

# YANKEE AT THE COURT OF JUDGE HALIBURTON

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MUCH OF HALIBURTON'S HUMOUR derives from his constant and skilful use of the anecdote, retailed almost always by Sam Slick, the critical and knowledgeable Connecticut clockmaker. The anecdote is bent — and often bent a long way, pleasure-bent one might say, to the ends of Haliburton's humour, and then again to the Judge's satire, and it is often masterfully ironic.

One should never despise the anecdote, because it gives a sudden glimpse, as when a flare explodes, into the past, or into character, or into manners and *mores*, such as one rarely gets in the history books or in official biographies. The same is true of the anecdotes about or of any famous man — collect them and one has a close-up of him, and his life and time, which may not necessarily be the true picture, but which will have much truth in it and that of a very human kind. One thinks, for instance, of the revelation of character in the Duke of Wellington's famous "Publish and be damned!" to a blackmailing mistress. They are also interesting in themselves. Sam Slick himself appreciated them, saying of Harriet Martineau: ". . . she seemed mighty fond of anecdotes (she wanted 'em for her book, I guess; for travels without anecdotes is like a puddin' without plums — all dough)."¹

The anecdote is defined, in the plural (*anecdota*) as being the "unpublished details of history", and more broadly as "things unpublished". This however is not quite adequate for our purposes. The anecdote ranges through seven possible definitions, from the trivial detail of biography to the barnyard joke (not always purified by Haliburton's humour) to the "tall" tale beloved of the Yankee, and all are put to use by Haliburton. Obviously then the term is fairly inclusive, and is meant to be, since the anecdote, thus loosely defined, forms much of the basis of Haliburton's humorous observations of character and life, and indeed of his whole method of, and approach to, writing.

Sam Slick, the travelling salesman, would never have held his huge public (comparable contemporaneously to that of Dickens) without the anecdotes sprinkled so liberally and seemingly haphazardly through his adventures, for the Slick books are built upon Sam's remembered experiences and he is the only unity. For instance the celebrated tale of the Elder Grab trying to pass off a toothless, thirty-year-old horse on what he thought was an ignorant French-Canadian farmer and getting a blind horse in exchange, is told by Sam Slick at Tattersall's Horse Market in London.<sup>2</sup> On the wings of the anecdote, however, we are suddenly and illogically transported from London to Acadia for the rest of the chapter and the Haliburton reader realizes it is almost always the anecdote which is important, not Tattersall's, or wherever Sam and the Squire may happen to be. If Haliburton was congenitally unable to leave a pun alone — there is, for instance, one whole, unseemly chapter of nerve-wracking punning in *The Letter Bag of the Great Western*<sup>3</sup> — he was also a connoisseur, and amateur, of the humorous anecdote, and he does much better with it; he has Sam Slick express his own point of view: "Truth is, Squire, I never could let a joke pass all my life without having a lark with it. I was fond of one ever since I was knee-high to a goose . . ." <sup>4</sup> Many of these humorous anecdotes are very skilfully worked in with both point and humour and often with delightful irony. If one feels that for the former he deserved the critical punishment he has received, one cannot accuse him of anecdotage. For sometimes he will illustrate a character, or a national character or characteristic, or criticize British, American or Nova Scotian society, or footnote a period in history, and at the same time amuse the reader with one skilfully turned, and often shockingly slanted, anecdote.

Anecdotes then have a fascination for most readers and yet surprisingly, literature, apart from certain *genres*, does not make as much use of them as one would expect. They interrupt the main flow of the narrative and they are therefore generally inartistic, an offence to the unity of the chapter in hand, or even the book. There are, of course, as always some exceptions: one thinks of Chaucer, Fielding, Sterne, the picaresque novelists especially, and biographies in general, but a scrutiny of a few great novels will show that the anecdote is a rare phenomenon because, Haliburton excluded, it takes the reader's attention off the main themes, characters and action. However there are doubtless many incidents, or ideas, or characters worked into the latter, which came to the author originally in anecdotal form. In other words, if he did not believe them to be true or even partly true when he heard them, he considers them "fictionally true" or likely — they *could* have happened — and Haliburton for one puts them in entire as

part of the lively, legal, civic, political, social background, and general Nova Scotian — U.S. folk tradition, which he knew, shaping them, sometimes brilliantly, to whatever satiric or humourous point he has in mind.

