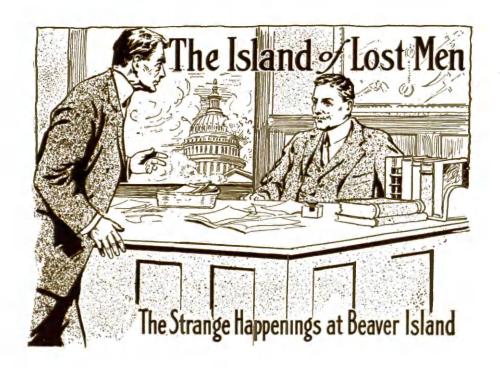


The Island of Lost Men
191 The International Teles of Mystery





#### CHAPTER I

Service are laid bare. Many astonishing and mysterious things happen that never become known to the public. That is as it should be, for if the plots and counterplots of all the enemies of this country and of the great European powers were made known, the people would be astounded, and in many cases undoubtedly badly scared.

I am John Merrill, agent of our Government Detective Service, and it was my fortune to have been closely connected with one of the most startling events in the criminal history of our country. If I had not been successful in my efforts to solve the bewildering and terrible series of events that occurred on the primitive little island that lies off the coast of Virginia, this great land of ours might have been devastated and possibly completely destroyed by a power that still sometimes haunts me in my dreams.

My work started when the chief of our Bureau in Washington called me to his office hurriedly on a May evening. His desk was strewn with papers, and a telegram lay open before him. "Do you know Beaver Island?" said he. "It lies off the coast of Virginia, just south of Richmond."

"I've heard of it," I answered.

He shot a keen glance at me. "What have you heard, Merrill?"

"Well," I replied, "for one thing, Professor Bracken lives there."

"Oh, yes, Bracken," he said impatiently. "Anyone else?"

I nodded. "I believe there's a young man who's fond of fishing and shooting."

"Good," said he. "I see you've got the lay of the land. That young man's name is Richards, remember that," he repeated, looking me squarely in the eye. "John Richards, a very ordinary young man with an ordinary name, do you understand?"

"Exactly," I repeated, smiling.

"This is Saturday," the chief went on. "Merrill, on Monday a fisherman was found dead on that island; on Wednesday night a farmer was discovered dead in his hayfield, and this wire tells me that one of John Richards' servants met with the same fate last night. Three men in a week, and there aren't more than twenty in the place."

- "It must be frightfully unhealthy," said I.
- "Very. But the strange part is that none of these men were ill, none were wounded in any way they were found lying dead, that was all."
  - "Who reported this?"
- "Professor Bracken's secretary. She makes frequent reports to the Department concerning young Richards."
- "Three in a week!" said I. "That island must be the Devil's own stamping-ground! When do you want me to go?"
- "At once. I want you to report at Professor Bracken's. He can put you up. Find out what's happening there, and—" here the chief swung about and looked at me very sharply—" see that it doesn't happen to John Richards! He is worth too much to the world."

Those were all my orders, and I left the office in Washington knowing only that I must manage to save a certain young man from an epidemic of mysterious death that was ravaging an apparently peaceful little island.

The next day, as I travelled by rail to the Atlantic coast, and was ferried across from there to Beaver Island, I tried to unravel something of the mystery. But, though I looked at it from every possible point of view, my efforts were fruitless. Nor did Beaver Island itself seem likely to tell me much. It was similar to hundreds of others that dot the waters off our western coast. Four or five miles long, by perhaps half that in width, it sheltered a little colony of fishermen, with a few farmers who worked hard to make a living from its shallow and stony soil. I knew the



"MY GLANCE STOPPED AT THE WINDOW. \* \* \* \* I SAW SOMETHING DIMLY REVEALED IN THE MOONLIGHT." (Page 9)

people of such a community from old experience. They would be stolid, difficult to get at, and entirely absorbed in their own work. They would probably be of little assistance to me in my search. What would also increase the difficulties would be the rugged and desolate character of the island, with its woods and beaches, caves and lonely meadows, offering excellent hidingplaces for desperate malefactors.

