

**TANTLER'S SISTER, AND OTHER
UNTRUTHFUL STORIES BEING A
COLLECTION OF PIECES
WRITTEN FOR PUBLIC READING**

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Tantler's Sister, and Other Untruthful Stories Being a Collection of Pieces Written for Public Reading by Edward F. Turner

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EDWARD F. TURNER

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BY

EDWARD F. TURNER

AUTHOR OF 'T. LEVIN'



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MR. SACKBUT'S COSTUME.

Now wot would you say, sir, to a Henglish *had*miral?'

Mr. Sackbut had no particular remark to offer to an English admiral, except that he didn't seem to care about representing him at a fancy dress-ball, and he so told the costumier in whose shop he was holding converse.

'I 'ave a wery fine *Ighlander*, sir,' said the costumier; 'he's much beliked by some, more pertikler by them as fancies their calves, and it comes pretty cheap in consekence of there being no——'

'No, no, no,' interrupted Mr. Sackbut; 'that wouldn't do at all, and I should catch my death of cold.'

'Well, sir, of course there's no denyin' that a *Ighland* costoom *as* a costoom is wery draughty. 'Ow about a *Italian* robber? You'd look it to the life, sir.'

Mr. Sackbut, who did not seem to appreciate the compliment, summarily rejected the robber; and the costumier, after making several more suggestions which met with the same fate, gave it up, and left him to inspect the stock in trade at his pleasure and make his own selection.

'You can see 'em, sir,' he remarked, 'a 'anging up all round and make your own chice. I've got 'em of all countries, sizes, shapes, hages, qualities *and* characters, so you've only got to please yourself according to your bent.

With this parting recommendation, the costumier withdrew to the other end of the shop, and set to work to let out Cardinal Wolsey's waist for a stout gentleman who was going to represent that personage at some private theatricals.

It was all very well to tell Mr. Sackbut that he had only got to please himself. But the point was, what *would* please himself? For instance—should he be military, naval, ecclesiastical, or civil? Should he be of an ancient, mediæval, or modern period? Should he be sombre or gay, fair or dark, stuffed out with padding or of natural size? Should he be young, or middle-aged, or old? Should he represent high life or low life? Should he appear as a celebrated or a disreputable character? Should he wear plated armour and not attempt to sit down, or a less imposing costume in which he could move freely?

All these conflicting considerations and more did Mr. Sackbut pass in review without arriving at a satisfactory result. He described with his eyes a succession of forlorn circles round and round the shop, and had reached an advanced stage of despair, when he suddenly caught sight of a policeman—not a fancy dress policeman, but a solid reality—sauntering in a leisurely manner past the shop.

'By George!' said Mr. Sackbut, seized with a sudden inspiration, 'I'll go as a Peeler—it will do splendidly. Here, I say, have you got a policeman's uniform?'

The costumier said yes, he had; and he brought it up from underneath William Rufus; and, what was more, the stock in trade of the establishment was equal to supplementing the uniform with a bull's-eye, a staff, and a rattle.

In all London there was not that evening a person more

thoroughly satisfied with himself than Rupert Orlando Sackbut, Esquire, as he drove in a hansom cab to the building in which the fancy dress-ball was to take place. So eager was he for the fray, that he half stood up and craned his head out in front nearly all the way, with the result that the reins rested in a festoon-like manner on the top of his helmet, and he chafed exceedingly to find, on reaching the scene of action, that the front entrance was blocked up by a four-wheeled cab, which stuck right in front of his hansom and was surrounded by a large crowd of people.

Mr. Sackbut speedily became aware that the obstruction was caused by a dispute which was being maintained on the subject of cab-fare between the driver of the four-wheeler and the party inside the same. When I refer to the party as being inside the cab, I am guilty of a departure from my usual accuracy, because the only male, a spindle-shanked youth of eighteen, who was got up as Prince Henry the something underneath a billycock hat and a macintosh, was sitting on the box; and of the four ladies originally inside, Catherine of Arragon was gesticulating with half her body out of one window, and Anne Boleyn was in a similar condition at the other window; while Anne of Cleves and Catherine Parr dived out their heads occasionally through whatever apertures they could find, and aided the discussion with a heated remark.

The cabman had got down, and it appeared that he had positively declined to move away, or let the party out, without a substantial addition to the coin which had been proffered. The party were on their side equally resolute, and the strife of tongues waxed high.

'I tell you,' shrieked Catherine of Arragon, 'that your

fare's half-a-crown. It's a shilling fare and three extra people, and I won't pay another farthing.'

Smothered chorus from Anne of Cleves and Catherine Parr: 'Another farthing.'

'Ho! is it? Per-raps you'd like to drive round 'Yde Park and see the Halbert Memorial for the money? or the British Moo-seum. You've only got to mention the spot as you'd like to be driv to in them there harticles of dress, and I'll take the lot for thruppence.'

'Don't be impertinent, sir! If my husband were here he'd take your number and summons you.'

'A pity he ain't ere, cos e'd make a sixth, and a-course, bein' *your* 'usband, I shouldn't make no charge for 'im. 'Arf a crown for driving five people got up like loonatics two miles and a 'arf; wy, I'd lend you a hextra shillen myself rather than see yer do sich a mean haction.'

After some further amenities, which were greatly appreciated by the populace, had been exchanged, a policeman was sent for at the wish of both the contending parties; and just at this juncture, in an evil moment for Mr. Sackbut, who was sitting in his hansom cab and waiting impatiently for the removal of the obstacle, Catherine of Arragon, in looking wildly round out of the cab window, caught sight of his uniform and jumped to a hasty conclusion.

'Oh! *there's* the policeman. *Now* we'll see about this. Here, policeman, come here, please. This cabman has demanded more than his proper fare, and insulted my party disgracefully. I give the cab in charge and request you to take him up at once.'

Following the direction of the speaker, the crowd caught sight of Sackbut, to whom an earthquake would have been