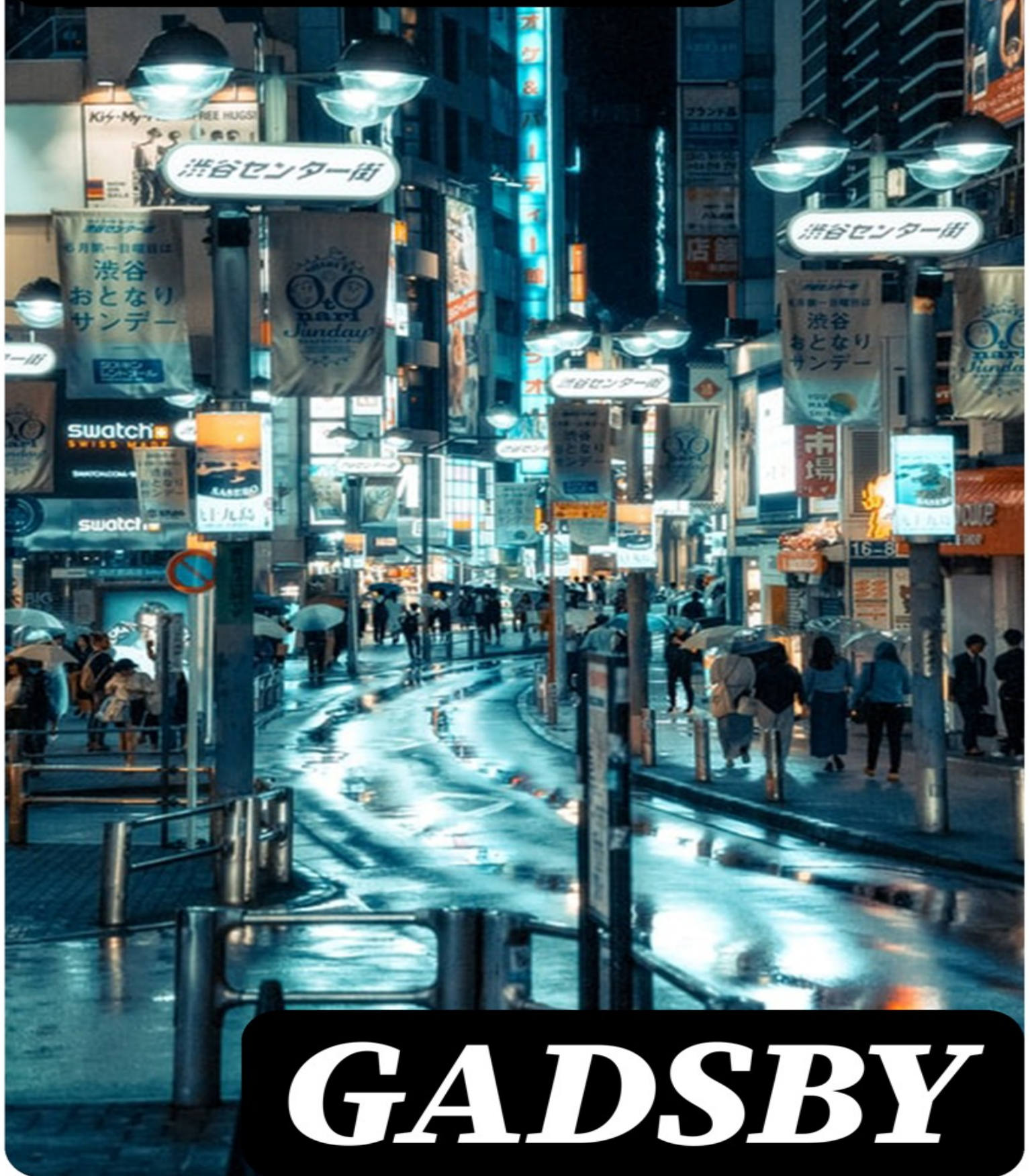
