

# THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF  
CLEVERNESS

Manuscripts, to receive prompt attention, should be addressed, "Editor of THE SMART SET."

## CONTENTS

THE ASSAULT OF WINGS . . . . .	Charles G. D. Roberts . . . . .	1
VIRGIN ISLE . . . . .	Florence Brooks . . . . .	7
YOU NEVER CAN TELL . . . . .	George Sterling . . . . .	8
THE HOUSE IN DEMETRIUS ROAD. Part II . . . . .	J. D. Beresford . . . . .	9
UNDER THE SNOW . . . . .	Richard Le Gallienne . . . . .	42
PAS DE TROIS . . . . .	Bias Casman and Mary Perry King . . . . .	43
PRISON-MADE . . . . .	Freeman Tilden . . . . .	47
FORTY POUNDS OF GOLD . . . . .	George Cutten . . . . .	55
HOUSES . . . . .	Ludwig Lewisohn . . . . .	61
PERTINENT AND IMPERTINENT . . . . .	Owen Hatteras . . . . .	62
THE WIDOW OF WASDALE HEAD. Play in One Act . . . . .	Arthur Wing Pinero . . . . .	63
A SPRING SONG . . . . .	Robert Loveman . . . . .	82
ONE MAN TO EVERY FAMILY . . . . .	Evelyn Gill Klahr . . . . .	83
THE SEA . . . . .	Louise Driscoll . . . . .	88
THE JOKE TOWNS OF AMERICA. Essay . . . . .	George Jayenne . . . . .	89
DEAD DREAMS . . . . .	Blanche Shoemaker Wagstaff . . . . .	95
THE WOMAN-AT-ARMS . . . . .	Victor Starbuck . . . . .	96
A MENIAL . . . . .	Louis Livingston . . . . .	97
SUNDAY NIGHT . . . . .	Louis Untermeyer . . . . .	104
THE TRIBE ON VACATION . . . . .	Basil Macdonald Hastings . . . . .	105
DELICATESSEN . . . . .	Joyce Kilmer . . . . .	111
IN A CELLAR . . . . .	Donn Byrne . . . . .	113
THE CALL . . . . .	Faith Baldwin . . . . .	120
HAMLET AND THE AMERICAN STAGE . . . . .	George Jean Nathan . . . . .	121
V—FOR VERA . . . . .	Cid Carr . . . . .	124
IN THE CASE OF BRADNER . . . . .	Hugh Irish . . . . .	125
WHY HE DIVORCED HER . . . . .	Paul Hervey Fox . . . . .	133
THE SIGNOR SEEKS ADVENTURE . . . . .	H. D. Couzens . . . . .	135
WILD SWANS . . . . .	Skipwith Cannell . . . . .	141
THE MULE DRIVER . . . . .	Henry Herbert Knibbs . . . . .	142
LE JUSTICIER. In the Original French . . . . .	Jean de Kerleog . . . . .	143
THE MIRACLE IN THIRTY-NINTH STREET WEST . . . . .	George Jean Nathan . . . . .	145
THE HARP, THE SACKBUT AND THE PSALTERY . . . . .	H. L. Mencken . . . . .	153

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# HAMLET AND THE AMERICAN STAGE

*Being a Sample Scene from the Famous Play of William Shakespeare as Our American Theatrical Managers Would Fix It Up for Their Own Particular Use.*

By George Jean Nathan

## THE ORIGINAL VERSION

GHOST: I AM thy father's spirit,  
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night. . . .  
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word  
Would harrow up thy soul; freeze thy young blood. . . .  
List, list, O list! If thou didst ever thy dear father love—

HAMLET: O God!

GHOST: Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

HAMLET: Murder?

GHOST: Murder most foul . . . the serpent that did sting  
Thy father's life now wears his crown. . . .  
Ay, that incestuous, adulterate beast,  
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts  
. . . won to his shameful lust  
The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen.

## I

## THE BELASCO VERSION

GHOST: I am thy father's spirit—you hear, Hamlet? You hear? (*With a loud sob*) *He doesn't hear me! He doesn't hear me!*  
Doomed psychologically by such authorities as Dr. Morton Prince and Professor Hyslop of Columbia University for a certain term to walk the night. . . .  
I could a tale adopt whose lightest word  
Would harrow up thy soul; freeze thy young blood. . . .  
Hear, hear, hear! (*Wildly*) *I can't get across!* If thou didst ever thy dear father love . . .

