

Beverly's Protective Mechanical Goat

BY THOMAS A. JANVIER

"MY friend Beverly, gentlemen," said the Colonel, "possessed—as you may have gathered from some of my previous statements concerning him—one of those rare creative minds in which the practical and the theoretical were poised so perfectly, and both so perfectly were at the command of his massive yet most versatile imagination, that the manifold expressions of his inventive energy uniformly were as commendably useful as they were daringly original. As you also will remember, among his more notable achievements were numerous mechanical devices of a strictly practical sort—in every case brilliantly evolved from ingenious concepts worked out in strict accordance with scientific principles—for the simplification or the amelioration of the affairs of every-day life. His invention of the Domestic Protective Mechanical Goat falls into this latter category, and to a marked degree illustrates—"

"Sit down right there, Colonel!" put in the Doctor. "Goats can't be hired to protect anybody but themselves—and their only notion of being domestic is to butt all the members of the family into the middle of next week!"

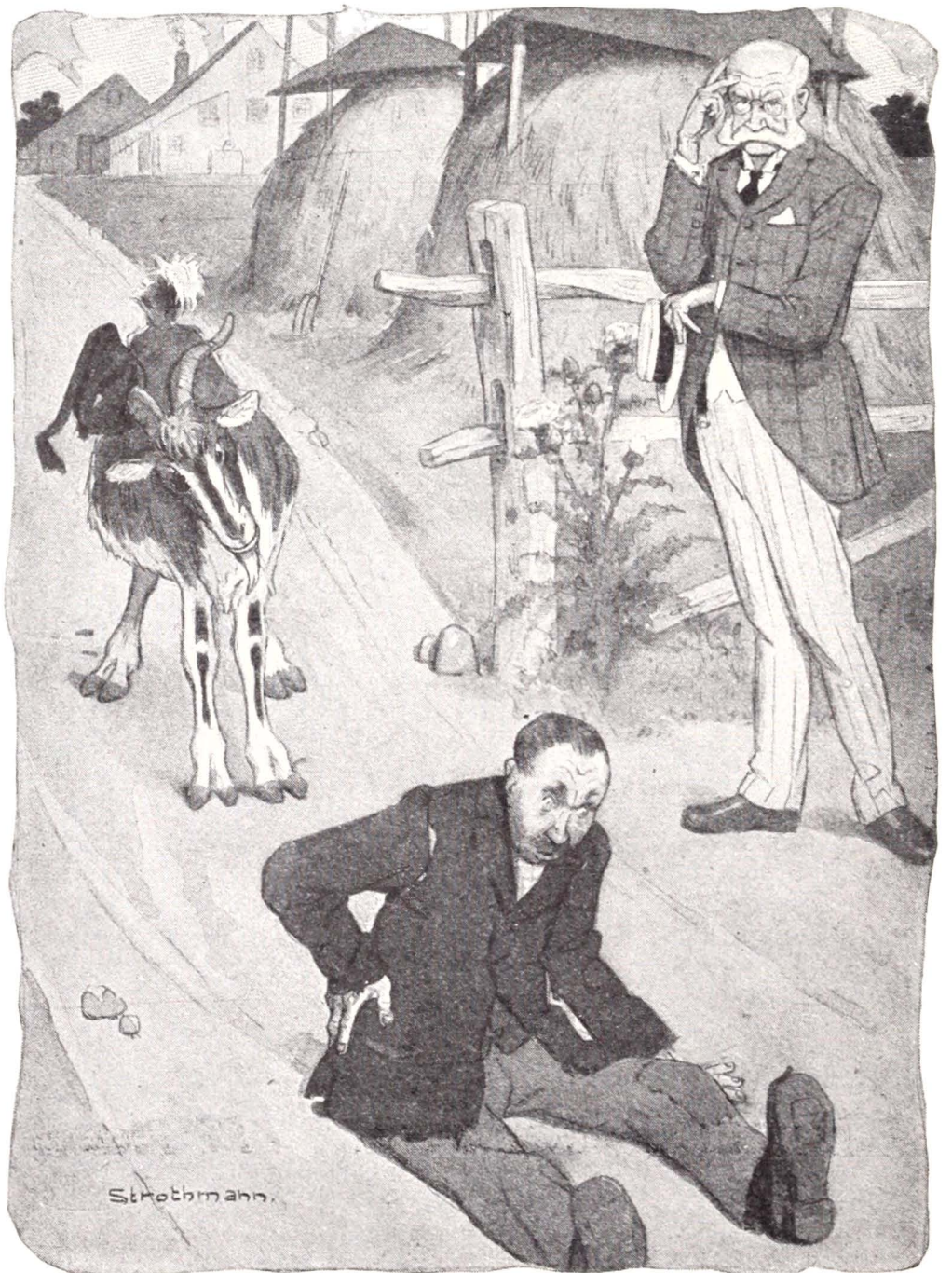
"Pardon me, Doctor," said the Judge. "I really must take issue with you. We had a goat at home when I was a boy that was far from being so savage a monster. We used to drive him in a little cart, and he was as nice a goat as you ever saw. I must admit, however, that when we angered William—we called him William—he did butt with a good deal of energy. He even butted me on one occasion. The incident is of so laughable a nature that I really must tell you about it. You see, William—"

