

THE SMOKE SPRITE.

BY JOHN ALBRO.

Cigar in mouth I sat. The graceful curl
Of smoke, like rings on a pretty girl,
Wreathed round my brow, while thoughts profound
Found and deep,
Tobacco-tinted, soothed me into sleep.

I dreamed that out a blue ascending ring
Stepped forth a blithe and graceful fairy thing.
A sprite with laughing eyes and rosy cheeks,
Whose coral lips are smiling as she speaks:

"I am the spirit of that soothing weed
Which men regard as luxury and need,
That social comfort and the love one's friend,
That rests the weary, makes the stern unkind.

"Loved in all climes since Raleigh, noble lord,
From England's court sought here for rich reward,
Nor found he aught of honor, place or pelf
So passing good, Tobacco, as thyself.

"Prized by all men except a weakly few
Too delicate to stand an honest chew;
Too nervous and effeminate to smoke,
So hide their weakness 'neath some weaker
joke;

"Or in long essays of less sense than sound,
Much polysyllabled, to seem profound,
Prove to their gaudy friends what demons
are
Bound in the binder of a dime cigar.

"The ladies, bless them (I am one), admit
'Tis mainly just to smoke—a little bit.
The winsome wife, cigar in hand, says: 'Dear,
Like the flavor, stay and smoke it here.'

"Tobacco, sweet narcotic, meat and drink,
Balm of the weary mind, our help to think,
Life's one necessity—'Hold! Don't be rash,'
Interrupted. "How about our hash?"

"There's sense in all you say, but still it seems
That you indulge, like mortals, in extremes.
I will explain just how and when to smoke,
And so I would, but, just then, I awoke.

IT WAS THE CAT-TAILS.

BY EVA M. DE JARNETTE.

"Cat-tails. *Genus Typhus*, also called
Reed-mace." *Vide* dictionary.

Girls, do you know what they say? In your
zeal for gathering and decorating with them,
have you ever thought to bend down your
ear and listen to their whispers?

In the dim ages of antiquity King Midas
was punished for ill-taste in music by having
asses' ears clapped on his head.

At his wife's suggestion the king started
the fashion of bangs, frizzes, ear-locks
and such, and he wore a great bag-topped
crown to conceal his deformity.

But no man is a hero to his valet, and
the barber knew all about it. Weary of the
burden of the terrible secret, he dug a hole
in a solitary place, and whispered into it,
"Our master has asses' ears!"

Cat-tails sprang up, and to this day, when
agitated by the wind, they mischievously
repeat the tale, maliciously varying the
message to make a personal affair of it.
"Our rulers have asses' ears!" they mur-
mur—"asses' ears!"

They whisper in Greek, and if Dick and
Tom, fresh from college, cannot make it
out, it is because they are just humbugs,
and don't know anything about the lan-
guage.

Moreover, Homer says, the giant Typhus
gave more trouble to the gods than all
the rest put together. He was like a cork; push
him under in one spot and he would pop
up in another. It was a difficult thing "for
to put a head on him," for he possessed
already a hundred of his own. And when at
last Jupiter "planted" him alive in the
isle of Icaria, and was thinking about
setting up a nice tombstone over him, to let
his friends know what a generous, spread-
ing, ubiquitous kind of old hairpin he was,
all at once cat-tails with their hundred
heads, appeared, and the wind floated
their downy seed-puffs over the face of
the earth.

Diseases with a hundred forms broke
out among men and beasts, which are still
called by his name wherever the cat-tails
grow. So Jupiter concluded not to
waste his money on a fellow who could
actually make the four winds of heaven
and whose face of nature do his advertis-
ing grails, even bending into the same
channel the aesthetic fancies of fashion-
able young ladies of the nineteenth cen-
tury.

But Dick Harrington didn't know a word
of all this.

Although long past the age when a fel-
low's friends constantly tell him, as a
piece of unexpected news, "how he has
grown," Dick had at the whiskers he
would ever own, and had grown to feel
sorry he had not let his troublesome mus-
tache remain latent, instead of rasping and
scraping at it, and cutting it with his sis-
ter's scissors, till it was as stiff as a black-
ing-brush.

Of course, he had trampled over cat-
tails and club-mosses, pond-lilies and wild
celery, thousands of times, but had never
bothered his brain over the generic names
of sedges and reeds.

