Knowledge is Power

Freeman Tilden

Table of Contents

Knowledge is Power

Freeman Tilden

I

NO we don't want no more books!" cried Mr. Caleb Coppins in a tone of belligerent finality.

At the same time he attempted to slam the front door in the enthusiastic face of the young man who stood outside. But the young man, who was no chicken at canvassing, had taken due precautions in expectation of just such an event. He had neatly inserted his foot between the door−casing and the jamb.

"Just a minute, Mr. Coppins," he pleaded.

"Take your foot out of there, or I'll bust it for you!" replied the head of the household.

The young man regarded his victim with something of pity, mingled with subdued joy. He had tamed many a householder like Mr. Coppins, and his thin nose quivered with the excitement of approaching combat.

"You may slam the door, Mr. Coppins," he said earnestly. "You may amputate my foot; but my severed foot will remain inside with you to extol the glory of the eighth wonder of the world — the `Pan−Continental Encyclopedic Dictionary,' the steam−engine of intellect, the book that will make your name a byword for wisdom and your home the rendezvous of the intellectual elite."

The canvasser's eloquence was not without effect. Mr. Caleb Coppins's set jaw relaxed. He ceased to push against the inserted foot.

"You've got nerve, young feller," he admitted. "Come in! But you can't sell it to me, no matter what it is. We've got books cluttering up the whole house. I can't turn around now without knocking against a book, and I haven't read half of 'em, nor a quarter. And I get the `Agricultural Year−Book' every year from our Congressman."

The canvasser for the "Pan−Continental" followed silently into the musty−smelling parlor, and, at the bidding of the owner, sat down. As Mr. Coppins threw open the door of the seldom−used room the odor of decaying heirlooms nearly gagged the book−agent. With a quick glance he surveyed the chamber of horrors, from the horsehair−covered chairs to the tall bookcase of black walnut, stuffed with dusty volumes that dated from the period when "Vanity Fair" was thought to be a little off color.

I am not surprised to see so many books," said the canvasser, with a subtle feigning of rapture. "I find it worth while to visit only the true lovers of good literature. Ah, Mr. Coppins, how little the average man knows the rare pleasure that we bibliophiles get from our printed treasures!"

The fact was, as the canvasser very well understood, that Mr. Coppins had led him into the parlor not with the idea of doing him honor, but merely to intimidate him — to prove that the house was already supplied with books.

Mr. Coppins, however, hearing himself described as a bibliophile, and surmising that a bibliophile must be a person of some importance, permitted himself the luxury of remarking that he was a bibliophile — a forty−third−degree bibliophile. In fact, though he was firm in his resolve not to buy any more books just then, he pastured himself on these green and luscious fields of flattery like a half−starved cow from a rocky hillside.

"It's a pleasure to visit a man like you, Mr. Coppins," resumed the canvasser. "Believe me, I appreciate it. My eye sparkled when I saw that bookcase. Maybe you saw it sparkle? Exactly! `Here is a man of parts,' I said to myself. `Here is a man who knows. I would rather talk with a man like this man, and not sell my books, than sell a cart−load of books to the vulgar crowd who cannot appreciate them.'"

The canvasser paused, and Mr. Coppins nodded appreciatively.

"Don't try to tell me that you don't read these books," continued the canvasser. "I admire your modesty, but I know you gorge yourself on them in the long winter evenings. I'll bet you could recite half of them from memory!"

Mr. Coppins, who spent most of the long winter evenings shooting Kelly pool in a stuffy room at the rear of the barber−shop, assented to this indictment with dreamy self−approval.

Suddenly the manner of the canvasser changed. He became violently agitated, for no apparent reason. His eyes took on a gleam of high exultation. He began to pace up and down excitedly in the open space between the what−not and the table full of artificial flowers in glass. Then he stopped and pointed a long finger at Mr. Coppins so suddenly that that gentleman winced.

"You are a man of parts, Mr. Coppins!" he repeated furiously. "Your name was sent to me from the home office in New York — in New York, understand? You know what books are worth. You know that knowledge is power! You know that a man can rule the world, if he knows enough. Well, then, let me tell you something. You have made one mistake. You have dabbled. Your information has been sound, but spread too thin. I can prove it to you. Shall I?"

Mr. Coppins was fascinated. He nodded feeble assent.

The canvasser's voice became more shrill and cutting. He launched another finger in the direction of the householder's half−scared face.

