



DELPHI
CLASSICS

Jeffery Farnol

Complete Works



Series Fourteen

The Complete Works of
JEFFERY FARNOL

(1878-1952)



Contents

The Jasper Shrig Books

The Amateur Gentleman (1913)
Peregrine's Progress (1922)
The Loring Mystery (1925)
The High Adventure (1925)
The Quest of Youth (1927)
The Way Beyond (1933)
The Crooked Furrow (1937)
The Happy Harvest (1939)
Murder by Nail (1942)
Heritage Perilous (1946)
My Lord of Wrybourne (1948)
The Ninth Earl (1950)
Waif of the River (1952)

Treasure and Vengeance Series

Black Bartlemy's Treasure (1920)
Martin Conisby's Vengeance (1921)

Other Novels

My Lady Caprice (1907)
The Broad Highway (1910)
The Money Moon (1911)
The Honourable Mr. Tawnish (1913)
Beltane the Smith (1915)
The Definite Object (1917)
Our Admirable Betty (1918)
The Geste of Duke Jocelyn (1919)
Sir John Dering (1923)
Guyfford of Weare (1928)
Another Day (1929)
Over the Hills (1930)

The Jade of Destiny (1931)
Charmian, Lady Vibart (1932)
Winds of Fortune (1934)
John o' the Green (1935)
A Pageant of Victory (1936)
The Lonely Road (1938)
Adam Penfeather, Buccaneer (1940)
The King Liveth (1942)
The Piping Times (1945)
The Fool Beloved (1949)
The Glad Summer (1951)
Justice by Midnight (1955)

The Short Story Collections

The Shadow and Other Stories (1929)
Voices from the Dust (1932)
Portrait of a Gentleman in Colours (1935)
A Matter of Business (1940)
Uncollected Stories

The Short Stories

List of Short Stories in Chronological Order
List of Short Stories in Alphabetical Order

The Non-Fiction

Some War Impressions (1918)
Famous Prize Fights (1928)

The Delphi Classics Catalogue

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Selwyn Farnol". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'S' and a long, sweeping tail.

© Delphi Classics 2024
Version 1

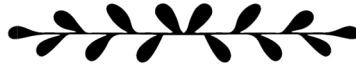
The Complete Works of
JEFFERY FARNOL



By Delphi Classics, 2024

COPYRIGHT

Complete Works of Jeffery Farnol



First published in the United Kingdom in 2024 by Delphi Classics.

© Delphi Classics, 2024.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form other than that in which it is published.

ISBN: 978 1 80170 167 9

Delphi Classics

is an imprint of

Delphi Publishing Ltd

Hastings, East Sussex

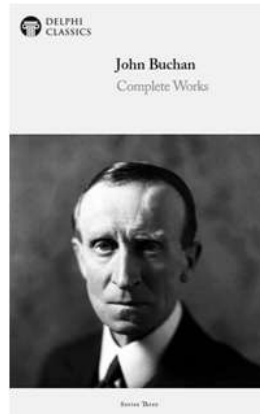
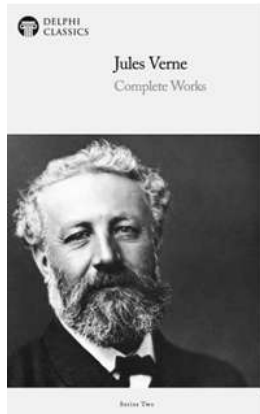
United Kingdom

Contact: sales@delphiclassics.com

DELPHI  CLASSICS

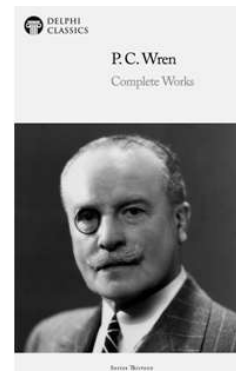
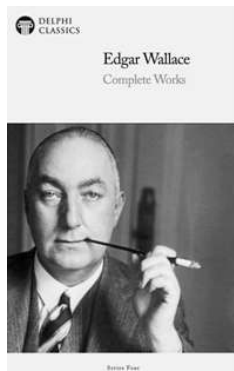
www.delphiclassics.com

Classic Adventure



From classic yarns to pioneering science-fiction, explore the Delphi Classics range of Adventure novelists...

