

The Spectre of Tappington

Thomas Ingoldsby

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"IT is very odd, though; what can have become of them?" said Charles Seaforth, as he peeped under the valance of an old-fashioned bedstead, in an old-fashioned apartment of a still more old-fashioned manor-house; "'tis confoundedly odd, and I can't make it out at all. Why, Barney, where are they?—and where the d—I are you?"

No answer was returned to this appeal; and the lieutenant, who was, in the main, a reasonable person,—at least as reasonable a person as any young gentleman of twenty-two in "the service" can fairly be expected to be,—cooled when he reflected that his servant could scarcely reply extempore to a summons which it was impossible he should hear.

An application to the bell was the considerate result; and the footsteps of as tight a lad as ever put pipe-clay to belt sounded along the gallery.

"Come in!" said his master.—An ineffectual attempt upon the door reminded Mr Seaforth that he had locked himself in.—"By Heaven! this is the oddest thing of all," said he, as he turned the key and admitted Mr Maguire into his dormitory.

"Barney, where are my pantaloons?"

"Is it the breeches?" asked the valet, casting an inquiring eye round the apartment;—"is it the breeches, sir?"

"Yes; what have you done with them?"

"Sure then your honour had them on when you went to bed, and it's hereabout they'll be, I'll be bail;" and Barney lifted a fashionable tunic from a cane-backed arm-chair, proceeding in his examination. But the search was vain: there was the tunic aforesaid,—there was a smart-looking kerseymere waistcoat; but the most important article of all in a gentleman's wardrobe was still wanting.

"Where *can* they be?" asked the master, with a strong accent on the auxiliary verb.

"Sorrow a know I knows," said the man.

"It *must* have been the devil, then, after all, who has been here and carried them off!" cried Seaforth, staring full into Barney's face.

Mr Maguire was not devoid of the superstition of his countrymen, still he looked as if he did not quite subscribe to the *sequitur*.

His master read incredulity in his countenance. "Why, I tell you, Barney, I put them there, on that arm-chair, when I got into bed; and, by Heaven! I distinctly saw the ghost of the old fellow they told me of, come in at midnight, put on my pantaloons, and walk away with them.

"May be so," was the cautious reply.

"I thought, of course, it was a dream; but then,—where the d—I are the breeches?"

The question was more easily asked than answered. Barney renewed his search, while the lieutenant folded his arms, and, leaning against the toilet, sunk into a reverie.

"After all, it must be some trick of my laughter-loving cousins," said Seaforth.

"Ah! then, the ladies!" chimed in Mr Maguire, though the observation was not addressed to him; "and will it be Miss Caroline, or Miss Fanny, that's stole your honour's things?"

"I hardly know what to think of it," pursued the bereaved lieutenant, still speaking in soliloquy, with his eye resting dubiously on the chamber-door. "I locked myself in, that's certain; and—but there must be some other entrance to the room—pooh! I remember—the private staircase; how could I be such a fool?" and he crossed the chamber to where a low oaken doorcase was dimly visible in a distant corner. He paused before it. Nothing now interfered to screen it from observation; but it bore tokens of having been .at some earlier period concealed by tapestry, remains of which yet clothed the walls on either side the portal.

"This way they must have:come," said Seaforth; "I wish with all my heart I had caught them!"

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"Och! the kittens!" sighed Mr Barney Maguire.

But the mystery was yet as far from being solved as before. True, there *was* the "other door;" but then that, too, on examination, was even more firmly—secured than the one which opened on the gallery,—two heavy bolts on the inside effectually prevented any *coup de main* on the lieutenant's *bivouac* from that quarter. He was more puzzled than ever; nor did the minutest inspection of the walls and floor throw any light upon the subject! one thing only was clear,—the breeches were gone! "It is *very* singular," said the lieutenant.

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Tappington (generally called Tapton) Everard is an antiquated but commodious manor—house in the eastern division of the county of Kent. A former proprietor had been High—sheriff in the days of Elizabeth, and many a dark and dismal tradition was yet extant of the licentiousness of his life, and the enormity of his offences. The Glen, which the keeper's daughter was seen to enter, but never known to quit, still frowns darkly as of yore; while an ineradicable bloodstain on the oaken stair yet bids defiance to the united energies of soap and sand. But it is with one particular apartment that a deed of more especial atrocity is said to be connected. A stranger guest—so runs the legend—arrived unexpectedly at the mansion of the "Bad Sir Giles." They met in apparent friendship; but the ill—concealed scowl on their master's brow told the domestics that the visit was not a welcome one; the banquet, however, was not spared; the wine—cup circulated freely,—too freely, perhaps,—for sounds of discord at length reached the ears of even the excluded serving—men as they were doing their best to imitate their betters in the lower hall. Alarmed, some of them ventured to approach the parlour; one, an old and favoured retainer of the house, went so far as to break in upon his master's privacy. Sir Giles, already high in oath, fiercely enjoined his absence, and he retired; not, however, before he had distinctly heard from the stranger's lips a menace that "There was that within his pocket which could disprove the knight's right to issue that or any other command within the walls of Tapton.

The intrusion, though momentary, seemed to have produced a beneficial effect; the voices of the disputants fell, and the conversation was carried on thenceforth in a more subdued tone, till, as evening closed in, the domestics, when summoned to attend with lights, found not only cordiality restored, but that a still deeper carouse was meditated. Fresh stoups, and from the choicest bins, were produced; nor was it till at a late, or rather early hour, that the revellers sought their chambers.

The one allotted to the stranger occupied the first floor of the eastern angle of the building, and had once been the favourite apartment of Sir Giles himself. Scandal—ascribed this preference to the facility which a private staircase, communicating with the grounds, had afforded him, in the old knight's time, of following his wicked courses unchecked by parental observation; a consideration which ceased to be of weight when the death of his father left him uncontrolled master of his estate and actions. From that period Sir Giles had established himself in what were called the "state apartments;" and the "oaken chamber" was rarely tenanted, save on occasions of extraordinary festivity, or when the yule log drew an unusually large accession of guests around the Christmas hearth.