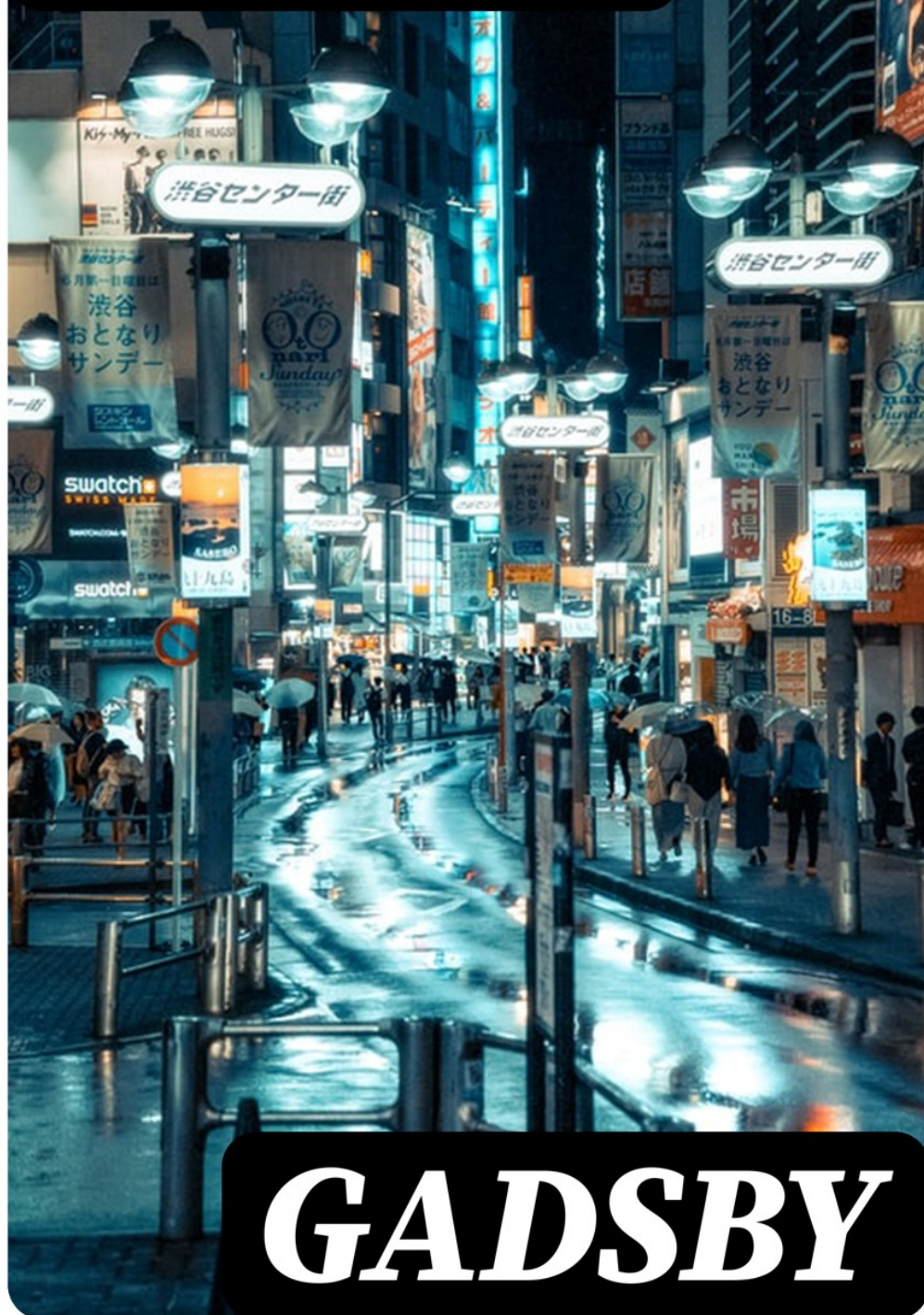