[Browse our latest Adventure classics...](#)



The Jasper Shrig Books



Aston, Birmingham, c. 1900 – Jeffery Farnol was born in Aston in 1878.

The Amateur Gentleman (1913)



Jeffery Farnol was born in Aston, Birmingham, the son of Henry John Farnol, a factory-employed brass-founder, and Kate Jeffery. His childhood was spent in London and Kent and he attended the Westminster School of Art after losing his job with a Birmingham metal-working company. In 1900, he married Blanche Wilhelmina Victoria Hawley, the 16-year-old daughter of the noted New York scenic artist H. Hughson Hawley. They relocated to the United States, where he found work as a scene painter. In 1907 Farnol published his first romance novel, *My Lady Caprice*, while still living America. The success of his early novels led him to become a professional writer. By 1910 he was back in England, following his career as a novelist with renewed vigour.

Along with the work of Georgette Heyer, Farnol novels helped establish the Regency romantic genre. He would eventually develop a series of detective stories featuring the Regency thief-taker Jasper Shrig, of which the first volume is *The Amateur Gentleman*. Farnol finished work on the manuscript at the end of 1912 and it was published the following March. It tells the story of Barnabas Barty, the son of a former champion boxer and landlord of a pub in Kent and his late wife, Joan, who was a highborn lady that had married for love. Young Barnabas inherits seven hundred thousand pounds from an uncle that died in Jamaica and tells his father that he proposes to use the money to go to London and become a gentleman. His father objects, they quarrel and settle their differences in a round of fisticuffs, which Barnabas wins. Early on his journey he finds the Lady Cleone Meredith and Sir Mortimer Carnaby in Annersley Wood; he promptly falls in love with one and has a fight with the other. He meets a Bow Street Runner by the name of Jasper Shrig, “a mild-faced man of sober habit and dress,” who helps him out when he’s attacked and makes a lasting impression.

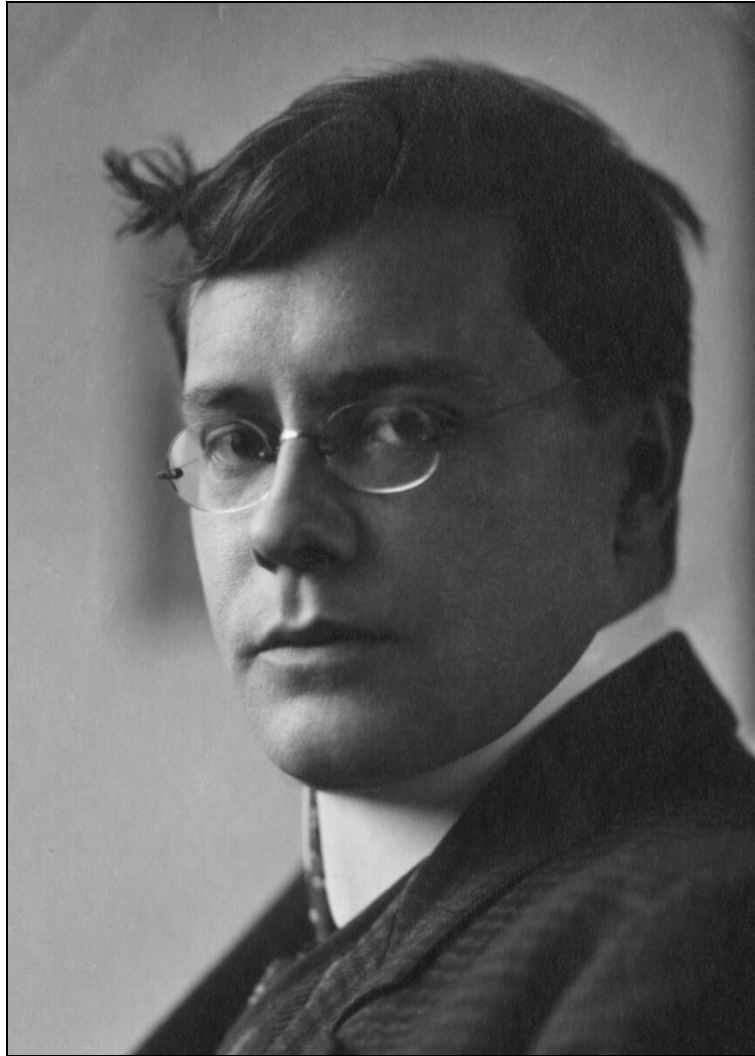
The recurring character of Jasper Shrig is partly based on Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes, who was all the rage at the time, and Dickens’ humorous Cockney bootblack, Sam Weller, who like Shrig often mixes up his v’s with w’s. The period detective would often remain a peripheral character of the plots, but he would reappear time and time again in twelve more novels.

