



SIR CONRAD AND THE RUSTY ONE

by W. S. Gilbert

A knight for doughty doings rife,
With falchion, lance, or bill,
Was fair Sir Conrad Talbotype,
Of Talbotypetonneville.

His parents he had never known
(The sting of many a taunt);
He had one relative alone—
A sweet, dyspeptic aunt.

A time must come when loving hearts
Must part awhile—and lo!
Sir Conrad into foreign parts
As errant-knight must go!

Some name to which he might be true
He sought for near and far,
But with the maidens whom he knew
He was not popular.

Men jeered the knight who ne'er had been
With love of maiden blessed,
Till, mad with disappointment keen,
His aunt he thus addressed:

“No longer shall such chaff inane
Against my head be hurled;
If you’ll allow me, I’ll maintain
Your charms against the world!

“All knights shall at thine honoured name
In fealty bend the knee—
From every errant I will claim
His homage, aunt, for thee!”

A tear stood in her widow’d eye,
And thus outspoke the dame—
“Oh, don’t you think you’d better try
Some younger lady’s name ?

“For folks would chuckle if they should
Discover I’m your aunt.”

“I would,” said Conrad, “if I could,
But then, you see, I can’t.”

“Then go, my boy, with dauntless eye,
My peerlessness maintain;
Make this your dreaded battle-cry,
‘King Harry and Aunt Jane!’ “

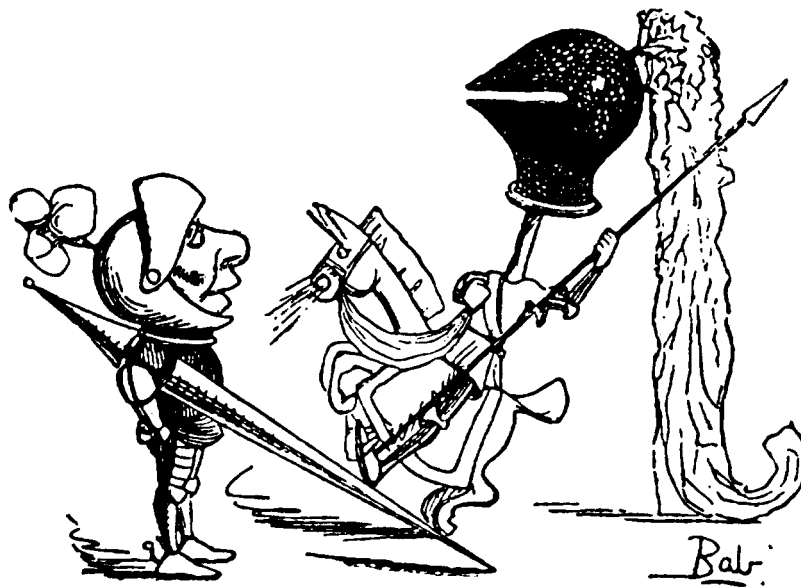
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“Ho! stand, Sir Knight, if thou be brave,
And try thy might with mine,
Unless you wish this trusty glaive
To cleave thee to the chine!”

So spake Sir Conrad as he thrust
His lance in gallant mode—
Towards a knight in suit of rust,
Who passed him on the road.

The knight at words so boldly shaped,
Stopped short and turned him round,
Then humbly touched his brow, and scraped
His toot upon the ground.

“Ha!” quoth Sir Conrad, “malpert!
Dost think with threats to brave
Sir Conrad’s wrath, thou thing of dirt—
Thou braggadocio knave ?



“Sir Conrad thus you may not daunt,
Or make him hold his rein—
Come—swear you never knew an aunt
So fair as my Aunt Jane!”

“Fair sir,” the Rusty One replied,
“Indeed, I do not think
I ever knew but one—who died,
And all along of drink.”

“Then own, thou braggart, by thy star,”
Sir Talbotype replied,
“That my Aunt Jane is fairer far
Than she who lately died !”

The knight rejoined, “Oh, do not cut—
Forbear, my Lord, to strike!
I have not seen the lady, but
I think it’s very like.

“To that belief—I own it free—
I solemnly incline—
No aunt of yours could ever be
So great a beast as mine.

“She figured in police reports
Along of ‘heavy wet,’
And was be-known at all the courts
As ‘Coxybogy Bet!’“

“Then sign this paper,” Conrad said,
“Or there I’ll stretch thee stark !“
The Rusty One inclined his head
And made his knightly mark.

“Beshrew me! here’s a dullard wight,
Gramercy, halidame!
Thou call’st thyself an errant knight,
And canst not sign thy name!”

“A knight ?“ exclaimed the Rusty one;
“Lor bless your honour, no!
I’m only hired to set of sun
To join the Lord Mayor’s Show!”



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Sir Conrad hied him home again
As quickly as he could,
Right-welcomed by his kind Aunt Jane
And all the neighborhood.

He told them how in foreign land
He fought that rusty buck;
And though the maidens scorn his hand,
They do not doubt his pluck.