

## THE SMOKE SPRITE.

BY JOHN ALBRO.

Cigar in mouth I sat. The graceful curl Of smoke, like ringlets on a pretty girl, Wreathed round my brow, while thoughts profound 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 soothsaying weed Which men regard as luxury and need, That social comfort and the love one's friend, That rests the weary, makes the stern unend."

"Loved in all climes since Raleigh, noble lord, From England's court sought here for rich reward.

Not 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 polysyllabed, to seem profound, Prove to their guying friends what demons are Bound in the binder of a dime cigar.

"The ladies, bless them I am one, admit This manly just to smoke—a little bit. The winsome wife, cigar in hand, says: 'Dear, I 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," I 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 now and when to smoke. And so I would, but, just then, I awoke.

## IT WAS THE CAT-TAILS.

BY EVA M. DE JARINETTE.

"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!"

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 language.

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 Ischia, and was thinking about setting up a nice tombstone over him, to let his friends know what a generous, spreading, 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-tail grows. So Jupiter concluded not to waste his money on a fellow who could actually make the four winds of heaven and whose fate of nature do his advertising gratis, even bending into the same channel the aesthetic fancies of fashionable young ladies of the nineteenth century.

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

Although long past the age when a fellow's friends constantly tell him, as a piece of unexpected news, "how he has grown," Dick had at the whiskers he had not let his troublesome mustache remain latent, instead of rasping and scraping at it, and cutting it with his sister's scissors, till it was as stiff as a black-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, snails, and other small crustaceans, as the proper food, or signs of feeding ground for "willetts," "marlins," "summer ducks," "seek-not-fathers," and "doo-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 velveteen shooting-jacket, and stuffing his pantaloons 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.

Falsey he averred a flock of dippagers or wild turkeys (Kate could not make out what he said, he mumbled so) to be scattered 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 gobblers 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 utterly 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 tall as a church steeple."

"Dick, I'd go in a minute, but I've got to meet a man—"

"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. Harrington?"

"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 catching them through me."

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

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

Had he climbed Horney's Peak when it was two feet deep in snow; shot a California grizzly; had slept calmly by the bison 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 "afeard 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 communed sadly 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.

"Afeard 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 marty 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—elongates his body, thrusts forward his head; his eye is set; his limbs stand rigidly; he is about to have a fit!

"Hie on!" Whirr-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 woodcock 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 shuddering 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 skillful sportsmen can distinguish objects afar off is well known, but none the less remarkable. 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 briers, 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 himself, although his own would have done for Hercules. Ladies' gloves are sometimes prettier than the hands they cover.

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

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

A few more strides on the Seven-league Boots and he was on the high road, where Ponto 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 mud clinging 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 gaping like Mariana in the moated grange.

Cautiously passing the honeysuckle arbor, looking about and around over his shoulders, 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 before he had time to swoon or shoot him, he plucked Katie, who thoroughly enjoyed 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 Pleiades 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 now—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. Harrington?"

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

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

Then she carried her friend into the parlor, 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."

Kate 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

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