Securing the friendship of Viscount Devenham and the services of John Peterby as his valet, Barnabas does in fact make some success of being a gentleman. However, the undertaking of freeing Lady Cleone’s brother Barrymaine from debt and dishonour becomes his main consideration...

Critics of the time praised this novel, with one saying, “It is full of the joy of life... and it would be an ungrateful reader who did not accept every character and every incident of this delightful story in good faith”. Another pointed out that, “Most of the incidents in this book are improbable, but the author makes them seem plausible by his rare art.” Some reviewers were a little more to the point: “Every page is crowded with action,” said one, whilst another declared, “No English writer of today has a more delicate and exquisite humorous touch”. One critic even offered the simple advice that “all wise people should provide themselves with this happy book.”

The Amateur Gentleman was adapted into a silent film and released in March 1920. Seven years later, another silent version appeared under the same name, this time starring Richard Barthelmess. The best remembered version was released in April 1936 and starred Douglas Fairbanks Jr as Barty. It was adapted by Edith Meiser

for a thirty part serialisation on CBS radio, which aired in 1935 and starred Leslie Howard as Barty.



Farnol, close to the time of publication



The original frontispiece

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I.
CHAPTER II.
CHAPTER III.
CHAPTER IV.
CHAPTER V.
CHAPTER VI.
CHAPTER VII.
CHAPTER VIII.
CHAPTER IX.
CHAPTER X.
CHAPTER XI.
CHAPTER XII.
CHAPTER XIII.
CHAPTER XIV.
CHAPTER XV.
CHAPTER XVI.
CHAPTER XVII.
CHAPTER XVIII.
CHAPTER XIX.
CHAPTER XX.
CHAPTER XXI.
CHAPTER XXII.
CHAPTER XXIII.
CHAPTER XXIV.
CHAPTER XXV.
CHAPTER XXVI.
CHAPTER XXVII.
CHAPTER XXVIII.
CHAPTER XXIX.
CHAPTER XXX.
CHAPTER XXXI.
CHAPTER XXXII.
CHAPTER XXXIII.
CHAPTER XXXIV.
CHAPTER XXXV.
CHAPTER XXXVI.
CHAPTER XXXVII.
CHAPTER XXXVIII.
CHAPTER XXXIX.
CHAPTER XL.
CHAPTER XLI.
CHAPTER XLII.
CHAPTER XLIII.
CHAPTER XLIV.
CHAPTER XLV.
CHAPTER XLVI.
CHAPTER XLVII.

CHAPTER XLVIII.
CHAPTER XLIX.
CHAPTER L.
CHAPTER LI.
CHAPTER LII.
CHAPTER LIII.
CHAPTER LIV.
CHAPTER LV.
CHAPTER LVI.
CHAPTER LVII.
CHAPTER LVIII.
CHAPTER LIX.
CHAPTER LX.
CHAPTER LXI.
CHAPTER LXII.
CHAPTER LXIII.
CHAPTER LXIV.
CHAPTER LXV.
CHAPTER LXVI.
CHAPTER LXVII.
CHAPTER LXVIII.
CHAPTER LXIX.
CHAPTER LXX.
CHAPTER LXXI.
CHAPTER LXXII.
CHAPTER LXXIII.
CHAPTER LXXIV.
CHAPTER LXXV.
CHAPTER LXXVI.
CHAPTER LXXVII.
CHAPTER LXXVIII.



