

*Classic Series*

# HUMOUR STORIES



*Esme*

*Ranassa*

*The Robe Of Peace*

*Babes In The Jungle*

*The Girl And The Graft*

*Bertie's Christmas Eve*

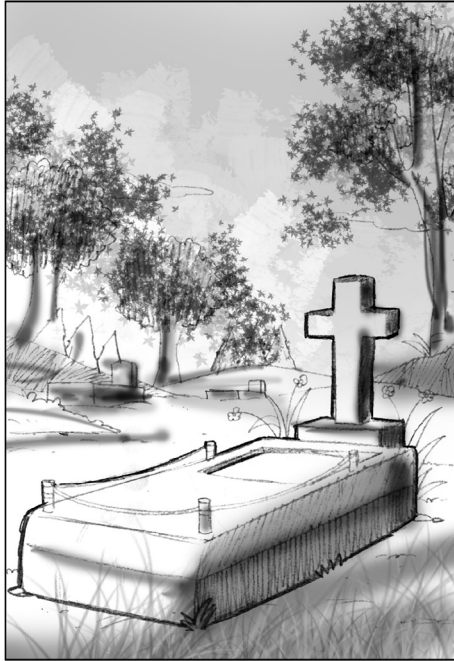
*Proof Of The Pudding*



CLASSIC SERIES

*Greatest.*

# *Humour Stories*



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It has been our constant endeavour at the **V&S Publishers** to publish all kinds of books ranging from Fiction, Non-fiction, Storybooks, Children Encyclopaedias, to Self-Help, Science Books, Dictionaries, Grammar Books, Self-Development, Management Books, etc.

However, this is for the first time that we are venturing into the vast, rich and fathomless ocean of English Literature and have come up with a set of *ten storybooks called the Greatest Classic Series* authored by some of the greatest and eminent writers of the world. There is a lot to learn from their writing style, selection of plot, development and building of theme and suspense of the story, emphasis and presentation of characters, dialogues, working towards the climax of the story, presenting the climax, and then finally concluding the story.

Each these books are of about 200 pages containing around ten popular stories or more of renowned authors like Oscar Wilde, Ernest William Hornung, Guy de Maupassant, O. Henry, Saki, Washington Irving, Thomas Hardy, Charles Dickens, Jules Verne, Jack London, Mark Twain, Edgar Allen Poe, H.G.Wells, Ambrose Bierce, Amelia Edwards, Edith Wharton, Wilkie Collins and many more. The series is called The Greatest Classic Series as all the names of the books begin with the word, 'Greatest' like the Greatest Adventurous Stories, Greatest Detective Stories, Greatest Love Stories, Greatest Ghost Stories, and so on. Besides this, three of the ten books are exclusively on the Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, one of the best detectives the world has ever known written by none other than Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

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These books are not only a boon for the school-going students, particularly studying in senior classes from the seventh standard till the twelfth, but are also a treasure trove for all those young and aspiring writers, voracious readers and lovers of English language and literature.

*Each of these ten books focus on a theme, such as adventure, love, terror, humour, or supernatural happenings, and are so captivating and real to life that readers may find it difficult to choose from them and so it's better to pick the entire series.*

*Wishing you all a happy and enjoyable reading...*

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# The Girl And The Graft

- O. Henry

**TH**e other day I ran across my old friend Ferguson Pogue. Pogue is a *conscientious* grafter of the highest type. His headquarters is the Western Hemisphere, and his line of business is anything from speculating in town lots on the Great Staked Plains to selling wooden toys in Connecticut, made by *hydraulic pressure* from nutmegs ground to a pulp.

Now and then when Pogue has made a good haul he comes to New York for a rest. He says the jug of wine and loaf of bread and Thou in the wilderness business is about as much rest and pleasure to him as sliding down the bumps at Coney would be to President Taft. "Give me," says Pogue, "a big city for my vacation. Especially New York. I'm not much fond of New Yorkers, and Manhattan is about the only place on the globe where I don't find any."

