

# RIP VAN WINKLE





# RIP VAN WINKLE

by  
WASHINGTON IRVING



ILLUSTRATED  
by  
EVERETT SHINN

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# FOREWORD



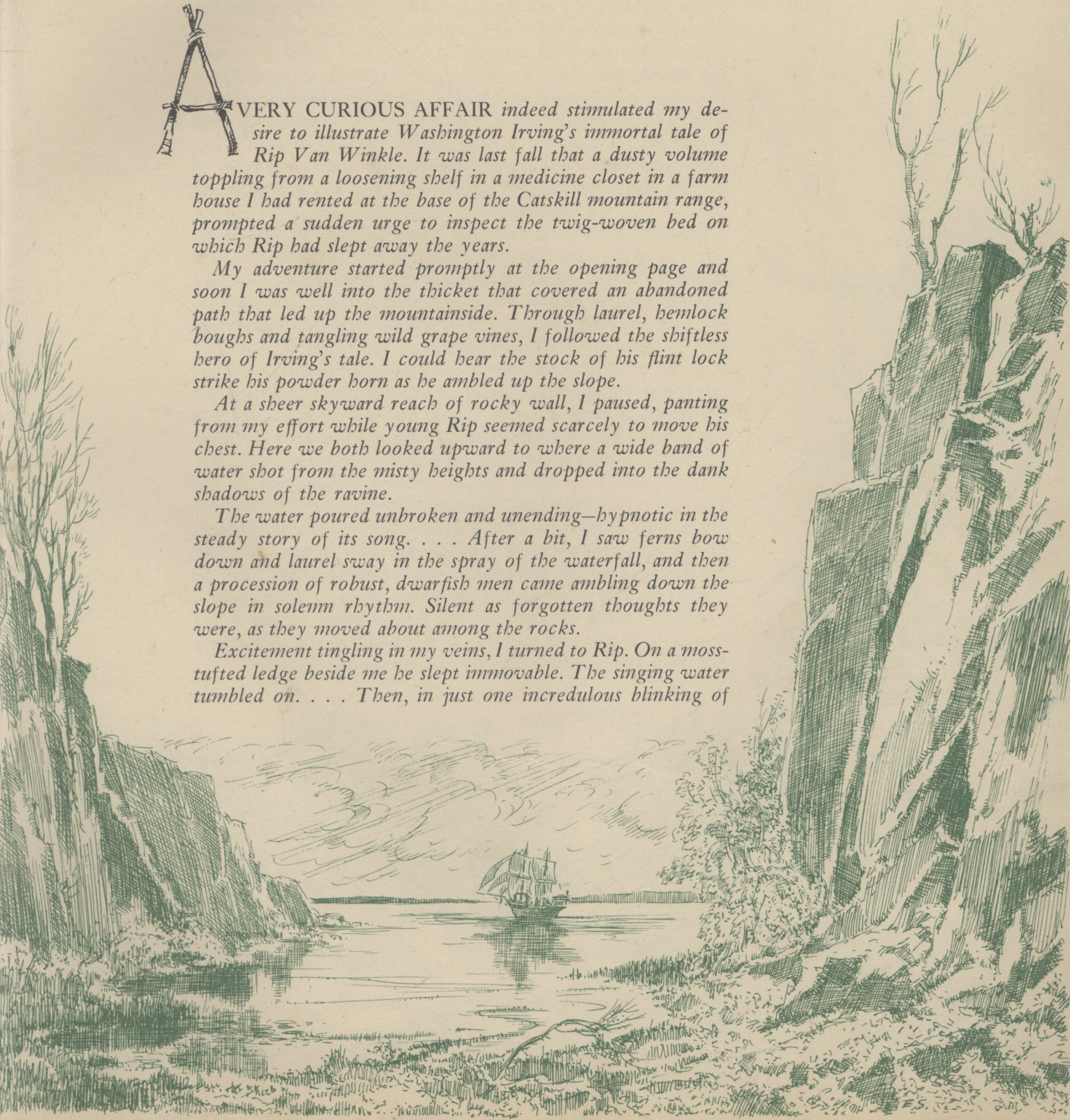
VERY CURIOUS AFFAIR indeed stimulated my desire to illustrate Washington Irving's immortal tale of *Rip Van Winkle*. It was last fall that a dusty volume toppling from a loosening shelf in a medicine closet in a farm house I had rented at the base of the Catskill mountain range, prompted a sudden urge to inspect the twig-woven bed on which Rip had slept away the years.

My adventure started promptly at the opening page and soon I was well into the thicket that covered an abandoned path that led up the mountainside. Through laurel, hemlock boughs and tangling wild grape vines, I followed the shiftless hero of Irving's tale. I could hear the stock of his flint lock strike his powder horn as he ambled up the slope.

At a sheer skyward reach of rocky wall, I paused, panting from my effort while young Rip seemed scarcely to move his chest. Here we both looked upward to where a wide band of water shot from the misty heights and dropped into the dank shadows of the ravine.

The water poured unbroken and unending—hypnotic in the steady story of its song. . . . After a bit, I saw ferns bow down and laurel sway in the spray of the waterfall, and then a procession of robust, dwarfish men came ambling down the slope in solemn rhythm. Silent as forgotten thoughts they were, as they moved about among the rocks.