***ERNEST VINCENT
WRIGHT***



GADSBY

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WRIGHT***



GADSBY

Ernest Vincent Wright

Gadsby

**A Story of Over 50,000 Words Without Using the
Letter "E"**

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Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



TABLE OF CONTENTS

[TO YOUTH!](#)

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[I](#)

[II](#)

[III](#)

[IV](#)

[V](#)

[VI](#)

[VII](#)

[VIII](#)

[IX](#)

[X](#)

[XI](#)

[XII](#)

[XIII](#)

[XIV](#)

[XV](#)

[XVI](#)

[XVII](#)

[XVIII](#)

[XIX](#)

[XX](#)

[XXI](#)

[XXII](#)

[XXIII](#)

[XXIV](#)

[XXV](#)

[XXVI](#)

[XXVII](#)

[XXVIII](#)

[XXIX](#)

[XXX](#)

[XXXI](#)

[XXXII](#)

[XXXIII](#)

[XXXIV](#)

[XXXV](#)

[XXXVI](#)

[XXXVII](#)

[XXXVIII](#)

[XXXIX](#)

[XL](#)

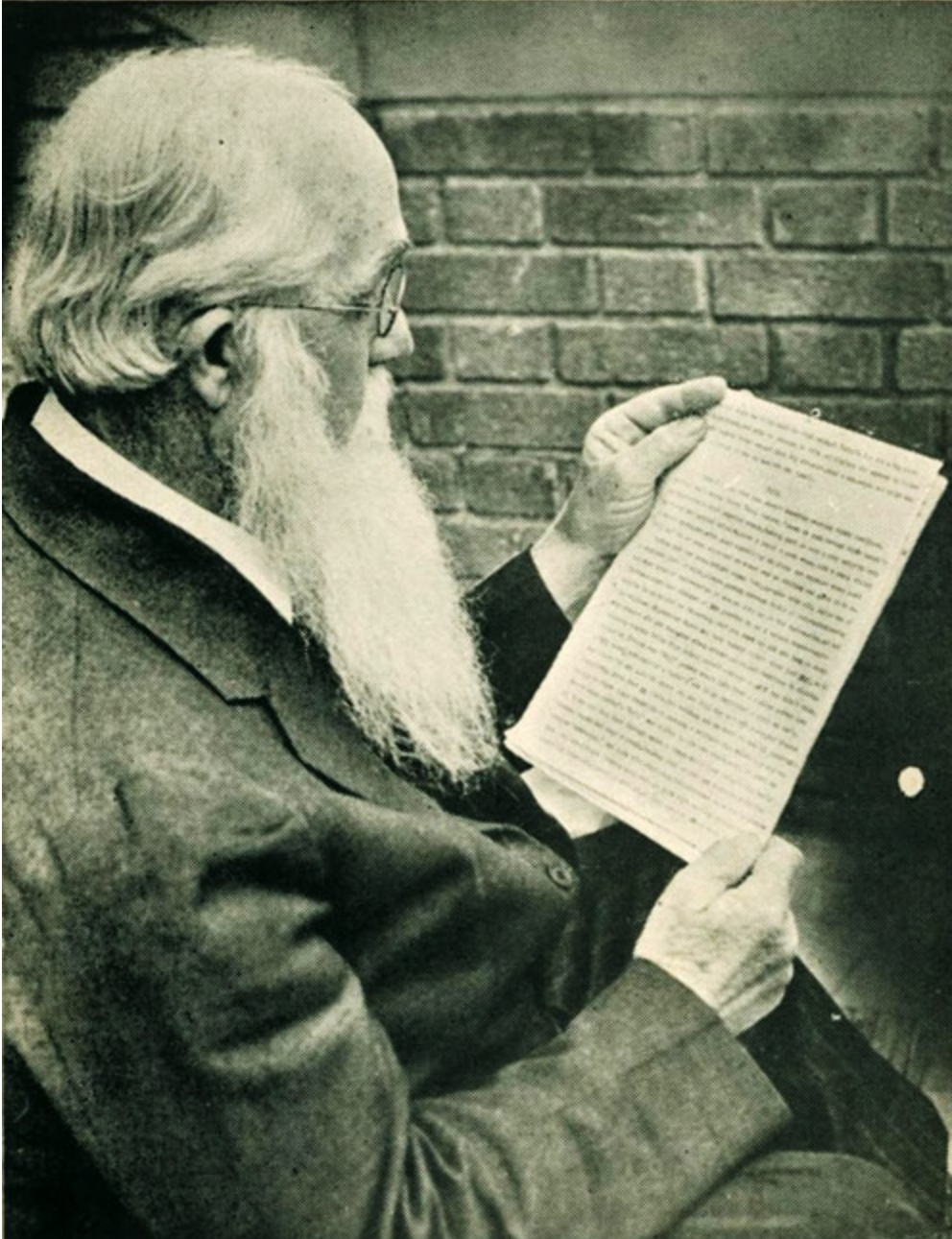
[XLI](#)

[XLII](#)

[XLIII](#)

TO YOUTH!

[Table of Contents](#)



ERNEST VINCENT WRIGHT

INTRODUCTION

Table of Contents

THE ENTIRE MANUSCRIPT of this story was written with the E type-bar of the typewriter *tied down*; thus making it impossible for that letter to be printed. This was done so that none of that vowel might slip in, accidentally; and many *did* try to do so!