"Can you tell me," he demanded with emphasis that cut like a Damascene blade, "what was the population of the city of Joliet, Illinois, in 1900? Can you tell me the name of the heaviest element in nature? How much does the earth weigh, down to the fraction of an ounce? Can you go right out into company and tell the names of the opposing generals in the first Punic War? Or what makes sugar crystallize? Or why the sky is blue? Do you know these things?"

"No, I don't," replied Caleb Coppins hoarsely.

" I know!" shouted the canvasser victoriously. "I can tell you the colors of the solar spectrum, backward and forward. I can tell you what the interest on one dollar, compounded semiannually at six per cent for a thousand years, would amount to. I can tell you the name of the right−hand man of the Egyptian monarch Rameses II, and the inscription on the tomb of Numa the Lawgiver. What was the first message ever sent over the electric telegraph? Can you tell me that, Mr. Coppins?"

"No, I can't," replied the abashed bibliophile. And then he added, with a ray of wicked hope flickering in his eyes: "Can you?"

"You can bet your best hat I can! The telegraph was invented by Samuel F. B. Morse, and the first message that was flashed over the wire was: `What hath God wrought!'"

Mr. Coppins shrank back from this prodigy of learning, and his hands trembled nervously.

Again the accusing finger shot forth toward the head of the householder.

"What," cried the canvasser, "is telekinesis? What is arteriosclerosis? Who discovered the X−ray? What is the present price of radium per milligram? What is a milligram? What is the coldest place in the United States? Where is Omsk? Who owns the most expensive dog in the world?"

"Calkins the grocer has a darned expensive dog," ventured Mr. Coppins. "He bit a lawyer last week!"

"That is not worthy of you," challenged the canvasser, flushing deeply. "That is trivial. We are dealing in all seriousness with the greater truths. Is there a single book in your excellent library that can tell you the precise nutritive value of the Lima bean?"

"No," admitted Mr. Coppins.

"There you are!" the canvasser shot back swiftly. "You've got lots of books, but if you wanted to find any of these important things in them it would be like hunting for a needle in a haystack. Suppose any one should ask you to give the origin and uses of caoutchouc? Could you do it? No. Could you spell it? No. There is an old Latin proverb, ` Scire ubi aliquid invenias magna pars eruditionis est.' You recall it?"

"Perfectly," responded Mr. Coppins, trying to look as much as possible like an ancient Roman.

"Of course you do. You know that it means, `To know where to lay hands on a fact is a great part of learning.' Well, Mr. Coppins, here you are! The `Pan−Continental Encyclopedic Dictionary' — the greatest book ever issued from the printing−press — the book that cost two hundred thousand dollars before a single page was printed — the book that called for the brains of one thousand of the world's greatest savants. Will you have it in cloth, in buckram, or in limp leather? Don't choose cloth, Mr. Coppins. I beg you won't give way to your first mercenary impulse and choose cloth."

"Why not choose cloth, if it comes cheaper?" asked Mr. Coppins, in one last defensive effort.

"Because," concluded the canvasser, you look, act, and talk like a limp leather man! Sign here — on this line, please. That's right!"

"How much?" queried Mr. Coppins, after he had committed himself. Already he was breathing more freely, like a man emerging from a trance.

"Ninety−six dollars and fifty cents," was the soothing reply. "The books are worth a thousand dollars to you. One−half the amount down and the rest in monthly instalments{sic}. With these books you can become a walking fund of learning. You can override the village like a Roman conqueror in his triumphal chariot. You can be an oracle, a magnate. Knowledge is power!"

"Ninety−six fifty!" groaned the bibliophile. "I don't know whether to be glad or sorry I didn't shut the door and amputate your foot."

The day will come when you will remember me with a heart full of gratitude, Mr. Coppins. We prepay freight charges. Your check is just as good as your money. Thank you!"

"Durn his hide!" said Caleb Coppins, when the nimble figure had flattened itself against the expanse of distance. "Ninety−six fifty! I feel like I had been mesmerized and robbed. But them books may be wuth it!"

II

THE "Pan−Continental Encyclopedic Dictionary" came by fast freight. Mr. Coppins bore the treasures to his room, and manufactured a number of reasonable excuses for being in possession of them when Mrs. Coppins should make the inevitable inquiries. He entered the item on his check−stub as "investment," for the benefit of his wife's splendid eyesight; and then he began to absorb knowledge, which is power.

Down in the rear of the barbershop the game of Kelly pool was proceeding with the usual abandon. Mr. Coppins was not present. The twelve ball got the money; the six ball captured the ten−cent stakes; the ivory cue−ball left the table and went into the corner of the room with its accustomed vigor; but Mr. Coppins was not there.