On this eventful night it was prepared for the unknown visitor, who sought his couch heated and inflamed from his midnight orgies, and in the morning was found in his bed a swollen and blackened corpse. No marks of violence appeared upon the body; but the livid hue of the lips, and certain dark—coloured spots visible on the skin, aroused suspicions which those who entertained them were too timid to express. Apoplexy, induced by the excesses of the preceding night, Sir Giles's confidential leech pronounced to be the cause of his sudden dissolution; the body was buried in peace; and though some shook their heads as they witnessed the haste with which the funeral rites were hurried on, none ventured to murmur. Other events arose to distract the attention of the retainers; men's minds became occupied by the stirring politics of the day, while the near approach of that formidable armada, so vainly arrogating to itself a title which the very elements joined with human valour to disprove, soon interfered to weaken, if not obliterate, all remembrance of the nameless stranger who had died within the walls of Tapton Everard.

Years rolled on: the "Bad Sir Giles" had—himself long since gone to his account, the last, as it was believed,

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of his immediate line; though a few of the older tenants were sometimes heard to speak of an elder brother, who had disappeared in early life, and never inherited the estate. Rumours, too, of his having left a son in foreign lands were at one time rife: but they died away, nothing occurring to support them: the property passed unchallenged to a collateral branch of the family, and the secret, if secret there were, was buried in Denton churchyard, in the lonely grave of the mysterious stranger. One circumstance alone occurred, after a long-intervening period, to revive the memory of these transactions. Some workmen employed in grubbing an old plantation, for the purpose of raising on it site a modern shrubbery, dug up, in the execution of their task, the mill-dewed remnants of what seemed to have been once a garment. On more minute inspection, enough remained of silken slashes and a coarse embroidery to identify the relics as having once formed part of a pair of trunk hose; while a few papers which fell from them, altogether illegible from damp and age, were by the unlearned rustics conveyed to the then owner of the estate.

Whether the squire was more successful in deciphering them was never known; he certainly never alluded to their contents; and little would have been thought of the matter but for the inconvenient memory of one old woman, who declared she heard her grandfather say that when the "stranger guest" was poisoned, though all the rest of his clothes were there, his breeches, the supposed repository of the supposed documents, could never be found. The master of Tapton Everard smiled when he heard Dame Jones's hint of deeds which might impeach the validity of his own title in favour of some unknown descendant of some unknown heir; and the story was rarely alluded to, save by one or two miracle-mongers, who had heard that others had seen the ghost of old Sir Giles, in his night-cap, issue from the postern, enter the adjoining copse, and wring his shadowy hands in agony, as he seemed to search vainly for something hidden among the evergreens. The stranger's death-room had, of course, been occasionally haunted from the time of his decease; but the periods of visitation had latterly become very rare,—even Mrs Botherby, the house-keeper, being forced to admit that, during her long sojourn at the manor, she had never "met with anything worse than herself;" though, as the old lady afterwards added upon more mature reflection, "I must say I think I saw the devil *once*."

Such was the legend attached to Tapton Everard, and such the story which the lively Caroline Ingoldsby detailed to her equally mercurial cousin Charles Seaforth, lieutenant in the Hon. East India Company's second regiment of Bombay Fencibles, as arm-in-arm they promenaded a gallery decked with some dozen grim-looking ancestral portraits, and, among others, with that of the redoubted Sir Giles himself. The gallant commander had that very morning paid his first visit to the house of his maternal uncle, after an absence of several years passed with his regiment on the arid plains of Hindostan, whence he was now returned on a three years' furlough. He had gone out a boy, he—returned a man, but the impression made upon his youthful fancy by his favourite cousin remained unimpaired, and to Tapton he directed his steps, even before he sought the home of his widowed mother,—comforting himself in this breach of filial decorum by the reflection that, as the manor was so little out of his way, it would be unkind to pass, as it were, the door of his relatives without just looking in for a few hours.

But he found his uncle as hospitable and his cousin more charming than ever, and the looks of one, and the requests of the other, soon precluded the possibility of refusing to lengthen the "few hours" into a few days, though the house was at the moment full of visitors.

The Peterses were there from Ramsgate; and Mr, Mrs, and the two Miss Simpkinsons, from Bath, had come to pass a month with the family; and Tom Ingoldsby had brought down his college friend the Honourable Augustus Sucklethumbkin, with his groom and pointers, to take a fortnight's shooting. And then there was Mrs Ogleton, the rich young widow, with her large black eyes, who, people did say, was setting her cap at the young squire, though Mrs Botherby did not believe it; and, above all, here was Mademoiselle Pauline, her *femme de chambre*, who "*mon Dieu*" everything and everybody, and cried, *Quel horreur!*" at Mrs Botherby's cap. In short, to use the last-named and much-respected lady's own expression, the house was "choke-full" to the very attics,—all, save the "oaken chamber," which, as the lieutenant expressed a most magnanimous disregard of ghosts, was forthwith appropriated to his particular accommodation. Mr Maguire meanwhile was fain to share the apartment of Oliver Dobbs, the squire's own man: a jocular proposal of joint occupancy having been first indignantly rejected by "Mademoiselle," though preferred with the "laste taste in life" of Mr Barney's most insinuating brogue.

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"Come, Charles, the urn is absolutely getting cold; your breakfast will be quite spoiled: what can have made you so idle?" Such was the morning salutation of Miss Ingoldsby to the *militaire* as he entered the breakfast-room half an hour after the latest of the party.

"A pretty gentleman, truly, to make an appointment with," chimed in Miss Frances. "What is become of our ramble to the rocks before breakfast?"

"Oh! the young men never think of keeping a promise now," said Mrs Peters, a little ferret-faced woman with underdone eyes.

"When I was a young man," said Mr Peters, I remember I always made a point of—"

"Pray how long ago was that?" asked Mr Simpkinson from Bath.

"Why, sir, when I married Mrs Peters, I was—let me see—I was—"

"Do pray hold your tongue, P., and eat your breakfast!" interrupted his better half, who had a mortal horror of chronological references; it's very rude to tease people with your family-affairs."

