A study in temptations

Hobbes John Oliver
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Author: Hobbes John Oliver

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A STUDY IN TEMPTATIONS

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JOHN OLIVER HOBSES

A STUDY
IN TEMPTATIONS

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"SOME EMOTIONS AND A MORAL," "THE SINNER'S
COMEDY."

SECOND EDITION

LONDON
T. FISHER UNWIN
PATERNOSTER SQUARE

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To A.

DESIDERIUM ANIMÆ EJUS TRIBUISTI EI
DOMINE, ET VOLUNTATE LABIORUM
EJUS NON FRAUDASTI EUM.

VITAM PETIIT A TE, ET TRIBUISTI EI
LONGITUDINEM DIERUM IN
SÆCULUM SÆCULI.

February 7th, 1892.
"In order to judge whether what is said or done by any character be well or ill, we are not to consider that speech or action alone, whether in itself it be good or bad, but also by whom it is spoken or done, to whom, at what time, in what manner, or for what end...

"To opinion, or what is commonly said to be, may be referred even such things as are improbable and absurd; and it may also be said that events of that kind are, sometimes, not really improbable; since, 'it is probable that many things should happen contrary to probability.'"—Aristotle, Poet.
AUTHOR'S NOTE.

In the brief sketches of Farmer Battle and Miss Caroline Battle, the author's aim has been to suggest, not to reproduce, a dialect; and by so doing he ventures to think he is humbly following many great examples.
PREFACE TO
SECOND EDITION.

His little work has been received with such extraordinary kindness, and the author has been scolded for its faults with such generosity and grace, that he could almost wish he might offend his critics again, if only for the honour of being so wittily rebuked. There is a story told of a man who begged his wife to tell him his besetting sin, “In order,” said he, “that I may conquer it, and so please you in all respects.” With much reluctance, and only after many exhortations to be honest, the lady replied that she feared he was selfish. “I am not perfect,” said her husband, “and perhaps I am a sinful
creature, but if there is one fault which I thank God I do not possess it is selfishness. Anything but that!” and as he spoke, he passed her the apples—they were at luncheon—and set himself to work on the only peach. Now the author is in the same frame of mind with regard to the charge of flippant: he cannot bring himself to own that he is flippant: he longs to be told his short-comings, he is most eager to please his readers in all respects, but he will not admit that he is cynical—anything but that. He is by nature so extremely serious that, like the good angel who liked laughter, he has thought it wiser to curb his disposition at all events for the present. A greater part of the book was composed under the strain of bad health, and all of it in circumstances of peculiar anxiety. If the author had written as he felt and thought, the result would have been very far from amusing. And his sole aim has been to amuse. In times of illness, irritability, and grief, he has often cast about him for some light reading—simple yet not altogether meaningless, unreal yet not impossible: he has longed to draw a veil on actualities