HAMLET: O God!

GHOST: Revenge his foul and what Lombroso would call his most abnormal murder.

HAMLET: Murder?

**GHOST:** Murder most foul . . . the serpent that used lethal hypnosis on  
 Thy father's life now wears his crown. . . .  
 Ay, that incestuous, adulterate beast,  
 With witty auto-suggestion, with traitorous psychophysics  
 . . . won to his shameful lust  
 The static sense, as Flammarion would call it, of my most seeming-  
 virtuous queen.

## II

## THE COHAN AND HARRIS VERSION

**GHOST:** I'm your old man's spook  
 Sentenced for sixty days to walk around Providence, Rhode Island. . .  
 I could spin a yarn, kid, whose one-syllables  
 Would give you heart failure; give you a young chill. . . .  
 Stop, look, listen! If you didn't used to hate your old man—

**HAMLET:** O gee!

**GHOST:** Get even for his rotten murder.

**HAMLET:** Murder?

**GHOST:** *Some murder, believe me!* . . . the parlor snake that stung  
 Your old man now wears his jeweled Dunlap. . . .  
 Yep, that dirty, low dog,  
 With some Willie Collier stuff and with the double-cross  
 . . . copped off for himself  
 The person of my otherwise phoebe-snow royal dame.

## III

## THE SHUBERT VERSION

**GHOST:** I am thy father's spirit,  
 Doomed for a certain term to walk the night. . . .  
 (*Song: "When You Walk in the Night with the Moon Shining Bright."*)  
 I could a tale unfold whose lightest word  
 Would harrow up thy soul; freeze thy young blood. . . .  
 List, list, O Listerine\*! If thou didst ever thy dear father love—

**HAMLET:** (*Song: "I Always Loved My Dear Old Dad."*)

**GHOST:** Then revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

**HAMLET:** Murder?

**GHOST:** Murder most foul . . . the serpent that did sting  
 Thy father's life now wears his crown. . . .  
 Ay, that incestuous, adulterate cadet,  
 With stories about his New York, with drugged champagne  
 . . . won to shameful white slavery  
 The will of my pure innocent young daughter.

\* \$25 per performance.

(The GHOST and HAMLET, followed by sixty chorus girls, march out onto runway extending across auditorium of theater.—Song: "Moving to the Music of That Maxixe Melodee.")

## IV

## THE FROHMAN VERSION\*\*

- GHOST (*removing his top hat and gloves*): I am thy pater's spirit,  
Doomed for a certain period to toddle the night. . . .  
I could a tale unfold, m' lord, whose lightest word  
Would harrow up thy soul; freeze thy young blood. . . .  
I say! If thou didst ever thy dear pater love—
- HAMLET (*bored*): Sorry! (*A servant appears*) Tea, Jenkins.
- JENKINS: Very good, sir. (*Exit*)
- GHOST: Why not revenge his foul and most unnatural murder?
- HAMLET (*still bored*): Murder? Oh, I say! 'Pon m' word! Sorry. (*Enter JENKINS with the tea. HAMLET and the GHOST draw chairs to tea table.*)  
Sugar or lemon?
- GHOST: No, I thank you. Yes, really, as I was saying,  
Murder most foul . . . the cad that did take  
Thy pater's life now wears his crown. . . .  
Ay, that risqué bounder,  
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous epigram  
. . . won to his vulgar, middle-class lust  
The will of my most seeming-virtuous lady.

## V

## THE A. H. WOODS VERSION

- GHOST (*a Jew*): I'm your father's ghost!
- HAMLET: O hell!
- GHOST: Revenge his sensational murder!
- HAMLET: Murder? Gawd!!
- GHOST: Villainous, terrible, awful murder!! The cur that bit  
Your father's life has now got his crown on. . . .  
Yes, that incestuous, adulterate beast,  
That low, vile, verminous hound,  
That base, mean, depraved scoundrel,  
That contemptible, scurvy, ignoble crook,  
That putrid, corrupt, foul shyster,  
With that dastardly dirty work of his won to his shameful lust  
My innocent little shop girl wife—(*Breaking down*) your mother!

\*\* The scene is laid in the drawing room of Lady Trowbridge's house in Grosvenor Square, London.