The lieutenant had by this time taken his seat in silence—a good-humoured nod, and a glance, half-smiling, half-inquisitive, being the extent of his salutation. Smitten as he was, and in the immediate presence of her who had made so large a hole in his heart, his manner was evidently *distract*, which the fair Caroline in her secret soul attributed to his being solely occupied by her *agrémens*,—how would she have bridled had she known that they only shared his meditations with a pair of breeches!

Charles drank his coffee and spiked some half-dozen eggs, darting occasionally a penetrating glance at the ladies, in hope of detecting the supposed waggery by the evidence of some furtive smile or conscious look. But in vain; not dimple moved indicative of roguery, nor did the slightest elevation of eyebrow rise confirmative of his suspicions. Hints and insinuations passed unheeded,—more particular inquiries were out of the question:—the subject was unapproachable.

In the meantime, "patent cords" were just the thing for a morning's ride; and, breakfast ended, away cantered the party over the downs, till, every faculty absorbed by the beauties, animate and inanimate, which surrounded him, Lieutenant Seaforth of the Bombay Fencibles bestowed no more thought upon his breeches than if he had been born the top of Ben Lomond.

Another night had passed away; the sun rose brilliantly, forming with his level beams a splendid rainbow in the far off west, whither the heavy cloud, which for the last two hours had been pouring its waters on the earth, was now flying before him.

"Ah! then, and it's little good it'll be the claning of ye," apostrophised Mr Barney Maguire, as he deposited, in front of his master's toilet, a pair of "bran-new" jockey boots, one of Hoby's primeest fits, which the lieutenant had purchased in his way through town. On that very morning had they come for the first time under the valet's depurating hand, so little soiled, indeed, from the turfy ride of the preceding day, that a less scrupulous domestic might, perhaps, have considered the application of "Warren's Matchless," or oxalic acid, altogether superfluous. Not so Barney: with the nicest care had he removed the slightest impurity from each polished surface and there they stood, rejoicing in their sable radiance. No wonder a pang shot across Mr Maguire's breast, as he thought on the work now cut out for them, so different from the light labours of the day before, no wonder he murmured with a sigh, as the scarce-dried window-panes disclosed a road now inch-deep in mud, "Ah! then, it's little good the claning of ye!"—for well had he learned in the hall below that eight miles of a stiff clay soil lay between the Manor and Bolsover Abbey, whose picturesque ruins,

"Like ancient Rome, majestic in decay,"

the party had determined to explore. The master—had already commenced dressing, and the man was fitting straps upon a light pair of crane-necked spurs, when his hand was arrested by the old question, "Barney, where are the breeches?"

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They were nowhere to be found!

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Mr Seaforth descended that morning, whip in hand, and equipped in a handsome green riding-frock, but no "breeches and boots to match" were there: loose jean trowsers, surmounting a pair of diminutive Wellingtons, embraced, somewhat incongruously, his nether man, *vice* the "patent cords," returned, like yesterday's pantaloons, absent without leave. The "top-boots" had a holiday.

"A fine morning after the rain," said Mr Simpkinson from Bath.

"Just the thing for the 'ops," said Mr Peters. "I remember when I was a boy——"

"Do hold your tongue, P.," said Mrs Peters, advice which that exemplary matron was in the constant habit of administering to "her P.," as she called him, whenever he prepared to vent his reminiscences. Her precise reason for this it would be difficult to determine, unless, indeed, the story be true which a little bird had whispered into Mrs Botherby's ear,—Mr Peters, though now a wealthy man, had received a liberal education at a charity-school and was apt to recur to the days of his muffin cap and leathers. As usual, he took his wife's hint in good part, and "paused in his reply."

"A glorious day for the ruins!" said young Ingoldsby. "But, Charles, what the deuce are you about?—you don't mean to ride through our lanes in such toggey as that?"

"Lassy me!" said Miss Julia Simpkinson, "won't you be very wet?"

"You had better take Tom's cab," quoth the squire.

But this proposition was at once overruled; Mrs Ogleton had already nailed the cab, a vehicle of all others the best adapted for a snug flirtation.

"Or drive Miss Julia in the phaeton?" No; that was the post of Mr Peters, who, indifferent as an equestrian, had acquired some fame as a whip while travelling through the midland counties for the firm of Bagshaw, Snivelby, and Ghrikes.

"Thank you, I shall ride with my cousins," said Charles, with as much *nonchalance* as he could assume,—and he did so; Mr Ingoldsby, Mrs Peters, Mr Simpkinson from Bath, and his eldest daughter with her *album*, following in the family coach. The gentleman-commoner "voted the affair d—d slow, and declined the party altogether in favour of the gamekeeper and a cigar. "There was 'no fun' in looking at old houses!" Mrs Simpkinson preferred a short *séjour* in the still-room with Mrs Botherby, who had promised to initiate her in that grand *arcanum*, the transmutation of gooseberry jam into Guava jelly.

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"Did you ever see an old abbey before, Mr Peters?"

"Yes, miss, a French one; we have got one at Ramsgate; he teaches the Miss Joneses to parley—voo, and is turned of sixty."

Miss Simpkinson closed her album with an air of ineffable disdain.

Mr Simpkinson from Bath was a professed antiquary and one of the first water; he was master of Gwillim's Heraldry, and Milles's History of the Crusades; knew every plate the Monasticon; had written an essay on the origin and dignity of the office of overseer, and settled the date of a Queen Anne's farthing. An influential member of the Antiquarian Society, to whose "Beauties of Bagnigge Wells" he had been a liberal subscriber, procured him a seat at the board of that learned body, since which happy epoch Sylvanus Urban had not a more indefatigable correspondent. His inaugural essay on the President's cocked hat was considered a miracle of erudition: and his account of the earliest application of gilding to gingerbread, a masterpiece of antiquarian research. His eldest daughter was of a kindred spirit: if her father's mantle had not fallen upon her, it was only because he had not thrown it off himself; she had caught hold of its tail, however, while it yet hung upon his

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honoured shoulders. To souls so congenial, what a sight was the magnificent ruin of Bolsover! its broken arches, its mouldering pinnacles, and the airy tracery of its half-demolished windows. The party were in raptures; Mr Simpkinson began to meditate an essay, and his daughter an ode: even Seaforth, as he gazed on these lonely relics of the olden time, was betrayed into a momentary forgetfulness of his love and losses; the widow's eye-glass turned from her *cicisbeo's* whiskers to the mantling ivy: Mrs Peters wiped her spectacles; and "her P." supposed the central tower "had once been the county jail." The squire was a philosopher, and had been there often before, so he ordered out the cold tongue and chickens.

