RIP VAN WINKLE, M. D.

An After-Dinner Prescription.

BY OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

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CANTO FIRST.

Old Rip Van Winkle had a grandson, Rip, Or the paternal block a genuine chip; A lazy, sleepy, curious Rip of chap; He, like his grandfather, took a mighty nap, Whereof the story I propose to tell, In one brief canto, if you listen well.

Rip married a wife when Rip to manhood grew; They always will when there's work to do; He tried at farming—found it rather slow—He tried at teaching—what he didn't know; Then took to hanging round the tavern bars, To frequent toddies and longcane cigars, Till Dame Van Winkle, out of patience, vexed With preaching homilies, having for their text A mop, a broomstick—aught that might avail To point a moral or adorn a tale, Exclaimed—"I have it! Now then Mr. V.! He's good for something—make him a M. D."

The die was cast; the youngster was content; They packed his shirts and stockings, and he went.

How hard he studied it were vain to tell—He drowned through Wister, nodded over Bell, Slept sound with Cooper, snored aloud on Good; Heard heaps of lectures doubtless under-stood; Rubbed up his knowledge smartly as he could, A constant listener, for he did not fall To carve his name on every bench and stall.

Months grew to years; at last he counted three, And Rip Van Winkle found himself M. D. Illustrious title! in a gilded frame He set the diploma with his Latin name, *Ripum Van Winkhum, gorus—ve scimus*—know *hibiemus*—we do so and so!

He hired an office; soon its walls displayed His new diploma and his stock in trade, A mighty arsenal to subdue disease Of various names, whereof I mention these: Lancets and bleeders, great and little squirt, Rhubarb and Senna, Snakeroot, Thoroughwort, Ant Tree, Vin. Colch., Pil. Cochic and Black Drop, Tinctures of Opium, Gentian, Henbane, Hop, Puv. Ipecacuanhe, which for long Of breath to utter can pick up a song, Camphor and Kino, Turpentine, Jalap, Cubebs, Copaiva, Vitriol—white and blue, Fennel and Flaxseed, Slippery Elm and Squill, And roots of Sassafras and "Sassafrill," Brandy—for colds—Pinkroot, death worms—Valerian, calmer of hysteric spirims, Musk, Assafœtida, the noisome gum Named from its odor—well, it does smell some—Jalap, that works not wisely, but too well, Ten pounds of bark and six of Calomel.

Five outward griefs he had an ample store, Some twenty jars and gallipots, or more: *Contusus singlor*—bumpers where all comple The range of home, and call it "wax and ple;" *Lingwinkh Resinosum*—change its name, The drawing salve of Dame Van Winkle and dame; *Argenti Nitras*, also "Spanish flies," Whose virtue makes the sluggish soldier rise—(Some say that spread upon a taper's skin "They draw no water, only run or gin)—Leeches, sweet vermin! don't they charm the sick? And sticking-plaster—how it hates to stick! *Emplastrum Ferri*—ointment of Iron Pitch, Washes and Powders, Brimstone for the which, *Nubies or Pharo*, is thy chosen name Since Hahnemann's goose quill scratch'd thee into fame, Proved thee the source of every nameless ill, Whose sole specific is a moonshine pill, Till saucy science, with a quiet grin, Held up the Acetus, crawling on a pin! —Mountains have labored and have brought forth mice: The Dutchman's theory hatched a brood of twice— I've well nigh said them—words unfitting quite For these fair precincts and for ears polite.

The surest foot may chance at last to slip, And so at last Rip proved to his cost that One full-sized bottle stood upon the shelf Which held the medicine that he took himself; What'er the reason, it must be confessed He filled that bottle different from the rest; What drug it held I don't presume to know—The gilded label said "Elixir Pro."

One day the Doctor found the bottle full, And, being thirsty, took a vigorous pull, Put back the "elixir" where he had always found, And had old Dobbin saddled and brought round.

—That week those old-time rhubarb-colored nags Traversed doctors and their saddle-bags; Sagacious beasts! they stopped at every place Where lines were out of tribulation's chase; Ten times a case, Dobbin, with ears erect, Looked up and thought—the baby's in a fit. *That* won't last long—he'll soon be through Dobbin knew!

But shook their heads before the knockered door Where some old lady told the story o'er What a relapse the poor patient had taken, How for gastric grief, and peristaltic woes,

What jack o' lantern led him from his way, And where it ed him. It were hard to say! Enough that wandering many a weary mile Through paths the mountain sheep trod single file.

