedly be 'full' on its return," put in Jim Webb.

"Are there any sleeping cars to be provided?" asked Ben Maginly.

"Well, I believe there has been nothing said about such luxuries yet," said the Chair.

"I would suggest to the illustrious bald that arrangements have been made, whereby those who become too enthusiastic can take a nap in the sand, in the breakers, or at the hotel," said Paul Hurley, whereat there was a laugh.

"And another thing which I think ought to be taken into consideration, before the club votes to accept the invitation, and that is that it shall be obligatory upon all those who go to take a plunge in the breakers," said Roody Braddon.

"Does the brother speak on behalf of the Board of Health, or for the sanitary good of the club?" asked George Moscs.

"Well, I think the club and the public generally can draw its own conclusions. At all events, I think the motion should be brought up."

"If such a motion does come up, Mr. President, I trust it will be voted upon without debate," said Jim Everhard.

"I think the whole matter should be left to the good sense of the individual members," said Ed Dunn.

"Well, but I beg to call the brother's attention to the existence on the part of—well, a *large* number of the members, of a seated antipathy to water, and on that account I think there ought to be a binding vote on the subject."

"I regard it as personal," said Roody Braddon, "for it is well known that I belong to the Blue Ribbon movement, a league that uses water."

"What for?" asked several voices.

"Well—we never drink anything else."

"What, *never*?"

"Well—hardly ever," he stammered.

"I beg to say also that I regard the matter as personal," said Andy Sheehan.

"What!" from all over the room.

"Well, it is well known that I belong to——"

"Hear—hear—hear!"

"To—to——"

"Gently, Andy, gently now."

"To—to the Union Ferry Company."

"Oh!"

"And that we also make use of water—to sail our boats in; therefore I regard the insinuation as personal. I wish to go upon the record as believing in water."

A shout of laughter greeted this, after which there began a series of motions and amendments which entirely nullified the first motion, and made it obligatory for every member to do just as he thought best about everything.

And so when the motion was made to accept the invitation to visit Manhattan Beach in a body, it was carried with a rush that shook the very windows.

The next day was the one agreed upon, and word was sent by telegraph that the Balds were to visit the beach, and extra provisions were at once made to receive and entertain them.

It was a fine-looking "gang" that strode on board the steamer that was to take them from New York to meet the cars of the Manhattan Beach Rail-

Some of them struck out for the shore as though pursued by sharks and winged devils, while others fought and yelled to frighten away the hungry gulls.



road, and knowing so many people, it is no wonder that a great interest was awakened by this advent.

The boat was crowded, and there were fair women and brave men congregated on the decks, bound for that cooling beach and a plunge into the refreshing breakers. And they had a first-class time on the way down; singing, laughing, telling stories, and greeting acquaintances.

At the cars they became scattered, for the great rush from the boat prevented them from keeping together, and the result was that there was a detachment of the Bald-Headed Club in every car of the long train. But the mopping of heads gave them away, and many a laugh and joke was then sent up at their expense.

But on their arrival there they found a large crowd of friends waiting to receive them, and they were conducted in triumph right to a private dining-room in the hotel, where the proprietors stood ready to greet and brace them up.

For the next hour the minutes were punctuated by the popping of corks, and every five minutes marked by a "flow of soul."

Then a move was made for the bathing-houses, with the understanding that they were to return to the same room after the lave, and indulge further in the feast of good things and the "flow of soul."

But, in reality, the fun of the whole thing began with their march to the bathing-houses, for by this time they were all in a mellow mood, if not more so, and the whole island seemed to belong to them for the time being.

Then they reached their bathing-houses, after having obtained their suits at the office, and began to disrobe.

Well, we won't look into their individual houses, for that would be impolite, but when they afterwards congregated on the shore, dressed in their suits, their own wives, mothers, or mothers-in-law would never have known who they were.

A loud cheer from the amphitheater greeted them as they marched down from the bathing-houses towards the breakers, and then a loud laugh followed, for a funnier-looking company never appeared upon old Long Island's Sea Beat Shore than they were.

So few of them had any hair at all that a stone jug might have put on airs

alongside of them, especially if it happened to be a trifle dirty, and as they marched along, their heads shone in the sunlight like full moons.

They plunged into the water, and the band struck up, "We are all bobbing, bob, bob, bobbing," as indeed they were the moment they took the first breaker, and the appropriateness of the music created a laugh all along the beach.

The ladies waved their handkerchiefs and the gents swung their hats, but as the demonstration was becoming a trifle too personal, the members of the club struck out for deep water, in the neighborhood of the raft that is anchored about five hundred feet from the shore.

Reaching this, and being somewhat removed, or at least far enough away to be out of hearing, if not out of sight, they climbed upon the raft and began diving from it, and having hogsheads of fun in the wabby brine.

Yes, they were out of reach of their enemies and were having lots of fun, but a new enemy suddenly came down upon them in the shape of three or four sea gulls.