A servant of Professor Bracken met me at the boat-landing, and took my bag. I questioned him closely as to what had happened on the island since the previous night. It seemed there was no news of any sort that he could remember. Then I asked him about the three men who had been found mysteriously slain. He said that he had known them well, that they were old inhabitants, and that, to the best of his knowledge, none of the three had ever been farther away from home than to Richmond. I wanted to know if there was any ill-feeling in the little community, or any trouble between the members of the different families. "No, sir," he answered, "we be all peaceable folk here on the island, an' the more I thinks of it, the more I thinks that them three was the most peaceable of us all. Seems like nobody could ha' bore 'em any grudge at all. It looks to me powerful like there was speerits to work hereabout. I don't go out at night no more 'cept in fear an' tremblin', with a rabbit's foot tucked into my left boot." So I had to give up that source of information.

I found Professor Bracken's house a two-story building, set back from the water. Bracken himself answered my knock and shook my hand warmly. He might have been about sixty, and had a good-natured face and cheery voice, and the bent shoulders of a scholar. "I got your wire," said he, "and your room's ready for you. It's high time an expert was sent down to look into this matter, for, upon my word, it passes all belief!"

It was already dark, and a few minutes later a bell advised me that supper was ready. I came downstairs, and the Professor introduced me to Miss Lyle, his secretary, a young and very pretty woman. She greeted me warmly. "Oh, Mr. Merrill," she exclaimed, "if you can only clear up this terrible tragedy! There's something uncanny hanging over our heads! We're all afraid to go out of doors for fear we'll never come home again." I could see in her eyes that she was very much frightened, and that only great strength of will kept her fears in check.

"What's become of our foreign friend?" Professor Bracken asked. He turned to me, his eyes smiling behind his great gold-rimmed spectacles. "It never rains but it pours," he continued. "Usually Miss Lyle and I are here all alone, but this very morning a foreigner arrived, bringing letters of introduction to me from certain famous scholars of Europe, and stating he was anxious to learn something of my new experiments. He was a gentleman, so I offered him a room for a few days."

I started. "In Turkey!" I replied. "But he only arrived here today?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;A foreigner?" said I. "From what country?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;He's been living in Germany, and his name is Herr Wilhelm Bey; but he was born in Turkey."

"Yes, that is true. Ah, here he is now."

The door had opened, and I found myself looking at a heavily-built man, almost bald, with very black eyes, and the swarthy skin one finds in Eastern Europe. He bowed solemnly as we were introduced, and then the four of us went in to supper.

Herr Bey and the Professor discussed science the greater part of the meal. They both seemed absorbed in certain geological studies Bracken was making, and though I tried several times to turn the talk to the mysterious deaths, they kept coming back to the other topic. After supper the man from Europe went up to his room to finish some letters, Professor Bracken returned to his laboratory, which was in a wing of the house, and Miss Lyle and I were left alone.

"Tell me everything you know about the death of these three men," I said, "and don't neglect to mention any trivial little incident connected with the matter. It's those little things that seem so unimportant that give us our real clues."

"That's just the trouble," she answered. "There aren't any little things." Then she told me the whole story, and there was nothing in it that I didn't already know.

"What does Mr. John Richards think?" I asked abruptly.

I caught a sudden gleam in her eyes. She paled, and then flushed. "You know him?" she asked quickly.

I nodded, wondering how much she knew about him.

To my surprise she rose from her chair and came toward me. "Oh, Mr. Merrill, he must be saved!" she cried. "I'm more afraid for him than for anyone else."

"So am I," I answered grimly. "Are you brave enough to take me to his house at once?"

"If you'll go," she answered eagerly. "It's a good mile from here, but there's a moon."

I stepped to the laboratory door, and told the Professor that Miss Lyle and I were going to see Mr. Richards. Bracken was busy weighing some metals in a balance, and only nodded his head absent-mindedly.

The girl and I went out, and followed the road along the shore. Clouds were gathering in the sky, but there was enough light for us to see our way. It was fully a mile to the house we sought, but we reached it safely. A servant opened the door at our summons and showed us into the sitting-room. A young man was there, and at sound of our steps he jumped up. "You here, Anne!" he exclaimed, and I was sure that I could read more than friendly interest in his eyes.