He distinguished them as good "cover" for
grouse, partridges and Indian hens, or
classed them along with sand-worms, snap-
shells, and other small crustacea, as the
proper food, or signs of feeding ground for
"wilets," "marlins," "summer ducks,"
"seek-no-further," and "doe-witches."

He wasn't aesthetic at all, Dick wasn't,
and no wonder his pretty sister Kate was
"out" with him for putting on that rusty
velvet shooting-jacket, and stuffing his
pataloons into boots that were quite big
and strong enough to walk about alone,
and for going out after "dippers" and
"spring-tails" when a girl was coming—one
of those "utterly utter" kind, too, who have
never a shadow of any kind of real trouble
to sour them, and consequently think that
the sun shines and the "wide world wags"
for their private and individual benefit.

"Afraid of a gal! And he just six feet
two in his stocking feet." No wonder he
looked sneaking and mean; and when
Kate followed him as far as the horse-
blocks, still arguing the question, he gave
three perfectly hypocritical reasons for not
going to the station to meet Dora, her
doubly dear schoolmate and bosom friend,
Dora.

Falsely he averred a flock of didappers
or wild turkeys (Kate could not make out
what he said, he mumbled so) to be scat-
tered and in waiting for him to kill in
Carrie's Wood. In testimony of which he
produced a "yelper," and yelped till Kate
put her fingers to her ears, for all the gob-
blers in the yard, angrily answering, came
strutting up, with their "Turk's heads"
swelled up as red and big as acme tomatoes.

"Dick, you are just too out-erly mean to
live. I'd like to throw a plate at you.
Really, Dick, I am ready to cry. To have
to send the hired boy to drive, when I've
got a brother told as a church steeples."

"Kate, I'd go in a minute, but I've got to
meet a man."

"Hush, Dick, you are telling stories
Dora is so pretty too," sighs Kate.

"The washerwoman has all my collars,
and—"

"I wonder you are not afraid you'll end

like Ananias and Sapphira. Oh, I do wish
I wasn't afraid to drive Flirt myself." And
two bright little tears rolled down her
cheeks.

"Really, Katie, I was in the village
yesterday, where they have measles, and I
should not like to run the risk of her catch-
ing them through me."

"Oh, I do hope Dora will pay you for
this; indeed I do. I hope she will flirt the
bat off your head, you aggravating, good-
for-nothing—"

Dick fled away out of hearing, for in his
heart of hearts he was "afraid of a gal."

He had climbed Horney's Peak when it
was two feet deep in snow; shot a Cali-
fornia grizzly; had slept calmly by the bio-
nomic fire to the music of the gray wolves'
hideous howling and the mountain-lion's
doleful roar. He had dared the redskins
of the Black Hills in their rocky fastnesses,
but was pitifully "afraid of a woman."

Stepping out, as if he was owner of the
Seven League Boots, keeping a keen eye
to the slightest indication of a "point" from
his black-and-tan setter, he commended
sady with himself as to how he could
possibly avail himself of lodging privileges
under his father's roof for the coming
week. How he was to eat and sleep, keep
out of sight of his sister's friend, and still
be highly thought of and admired by her.

"Afraid of a woman!"

Kate this time, for he dearly loved his
pretty sister, and hated to cross her
wishes.

"Unless I break a leg or knock out an
eye, she would never forgive me," was his
conclusion. "However, I'll hunt to-day,
and go into the martyr business in the
morning."

"Sing while we may,
Another day
Will bring enough of sorrow."

Hola! Something is the matter with
Ponto! His white-tipped tail has ceased
to vibrate—he elongates his body, thrusts
forward his head; his eye is set; his limbs
stiffen rigidly; he is about to have a fit!

"Hee on! Whirr-r-r! Bang, bang!
How the feathers fly! Three birds, by all
that's lovely!"

He bags the pretty, brown, quivering
creatures, without a pang of compunction,
and loads up for fresh victims. When
game is plentiful the true hunter takes no
note of time, nor does he heed the pangs
of hunger.

Passing through the dim, damp depths
of the leafless woods, he added some wood-
cock and "merry brown hares" to his bag.