There is a great deal of information as to what *Youth* can do, if given a chance; and, though it starts out in somewhat of an impersonal vein, there is plenty of thrill, rollicking comedy, love, courtship, marriage, patriotism, sudden tragedy, *a determined stand against liquor*, and some amusing political aspirations in a small growing town.

In writing such a story,—purposely avoiding all words containing the vowel E, there are a great many difficulties. The greatest of these is met in the past tense of verbs, almost all of which end with "—ed." Therefore substitutes must be found; and they are *very few*. This will cause, at times, a somewhat monotonous use of such words as "said;" for neither "replied," "answered" nor "asked" can be used. Another difficulty comes with the elimination of the common couplet "of course," and its very common connective, "consequently;" which will, unavoidably cause "bumpy spots." The numerals also cause plenty of trouble, for none between six and thirty are available. When introducing young ladies into the story, this is a *real* barrier; for what young woman wants to have it known that she is over thirty? And this restriction on numbers, of course taboos all mention of dates.

Many abbreviations also must be avoided; the most common of all, "Mr." and "Mrs." being particularly

troublesome; for those words, if read aloud, plainly indicate the E in their orthography.

As the vowel E is used more than five times oftener than any other letter, this story was written, not through any attempt to attain literary merit, but due to a somewhat balky nature, caused by hearing it so constantly claimed that "it can't be done; for you *cannot* say anything at all without using E, and make smooth continuity, with perfectly grammatical construction—" so 'twas said.

Many may think that I simply "drop" the E's, filling the gaps with apostrophes. A perusal of the book will show that this is not so. All words used are *complete*; are correctly spelled and properly used. This has been accomplished through the use of synonyms; and, by so twisting a sentence around as to avoid ambiguity. The book may prove a valuable aid to school children in English composition.

People, as a rule, will not stop to realize what a task such an attempt actually is. As I wrote along, in long-hand at first, a whole army of little E's gathered around my desk, all eagerly expecting to be called upon. But gradually as they saw me writing on and on, without even noticing them, they grew uneasy; and, with excited whisperings amongst themselves, began hopping up and riding on my pen, looking down constantly for a chance to drop off into some word; for all the world like sea-birds perched, watching for a passing fish! But when they saw that I had covered 138 pages of typewriter size paper, they slid off onto the floor, walking sadly away, arm in arm; but shouting back: "You certainly must have a hodge-podge of a yarn there without *Us*! Why, man! We are in every story ever written, *hundreds*

of thousands of times! This is the first time we ever were shut out!"

Pronouns also caused trouble; for such words as he, she, they, them, theirs, her, herself, myself, himself, yourself, etc., could not be utilized. But a particularly annoying obstacle comes when, almost through a long paragraph you can find no words with which to continue that line of thought; hence, as in *Solitaire*, you are "stuck," and must go way back and start another; which, of course, must perfectly fit the preceding context.

I have received some extremely odd criticisms since the Associated Press widely announced that such a book was being written. A rapid-talking New York newspaper columnist wanted to know how I would get over the plain fact that my name contains the letter E three times. As an author's name is *not* a part of his story, that criticism did not hold water. And I received one most scathing epistle from a lady (woman!) denouncing me as a "genuine fake;" (that paradox being a most interesting one!), and ending by saying:—"Everyone knows that such a feat is impossible." All right. Then the impossible has been accomplished; (a paradox to equal hers!) Other criticism may be directed at the Introduction; but this section of a story *also* is not part of it. The author is entitled to it, in order properly to explain his work. The story required five and a half months of concentrated endeavor, with so many erasures and retrenchments that I tremble as I think of them. Of course anybody can write such a story. All that is needed is a piece of string tied from the E type-bar down to some part of the base of the typewriter. Then simply go ahead and type your

story. Incidentally, you should have some sort of a bromide preparation handy, for use when the going gets rough, as it most assuredly will!

Before the book was in print, I was freely and openly informed "there is a trick, or catch," somewhere in that claim that there is not one letter E in the entire book, after you leave the Introduction. Well; it is the privilege of the reader to unearth any such deception that he or she may think they can find. I have even ordered the printer not to head each chapter with the words "Chapter 2," etc., on account of that bothersome E in that word.

In closing let me say that I trust you may learn to love all the young folks in the story, as deeply as I have, in introducing them to you. Like many a book, it grows more and more interesting as the reader becomes well acquainted with the characters.