The 1943 edition



The 1936 film adaptation

TO MY FATHER
WHO HAS EVER CHOSEN
THE "HARDER WAY,"
WHICH IS A PATH
THAT CAN BE TRODDEN
ONLY BY THE FOOT OF A MAN

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH BABNABAS KNOCKS DOWN HIS FATHER, THOUGH AS DUTIFULLY AS MAY BE



JOHN BARTY, EX-CHAMPION of England and landlord of the “Coursing Hound,” sat screwed round in his chair with his eyes yet turned to the door that had closed after the departing lawyer fully five minutes ago, and his eyes were wide and blank, and his mouth (grim and close-lipped as a rule) gaped, becoming aware of which, he closed it with a snap, and passed a great knotted fist across his brow.

“Barnabas,” said he slowly, “I beant asleep an’ dreaming be I, Barnabas?”

“No, father!”

“But — seven — ‘undred — thousand — pound. It were seven — ‘undred thousand pound, weren’t it, Barnabas?”

“Yes, father!”

“Seven — ‘undred — thou — ! No! I can’t believe it, Barnabas my bye.”

“Neither can I, father,” said Barnabas, still staring down at the papers which littered the table before him.

“Nor I aren’t a-going to try to believe it, Barnabas.”

“And yet — here it is, all written down in black and white, and you heard what Mr. Crabtree said?”

“Ah, — I heered, but arter all Crabtree’s only a lawyer — though a good un as lawyers go, always been honest an’ square wi’ me — leastways I ‘ve never caught him trying to bamboozle John Bartly yet — an’ what the eye don’t ob-serve the heart don’t grieve, Barnabas my bye, an’ there y’are. But seven ‘undred thousand pound is coming it a bit too strong — if he’d ha’ knocked off a few ‘undred thousand I could ha’ took it easier Barnabas, but, as it is — no, Barnabas!”

“It’s a great fortune!” said Barnabas in the same repressed tone and with his eyes still intent.

“Fortun’,” repeated the father, “fortun’ — it’s fetched me one in the ribs — low, Barnabas, low! — it’s took my wind an’ I’m a-hanging on to the ropes, lad. Why, Lord love me! I never thought as your uncle Tom ‘ad it in him to keep hissself from starving, let alone make a fortun’! My scapegrace brother Tom — poor Tom as sailed away in a emigrant ship (which is a un-common bad kind of a ship to sail in — so I’ve heered, Barnabas) an’ now, to think as he went an’ made all that fortun’ — away off in Jamaiky — out o’ vegetables.”

“And lucky speculation, father — !”

“Now, Barnabas,” exclaimed his father, beginning to rasp his fingers to and fro across his great, square, shaven chin, “why argufy? Your uncle Tom was a planter — very well! Why is a man a planter — because he plants things, an’ what should a man plant but vegetables? So Barnabas, vegetables I says, an’ vegetables I abide by, now an’ hereafter. Seven ‘undred thousand pound all made in Jamaiky — out o’ vegetables — an’ there y’ are!”

Here John Bartly paused and sat with his chin ‘twixt finger and thumb in expectation of his son’s rejoinder, but finding him silent, he presently continued:

“Now what astonishes an’ fetches me a leveller as fair doubles me up is — why should my brother Tom leave all this money to a young hop o’ me thumb like you,

Barnabas? you, as he never see but once and you then a infant (and large for your age) in your blessed mother's arms, Barnabas, a-kicking an' a-squaring away wi' your little pink fists as proper as ever I seen inside the Ring or out. Ah, Barnabas!" sighed his father shaking his head at him, "you was a promising infant, likewise a promising bye; me an' Natty Bell had great hopes of ye, Barnabas; if you'd been governed by me and Natty Bell you might ha' done us all proud in the Prize Ring. You was cut out for the 'Fancy.' Why, Lord! you might even ha' come to be Champion o' England in time — you 're the very spit o' what I was when I beat the Fighting Quaker at Dartford thirty years ago."

"But you see, father—"

"That was why me an' Natty Bell took you in hand — learned you all we knowed o' the game — an' there aren't a fighting man in all England as knows so much about the Noble Art as me an' Natty Bell."