"One moment, Judge," interpolated the Bishop, "my cloth will not permit me to let pass without a timely word of remonstrance the Doctor's too hasty generalization concerning the ungrateful natures of the lower or-

ders of animals. Even the fiercest of them are amenable to loving kindness. Take, for instance, the many touching legends of which St. Francis is the centre; and, as an extreme case, take that of his encounter with the savage wolf of Agobio. As you will remember, the ravening beast 'became as a lamb' when that seraphic man—"

"Did that seraphic man ever get up against the business end of a goat and find anything lamb-like about it?" asked the Doctor.

"Really, for the moment, I cannot recall any such incident in the life of St. Francis."



THAT ILLUMINATIVE HINT SUFFICED TO SET INSTANTLY IN ACTION MR. BEVERLY'S INVENTIVE GENIUS

replied the Bishop, coldly. "But, no doubt—"

"Well, it's goats we're talking about," went on the Doctor, breezily; "and unless—"

"Precisely," said the Judge, pouring kindly oil upon the waters. "The subject of our present discussion is goats. To be exact, it is mechanical goats. Inadvertently, we have wandered from it, and from the very interesting story that the Colonel—"

"I beg, gentlemen," said the Colonel, bitingly, "that you will not in the least consider my feelings. In this company I am accustomed—"

