



*Illustrated by T. S. C. CROWTHER.*

#### IV.—THE PROCTOR.



SOULS of good Americans have been accounted for in a latter-day proverb, but I have yet to learn that the spirit of the virtuous proctor has received the same attention. Possibly it is the opinion of mankind in general, and of the undergraduate in particular, that the proctor has no soul, or, having one, is predestined to shades

wherein the smoke is not the smoke of the Havannah, nor the music the dulcet strain of the "Circus Girl." Yet a moment's reflection should convince us that the soul of the good proctor goes to Andrew's Street, there to stalk a heaven paved with the third parts of pounds, and peopled with undergraduates who cannot run. No Sisyphian tortures mar this haven of bliss. Fines are not paid with farthings; strangers are not arrested to mock and scorn. The good proctor demands his six-and-eight through eternity. The ages are forgotten but his youth is perpetual, and his bulldogs never lose their wind.

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To resist violence, says Tacitus, is implanted in the nature of man. The same spirit animating youth, we may suppose, contrives that instinctive hostility with which even the freshman regards the proctor. From his first day at Cambridge the undergraduate is taught that no friendship is

possible between him and the gentleman in bands who goes forth by night seeking whom he may fine. There is, indeed, something not to be forgotten in your first meeting with a proctor. It seems to recall those days long ago when Mary Ann, your nurse, threatened you with a great big ugly policeman if you interrupted her flirtation with the pretty little soldier man. You have a quaking at the knees when the banded guardian of the University peace flits by in the dark of evening, and an obliging gas lamp shows you the villainous faces of the two murderers—or bulldogs—who follow in his steps. Yet a proctor is only human. Strip him of his gown and bands, examine his flexors and extensors, and you might even come to a profound contempt for him. This, unfortunately, is not permitted even to the most curious freshman; the giant's robe hedges about even a liliputian proctor with the glamour of the unpleasant office. Your cigar goes up your sleeve, driven there by a subtle instinct, when he approaches; your broken hat seems to gather itself together and to tremble upon your head.

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Much as vulgar curiosity promotes the desire to behold a proctor, the freshman may spend weeks in Cambridge and yet never see one. People assure him that his anxiety will be less by-and-bye; but that does not satisfy a craving to behold in the flesh those janisaries of 'Varsity law who are potent to strike terror even into the heart of a ripened student. So our type may patrol Andrew's Street night after night, asking of all, "Show me a proctor," and no answer will be vouchsafed to him. They have told him before this that a proctor is a don and nothing

more—a human, palpable, flesh-and-blood don appointed by the vice-chancellor to patrol the streets of Cambridge for one year, and to snap up all the unconsidered trifles in the way of six-and-eights possible during the time. The freshman believes no such tale. A proctor to him is a ghostly apparition rising up from the limbo of lost policemen. The bulldogs are resurrected assassins lusting for horrid deeds. By-and-bye when he has forgotten his desire to see such rogues, and has brought himself to believe that proctors are myths, and that practically you can wear any sort of cap, and smoke where and when you like in Cambridge, his system receives a shock. He is returning to his rooms, perhaps, with that jaunty and devil-may-care step which speaks of oysters and ginger ale; a big cigar decorates the corner of his mouth; the ruins of a cap totter upon his ample brow. He flatters himself that he is alone, and murmurs sweet



"Sheffield 'andicaps ain't in it with this yere."

airs all about "Cole and a jolly old soul." This is the moment when he makes acquaintance with the proctor. Suddenly, from the darkness, a figure appears before him. It is that of a man in a black morning coat and a tall silk hat. The man has a vulgar face and does not always pay tribute to the aspirates. He is a college servant, in fact, a butler or gyp promoted to the honours of the bulldog's state during his master's term of office. And now he stands before the amazed freshman proffering his meek request—

"The proctor would like to speak to you, sir."

The freshman takes his cigar out of his mouth, and is conscious of a curious sensation. Is this, then, the moment he has looked for? Has a proctor really come down to earth? He is about to put a question to the menial at his side when two other figures sweep out of the darkness. One is that of the second murderer, attired also in the black morning coat and the silk hat; the other, the figure of the proctor himself in his master's gown, his bands, and his dignity of office. Disillusion indeed! Can this be the man, this little, piping, thin-legged fellow with a voice like a deformed whistle and the politeness of a dancing-master? The freshman is soon able to answer the question.

"You are a member of this University, sir," squeaks the proctor.