"But father—"

"If you 'd only followed your nat'ral gifts, Barnabas, I say you might ha' been Champion of England to-day, wi' Markisses an' Lords an' Earls proud to shake your hand — if you'd only been ruled by Natty Bell an' me, I'm disappointed in ye, Barnabas — an' so's Natty Bell."

"I'm sorry, father — but as I told you—"

"Still Barnabas, what ain't to be, ain't — an' what is, is. Some is born wi' a nat'ral love o' the 'Fancy' an' gift for the game, like me an' Natty Bell — an' some wi' a love for reading out o' books an' a-cyphering into books — like you: though a reader an' a writer generally has a hard time on it an' dies poor — which, arter all, is only nat'ral — an' there y' are!"

Here John Barty paused to take up the tankard of ale at his elbow, and pursed up his lips to blow off the foam, but in that moment, observing his son about to speak, he immediately set down the ale untasted and continued:

"Not as I quarrels wi' your reading and writing, Barnabas, no, and because why? Because reading and writing is apt to be useful now an' then, and because it were a promise — as I made — to — your mother. When — your mother were alive, Barnabas, she used to keep all my accounts for me. She likewise larned me to spell my own name wi' a capital G for John, an' a capital B for Barty, an' when she died, Barnabas (being a infant, you don't remember), but when she died, lad! I was that lost — that broke an' helpless, that all the fight were took out o' me, and it's a wonder I didn't throw up the sponge altogether. Ah! an' it's likely I should ha' done but for Natty Bell."

"Yes, father—"

"No man ever 'ad a better friend than Natty Bell — Ah! yes, though I did beat him out o' the Championship which come very nigh breaking his heart at the time, Barnabas; but — as I says to him that day as they carried him out of the ring — it was arter the ninety-seventh round, d' ye see, Barnabas— 'what is to be, is, Natty Bell,' I says, 'an' what ain't, ain't. It were ordained,' I says, 'as I should be Champion o' England,' I says— 'an' as you an' me should be friends — now an' hereafter,' I says — an' right good friends we have been, as you know, Barnabas."

"Indeed, yes, father," said Barnabas, with another vain attempt to stem his father's volubility.

"But your mother, Barnabas, your mother, God rest her sweet soul! — your mother weren't like me — no nor Natty Bell — she were away up over me an' the likes o' me — a wonderful scholard she were, an' — when she died, Barnabas—" here the ex-champion's voice grew uncertain and his steady gaze wavered — sought the sanded

floor — the raftered ceiling — wandered down the wall and eventually fixed upon the bell-mouthed blunderbuss that hung above the mantel, “when she died,” he continued, “she made me promise as you should be taught to read an’ cypher — an’ taught I’ve had you according — for a promise is a promise, Barnabas — an’ there y’ are.”

“For which I can never be sufficiently grateful, both to her — and to you!” said Barnabas, who sat with his chin propped upon his hand, gazing through the open lattice to where the broad white road wound away betwixt blooming hedges, growing ever narrower till it vanished over the brow of a distant hill. “Not as I holds wi’ eddication myself, Barnabas, as you know,” pursued his father, “but that’s why you was sent to school, that’s why me an’ Natty Bell sat by quiet an’ watched ye at your books. Sometimes when I’ve seen you a-stooping your back over your reading, or cramping your fist round a pen, Barnabas, why — I’ve took it hard, Barnabas, hard, I’ll not deny — But Natty Bell has minded me as it was her wish and so — why — there y’ are.”

It was seldom his father mentioned to Barnabas the mother whose face he had never seen, upon which rare occasions John Barty’s deep voice was wont to take on a hoarser note, and his blue eyes, that were usually so steady, would go wandering off until they fixed themselves on some remote object. Thus he sat now, leaning back in his elbow chair, gazing in rapt attention at the bell-mouthed blunderbuss above the mantel, while his son, chin on fist, stared always and ever to where the road dipped, and vanished over the hill — leading on and on to London, and the great world beyond.

“She died, Barnabas — just twenty-one years ago — buried at Maidstone where you were born. Twenty-one years is a longish time, lad, but memory’s longer, an’ deeper, — an’ stronger than time, arter all, an’ I know that her memory will go wi’ me — all along the way — d’ ye see lad: and so Barnabas,” said John Barty lowering his gaze to his son’s face, “so Barnabas, there y’ are.”

