

## **The Broom of the Temple**

by Ambrose Bierce

The city of Gakwak being about to lose its character of capital of the province of Ukwuk, the Wampog issued a proclamation convening all the male residents in council in the Temple of Ul to devise means of defence. The first speaker thought the best policy would be to offer a fried jackass to the gods. The second suggested a public procession, headed by the Wampog himself, bearing the Holy Poker on a cushion of cloth-of-brass. Another thought that a scarlet mole should be buried alive in the public park and a suitable incantation chanted over the remains. The advice of the fourth was that the columns of the capitol be rubbed with oil of dog by a person having a moustache on the calf of his leg. When all the others had spoken an Aged Man rose and said:

"High and mighty Wampog and fellow-citizens, I have listened attentively to all the plans proposed. All seem wise, and I do not suffer myself to doubt that any one of them would be efficacious. Nevertheless, I cannot help thinking that if we would put an improved breed of polliwogs in our drinking water, construct shallower roadways, groom the street cows, offer the stranger within our gates a free choice between the poniard and the potion, and relinquish our private system of morals, the other measures of public safety would be needless."

The Aged Man was about to speak further, but the meeting informally adjourned in order to sweep the floor of the temple--for the men of Gakwak are the tidiest housewives in all that province. The last speaker was the broom.