The short winter day is almost ended.
The naked, rusty tree-tops stand out coldly
against the pale, grayish sky; the shudder-
ing chill of the dying day creeps over him,
and he begins to realize that he has eaten
nothing since breakfast.

As the Loadstone Rock drew Sinbad's
frail bark remorselessly to its destruction,
so Dick is marching straight into the
meshes which Fate has prepared for him.

The unerring certainty with which skill-
ful sportsmen can distinguish objects afar
off is well known, but none the less re-
markable. By the pale, smothered gleam
of the fading sunset Dick perceives a thing
which makes his heart flutter.

There has been a signal of danger. His
own footsteps crunching over the stiff, dry
flags, and the noise of

"The ripple washing in the reeds,
And the water lapping on the crag,"
are the only sounds he hears.

Yet Crusoe's man Friday was not more
startled at the man's footprint in the sand
than was Dick at a blue gauze veil, caught
in a bunch of briars, gently, innocently
waving in the evening breeze.

A step further there is a sprig of scarlet
China berries, some small footprints in
the mud, and a glove.

Victor Hugo makes a big, tough old
sailorman particularly fastidious about
ladies' hands. Dick liked them small him-
self, although his own would have done for
Hercules. Ladies' gloves are sometimes
prettier than the hands they cover.

This one was a dainty, embroidered lit-
tle affair, and told a tale of distress lying
there among the dried grasses and things
girls are for ever reaching after for their
winter vase, with scrambling little foot-
prints in the mud all around it.

Beauty begot in its greed for the
decorative cat-tail! Dick sighed as he put
the pretty trifle in his vest-pocket.

A few more strides on the Seven-league
Boots and he was on the high road, where
Flirt had stamped holes, while the hired
boy held her in, and the young lady "went
for" the rushes.

Afar off he could, through the parlor
windows, see the light, "where household
fires gleamed warm and bright." He
stalked along with pounds of mad cling-
ing to his boots, bristling all over with
cockle burrs and Spanish needles, hands
grimed with gunpowder, and a heavy gun
and gamebag.

But nothing felt so heavy as that bit of
gauze in his pocket, and the dainty glove.
Like the sybarite's crumpled rose-leaf,
they made a lump that rubbed and galled
him. He was in a fever to be rid of them.

He made a circuit of the stable-lot and
garden to prevent the possibility of his
being seen from the parlor windows, as if
in these days of high art young ladies
had nothing better to do than sit moping
and gazing like Mariana in the moated
grange.

Cautiously passing the honeysuckle arbor,
looking about and around over his shoul-
ders, he plumped upon what he most
wished to avoid.

Sitting on the back-porch steps, gazing
at the moon rising in mystic majesty over
the big wood-pile, sat his sister and her
friend.

He nearly stepped upon them, but be-
fore he had time to swoon or shoot him-
self, wicked Katie, who thoroughly en-
joyed the situation, was introducing
them. A fairy-like creature, with Italian
sunset in her hair, and aurora borealis in
her cheeks, was murmuring his name.

He had not the sense to excuse himself
and leave, but stood like a great object,
blushing, muttering, looking like the poor
"Exile of Erin," or a Pennsylvania road-
tramp.

To Dora he appeared more of a bandit
of the Pyrenees, for the slouch hat hid all
the face his great beard left exposed, and
in a pretty flute voice, she began talking to
him.

"Oh, Mr. Harrington, Kate and I have
been thinking such things about the Plei-
ades and Orion, and Berenice's Hair. How
they must have looked and shone, just as
they do now, thousands of years ago, when
the Greek boys and girls went tramping
over the hilly roads of Arcadia on their way
to the Olympic Games; and they talked of
them under the same names that we do to-
night—didn't they, Kate?"

"Indeed they did, Dora."

"And they twinkle now just as they did
on the night Alexander stormed Tyre, and
Hannibal terrified Rome with his victory
at Cannae. Don't you think so, Mr. Har-
rington?"

"Indeed he does, Dora. Dick has been
half over the world, you know."

Then she carried her friend into the par-
lor, leaving Dick too weak to walk up the
steps.

When she went up to his room later, to
see why he did not come down, he told her
"he had a chip in his eye, his ankle was
out of joint, his nose was bleeding."

Katie just went on laying out his best
clothes on the bed for him to put on.