The Judge, a natural *raconteur*, knew hundreds of them; in fact he collected them, knowing how interesting they were to others like himself for the sidelights they threw on “human natur’”. (He appears typically before us, for instance, lighted up by a single anecdote when, on being told in court that one of his jurymen could not sit because of the chronic itch, he gave the judicial order: “Scratch that man!” The Judge was found guilty once again — of a pun.) He also put his beloved anecdotes, appropriately enough, in the mouth of a man who would be of all people most likely to have heard a wide and varied assortment of tales of other people’s lives — a mercurial and ubiquitous travelling salesman of loquacious and gregarious nature, who possessed a highly developed sense of the ridiculous and a critical appreciation of character and psychology, before the latter was known as such.

NOW TO CONSIDER some specific examples. One of the simplest is perhaps best illustrated by the plain anti-American anecdote. The Honourable Alden Gobble, the newly-appointed American Secretary to the Legation at the Court of St. James in London, a very wily, wide-awake Yankee diplomat, almost sharp enough to cut himself, has been suffering from “great oneasiness arter eatin’”, or “dyspepsy”, as he calls it, and he goes to the famous Dr. Abernethy of London town for a cure, only to be told that his troubles are over. The Hon. Alden Gobble is surprised: “I don’t see that ’are inference,” said Alden. “It don’t foller from what you predicate at all, . . .” “But I tell you it does foller,” said the doctor; “for in the company you’ll have to keep, you’ll have to eat like a Christian.”<sup>5</sup>

This is obviously one of the simplest ways to use the anecdote against the much-despised but much-feared, wily and aggressive Yankee republicans to the south. It is really nothing more than an anti-Yank story, but it reflects the contemporary Loyalist and British disapproval of Yankee manners as shown also by Dickens in his *American Notes*. It is not very subtle, and perhaps grossly unfair, but amusing enough if you happened to be Nova Scotian or British — both of which Haliburton was. One point worth noting is that Haliburton manages to tell the story through Sam himself. He does this by having Sam pour it out while seething

with indignation against British manners, and British disrespect for the "everlastin' republic".

Another kind of Haliburtonian anecdote concerns Sam's expedition from Slickville, Connecticut, to Italy, in search of quick, "instant" culture in the form of Italian art. The Governor of Connecticut and the local General have just come into Sam's clockmaking workshop where he is painting on his clocks angels equipped with rifles, led by one tall, distinguished angel, with a bowie knife. They are leaving Heaven to emigrate down to the United States — where conditions are better. His visitors ask what the mystic letters "AP" and "HE" stand for in the painting and are told that "AP" stands for "Airthly Paradise" and "HE" stands for "Heavenly Emigrants". The emigrating angels evidently see more future in the States, and have come fully equipped for the country. (If Haliburton had Milton in mind, they could represent a second wave, descending into Hell.) The Governor and the General then offer Sam, as an artist in his own right, the job of going to Italy and buying up some real good art, the genuine stuff, for the Slickville Art Gallery; but the Governor cautions him that, since the statues imported the year before were all stark naked, and therefore had to be clothed from head to foot before Slickville could study them, Sam must be careful in his selection of Italian masterpieces: "So none of your Potiphar's wives, or Susannahs, or sleepin' Venuses; such pictures are repugnant to the high tone of moral feelin' in this country."