While in the metropolis Pogue can always be found at one of two places. One is a little second-hand bookshop on Fourth Avenue, where he reads books about his hobbies, Mahometanism and taxidermy. I found him at the other - his hall bedroom in Eighteenth Street - where he sat in his stocking feet trying to pluck "The Banks of the Wabash" out of a small zither. Four years he has practised this tune without arriving near enough to cast the longest trout line to the water's edge. On the dresser lay a blued-steel Colt's forty-five and a tight roll of tens and twenties large enough around to belong to the spring rattlesnake-story class. A chambermaid with a room-cleaning air *fluttered* nearby in the hall, unable to enter or to flee, scandalised by the stocking feet, aghast at the Colt's, yet powerless, with her metropolitan instincts, to remove herself beyond the magic influence of the yellow-hued roll.

I sat on his trunk while Ferguson Pogue talked. No one could be franker or more candid in his conversation. Beside his expression the cry of Henry James for lacteal nourishment at the age of one month would have seemed like a Chaldean cryptogram. He told me stories of his profession with pride, for he considered it an art. And I was curious enough to ask him whether he had known any women who followed it.

**Conscientious** - Just, Homest

**Hydraulic pressure** - The dynamic behaviour of fluids

**Fluttered** - Toss about

**Scandalised** - Defaned



“Ladies?” said Pogue, with Western chivalry. “Well, not to any great extent. They don’t amount to much in special lines of graft, because they’re all so busy in general lines. What? Why, they have to. Who’s got the money in the world? The men. Did you ever know a man to give a woman a dollar without any consideration? A man will shell out his dust to another man free and easy and gratis. But if he drops a penny in one of the machines run by the Madam Eve’s Daughters’ Amalgamated Association and the pineapple chewing gum don’t fall out when he pulls the lever you can hear him kick to the superintendent four blocks away. Man is the hardest proposition a woman has to go up against. He’s the low-grade one, and she has to work overtime to make him pay. Two times out of five she’s salted. She can’t put in *crushers* and costly machinery. He’d notice ‘em and be onto the game. They have to pan out what they get, and it hurts their tender hands. Some of ‘em are natural *sluice* troughs and can carry out \$1,000 to the ton. The dry-eyed ones have to depend on signed letters, false hair, sympathy, the kangaroo walk, cowhide whips, ability to cook, sentimental juries, conversational powers, silk underskirts, ancestry, rouge, anonymous letters, violet sachet powders, witnesses, revolvers, pneumatic forms, carbolic acid, moonlight, cold cream and the evening newspapers.”

“You are outrageous, Ferg,” I said. “Surely there is none of this ‘graft’ as you call it, in a perfect and *harmonious* matrimonial union!”

“Well,” said Pogue, “nothing that would justify you every time in calling Police Headquarters and ordering out the reserves and a vaudeville manager on a dead run. But it’s this way: Suppose you’re a Fifth Avenue millionaire, soaring high, on the right side of copper and cappers.

“You come home at night and bring a \$9,000,000 diamond brooch to the lady who’s staked your for a claim. You hand it over. She says, ‘Oh, George!’ and looks to see if it’s backed. She comes up and kisses you. You’ve waited for it. You get it. All right. It’s graft.

“But I’m telling you about Artemisia Blye. She was from Kansas and she suggested corn in all of its phases. Her hair was as yellow as the silk; her form was as tall and graceful as a stalk in the low grounds during a wet summer; her eyes were as big and startling as bunions, and green was her favorite color.

**Crushers** - To press or squeeze with a force that destroys/deforms

**Sluice troughs** - To let out/drain water through a long, narrow, open receptacle

**Harmonious** - Melodious

“On my last trip into the cool recesses of your *sequestered* city I met a human named Vaucross. He was worth - that is, he had a million. He told me he was in business on the street. ‘A sidewalk merchant?’ says I, sarcastic. ‘Exactly,’ says he, ‘Senior partner of a paving concern.’

“I kind of took to him. For this reason, I met him on Broadway one night when I was out of heart, luck, tobacco and place. He was all silk hat, diamonds and front. He was all front. If you had gone behind him you would have only looked yourself in the face. I looked like a cross between Count Tolstoy and a June *lobster*. I was out of luck. I had - but let me lay my eyes on that dealer again.

“Vaucross stopped and talked to me a few minutes and then he took me to a high-toned restaurant to eat dinner. There was music, and then some Beethoven, and Bordelaise sauce, and *cussing* in French, and frangipangi, and some hauteur and cigarettes. When I am flush I know them places.

