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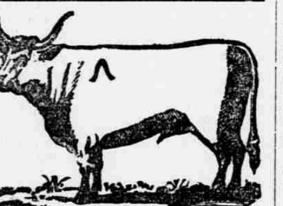
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## CEDRIC THE WISE.



In that town of our dearland of England, in which I was born and grew up to manhood, the folk are wont to tell many tales ancient the good King Alfred. Albeit those who dwell at the same time as that good king have had sons and daughters, and these in their turn children, and these again yet other children, and so on till the years be many that lie betwixt our time and his, yet does the renown of King Alfred last among us, and is spoken of even now. He it was who fought the wicked Danes and beat them, driving them all out of our country to their own, save only those whom he slew so that they could work no more woe; and this, indeed, is the only sure way to forefend against a Dane doing ill, for they are of a truth bad men and given to all manner of knavery and sin.

Now my father has often told me how that when King Alfred had driven out the Danes he ruled so wisely and so well that men could hang chains of gold and jewels by the roadside, and there they would stay untouched save by him who owned them. And this was so not because there were no evil men in the land—for these are everywhere to be found save in the kingdom of our Lord alone—but because doomsmen were set up by the king, before whom were haled all who did not righteously, and according to their faults they were doomed. It followed in its course that among these doomsmen some were wiser than others and more even handed; but among them all was none to be found more righteously and more blameless in his findings than Cedric, the son of Hend.

In Reading was his dwelling, and over the men of that borough he sat in the doomsman's chair every day in the church yard, setting straight that which was crooked and uplifting the small against the great, the feeble folk against the strong. Now the talk of his righteousness spread, as when a stone drops in a mere the ripples of it spread until they touch the shore, so that even to the king's ears came the name of Doomsman Cedric, the son of Hend.

And the king said unto himself: "Perchance these be fond tidings which are told to me, and yet again there may be truth in them; but strange it is that a man should be not only so righteously but so wise that none make plaint touching any of the dooms he gave forth," and he so pondered over this thing that in the end he habited himself like unto a simple knight at arms, and rode forth from London, taking the high road to Reading to see for himself what manner of man this Cedric might be. Ditton he passed and Windsor also, and whenever he tarried for the night as folk at their supper he heard them talk as they quaffed their ale or mead of Cedric the Doomsman and his rightfulness, until the king began to grow hot within him at the endless babble, as it seemed to him, concerning the worthiness of this one man.

Soheroic until he came to Staines and as he was about to pass over the bridge he saw, lying in the dust at the wayside, a beggar, habited in rags, and begging alms from the passers by.

"Help me, oh, stranger!" said the beggar.  
"With all my heart," answered the king, and took from his pouch three pennies, which he gave to the beggar.  
"Help me, oh, stranger!" quoth once more the beggar.

"Thou art a greedy varlet!" said the king; "what more dost thou want?"  
"I am old and weak," answered the beggar. "Wilt thou not set me behind thee on thy horse and carry me to Reading town?"

"With all my heart!" replied once more the king, and straightway set him fowl as he was upon his horse, and in that wise rode over the bridge and along the high road into the town of Reading. As they went down the High street the king said to the beggar, "Where wilt thou that I set thee down?"  
"To which made answer the other: "Nay, but rather where wilt thou that I set thee down?"

"Thou art a saucy varlet," quoth the king; "and it would be using thee not unseemly were I to pitch thee off my horse into the tunnel there by the side of us."  
"Hast thou the face to call it thy horse?" quoth the beggarman.  
"Thou shameless thing! thou knowest well the horse belongs to me."

"Thy horse?" shouted the king.  
"Ay! mine," said the beggar.  
"We will see about that," said the king.  
"We truly will," said the beggar, and with that he made a loud outcry, calling aloud; "Thief! thief! so that they who passed by stopped and, wondering at the noise, asked who might be the thief, and in what the beggar, who was a foreigner to them all had been wronged.