Los Angeles, California

February, 1939

I

[Table of Contents](#)

IF YOUTH, THROUGHOUT all history, had had a champion to stand up for it; to show a doubting world that a child can think; and, possibly, do it practically; you wouldn't constantly run across folks today who claim that "a child don't know anything." A child's brain starts functioning at birth; and has, amongst its many infant convolutions, thousands of dormant atoms, into which God has put a mystic possibility for noticing an adult's act, and figuring out its purport.

Up to about its primary school days a child thinks, naturally, only of play. But many a form of play contains disciplinary factors. "You can't do this," or "that puts you out," shows a child that it must think, practically, or fail. Now, if, throughout childhood, a brain has no opposition, it is plain that it will attain a position of "status quo," as with our ordinary animals. Man knows not why a cow, dog or lion was not born with a brain on a par with ours; why such animals cannot add, subtract, or obtain from books and schooling, that paramount position which Man holds today.

But a human brain is not in that class. Constantly throbbing and pulsating, it rapidly forms opinions; attaining an ability of its own; a fact which is startlingly shown by an occasional child "prodigy" in music or school work. And as, with our dumb animals, a child's inability convincingly to impart its thoughts to us, should not class it as ignorant.

Upon this basis I am going to show you how a bunch of bright young folks did find a champion; a man with boys and girls of his own; a man of so dominating and happy individuality that Youth is drawn to him as is a fly to a sugar bowl. It is a story about a small town. It is not a gossipy yarn; nor is it a dry, monotonous account, full of such customary "fill-ins" as "romantic moonlight casting murky shadows down a long, winding country road." Nor will it say anything about tinklings lulling distant folds; robins carolling at twilight, nor any "warm glow of lamplight" from a cabin window. No. It is an account of up-and-doing activity; a vivid portrayal of Youth as it is today; and a practical discarding of that worn-out notion that "a child don't know anything."

Now, any author, from history's dawn, always had that most important aid to writing:—an ability to call upon any word in his dictionary in building up his story. That is, our strict laws as to word construction did not block his path. But in *my* story that mighty obstruction *will* constantly stand in my path; for many an important, common word I cannot adopt, owing to its orthography.

I shall act as a sort of historian for this small town; associating with its inhabitants, and striving to acquaint you with its youths, in such a way that you can look, knowingly, upon any child, rich or poor; forward or "backward;" your own, or John Smith's, in your community. You will find many young minds aspiring to know how, and WHY such a thing is so. And, if a child shows curiosity in that way, how ridiculous it is for you to snap out:—

"Oh! Don't ask about things too old for you!"

Such a jolt to a young child's mind, craving instruction, is apt so to dull its avidity, as to hold it back in its school work. Try to look upon a child as a small, soft young body and a rapidly growing, constantly inquiring brain. It must grow to maturity slowly. Forcing a child through school by constant night study during hours in which it should run and play, can bring on insomnia; handicapping both brain and body.

Now this small town in our story had grown in just that way:—slowly; in fact, much *too* slowly to stand on a par with many a thousand of its kind in this big, vigorous nation of ours. It was simply stagnating; just as a small mountain brook, coming to a hollow, might stop, and sink from sight, through not having a will to find a way through that obstruction; or around it. You will run across such a dormant

town, occasionally; possibly so dormant that only outright isolation by a fast-moving world, will show it its folly. If you will tour Asia, Yucatan, or parts of Africa and Italy, you will find many sad ruins of past kingdoms. Go to Indo-China and visit its gigantic Ankhov Vat; call at Damascus, Baghdad and Samarkand. What sorrowful lack of ambition many such a community shows in thus discarding such high-class construction! And I say, again, that so will Youth grow dormant, and hold this big, throbbing world back, if no champion backs it up; thus providing it with an opportunity to show its ability for looking forward, and improving unsatisfactory conditions.

So this small town of Branton Hills was lazily snoozing amidst up-and-doing towns, as Youth's Champion, John Gadsby, took hold of it; and shook its dawdling, flabby body until its inhabitants thought a tornado had struck it. Call it tornado, volcano, military onslaught, or what you will, this town found that it had a bunch of kids who had wills that would admit of no snoozing; for that is Youth, on its forward march of inquiry, thought and action.