“I declare, I must have looked as bad as a magazine artist sitting there without any money and my hair all rumbled like I was booked to read a chapter from ‘Elsie’s School Days’ at a Brooklyn Bohemian smoker. But Vaucross treated me like a bear hunter’s guide. He wasn’t afraid of hurting the waiter’s feelings.

“‘Mr. Pogue,’ he explains to me, ‘I am using you.’

“‘Go on,’ says I; ‘I hope you don’t wake up.’

“And then he tells me, you know, the kind of man he was. He was a New Yorker. His whole ambition was to be noticed. He wanted to be *conspicuous*. He wanted people to point him out and bow to him, and tell others who he was. He said it had been the desire of his life always. He didn’t have but a million, so he couldn’t attract attention by spending money. He said he tried to get into public notice one time by planting a little public square on the east side with garlic for free use of the poor; but Carnegie heard of it, and covered it over at once with a library in the Gaelic language. Three times he had jumped in the way of automobiles; but the only result was five broken ribs and a notice in the papers that an unknown man, five feet ten, with four amalgam-filled teeth, supposed to be the last of the famous Red Leary gang had been run over.

“‘Ever try the reporters,’ I asked him.

**Sequestered** - To remove/withdraw into solitude

**Lobster** - A large sized prawn

**Cussing** - Swearing, curseny

**Conspicuous** - Clearly, vividly

“‘Last month,’ says Mr. Vaucross, ‘my expenditure for lunches to reporters was \$124.80.’

“‘Get anything out of that?’ I asks.

“‘That reminds me,’ says he; ‘add \$8.50 for perpsin. Yes, I got indigestion.’

“‘How am I supposed to push along your scramble for prominence?’ I inquires. ‘Contrast?’

“‘Something of that sort to-night,’ says Vaucross. ‘It grieves me; but I am forced to resort to *eccentricity*.’ And here he drops his napkin in his soup and rises up and bows to a gent who is devastating a potato under a palm across the room.

“‘The Police Commissioner,’ says my climber, gratified. ‘Friend’, says I, in a hurry, ‘have ambitions but don’t kick a rung out of your ladder. When you use me as a stepping stone to salute the police you spoil my appetite on the grounds that I may be degraded and *incriminated*. Be thoughtful.’

“‘At the Quaker City squab en casserole the idea about Artemisia Blye comes to me.

“‘Suppose I can manage to get you in the papers,’ says I - ‘a column or two every day in all of ‘em and your picture in most of ‘em for a week. How much would it be worth to you?’ “‘Ten thousand dollars,’ says Vaucross, warm in a minute. ‘But no murder,’ says he; ‘and I won’t wear pink pants at a cotillon.’

“‘I wouldn’t ask you to,’ says I. ‘This is honourable, stylish and uneffeminate. Tell the waiter to bring a demi tasse and some other beans, and I will disclose to you the opus moderandi.’ “‘We closed the deal an hour later in the ro-coco rouge et noise room. I telegraphed that night to Miss Artemisia in Salina. She took a couple of photographs and an autograph letter to an elder in the Fourth Presbyterian Church in the morning, and got some transportation and \$80. She stopped in Topeka long enough to trade a flashlight interior and a valentine to the vice-president of a trust company for a mileage book and a package of five-dollar notes with \$250 scrawled on the band.

“‘The fifth evening after she got my wire she was waiting, all decolletee and dressed up, for me and Vaucross to take her to dinner in one of these New York feminine apartment houses where a man can’t get in unless he plays *bezique* and

**Bezique** - A card  
game

**Incriminated** -  
Accused

**Eccentricity** -  
Madness, Crazyness

smokes depilatory powder cigarettes. “‘She’s a stunner,’ says Vaucross when he saw her. ‘They’ll give her a two-column cut sure.’ “This was the scheme the three of us concocted. It was business straight through. Vaucross was to rush Miss Blye with all the style and display and emotion he could for a month. Of course, that amounted to nothing as far as his ambitions were concerned. The sight of a man in a white tie and patent leather pumps pouring greenbacks through the large end of a *cornucopia* to purchase nutriment and heart-ease for tall, *willowy blondes* in New York is as common a sight as blue turtles in delirium tremens. But he was to write her love letters - the worst kind of love letters, such as your wife publishes after you are dead - every day. At the end of the month he was to drop her, and she would bring suit for \$100,000 for breach of promise.

