

THE THREE BOHEMIAN ONES

by W. S. Gilbert

A worthy man in every way
Was Mister Jasper Porklebay;
He was a merchant of renown
(The firm was Porklebay and Brown).

Three sons he had, and only three,
But they were bad as bad could be;
They spurned their father's righteous ways,
And went to races, balls, and plays.

On Sundays they would laugh and joke,
I've heard them bet, I've known them smoke.
At whist they'd sometimes take a hand;
These vices Jasper couldn't stand.

At length the eldest son, called Dan,
Became a stock tragedian,
And earned his bread by ranting through
Shakespearean parts, as others do.

The second (Donald) would insist
On starting as a journalist,
And wrote amusing tales and scenes
In all the monthly magazines.

The youngest (Singleton his name)
A comic artist he became,
And made an income fairly good
By drawing funny heads on wood.



And as they trod these fearful ways
(These three misguided Porklebays)
They drew not on their father's hoard—
For Jasper threw them overboard.

Yes—Jasper, grieving at their fall,
Renounced them one, renounced them all.
And lived alone, so good and wise,
At Zion Villa, Clapham Rise.



By dint of work and skilful plan
Old Jasper grew a wealthy man;
And people said, in slangy form,
That Jasper P. would “cut up warm.”

He had no relative at all
On whom his property could fall,
Except, of course, his wicked sons,
Those three depraved Bohemian ones.

So he determined he would fain
Bequeath his wealth (despite mortmain),
Freeholds, debenture, stock and all,
To some deserving hospital.

When his intent was known abroad,
Excitement reigned in every ward,
And with the well-experienced throng
Of operators all went wrong.

St. George's, Charing Cross, and Guy's,
And little Westminster likewise,
Bartholomew's and Middlesex,
Combined old Jasper to perplex.

House surgeons, spite of patients' hints,
Bound headaches up in fracture splints;
In measles, strapped the spots that come,
With strips of plain diachylum.

Rare leeches, skilled at fever beds,
For toothache shaved their patients' heads;
And always cut their fingers off
If they complained of whooping cough.

Their zeal grew greater day by day,
And each did all that in him lay
To prove his own pet hospital
The most deserving of them all.

Though Jasper P. could not but feel
Delighted at this show of zeal,
When each in zeal exceeds the rest,
One can't determine which is best.

Interea, his reckless boys
Indulged in low Bohemian joys:
They sometimes smoked till all was blue,
And danced at evening parties too.

The hospitals, conflicting sore,
Perplexed poor Jasper more and more.
But, ah! ere Jasper could decide,
Poor charitable man, he died.



And Donald, Singleton, and Dan
Now roll in wealth, despite his plan:
So Donald, Dan, and Singleton,
By dint of accident have won.

Vice triumphs here; but, if you please,
It's by exceptions such as these
(From probability removed)
That every standing rule is proved.

By strange exceptions Virtue deigns
To prove how paramount she reigns;
A standing rule I do not know,
That's been more oft established so.