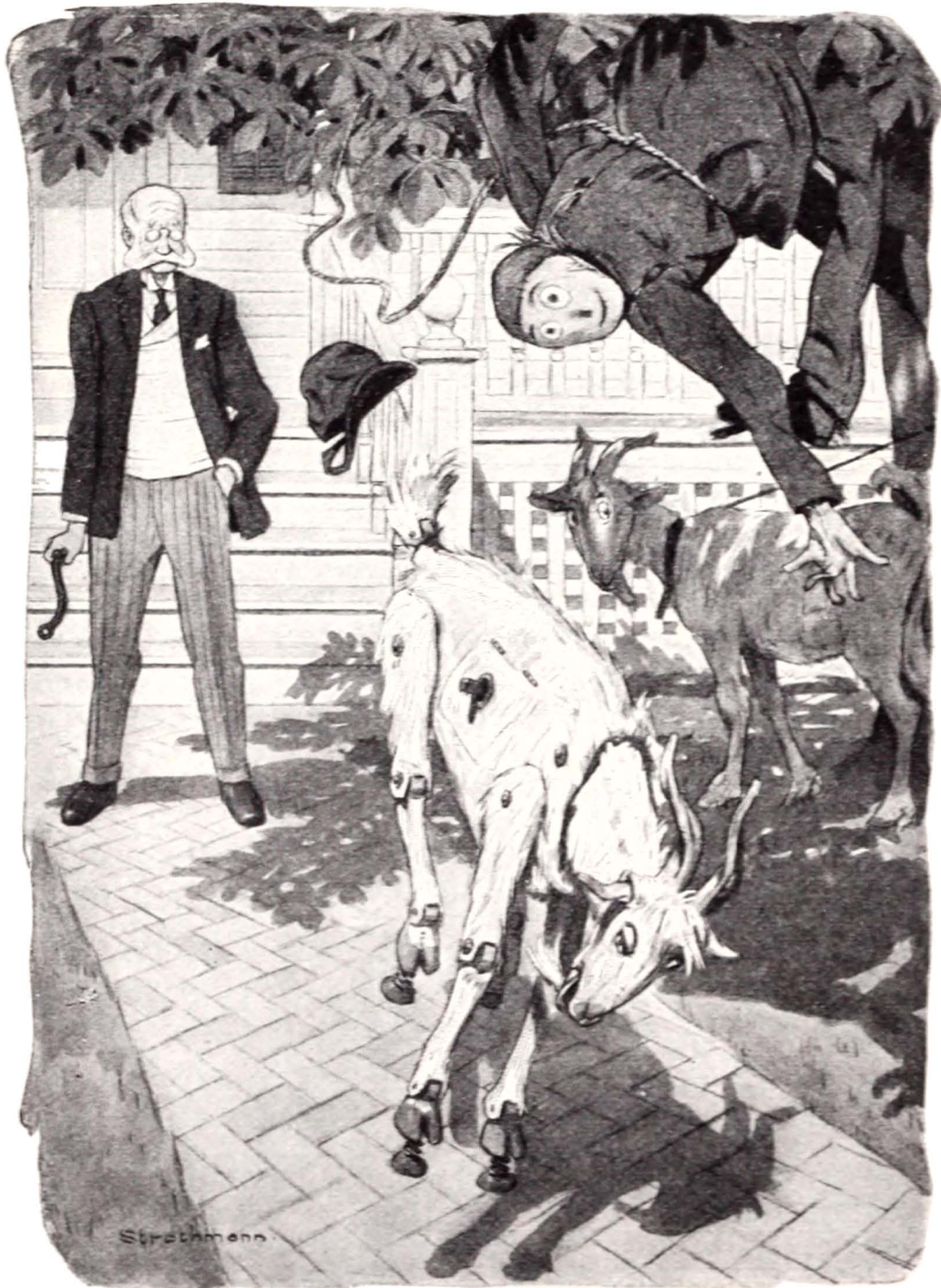
"And we earnestly desire," continued the Judge with a genial insistence, "to hear all about Mr. Beverly's curious invention; and especially to have explained to us how so artificial a creation as a mechanical goat could be domestic and protective."

"Mr. Beverly's mechanical goat," resumed the mollified Colonel, "was not 'domestic and protective'—as you have phrased it, Judge—but 'domestic protective'—that is to say, it was intended to be a protector of domesticity, a safeguard of the home. Especially was it intended to be the protector of isolated homes, in rural communities, liable to be annoyed or to be endangered by the

incursions of tramps. Indeed, Mr. Beverly's point of departure—his keenly active mind ever was alert to suggestion—was seeing a real goat butt a tramp from the kitchen door of a farmhouse, and keep on butting him all the way down the lane until he landed him in a heap in the public road. The tramp was not seriously injured—the goat, being the pursuer, had no opportunity to assail him in a vital part—but he was scared out of his seven senses; and he confided to Mr. Beverly—when he somewhat had recovered himself—that had he suspected the presence of a goat upon the premises nothing would have induced him to approach the farmhouse: adding that goats were regarded by all tramps as far more to be feared than were the most savage dogs. That illuminative hint sufficed to set instantly in action Mr. Beverly's inventive genius. Scarcely had he and the bruised tramp parted ere his admirable project for the mechanical goat protection of isolated rural homes was conceived."

"Why wasn't he satisfied to goat-protect isolated rural homes with real goats—and let it go at that?" asked the Doctor.

"Precisely because the belief concerning goat habits, to which you yourself but a moment ago gave expression, has a wide prevalence. An ordinary mind—you will pardon. I trust, this implied reflection upon your own intellectual equipment—would have gone no farther than projecting a stock company that should purchase real goats in wholesale quantities; and that should resell them at retail, as watch-goats, for isolated home protective purposes. As Mr. Beverly's mind was not ordinary, he perceived that even the owners of exceptionally isolated homes, urgently in need of protection, almost certainly would refuse to protect them in that way—because of their well-grounded dread that animate watch-goats—when there are no tramps about to operate on—would keep in training by butting all the members of the household all over the place. Thence came his brilliantly imaginative but severely practical project for making mechanical watch-goats: which—being kept wound-up and all ready to be started by pressing a suitably placed button—would get down to business in a hurry when their expulsive services were needed; but which, in between-times, when offensive action was not required of them, would be inert and harmless—easily disposed of in the kitchen closet, or in a conveniently accessible goat-house in the back yard."