I had never seen this man before, though I had often heard whispers about him. So I took a good look at him now. He was tall and slender, very handsome, and anyone used to studying men could have readily seen that he was not of Anglo-Saxon birth. Miss Lyle explained my business with him, and he at once became very much interested. "Yes, it's true," said he. "One of my servants, Frederick, as fine a fellow as ever lived, was found dead in the road night before last, and there was not a single mark of violence about him. The doctor from the mainland examined him, and said it was the most extraordinary case he had ever seen. He was in the best of health, and yet he apparently suddenly stopped breathing and fell in the road. And it

was the same with the other two men last week. It seems beyond belief. Yet I'm convinced the men were murdered, taken off in some devil's fashion, not for money, because they weren't robbed, nor for hate, because there was no one with a grudge against them, but just for the sheer love of killing. And if that happened to them, who's safe at all?"

"I've known many strange cases, but none like this," said I.

"But you'll always find there's a reason back of these events, if only you'll go deep enough."

Richards was looking at Miss Lyle. "You shouldn't have come out, Anne," he said. "There's danger lurking for everyone in this night air."

"I had to," she answered simply. I looked away, and as I did so my glance stopped at the window. The curtain was only half drawn, and I saw something outside, something only dimly revealed in the moonlight, but which I was certain was the figure of a man, standing stock-still and gazing in at us. I did not recognize him as anyone I had yet seen. I moved ever so slightly, and the figure disappeared.

"Mr. Richards," I began, but had got no farther when there was a cry outside, the outer door was flung open, and the servant who had let us into the house rushed in. "They've got Tom Lee this time!" he cried. "Right before his own house! He's killed, just like the others, without a trace of the criminal!"

I was on my feet, revolver in hand. "You stay here!" I commanded Richards and Miss Lyle. "Now," I added, turning to the servant, "take me to Tom Lee's as fast as you can!"

"Oh, be careful!" begged the girl. "You don't know what may happen if you go out there!" At the first note of alarm she had run across the room to the young man, and now stood protected by his arm.

But I was in no mood for caution. The criminal could not be far away from me now. "Quick!" I cried to the servant, and catching him by the sleeve fairly pulled him through the doorway.

Once outside the man ran across a bit of open lawn, vaulted a fence, and so brought me into a road. We headed down this. It was bordered on one side by a row of trees, apparently part of an orchard, and on the other by a low stone wall. We had not covered more than twenty yards or so when I thought I saw something moving among the trees on the right. I did not call to the servant, for fear of attracting attention, but slackened my pace. Now I was sure there was someone just the other side of the trees. Without hesitating I turned from the road and ran to the right. I passed under a bough, and at the same instant felt a stinging blow on my left arm. I stopped, partly stunned by the sharp pain, then, with a cry, I sprang forward. A man was standing before me, stick in hand. He aimed another blow at me, but I missed it by ducking to one side. I whipped my revolver from my pocket. Before I could fire my enemy's stick had sent the pistol whirling from my hand. Then I plunged forward, my arms stretched out before me. I caught the man about the knees, and, though he was very heavy, I brought him to the ground. Over and over we rolled, each trying to pin the other underneath. At last I saw my chance. I loosened my grip, then suddenly clutched at his throat with both hands, and

managed to get my knees up on him at the same instant. I forced his head back on the ground. By now Richards' servant had missed me, and had come running back. I called to him, and he dashed up. "Who is it?" he cried.

"I don't know," I answered. "Have you anything to bind him with?"

For answer the man slipped off his canvas belt. "Here," said he, "ease up a bit, and I'll make his arms fast." My opponent, who was a heavy man, was by now gasping for breath, and capable of making no further resistance. I loosened my grip at his throat, and pulled him up to a sitting position. Then the servant was able to run the belt about his elbows and fasten his arms together.