Excitement tingling in my veins, I turned to Rip. On a moss-tufted ledge beside me he slept immovable. The singing water tumbled on. . . . Then, in just one incredulous blinking of





## RIP VAN WINKLE

my eyes, the span of twenty years fled by, and where the youthful Rip had slumbered there stretched the ragged framework of that carefree youth who had sought refuge in a quiet wood from the broomstick of his wife.

His drowsiness had dropped him down upon tiny saplings; now towering hemlocks black-roofed the sky above him. By his side his gun-stock had rotted: the leather thong that held his powder horn lay pulverized in the frayed threads of his coat. His sleeves were open at the seams and his shoe soles hung down like parched and gaping mouths. His beard spread out like a white mist, its fringed ends settling at his belt. . . .

It was not the wind that ruffled the matted beard or relaxed the wrinkles at the old man's eyes. I saw the ragged figure move and rise. I heard the creak of his joints while his gnarled fingers dug into his bewildered eyes. A cracked voice rattled up through the dusty passage of his throat: "Wolf, Wolf, where are you?" No barking answer came, only the echo of his cry. Frightened, with despairing eyes, the old man felt his way into the thicket.

Close on his heels I followed. Partly down the mountain-side, he paused at the crumbling, stone foundation of a mountain cabin. Again he called for his dog. Then, shielding his eyes with a palsied hand he peered across the threshold. No light—no sound within. Dismayed, in terror, old Rip turned and was lost in the black shadows of the forest.

A distant roll of thunder marked his disappearance. I hesitated as a more ponderous boom sounded at the summit of the range. It came quickly. It was like a thousand carts that had labored up the opposite side to break loose over the summit and pour in a splintering crash down the ravine. The first drops of rain, the size of copper pennies, fell and stained the door-stone on which I sat. The tree-tops writhed in the mounting wind. A strange light played upon the scene. Stumps turned into nine pins and toppled over in a barrage of shiny red balls. Dwarfish faces leered out of rain-lashed ferns. In plain, cold fear I ran myself breathless through the woods.

That evening I talked to the farmer from whom I had rented my house and told him of my climb to the spot where Rip Van Winkle had slept for twenty years.





## RIP VAN WINKLE

My landlord's eyes widened, his lips twitched, then held steady by the pressure of his teeth. "So ye found it?" he asked huskily.

"Yes, the very spot, I'm sure of that," I said. But a glance at my landlord's face gave me pause. I decided to omit all mention of Rip himself. So substantial a thing as the ruins of a mountain cabin, however, seemed rational enough, so I told him of the tumbling stone remains.

"Found that too, did ye?" the strained expression easing somewhat.

"Yes, I got caught in a thunderstorm up there. No shelter, just sat on the stones."

Suddenly my landlord moved back into the shadows of the wagon shed. His voice, breathless in astonishment, was scarcely audible. "Thunderstorm! Ye mean a thunderstorm today?"

"Why, yes—late this afternoon."

"There ain't been no thunderstorm today. Not a drop fer a week past, and ye ain't been here that long!"

I felt my clothes still soggy with the rain.

"Must have fell in the brook . . . and dreamt about that thunderstorm."

"Did I dream about the cabin?" I asked.

"No, that's there, sure enough. They say 'twas built by a man named Van Winkle."

"Rip Van Winkle!" I cried.

"Say—" anxiety returned to my landlord's face; "Ye don't take no stock in that book, do ye? Little dwarfs playin' nine pins and all that folderol, and Rip sleepin' twenty years?"

"Every word of it," I replied warmly.

My landlord's body seemed straightway to shrink. His hand felt for the wooden latch in the cow stall door. Slowly, the aperture behind his back widened. Then, with a quick step, he passed inside. I heard a metal hook fall into place, the door tried, then a muffled voice, "Milkin' time. Good night!"

. . . I went home and started work on my illustrations.

EVERETT SHINN

April, 1939.

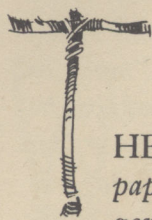








# INTRODUCTION



THE FOLLOWING TALE was found among the papers of the late Diedrich Knickerbocker, an old gentleman of New York, who was very curious in the Dutch history of the province, and the manners of the descendants from its primitive settlers. His historical researches, however, did not lie so much among books as among men; for the former are lamentably scanty on his favorite topics; whereas he found the old burghers, and still more their wives, rich in that legendary lore so invaluable to true history. Whenever, therefore, he happened upon a genuine Dutch family, snugly shut up in its low-roofed farmhouse, under a spreading sycamore, he looked upon it as a little clasped volume of black-letter, and studied it with the zeal of a bookworm.

The result of all these researches was a history of the province during the reign of the Dutch governors, which he published some years since. There have been various opinions as to the literary character of his work, and, to tell the truth, it is not a whit better than it should be. Its chief merit is its scrupulous accuracy, which indeed was a little questioned on its first appearance, but has since been completely established; and it is now admitted into all his-