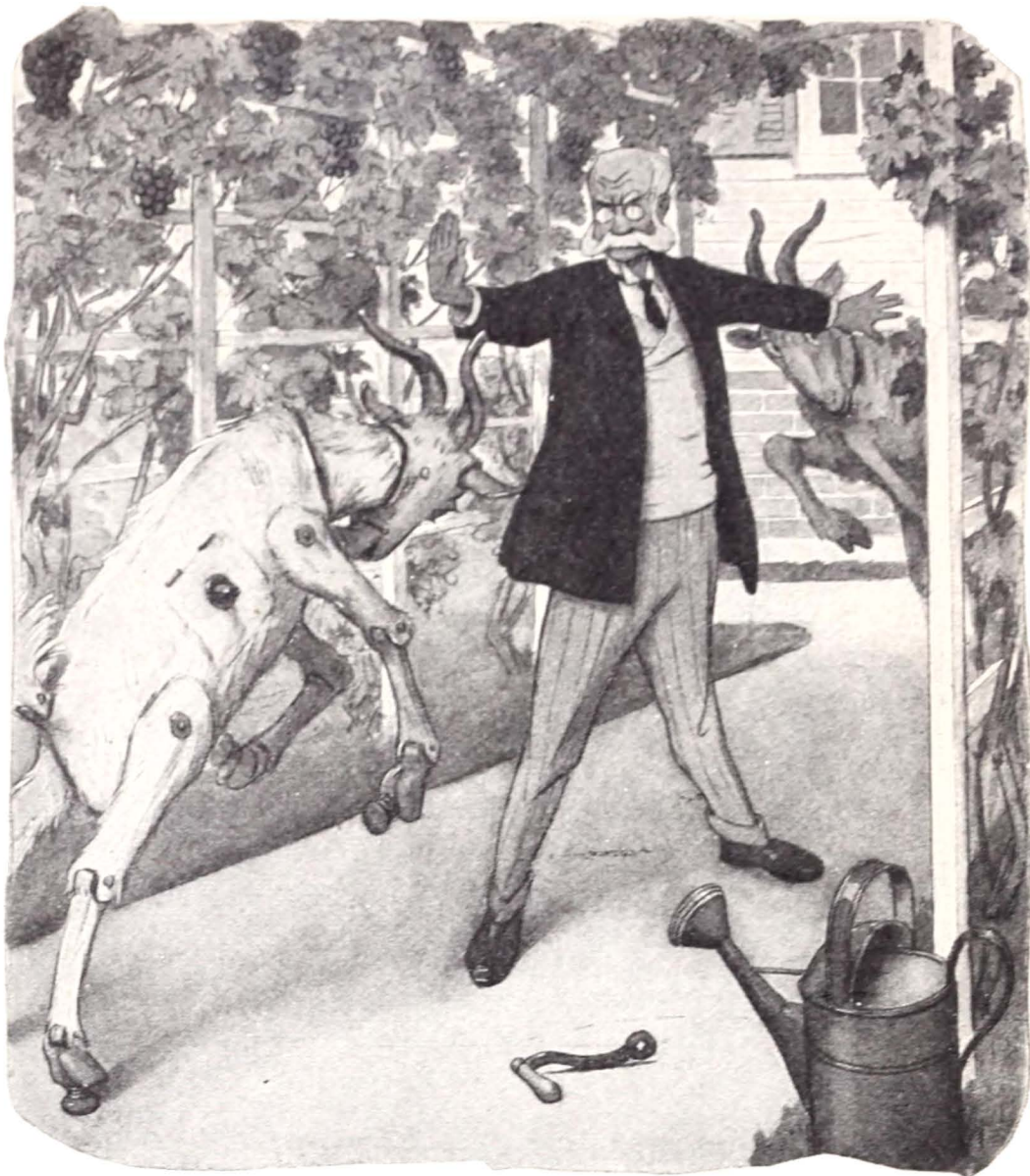
MR BEVERLY USED A STUFFED FIGURE REPRESENTING A TRAMP AS ITS OBJECTIVE

"Was Mr. Beverly a heavy drinker, Colonel?" inquired the Judge, absently.