"Er—aw—that is—yes."

"Your name and college, sir?"

"Er—aw—Snooks, of Corpus."

"You will return to your rooms, sir, and come to me at eleven o'clock to-morrow morning with a new cap. You have been smoking, sir."

The freshman looks at his cigar, then at the proctor. It is all so new; he cannot quite understand it. "His name and college—new cap—been smoking—eleven o'clock to-morrow." It is Hindustani to him—for that night at any rate. It will not be Hindustani in the morning when he will pay six shillings and eightpence into the University chest, and owe his tailor for a second cap.

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Here is the simplest possible picture of the proctor in action; but there are varieties of it. When, for instance, the figure of our first murderer loomed up out of the fog, the undergraduate might have concluded that a sprint would do him no harm, and have run for it. Such things have been known in Cambridge. I remember an old Varsity athlete, a "ten-and-a-fifther" in his time, who said to me once, "I always run from proctors; it keeps my wind in order." To him the thing was as simple as picking flowers. Directly he saw a bulldog, he would start off with that swinging stride of his, measuring his pace so perfectly that the wretched murderer was tortured with all the misery of hope deferred. One night this athlete, whom I will call Black, ran in from Trumpington, the bulldog being a man of unusual staying power. After a rare bout of two miles and a half, the pair wound up with a



“‘You are a member of this University, sir,’ squeaks the proctor.”

burst down Trinity Street, in which the blue was anywhere and the dog nowhere. I remember the occasion well, for the pursued took refuge in my rooms, and when he had recovered a little we opened the window and observed the bulldog sitting on a doorstep a few yards down the road. The unfortunate rogue groaned like a strong man on a channel packet. He recognised his quarry, of course, but was far too good a sportsman to give him away; indeed he bore witness to the merit of the entertainment.

"Lord!" he gasped, "you're a winner, you are! Sheffield 'andicaps ain't in it with this yere. For heavin's sake give us something to drink, sir, or I'm derved if I shan't 'ave a fit!"

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We gave him something to drink; and having been assured by him that his new trousers were spoiled, and that "the job would cost him a sovereign," we sent him on his way rejoicing. This was not the only occasion upon which Black moved a bulldog to imperil his immortal soul by the use of expletives deserving the ecclesiastical anathema. I recall very clearly the memory of a night when, dining in the rooms of a man who kept near by Jesus Piece, our dinner was interrupted by a little comedy so delightful that it was long a *bonne bouche* of 'Varsity reminiscence. It is necessary to explain that the street which served for the scene of this play was one side of a block of buildings which made a square of streets, the gardens of the houses forming the centre of the square, and the streets themselves the four sides. We had just sat down to dinner when the curtain rose upon the performance. Suddenly an unusual shouting was to be heard in the street without. Someone cried that the voice was the voice of Black, a suggestion which drew us to the window expectantly. There, sure enough, was Black running for all he was worth, and pursued by a bulldog who sprinted like an Indian. The pair were gone round the corner in a flash, but we guessed that our friend would make the tour of the square, and presently that assumption was justified. Three minutes passed, perhaps, before we saw him again, but by this time he had gained fifty yards on the bulldog, and was striding out with that perfection of form which enabled him to cut so many records. Not a word did he say to us as he passed, but with a nod and a grin he doubled round the corner again, and the bulldog went lurching after him. When he

came into view for the third time he had gained a hundred yards or more upon his enemy, and this time he spoke to us.

"You fellows," he roared, "throw me a cap and gown next time!"

Needless to say we had the disguise ready in a moment, guessing the meaning of the request. It seemed a long time before Black appeared at the end of the street; but the bulldog was lost to sight by that time, and when our friend came under our window he threw his low hat deftly into the room and slipped on the cap and gown. Then he put his hands into his pockets and strolled calmly down the street. The bulldog, meanwhile, had appeared upon the scene again, the mere wreck of a man, panting, swearing, rolling with his efforts. Seeking to follow a tall undergraduate in a low hat, he never even looked at Black as he ran by him, but doubled the corner again and went flying on. When we saw him ten minutes later he was sitting in the gutter with his collar, hat, and tie beside him, and the expression of the ultimate agony upon his face.