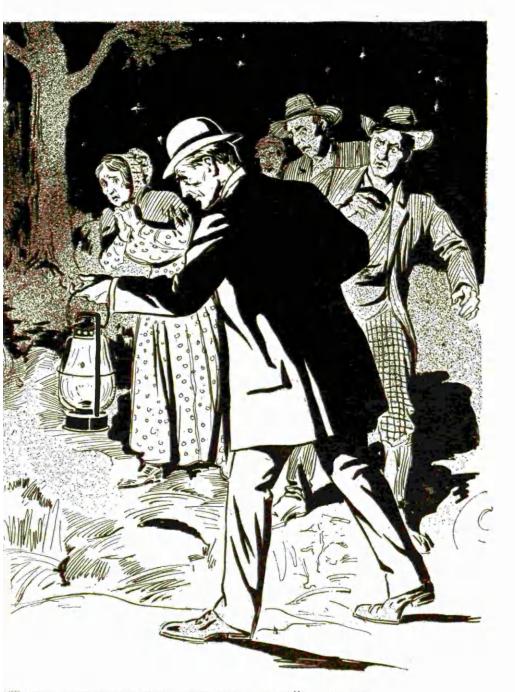
I got to my feet. "Now," said I, "who are you, and what did you mean by trying to brain me with that stick?"

The man said nothing. I took a good look at him. His hat had fallen off in our fight and exposed a shock of black hair.

"I've a notion I've seen you before this evening," I said. "I think you're the fellow I caught looking in at Mr. Richards' window."

Still he answered nothing. I looked about the ground, found my revolver, and put it back in my pocket. I rubbed my left arm briskly to drive the numbness out of it. Then I stood in front of our sorry-looking prisoner. "Come, speak up, man," I admonished him. "What were you doing skulking through the trees here, and why did you go for me with your stick?"





He might have been dumb. He tried to stretch out his arms, but the belt held them fast. Then he sat still, staring at the ground.

- "Did you ever see him before?" I asked, turning to Richards' man.
- "Never, sir. Shall I twist his arms a bit to make him answer?"
- "No, he'll have time enough to talk after a while." I bent down and felt of the strap that held the man's arms. "That's good and tight, but we'll just get him up with his back to that tree and make the belt fast about that. Now, you'd better come quietly, my man, and make no trouble."

He made no resistance while the two of us lifted him to his feet, walked him over to the nearest tree, and stood him with his back to it. I loosened the strap that held his arms and managed to pass it around the trunk of the tree and pin his arms at the elbows. When this was done I turned to Richards' man. "He'll be here now when we want him," said I. "I'm not going to run into any such pitfall again, so I'll just step back to Mr. Richards' house and get a lantern. I want you to go on and tell them not to move Tom Lee's body until I can get there."

"All right, sir," he answered, and disappeared down the road. It only took me a minute or two to run back to Richards' house. I opened the front door, stepped in, and picked up a lantern that was near at hand. I pulled a box of matches from my pocket and lighted it. "What is it?" cried Richards, who had heard me.

Looking up I could see into the sitting-room. Richards was still busy protecting Miss Lyle with his strong right arm, and I discreetly looked away. "Nothing," I answered, and hurried out at the door.

With the lighted lantern I went back across the lawn and into the road. I was on my guard now, revolver in hand, and very careful to keep far enough from trees or bushes to run no risk of another blow in the dark. I went down the road until I came to the place where I had spied the strange man. There I turned off, and made for the tree where I had left him. "Well, my fine fellow," said I, "have you got your voice back by now?"

There was no answer. I swung the lantern in front of me, thinking I might have made a mistake in the tree. Then I went from tree to tree, until I had examined a dozen or so. To my amazement there was no man there, our prisoner had absolutely vanished, without even leaving the canvas belt behind him.

I looked for him high and low before I gave up the search. Then I stopped to consider. Either he was a most remarkable contortionist, or he had a confederate to help him. And I was by now convinced that he had had some hand in these mysterious crimes that were devastating Beaver Island.

When I was sure that there was no use in looking for him farther, I went back to the road. Following it I soon came to a house, with open ground before it. The shifting moonlight showed me that the figure of a man lay there, with a number of men and women gathered about it. I went over to them, and, telling them who I was, knelt down and made a rapid examination by the light of my lantern. My work as a detective had

made me familiar with such situations, and so I hurriedly applied the tests that are used in such cases.

