

**THE LITTLE BROWN
JUG
AT KILDARE**

By
MEREDITH NICHOLSON

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I TWO GENTLEMEN SAY GOOD-BY

CHAPTER II THE ABSENCE OF GOVERNOR OSBORNE

CHAPTER III THE JUG AND MR. ARDMORE

CHAPTER IV DUTY AND THE JUG

CHAPTER V MR. ARDMORE OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED

CHAPTER VI MR. GRISWOLD FORSAKES THE ACADEMIC LIFE

CHAPTER VII AN AFFAIR AT THE STATE HOUSE

CHAPTER VIII THE LABORS OF MR. ARDMORE

CHAPTER IX THE LAND OF THE LITTLE BROWN JUG

CHAPTER X PROFESSOR GRISWOLD TAKES THE FIELD

CHAPTER XI TWO LADIES ON A BALCONY

CHAPTER XII THE EMBARRASMENTS OF THE DUKE OF BALLYWINKLE

CHAPTER XIII MISS DANGERFIELD TAKES A PRISONER

CHAPTER XIV A MEETING OF OLD FRIENDS

CHAPTER XV THE PRISONER IN THE CORN-CRIB

CHAPTER XVI THE FLIGHT OF GILLINGWATER

CHAPTER XVII ON THE ROAD TO TURNER'S
CHAPTER XVIII THE BATTLE OF THE RACCOON
CHAPTER XIX IN THE RED BUNGALOW
CHAPTER XX ROSÆ MUNDI
CHAPTER XXI GOOD-BY TO JERRY DANGERFIELD



Oh, for you that I never knew,
Only in dreams that bind you!—
By Spring's own grace I shall know your face
When under the may I find you!
—*H. C. Bunner*

**THE LITTLE BROWN JUG AT
KILDARE**



**THE LITTLE BROWN JUG
AT KILDARE**

CHAPTER I

TWO GENTLEMEN SAY GOOD-BY

"If anything really interesting should happen to me I think I should drop dead," declared Ardmore as he stood talking to Griswold in the railway station at Atlanta. "I entered upon this life under false pretenses, thinking that money would make the game easy, but here I am, twenty-seven years old, stalled at the end of a blind alley, with no light ahead; and to be quite frank, old man, I don't believe you have the advantage of me. What's the matter with us, anyhow?"

"The mistake we make," replied Griswold, "is in failing to seize opportunities when they offer. You and I have talked ourselves hoarse a thousand times planning schemes we never pull off. We are cursed with indecision, that's the trouble with us. We never see the handwriting on the wall, or if we do, it's just a streak of hieroglyphics, and we don't know what it means until we read about it in the newspapers. But I thought you were satisfied with the thrills you got running as a reform candidate for alderman in New York last year. It was a large stage and the lime-light struck you pretty often. Didn't you get enough? No doubt they'd be glad to run you again."

Ardmore glanced hastily about and laid his hand heavily on his friend's shoulder.

"Don't mention it—don't think of it! No more politics in mine. The world may go hang if it waits for me to set it right. What I want is something different, a real adventure—something with spice in it. I have bought everything money can buy, and now I'm looking for something that can't be tagged with a price."

"There's your yacht and the open sea," suggested Griswold.

"Sick of it! Sick to death of it!"

"You're difficult, old man, and mighty hard to please. Why don't you turn explorer and go in for the North Pole?"

"Perfectly bully! I've thought of it a lot, but I want to be sure I've cleaned up everything else first. It's always up there waiting—on ice, so to speak—but when it's done once there will be nothing left. I want to save that for the last call."

"You said about the same thing when we talked of Thibet that first evening we met at the University Club, and now the Grand Lama sings in all the phonographs, and for a penny you can see him in a kinetoscope, eating his luncheon. I remember very well that night. We were facing each other at a writing-table, and you looked up timidly from your letter and asked me whether there were two *g*'s in aggravate, and I answered that it depended on the meaning—one *g* for a mild case, two for a severe one—and you laughed, and we began talking. Then we found out how lonesome we both were, and you asked me to dinner, and then took me to that big house of yours up there in Fifth

Avenue and showed me the pictures in your art gallery, and we found out that we needed each other."

"Yes, I had needed you all right!" And Ardmore sniffed dolefully, and complained of the smoke that was drifting in upon them from the train sheds. "I wish you wouldn't always be leaving me. You ought to give up your job and amuse me. You're the only chap I know who doesn't talk horse or automobile or yacht, or who doesn't want to spend whole evenings discussing champagne vintages; but you're too good a man to be wasted on a college professorship. Better let me endow an institution that will make you president—there might be something in that."

"It would make me too prominent, so that when we really make up our minds to go in for adventures I should be embarrassed by my high position. As a mere lecturer on *The Libeling of Sunken Ships* in a law school, I'm the most obscure person in the world. And for another thing, we couldn't risk the scandal of tainted money. It would be nasty to have your great-grandfather's whisky deals with the Mohawk Indians chanted in a college yell."