“Miss Artemisia was to get \$10,000. If she won the suit that was all; and if she lost she was to get it anyhow. There was a signed contract to that effect.

“Sometimes they had me out with ‘em, but not often. I couldn’t keep up to their style. She used to pull out his notes and criticize them like bills of lading.

“‘Say, you!’ she’d say. ‘What do you call this - letter to a Hardware Merchant from His Nephew on Learning that His Aunt Has Nettlerash? You Eastern *duffers* know as much about writing love letters as a Kansas grasshopper does about *tugboats*. “My dear Miss Blye!” - wouldn’t that put pink icing and a little red sugar bird on your bridal cake? How long do you expect to hold an audience in a court-room with that kind of stuff? You want to get down to business, and call me “Tweedlums Babe” and “Honeysuckle,” and sing yourself “Mama’s Own Big Bad Puggy Wuggy Boy” if you want any limelight to concentrate upon your *sparse* gray hairs. Get *sappy*.’

“After that Vaucross dipped his pen in the indelible tabasco. His notes read like something or other in the original. I could see a jury sitting up, and women tearing one another’s hats to hear ‘em read. And I could see piling up for Mr. Vaucross as much *notoriousness* as Archbishop Crammer or the Brooklyn Bridge or cheese-on-salad ever enjoyed. He seemed mighty pleased at the prospects.

“They agreed on a night; and I stood on Fifth Avenue outside a solemn restaurant and watched ‘em. A process-server

**Cornucoupla** - A horn containing abundant supply food, drink  
**Willowy** - Slender, graceful  
**Blodes** - Having fair hair and vsually fair skin and light eyes  
**Duffers** - Plading, clumsy person  
**Tugboats** - Small, Powerful boats

walked in and handed Vaucross the papers at this table. Everybody looked at 'em; and he looked as proud as Cicero. I went back to my room and lit a five-cent cigar, for I knew the \$10,000 was as good as ours.

"About two hours later somebody knocked at my door. There stood Vaucross and Miss Artemisia, and she was clinging - yes, sir, clinging - to his arm. And they tells me they'd been out and got married. And they *articulated* some trivial *cadences* about love and such. And they laid down a bundle on the table and said 'Good night' and left.

"And that's why I say," concluded Ferguson Pogue, "that a woman is too busy occupied with her natural vocation and instinct of graft such as is given her for self-preservation and amusement to make any great success in special lines."

"What was in the bundle they left?" I asked, with my usual curiosity.

"Why," said Ferguson, "there was a scalper's railroad ticket as far as Kansas City and two pairs of Mr. Vaucross's old pants."



## *Food For Thought*

Why do you think Miss Artemisia choose vaucrossas her husband instead of Ferguson pogue? Explain your answer with appropriate reasons.

**Articulated** - Made  
clear or distinct

**Caences** - Arhythmic  
pattern of sounds/  
beats

**Amusement** -  
Recreation, enjoyment

## *An Understanding*

**Q. 1.** What experiences did Ferguson Pogue narrate to the narrator or speaker about his profession of preparing and selling wooden toys?

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Q. 2.** Where did Poge enjoy spending his vacation and why?

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Q. 3.** What humour elements do you find in the story when Pogue describes the ways in which he and vaucross, including others in his company tried to woo and please Miss Artemisia Blye?

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Q. 4.** "And that's why I say," concluded Ferguson Pogue, "that a woman is too busy occupied with her instinct of graft, such as is given to her for self - preservation and amusement to make any great success in special lines." Why does Pogue say these words to the narrator? What does he mean by saying so?

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# Canossa

- Saki

**DE**mosthenes Platterbaff, the eminent Unrest Inducer, stood on his trial for a serious offence, and the eyes of the political world were focussed on the jury. The offence, it should be stated, was serious for the Government rather than for the prisoner. He had blown up the Albert Hall on the eve of the great Liberal Federation Tango Tea, the occasion on which the Chancellor of the Exchequer was expected to propound his new theory: "Do *partridges* spread infectious diseases?" Platterbaff had chosen his time well; the Tango Tea had been hurriedly postponed, but there were other political fixtures which could not be put off under any circumstances. The day after the trial there was to be a by-election at Nemesis-on-Hand, and it had been openly announced in the division that if Platterbaff were languishing in gaol on polling day the Government candidate would be "outed" to a certainty. Unfortunately, there could be no doubt or *misconception* as to Platterbaff's guilt.