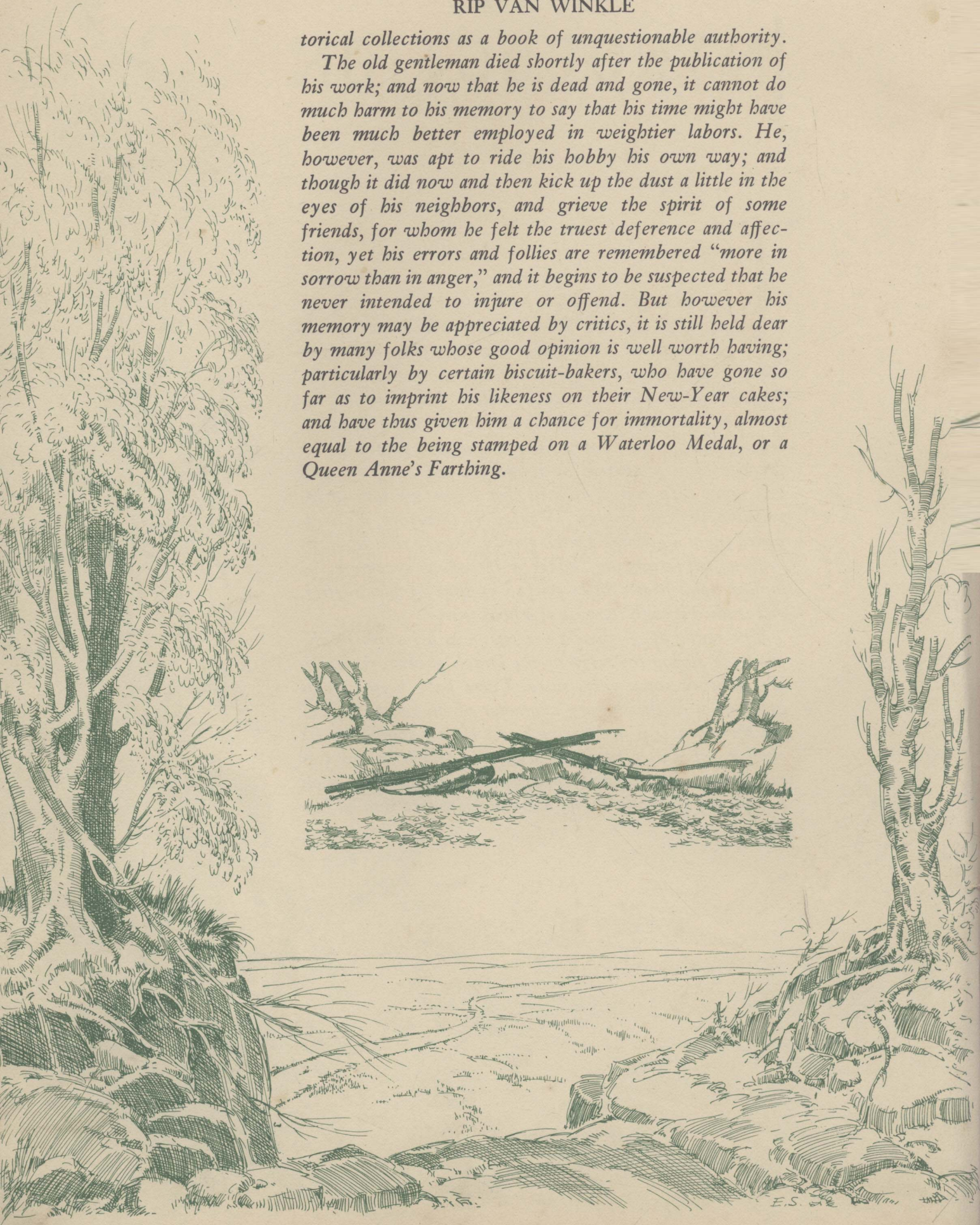




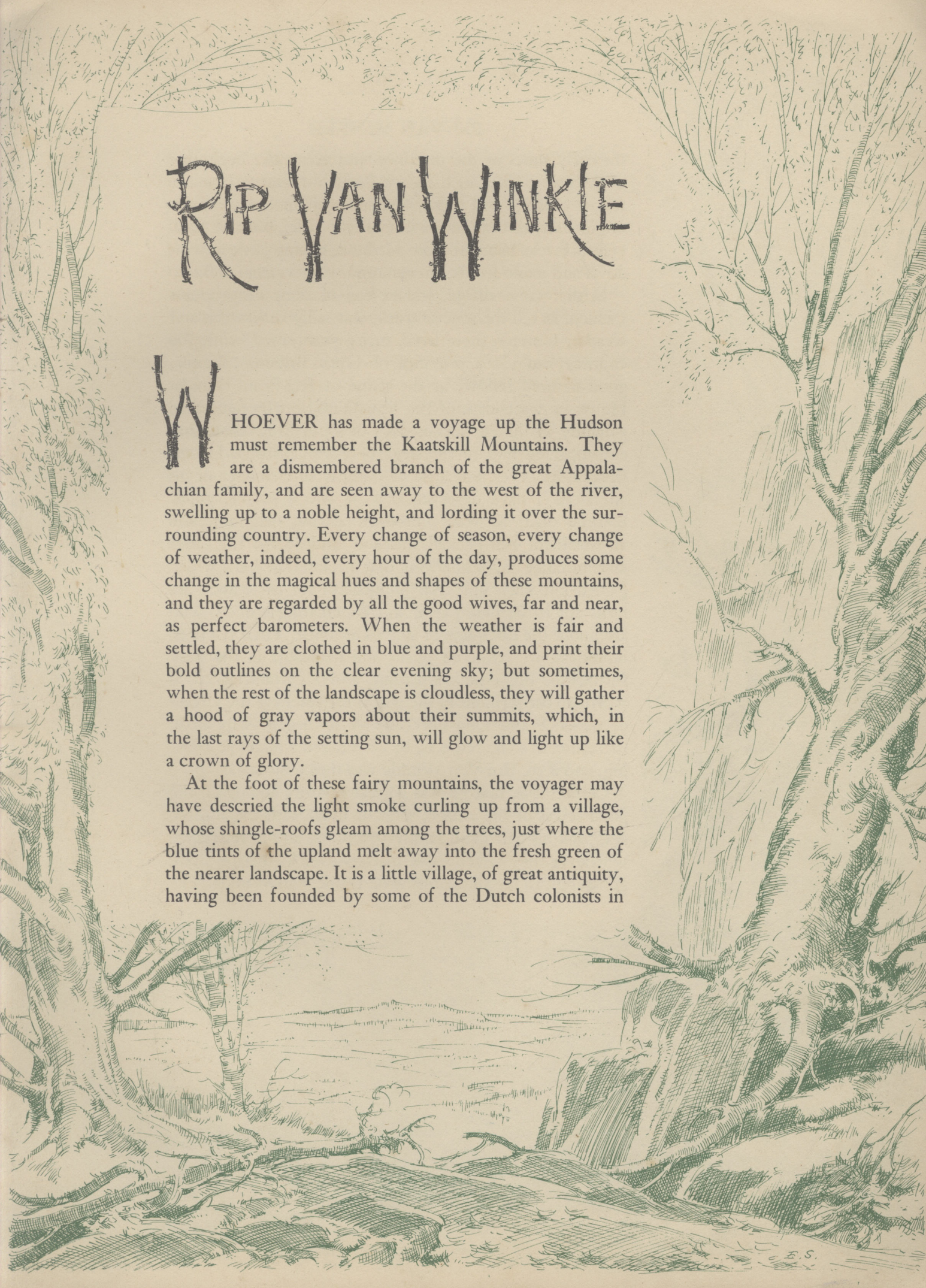
## RIP VAN WINKLE

torical collections as a book of unquestionable authority.

The old gentleman died shortly after the publication of his work; and now that he is dead and gone, it cannot do much harm to his memory to say that his time might have been much better employed in weightier labors. He, however, was apt to ride his hobby his own way; and though it did now and then kick up the dust a little in the eyes of his neighbors, and grieve the spirit of some friends, for whom he felt the truest deference and affection, yet his errors and follies are remembered "more in sorrow than in anger," and it begins to be suspected that he never intended to injure or offend. But however his memory may be appreciated by critics, it is still held dear by many folks whose good opinion is well worth having; particularly by certain biscuit-bakers, who have gone so far as to imprint his likeness on their New-Year cakes; and have thus given him a chance for immortality, almost equal to the being stamped on a Waterloo Medal, or a Queen Anne's Farthing.







# RIP VAN WINKLE

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HOEVER has made a voyage up the Hudson must remember the Kaatskill Mountains. They are a dismembered branch of the great Appalachian family, and are seen away to the west of the river, swelling up to a noble height, and lording it over the surrounding country. Every change of season, every change of weather, indeed, every hour of the day, produces some change in the magical hues and shapes of these mountains, and they are regarded by all the good wives, far and near, as perfect barometers. When the weather is fair and settled, they are clothed in blue and purple, and print their bold outlines on the clear evening sky; but sometimes, when the rest of the landscape is cloudless, they will gather a hood of gray vapors about their summits, which, in the last rays of the setting sun, will glow and light up like a crown of glory.

At the foot of these fairy mountains, the voyager may have descried the light smoke curling up from a village, whose shingle-roofs gleam among the trees, just where the blue tints of the upland melt away into the fresh green of the nearer landscape. It is a little village, of great antiquity, having been founded by some of the Dutch colonists in

