

**TO BUDDLECOMBE
AND BACK**

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To Buddlecombe and Back by F. C. Burnand

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F. C. BURNAND

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By F. C. BURNAND,

AUTHOR OF "HAPPY THOUGHTS," "HAPPY THOUGHT HALL,"
"THE NEW HISTORY OF SANDFORD AND
MERTON," ETC.



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CHAPTER I.

OF THE CHIEF OF THE ABORIGINAL WIDEAWAKES,
AND WHAT RESULTED FROM A MEETING OF
THEIR GRAND LODGE.

FRED KERRICK had the unenviable reputation of being a practical joker.

Appreciated at first by those who had not been his victims, he was invited out in all directions ; and few convivial parties, or country-house gatherings, were considered perfect, unless Fred Kerrick was among the guests. He was like the advertised Court Guide or Directory, "without which no gentleman's library is complete."

After a time, however, when the hosts and hostesses found that their hospitalities were no defence against Fred's playing his tricks on themselves, his popularity began to wane ; and thenceforth his practical jokes seemed

rather to be suggested by a desire of malicious annoyance, than to result from irrepressible animal spirits. What he had begun as an amateur, he continued gravely as a professional. Practical joking seemed to be the business of his life.

When Fred was in your company, you never could feel sure of not having a card with "Kick me," or "This style seven-and-six," either fastened to your coat-tail buttons, or pinned on somewhere out of your own sight and reach, but evident to everybody else.

In conversation with Fred, the safest position was with your back to the wall, and a full front to the enemy. He had learned sleight-of-hand, and was capable of taking a breast-pin out of the scarf of the person with whom he was talking, if the latter were only sufficiently unsuspecting to be allowed to have his gaze directed, even for a second, away from Mr. Fred's movements. In hotels, he would go round at night, and change the boots and shoes; so that Number Sixteen, first floor, would next morning find himself trying to put on the boots of Number Fifty-six, second

floor, while the owner of the latter would be ringing wildly for the "boots," to tell him that he had given him the wrong shoes, and that if he didn't have his right ones in five minutes he should miss his train. Sawdust in hats and umbrellas; strawberries on any chair where there might be a chance of a gentleman in light trousers seating himself; sewing up the lining in the arm of a dress-coat, and putting on the clock so that the unfortunate man should double his energy to tear through the difficulties; misplacing a methodical man's shirts, handkerchiefs, and boots; putting mild fireworks in cigars, — and other such amusing tricks were to Fred Kerrick merely the A B C of practical jokes.

He had originated an idea, — a school for practical joking. He issued prospectuses to all his acquaintances, with terms and lists of lectures. The notion was taken up, and Fred's "course of studies" were well attended by a certain section of young men who went in for larks, and who considered the greatest fun to consist in noisy suppers, rowdyism, and being generally wide awake.