There was no doubt but that the man was dead, and also no doubt, so far as I could see, but that he had fallen where he stood, without any blow or attack from outside that would have left a mark. In all my experience I had never met with any case like this before. It seemed as if there must be some deadly poison hiding in the night air of this place.

"Well, Mr. Merrill," said a deep voice at my shoulder, "what do you make of it?"

I stood up. I knew from the voice that the speaker was Herr Wilhelm Bey. "I saw this man standing on his porch not five minutes ago," said he. "I was out for a little walk, and happened to pass by."

"And you heard nothing, saw nothing after that?" I asked.

"Nothing. I had gone on down to the beach when I heard some people calling and hurried back."

I was thinking fast. It seemed strange that a man who knew the dangers of being abroad in this island at night should have gone for a walk on the beach by himself. But this was no time to unravel these mysteries. "You had better take the body of Mr. Lee indoors," I directed. "Now, Herr Bey, I'm going to ask you to step over to Mr. Richards' house with me." "Very good, Mr. Merrill," said he. I touched Richards' servant on the shoulder, and whispered to him to say nothing of the man we had left bound to the tree. Then we went back to his master's house.

I entered that young man's sitting-room first. "The mystery deepens," said I. "I've brought in a gentleman who was passing by. Herr Bey, Mr. Richards."

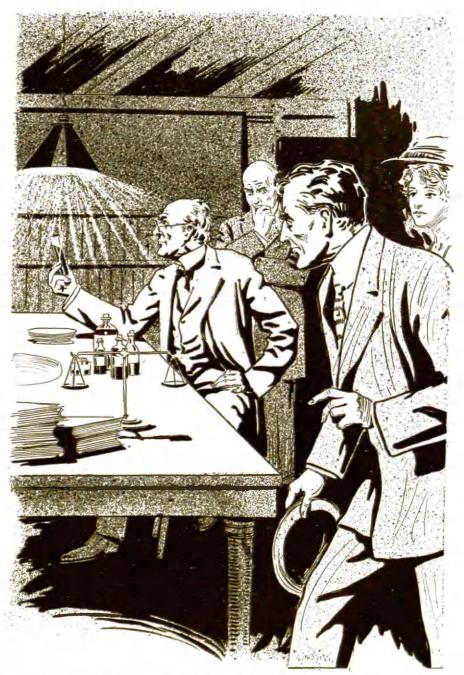
The young man looked up. To my surprise I saw him shrink away from the visitor, and I thought he blanched under the tan of his cheeks. "He knows him!" I thought. "The Professor was right when he said this man was a Turk, and it's dollars to doughnuts he knows as much about John Richards as I do."

Herr Bey had made a low bow, and was now standing still, a smile on his broad face. "Indeed, it is most extraordinary, Mr. Richards," said he. "I see this man quite alive and well one minute, and the next he is dead, and with never a scratch to show why. Your little island is a most tragic place."

"So it seems," said Richards drily. I saw he wished to be rid of the visitor, and so I suggested that it was high time we were returning home. "I shall come to see you in the morning," the young man said in a troubled voice, and apparently equally to me and to Miss Lyle. But it was Herr Bey who answered him. "We shall all be glad to see you, Mr. Richards, at any time," said he.

As we came out into the night a strange sound caught my ear. I looked up at the sky, around at the lawn and trees, down at the beach. I had certainly heard a thrumming, buzzing noise, yet there was nothing to be seen. "I suggest we walk fast," said I, "though as the devil of this island seems to hunt his victims when they're alone, I suppose we three are safe enough."

I know that Miss Lyle and I were glad to reach home. All three of us went into the Professor's laboratory, where we found



"WE FOUND THE PROFESSOR WORKING OVER HIS BALANCES AND VIALS." (Page 19)

him working over his balances and vials. I told him what had happened. He seemed very much preoccupied, remarkably so, I thought. "Dear me, dear me," he said absent-mindedly, "it's lucky you're here, Mr. Merrill. I hope you find out the trouble as soon as you can." And he turned back to his table.