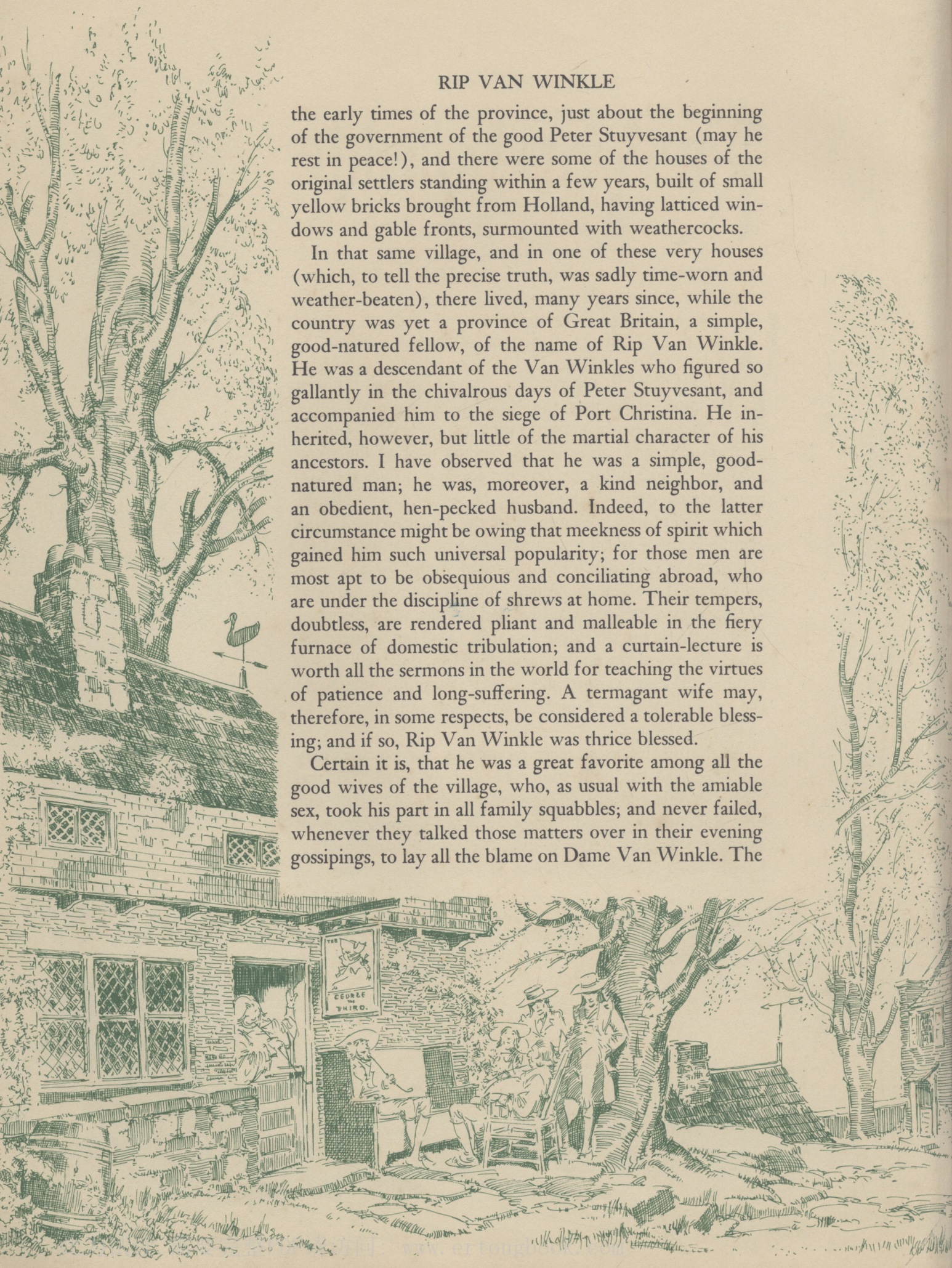


## RIP VAN WINKLE

the early times of the province, just about the beginning of the government of the good Peter Stuyvesant (may he rest in peace!), and there were some of the houses of the original settlers standing within a few years, built of small yellow bricks brought from Holland, having latticed windows and gable fronts, surmounted with weathercocks.

In that same village, and in one of these very houses (which, to tell the precise truth, was sadly time-worn and weather-beaten), there lived, many years since, while the country was yet a province of Great Britain, a simple, good-natured fellow, of the name of Rip Van Winkle. He was a descendant of the Van Winkles who figured so gallantly in the chivalrous days of Peter Stuyvesant, and accompanied him to the siege of Port Christina. He inherited, however, but little of the martial character of his ancestors. I have observed that he was a simple, good-natured man; he was, moreover, a kind neighbor, and an obedient, hen-pecked husband. Indeed, to the latter circumstance might be owing that meekness of spirit which gained him such universal popularity; for those men are most apt to be obsequious and conciliating abroad, who are under the discipline of shrews at home. Their tempers, doubtless, are rendered pliant and malleable in the fiery furnace of domestic tribulation; and a curtain-lecture is worth all the sermons in the world for teaching the virtues of patience and long-suffering. A termagant wife may, therefore, in some respects, be considered a tolerable blessing; and if so, Rip Van Winkle was thrice blessed.

Certain it is, that he was a great favorite among all the good wives of the village, who, as usual with the amiable sex, took his part in all family squabbles; and never failed, whenever they talked those matters over in their evening gossipings, to lay all the blame on Dame Van Winkle. The



