

BUNK.

(A Tragedy in Two Acts—Being an Explanation of the Recent Heavy Rains).

ACT I.

(A Professor English is sitting at his desk in a recitation room. He is absorbed in a book. He has reached the Third Stage in teaching, having passed through the first, or interested stage; also the second, the brow-beating, or antagonistic stage, and the intermediate bored, or clock-watching stage, which leads imperceptibly into the Third Stage, or Complete Coma. He is harmless when undisturbed (that is, out of class). He welcomes interruptions in class, as they serve to take up time. The Professor has only one ambition in life, and that is to have an assistant to grade his papers and call his class rolls, etc. He loves the rest of teaching, as it requires him only to talk, and at that, to talk only about his own ideas. Outside his classroom he never finds the helplessly passive audience that he has in class. He loves to talk, particularly about Oxford—that is the best description of the Prof.)

(When the action begins, fifteen Class Attenders and one Student enter and take their seats. The Attenders are sophomores, some from the engineering and some from the agricultural schools. Their being sophomores does not mean that this is their second year in college. One Attender is finishing his fourth year in this same course under the Professor. This has its advantages, as the Professor can now, with very little difficulty, read this Attenders writing. The impression must not be got that this fourth year attender is dull,—unusually dull, that is to say. The opposite is true. Four years ago, the Prof. discovered in him the makings of a student; so he kept him while the more hopeless were passed on, the Prof. realizing that if he were to keep some of them even eight years, he would still not be able to read their writing. The Professor expects this fourth year Attender to develop into a student in perhaps two more years.)

(The time of the play is during a drought which occurred last March. The farmers, who are always apprehensive, were becoming more so on account of the drought, thinking that the seeds in the ground would not have enough moisture to cause them to come up.)

Prof: Good morning, gentlemen; I have a very important announcement to make to you this morning. I have at last discovered a plan whereby A. and M. students (and Class Attenders also, of course) can do something really valuable and worth while. (The class show signs of intense surprise, wonder, and doubt.) In teaching you I often wish for something that could be substituted for English, as I regard the task of getting the matter into your heads as impossible. How much better you would do, for example, if you could use * * * * * in your college work. I have never heard your students talk more effectively than when the circumstances permitted * * * * *. But get you in the classroom where such talk is excluded, and you are at a total loss to express your ideas. I would suggest that some system that allowed the use of this language be substituted for the present course, but I should lose my job, and I must live—

1st Attender: (Quoting Dr. John-

son, though entirely unconscious of the fact, being the average well-read cadet). "Sir, I fail to see the necessity!"

2nd Attender: (Snapping his fingers and waving his hand in air) Fesser! Say Fesser!

Prof.: All right, what is it?

2nd Attender: At the beginning of the class you greatly interested us by saying that we could do something useful—

Prof: (Looking anxiously at his watch). So I did, but in planning my lecture for this class I intended for that subject (whatever it was!) to take up the first twenty minutes of the period, and that time has passed now, so I won't have to use it. We will—

3rd Attender: But Fesser, you said this could take the place of English and that it was interesting.

Prof: O well, I have forgotten now.

6th Attender: You were reading a book when you came in,—maybe what you were talking about was in that.

Prof: (Takes up book and looks through it, reading bits here and there). Oh yes! I recall it now. I lately discovered that my Japanese was getting rusty, so I decided to read old Japanese plays, especially "The Love of Komachi, the Poetess". While chanting this drama to myself, I came to the place where the natives once went to a mountain and read poems to one of their Rain-Gods, in the hope of pleasing him to the extent of his granting them a much-needed shower. At the time they were having a drought similar to the present one. The poems were read to this God and one was found good enough to cause rain. The seed of this episode fell on my fertile brain and at once germinated, hatching the idea I am about to give you. You, Student, and Attenders of this class, may each write a poem and at our next meeting we can gather on the hill and read poems again to this old Jap God; and I am sure that if the right poem is read, he will not fail us in the present crisis.

Attenders: (all together) Great! The prof is at last producing! Hooray We will do it! etc., etc.

Prof: (looking at his watch, and feeling secretly what the Attenders are showing outwardly,—namely, a deep satisfaction that the time is up) Your time us up! Each of you write a poem and we shall offer it for rain on the hill at our next meeting.

ACT II.

(The news having been spread broadcast over the College, the Faculty and ladies, the President and the Deans, along with a great crowd of Class Attenders and a few Students, are on hand at the hill) One great secret desire has brought forth this mass of people, and that is to see education, as taught at A. and M., vindicated. They have come as pessimists, having long ago given up hope of seeing their cherished dream come true. The Agriculturists are looking for a good excuse for Agriculture, and on this day, they are hoping to get something that will give them ground to stand on. The Engineers present cherish a similar ambition. They have one constant dread and they know secretly that they will never remove the cause of this fear. They never enjoy eating for being afraid that some day they may swallow a seed, which, once swallowed, will sprout in the dirt they have taken into their systems by drinking college water. But this day, they feel sure that the Engi-

neering Attender's poem will win, and then when a college building falls and the agriculturists jibe at them, they can say, "Who caused the rain to fall on your crops?" With such secret yearnings, all classes are thus on hand.