"Bolsover Priory," said Mr Simpkinson, with the air of a connoisseur,— "Bolsover Priory was founded in the reign of Henry the Sixth, about the beginning of the eleventh century. Hugh de Bolsover had accompanied that monarch to the Holy Land, in the expedition undertaken by way of penance for the murder of his young nephews in the Tower. Upon the dissolution of the monasteries, the veteran was enfeoffed in the lands and manor, to which he gave his own name of Bowlsover, or Bee-owls-over (by corruption Bolsover),—a Bee in chief, over three Owls, all proper, being the armorial ensigns borne by this distinguished crusader at the siege of Acre."

"Ah! that was Sir Sidney Smith," said Mr Peters; "I've heard tell of him, and all about Mrs Partington, and—"

"P., be quiet, and don't expose yourself!" sharply interrupted his lady. P. was silenced, and betook himself to the bottled stout.

"These lands," continued the antiquary, "were held in grand serjeantry by the presentation of three white owls and a pot of honey—"

"Lassy me! how nice!" said Miss Julia. Mr Peters licked his lips.

"Pray give me leave, my dear—owls and honey, whenever the king should come a rat-catching into this part of the country."

"Rat-catching!" ejaculated the squire, pausing abruptly in the mastication of a drumstick.

"To be sure, my dear sir: don't you remember that rats once came under the forest law—a minor species of venison? 'Rats and mice, and such small deer,' eh?—Shakspear, you know. Our ancestors ate rats ("The nasty fellows!" shuddered Miss Julia in a parenthesis); and owls, you now, are capital mousers—"

"I've seen a howl," said Mr Peters; "there's one in the Sohological Gardens,—a little hook-nosed chap in a wig,—only its feathers and—"

Poor P. was destined never to finish a speech.

"*Do* be quiet!" cried the authoritative voice, and the would-be naturalist shrank into his shell, like a snail in the "Sohological Gardens."

"You should read Blount's 'Jocular Tenures,' Mr Ingoldsby," pursued Simpkinson. "A learned man was Blount! Why, sir, his Royal Highness the Duke of York once paid a silver horse-shoe to Lord Ferrers—"

"I've heard of him," broke in the incorrigible Peters; "he was hanged at the old Bailey in a silk rope for shooting Dr Johnson."

The antiquary vouchsafed no notice of the interruption; but, taking a pinch of snuff, continued his harangue.

"A silver horse-shoe, sir, which is due from every scion of royalty who rides across one of his manors; and if you look into the penny county histories, now publishing by an eminent friend of mine, you will find that Langhale in Co. Norf. was held by one Baldwin *per saltum sufflatum, et pettem*; that is, he was to come every Christmas into Westminster Hall, there to take a leap, cry hem! and—"

"Mr Simpkinson, a glass of sherry?" cried Tom Ingoldsby, hastily.

"Not any, thank you, sir. This Baldwin, surnamed *Le*—"

"Mrs Ogleton challenges you, sir; she insists upon it," said Tom, still more rapidly; at the same time filling a glass, and forcing it on the *sçavant*, who, thus arrested in the very crisis of his narrative, received and swallowed the potation as if it had been physic.

"What on earth has Miss Simpkinson discovered there?" continued Tom; "something of interest. See how fast she is writing."

The diversion was effectual: every one looked towards Miss Simpkinson, who, far too ethereal for "creature comforts," was seated apart on the dilapidated remains of an altar-tomb, committing eagerly to paper something that had strongly impressed her: the air,—the eye "in a fine frenzy rolling,"—all betokened that the divine *afflatus* was come. Her father rose, and stole silently towards her.

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"What an old boar!" muttered young Ingoldsby; alluding, perhaps, to a slice of brawn which he had just begun to operate upon, but which, from the celerity with which it disappeared, did not seem so very difficult of mastication.

But what had become of Seaforth and his fair Caroline all this while? Why, it so happened that they had been simultaneously stricken with the picturesque appearance of one of those high and pointed arches, which that eminent antiquary, Mr Horseley Curties, has described in his "Ancient Records" as "a *Gothic* window of the *Saxon* order;"—and then the ivy clustered so thickly and so beautifully on the other side, that they went round to look at that;—and then their proximity deprived it of half its effect, and so they walked across to a little knoll, a hundred yards off, and in crossing a small ravine, they came to what in Ireland they call a "bad step," and Charles had to carry his cousin over it,—and then, when they had to come back, she would not give him the trouble again for the world, so they followed a better but more circuitous route and there were hedges and ditches in the way, and stiles to get over, and gates to get through; so that an hour or more had elapsed before they were able to rejoin the party.

"Lassy me!" said Miss Julia Simpkinson, "how long you have been gone!"

And so they had. The remark was a very just as well as a very natural one. They were gone a long while, and a nice cosey chat they had; and what do you think it was all about, my dear miss?

"O, lassy me! love, no doubt, and the moon, and eyes, and nightingales, and—"

Stay, stay, my sweet young lady; do not let the fervour of your feelings run away with you! I do not pretend to say, indeed, that one or more of these pretty subjects might not have been introduced; but the most important and leading topic of the conference was—Lieutenant Seaforth's breeches.

"Caroline," said Charles, "I have had some very odd dreams since I have been at Tappington."

"Dreams, have you?" smiled the young lady, arching her taper neck like a swan in pluming. "Dreams, have you?"

"Ay, dreams,—or dream, perhaps, I should say; for, though repeated, it was still the same. And what do you imagine was its subject?"

"It is impossible for me to divine," said the tongue;—"I have not the least difficulty in guessing," said the eye, as plainly as ever eye spoke.

"I dreamt—of your great grandfather!"

There was a change in the glance—"My great grandfather?" "Yes, the old Sir Giles, or Sir John, you told me about the other day: he walked into my bedroom in his short, cloak of murrey-coloured velvet, his long rapier, and his Raleigh-looking hat and feather, just as the picture represents him: but with one exception."