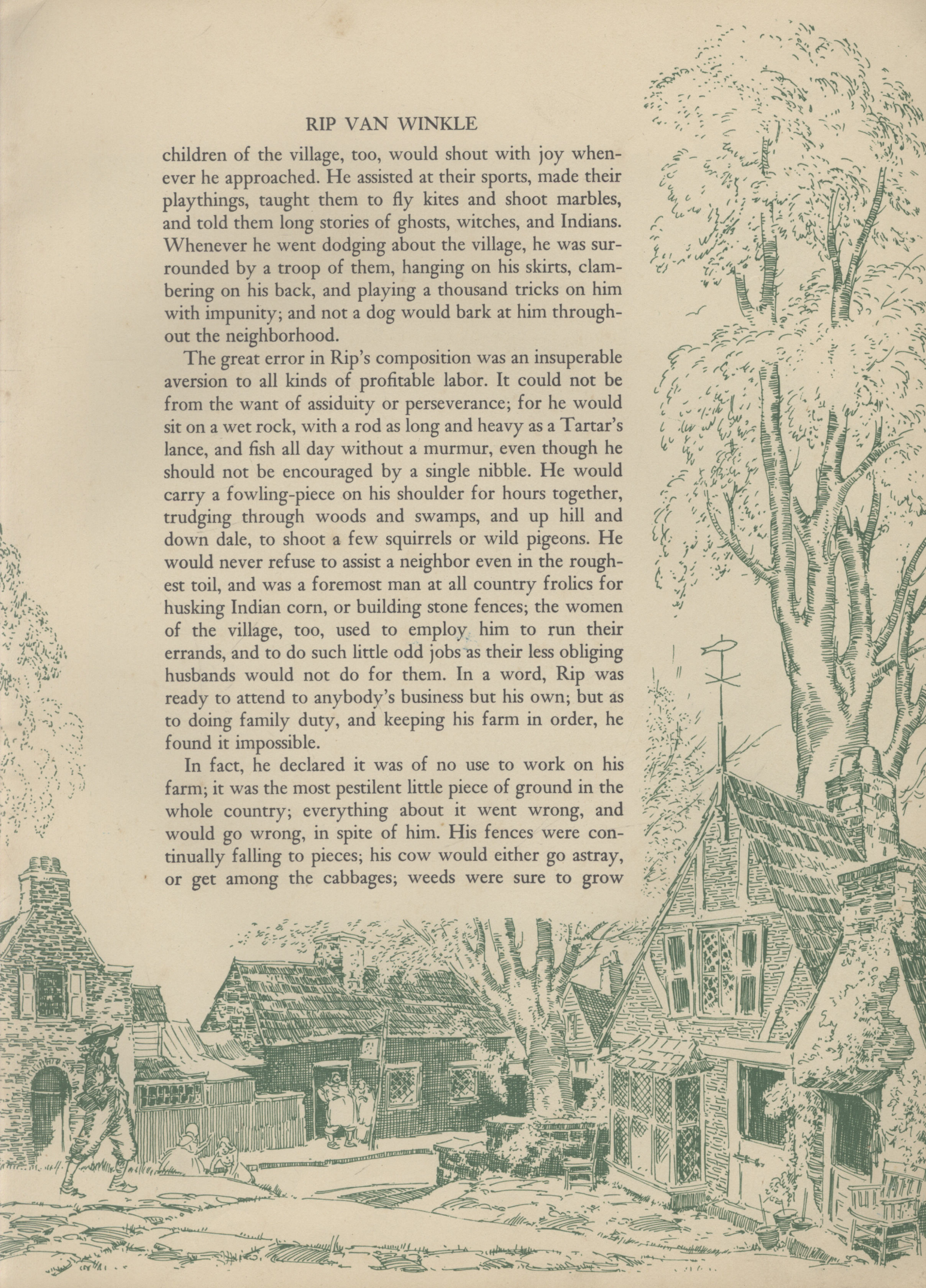


## RIP VAN WINKLE

children of the village, too, would shout with joy whenever he approached. He assisted at their sports, made their playthings, taught them to fly kites and shoot marbles, and told them long stories of ghosts, witches, and Indians. Whenever he went dodging about the village, he was surrounded by a troop of them, hanging on his skirts, clambering on his back, and playing a thousand tricks on him with impunity; and not a dog would bark at him throughout the neighborhood.

The great error in Rip's composition was an insuperable aversion to all kinds of profitable labor. It could not be from the want of assiduity or perseverance; for he would sit on a wet rock, with a rod as long and heavy as a Tartar's lance, and fish all day without a murmur, even though he should not be encouraged by a single nibble. He would carry a fowling-piece on his shoulder for hours together, trudging through woods and swamps, and up hill and down dale, to shoot a few squirrels or wild pigeons. He would never refuse to assist a neighbor even in the roughest toil, and was a foremost man at all country frolics for husking Indian corn, or building stone fences; the women of the village, too, used to employ him to run their errands, and to do such little odd jobs as their less obliging husbands would not do for them. In a word, Rip was ready to attend to anybody's business but his own; but as to doing family duty, and keeping his farm in order, he found it impossible.

In fact, he declared it was of no use to work on his farm; it was the most pestilent little piece of ground in the whole country; everything about it went wrong, and would go wrong, in spite of him. His fences were continually falling to pieces; his cow would either go astray, or get among the cabbages; weeds were sure to grow