Sam then tells the Squire how he put it over the Italian art dealers:

"A very good man the Governor, and a genuwine patriot too," said Mr. Slick. "He knowed a good deal about paintin' for he was a sign-painter by trade; but he often used to wade out too deep, and get over his head now and then afore he knowed it. He warn't the best o'swimmers neither, and sometimes I used to be scared to death for fear he'd go for it afore he'd touch bottom agin. Well, off I sot in a vessel to Leghorn, and I laid out there three thousand dollars in pictur's. Rum-lookin' old cocks them saints, some on 'em too, with their long beards, bald heads and hard featur's, bean't they? but I got a lot of 'em, of all sizes. I bought two Madonnas, I think they call them — beautiful little pictur's they were too; but the child's legs were so naked and ondecnt, that to please the Governor and his factory gals, I had an artist to paint trousers and a pair of lace boots on him, and they look quite genteel now. It improved 'em amazin'ly; but the best o' the joke was those Macaroni rascals, seein' me a stranger, thought to do me nicely (most infarnal cheats them dealers too — walk right into you afore you know where you be). The older a pictur' was, and the more it was blacked, so you couldn't see the figur's, the more they axed for it; and they'd talk and jabber away about their Titty-tints and Gaudio airs by the hour. "How soft we are, ain't

we?" said I. "Catch a weasel asleep, will you?" Second-hand furniture don't suit our market. We want pictur's and not things that look a plaguy sight more like the shutters of an old smoke-house than paintin's, and I hope I may be shot if I didn't get bran new ones for half the price they axed for them rusty old veterans. Our folks were well pleased with the shipment, and I ought to be too, for I made a trifle in the discount of fifteen per cent., for comin' down handsum' with the cash on the spot. Our Atheneum is worth seein' I tell you; you won't ditto it easy, I know; it's actilly a sight to be behold.<sup>6</sup>

This needs no comment, except perhaps that the satire on Slickville, Connecticut, would have applied equally well to Haliburton's countrymen in Windsor or Halifax, or in fact to Montreal in 1966, where Michelangelo's *David* had somewhat the effect of a fox in a hen-roost. One is also reminded of Samuel Butler's "Oh, God! oh, Montreal!"

After the previous anecdotes, the anti-Yankee story, and the satire on Yankee jingoism and philistinism in art, we next see Haliburton on the now threadbare theme of the almighty dollar and the consequent slave-driving of the ignorant Irish immigrant who is democratically called a gentleman — and then worked to death for a canal contract. He gives us a typically propagandistic and didactic anecdote describing what happens to Pat Lannigan, an Irish immigrant as yet imperfectly metamorphosed into a Nova Scotian, who had been tempted by the greener grass on the other side of the American-Canadian fence and had gone to the land of opportunity to make his fortune, as Pugnose, the lazy and shiftless Bluenose innkeeper, had just been talking of doing. Pat Lannigan has now returned to Nova Scotia. This story is typical of one of the main trends of Haliburton's patriotic, anti-American satire, of which the central theme might be defined: "There is no place like home — as long as you work hard. And at home they're a lot more honest."

Sam is talking about Pugnose's plan to sell his inn and go to the States, a common idea then as now. Nova Scotia, Sam opines, is fine, farming country compared to the cold, thin soil of New England. The land between Salem and Boston would "starve a flock of geese", and yet the stout and prosperous inhabitants of Salem, through hard work and thrift, have made so much money they figure they might as well buy Nova Scotia from the King, whereas the Bluenoses, rather than buckle down to work, can think of nothing but emigrating to the Land of Promise in order to live an easier life, like the ambitious Angel with the bowie knife. They had better not, says Sam, who has himself left the "Airthly Paradise" of Connecticut for Nova Scotia, where the pickings are easier, and he underlines his point with an illustrative anecdote:

I met an Irishman, one Pat Lannigan, last week, who had just returned from the States. "Why," says I, "Pat, what on airth brought you back?" "Bad luck to 'em," says Pat, "if I warn't properly bit. 'What do you get a day in Nova Scotia?' says Judge Beler to me. "Four shillings, your Lordship," says I. 'There are no lords here,' says he, 'we are all free. Well, says he, 'I'll give you as much in one day as you can airn there in two; I'll give you eight shillings'. "Long life to your Lordship," says I. So next day to it I went with a party of men a-diggin' of a piece of canal, and if it wasn't a hot day my name is not Pat Lannigan. Presently I looked up and straightened my back. Says I to a comrade of mine: "Mick," says I, "I'm very dry". With that says the overseer: 'We don't allow gentlemen to talk at their work in this country.' Faith, I soon found out for my two days' pay in one I had to do two days' work in one, and pay two weeks' board in one, and at the end of the month I found myself no better off in pocket than in Nova Scotia; while the devil a bone in my body that didn't ache with pain; and as for my nose it took to bleedin' and bled day and night entirely. "Upon my soul, Mr. Slick," said he, "the poor labourer does not last long in your country; what with new rum, hard labour, and hot weather, you'll see the graves of the Irish each side of the canals, for all the world like two rows of potatoes in a field that have forgot to come up." 7

Sam agrees that America is a land of hard work, and Pat's migration gives us an interesting, historical glimpse behind the scenes at this work. One is always amazed at the vast labours of our grandfathers without the machinery which we now accept like electric light without comment. Unknown men laboriously built the canals and railroads by the sweat of their brows and a hundred thousand horses of one-horse power each. The only slaves available were wage-slaves, who were largely Irish; they were expendable and they died, of course, in their thousands, finding the hot American summer very different from the mild summers of Ireland or Nova Scotia and, if the anecdote gives a true picture, also finding American working conditions twice as hard.

The moral of the story is obvious, as usual in Haliburton, particularly since he is here addressing an unsophisticated audience made up of many Pug noses. The New Englanders had got what they had got through hard work and initiative and the Nova Scotians could do the same, and better, if they would only bestir themselves. It is the old, sound advice but like most sound, old advice it is not very entertaining to the man who is getting it; nor was it to the frustrated workingman of Nova Scotia, thinking of emigrating to the States where the sun shone gold. What does stand out clearly, however, is the character of the simple, rather pathetic Irishman, and the glimpse of two other characters, Judge Beler, and the foreman of the American bull-gang, with its mixed bag of immigrants,

mostly no doubt Irish. The foreman, one notices, speaks as very few gang-bosses have ever spoken in this rough world; unless they were intending some ponderous sarcasm at the unfortunate labourer's expense. When Pat straightens his back and says to his comrade Mick, "I'm very dry", the overseer, the slave-driver employed by the nineteenth-century Yankee Pharoahs, cracks his whip gently, informing Pat that "gentlemen" are not allowed "to talk at their work". Pat is called a "gentleman" in the land of promise, but he is working twice as hard as he ever worked in Nova Scotia, or Ireland, making twice as much money and being charged twice as much to live. He is, moreover, helping to bury rows of his fellow-workers beside the canal as it pushes across the enormous country — so different from their small green island. And, with the pathos always underlying humour, their graves grotesquely resemble the troughs and hills of a blasted potato field.

The word "gentleman", applied to Pat Lannigan by a Yankee gang-boss, seemed more amusing to Haliburton's contemporaries than it does to us in the middle of the twentieth century, and it demonstrates what Haliburton considered the lunatic topsy-turviness of the great American social experiment. His use of such a term was a mockery of the American so-called classless society where Jack was supposed to be as good as his master and where every Jack became a gentleman and every Pat became a Jiggs, complete with top hat and cigar. He therefore satirically shows Pat finding that fine words do not make a democracy any easier on the man with the shovel. Haliburton asserts that American democracy, that would-be league of gentlemen, observing all the forms of equality between Pat and his gang-boss, and between the "gentlemen" who were working on the canal and Judge Beler, nevertheless buries great numbers of the gentry as they go along; but not the Judge Belers, and probably not many "overseers" either. Americans, he intimates, are calling each other *citoyen* in theory — *citoyen*, in spite of its connotations in that post-guillotine age, translated into English, is a favourite word of Sam Slick's — but working their less fortunate citizens to death — for the dollar — in practice. In the anecdote citizens ironically become "gentlemen", an absurd idea to Haliburton; even today, one would rather expect "Hey, you there!"