The crowd surged past them to the Washington express, and a waiting porter picked up Griswold's bags.

"Wish you wouldn't go. I have three hours to wait," said Ardmore, looking at his watch, "and the only Atlanta man I know is out of town."

"What did you say you were going to New Orleans for?" demanded Griswold, taking out his ticket and moving

toward the gate. "I thought you exhausted the Creole restaurants long ago."

"The fact is," faltered Ardmore, coloring, "I'm looking for some one."

"Out with it—out with it!" commanded his friend.

"I'm looking for a girl I saw from a car window day before yesterday. I had started north, and my train stopped to let a south-bound train pass somewhere in North Carolina. The girl was on the south-bound sleeper, and her window was opposite mine. She put aside the magazine she was reading and looked me over rather coolly."

"And you glanced carelessly in the opposite direction and pulled down your shade, of course, like the well-bred man you are—" interrupted Griswold, holding fast to Ardmore's arm as they walked down the platform.

"I did no such thing. I looked at her and she looked at me. And then my train started—"

"Well, trains have a way of starting. Does the romance end here?"

"Then, just at the last moment, she winked at me!"

"It was a cinder, Ardy. The use of soft coal on railways is one of the saddest facts of American transportation. I need hardly remind you, Mr. Ardmore, that nice girls don't wink at strange young men. It isn't done!"

"I would have you know, Professor, that this girl is a lady."

"Don't be so irritable, and let me summarize briefly on your own hypothesis: You stared at a strange girl and she winked at you, safe in the consciousness that she would never see you again. And now you are going to New Orleans to look for her. She will probably meet you at the station, with her bridesmaids and wedding cake all ready for you. And you think this will lead to an adventure—you defer finding the North Pole for this—for this? Poor Ardy! But did she toss her card from the window? Why New Orleans? Why not Minneapolis, or Bangor, Maine?"

"I'm not an ass, Grissy. I caught the name of the sleeper—you know they're all named, like yachts and tall buildings—the name of her car was the *Alexandra*. I asked our conductor where it was bound for, and he said it was the New Orleans car. So I took the first train back, ran into you here, and that's the whole story to date."

"I admire your spirit. New Orleans is much pleasanter than the polar ice, and a girl with a winking eye isn't to be overlooked in this vale of tears. What did this alleviating balm for tired eyes look like, if you remember anything besides the wicked wink?"

"She was bareheaded, and her hair was wonderfully light and fluffy, and it was parted in the middle and tied behind with a black ribbon in a great bow. She rested her cheek on her hand—her elbow on the window-sill, you know—and she smiled a little as the car moved off, and winked—do you understand? Her eyes were blue, Grissy, big and blue—and she was perfectly stunning."

"There are winks and winks, Ardy," observed Griswold with a judicial air. "There is the wink inadvertent, to which no meaning can be attached. There is the wink deceptive, usually given behind the back of a third person, and a vulgar thing which we will not associate with your girl of the *Alexandra*. And then, to be brief, there is the wink of mischief, which is observed occasionally in persons of exceptional bringing up. There are moments in the lives of all of us when we lose our grip on conventions—on morality, even. The psychology of this matter is very subtle. Here you are, a gentleman of austerely correct life; here is a delightful girl, on whom you flash in an out-of-the-way corner of the world. And she, not wholly displeased by the frank admiration in your eyes—for you may as well concede that you stared at her—"

"Well, I suppose I did look at her," admitted Ardmore reluctantly.

"Pardonably, no doubt, just as you would look at a portrait in a picture gallery, of course. This boarding-school miss, who had never before lapsed from absolute propriety, felt the conventional world crumble beneath her as the train started. She could no more have resisted the temptation to wink than she could have refused a caramel or an invitation to appear as best girl at a church wedding. Thus wireless communication is established between soul and soul for an instant only, and then you are cut off forever. Perhaps, in the next world, Ardy—"

Griswold and Ardmore had often idealized themselves as hopeless pursuers of the elusive, the unattainable, the

impossible; or at least Ardmore had, and Griswold had entered into the spirit of this sort of thing for the joy it gave Ardmore. They had discussed frequently the call of soul to soul—the quick glance passing between perfect strangers in crowded thoroughfares, and had fruitlessly speculated as to their proper course in the event the call seemed imperative. A glance of the eye is one thing, but it is quite another to address a stranger and offer eternal friendship. The two had agreed that, while, soul-call or no soul-call, a gentleman must keep clear of steamer flirtations, and avoid even the most casual remarks to strange young women in any circumstances, a gentleman of breeding and character may nevertheless follow the world's long trails in search of a never-to-be-forgotten face.

The fact is that Ardmore was exceedingly shy, and a considerable experience of fashionable society had not diminished this shortcoming. Griswold, on the other hand, had the Virginian's natural social instinct, but he suffered from a widely-diffused impression that much learning had made him either indifferent or extremely critical where women are concerned.