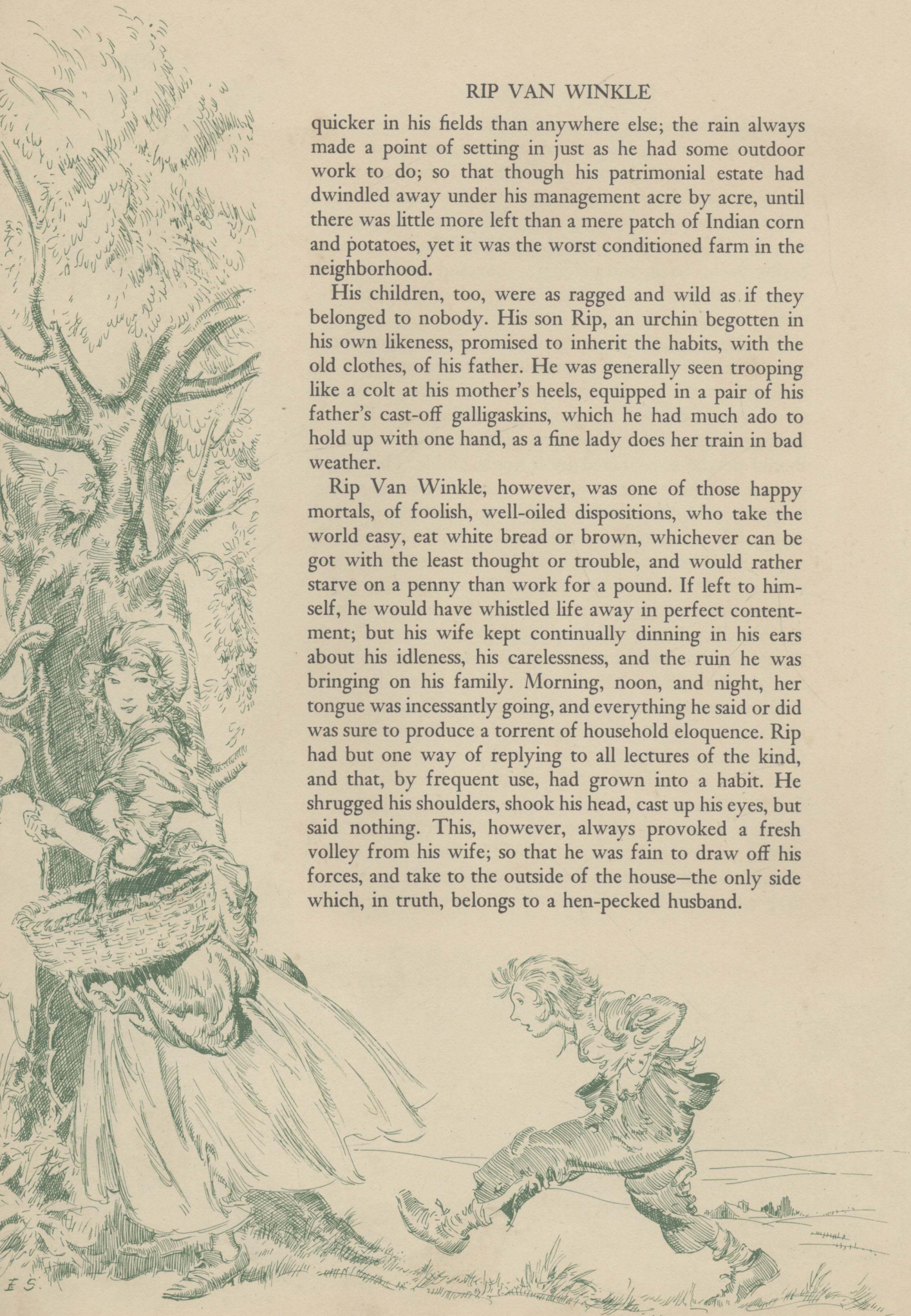


## RIP VAN WINKLE

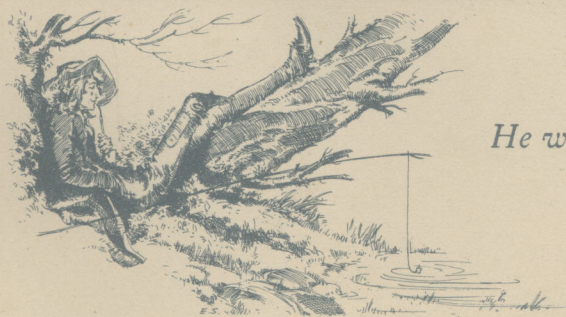
quicker in his fields than anywhere else; the rain always made a point of setting in just as he had some outdoor work to do; so that though his patrimonial estate had dwindled away under his management acre by acre, until there was little more left than a mere patch of Indian corn and potatoes, yet it was the worst conditioned farm in the neighborhood.

His children, too, were as ragged and wild as if they belonged to nobody. His son Rip, an urchin begotten in his own likeness, promised to inherit the habits, with the old clothes, of his father. He was generally seen trooping like a colt at his mother's heels, equipped in a pair of his father's cast-off galligaskins, which he had much ado to hold up with one hand, as a fine lady does her train in bad weather.

Rip Van Winkle, however, was one of those happy mortals, of foolish, well-oiled dispositions, who take the world easy, eat white bread or brown, whichever can be got with the least thought or trouble, and would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound. If left to himself, he would have whistled life away in perfect contentment; but his wife kept continually dinning in his ears about his idleness, his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing on his family. Morning, noon, and night, her tongue was incessantly going, and everything he said or did was sure to produce a torrent of household eloquence. Rip had but one way of replying to all lectures of the kind, and that, by frequent use, had grown into a habit. He shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, cast up his eyes, but said nothing. This, however, always provoked a fresh volley from his wife; so that he was fain to draw off his forces, and take to the outside of the house—the only side which, in truth, belongs to a hen-pecked husband.