"What a remarkable man!" exclaimed the foreigner. "I wish I knew as much as he does!"

"And I wish I knew what your little game on this island is," I thought to myself, "for you know a lot more than you've told any of us yet. But I'll find out what you're up to before I'm through with you," I added, "and I'm thinking that'll throw a little light on who or what it was that killed Tom Lee." Then my eyes lighted on Anne Lyle. "But I've got to find out in time to save that young man with a history," I concluded, "or that girl and the United States Government won't have much more use for me!"

I looked back at the Professor. It was certainly strange that he took so little interest in these mysterious catastrophes.

( TO BE CONTINUED IN BOOK NO. 2, WHICH WILL BE MAILED TO YOU SHORTLY )



G. B. A., Chicago, Ill., writes: I am to be an usher at a Church Wedding. It is to take place at noon. Please tell me the correct dress and accessories.

Answer. In a measure, you will have to be governed by the other ushers, so as to have the appearance of all uniform. The correct dress, however, is as follows:

OVERCOAT: Black or Dark Gray Chesterfield. Single or double-breasted in plain or fancy weave.

COAT: Morning coat (Cutaway). This coat should be moderately waistdefining, either plain or braided, although the plain is now rather smarter than the braided. It may be of black or dark gray fabric, long in the skirts and cut sharply away.

Waistcoat: Cloth to match coat or fancy. Silk in a corded or fine line effect, light gray—single breasted, will be found a very satisfactory fancy waistcoat.

TROUSERS: Worsted or cheviot, dark gray, striped. Trousers to match coat are rather informal and are used more for business and walking

SHIRT: White—Stiff, pleated or tucked bosom. Small colored stripes and figures are permissible, but the general white effect must be preserved. Better stick to the plain white.

COLLAR
AND CUFFS: High wing collar with large or small tabs. Poke, or fold, if preferred. The fold collar is quite permissible, although often stated to the contrary. The cuffs may be single or double with square or round corners—well starched.

CRAVAT: The once over or the four-in-hand. In dove gray to match vest.

Never white.

GLOVES: Match cravat. Unfinished deer-skin, rather heavy, one button to button through.

SHOES: Black patent leather or polished high calf skin. Black silk or lisle socks. Spats may be worn and should match cravat.

STICK: Light weight, gold or silver mounted stick. The crook stick is rather smarter than the straight.

JEWELRY: Gold cuff-links, etc. Links of semi-precious stones may be worn.

Plain gold watch chain. Plain pearl or unobtrusive jewel scarf-pin.

N. V. B., Omaha, Neb., writes: Are permanent turned-up trousers in good form?

Answer. This is a mooted question, and a great many different opinions have been expressed. I do not hesitate to say, however, for informal wear they are absolutely correct, giving a rather smart appearance to the foot. Of course, they are not to be worn for formal day dress nor formal and informal evening wear.



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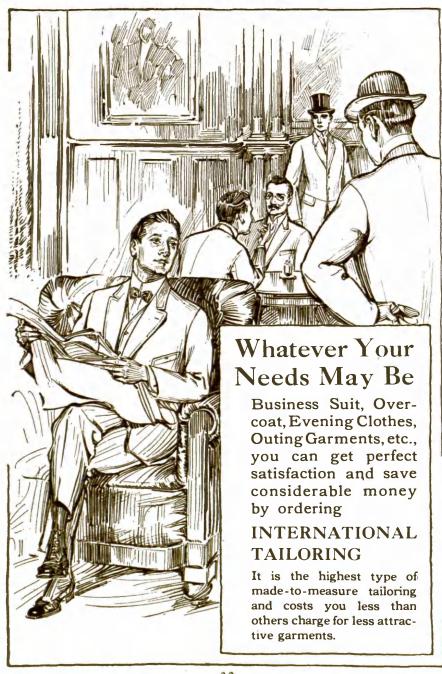
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#### Business

A train in Arizona was boarded by robbers, who went through the pockets of the luckless passengers. One of them happened to be a traveling salesman from New York, who, when his turn came, fished out two hundred dollars, but rapidly took four dollars from the pile and placed it in his vest pocket.