Overcome by feelings such as patients know Who dose too freely with "Elixir Pro," He tumbl—dismounted, slightly in a heap, And lay, promiscuous, lapped in balmy sleep.

Night followed night, and day succeeded day, But morning still the slumbering Doctor lay. Your Dobbin, sagacious, thought upon the stalls, And straggled homeward, saddle-bags and all; The village people hunted all around, But Rip was missing—never could be found. Eleven days! Dame Van Winkle, in despair, half a year Put questions and questions—and he answered not one queer; Some said of apple-brandy—other some Found a strong flavor of Rye Whiskey rum! —Why can't a fellow hear the fine things said About a fellow when a fellow's dead? The list of eulogiums—so they are declared—A public blessing while his life was spared, Were to his memory, heartsome to the ear, In all things temperate, sober, just and pure; The last of husbands! echoed Mrs. Van, And set her cap to catch another man.

—So ends this Canto—if it's *quantum suff*, Well just stop here and say we've had enough, And leave poor Rip to sleep for thirty years, I grind the organ—if you lend your ears Rip hear my second Canto, after the Wedding Bell, We'll send around the monkey with the hat.

CANTO SECOND.

So thirty years had gone—but not a word In all that time of Rip was ever heard. The world wagged on—it never does go back—The wheel of fortune was ridiculous as ever, France was an Empire—Andrew J. was dead, And Abraham Lincoln was reigning in his stead. Four murderous years had passed in savage strife, Yet still the rebel host lie bloody knife. —At last one morning—who forgets the day When the black cloud of war dissolved away? —The joyous tidings spread—the nation said, Rebellion done for! Grant has captured Lee! Up every flagstaff spang the Stars and Stripes—

On rushed the Extras, wild with maumoth types,

Down went the laborer's hoe, the shoemaker's book—"Hurrah!" he cried—"the rebel army's took!" Ah! what a load the folks felt and what joy Each food; pale mother thinking of her boy; Old grandfathers, fathers, mothers—Have you heard? Yes, I've heard the whole—and not another word; Sisters all trembling—maidens, not less dear, In trembling joys—between a smile and tear; Poor Bridget thinking how she'll stuff the goose, In that big cake for Johnny when he comes; Cripples afoot—rheumatics on the pins, Old girls so loving they could hug the pumps, Guns going bang! from every fort and hill, Bells banging so loud at last they ceased the din.

I spare the picture, how a man appears Who's been asleep a score or two of years; Who all have seen it to perfection drew Rip Joe Van Winkle—I mean Rip Jefferson. Well, as it was—old Rip at last came back, Claimed his old wife—the present widow Mac—

Had his old sign regilded, and began To practice physic on the same old plan.

Some weeks went by—it was not long to wait— And "please to call" grew frequent on the slate. He had, in fact, an ancient, mildewed air, A long grey beard, a pleuteous lack of hair, Spectacles that always remembered to be lost, Your good old Doctor to his ailing friends. "Talk of your science! after all is said, There's nothing like a hare and shing head—Ye lands the graves that are sure to be Folks want their doctors monthly, like their cheese.

So Rip began to look at people's tongues And thump their bristled chests—he found their lungs!. Brushed up his knowledge smartly as he could, Read in old Cullen and in Doctor Good. The town was healthy, for a month or two He gave the sexton little work to do.

About the time when dogday heats begin, Measles and mumps and whooping cough set in; With autumn evenings dysentery came, Of which the symptom is his sanctifying blame; The blacksmith ailed—the carpenter was down—

And half the children sickened in the town. The sexton's fees grew sweeter than ever before—The sexton's wife, a brandnew bonnet wore—Things looked quite serious—Death has got a grip On old and young, in spite of Doctor Rip.

And now the Squire was taken with a chill—Wife gave "hot drops"—a sight an Indian bow! Next morning, feverish—bedtime, getting worse, Out of his head—began to rave and curse; The Doctor sent for—double quick he came: *Ar. Tert quotidian*, said the Doctor—Fever! If no et cetera. Third day—nothing new; Paroxysm of the brain—Rip's sight an Indian bow; Lung-fever threatening—something of the sort.

Out with the lancet—let him blood—a quart—Ten leeches—then—blister the soles of his feet—Ten grains of calomel—just then he died.