They had been sailing around above their heads ever since they entered the water, evidently trying to make out what sort of a fish these bald heads were, and after consulting and probably concluding that they were sun-fish, they made a swoop down upon them.

And then began one of the most curious battles on the water that ever was seen. The balds saw that the gulls meant mischief, and began to fight and strike out, and shout, and say shoo, and to dive under water to escape, but the birds meant business, and swooped at every head that showed itself above the surface.

Some of them struck out for the shore as though pursued by sharks and winged devils, while others fought and yelled to frighten away the hungry gulls.

The crowd standing on the shore saw the situation, and thinking it a confounded sight funnier than it really was, roared, and jeered them roundly.

In fact, it was this tremendous roar of the multitude, together with the roar of the waters, that eventually frightened the birds away and gave the poor devils a chance to get out of the water, or far enough in shore to be out of immediate danger.

But it was almost like getting out of the frying-pan into the fire, for it

seemed as though everybody in that big crowd was trying to split their lungs, and shake themselves to pieces with laughter.

Some of them even fell down and rolled in the sand in their paroxysms of laughter, and everybody crowded down to the edge of the water.

A few of them were bleeding. Some had pieces nipped out of their ears, others bore the marks of claws upon their polished scalps, and a sicker, more disgusted lot of men were never seen.

"That's what I call being *gulled*!" said Joe Howard, one of the first to reach the shore.

"Wonder what they take us for?" said Shook.

"They didn't take me at all," said Hoey.

"No, perhaps not, but they took a piece of your ear."

"Well, I—I'll be hanged," said Jack Peterson, as he came puffing out of the water. "I'll be hanged if I ever knew that sea gulls were so fond of brains."

"What sort of a snap is this, anyway?"

"Well, I should call it a *clause*."

"Put on skull caps and go it again," said several of the crowd.

"Paint your heads!"

"Swim under water," and hundreds of other shouts greeted them from all sides.

In fact, they ridiculed and laughed at them so much that they finally withdrew and started on a run for their bathing-houses, while the band struck up: "Come and tell me, gentle sea-birds."

This, of course, created another laugh, and to its music and that of the band they finally vanished into their respective bathing-rooms.

In the course of an hour they again stole out of their rooms and gathered on the piazza of the hotel. But here they were soon recognized, and a broad grin stood upon the face of nearly everybody who sat or stood around.

But following their adventurous bath came a supper in a private room, where they could laugh and talk the matter over among themselves, without having a crowd at hand to make the laugh too much one-sided.

And laugh they well might when the hats were once removed, for after the bath there had been a lively demand for court-plaster to cover the claw

marks, and now some of those bald heads resembled Western cities on paper, so thickly were the strips applied.

Well, I don't mind a *lark* now and then," said President Brown, "but I must say that I do object to being *gulled* in this manner."

This drew the laugh towards him, for, to tell the truth, his head was plastered the worst of them all, and his ear was nicked badly.

"Well, there is one thing certain, we can't be *gulled* out of our *interna bath*," said Joe Howard, raising a glass of the rosy to his lips.

"But what surprises me is, that those chaps who got their ears nipped did not take in their sky-sails when they saw the squall coming," said Jim Everhard.

"That's so," said the unnicked ones.

"Oh, mind you, I don't care so much for a little piece of ear like that; there is nothing mean or stingy about me, only I don't like the way they did the job," said the president. "Now, if they had only took a piece out of each ear, I shouldn't have cared so much; I should have been better balanced and looked more uniform. Now I shall be obliged to carry my tobacco on the left side of my mouth all my life in order to keep properly trimmed."

And so they laughed and joked as they ate and drank, and finally they plunged so deeply into the festivities that they forgot all their late mishaps. Once more the "Bald-Headed Club" was itself again, and merriment ruled the hour.

It was late at night when they started to return to the city, and were they happy?

Were they "full"—of enthusiasm? And song? And fun—and; well did they take possession of the boat almost, and make things merry and lively?

Well, somewhat.

That is to say—in a measure.

But rounders though they were, it has always been a mystery to them how they actually did get home, and whether it was the salt-water, the sea-gulls, the roast clams, the cold chicken, or the lobster-salad, that gave them such "heads" the next morning.

At all events they *had* "heads" on them, and at the next meeting it was voted to lay the blame to the lobster-salad, and a series of resolutions were

drawn up and adopted, denouncing lobster-salad as one of the leading factors of all the "heads" that flesh is heir to.

These resolutions were adopted with all the gravity of a town meeting, and placed upon the records, underlined with red ink.

Well, here we are.

To continue the doings of the Bald-Headed Club would almost necessarily be to repeat what has already been written, and so it may be best to stop it right here and save the reputation of as nice a lot of gentlemen as ever lived.

The club is still in existence, and wherever there is fun and hurrah's; wherever there is amusement that is intellectual, or conceits that are whimsical, there will always be found a few, if not more, of THE BALD-HEADED CLUB.

[THE END.]

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