If you stop to think of it, you will find that it is customary for our "grown-up" brain to cast off many of its functions of its youth; and to think only of what it calls "topics of maturity." Amongst such discards, is many a form of happy play; many a muscular activity such as walking, running, climbing; thus totally missing that alluring "joy of living" of childhood. If you wish a vacation from financial affairs, just go out and play with Youth. Play "blind-man's buff," "hop-scotch," "ring toss," and football. Go out to a charming woodland spot on a picnic with a bright, happy, vivacious

group. Sit down at a corn roast; a marshmallow toast; join in singing popular songs; drink a quart of good, rich milk; burrow into that big lunch box; and all such things as banks, stocks, and family bills, will vanish on fairy wings, into oblivion.

But this is not a claim that Man should stay always youthful. Supposing that that famous Spaniard, landing upon Florida's coral strands, had found that mythical Fountain of Youth; what a calamity for mankind! A world without maturity of thought; without man's full-grown muscular ability to construct mighty buildings, railroads and ships; a world without authors, doctors, savants, musicians; nothing but Youth! I can think of but a solitary approval of such a condition; for such a horror as war would not,—could not occur; for a child is, naturally, a small bunch of sympathy. I know that boys will "scrap;" also that "spats" will occur amongst girls; but, at such a monstrosity as killings by bombing towns, sinking ships, or mass annihilation of marching troops, childhood would stand aghast. Not a tiny bird would fall; nor would any form of gun nor facility for manufacturing it, insult that almost Holy purity of youthful thought. Anybody who knows that wracking sorrow brought upon a child by a dying puppy or cat, knows that childhood can show us that our fighting, our policy of "a tooth for a tooth," is abominably wrong.

So, now to start our story:—

Branton Hills was a small town in a rich agricultural district; and having many a possibility for growth. But, through a sort of smug satisfaction with conditions of long ago, had no thought of improving such important adjuncts

as roads; putting up public buildings, nor laying out parks; in fact a dormant, slowly dying community. So satisfactory was its status that it had no form of transportation to surrounding towns but by railroad, or "old Dobbin." Now, any town thus isolating its inhabitants, will invariably find this big, busy world passing it by; glancing at it, curiously, as at an odd animal at a circus; and, you will find, caring not a whit about its condition. Naturally, a town should grow. You can look upon it as a child; which, through natural conditions, should attain manhood; and add to its surrounding thriving districts its products of farm, shop, or factory. It should show a spirit of association with surrounding towns; crawl out of its lair, and find how backward it is.

Now, in all such towns, you will find, occasionally, an individual born with that sort of brain which, knowing that his town is backward, longs to start things toward improving it; not only its living conditions, but adding an institution or two, such as any *city*, big or small, maintains, gratis, for its inhabitants. But so forward looking a man finds that trying to instill any such notions into a town's ruling body is about as satisfactory as butting against a brick wall. Such "Boards" as you find ruling many a small town, function from such a soporific rut that any hint of digging cash from its cast iron strong box with its big brass padlock, will fall upon minds as rigid as rock.

Branton Hills *had* such a man, to whom such rigidity was as annoying as a thorn in his foot. Continuous trials brought only continual thorn-pricks; until, finally, a brilliant plan took form as John Gadsby found Branton Hills' High School pupils

waking up to Branton Hills' sloth. Gadsby continually found this bright young bunch asking:—

"Aw! Why is this town so slow? It's nothing but a dry twig!!"

"Ha!" said Gadsby; "A dry twig! That's it! Many a living, blossoming branch all around us, and this solitary dry twig, with a tag hanging from it, on which you will find: 'Branton Hills; A twig too lazy to grow!'"

Now this put a "hunch" in Gadsby's brain, causing him to say; "A High School pupil is not a child, now. Naturally a High School boy has not a man's qualifications; nor has a High School girl womanly maturity. But such kids, born in this swiftly moving day, think out many a notion which will work, but which would pass our dads and granddads in cold disdain. Just as ships pass at night. But supposing that such ships should show a light in passing; or blow a horn; or, if—if—if—By Golly! I'll do it!"