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These are strong measures, to be used only by a man of strong limbs. The weaker man pays up like a lamb; or if he dissemble, a cunning strategy must help him. There was, some little time ago, in Caius a freshman who had spent so many years in Paris that he spoke French like a Spaniard. This knowledge he used subsequently to the exceeding discomfort of a very English proctor who had not enough of the tongue to buy a biscuit at a buffet. I remember the occasion well. The freshman was walking down Andrew's Street, breaking as many of the laws and customs as one man might be expected to do on any given occasion. He had a cigar in his mouth, a golf cap upon his head, and an exceedingly loud suit of checks to aggravate his enormities. At the post office the Saxon proctor pounced upon him, glaring with fury that such a spectacle should be seen in the sober streets of Cambridge.

"Sir," he roared, "are you a member of this University?"

The freshman shrugged his shoulders, imitating a gentleman of France to perfection.

"Monsieur," he said with tremendous politeness, "combien prenez-vous par tête?"

The humour and the meaning of this extraordinary retort were utterly lost upon the proctor. Alarmed at the first word of a tongue he did not understand, ashamed to declare his ignorance, he took off his hat and

endeavoured to imitate the politeness of the unfortunate stranger.

"Sir," he said with great suavity, "I see that I have made a mistake; I beg to apologise, sir."

But now was our actor's time. Feigning indignation, he answered sternly—

"Monsieur, le chat échaudé craint l'eau froide."

The proctor began to wash his hands in the air and to suffer all the shame of ignorance.

They tell many stories in Cambridge of strangers who have amused themselves by the rather threadbare joke of suffering themselves to be caught by bulldogs and brought before the proctor, to that official's discomfiture. These humours are a little stale at this day; but a jest of a more elaborate order was, says rumour, played some while back with such astonishing success that the proctor concerned made heroic efforts to hush it up, and succeeded practically in doing so. The



"Mr. Paton, of Emmanuel."

"Sir," he reiterated, "je ne parle—that is, I have made a mistake, sir; I apologise."

"Monsieur," cried the freshman savagely, "vous me riez au nez; vous m'insultez—certainement; vous m'exaspérez—mes amis, monsieur!"

But at this point the proctor cried "enough." Perhaps he understood the word "amis"; possibly he thought that coffee and pistols would be ready at dawn. In either case he gathered his bulldogs about him and fled as one pursued by the Furies.

facts were very simple. A burlesque company came to the town to play an extravaganza at the only theatre. One of this company was a merry jade, famous in all provincial towns as a "principal boy." We may assume that some love-sick youth whispered into the ear of this damosel the suggestion that she should play the part of an undergraduate in the streets and be proctorised. However it was, she sallied forth one dark evening, daintily dressed in a thunder and lightning suit, and succeeded very quickly in gratifying her

strange ambition. A proctor stopped her, took down her name—which she gave as Paton—and informed her that she must call upon him at his rooms by eleven o'clock next day. She did so, being careful to change her dress and to set out all her charms to perfection before paying such a novel visit. The astonishment of the excellent cleric is to be imagined when "Mr. Paton, of Emmanuel," was announced and ushered into his room. No longer did he see the slim boy who had answered his questions so meekly the night before. In his place was a dashing girl, powdered, rouged, and splendidly attired—it may be a little unclassical in her phrases. Tradition—lying tradition, of course—declares that the good man shed real tears before he could persuade the lady to forsake the beautiful courts of his college. Never until that time had he been called "old chap" by a lady.

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Happily for the dignity of the office, it is not often that a proctor makes himself publicly ridiculous. I remember but two cases of the kind during my student days, the same man serving for hero on each occasion. He was a little fellow, a proctor of John's, who managed to earn conspicuous unpopularity for himself by methods of work which even professors pronounced unsportsmanlike. A favourite trick of his was to sally forth on Sunday night without his bulldogs; for he trusted that his little body would not be observed in the press of the crowd, and that many fish would rush, all unsuspecting, to his net. It was a rash business at the best, and news that "Stony," of John's, was out without his dogs spread quickly through the Varsity. On the second Sunday of this amazing venture "Stony" set out to patrol Andrew's Street as usual, but had got no further than the Market Place when a man of the Hall first boat slapped him on the back affectionately and deliberately seized his cap. Before the astonished proctor could speak or move, the boating man was skipping away towards Sidney with the captured treasure held high above his head. "Stony," having no dogs for the pursuit, stood speechless in the Market Place, while the crowd began to guffaw and to cheer. A proctor without a cap! Such a sight had never been seen within the memory of man. No message flashed from Eddystone to Berwick's bounds ever travelled at such a speed as these extraordinary tidings. From Caius, from Clare, from John's, from Trinity men came running,

wild with excitement and with joy. Soon a vast mob pressed on the terrified little man—the rare swimmer in that tremendous human sea. It shouted, danced, crowed with joy. From room to room and court to court the great news spread, "They have bagged 'Stony's' cap in the Market Place!" Nearly an hour passed before the excited, yelping throngs bore the little man, shoulder high, to the gates of his college and there took their leave of him with three times three. It was positively his last appearance in the rôle of a dogless proctor.