There was a light burning in Mr. Coppins's favorite corner of the house at night. There was a man absorbing the truths of the universe from limp−leather volumes. There was a man accumulating a fund of deathless information. There was a man trying to wring ninety−six dollars and fifty cents' worth of knowledge out of twenty−one volumes that sprang from the brains of one thousand of the world's greatest savants.

The man was Caleb Coppins. The volumes were the "Pan−Continental Encyclopedic Dictionary."

One bright morning Mr. Coppins emerged from his home with an eager look in his eye. He pounded down Main Street until he got as far as Calkins's Cash Grocery, where he met Mr. Hemingway, manager of the canning−factory.

"Morning, Caleb," was the latter's salutation.

Mr. Coppins nodded and then took the other man by the coat−collar and spoke to him crisply.

"What is the temperature of the ocean at a depth of three thousand fathoms?" he asked.

Mr. Hemingway backed off to a safe distance.

"What difference does it make?" he parried.

"How much is a fathom?" continued Mr. Coppins, cocking his head on one side knowingly.

"I don't know."

Mr. Coppins gave a triumphal snort.

"You ought to know, Alec," he said. "A man in your position!"

Then he proceeded on his way. He had already picked out another victim. It was the principal of the high school, on his way to duty.

Before he received that box of books by fast freight Mr. Coppins had always regarded this man — Sterling Wendell — with awe. Now he stepped up to him with an air of affable ease and said:

"Mr. Wendell, do you happen to know what is the Algonquin Indian word for summer squash?"

"Why, I don't recall it just this minute," replied the schoolmaster, as if it had slipped from his mind during the last few seconds.

"Perhaps you can tell me what is the chemical symbol for ice−cream?" suggested Mr. Coppins.

"Really, Caleb, I'm a little late for school as it is. I'll be glad to talk over those matters with you some evening. By the way, do you know the chemical symbol for ice−cream?"

"I should say I do!" replied Mr. Coppins, hastening onward with a serene heart.

Then Mr. Coppins entered the butcher−shop,

"What can I do for you this morning?" asked the butcher, "Some mighty fine pork just came in."

"Wells," said Caleb sharply, "probably you can tell me the meaning of the word `endosperm'?"

"I'm afraid I can't this morning, Mr. Coppins," replied the butcher reluctantly. "Did you say you'd have a shoulder or a loin roast?"

"No, I didn't. At what temperature would water boil at an altitude of nineteen thousand feet above sea−level?"

Mr. Wells was silent.

"You don't know?" prodded the man of parts.

The butcher shook his head.

"You ought to know, in your business," was the commiserating retort.

"I s'pose you know," said the butcher.

"Pretty likely I do!" replied Caleb Coppins, in triumph.

Mr. Coppins visited the bank, and asked to be informed as to the date of the discovery of argon. He also requested information concerning the treatment of anthrax. The cashier threw up his hands and hid behind his card−index.

Mr. Coppins then assailed the clothing−store employees, clamoring for the specific gravity of dried prunes. The employees fell down wofully {sic} on this problem. Mr. Coppins smiled genially.

" I know!" he said.

Then he went home. He felt that things were coming his way. He knew that before supper he would be the talk of the village. He felt that there would be a movement on foot to deal with him. He was equally sure that he could be dealt with only at the expense of the dealer.

"The feller was right," ruminated Mr. Coppins. "I've got 'em all thinking. Knowledge is power!"

III

HIS sudden flare of erudition gained for Mr. Coppins all the popularity of a game−warden. Not since the smallpox epidemic of 1871 had Brookfield been visited by such a pest. The male residents of voting age learned how to disappear around corners or into doorways when they saw Caleb Coppins approaching. The principal of the high school discovered a circuitous route from his home to the school that took only ten minutes longer to travel. Children instinctively shunned this prodigy of information, because Caleb had been reduced, once or twice, to the necessity of holding them up and demanding an answer to the question:

"Which is the longest bridge in the world?"

But the thing that most envenomed Mr. Coppins's former associates of the stuffy room at the rear of the barber−shop was the fact that Caleb had gained no small credit with the feminine part of Brookfield society. Local hostesses who had run short of attractions took him up. He became a lion. The proper thing to do, it developed, was to serve some small refreshments, and then, after the dishes had been spirited away from the parlor, to turn to some harried young male victim and say:

"Mr. Peters, wouldn't you like to ask Mr. Coppins a question?"