“Yes, father!” nodded Barnabas, still intent upon the road.

“And now I come to your uncle Tom — an’ speaking of him — Barnabas my lad, — what are ye going to do wi’ all this money?”

Barnabas turned from the window and met his father’s eye.

“Do with it,” he began, “why first of all—”

“Because,” pursued his father, “we might buy the ‘White Hart’ — t’ other side o’ Sevenoaks, — to be sure you’re over young to have any say in the matter — still arter all the money’s yours, Barnabas — what d’ ye say to the ‘White Hart’?”

“A very good house!” nodded Barnabas, stealing a glance at the road again—
“but—”

“To be sure there’s the ‘Running Horse,’” said his father, “just beyond Purley on the Brighton Road — a coaching-house, wi’ plenty o’ custom, what d’ ye think o’ the ‘Running Horse’?”

“Any one you choose, father, but—”

“Then there’s the ‘Sun in the Sands’ on Shooter’s Hill — a fine inn an’ not to be sneezed at, Barnabas — we might take that.”

“Just as you wish, father, only—”

“Though I’ve often thought the ‘Greyhound’ at Croydon would be a comfortable house to own.”

“Buy whichever you choose, father, it will be all one to me!”

“Good lad!” nodded John, “you can leave it all to Natty Bell an’ me.”

“Yes,” said Barnabas, rising and fronting his father across the table, “you see I intend to go away, sir.”

“Eh?” exclaimed his father, staring— “go away — where to?”

“To London!”

“London? and what should you want in London — a slip of a lad like you?”

“I’m turned twenty-two, father!”

“And what should a slip of a lad of twenty-two want in London? You leave London alone, Barnabas. London indeed! what should you want wi’ London?”

“Learn to be a gentleman.”

“A — what?” As he spoke, John Barty rose up out of his chair, his eyes wide, his mouth agape with utter astonishment. As he encountered his son’s look, however, his expression slowly changed from amazement to contempt, from contempt to growing ridicule, and from ridicule to black anger. John Barty was a very tall man, broad and massive, but, even so, he had to look up to Barnabas as they faced each other across the table. And as they stood thus eye to eye, the resemblance between them was marked. Each possessed the same indomitable jaw, the same square brow and compelling eyes, the same grim prominence of chin; but there all likeness ended. In Barnabas the high carriage of the head, the soft brilliancy of the full, well-opened gray eye, the curve of the sensitive nostrils, the sweet set of the firm, shapely mouth — all were the heritage of that mother who was to him but a vague memory. But now while John Barty frowned upon his son, Barnabas frowned back at his father, and the added grimness of his chin offset the sweetness of the mouth above.

“Barnabas,” said his father at last, “did you say a — gentleman, Barnabas?”

“Yes.”

“What — you?” Here John Barty’s frown vanished suddenly and, expanding his great chest, he threw back his head and roared with laughter. Barnabas clenched his fists, and his mouth lost something of its sweetness, and his eyes glinted through their curving lashes, while his father laughed and laughed till the place rang again, which of itself stung Barnabas sharper than any blow could have done.

But now having had his laugh out, John Barty frowned again blacker than ever, and resting his two hands upon the table, leaned towards Barnabas with his great, square chin jugged forward, and his deep-set eyes narrowed to shining slits — the “fighting face” that had daunted many a man ere now.

“So you want to be a gentleman — hey?”

“Yes.”

“You aren’t crazed in your ‘ead, are ye, Barnabas?”

“Not that I know of, father.”

“This here fortun’ then — it’s been an’ turned your brain, that’s what it is.”

Barnabas smiled and shook his head.

“Listen, father,” said he, “it has always been the dream and ambition of my life to better my condition, to strive for a higher place in the world — to be a gentleman. This was why I refused to become a pugilist, as you and Natty Bell desired, this was why I worked and studied — ah! a great deal harder than you ever guessed — though up till to-day I hardly dared hope my dream would ever be realized — but now—”

“Now you want to go to London and be a gentleman — hey?”

“Yes.”