However, though the justice of the story does not much concern us, its psychological, historical, and satirical implications do. America was the second Promised Land where the streets were all paved with gold; but only the strong and fit and the unencumbered were able to pick some of it up, and button it up firmly in a hip pocket. Thousands, Haliburton warns, find early democratic graves in the

slums or beside the canals and railroads. The satire has humour, pathos, irony, and considerable truth. One notices the American judge, of which class Haliburton thought little as we shall see in the next and final anecdote, standing upon the letter of democracy ("there are no lords here") while "sweating" Pat Lannigan and his comrades into an early grave; one also notices that Judge Beler is contracting, or sub-contracting, for the building of part of the canal, instead of occupying himself exclusively and more enthusiastically with the maintenance of the laws of the great republic. The law is therefore also engaged with gusto in the pursuit of happiness and the dollar, instead of keeping a closer eye on how other citizens obtain theirs. The picture presented, heightened by such Biblical terms as "overseer", is of another land of the Pharoahs, where the slaves are paid, and by implication of course Nova Scotia is a much more civilized place to live.

**H**ALIBURTON THOUGHT very little of American courts, of their procedures or of their judges, as the following ironic anecdote shows. Sam is attending a court in Nova Scotia with the Squire, and a Yankee is on trial for theft. Sam says:

We have a great respect for the laws, Squire; we've been bred to that, and always uphold the dignity of the law. I recollect once that some of our young citizens away above Montgomery got into a flare-up with a party of boatmen that lives on the Mississippi; a desperate row it was too, and three Kentuckians were killed as dead as herrin's. Well, they were had up for it afore Judge Cotton. He was one of our revolutionary heroes, a starn hard-featured old man, quite a Cato; and he did curry 'em down with a heavy hand, you may depend — he had no marcy on 'em. There he sot with his hat on, a cigar in his mouth, his arms folded and his feet over the rail, lookin' as sour as an onripe lemon. "Bring up them culprits", said he, and when they were brought up he told 'em it was scandalous, only fit for English and ignorant foreigners that sit on the outer porch of darkness, and not highminded, intelligent Americans. "You are a disgrace," said he, "to our great nation, and I hope I shall never hear the like of it agin. If I do, I'll put you on your trial as sure as you are born; I hope I may be skinned alive by wild cats if I don't." Well, they didn't like that kind o'talk at all so that night away they goes to the judge's house, to teach him a thing or two with a cowskin, and kicked up a deuce of a row; and what do you think the neighbours did? Why, they jist walked in, seized the ring-leaders and lynched them, in less than ten minits, on one of the linden trees afore the judge's door.<sup>8</sup>

This lynching episode is couched in broad but very amusing irony which both



explains the immediate and early popularity of *The Clockmaker* and anticipates Twain's style. From the first words, where Sam proudly claims that his countrymen have a "great respect for the law", we see a caricature of what Haliburton considered the Americans' attitude to the law: no understanding of it, no dignity in its administration, no qualified men to uphold it and, when in doubt, a marked propensity to speed things up with a lynching. A Shakespearean disorder reigns supreme. (The justice of this picture once again does not concern us of course, but November 22, 1964, in Dallas, and particularly its aftermath, springs to mind. In any case that was the way Haliburton saw it. One can hear him say: "Of course . . . I told you so.")

In this anecdote several citizens are on trial for the peccadillo of killing three fellow-citizens in a brawl. There follows an exquisite picture of about as unlikely a judge as one could wish for, our Judge Cotton — "quite a Cato", in Sam's opinion. He has no legal illusions about listening to the evidence, or wasting time weighing the pros and cons of the case. "Bring up them culprits," he says, quickly knocking the law and legal ethics into a cocked hat. He is as severe in tone as we have been led to expect, though not quite a "Hanging Judge", since he is satisfied with giving them a sharp browbeating and warning them that if they do it "agin", that is, kill any more people, he will certainly put them on trial next time. Once is quite enough. He is distinctly testy about the three killings. A browbeating however, in such harsh words, offends the citizens who feel that their breach of decorum does not merit such language or such threats, and they go up that night with a "cowhide" to teach the judge what democracy means. However, as Sam points out, all's well that ends well; the dignity of the law is upheld and once again American justice prevails; order is quickly restored with the help of the linden tree "afore the judge's door."