In such cases Mr. Coppins would sit back comfortably into the upholstery and cock his head attentively, while Mr. Peters would shrink to the size of a dwarfed child, cough nervously, and ask to be excused from such a wild adventure. Whereupon the forty−third−degree bibliophile would say nonchalantly:

"Oh, go on, Peters, ask me something difficult!"

And then, failing to arouse the fighting spirit of his paltry opponent, Mr. Coppins would ask himself questions and answer them with careless celerity.

Down at the pool−table, one night, Mr. Calkins paused over his shot and remarked to the smoke−embalmed gathering:

"Say, what do you think of this feller Coppins, anyway?"

"I think he's a big bluff," responded a slender youth. "I been thinking it over, and I come to the conclusion that he don't know the answers to half the questions he asks. You notice he always says he knows, but he never tells what it is."

"Well, why don't you call his bluff?" asked Mr. Calkins.

The slender youth hitched nervously and replied:

"Aw, what's the use?"

"He's making a great hit with the women," said another man. "You can't go to a party, or anything, these days, without having Coppins rubbed under your nose. We got to do something to that wise gent, or he'll have us back in the peg−top class, or rolling hoop, or something!"

"Where'd he get all that information?" asked some one.

"Gosh, I dunno," replied the grocer. "He never used to know beans; and all of a sudden he launches out as a regular college president!"

"Somebody's got to call his bluff, if he's bluffing. If he isn't, somebody's got to inveigle him into a vacant lot and wallop him," said the grocer.

"He's bluffing, all right," affirmed the slender youth.

"Well, who's going to call him?"

The slender youth thought for a moment and then replied:

"What do you say we get young Harold Hussey?"

"Harold Hussey!" echoed half a dozen sneering, raucous voices. "That little shrimp?"

"He may be a shrimp," was the reply; "but what makes him a shrimp? Ain't it because he studies too much? Ain't it because he spends so much time playing the piano and reading magazines and things? Ain't it because his head is so loaded with information that he don't have any time for the pleasures of life? What more do you want?"

"By thunder, he's right!" admitted Calkins. "Harold is the boy. If there's any one in this town that can hand it to Caleb, it's little Harold Hussey. But will he do it? Harold hasn't got the nerve of a chipmunk."

"He'll do it," continued the slender youth, "if you can get him on a subject he's interested in. You just mention music, and you'll see his eyes looking almost human. He knows more about music and musicians than Caleb Coppins could learn in the rest of his lifetime. Me for Harold Hussey!"

"Somebody go get him," said the grocer. "He won't be in bed yet, I guess. It's only quarter of eight. Bring him here to talk it over."

"No, he couldn't stand the atmosphere of this room," objected Wells, the butcher. "He'd faint. We'd better appoint a delegation to wait on Harold and groom him for the occasion. We'll promise him a box of the best fudge if he'll do it."

"There's a great chance coming the night after to−morrow," said the slender youth. "Mrs. Hastings is going to have a surprise party for George Hastings, and everybody's going to turn out to see George try to look surprised. You see, George was the one that thought of the idea. Everybody that comes is supposed to bring something to eat, and it 'll stock up the Hastingses with pie and cake enough for a month, at least. That's the time to spring little Harold Hussey on Coppins."

Half an hour later a couple of the men returned to the barber−shop with the glad news that Harold had consented to propound a number of questions on the momentous occasion. At least, Harold's mother had consented to permit Harold to consent, which was just as good, if not better.

Whereupon a dozen strong men, each shouldering a cue, formed in line and marched around the pool−table, pausing now and then to slap one another on the back and utter some horrible imprecation against Caleb Coppins.

IV

HAROLD HUSSEY had a watery blue eye, tapering fingers, manicured nails, and a slight lisp. It was said that Mrs. Hussey had been disappointed because Harold, her only child, was not a girl. At all events, she had since done all that she could to rectify nature's unfortunate mistake. The only additional shame she could possibly have saddled upon the nineteen−year−old youth would have been to make him wear earrings.

He called his mother "mommy," and she usually referred to him as "my angel." She withheld from Harold the only possibility by which he might have gained some good repute from the rest of his fellows — she wouldn't let him learn to play ragtime on the piano.

You can't keep a scheme like that quiet in a place like Brookfield. It came to Caleb's ears that Harold Hussey was going to be used against him at the Hastings surprise party, and Mr. Coppins nearly exploded with subdued laughter.