Then both the beggar and the king told each his tale. Now the tale of the beggar was in this wise: That he, riding toward the town of Reading, had met the king, albeit he knew not, nor did the Reading men, that he was a king, but thought him a simple wayfarer, and seeing he was afoot and weary, had offered to him to ride before him on his horse. "The which," said the beggar, "does he now, with foul threats and evil knocks, try to take by force from me, saying it is his own, though it is plain to be seen that I am old and weak and he is young and lusty."

And after the king had told his truthful tale, how that it was he who had been riding toward the town and had in kindness set the beggar behind him and helped him on his way with but scurvy payment for his pains, the men of Reading were sore beset in their minds as to which of the twain might be the truth teller and which the liar. After some had talked this way and some that, an elder among them said: "Let us hale them both and also the horse before Cedric, our doomsman, and let him tell us which we shall believe."

Nothing loath was the king, nor did the beggar dare to say them nay, and so it came to pass that in no great while they stood before Cedric, the son of Hend, in the church yard where his seat was. But they were not the first comers, and so had to wait until two trials had been held. The first was a quarrel between a scrivener and a hedger concerning a woman. The scrivener said that she was his wife, and had been taken from him by the hedger, and the hedger, indeed, said no; that she had always been his wife, and that the scrivener had no lawful right to her. The woman said nothing, whereat all marvelled. When each had told his tale Cedric pondered and said: "Leave the woman here and return, each of you, on the morrow," and they went away leaving the woman.

Next came a fletcher and a miller, the miller holding in his hand a sum of money. "I went," said he, "at noon to the fletcher to buy meat for my household, and when the time came for me to pay him I drew from my pouch these coins of silver, the which, when the fletcher saw, he made as if to clutch and took me by the wrist, so that both of us are now come before you, I holding my silver and he clutching my wrist. He says the silver is his. I say it is mine. Yet do I make oath that to me and not to him does it belong."

Then said the fletcher: "Nay, but this man lies. He came to my house as he says, but that is all the truth there is in his tale. When he had taken his meat he asked me whether I had silver to give to him in place of gold coin. 'Ay,' quoth I, and laid out on my fleshing block a handful of silver coins, which, when he saw, he caught up with his hand, and so was making off when I clutched him by the wrist and haled him before thee, our doomsman. To this I will make oath and say that he the miller, is a rogue and a rascal, while I am an upright man and the rightful owner of the silver."

And when the doomsman asked it of them, each of the twain, the fletcher and the miller, stuck to his tale, nor altered it a jot. Then quoth the doomsman, "Leave ye the silver with me and come again on the morrow." And they went their own ways.

Then came forward the king and the beggar, and the king said: "I was riding toward this town, and when I came to the bridge of Staines I saw this man seated by the roadside, and when he asked me to lift him on my horse I, seeing that he was old and feeble, said yes with good heart and carried him into this town of yours, in the which he was no sooner come than he claimed my horse to be his own, saying that it was his and not mine. This on the word of one who tries to be a righteously man is the truth, oh, doomsman."

And the beggar: "I was riding toward the town on this my horse when I met this young man, who, saying he was nigh dead from hard going, asked me to help him on his way. With a good heart I did so, putting him before me on my horse; but when we were come into the high street he roguishly claimed of me my horse, and when I would not give it up he had me haled before thee. This on the word of an old and righteously man is the truth, oh, doomsman!"

Said Cedric, "Leave the horse here with me and come again on the morrow."

So the king and the beggar went their own ways, and on the morrow were in the church yard, as were the others also, to hear the doom that Cedric would give.  
The scrivener and the hedger were called.  
"Take thy wife, scrivener," said Cedric, "and let the ears be cut from off the hedger."

So the hedger lost his ears and the scrivener gained his wife, and yet some said their lots were equal.  
Then were called the fletcher and the miller.  
"Take thy silver, miller," said Cedric, "and let the right hand be cut from off the fletcher."

So the miller got his silver and the fletcher lost his hand.  
Then the king and the beggar were called.  
"Come with me," said Cedric to the king, and he took him to a stable hard by where were a score of horses.  
"Pick out thine own horse," said Cedric; and the king did so.

Then Cedric sent for the beggar and said to him: "Pick out thine own horse from among a score of horses;" and the beggar, whose eyes were keen and whose arts were nimble, picked out the king's horse.