"And what was that?"

"Why, his lower extremities, which were visible, were—those of a skeleton."

"Well."

"Well, after taking a turn or two about the room, and looking round him with a wistful air, he came to the bed's foot, stared at me in a manner impossible to describe,—and then he—he laid hold of my pantaloons; whipped his long bony legs into them in a twinkling; and strutting up to the glass, seemed to view himself in it with great complacency. I tried to speak, but in vain. The effort, however, seemed to excite his attention; for, wheeling about, he showed me the grimmest-looking death's head you can well imagine, and with an indescribable grin strutted out of the room."

"Absurd! Charles. How can you talk such nonsense?"

"But, Caroline,—the breeches are really gone."

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On the following morning, contrary to his usual custom, Seaforth was the first person in the breakfast parlour. As no one else was present, he did precisely what nine young men out of ten so situated would have done; he walked up to the mantel-piece, established himself upon the rug, and subducting his coat-tails one under each arm, turned towards the fire that portion of the human frame which it is considered equally indecorous to

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present to a friend or enemy. A serious, not to say anxious, expression was visible upon his good-humoured countenance, and his mouth was fast buttoning itself up for an incipient whistle when little Flo, a tiny spaniel of the Blenheim breed,—the—: pet object of Miss Julia Simpkinson's affections, bounced from beneath a sofa, and began to bark at—his pantaloons.

They were cleverly "built," of a light grey mixture, a broad stripe of the most vivid scarlet traversing each seam in a perpendicular direction from hip to ankle,—in short, the regimental costume of the Royal Bombay Fencibles. The animal, educated in the country, had never seen such a pair of breeches in her life—*Omne ignotum pro magnifico!* The scarlet streak, inflamed as it was by the reflection of the fire, seemed to act on Flora's nerves as the same colour does on those of bulls and turkeys; she advanced at the *pas de charge*, and her vociferation, like her amazement, was unbounded. A sound kick from the disgusted officer changed its character, and induced a retreat at the very moment when the mistress of the pugnacious quadruped entered to the rescue.

"Lassy me! Flo! what *is* the matter?" cried the sympathising lady, with a scrutinising glance levelled at the gentleman.

It might as well have lighted on a feather bed.—His air of imperturbable unconsciousness defied examination; and as he would not, and Flora could not expound, that injured individual was compelled to pocket up her wrongs. Others of the household soon dropped in, and clustered round the board dedicated to the most sociable of meals; the urn was paraded "hissing hot," and the cups which "cheer, but not inebriate," steamed redolent of hyson and pekoe; muffins and marmalade, newspapers and Finnon haddies, left little room for observation on the character of Charles's warlike "turn-out." At length a look from Caroline, followed by a smile that nearly ripened to a titter, caused him to turn abruptly and address his neighbour. It was Miss Simpkinson, who, deeply engaged in sipping her tea and turning over her album, seemed, like a female Chrononotonthologos, "immersed in cogibundity of cogitation." An interrogatory on the subject of her studies drew from her the confession that she was at that moment employed in putting the finishing touches to a poem inspired by the romantic shades of Bolsover. The entreaties of the company were of course urgent. Mr Peters, "who liked verses," was especially persevering, and Sappho at length compliant. After a preparatory hem! and a glance at the mirror to ascertain that her look was sufficiently sentimental, the poetess began:—

"There is a calm, a holy feeling,
Vulgar minds can never know,
O'er the bosom softly stealing—
Chasten'd grief, delicious woe!
Oh! how sweet at eve regaining
Yon lone tower's sequester'd shade—
Sadly mute and uncomplaining—"

Yow!—yeough!—yeough!—yow!—yow! yelled a hapless sufferer from beneath the table.—It was an unlucky hour for quadrupeds; and if "every dog will have his day," he could not have selected a more unpropitious one than this. Mrs Ogleton, too, had a pet,—a favourite pug,—whose squab figure, black muzzle, and tortuosity of tail, that curled like a head of celery in a salad-bowl, bespoke his Dutch extraction. Yow! yow! yow! continued the brute,—a chorus in which Flo instantly joined. Sooth to say, pug had more reason to express his dissatisfaction than was given him by the muse of Simpkinson; the other only barked for company. Scarcely had the poetess got through her first stanza, when Tom Ingoldsby, in the enthusiasm of the moment, became so lost in the material world, that, in his abstraction, he unwarily laid his hand on the cock of the urn. Quivering with emotion, he gave it such an unlucky twist, that the full stream of its scalding contents descended on the gingerbread hide of the unlucky Cupid.—The confusion was complete;—the whole economy of the table disarranged;—the company broke up most admired disorder;—and "Vulgar minds will never know" anything more of Miss Simpkinson's ode till they peruse it in some forthcoming Annual.

Seaforth profited by the confusion to take the delinquent who had caused this "stramash" by the arm, and to lead him to the lawn, where he had a word or two for his private ear. The conference between the young gentlemen was neither brief in its duration nor unimportant in its result. The subject was what the lawyers call

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tripartite, embracing the information that Charles Seaforth was over head and ears in love with Tom Ingoldsby's sister; secondly, that the lady had referred him to "papa" for his sanction; thirdly and lastly, his nightly visitations, and consequent bereavement. At the two first items Tom smiled auspiciously; at the last he burst out into an absolute "guffaw."

"Steal your breeches!—Miss Bailey over again, by Jove," shouted Ingoldsby. "But a gentleman, you say,—and Sir Giles too.—I am not sure, Charles, whether I ought not to call you out for aspersing the honour of the family."

"Laugh as you will, Tom,—be as incredulous as you please. One fact is incontestible,—the breeches are gone! Look here—I am reduced to my regimentals, and if these go, to-morrow I must borrow of you!"

Rochefoucault says, there is something in the misfortunes of our very best friends that does not displease us;— assuredly we can, most of us, laugh at their petty inconveniences, till called upon to supply them. Tom composed his features on the instant, and replied with more gravity, as well as with an expletive, which, if my Lord Mayor had been within hearing, might have cost him five shillings.