He knew that Harold's knowledge was practically confined to one subject. Now, Mr. Coppins knew nothing about music. But he got to work under his kerosene lamp. He absorbed everything in the "Pan−Continental" that looked as if it might have the taint of harmony. He delved for dates and nourished himself on names.

He arrived at the Hastings home with a glint of vulpine shrewdness in his eyes. He was not perturbed by the surreptitious whispering that went on around him. He picked out the best chair in the crowded rooms, and threw himself into the preliminary course of ice−cream, sandwiches, and cake. Once in a while he cast a withering glance at Harold Hussey, who had been placed opposite to him, and Harold nearly choked upon a mouthful of frosted cake, Mrs. Hussey patted her pride and hope upon his back and spoke soothing words to him.

Mr. Coppins deliberately put away his dishes and drew himself into a dignified attitude of scholastic reflection. Suddenly he remarked:

"I tell you, folks, it's only when a man really begins to learn something that he realizes how much there is to learn. Now, friends, there was a time when I felt pretty sure I knew everything. But I didn't — not then!"

"I suppose you do now," retorted an untactful guest, out of his heart of writhing hate.

"Oh, no," replied Caleb complacently; "not everything. But little by little I'm accumulating a fund of knowledge. Knowledge is power! I tell you what, it makes a man feel like a real man. It's the little facts that count. How many of you here could tell me, for instance, the length, in American measure, of a Swedish mile? You ought to know, folks. It's important to know those things. How many of you could tell me what language the ancient Egyptians spoke, or who deciphered the first cuneiform inscriptions dug from the great desert near the Nile? You ought to know. Everybody ought to know. Those things are important. Now, you," concluded Caleb, pointing at the untactful young man who had opened the subject, "suppose you ask me some question — any question. Go ahead — make it a hard one!"

The untactful young man glowered at the enemy and swallowed hard. He took four reefs in his forehead, and the veins stood out on his temples in his effort to think of a poser. Finally he gasped and lay back in his chair, helpless. He couldn't think of a question to save his life!

Mr. Coppins laughed softly and stroked his chin.

"Anybody else?" he said airily.

"Wait a minute!" cried the untactful one, suddenly coming to life with a wild gleam of joy. "Tell us — tell us — who discovered the — monkey−wrench!"

A titter went around the room, and a dozen male mouths opened with cordial expectation that Caleb Coppins would be crushed to earth. For a second he looked at the ceiling. Then, in a chant that was suspiciously like that of a parrot, he warbled:

"Certainly! The monkey−wrench is not, as some may suppose, an instrument to monkey with; nor indeed has it any connection with the simian tribe. It should really be called a moncky−wrench, for it was invented by a Baltimore mechanic named Charles Moncky. Got any other question to ask?"

The youth who propounded the query faded into the background and deftly pulled the background over his naked shame. There was generous applause from the ladies.

"I've got one!" said another brave candidate. "Who discovered glue?"

"Glue!" repeated Mr. Coppins. "Now there's a question! Who discovered glue? I like to have questions like that thrown at me. Glue is an important substance, and everybody should know the answer to that question. Now, glue — "

Mr. Coppins stopped. Of course, he did not know who discovered glue, and he had not the wit to frame a satisfactory answer to what was in reality an unfair question. It would have been almost as reasonable to inquire who invented bread.

His only hope was a swift diversion.

"Harold," he said, pulling himself together, "you are a musician. I'll bet you anything you don't know all a musician should know about the famous author of `Parsifal.' You don't know how old he was when he died, or where he was born, or where he died, or any of those important data."

"You mean Wagner?" replied Harold.

"I mean Vogner," replied Mr. Coppins, severely precise. "Those who do not know call him Wagner. I call him Vogner, as his fellow countrymen did. The German language is not like our language, you must understand. Now I ask the question, where was that great composer born; and I answer it myself — he was born in Leipsic, Germany."

"Is that right, Harold?" asked a score of eager voices. "Do you know?"

"That'th right," was the feeble and disappointed reply. "Leipthic is right."

"You see!" said Mr. Coppins, with a broad smile at the company. "Another important question!" continued Caleb, rubbing his hands gleefully. "A very important question! Where did the great composer die? Shake off the mortal coil, as one might say? I will answer — at Baireuth. Pronounced `Byroit,' you will please observe."

"Is that right, Harold?" challenged the same palpitating voices.

"No, thir," was the reply. "It ith not!"

"What?" shouted Caleb Coppins menacingly. "Do you mean to tell me, Harold, that I am wrong? Think again, boy, think again!"

"He died in Venice," persisted Harold in feeble exultation and reaching for his mother's hand.