And so Gadsby sat on his blossom-bound porch on a mild Spring morning, thinking and smoking. Smoking can calm a man down; and his thoughts had so long and so constantly clung to this plan of his that a cool outlook as to its promulgation was not only important, but paramount. So, as his cigar was whirling and puffing rings aloft; and as groups of bright, happy boys and girls trod past, to school, his plan rapidly took form as follows:—

"Youth! What is it? Simply a start. A start of what? Why, of that most astounding of all human functions; thought. But man didn't start his brain working. No. All that an adult can claim is a continuation, or an amplification of thoughts, dormant in his youth. Although a child's brain can absorb

instruction with an ability far surpassing that of a grown man; and, although such a young brain is bound by rigid limits, it contains a capacity for constantly craving additional facts. So, in our backward Branton Hills, I just *know* that I can find boys and girls who can show our old moss-back Town Hall big-wigs a thing or two. Why! On Town Hall night, just go and sit in that room and find out just how stupid and stubborn a Council, (put *into* Town Hall, you know, through popular ballot!), can act. Say that a road is badly worn. Shall it stay so? Up jumps Old Bill Simpkins claiming that it is a townsman's duty to fix up his wagon springs if that road is too rough for him!"

As Gadsby sat thinking thus, his plan was rapidly growing; and, in a month, was actually starting to work. How? You'll know shortly; but first, you should know this John Gadsby; a man of "around fifty;" a family man, and known throughout Branton Hills for his high standard of honor and altruism on any kind of an occasion for public good. A loyal churchman, Gadsby was a man who, though admitting that an occasional fault in our daily acts is bound to occur, had taught his two boys and a pair of girls that, though folks do slip from what Scriptural authors call that "straight and narrow path," it will not pay to risk your own Soul by slipping, just so that you can laugh at your ability in staying out of prison; for Gadsby, having grown up in Branton Hills, could point to many such man or woman. So, with such firm convictions in his mind, this upstanding man was constantly striving so to act that no complaint from man, woman or child should bring a word of disapproval. In his mind, what a man might do was that man's affair only

and could stain no Soul but his own. And his altruism taught that it is not difficult to find many ways in which to bring joy to such as cannot, through physical disability, go out to look for it; and that only a small bit of joy, brought to a shut-in invalid will carry with it such a warmth as can flow only from acts of human sympathy.

For many days Gadsby had thought of ways in which folks with a goodly bank account could aid in building up this rapidly backsliding town of Branton Hills. But, how to show that class what a contribution could do? In this town, full of capitalists and philanthropists contributing, off and on, for shipping warming pans to Zulus, Gadsby saw a solution. In whom? Why, in just that bunch of bright, happy school kids, back from many a visit to a *city*, and noting its ability in improving its living conditions. So Gadsby thought of thus carrying an inkling to such capitalists as to how this stagnating town could claim a big spot upon our national map, which is now shown only in small, insignificant print.

As a start, Branton Hills' "Daily Post" would carry a long story, outlining a list of factors for improving conditions. This it did; but it will always stay as a blot upon high minds and proud blood that not a man or woman amongst such capitalists saw, in his plan, any call for dormant funds. But did that stop Gadsby? Can you stop a rising wind? Hardly! So Gadsby took into council about forty boys of his vicinity and built up an Organization of Youth. Also about as many girls who had known what it is, compulsorily to pass up many a picnic, or various forms of sport, through a lack of public park land. So this strong, vigorous combination of both youth and untiring activity, avidly took up Gadsby's

plan; for nothing so stirs up a youthful mind as an opportunity for accomplishing anything that adults cannot do. And did Gadsby *know* Youth? I'll say so! His two sons and girls, now in High or Grammar school, had taught him a thing or two; principal amongst which was that all-dominating fact that, at a not too far distant day, our young folks will occupy important vocational and also political positions, and will look back upon this, *our* day; smiling kindly at our way of doing things. So, to say that many a Branton Hills "King of Capital" got a bit huffy as a High School stripling was proving how stubborn a rich man is if his dollars don't aid so vast an opportunity for doing good, would put it mildly! Such downright *gall* by a half-grown kid to inform *him*; an outstanding light on Branton Hills' tax list, that this town was sliding down hill; and would soon land in an abyss of national oblivion! And our Organization girls! *How* Branton Hills' rich old widows and plump matrons did sniff in disdain as a group of High School pupils brought forth straightforward claims that cash paving a road, is doing good practical work, but, in filling up a strong box, is worth nothing to our town.

Oh, that class of nabobs! How thoroughly Gadsby *did* know its parsimony!! And how thoroughly did this hard-planning man know just what a constant onslaught by Youth could do. So, in about a month, his "Organization" had "waylaid," so to say, practically half of Branton Hills' cash kings; and had so won out, through that commonly known "pull" upon an adult by a child asking for what plainly is worthy, that his mail brought not only cash, but two rich landlords put at his disposal, tracts of land "for any form of