"There is something very queer in this, after all. The clothes, you say, have positively disappeared. Somebody is playing you a trick, and, ten to one, your servant has a hand in it. By the way, I heard something yesterday of his kicking up a bobbery in the kitchen, and seeing a ghost, or something of that kind, himself. Depend upon it, Barney is in the plot."

It now struck the lieutenant at once, that the usually buoyant spirits of his attendant had of late been materially sobered down, his loquacity obviously circumscribed, and that he, the said lieutenant, had actually rung his bell several times that very morning before he could procure his attendance. Mr Maguire was forthwith summoned, and underwent a close examination. The "bobbery" was easily—explained. Mr Oliver Dobbs hinted his disapprobation of a flirtation carrying on between the gentleman from Minster and the lady from the Rue St Honoré. Mademoiselle had boxed Mr Maguire's ears, and Mr Maguire had pulled Mademoiselle upon his knee, and the lady had *not* cried *Mon Dieu!* And Mr Oliver Dobbs said it was very wrong; and Mrs Botherby said it was "scandalous," and what ought not to be done in any moral kitchen; and Mr Maguire had got hold of the Honourable Augustus Sucklethumbkin's powder-flask, and had put large pinches of the best double Dartford into Mr Dobbs's tobacco-box;—and Mr Dobbs's pipe had exploded, and set fire to Mrs Botherby's Sunday cap;—and Mr Maguire had put it out with the slop-basin, "barring the wig";—and then they were all so "cantankerous," that Barney had gone to take a walk in the garden; and then—then Mr Barney had seen a ghost!

"A what? you blockhead!" asked Tom Ingoldsby.

"Sure then, and it's meself will tell your honour the rights of it," said the ghost-seer. "Meself and Miss Pauline, sir, or Miss Pauline and meself, for the ladies comes first anyhow, we got tired of the hobstroppylous skrimmaging among the ould servants, that didn't know a joke when they seen one: and we went out to look at the comet,—that's the rory-bory-alehouse, they calls him in this country,—and we walked upon the lawn—and divil of any alehouse there was there at all; and Miss Pauline said it was because of the shrubbery maybe, and why wouldn't we see it better beyonst the trees?—and so we went to the trees, but sorrow a comet did meself see there, barring a big ghost instead of it."

"A ghost? And what sort of a ghost, Barney?"

"Och, then, divil a lie I'll tell your honour. A tall ould gentleman he was, all in white, with a shovel on the shoulder of him, and a big torch in his fist,—though what he wanted with that it's meself can't tell, for his eyes were like gig-lamps, let alone the moon and the comet, which wasn't there at all,—and 'Barney,' says he to me,—'cause why he knew me,—'Barney,' says he, 'what is it you're doing with the *colleen* there, Barney?'—Divil a word did I say. Miss Pauline screeched, and cried murther in French, and ran off with herself; and of course meself was in a mighty hurry after the lady, and had no time to stop palavering with him any way; so I dispersed at once, and the ghost vanished in a flame of fire!"

Mr Maguire's account was received with avowed incredulity by both gentlemen; but Barney stuck to his text with unflinching pertinacity. A reference to Mademoiselle was suggested, but abandoned, as neither party had a taste for delicate investigations.

"I'll tell you what, Seaforth," said Ingoldsby, after Barney had received his dismissal, "that there is a trick here, is evident; and Barney's vision may possibly be a part of it. Whether he is most knave or fool, you best know. At all events, I will sit up with you to-night and see if I can convert my ancestor into a visiting

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acquaintance. Meanwhile your finger on your lip!"

"'Twas now the very witching time of night,
When churchyards yawn, and graves give up their dead."

Gladly would I grace my tale with decent horror, and therefore I do beseech the "gentle reader" to believe, that if all the *succedanea* to this mysterious narrative are not in strict keeping, he will ascribe it only to the disgraceful innovations of modern degeneracy upon the sober and dignified habits of our ancestors. I can introduce him, it is true, into an old and high-roofed chamber, its walls covered on three sides with black oak wainscotting, adorned with carvings of fruit and flowers long anterior to those of Grinling Gibbons; the fourth side is clothed with a curious remnant of dingy tapestry, once elucidatory of some Scriptural history, but of *which* not even Mrs Botherby could determine. Mr Simpkinson, who had examined it carefully, inclined to believe the principal figure to be either Bathsheba, or Daniel in the lions' den; while Tom Ingoldsby decided in favour of the King of Bashan. All, however, was conjecture, tradition being silent on the subject.—A lofty arched portal led into, and a little arched portal led out of, this apartment; they were opposite each other, and each possessed the security of massy bolts on its interior. The bedstead, too, was not one of yesterday, but manifestly coeval with days ere Seddons was, and, when a good four-post "article" was deemed worthy of being a royal bequest. The bed itself, with all the appurtenances of palliasse, mattresses, etc., was of far later date, and looked most incongruously comfortable; the casements, too, with their little diamond-shaped panes and iron binding, had given way to the modern heterodoxy of the sash-window. Nor was this all that conspired to ruin the costume, and render the room a meet haunt for such "mixed spirits" only as could condescend to don at the same time an Elizabethan doublet and Bond Street inexpressibles.

With their green morocco slippers on a modern fender in front of a disgracefully modern grate, sat two young gentlemen, clad in "shawl pattern" dressing gowns and black silk stocks, much at variance with the high cane-backed chairs which supported them. A bunch of abomination, called a cigar, reeked in the left-hand corner of the mouth of one, and in the right-hand corner of the mouth of the other;—an arrangement happily adapted for the escape of the noxious fumes up the chimney, without that unmerciful "funking" each other, which a less scientific disposition of the weed would have induced. A small pembroke table filled up the intervening space between them, sustaining at each extremity, an elbow and a glass of toddy;—thus in "lonely pensive contemplation" were the two worthies occupied, when the "iron tongue of midnight had tolled twelve."

"Ghost-time's come!" said Ingoldsby, taking from his waistcoat pocket a watch like a gold half-crown, and consulting it as though he suspected the turret-clock over the stables of mendacity.

"Hush!" said Charles; "did I not hear a footstep?"