Sam, in the first anecdote, discounts the killings, he is impressed by the appearance of the judge, he appreciates the firm way the judge tells them to stop it; in fact he feels that perhaps the judge was a *little* hard on them, and that the lynching settled everything nicely and demonstrated the law-abiding qualities of his fellow-countrymen. It was, in fact in Sam's own phrase, "a caution to sinners", and oddly enough such a point of view is not absolutely incredible. In a small country town where education was lacking and passions were apt to run high, about not very much, a home-spun judge might perhaps be unwilling to make much fuss about mere outsiders (Kentuckians) who got themselves killed in a routine Saturday-night brawl. After all it was not murder, but only manslaughter multiplied by three, and hanging was not the punishment for fighting, even with

bowie knives. There are all the elements of farce in the anecdote, although it is close to tragic farce.

Haliburton, as a judge in his civilized and peaceful colony, is comparing the British or Nova Scotian legal system with what he considers an adolescent and violent system of punishing the wrong-doer. Much of his comedy stems from a comparison between the two societies, the one basically conservative, the other revolutionary, and Haliburton, being a humourist, was perhaps doubly a conservative, as conversely, revolutionaries, taking themselves with the utmost seriousness, are unhumorous. There was a long tradition of swift and sometimes rough justice in the United States, which was founded on necessity where there was no machinery to enforce ordinary law. People pushed on ahead of the law, and if one of them stole a horse and got caught, he might well end up inside a noose, which to Haliburton, from the comparative peace of Nova Scotia, was a travesty of the law.

Haliburton ingeniously interweaves and contrasts two anecdotes to demonstrate how much better was the British, or Nova Scotian, court procedure than Judge Cotton's tradition. The second about the Yankee thief, Expected Thorne, is also of course recounted by Sam, and Sam's observations on the two legal procedures point up the contrast ironically. Haliburton says a great deal with the careful juxtaposition and interweaving of the two incidents.

Sam tells the Squire how an "almighty, cantin' rogue" and a countryman of his, Expected Thorne, is arrested for stealing a watch in Annapolis, Nova Scotia, from one Captain Billy Slocum. The court does not at all come up to Sam's democratic ideas of a court. There is far too much dignity, far too much ceremony, and altogether too much respect is shown for the judge; the lawyers are all got up in black gowns with white bands, and when the Sheriff calls for order, instead of the familiar, gradual, democratic subsidence of noise, all is suddenly "still as moonlight." This is altogether too much pandering to authority for Sam and it is just not "free-and-equal" enough. It strikes Sam as very formal and rather mediaeval; like the black and white bands:

Them sort of liveries may do in Europe, but they don't convene to our free and enlightened citizens. It's too foreign for us, too unphilosophical, too feudal, and a remnant o' the dark ages. No sir; our lawyers do as they like. Some on 'em dress in black, and some white; some carry walkin' sticks, and some umbrellas, some whittle sticks with pen-knives, and some shave the table, and some put their legs under the desks and some put 'em a-top of them, jist as it suits them. They sit as they please, dress as they please, and talk as they please; we are a free people.<sup>10</sup>

Haliburton uses irony to deal with such democratic obnoxiousness. His dual nature, his two characters which come out constantly in the Judge and Squire on the one hand and Sam on the other, and his two sympathies for the New World and for the traditional British Old World, merged into one when it came to the Law. The Law was sacrosanct and British Law was the best law, even if the guilty man walked away whistling.