"Now, sonny, don't you be a great goose,
Dora's the dearest little creature in the
world. Don't you mind her talk about the
stars and things; it is just a way she has,
and she'll get over it in no time. She is
all dressed up in her great grandfather's
shoe-buckle, playing backgammon with pa
like a dear. She'd make a nice sister for
me, but I do not want her for a ma, so
hurry on down."

Only a few girls will admit that they
tremble and stand at the parlor door to get
their courage up. Dick would have done
so, but the man with an armful of wood to
replenish the fire came along, and he had
to go in to keeping Sambo from laughing
at him.

Dora was standing before an old family
picture, which Mrs. Harrington was ex-
plaining upon. She wore a black velvet
dress, white lace ruffles, a diamond buckle
and a graceful bunch of crimson bouvardia
in her lovely golden hair.

Dick slipped into a seat and tried to look
as if he had been sitting there a long time.
"What you see to the left there is water,"
the old gentleman was saying. "It is the
river, not much of one, but there seems to
be attraction enough to keep Dick for ever
rambling along its margin. Come, Dick,
and tell us what you find."

"Wilets, marlins and doe-witches," re-
peated Dick, as if answering a question in
geography.

"Oh, but I saw lovely things growing on
the banks when I crossed it to-day!" cries
Dora, and old Mr. Harrington, having
logged his bashful son into the conversa-
tion, gracefully retired behind his paper.

Kate did not want to see her brother die
right in the prime of life, so she merciful-
ly answered for him in an off-hand kind of
way.

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logged his bashful son into the conversa-
tion, gracefully retired behind his paper.

Dick stood by her, and couldn't help
thinking her distractingly pretty, but he
was not the fellow to take a lead in conver-
sation.

"Don't you think cat-tails are too utterly
lovely for anything?" asked Dora, in a
confidential kind of way.

"I—I can't say I like them much. They
are always getting mashed, or being trod
on, or being caught in shutting the door."

Dora opened her eyes and looked puzzled.

"They should be hung with red ribbon
to have the most artistic effect. You know
we cannot get them in town, and I am so
anxious to take them home with me. Will
you not help me, Mr. Harrington, to get
them?"

"Certainly. But would you not prefer
fox? I know a fellow who has a glass case
full. He cuts them off as trophies."

"How awfully cruel!"

"Cat-tails would be worse, as you would
have to kill them first, I suppose. My sis-
ter thinks almost as much of Tabby as she
does of me."

Dora looked as completely mystified as
if she were listening to a few remarks in
the Hebrew language.

Kate, on the lookout, caught the expres-
sion, and carried her friend off to the
piano.

Was it a shaft at random sent that made
Dora sing "Wapping Old Stairs," instead
of the German songs she had spent so
much time over?

Some little fairylike creatures know their
man by instinct, and suit their ammunition
to the game.

Dick thought he had never heard any-
thing so entrancingly sweet when Dora
warbled—

"Your Molly has never been false, she declares,
Since last time we parted at Wapping Old
Stairs;
When I swore that I'd still would continue the
same,
And gave you a 'bacca-box marked with my
Be constant and kind, nor your Molly forsake,
For your trousers I'll mend, and your grog,
too, I'll make."

And then, to show what a domestic turn
she possessed, the little creature went and
got her knitting, and began narrowing to
set the heel.

There was a skein to be wound, and be-
fore Dick knew what he was about his
arms were stretched in an imploring atti-
tude, holding the hank, while Dora's pretty
white fingers loosened a tangle here and
there in the most charming manner possi-
ble.

"Is this for—a tidy?" he asked, by way
of being agreeable.

"No. It is for my—my stockings," mur-
murs Dora. "I always knit them myself,"
she added.

You might have knocked Dick down
with a feather. Knitting her own stock-
ings. Economical little thing!

A freak of memory called to mind how
his mother used to do it, knitting his
father's socks in the bright firelight while
he and his baby sister romped with the
kittens on that very hearth. He wondered
if anybody would ever knit socks for him
there.

"And did you spin the yarn?"

He looked so in hopes she would say
yes. Dora was really sorry she had not.
She did not think fit to tell him that the
silk cost as much as six ordinary pairs,
and that the knitting had been her company
work for a year. Crimson and cream-
colored silk make little hands look so cun-
ning and white.