He had not only pleaded guilty, but had expressed his intention of repeating his escapade in other directions as soon as circumstances permitted; throughout the trial he was busy examining a small model of the Free Trade Hall in Manchester. The jury could not possibly find that the prisoner had not deliberately and intentionally blown up the Albert Hall; the question was: Could they find any extenuating circumstances which would permit of an acquittal? Of course any sentence which the law might feel compelled to inflict would be followed by an immediate pardon, but it was highly desirable, from the Government's point of view, that the necessity for such an exercise of clemency should not arise. A *headlong* pardon, on the eve of a by-election, with threats of a heavy voting defection if it were withheld or even delayed, would not necessarily be a surrender, but it would look like one. *Opponents* would be only too ready to attribute ungenerous motives. Hence the anxiety in the crowded Court, and in the little groups gathered round the tape-machines in Whitehall and Downing Street and other affected centres.

The jury returned from considering their verdict; there was a flutter, an excited murmur, a death-like *hush*. The foreman delivered his message:

"The jury find the prisoner guilty of blowing up the Albert Hall. The jury wish to add a rider drawing attention to the fact

**Partridges** - Small old world game birds  
**Headlong** - Without delay, hastily, plunge  
**Misconception** - False notion  
**Opponents** - Competitions



that a by-election is pending in the Parliamentary division of Nemesis-on-Hand."

"That, of course," said the Government Prosecutor, springing to his feet, "is equivalent to an *acquittal*?"

"I hardly think so," said the Judge, coldly; "I feel obliged to sentence the prisoner to a week's imprisonment."

"And may the Lord have mercy on the poll," a Junior Counsel exclaimed irreverently. It was a scandalous sentence, but then the Judge was not on the Ministerial side in politics. The verdict and sentence were made known to the public at twenty minutes past five in the afternoon; at half-past five a dense crowd was *massed* outside the Prime Minister's residence lustily singing, to the air of "Trelawney":

"And should our Hero rot in gaol,  
For e'en a single day,  
There's Fifteen Hundred Voting Men  
Will vote the other way."

"Fifteen hundred," said the Prime Minister, with a shudder; "it's too horrible to think of. Our majority last time was only a thousand and seven."

"The poll opens at eight to-morrow morning," said the Chief Organiser; "we must have him out by 7 a.m."

"Seven-thirty," amended the Prime Minister; "we must avoid any appearance of precipitancy."

"Not later than seven-thirty, then," said the Chief Organiser; "I have promised the agent down there that he shall be able to display posters announcing 'Platterbaff is Out,' before the poll opens. He said it was our only chance of getting a telegram 'Radprop is In' to-night."

At half-past seven the next morning the Prime Minister and the Chief Organiser sat at breakfast, making a perfunctory meal, and awaiting the return of the Home Secretary, who had gone in person to superintend, the releasing of Platterbaff. Despite the earliness of the hour a small crowd had gathered in the street outside, and the horrible *menacing* Trelawney *refrain* of the "Fifteen Hundred Voting Men" came in a steady, *monotonous* chant.

"They will cheer presently when they hear the news," said the Prime Minister hopefully; "hark! They are *booing* some one now! That must be McKenna."

The Home Secretary entered the room a moment later, disaster written on his face.

"He won't go!" he exclaimed.

**Acquittal** - *The deliverance/release a person before a court*  
**Massed** - *Heap/Pile*  
**Menacing** - *Extremely annoying person*  
**Refrainment** - *Desist, Forbear*  
**Monotonous** - *Boring, dull*

“Won’t go? Won’t leave gaol?”

“He won’t go unless he has a brass band. He says he never has left prison without a brass band to play him out, and he’s not going to go without one now.”

“But surely that sort of thing is provided by his supporters and admirers?” said the Prime Minister; “we can hardly be supposed to supply a released prisoner with a brass band. How on earth could we defend it on the Estimates?”