“Which all comes along o’ your reading o’ fool book! Why, Lord! you can no more become a gentleman than I can or the — blunderbuss yonder. And because why? Because a gentleman must be a gentleman born, and his father afore him, and *his* father afore him. You, Barnabas, you was born the son of a Champion of England, an’ that should be enough for most lads; but your head’s chock full o’ fool’s notions an’ crazy fancies, an’ as your lawful father it’s my bounden duty to get ’em out again,

Barnabas my lad.” So saying, John Barty proceeded to take off his coat and belcher neckerchief, and rolled his shirt sleeves over his mighty forearms, motioning Barnabas to do the like.

“A father’s duty be a very solemn thing, Barnabas,” he continued slowly, “an’ your ‘ead being (as I say) full o’ wild idees, I’m going to try to punch ’em out again as a well-meaning father should, so help me back wi’ the table out o’ the road, an’ off wi’ your coat and neckercher.”

Well knowing the utter futility of argument with his father at such a time, Barnabas obediently helped to set back the table, thus leaving the floor clear, which done, he, in turn, stripped off coat and neckcloth, and rolled up his sleeves, while his father watched him with sharply appraising eye.

“You peel well, Barnabas,” he nodded. “You peel like a fighting man, you’ve a tidy arm an’ a goodish spread o’ shoulder, likewise your legs is clean an’ straight, but your skin’s womanish, Barnabas, womanish, an’ your muscles soft wi’ books. So, lad! — are ye ready? Then come on.”

Thus, without more ado they faced each other foot to foot, bare-armed and alert of eye. For a moment they sparred watchfully, then John Barty feinted Barnabas into an opening, in that same moment his fist shot out and Barnabas measured his length on the floor.

“Ah — I knowed as much!” John sighed mournfully as he aided Barnabas to his feet, “and ‘t were only a love-tap, so to speak, — this is what comes o’ your book reading.”

“Try me again,” said Barnabas.

“It’ll be harder next time!” said his father.

“As hard as you like!” nodded Barnabas.

Once more came the light tread of quick-moving feet, once more John Barty feinted cunningly — once more his fist shot out, but this time it missed its mark, for, ducking the blow, Barnabas smacked home two lightning blows on his father’s ribs and danced away again light and buoyant as a cork.

“Stand up an’ fight, lad!” growled his father, “plant your feet square — never go hopping about on your toe-points like a French dancing-master.”

“Why as to that, father, Natty Bell, as you know, holds that it is the quicker method,” here Barnabas smote his father twice upon the ribs, “and indeed I think it is,” said he, deftly eluding the ex-champion’s return.

“Quicker, hey?” sneered his father, and with the words came his fist — to whizz harmlessly past Barnabas’s ear — “we’ll prove that.”

“Haven’t we had almost enough?” inquired Barnabas, dropping his fists.

“Enough? why we aren’t begun yet, lad.”

“Then how long are we to go on?”

“How long?” repeated John, frowning; “why — that depends on you, Barnabas.”

“How on me, father?”

“Are ye still minded to go to London?”

“Of course.”

“Then we’ll go on till you think better of it — or till you knock me down, Barnabas my lad.”

“Why then, father, the sooner I knock you down the better!”

“What?” exclaimed John Barty, staring, “d’ ye mean to say — you think you can? — me? — you?”

“Yes,” nodded Barnabas.

“My poor lad!” sighed his father, “your head’s fair crazed, sure as sure, but if you think you can knock John Barty off his pins, do it, and there y’ are.”

“I will,” said Barnabas, “though as gently as possible.”

And now they fell to it in silence, a grim silence broken only by the quick tread and shuffle of feet and the muffled thud of blows. John Barty, resolute of jaw, indomitable and calm of eye, as in the days when champions had gone down before the might of his fist; Barnabas, taller, slighter, but full of the supreme confidence of youth. Moreover, he had not been the daily pupil of two such past masters in the art for nothing; and now he brought to bear all his father’s craft and cunning, backed up by the lightning precision of Natty Bell. In all his many hard-fought battles John Barty had ever been accounted most dangerous when he smiled, and he was smiling now. Twice Barnabas staggered back to the wall, and there was an ugly smear upon his cheek, yet as they struck and parried, and feinted, Barnabas, this quick-eyed, swift-footed Barnabas, was smiling also. Thus, while they smiled upon and smote each other, the likeness between them was more apparent than ever, only the smile of Barnabas was the smile of youth, joyous, exuberant, unconquerable. Noting which Experienced Age laughed short and fierce, and strode in to strike Youth down — then came a rush of feet, the panting hiss of breath, the shock of vicious blows, and John Barty, the unbeaten ex-champion of all England, threw up his arms, staggered back the length of the room, and went down with a crash.

