

A FOOL'S ERRAND

FOUNDED ON FACT

I

In a room upon the campus, on a dark and gloomy day,
Met a band of busy students, in a silent mystic way;
They were members of an order formed for college jokes and pranks,
And their meetings boded trouble in the staid professors' ranks.

II

They had met to make arrangements for a plan a member put
To the meeting with the purpose to surprise Professor Foot,
And they planned to take his carriage from his stable in the night
And beneath Oconee's waters hide it evermore from sight.

III

With a plenitude of caution they discussed the matter there,
And arranged the whole procedure with minuteness and with care,
How to take without detection, when the town was still and dark,
The old vehicle that rumor said was older than the Ark.

IV

The arrangements are completed and the band have left the room,
And old Foot, within his mansion, knows not of his phaeton's doom,
And the plotters with impatience watch the sun's slow fading light,
For the deed must be accomplished under cover of the night.

* * * * * V * * * *

Night has come, and from the steeple slowly chimes the fated hour,
And the band, with stealthy footsteps, seek the shadows of the tower;
All are present; all is ready for the march to be begun,
And the plotters all are merry at the prospect of the fun.

VI

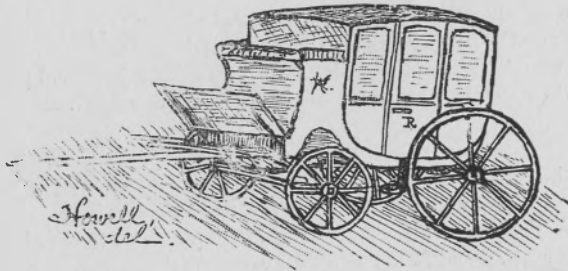
Soon they reach the gloomy stable, and its frail, worm-eaten door
Soon is opened, and the students stand upon the oaken floor,
And before them stands the carriage, like a dark and gloomy ghost,
Like some pre-adamic sentry, standing silent at its post.

VII

But to make the story shorter, and to save our costly space,
 We omit the minor details and descriptions of the place,
 For the boys were bent on mischief, and paused not to look around,
 But with earnest toil, in silence, rolled the carriage to the ground.

VIII

Joy and stern determination shone on every boyish face,
 As, with swiftly rolling phaeton, they began the midnight race;
 Streets are rough and wheels are heavy and their brows are bathed in sweat,
 But their purpose knows no failing and is tinged with no regret.



IX

Passed now is the darksome court house, with its stone steps white and steep;
 Passed now is the college campus, and the snores of those asleep
 Make the toiling plotters restless as they think of home and bed,
 But with burden growing greater, still the rocky streets they tread.

X

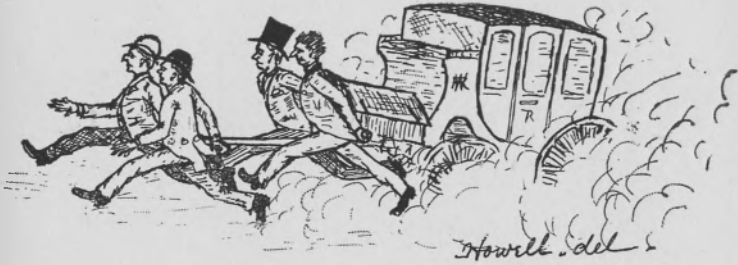
Never phaeton rolled so heavy, never streets so dark and rough,
 But the thought of Foot's displeasure, to the boys gave strength enough
 To have dragged a hundred phaetons, and the thought new vigor lent,
 And with tired legs and bodies, on the busy plotters went.

XI

Now they see the dark Oconee and its waters black and still,
 And the boys with fresh exertions drag the carriage down the hill;
 Soon the deed will be accomplished, and their oaths again they swore:
 "Foot shall see his aged carriage, see his phaeton, nevermore!"

XII

Now they reach the silent waters, and they pause upon the shore;
 By its wheels they held the phaeton, and a smile their features wore,
 As they slowly pushed the carriage, pushed the carriage from the bank,
 And the huge and rusty axles 'neath the hungry waters sank.



XIII

Stop! The phaeton door is creaking, and is now thrown open wide!
Heavens! On the cushions sitting, is a gray-haired man inside.
See, with measured grace he rises, through the door his head is put;
Shades of Calculus defend us! Satan take us, 'tis old Foot!

XIV

With a differential accent and a parabolic smile,
And a logarithmic gesture, in a manner full of guile,
The professor thanked the students for the pleasant evening ride
Through the shadowed streets of Athens to the charming river side.

XV

"Now, young gentlemen," he whispered, "if you all are satisfied,
We will journey back to Cobbham, where you left my horses tied.
By-the-by, that team of horses on to-morrow I shall sell,
Since I find a team of donkeys serve my purpose just as well."

L'ENVOI

In a room upon the campus, when the dawn had come at last,
Met a band of dismal students, and their brows were overcast,
And the captain kicked his neighbor, and his neighbor kicked his mate,
And because they could not kick themselves, each cursed his cruel fate.

An unfortunate declaimer for a Sophomore speaker's place
was recently heard to remark that "the faculty had done him
an injustice." "Why so," asked a bystander, "do you think
you deserved one?" "Think it?" replied the offended Soph,
"I know it. Didn't I hear myself speak and didn't I hear
the rest of em?"