“His supporters say it is up to us to provide the music,” said the Home Secretary; “they say we put him in prison, and it’s our affair to see that he leaves it in a respectable manner. Anyway, he won’t go unless he has a band.”

The telephone *squealed shrilly*; it was a trunk call from Nemesis.

“Poll opens in five minutes. Is Platterbaff out yet? In Heaven’s name, why --”

The Chief Organiser rang off.

“This is not a moment for standing on dignity,” he observed *bluntly*; “musicians must be supplied at once. Platterbaff must have his band.”

“Where are you going to find the musicians?” asked the Home Secretary *wearily*; “we can’t employ a military band, in fact, I don’t think he’d have one if we offered it, and there ain’t any others. There’s a musicians’ strike on, I suppose you know.”

“Can’t you get a strike permit?” asked the Organiser.

“I’ll try,” said the Home Secretary, and went to the telephone.

Eight o’clock struck. The crowd outside chanted with an increasing volume of sound:

“Will vote the other way.”

A telegram was brought in. It was from the central committee rooms at Nemesis. “Losing twenty votes per minute,” was its brief message.

Ten o’clock struck. The Prime Minister, the Home Secretary, the Chief Organiser, and several earnest helpful friends were gathered in the inner gateway of the prison, talking volubly to Demosthenes Platterbaff, who stood with folded arms and squarely planted feet, silent in their midst. Golden-tongued legislators whose *eloquence* had *swayed* the Marconi Inquiry Committee, or at any rate the greater part of it, expended their arts of oratory in vain on this stubborn

**Booing** - To shout and express disgust  
**Bluntly** - Rudely  
**Squealed** - Sudden violent gust of wind  
**Shrilly** - High pitched voice  
**Wearily** - Tiredly

unyielding man. Without a band he would not go; and they had no band.

A quarter past ten, half-past. A constant stream of telegraph boys poured in through the prison gates.

"Yamley's factory hands just voted you can guess how," ran a despairing message, and the others were all of the same *tenour*. Nemesis was going the way of Reading.

"Have you any band instruments of an easy nature to play?" demanded the Chief Organiser of the Prison Governor; "drums, *cymbals*, those sort of things?"

"The warders have a private band of their own," said the Governor, "but of course I couldn't allow the men themselves --"

"Lend us the instruments," said the Chief Organiser.

One of the earnest helpful friends was a skilled performer on the cornet, the Cabinet Ministers were able to clash cymbals more or less in tune, and the Chief Organiser has some knowledge of the drum.

"What tune would you prefer?" he asked Platterbaff.

"The popular song of the moment," replied the Agitator after a moment's reflection. It was a tune they had all heard hundreds of times, so there was no difficulty in turning out a *passable* imitation of it. To the improvised strains of "I didn't want to do it" the prisoner strode forth to freedom. The word of the song had reference, it was understood, to the incarcerating Government and not to the destroyer of the Albert Hall.

The seat was lost, after all, by a narrow majority. The local Trade Unionists took offence at the fact of Cabinet Ministers having personally acted as strike-breakers, and even the release of Platterbaff failed to pacify them. The seat was lost, but Ministers had scored a moral victory. They had shown that they knew when and how to *yield*.

**Eloquence** - Ease in using language to the best effect

**Swayed** - To move or swing to one side or in one direction

**Tenor** - Period

**Cymbals** - Percussion instruments of indefinite pitch

**Passable** - Adequate, acceptable

## Food For Thought

Why do you think the Prime Minister released Platterbaff from jail and also asked the Brass Band to play him out? The Cabinet Ministers and the Prime Minister lost the elections but won the people's hearts. Do you agree? Support your answer with relevant reasons.

## *An Understanding*

**Q. 1. What was the offence of Demosthenes Platterbaff, the eminent Unrest Induces?**

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Q. 2. Why has the author, Saki (H.H.Munro) named the story as 'Canossa'? What does it mean and how does it go with the story?**

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Q. 3. The jury couldnot find that the guilty, Platterbaff, who was also the prisoner intentionally blew up the Albert Hall. How did then they found the circumstances that would permit of an acquittal?**

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Q. 4. The verdict was passed that Platter baff was found guilty of blowing up the Albert Hall and was sentenced to a week's imprisonment. What was the reaction of the public after this announcement?**

Ans. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_