*He was fain to draw off his forces, and take to the  
outside of the house.*



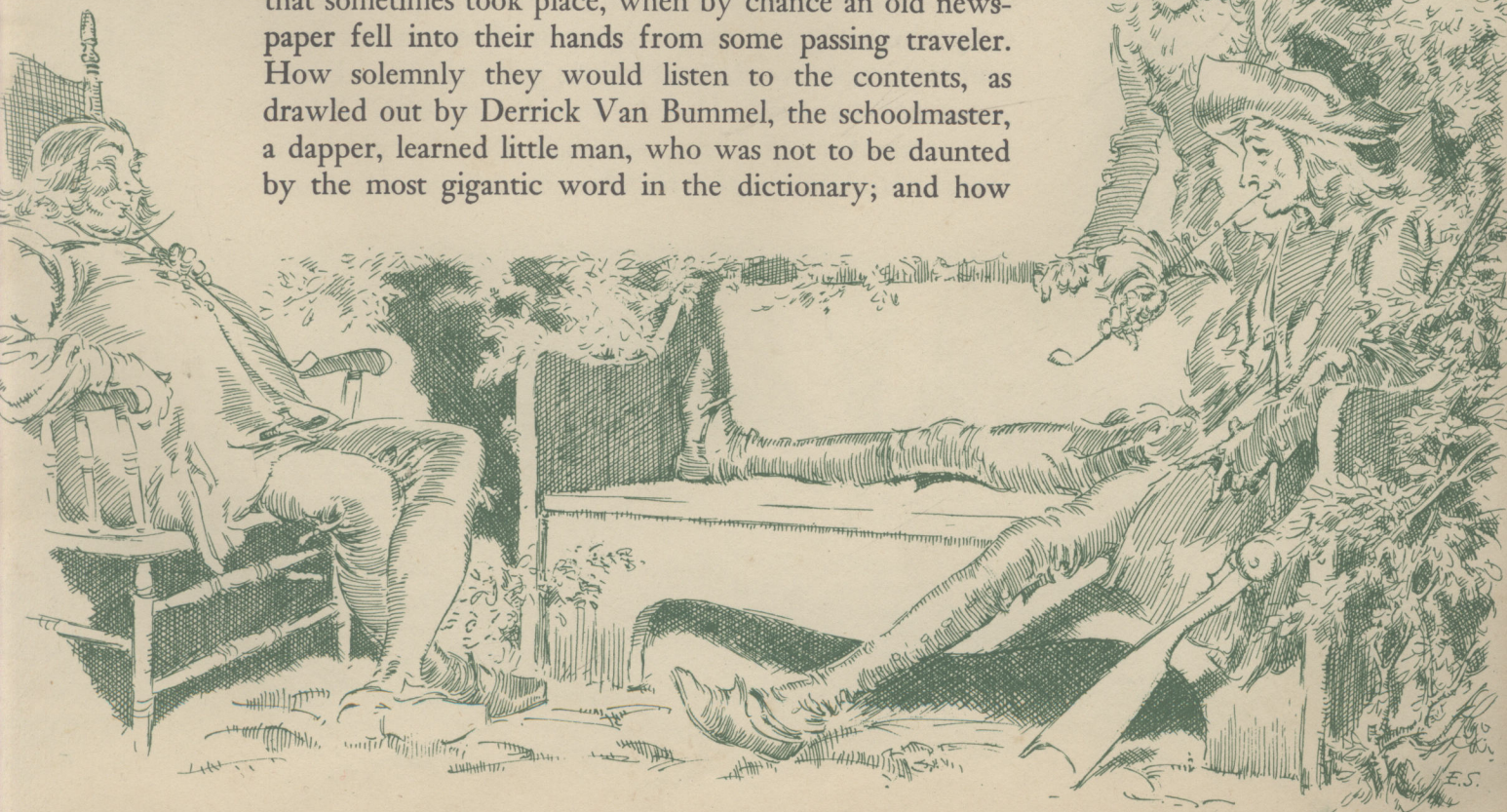




## RIP VAN WINKLE

Rip's sole domestic adherent was his dog Wolf, who was as much hen-pecked as his master; for Dame Van Winkle regarded them as companions in idleness, and even looked upon Wolf with an evil eye, as the cause of his master's going so often astray. True it is, in all points of spirit befitting an honorable dog, he was as courageous an animal as ever scoured the woods; but what courage can withstand the ever-during and all-besetting terrors of a woman's tongue? The moment Wolf entered the house his crest fell, his tail drooped to the ground, or curled between his legs, he sneaked about with a gallows air, casting many a sidelong glance at Dame Van Winkle, and at the least flourish of a broomstick or ladle he would fly to the door with yelping precipitation.

Times grew worse and worse with Rip Van Winkle as years of matrimony rolled on; a tart temper never mellows with age, and a sharp tongue is the only edged tool that grows keener with constant use. For a long while he used to console himself, when driven from home, by frequenting a kind of perpetual club of the sages, philosophers, and other idle personages of the village, which held its sessions on a bench before a small inn, designated by a rubicund portrait of His Majesty George the Third. Here they used to sit in the shade through a long, lazy summer's day, talking listlessly over village gossip, or telling endless sleepy stories about nothing. But it would have been worth any statesman's money to have heard the profound discussions that sometimes took place, when by chance an old newspaper fell into their hands from some passing traveler. How solemnly they would listen to the contents, as drawled out by Derrick Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, a dapper, learned little man, who was not to be daunted by the most gigantic word in the dictionary; and how





## RIP VAN WINKLE

sagely they would deliberate upon public events some months after they had taken place.

The opinions of this junto were completely controlled by Nicholas Vedder, a patriarch of the village, and landlord of the inn, at the door of which he took his seat from morning till night, just moving sufficiently to avoid the sun and keep in the shade of a large tree; so that the neighbors could tell the hour by his movements as accurately as by a sun-dial. It is true he was rarely heard to speak, but smoked his pipe incessantly. His adherents, however (for every great man has his adherents), perfectly understood him, and knew how to gather his opinions. When anything that was read or related displeased him, he was observed to smoke his pipe vehemently, and to send forth short, frequent, and angry puffs; but when pleased, he would inhale the smoke slowly and tranquilly and emit it in light and placid clouds and sometimes, taking the pipe from his mouth, and letting the fragrant vapor curl about his nose, would gravely nod his head in token of perfect approbation.

From even this stronghold the unlucky Rip was at length routed by his termagant wife, who would suddenly break in upon the tranquillity of the assemblage and call the members all to naught; nor was that august personage, Nicholas Vedder himself, sacred from the daring tongue of this terrible virago, who charged him outright with encouraging her husband in habits of idleness.

Poor Rip was at last reduced almost to despair; and his only alternative, to escape from the labor of the farm and clamor of his wife, was to take gun in hand and stroll away into the woods. Here he would sometimes seat himself at the foot of a tree, and share the contents of his wallet with Wolf, with whom he sympathized as a fellow-