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The other instance of which I have spoken was in its way even more amusing. The occasion was a great gathering at the Guildhall in the Market Place. A mob of townsmen and undergraduates assembled before the doors of the building, hoping to secure a seat and hear the popular Corney Grain and his company. Everyone looked for a row, of course, nor was this hope disappointed. Presently "Stony," the proctor, appeared upon the scene. With a great many "by your leave's" and "allow me's," he forced his way into the middle of the press. At this point, however, he stuck, and being unable to move so much as a hand because of the multitude, he waited there patiently. It befell that one of his neighbours was a great Australian blue—a man of humour—whose keen mind was quick to appreciate the fact that the proctor and his bulldogs were hopelessly wedged in the crowd. Such an opportunity was not to be missed. Up went the oarsman's great fist—down it came crash on the spotless silk hat of the helpless bulldog! A second blow jammed the hat of the second man right down upon his shoulders! The pair, blinded by their own headgear, powerless to move, wormed and twisted like whipped dogs. "Stony" himself roared, "Your name and college, sir?" until he was black in the face. But the Australian was a man of nerve. Kissing his hand prettily to the representative of law and order, he shouldered his way through the crowd and was instantly lost to sight.

Strangely enough this was not "Stony's" only adventure on that memorable night. An hour or so later he had left his bulldogs at the top of the Guildhall stairs, and was engaged instructing the box-office keeper what to do with gentlemen who, having no wish to pay without going in, did not object to go in without paying. As "Stony" stood at the little window, his head through the

opening and his legs stuck well out behind him, it occurred to some man of emprise that the proctor would be more comfortable on the other side of the partition. Without more ado he picked up "Stony" by the legs and dropped him through the window usually devoted to the reception of cash! The astonishment of the box-office keeper at the advent of the human coin is easy to be imagined. In fact, the proctor and he went rolling over and over on the floor together; but when they picked themselves up, the perpetrator of the dastardly outrage had fled.

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The childish employments of leisurely stockbrokers have been a source of amusement to strangers for some generations, but even a stockbroker spinning a peg-top is not so infantile a spectacle as the undergraduate in the moment of fashions and of new toys. In my time there was a month when peashooters—long glass peashooters—were the mode. Freshmen bought these unblushingly, and practised with them upon the heads of any inoffensive person who chanced to come within range. I can recollect very well an occasion when a party of diners, who had held a feast in some rooms overlooking the Market Place, were enabled to use these weapons upon the sacred person of "Red Morgan," the terrible, who was then a proctor. It was almost dusk when "Red Morgan," with his dot-and-go-one walk, came stumping along the opposite side of the road, and no sooner had the diners seen him than out went their lights and up went their pea-shooters. Presently you heard a perfect hail of pellets upon the hard hats of the bulldogs, while "Red Morgan" himself was seen to cover his face with his hands and to swell with excitement. Surprise and indignation at the audacity of the thing robbed him of words. He stood with a bellow halting upon his lips. A second volley moved him to imbecile laughter—the laughter of a pasha who will hang you presently upon hot hooks.

"Ho, ho, this is indeed absurd!"

The expression was not such as the hearers expected, but it fitted the occasion to a nicety. The awful bass voice of the enraged proctor seemed to shake the tower of St. Mary's. A second indiscreet volley attracted his attention to the darkened room in which the carousal had been held. Standing for a moment swaying like a bull who has been pricked by darts, he made up his mind at last to charge, and came trotting

across the road with the step of an elephant. Meanwhile the youths had distributed themselves; five were stowed away cleverly beneath the bed of their host; five more were jammed in a little linen cupboard under the stairs. When "Red Morgan" reached the dining-room it was as silent as a cavern. The men, from their place of shelter, heard him roar again, "This is indeed absurd!" but they suppressed their feelings, though the agony of the "black hole" was almost beyond endurance. In all probability the affair would have ended with success had not the door of the linen cupboard burst



"He picked up 'Stony' by the legs and dropped him through the window."

open just as "Red Morgan" appeared upon the landing. The spectacle of five men shot out as from a catapult—for the press in the cupboard was awful—appealed irresistibly to his sense of humour. He wound up—after terrible threats and dreadful hints—by asking the diners to breakfast with him—and they went.