Ardmore shrugged his shoulders and fumbled in his coat pockets as though searching for ideas. An austere composure marked his countenance at all times, and emphasized the real distinction of his clean-cut features. His way of tilting back his head and staring dreamily into vacancy had established for him a reputation for stupidity that was wholly undeserved.

"Please limit the discussion to the present world, Professor."

When Ardmore was displeased with Griswold he called him Professor, in a withering tone that disposed of the academic life.

"We shall limit it to New Orleans or the universe, as you like."

"I'm disappointed in you, Grissy. You don't take this matter in the proper spirit. I'm going to find that girl, I tell you."

"I want you to find her, Ardy, and throw yourself at her feet. Be it far from me to deprive you of the joy of search. I thoroughly admire your resolute spirit. It smacks of the old heroic times. Nor can I conceal from you my consuming envy. If a girl should flatter me with a wink I should follow her thrice round the world. She should not elude me anywhere in the Copernican system. If it were not the nobler part for you to pursue alone, I should forsake my professorship and buckle on my armor and follow your standard—

With the winking eye
For my battle-cry."

And Griswold hummed the words, beating time with his stick, much to Ardmore's annoyance.

"In my ignorance," Griswold continued, "I recall but one allusion to the wink in immortal song. If my memory serves me, it is no less a soul than Browning who sings:

'All heaven, meanwhile, condensed into one eye
Which fears to lose the wonder, should it wink.'

You seem worried, Ardy. Does the wink press so heavily, or what's the matter?"

"The fact is, I'm in trouble. My sister says I've got to marry."

"Which sister?"

"Mrs. Atchison. You know Nellie? She's a nice girl and she's a good sister to me, but she's running me too hard on this marrying business. She's going to bring a bunch of girls down to Ardsley in a few days, and she says she'll stay until I make a choice."

Griswold whistled.

"Then, as we say in literary circles, you're up against it. No wonder you're beginning to take notice of the frolicsome boarding-school girl who winks at the world. I believe I'd rather take chances myself with that amiable sort than marry into your Newport transatlantic set."

"Well, one thing's certain, Grissy. You've got to come to Ardsley and help me out while those people are there. Nellie likes you; she thinks you're terribly intellectual and all that, and if you'll throw in a word now and then, why—"

"Why, I may be able to protect you from the crafts and assaults of your sister. You seem to forget, Ardy, that I'm not one of your American leisure class. I'm always delighted to meet Mrs. Atchison, but I'm a person of

occupations. I have a consultation in Richmond to-morrow, then me for Charlottesville. We have examinations coming on, and, while I like to play with you, I've positively got to work."

"Not if I endow all the chairs in the university! You've not only got to come, but you're going to be there the day they arrive."

Thomas Ardmore, of New York and Ardsley, struck his heavy stick—he always carried a heavy stick—smartly on the cement platform in the stress of his feeling. He was much shorter than Griswold, to whom he was deeply attached—for whom he had, indeed, the frank admiration of a small boy for a big brother. He sometimes wondered how fully Griswold entered into the projects of adventure which he, in his supreme idleness, planned and proposed; but he himself had never been quite ready to mount horse or shake out sail, and what Griswold had said about indecision rankled in his heart. He was sorry now that he had told of this new enterprise to which he had pledged himself, but he grew lenient toward Griswold's lack of sympathy as he reflected that the quest of a winking girl was rather beneath the dignity of a gentleman wedded not merely to the law, but to the austere teaching profession as well. In his heart he forgave Griswold, but he was all the more resolved to address himself stubbornly to his pursuit of the deity of the car *Alexandra*, for only by finding her could he establish himself in Griswold's eyes as a man of action, capable of carrying through a scheme requiring cleverness and tact.

Ardmore was almost painfully rich, but the usual diversions of the wealthy did not appeal to him, and, having exhausted foreign travel, he spent much time on his estate in the North Carolina hills, where he could ride all day on his own land, and where he read prodigiously in a huge library that he had assembled with special reference to works on piracy, a subject that had attracted him from early youth.

It was this hobby that had sealed his friendship with Griswold, who had relinquished the practice of law, after a brilliant start in his native city of Richmond, to accept the associate professorship of admiralty in the law department of the University of Virginia. Marine law had a particular fascination for Griswold from its essentially romantic character. As a law student he had read all the decisions in admiralty that the libraries afforded, and, though faithfully serving the university, he still occasionally accepted retainers in admiralty cases of unusual importance. His lectures were constantly attended by students in other departments of the university for sheer pleasure in Griswold's racy and entertaining exposition of the laws touching the libeling of schooners and the recovery of jettisoned cargoes. Henry Maine Griswold was tall, slender and dark, and he hovered recklessly, as he might have put it, on the brink of thirty. He stroked his thin brown mustache habitually, as though to hide the smile that played about his humorous mouth—a smile that lay even more obscurely in his fine brown eyes. He did violence to the academic traditions by dressing with metropolitan care, gray being his prevailing note, though his scarfs ventured upon bold color schemes that interested his students almost as much

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

