

# HARPER'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE

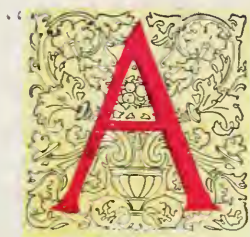
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## The Castle of Content

BY JAMES BRANCH CABELL



“AND so,” she ended, “you may seize the revenues of Allonby with unwashed hands, cousin.”

“Why have you done this?” I cried. I was half frightened by the sudden whirl of Dame Fortune’s wheel.

“Dear cousin in motley,” grinned the beldame, “’twas for hatred of Tom Allonby and all his accursed race that I have kept the secret thus long. Now comes a braver revenge: and I wreak my vengeance on all the spawn of Allonby—ah, how entirely!—by setting you at their head. Will you jest for them in counsel, good cousin?—reward your henchmen with a merry quip?—lead them to battle with a bawdy song?—ugh! ugh!” Her voice crackled like burning timber, and sputtered in groans that would have been fanged curses had breath not failed her: for my aunt Elinor had a nimble tongue, whetted, as rumor had it, by the attendance of divers Sabbats, and the chaunting of such songs as honest men may not hear and live, however highly succubi and leprichaunes commend them.

I squinted down at one green leg, scratched the crimson fellow to it with my bauble, and could not deny that her argument was just.

’Twas a strange tale she had ended, speaking swiftly lest the worms grow impatient and Charon weigh anchor ere she had done: and the proofs of the tale’s

verity, set forth in a fair clerkly handwriting, rustled in my hand—scratches of a long-rotted pen that transferred me to the right side of the blanket, and transformed the motley of a fool into the ermine of a peer.

All Devon knew that I was son to Tom Allonby, who had been Marquis of Falmouth at his uncle’s death, had he not first broken his neck in a fox-hunt; but Dan Gabriel, come post-haste from heaven, had scarce convinced the village idiot that Holy Church had smiled upon his union with a tanner’s daughter, and that their son was lord of Allonby Shaw. I doubted it, even as I read the proof. Yet it was true—true that I had precedence even of Monsieur de Puyange, friend of the King’s though he was, who had kept me on a shifty diet, first coins, then curses, these ten years past—true that my father, rogue in all else, had yet dealt honestly with my mother ere he died—true that my aunt, less fairly treated by him, had shared their secret with the priest that married them, and had most maliciously preserved it till now, when her words fell before me like Jove’s shower before the Lady Danae, chinking, sparkling, pregnant with undreamed-of chances that stirred as yet blindly in the womb of Time.

A sick anger woke in me, remembering the burden of ignoble years she had suffered me to bear; yet my callow gentility bade me deal tenderly with this dying peasant woman, who, when all was said,

same fan and handkerchief are there, but that irresistible, roguish glance which plays on her face in the later portrait is the mesmerizing glare of a Medusa in the schoolboy's handiwork, and the black curls are more suggestive of art than of nature. As for the elderly *soupirant* who stands before her, crush-hat in hand, he surely must have been drawn from the boy's recollection of some guest of Major Carmichael Smyth's when at Addiscombe.

At any originating idea which may have suggested the two drawings "Dangerous" and "Slow and Steady wins the Race" of course no guess can be made. But in the case of the former it is curious to note something of the same motive as in the illustration to the *Pickwick Papers* made by "Phiz" ten years later on. The self-satisfied dandy, skating backwards with folded arms, has cer-

tainly nothing in common with Winkle the sporting-man; but the outside-edge stroke which he has just begun will evidently land him with fatal accuracy upon the couple in collision behind him, much in the manner of Mr. Winkle and the medical students at Dingley Dell.

In "Slow and Steady," the welter-weight jockey, gazing with satisfaction at the winning-post, and his mount, as much astonished as the rider at reaching the end of the course, are perhaps memories of some Devonshire steeplechase or local point-to-point race visited by young Thackeray. The spectators are not in view, or one would like to point out among them the figures which were afterwards better known to the world as Blanche Amory, the jolly old Begum, little Harry Foker, and perhaps even "Pen" himself.

## Indian Summer

BY TERTIUS AND HENRY VAN DYKE

A SOFT veil dims the turquoise skies,  
 And half-conceals from pensive eyes  
     The bronzing tokens of the Fall;  
 A calmness broods upon the hills,  
 And Summer's parting dream distills  
     A charm of silence over all.

The stacks of corn, in brown array,  
 Stand waiting through the placid day,  
     Like tattered wigwams on the plain;  
 The tribes that find a shelter there  
 Are phantom peoples, forms of air,  
     And ghosts of vanished joy and pain.

At evening, when the blood-red crest  
 Of sunset passes through the West,  
     I hear the whispering host returning:  
 On far-off fields, by elm and oak,  
 I see the light, I smell the smoke,—  
     The camp-fires of the Past are burning.