"You are not like the young lady I met
at a ball in California," said Dick. "She
said to me, 'Stockings I can do without,
but earrings I must have.' I see you wear
no earrings."

"I wear no ornaments except natural
flowers, and this old shoebuckle of my
grandfather's."

Then and there Dick made up his mind
he would get her the biggest breastpin
money could buy, the very next time he
went to the city, and send it anonymously.

A girl who did her own knitting, wore a
black gown without any peaks or ruffles,
and an old shoe-buckle for jewelry, de-
served a breastpin.

And that very night he reflected over his
usual pipe, that even if a fellow had not a
great deal of money, any man would do
well to get a wife like that, and believed he
would tell his friend Howard about her.

And he dreamed pleasant dreams of Dora
knitting socks, and patching the big hole
he had that day torn in his corduroy
trousers, though the stars, and cats with
their tails cut off, came and bothered him
some.

Dick spent an hour with the brushes
next morning, trying to get his hair to lie
smooth.

He had a way of looking as if he were
always in a high wind, even on a day when
a feather would drop like a bullet. But

his teeth were as white as Ponto's, and he
looked you straight in the eye.

There was a broiled woodcock for break-
fast.

"Oh, Katie, stop!" cries Dora. "You
must eat yours from the plate I painted for
you."

She runs away for it, and comes down
with a charming bit of ceramic art. Ari-
adne was represented riding on a panther
on a background of palest green, the color
of a duck's egg. The nymph was in a most
graceful attitude, her countenance beaming
with love and hope, as the joyous bride of
Bacchus.

"This is a present for you, dear; I did it
myself."

"How utterly lovely! It must be hung up;
it must! Look, pa, how beautiful."

Mr. Harrington put on his spectacles,
and examined it critically.

"A very pretty Scripture picture! Very
good, indeed!"

Dick's wonder and admiration were too
great for utterance. What could she not
do? To make a plate actually! It was the
last straw that broke the camel's back. He
threw up the sponge.

The others chattered on about the plate,
but he saw only Dora, and gazing at her
between morsels of food, ran great risk of
injuring himself with his fork.

When his friend Howard came next day
with hot-house flowers, and another friend
took her riding in the tightest, trimmest
little habit, he despised his own sheepish-
ness in letting the other fellow get ahead
of him. And he wondered why they made
such officious fools of themselves. He
grew dissatisfied with the fit of his clothes,
and promised to make it lively for that
bootmaker who sent him number nines,
knowing that he could squeeze into eights
and a half.

So many visitors kept on coming to see
Dora that he grew gloomy and low-spirited,
fell away from his food, till Kate was quite
uneasy about her brother.

He wearied himself hunting woodcock
because Dora was fond of them, and en-
dangered his life climbing slim trees for
deserted birds' nests after she had begged
him to bring her home one.

His game bag was stuffed with long
mosses, like old men's gray beards, and dry
seed-pods, and bunches of "trash" for Dora.

He had caught a part of the tune of
"Wapping Old Stairs," which in secluded
spots he sang with great gusto; and he
foolishly kissed the little glove more than
once, a thorn in the side no longer.

The week had nearly slipped away, and
he was out washing his gun, when she came
and watched him.

"You have not kept your promise," she
remarked.

"What promise?"

"To help me get cat-tails."

"I'll do it now. Shall I shoot them first?"
he asked.

"What do you mean? I'll run in and get
my hat and go with you."

"Like as not they are on the roof of the
house," muttered Dick, "and I don't know
what Kate will do. But if Dora wants
Mazepa's tail it shall be cut off for her.
What queer fancies girls have! To want a
cat's tail!"

Under that great furry black hat, with
its wealth of soft plumes, any girl would
have looked charming. Dora always look-
ed so.

"Come," she said, "they are down on the
river. I won't scramble after them my-
self. It brings good luck."

"They'll scratch you fearfully."

"I am not afraid," she replied, "with you
at my side."

"There is a tide in the affairs of men,"
and Dick felt that his had flowed of its own
accord right to his feet, and that if he ever
intended to get Dora to knitting his socks,
he must make arrangements at once. He
became so excited, and appeared to have
such a hurricane blowing around him, that
he could scarcely keep his hat on his head.

Dora walked calmly and peacefully
along under her big hat.

Let us draw a veil over the love-making,
which