"He was not!" replied the Colonel, with severity. "On the contrary, he was a total abstainer. Having answered your irrelevant question, sir, I will proceed. With my friend, thinking and acting practically were simultaneous conditions. He therefore set himself to the immediate realization of his useful project: purchasing the necessary materials for his goat-simulacrum—of which the most important were exceptionally powerful springs to energize a butting force of great intensity—and personally directing a corps of skilled workmen in the making and in the assembling of its several parts.

"The essential matter being merely to produce what looked enough like a goat to lead a scared tramp being butted by it to think it was one, there was no need to make the simulacrum conform accurately to its original. Mr. Beverly, however, with a characteristically painstaking conscientiousness, purchased a real goat to serve as a standard pattern; and with this standard the mechanical goat, at every stage of its construction, critically was compared.

"Such patient endeavor bore its fitting fruit. As his creation approached completion even Mr. Beverly—whose requirements of his own extraordinary talents ever were most exigent—was satisfied with it. Not merely did the mechanical goat duplicate the real goat in outward appearance: it had also—so ingeniously contrived and so powerfully energized was its interior—the very walk and, what was still more to the inventor's purpose, the very butt of life. Being wound up and started at its objective—Mr. Beverly used a stuffed figure representing a tramp as its objective—the mechanism would charge with great celerity to the required spot; there—on the automatic loosing of a trigger connected by a simple interlocking mechanism with a cogged wheel carrying a disk indicating distances—it would rise upon its hind legs with a perfect naturalness: then it would pause for an instant, in accord with goat habits; and then, lowering its head to a suitable level, it would come downward and forward in such a manner as to deliver with its forehead upon the stuffed figure a crushing blow. Presumably, a tramp so treated, having regained an upright posture, would be disposed to immediate flight. But, to make the contrivance still more effectively intimidating, a supplementary system of springs was provided that caused the mechanical goat to continue its extrusive operations with a series of charg-



MR. BEVERLY FLUNG HIMSELF BETWEEN THEM AND RESOLUTELY EXTENDED TOWARD EACH A REPELLING HAND

ings and buttings which could be relied upon to make the most determined tramp give up the contest and run away."

"I haven't seen any of 'em about anywhere," said the Doctor. "Didn't Beverly's notion ketch on? Or did he die in an asylum before he put it through?"

"Mr. Beverly still is alive, and his sanity remains normal," replied the Colonel, coldly. "That his 'notion' did not 'ketch on'—I use, Doctor, your own elegant phraseology—was due solely to the fact that he never placed it upon the market. In the very moment of its demonstratedly practical success an unhappy accident occurred—involving both the invention and the inventor—that most regrettably caused him to abandon his beneficently utilitarian scheme.

"As I have stated, the mechanical goat was compared at short intervals while in course of construction with the standard real goat. For a considerable time the real goat exhibited during these comparisons—the framed mechanism bearing little resemblance to any living creature—a mere moody indifference. But as the framework got to be more and more goat-like, both in appearance and in action, the real goat became restive; and during the later stages of comparison—when the mechanism went jumping and butting about in a very goatish fashion—the real goat got so excited that he had to be tied to a tree.

"Out of these conditions—at what Mr. Beverly had decided should be the conclud-

ing test—came the catastrophe to which I have made reference. By that time, in outward appearance, his creation was absolutely goat-like: being coated with goat-pelt, and having yellow glass eyes which blinked evilly—under the impulse of a simple subsidiary mechanism—with a dangerously aggravating realism. The only remaining concern of the inventor, therefore, was to make sure of the equally realistic action of the mechanism as a whole; and to this end, having suitably lengthened the tethering-rope, he sought to provoke the real goat to run and to plunge and to butt with angered violence—in order that any errors in the running and plunging and butting of the mechanical goat might be observed and rectified.