The Deacon next required the Doctor's side; Took cold by sitting in a draught of air—Pains in the back, but what the matter is Not quite so sure—wife calls it "rheumatic." Rubs back with flannel—gives him something hot—

"Ah!" says the Deacon, "that goes *sigh* the spot;" Next day a *rigor*—run, my little man, And say the Deacon sent for Doctor Van. The Doctor came—percussion, at before, Thumping, and lunging till his ribs were sore; "Right side up the flattest"—then more vigorous rare. Fever—delirium—pleurisy, perhaps. A quart of blood will ease the pain, no doubt, "Ten leeches next will help to pack it out. Then clap a blister on the painful part—But first two grains of *Antimonial Tart*. Last, with a dose of cleansing calomel Unload the portal system—that sounds well!

But when the self-same remedies were tried, As all the village knew, the Squire had died; The neighbors hinted—"this will never do. He's killed the Squire—he'll kill the Deacon, too."

Now, when a doctor's patients are perplexed, A *consultation* comes in order next—You know what that is? In a certain place Meet certain doctors to discuss a case And other matters, such as weather, crops, Potatoes, pumpkins, lager beer and hops. For what's the use?—there's little to be said, Nine times in ten your man's as good as dead—

At best a talk (the secret is disclosed) Where three men guess and *sometimes* one man knows.

The counsel summoned came without delay—Young Doctor Green and shrewd old Doctor Gray. They heard the story—"Bleed?" says Doctor Green. "That's downright murder! cut his throat, you mean!

Leeches! the repulses! Why, for pity's sake, Not try an adder or a rattlesnake? But why, bless you, they're against the law! It's rank assault and battery if they draw! Tartrate of Antimony! shade of Luke, Stomachic turn pale at thought of such revoke! The pretty system! What's the man about? Unload your nonsense! Ca omen's played out! You've been asleep—you'd better sleep away Till some one calls you—"

"Stop!" says Doctor Gray—"Stop! Doctor Gray—"The story is you slept for thirty years; With Brother Green, I own that it appears You must have slumbered most amazing sound; But sleep once more till thirty years come round. You'll find the lancet in its honored place, Leeches and blisters rescued from disgrace, Your drugs redeemed from fashion's passing frown, And counted safe to give to babes unborn."

Poor sleepy Rip, M. M. S. S. M. D., A puzzled, serious, saddened man was he Home from the Deacon's house he plodded slow And filled one dropper of "Elixir Pro." "Good-bye," he faltered, "Mrs. Van, my dear: I'm going to sleep, but wake me once a year I don't like the aching in the frost and dew, If I take the turn, I'll all the same to you. Just once a year—remember! no oftener—mind! Try Rip Van Winkle, time for you to wake? Wake for a week in May when the frost is blow, For then the doctors meet, and I must go."

—Just once a year the Doctor's worthy dame Goes to the barn and shouts her husband's name; "Come, Rip Van Winkle!" (giving him a shake) "Rip! Rip Van Winkle! time for you to wake; Laylocks in blossom! 'tis the month of May— The doctors meeting is this blessed day, And come what will, you know I heard you stay— You'd never miss it, but be always there?"

And so it is, as every year comes round, Old Rip Van Winkle here is always found. You'll quickly know him by his mildewed air, The hayseed sprinkled through his scanty hair, The lichens growing on his rusty suit—I've seen a hundred sprouting on his boot—Who says I lie? Does any man presume—Tombstone? No matter—call it a rinsbroom. Where is his sign? He moves it every year; But look, you'll find him—he always here—Perhaps you'll track him by a whiff you know—

A certain flavor of "Elixir Pro."

New, then, I give you—as you seem to think You can stand healthfulness in stronger drink— Health to the mighty sleeper—you know him well Our brother Rip, M. M. S. S. M. D.!

NASBY IN DELAWARE.

His Appreciation of the Democracy of the South—the Troubles of Two of Their Who Desired to Rebuke Liquor Venders for Insults to Negroes.

MASTER'S CORNERS, MISSTIPPI HUVMBUM, IN THE STATE OF DELAWARE, May 28, 1870.—To say that I am delighted with the Dimocrisy av Delaware is to yooze a mildly feeble expression. They hev all the easy-goin faith av the Kentuckian without his ferocity; they hold jest as firmly to the proclamshun av Custom House rule, taking the length on load, from the forward jist av starn to after part of forward stern post, breadth av beam and moulded depth from under part of deck to top av bulwarks.

When I arrive, I find that the Democrisy av Delaware hev dug down a clean half-foot av burning flood, which the most reckless minded citizen av the Corner hed jest disklivver. They hev all the easy-goin faith av the Kentuckian without his ferocity; they hold jest as firmly to the proclamshun av Custom House rule, taking the length on load, from the forward part of stern to after part of forward stern post, breadth of beam moulded and depth from under part of deck to top of bulwarks.

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