"What do you mean by that?" asked the robber, as he toyed with his revolver.

Hurriedly came the answer: "Mine frent, you surely vould not refuse me two per zent. discount on a strictly cash transaction like dis?"—Fun.

Ticket Collector: "We don't stop there, sir."

Montague Hardup (who has just given up ticket): "Stop where?"

Ticket Collector: "At the pawn-broker's."

#### His Chance

"What do men know of women's work?" fiercely queried the lady orator.

"Is there a man here," she continued, tolding her arms, "that has day after day got up in the morning, gone quietly downstairs, made the fire, cooked his own breakfast, sewed the missing buttons on the children's clothes, cleaned the pots and kettles and swept the kitchen? If there is such a man in this audience, let him rise up; I should like to see him."

In the rear of the hall a mild-looking man in spectacles, in obedience to the summons, timidly rose. He was the husband of the eloquent speaker. It was the first time he ever had a chance to assert himself

#### Something Easier

A well-dressed man entered a florist's shop, threw down a five-dollar bill, and said he wanted some flowers to take home. He was very unsteady, and had evidently been looking on the wine when it was red. The flowers apparently were intended as a domestic peace-offering.

The florist picked out a dozen chrysanthemums, and the customer started to leave.

At the door he hesitated.

"I say," he said thickly, "watsh these flowersh called?"

"Chrysanthemums."

The customer shook his head. "Got to have something easier than that," he said. "Gimme a dozen pinks."



The "Prodigal Son" was the subject of the Sunday-school lesson, and the teacher was dwelling on the character of the elder brother.

"But amidst all the rejoicing," said the teacher, "there was one to whom the preparation of the feast brought no joy, to whom the prodigal's return gave no happiness, only bitterness; one who did not approve of the feast and had no wish to attend it. Now, who can tell me who this was?"

Silence for several moments; then a hand raised and a small, sympathetic voice: "Please, ma'am, it was the fatted calf."

A New York man paid his first visit to the South, and found himself one night at the home of a hospitable Kentuckian out some ten miles from Lexington. He slept the sleep of the just and was awakened early the next morning by an old colored man who asked him if he would like to have breakfast in his room.

"Oh, I don't know," said the New Yorker, "what have we for breakfast this morning?"

"Ain't but one kind of Kaintucky breakfast," the old negro replied, with a grin.

"And what might that be?" asked the man.

"Jug of liquor, er nice steak an' er dog," came the answer.

"For heaven's sake, what is the dog for?"

"He's to eat the steak," was the ready reply.

#### Time for a Change



Willie: "Ma, I don't think I can stand your husband any longer."

Mr. P. came home very late the other night from a political gathering. In the hall he kicked up rather a row, growling and swearing to himself till his wife called to him from upstairs:

"What's the matter, my dear?"

"Matter—hic\_is," Mr. P. shouted, "that there's two hat-racks here, and I dunno which one to hang my hat on."

"But you've got two hats, haven't you?" said Mrs. P. soothingly. "Hang one on each rack and come up to bed. You're tired."

#### A Generous Thought



A barber was about to be electrocuted at Sing Sing for murder. On the night before his death he was asked if he had any dving wish.

"Yes," he said, "there is one thing I

would like to do."

"What is it?" inquired the kind-hearted warden.

"I would like to shave the district attorney!"—Saturday Evening Post.

"What brought you here, my man?" asked the jail visitor of a prisoner.

"I married a new woman, sir," was

the reply.

"Aha! And she was so domineering and extravagant that it drove you to desperate courses, eh?"

"No," answered the prisoner; "the

old woman turned up!"

#### Explained

"What're ye comin' home with your milk pail empty for?" demanded the farmer. "Didn't the old cow give anything?"

"Yes," replied the chore boy; "nine

quarts and one kick."

#### The Has and the Are

I'd rather be a Could Be, If I could not be an Are;

For a Could Be is a May Be, With a chance of touching par.

I'd rather be a Has Been

Than a Might Have Been, by far;
For a Might Have Been has never been,
But a Has was once an Are. — R/w. Bu//.

## The Smartly Dressed Business Man

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