“So far as arousing the real goat to angry action was concerned, his purpose most fully was accomplished. In a very short time the real goat became positively furious: as the mechanical goat, exasperatingly snapping its wicked eyes, went through all the motions of a goat-fight—yet did not (the trigger on the cogged distance-wheel being set to stop it just outside of the real goat's radius of action) come within fighting distance. With the pride of a true artist, Mr. Beverly perceived that correction of any sort in his invention was unnecessary; and, wholly satisfied, he was about to end his triumphal comparison when the sinister mischance that dashed his hopes occurred. As the mechanical goat was making what he intended should be its final charge, the real goat—maddened beyond all endurance—also made a charge; and of such energy that the tethering-rope snapped like pack-thread and the infuriated animal was free to satisfy the lust for battle that was rampant in its heart. An instant later the mechanical goat rose on its hind legs to deliver the butt prompted by its artificial interior. Simultaneously, up went the real goat on *his* hind legs to do some butting prompted by an interior full of natural rage!

“In that crisis moment Mr. Beverly's action—while inadequately reasoned—was heroic: of a piece, and equally admirable, with the heroism of a father who dares death by entering a burning house to save his child. The fact was patent to him that his masterly creation—the offspring of his genius, the fruit of his months of patient toil—was in most imminent danger of destruction; and with a lightning-like rapidity his high resolve was taken that the impending conflict—at no matter what risk to his own person—should be stayed. With an equally lightning-like rapidity his intrepid purpose was realized. As the two goats, the real and the mechanical, stood up facing each other and paused—the one by force of his natural instinct, the other by force of its realistically contrived mechanism—Mr. Beverly flung himself between them and resolutely extended toward each a repelling hand! In another instant—”

“Pardon me, Colonel,” said the Bishop. “I regret the necessity of interrupting your interesting narrative, but my cloth compels

me to point out that in purposely arousing the evil passions of the real goat—and for no more justifiable end than the perfection of a curious piece of mechanism of but dubious utility—Mr. Beverly committed what I admit may be regarded as a minor, but scarcely as a venial, sin. His act was less in degree, of course, but in kind it was identical with the classical crime of Parrhasius: the Greek painter who, as you all know, tortured to death a slave in order that his portrayal of the agonies of Prometheus—”

“Permit me just one word, Bishop,” said the Judge. “I am in entire accord, I assure you, with your humane views in regard to Mr. Beverly's reprehensible treatment of the goat; but I cannot suffer to pass unchallenged your use in support of them of the now utterly discredited story about Parrhasius. It is a pure myth that—”

“That rests,” interrupted the Bishop, speaking with a cold distinctness, “upon the reputation for credibility of no less a personage than Seneca; who—”

“Who,” struck in the Judge, hotly, “flourished some centuries after the period assigned to the fictitious event to which he gave currency—”

“Concerning which,” interpolated the Bishop with chill irony, “you, Judge, I infer, are in a position to give contemporaneous testimony!”

“—and who totally neglected to harmonize, in his fanciful narrative, two radically irreconcilable facts. Seneca has the effrontery to tell us that Parrhasius bought for artistic torturing purposes one of the captives taken at Olynthus; an assertion conclusively nullified by the certainty that Parrhasius died, as has been demonstrated by Brun in his authoritative ‘Geschichte der griechischen Künstler’—”

“Holy smoke!” exclaimed the Doctor. “Where are you and the Bishop getting to, Judge? Let up on your back-number dead Greeks, and stop spoiling a first-class goat-story! Go ahead, Colonel. Let's have the rest of it. Did the goats everlastingly smash him?”

“I ask your pardon, Colonel; and I heartily join in the Doctor's request,” said the Bishop. “In justice to my cloth I could not withhold my adverse comment upon Mr. Beverly's treatment of the goat; but my argument with the Judge certainly has been ill-timed. I beg that you will proceed.”

“The Bishop is quite right, Colonel,” said the Judge, cordially. “I add my apology to his, and I join with him in begging that your very interesting story may be resumed.”

“My story, obviously, is so far removed from being interesting,” said the Colonel, rising from his seat, “that I prefer leaving the remainder of it untold: and so also leaving to the Judge and the Bishop a clear field wherein to continue the archaic discussion in which they have seen fit, at the most critical point in my narration, so learnedly to engage. I have the honor to wish you collectively, gentlemen, a very good day!”