"Now," said Cedric, "come both of you to the doomsman's seat," and when they were gathered there once more Cedric said to the king: "Take thy horse and let the old man be hanged."

And the king marvelled at the wisdom of the doomsman, and said to him:

"Now I know that all I have heard is truth. Thou art as full of wisdom as is an egg of meat. Know then that I am King Alfred;" and when Cedric had bowed his knee before him the king said:  
"Tell me, I pray thee, how thou gavest such rightful doom, for I dare swear that thou dealt as righteously with the scrivener and the miller as with me."

"All three were but small matters, oh, king," said Cedric, "but this was the manner in which I settled them. Thou sawest how that I kept all night the three things ancient which there was a bickering."

"I did," said the king.  
"Well," said Cedric, "in the morning I turned hastily to the woman and said, 'Smooth me down a skin, for I need to write,' and she took a skin and rubbed it after the fashion of a scrivener's helper, and then I knew that she belonged to the scrivener and not to the hedger's for how would a hedger's wife know aught of writing or of making ready skins whereon to write?"

"'Tis well," said the king.  
"The silver," Cedric, "I put in a pot of water and left it over night. In the morning there floated on the top of the water a fine white dust. Then I knew it belonged to the miller, whose hands and clothes were covered with ground wheat, and not to the fletcher, whose hands were greasy with his meats. Had it been his, oil and not dust would have been on the water's top."

"'Tis very well," said the king. "And my horse?"  
"Truly therein I had pains to find the truth. For though of course thou knowest thy beast among the score, and doubtless wouldst have known him amid an hundred, yet when I called the beggar in so did he, too, and I was puzzled."

"Then didst thou but guess the truth?" said the king.  
"Nay," replied Cedric. "To guess is not true wisdom. I saw that while the beggar knew the horse, yet did the horse not know him. Yet the king knew, and whinnied when thou camest nigh to it; and so I gave thee and hanged the beggar."

The king pondered awhile, and then spoke.  
"Truly, Cedric," quoth he, "thou art better fit to be king and I to be doomsman. And yet I know not; for while I make a passing good king I fear I should make a passing bad doomsman."—Horace Townsend in Independent.

**A Gruesome Curiosity.**  
Of all the hideous, uncanny objects says the Boston Globe, the one that hangs in the window of the Hall Rubber Company is the uncanniest and most hideous. It is the preserved head of a South American Indian.

The head is five centuries old and belonged to an Indian chief named Hambrasa who was killed during the war with the Augaruna Indians on the River Santiago. The head was cut from the body by its Brazilian captors, and with consummate art, all the bony matter was removed from the interior, leaving nothing but the flesh and skin. Then, by some long lost process, it was embalmed; so perfect is the work that all the features are preserved in their exact proportions, but so reduced in size that the whole head is not larger than a good sized orange.

Attached to the top of the head, and run through the upper lip, are long strands of bright-colored hair, used in carrying the head at the waist as a trophy, after the fashion of the North American Indians. Black silken hair, about eighteen inches long, hangs down on either side, and the chin is adorned with a black imperial. Even the eye-brows and the short hairs within the nostrils are preserved.

The curiosity is valued at \$5,000, and will be presented to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

**Amiable Tall Men.**

There exists a sentiment of rather amusing amiability among excessively tall men. In the Boreal building the other day a man about six feet four in height entered an elevator where another giant of similar proportions stood fanning himself with complacency. The two men looked one another over with entire frankness, and then the first said: "You must be pretty well above three inches."

"Six, four," said the other laconically. "Is that your height?"  
"I'm just a shade under it," said the other tall man, with great solemnity; then he stepped out of the elevator, leaving the other giant standing there with his companion.

"It may strike you as odd to see two men address one another in that fashion," he said. "Men of unusual stature grow so accustomed to looking down into the eyes of other men that when they are suddenly confronted with a man whose height causes them to lift their heads and look at him in a level way the effect is almost startling. A little chat about unusual height comes as a matter of course. Big men are proverbially good-natured you know. You have no idea how rare an experience it is for me to meet a man of my own height. Sometimes I move along for a year in New York without encountering one."—New York Sun.