The day is clear, with not a cloud in the sky. It is a week later than Act I. The people have regarded the occasion as a sort of outing, and the women are showing off their newest Spring clothes.

The prof is fifteen minutes late, but his class are all on hand, poems in hand.

Student: (nervous over prof's delay). What are we to do? the prof is to read the poems, and he is not here?

Commandant: See if you can find the prof. The people are becoming restless.

1st Attender: (from ag group, looking over the crowd). What a pity we did not charge admission, so that we could raise money to send our Ant-bear Judging Team to Brazil!

1st Prof of Sheep (to 2nd prof of Sheep). Have you read the new book of Uno's on docking sheep tails?

2nd Prof of Sheep (showing great interest). Yes, I most certainly do not agree with the author. I am unreservedly for the sharp knife. Why, what does—

1st Prof of Sheep (becoming heated). Do you mean to say you favor the sharp knife? What about our recent five hundred experiments where hot irons were used? You should—

(A bunch of engineers here drown out the Ags).

Concrete Prof: I say the 1:2:6 mixture.

Architectural Prof: (almost in tears) a thousand noes! It must be 1:3:4.

M. E. Prof: (with restrained indignation). You are wrong! Anybody knows it should be 1:2:5.

The Crowd (noisily). Yonder he comes! Now for a rain!

(In the distance the prof is seen coming down the road, carrying an umbrella and a raincoat. As he enters the crowd, he is at once impressed with its great size, and being used to no notice at all, from people outside his classes, he visibly swells with self-satisfaction and importance.)

Prof: Sorry to have caused the delay, but I was waiting in my classroom, having forgotten all about this meeting. (Here his voice expands to an oratorical rotundity that surprises himself and would do any politician credit). Without further delay, all of you knowing the purpose of this meeting, we can begin the reading of the poems. First, I shall read yours, Student. (Student hands in poem).

"A boy stood under an apple tree,
Two hours there he stopped;
He opened his mouth from ear to ear,
But never an apple dropped.
(Silence—the sky gets brighter. Nearest thing to rain is a few tears shed by a sentimental stenographer in the crowd).

Prof (undaunted):—Now I'll read yours, First Attender.

(Reads)
"The tunnel is built by engineers,
"So is the railroad track;
But Heaven forbid that the train go through
And not find its own way back.
O, the engineers
Would shed no tears,
That isn't the way with engineers.

But three loud cheers
For the engineers,
Who'd build a double track,
For then it's plain
That any train,
Would find its own way back.
(Rough thunder, with a few bolts of lightning).

Prof. (to Second Attender): I'll read yours now.

(Reads)
For four long years he studied the soil,
Then he planted the seed of an onion;
He hoed the ground, he plowed around,
His feet were one great bunion.

(A cloud appears)
Incidentally, the ground produced several pecks of onions.

(The cloud disappears hurriedly).

Prof: I shall read yours, 6th Attender.

(Reads)
Anna Maria, fresh and fair,
Sky-blue ears, and dimpled hair,
Wrinkled cheeks and knock-kneed chin,
Anna Maria, your toes turn in!
(One or two women and Clarence Braden faint).

Prof. (beginning to lose faith). Give me yours, Ninth Attender.

(Reads)
Barley, barley, wheat and straw,
Forty bottles is the law—
(At the second word in the last line, several cheers come from the crowd).

Fill 'em full of whiskey neat,
(Decided sensation of an agreeable nature among the older members of the faculty).

Put 'em under the flivver seat
(D. X. Bible looks self-conscious)
Drive right down Magnolia street,
And the second house from the end
Is where I live,
Bring 'em right in.

(Loud thunder and a few clouds)
Prof. (looking at several poems, and returning them with a sad nod of the head, looking at the crowd,

then seeing his umbrella and his raincoat, he realizes that he must not fail. In desperation, he calls for the last poem, that of the "dull" 15th Attender). I shall read yours, 15th Attender,—you are our last hope.
(Read in a resigned tone).

Hark, the herald angels sing,
"BEECHAM'S PILLS are just the thing—
(The whole sky becomes overcast)
Two for man, and one for child,
(Loud muttering of thunder, a vivid flash a lightning, and a few drops of rain).

Pleasure sweet and mercy mild!"
(Heavy sheets of rain—a cloudburst!)

(As the curtain slowly falls, people are seen running for shelter. In the rear appears the Prof., leisurely walking away, his solitary faith in the experiment being now justified by the usefulness of his coat and umbrella. He is deeply absorbed in reading a Chinese drama, so that he may be prepared in case it should become necessary to stop the rains, and also in order to prevent his Chinese from becoming rusty).

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