"He did not!" retorted Mr. Coppins.

"He did so," Harold insisted.

"The boy's got you," said Calkins, the grocer. "Give up, Caleb. You're stung!"

"He died in Byroit," said Caleb. "Mind what I tell you. I know!"

"Venice," said Harold Hussey feebly but doggedly.

Mr. Calkins, with a cunning look in his eye, took Harold by the arm and led him aside.

"Are you sure about it, son?" he asked.

"That'th what my book sayth," lisped Harold. "Besides, I know that Wagner died in an old palace on the Grand Canal in Venice."

Calkins turned swiftly upon Caleb. "The boy's got you," he laughed. "Give up; you're stung, Caleb!"

"Nonsense!" said Caleb.

I'll bet you one hundred dollars the boy's right," cried the grocer. "Put up or shut up!"

Mr. Calkins evidently had little idea that Caleb would put up. He paled visibly when Mr. Coppins replied confidently:

"I'll go you!"

"I — I haven't got that much cash with me," stammered the grocer. "But here are witnesses. I say Harold is right."

"I really hate to take your money," replied Caleb coolly. "It doesn't seem fair, honestly; but you can't blame me. One hundred dollars! I'm your man."

"Really, you mustn't bet money," interrupted Mrs. Hastings, thinking of the dignity of her position as hostess, but secretly hoping that it would be disregarded.

"Let 'em go ahead!" cried the men. "This has been coming to Caleb for a long time." —

EDITOR'S NOTE — The erroneous statement that Richard Wagner died at Baireuth is actually to be found in a well−known and usually very accurate work of reference.

"I can prove it by my book," averred Harold. "I'll go right home and get it thith minute."

"Books talk," returned Caleb. "I'll be back in half a jiffy. Then you'll hand me a check for that hundred, Calkins!

V

TEN awful minutes of suspense passed over the heads of the company. Calkins perspired in a corner and accepted the congratulations of the crowd with a clammy and uncertain hand.

There was a shuffling of feet outside. In another moment Caleb Coppins entered with a large volume bound in limp leather. He opened it and laid it on the table. Then he pressed his finger on a certain spot and threw back his head haughtily. As many as could gather around the evidence regarded the fatal words and groaned. In his corner Mr. Calkins shivered. It was plain:

WAGNER, Richard, German composer, born at Leipsic, 1813; died at Baireuth, 1883.

Another scraping of feet outside, and Mrs. Hussey entered with Harold. Harold also had a book. Mr. Coppins deigned to glance at his antagonist's evidence, and his eyebrows lifted somewhat. Harold also had a volume of the "Pan−Continental Encyclopedic Dictionary"!

Then Caleb smiled. All the better — the same volume to tell the same story!

Mr. Coppins saw Mr. Calkins pounce wolfishly upon Harold's book and whip the pages over. Presently the search ended, and young Hussey pointed to a passage which Mr. Calkins eagerly read. Then the grocer strode toward Caleb with a countenance which somehow made the bibliophile wonder if he had forgotten anything. With a bold front, however, he turned upon Mr. Calkins and asked confidently:

"Is there any other question you'd like to ask me?"

There was a tense moment of hush in the room. A glint of wicked guile that sparked from Calkins's eyes brought a pale spot under each of Caleb's ears. Then he heard these words:

"Yes, Caleb, there are two questions I'd like to ask you. One of them is: Have you seen this?"

He planked down before Caleb Harold's volume of the "Pan−Continental" and glued his finger to a pink slip of paper inserted in front of the title−page. Then, in a loud and cheerful voice, he read the following into Caleb's ear:

"ERRATUM — On page 301 of this volume, under `WAGNER, Richard,' for `died at Baireuth,' read `died at Venice, Italy.'"

Defeated, stricken dumb, Mr. Coppins did not even attempt a reply. After a moment of dead silence the triumphant voice of Mr. Calkins went on:

"Yes, Caleb, and here's the second question — have you that hundred in your jeans?"

ROSES — FOR A SONG

Buy me roses for my garden,"
Said the lady whose least word
Blends the iron of a mandate
With the sweetness of a bird.

"But I have no golden money;
Scarce have I a silver crown!"
"Buy them with Catullian honey,
Sweet as wild bees' dripping down.

"Take some golden words to market;
Don't you think the merchant knows
Beauty always is good barter,
Rose is fair exchange for rose?

"Then, when next time in my garden
By my side you walk along,
You shall see how words look growing —
Buy me roses with a song!"

Richard Franklin