There was a pause:—there *was* a footstep—it sounded distinctly—it reached the door—it hesitated, stopped, and

Tom darted across the room, threw open the door, and became aware of Mrs Botherby toddling to her chamber, at the other end of the gallery, after dosing one of the housemaids with an approved, julep from the Countess of Kent's "Choice Manual."

"Good night, sir!" said Mrs Botherby.

"Go to the d—I!" said the disappointed ghost-hunter.

An hour—two—rolled on, and still no spectral visitation; nor did aught intervene to make night hideous; and when the turret-clock sounded at length the hour of three, Ingoldsby, whose patience and grog were alike exhausted, sprang from his chair, saying,—

"This is all infernal nonsense, my good fellow. Deuce of any ghost shall we see to-night; it's long past the canonical hour. I'm off to bed; and as to your breeches, I'll insure them for the next twenty-four hours at least, at the price of the buckram."

"Certainly.—Oh! thankee;—to be sure!" stammered Charles, rousing himself from a reverie, which had degenerated into an absolute snooze.

"Good-night, my boy! Bolt the door behind me; and defy the Pope, the Devil and the Pretender!—"

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Seaforth followed his friend's advice, and the next morning came down to breakfast dressed in the habiliments of the preceding day. The charm was broken, the demon defeated; the light greys with the red stripe down the seams were yet *in rerum naturâ*, and adorned the person of their lawful proprietor.

Tom felicitated himself and his partner of the watch on the result of their vigilance; but there is a rustic adage, which warns us against self-gratulation before we are quite "out of the wood."—Seaforth was yet within its verge.

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A rap at Tom Ingoldsby's door the following morning startled him as he was shaving;—he cut his chin.

"Come in,—and be d—d to you!" said the martyr, pressing his thumb on the scarified epidermis.—The door opened, and exhibited Mr Barney Maguire.

"Well, Barney, what is it?" quoth the sufferer, adopting the vernacular of his visitant.

"The master, sir—"

"Well, what does he want?"

"The loanst of a breeches, plase your honour."

"Why, you don't mean to tell me—By Heaven, this is too good!" shouted Tom, bursting into a fit of uncontrollable laughter. "Why, Barney, you don't mean to say the ghost has got them again!"

Mr Maguire did not respond to the young squire's risibility; the cast of his countenance was decidedly serious.

"Faith, then, it's gone they are, sure enough! Hasn't meself been looking over the bed, and under the bed, and in the bed, for the matter of that, and divil a ha'p'orth of breeches is there to the fore at all:—I'm bothered entirely!"

"Hark'ee! Mr Barney," said Tom, incautiously removing his thumb, and letting a crimson stream "incarnadine the multitudinous" lather that plastered his throat,—"this may be all very well with your master, but you don't humbug *me*, sir:—tell me instantly what have you done with the clothes?"

This abrupt transition from "lively to severe" certainly took Maguire by surprise, and he seemed for an instant as much disconcerted as it is possible to disconcert an Irish gentleman's gentleman.

"Me? is it meself, then, that's the ghost to your honour's thinking?" said he, after a moment's pause, and with a slight shade of indignation in his tones: "is it I would stale the master's things?—and what would I do with them?"

"That you best know:—what your purpose is I can't guess, for I don't think you mean to 'stale' them, as you call it; but that you are concerned in their disappearance, I am satisfied. Confound this blood!—give me a towel, Barney."

Maguire acquitted himself of the commission. "As I've a sowl, your honour," said he solemnly, "little it is meself knows of the matter: and after what I seen—"

"What you've seen! Why, what *have* you seen?—Barney, I don't want to enquire into your flirtations; but don't suppose you can palm off your saucer eyes and gig-lamps upon me!"

"Then, as sure as your honour's standing there I saw him: and why wouldn't I, when Miss *Pauline* was to the fore as well as meself, and—"

"Get along with your nonsense, leave the room, sir!"

"But the master?" said Barney imploringly; "and without a breeches?—sure he'll be catching cowl!—"

"Take that, rascal!" replied Ingoldsby, throwing a pair of pantaloons at, rather than to, him: "but don't suppose, sir, you shall carry on your tricks here with impunity; recollect there is such a thing as a tread-mill, and that my father is a county magistrate."

Barney's eye flashed fire,—he stood erect, and was about to speak; but, mastering himself, not without an effort, he took up the garment, and left the room as perpendicular as a Quaker.

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"Ingoldsby;" said Charles Seaforth, after breakfast, "this is now past a joke; to-day is the last of my stay; for, notwithstanding the ties which detain me, common decency obliges me to visit home after so long an absence. I shall come to an immediate explanation with your father on the subject nearest my heart, and depart while I have a change of dress left. On his answer will my return depend! In the meantime tell me candidly,—I ask it in all seriousness and as a friend,—am I not a dupe to your well-known propensity to hoaxing? have you not a hand in—"

"No, by heaven I Seaforth; I see what you mean: on my honour, I am as much mystified as yourself: and if your servant—"

"Not he:—if there be a trick, he at least is not privy to it."

"If there *be* a trick? Why, Charles, do you think—"

"I know not *what* to think, Tom. As surely as you are a living man, so surely did that spectral anatomy visit my room again last night, grin in my face, and walk away with my trousers, nor was I able to spring from my bed, or break the chain which seemed to bind me to my pillow."

"Seaforth!" said Ingoldsby, after a short pause, "I will— But hush! here are the girls and my father.— I will carry off the females, and leave you a clear field with the governor: carry your point with him, and we will talk about your breeches afterwards."

Tom's diversion was successful; he carried off the ladies *en masse* to look at a remarkable specimen of the class *Dodecandria Monogynia*,—which they could not find:—while Seaforth marched boldly up to the encounter, and carried "the governor's" outworks by a *coup de main*. I shall not stop to describe the progress of the attack: suffice it that it was as successful as could have been wished, and that Seaforth was referred back again to the lady. The happy lover was off at a tangent; the botanical party was soon overtaken; and the arm of Caroline, whom a vain endeavour to spell out the Linnæan name of a daffy-down-dilly had detained a little in the rear of the others, was soon firmly locked in his own.

"What was the world to them,
Its noise, its nonsense, and its 'breeches' all?"