Expected Thorne is brought before the Nova Scotian judge and Sam notices that the wily Expected (anyone familiar with Haliburton will note the “dis-senting” name) has dressed for the role:

He had his hair combed down as straight as a horse’s mane; a little thin white cravat, nicely plaited and tied plain, garnished his neck, as a white towel does a dish of calve’s [*sic*] head; a standin’-up collar to his coat gave it the true cut, and the gilt buttons covered with cloth eschewed the gaudy ornaments of sinful, carnal man. He looked as demure as a harlot at a christenin’ — drew down the corners of his mouth, so as to contract the trumpet of his nose and give the right bass twang to the voice, and turned up the whites of his eyes, as if they had been in the habit of lookin’ in upon the inner man for self-examination and reproach. O, he looked like a martyr; jist like a man who would suffer death for conscience sake, and forgive his inemies with his dyin’ breath.<sup>11</sup>

The judge finds insufficient evidence to convict, though Sam saw immediately that his compatriot was guilty, and on his acquittal Expected boasts to Sam how he pulled the wool over the eyes of the “onsarcumcised colonials”, little realizing that his countryman was deeply shocked at any free-and-enlightened citizen of the univarsal everlastin’ United States descending to stealing when there were so many other ways of getting Slocum’s watch, if he felt he really needed it. Sam Slick’s comments ironically underline the theme which Haliburton uses the two anecdotes, in skilful combination and contrast, to demonstrate — that there is very little regard for or understanding of law and order south of the border, compared with the dignified and scrupulously just procedure of the Nova Scotian courts where insufficient evidence is enough to free a criminal on the principle that it is better that ten guilty men go free than that one innocent man be hanged. Haliburton’s double sympathies for the New World and the Old, in other words roughly for Sam’s viewpoint and the Squire’s, are clearly single here.

Sam however does reprimand Expected Thorne, underlining the irony:

... they ain’t such an enlightened people as we are, that’s sartin, but that don’t justify you a bit; you hadn’t ought to have stolen that watch. That was wrong, very wrong indeed. You might have traded with him, and got it for half nothin’;

or bought it and failed, as some of our importin' marchants sow up the soft-horned British; or swapped it and forgot to give the exchange, or bought it and give your note, and cut stick afore the note became due. There's a thousand ways of doin' it honestly and legally, without resortin', as foreigners do, to stealin'. We are a moral people; a religious, a high-minded, and a high-spirited people; and can do any and all the nations of the univarsal world out of anything, in the hundreds of millions of clever shifts there are in trade.<sup>12</sup>

The anti-American irony is adroit, even though the final code of conduct with which Sam chides Expected Thorne becomes pure farce.

Both of these anecdotes demonstrate character. Sam Slick's character is clear, of course, with every word he says and every tale he tells, as is the Squire's; but clear also is that "onripe lemon", Judge Cotton, and the free-and-easy democratic characters of the judge's law-abiding, local supporters who irritably lynch those citizens whom the judge had injudiciously failed to hang, thus setting everything right again. One sees as well the character of Expected Thorne, and the impartial, anonymous and dignified character of the Nova Scotian Judge and court who did not find evidence enough to convict. The anecdotes also underline the contrasting situations: in the American scene, three deaths, an undisciplined law court, an illegal acquittal, followed by a well-meant, neighbourly lynching; in the Nova Scotian court a stolen watch, a dignified court, an ultra-legal acquittal, followed by the admission of guilt by the thief. Haliburton gets a great deal into an anecdote.

Never in fact has a writer used the anecdote more creatively — or more destructively.

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> T. C. Haliburton, *Sam Slick, the Clockmaker* (Toronto: The Musson Book Company, 1918), p. 170.
- <sup>2</sup> T. C. Haliburton, *The Attaché* (New York: Stringer and Townsend, 1850), pp. 162-75.
- <sup>3</sup> T. C. Haliburton, *The Letter Bag* (New York: William Collyer, 1840), pp. 37-41.
- <sup>4</sup> Haliburton, *The Attaché*, p. 128.
- <sup>5</sup> Haliburton, *Sam Slick*, pp. 23-24.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 191-192.
- <sup>9</sup> Mody C. Boatright, *Folk Laughter on the American Frontier* (New York: Collier Books, 1961), p. 125.
- <sup>10</sup> Haliburton, *Sam Slick*, p. 193.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.