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Here is a lesson which might well be learnt by all proctors. The milk of human kindness is not wasted even upon an undergraduate. I remember a man who was made the lasting champion of the great

"O.B." of King's by a pretty act of vengeance which only a generous mind could have conceived. The man in question had been fined six-and-eightpence as compensation to the University chest for the enormity of smoking a cigarette in the streets of Cambridge. The proctor who apprehended the villain was Mr. Oscar Browning, the ever-popular and fatherly dignitary of King's. It chanced, however, that his prey was a humorist, who paid the bulldog next day in farthings, long hoarded for the jest. Mr. Oscar Browning had no objections to farthings as such, but he had a great regard for the pockets of his bulldogs and for the proctorial dignity. He answered the joke by another, the imposition of a guinea fine to wit. When the undergraduate came to him to protest, he gave him a lecture upon good manners and a capital lunch. So do the gods jest!

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Happily for the peace of the University, these venial offences are the offences most often expiated by the penitent at the proctorial confessional. It is not for me to speak here of the darker pictures and the more gloomy narratives to which human weakness gives birth in every city where men congregate. Nor can I discuss those larger questions of discipline and of procedure which have been so much discussed in and out of the University during the decade. Rare is the day now when even a breath of excitement sweeps the streets or courts of Cambridge. The cry of "Gown!" no longer rallies the elect to the reformation and spiritual salvation of the bargee. The 5th of November comes and goes, and the rare squib lifts its head meekly, as though to say, "Ah, the times I remember!" Lord Mayors' Days are numbered, yet peace prevails. The very mobs which come hungering to the gates of the colleges are sent empty away, with no more than a couple of scuttles of coal heaped on their heads from the windows above. Once only within the last twenty years has there been an approach to a riot of sufficient respectability to rub shoulders for a moment with the greater achievements of the past. That, if my memory does not fail me, was in the autumn of the year 1881, when a mob of angry men, goaded by an attack upon a popular restaurant, set off at eleven o'clock on the night of November 5 to visit a wild beast show then encamped on Jesus Piece. The intention of the company was to release the lions—a noble ambition defeated by the

vigilance of certain keepers armed with long poles, and by the vulgar obstinacy of the town constables. Thus obstructed, the valiant host could set free but one insignificant kangaroo, and having done so much, it turned back and began to indulge in the less hazardous pursuit of breaking lamps and wrenching off shutters. Considerable damage was done in the town, the lamps being wrecked for nearly a mile; but a strategic attack by combined proctors turned the movement and resulted at midnight in a glorious victory. The last meddlesome proctor I remember nearly lost his life on Degree Day. And the folly was all his own. He attempted to interfere with that sacred custom of presenting the last man in the mathematical tripos with a wooden spoon. When the spoon was lowered from the gallery of the senate house at the appointed time, this blundering man cut the string which suspended it, and it fell with a crash to the floor below. Who was responsible for the momentary madness which followed it would be impossible to say, but as the spoon fell a great roar of anger went up, and fifty men began to hustle the proctor. They were about to throw him out of the window to the street below, a distance of twenty or thirty feet, when lusty bulldogs fought their way to his side and carried him out of the building. He ran for his life to his own college, and there, fended by iron gates, he defied the mob. A well-meaning, but a woefully foolish man.

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A rare bird, happily, is a fellow of this sort. For the most part proctors are hard-working dons who perform an unpleasant task very pleasantly. I have known them so blind that they could not see a pipe if you smoked it under their very noses; I have known others who would stalk through Cambridge with their eyes fixed upon the pavement and their ears deaf even to the thundering refrain of "D'ye ken John Peel?" These men go down to fame in the golden book. It is something to remember their names after long years, and to think of them with esteem and regard. As for their brethren who can see a cigarette when it is yet a long way off, lucky for them that oblivion ultimately claims them. Ten years ago, perchance, they were flourishing dons and deans; to-day, it may be, they proctorise the heathen in far countries, and sorrow lies heavy upon their souls because the black man comes to their lectures with a red flannel waistcoat for his academicals.