Seaforth was in the seventh heaven; he retired to his room that night as happy as if no such thing as a goblin had ever been heard of, and personal chattels were as well fenced in by law as real property. Not so Tom Ingoldsby: the mystery,—for mystery there evidently was,—had not only piqued his curiosity, but ruffled his temper. The watch of the previous night had been unsuccessful, probably because it was undisguised. To-night he would "ensconce himself,"—not indeed "behind the arras,"—for the little that remained was, as we have seen, nailed to the wall,—but in a small closet which opened from one corner of the room, and, by leaving the door ajar, would give to its occupant a view of all that might pass in the apartment. Here did the young ghost-hunter take up a position with a good stout sapling under his arm, a full half-hour before Seaforth retired for the night. Not even his friend did he let into his confidence, fully determined that if his plan did not succeed, the failure should be attributed to himself alone.

At the usual hour of separation for the night, Tom saw, from his concealment, the lieutenant enter his room, and after taking a few turns in it, with an expression so joyous as to betoken that his thoughts were mainly occupied by his approaching happiness, proceed slowly to disrobe himself. The coat, the waistcoat, the black silk stock, were gradually discarded* the green morocco slippers were kicked off, and then—ay, and then—his countenance grew grave; it seemed to occur to him all at once that this was his last stake,—nay, that very breeches he had on were not his own,—that to-morrow morning was his last, and that if he lost *them*— A glance showed that his mind was made up: he replaced the single button he had just subducted, and threw himself upon the bed in a state of transition—half chrysalis, half grub.

Wearily did Tom Ingoldsby watch the sleeper by the flickering light of the night-lamp, till the clock, striking

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one, induced him to increase the narrow opening which he had left for the purpose of observation. The motion, slight as it was, seemed to attract Charles's attention; for he raised himself suddenly to a sitting posture, listened for a moment, and then stood upright upon the floor. Ingoldsby was on the point of discovering himself, when, the light, flashing full upon his friend's countenance, he perceived that, though his eyes were open, "their sense was shut,"—that he was yet under the influence of sleep. Seaforth advanced slowly to the toilet, lit his candle at the lamp that stood on it, then, going back to the bed's foot, appeared to search eagerly for something which he could not find. —For a few moments he seemed restless and uneasy, walking round the apartment and examining the chairs, till, coming fully in front of a large swing-glass that flanked the dressing-table, he paused, as if contemplating his figure in it. He now returned towards the bed; put on his slippers; and, with cautious and stealthy steps, proceeded towards the little arched doorway that opened on the private staircase.

As he drew the bolt, Tom Ingoldsby emerged from his hiding-place; but the sleep-walker heard him not; he proceeded softly down stairs, followed at a due distance by his friend; opened the door which led out upon the gardens; and stood at once among the thickest of the scrubs, which here clustered round the base of a corner turret, and screened the postern from common observation. At this moment Ingoldsby had nearly spoiled all by making a false step: the sound attracted Seaforth's attention,—he paused and turned: and as the full moon shed her light directly upon his pale and troubled features, Tom marked, almost with dismay, the fixed and rayless appearance of his eyes:

"There was no speculation in those orbs
That he did glare withal."

The perfect stillness preserved by his follower seemed to reassure him; he turned aside; and from the midst of a thickset laurustinus, drew forth a gardener's spade, shouldering which he proceeded with great rapidity into the midst of the shrubbery. Arrived at a certain point where the earth seemed to have been recently disturbed, he set himself heartily to the task of digging, till, having thrown up several shovelfuls of mould, he stopped, flung down his tool, and very composedly began to disencumber himself of his pantaloons.

Up to this moment Tom had watched him with a wary eye: he now advanced cautiously, and, as his friend was busily engaged in disentangling himself from his garment, made himself master of the spade. Seaforth, meanwhile, had accomplished his purpose: he stood for a moment with

"His streamers waving in the wind,"

occupied in carefully rolling up the small-clothes into as compact a form as possible, and all heedless of the breath of heaven, which might certainly be supposed, at such a moment, and in such a plight, to "visit his frame too roughly."

He was in the act of stooping low to deposit the pantaloons in the grave which he had been digging for them, when Tom Ingoldsby came close behind him, and with the flat side of the spade—

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The shock was effectual,—never again was Lieutenant Seaforth known to act the part of a somnambulist. One by one, his breeches,—his trousers,—his pantaloons,—his silk-net tights,—his patent cords,—his showy greys with the broad red stripe of the Bombay Fencibles were brought to light,—rescued from the grave in which they had been buried, like the strata of a Christmas pie; and, after having been well aired by Mrs Botherby, became once again effective.

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The family, the ladies especially, laughed;—the Peterses laughed;—the Simpkinsons laughed;—Barney Maguire cried "Botheration!" and Ma'mselle Pauline "*Mon Dieu!*"

Charles Seaforth, unable to face the quizzing which awaited him on all sides, started off two hours earlier than he had proposed—he soon returned, however; and having, at his father-in-law's request, given up the occupation of Rajah-hunting and shooting Nabobs, led his blushing bride to the altar.

Mr Simpkinson from Bath did not attend the ceremony, being engaged at the Grand Junction Meeting of *Sçavans*, then congregating from all parts of the known world in the city of Dublin. His essay, demonstrating that the globe is a great custard, whipped into coagulation by whirlwinds, and cooked by electricity,—a little too much baked in the Isle of Portland, and a thought underdone about the Bog of Allen,—was highly spoken of, and narrowly escaped obtaining a Bridgewater prize.

Miss Simpkinson and her sister acted as bridesmaids on the occasion; the former wrote an *epithalamium*, and the latter cried "Lassy me!" at the clergyman's wig.—Some years have since rolled on; the union has been crowned with two or three tidy little offshoots from the family tree of whom Master Neddy is "grandpapa's darling," and Mary-Anne mamma's particular "Sock." I shall only add that Mr and Mrs Seaforth are living together quite as happily as two good-hearted, good-tempered bodies, very fond, of each other, can possibly do: and, that since the day of his marriage Charles has shown no disposition to jump out of bed, or ramble out of doors o' nights,—though, from his entire devotion to every wish and whim of his young wife, Tom insinuates that the fair Caroline does still occasionally take advantage of it so far as to "slip on the breeches."