For a moment Barnabas stood wide-eyed, panting, then ran towards him with hands outstretched, but in that moment the door was flung open, and Natty Bell stood between them, one hand upon the laboring breast of Barnabas, the other stretched down to the fallen ex-champion.

“Man Jack,” he exclaimed, in his strangely melodious voice. “Oh, John! — John Barty, you as ever was the king o’ the milling coves, here’s my hand, shake it. Lord, John, what a master o’ the Game we’ve made of our lad. He’s stronger than you and quicker than ever I was. Man Jack, ’twas as sweet, as neat, as pretty a knockdown as ever we gave in our best days, John. Man Jack, ’tis proud you should be to lie there and know as you have a son as can stop even *your* rush wi’ his left an’ down you wi’ his right as neat and proper, John, as clean an’ delicate as ever man saw. Man Jack, God bless him, and here’s my hand, John.”

So, sitting there upon the floor, John Barty solemnly shook the hand Natty Bell held out to him, which done, he turned and looked at his son as though he had never seen him before.

“Why, Barnabas!” said he; then, for all his weight, sprang nimbly to his feet and coming to the mantel took thence his pipe and began to fill it, staring at Barnabas the while.

“Father,” said Barnabas, advancing with hand outstretched, though rather diffidently— “Father!”

John Barty pursed up his lips into a soundless whistle and went on filling his pipe.

“Father,” said Barnabas again, “I did it — as gently — as I could.” The pipe shivered to fragments on the hearth, and Barnabas felt his fingers caught in his father’s mighty grip.

“Why, Barnabas, lad, I be all mazed like; there aren’t many men as have knocked me off my pins, an’ I aren’t used to it, Barnabas, lad, but ‘t was a clean blow, as Natty Bell says, and why — I be proud of thee, Barnabas, an’ — there y’ are.”

“Spoke like true fighting men!” said Natty Bell, standing with a hand on the shoulder of each, “and, John, we shall see this lad, this Barnabas of ours, Champion of England yet.” John frowned and shook his head.

“No,” said he, “Barnabas’ll never be Champion, Natty Bell — there aren’t a fighting man in the Ring to-day as could stand up to him, but he’ll never be Champion, an’ you can lay to that, Natty Bell. And if you ask me why,” said he, turning to select another pipe from the sheaf in the mantel-shelf, “I should tell you because he prefers to go to London an’ try to turn himself into a gentleman.”

“London,” exclaimed Natty Bell, “a gentleman — our Barnabas — what?”

“Bide an’ listen, Natty Bell,” said the ex-champion, beginning to fill his new pipe.

“I’m listening, John.”

“Well then, you must know, then, his uncle, my scapegrace brother Tom — you’ll mind Tom as sailed away in a emigrant ship — well, Natty Bell, Tom has took an’ died an’ left a fortun’ to our lad here.”

“A fortun’, John! — how much?”

“Seven— ‘undred — thousand — pound,” said John, with a ponderous nod after each word, “seven— ‘undred — thousand — pound, Natty Bell, and there y’ are.”

Natty Bell opened his mouth, shut it, thrust his hands down into his pockets and brought out a short clay pipe.

“Man Jack,” said he, beginning to fill the pipe, yet with gaze abstracted, “did I hear you say aught about a — gentleman?”

“Natty Bell, you did; our lad’s took the idee into his nob to be a gentleman, an’ I were trying to knock it out again, but as it is. Natty Bell, I fear me,” and John Barty shook his handsome head and sighed ponderously.

“Why then, John, let’s sit down, all three of us, and talk this matter over.”

DELPHI  CLASSICS

End of Sample