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WAYSIDE TALES AND CARTOONS MAGAZINE

Edited by H. H. WINDSOR

Volume 20

Contents for SEPTEMBER, 1921

Number 3

SHORT STORIES

AUNTIE OF SIMMERING SANDS 345

By Harold de Polo

A western story, starring "Rainbow" Morrison and "Hardpan" Nichols, two of Harold de Polo's most delightful characters, holdovers from a West that is now all but forgotten.

THE OUTER REEF AT AMIGAL HEAD..... 354

By Elmer Brown Mason

An idyl of a quaint old fishing village of Maine, to which the fox-trot and the one-step have not yet penetrated, and where they still dance with zest "The Lady of the Lake," "Hull's Victory" and other dances of by-gone times.

THE WISE GUY AND THE GAL 368

By Edwin L. Sabin

A humorous story that shows the inevitable result of following a bit of advice left as a legacy to an underdone son: "Don't tell everything you know." Which wouldn't have taken Philander long, even if he had!

THE REVENGE OF "VAGALUME" 374

By H. M. Hamilton

Scene: Rio de Janeiro. Characters, an American girl, beautiful and vivacious; a musician of international fame, though born and at home in Brazil; former lovers, friends, etc. Theme: passion, intrigue, cunning, love.

"WHY NOT TRY BEEZELUM?" 410

By Harriette Wilbur

A story which shows that even home-brewers can be made to forsake the product of their subterranean efforts—at least temporarily—provided they can be supplied with something just as good.

CONTENTS—Continued

THE GHOST OF LILAC HILL.....419

By Frank Dorrance Hopley

A tale of ghosts—to be more accurate, of *a* ghost, a very charming sort of ghost that should go with every home such as this one haunted—an old manor house that was redolent with the fragrance of lilac, musk and rose leaves.

SERIAL

THE FIFTH GUARDIAN.....By Victor Rousseau.....386

This is the concluding installment of the three-part romance by the author of "The Messiah of the Cylinder," "Wooden Spoil," and "The Big Muskeg." A story that is filled with fun, mystery, action and romance, and with a surprise at every turn.

NOVELETTE

WANTED: A COWARD.....By Vincent Starrett.....426

This mystery story, told with the dash and gusto that characterize every Starrett story, has a plot that is "different," not only because the mystery is sustained to the very end, but because it shows how much harder it is for a courageous man to act a coward's part than for a coward to play the part of a hero.

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Cartoons, Humorous Drawings, and Jokes

THE MONTH'S BEST CARTOONS447

HAND PICKED478

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THE BEST OF THE JESTS.....502

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**Joseph H. Korff,
a Federal student
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What One of America's Greatest Cartoonists Thinks About the Landon Course

Feb. 10, 1921.

Mr. C. N. Landon,
 The Landon School,
 Cleveland, Ohio.

Dear Sir:

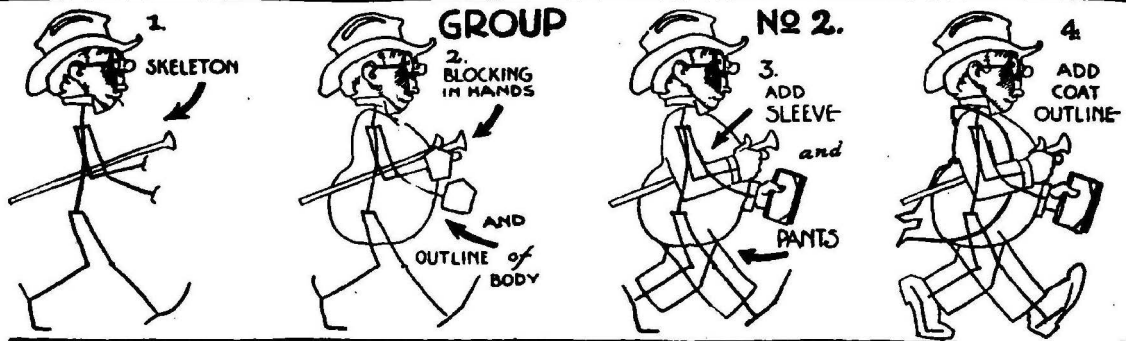
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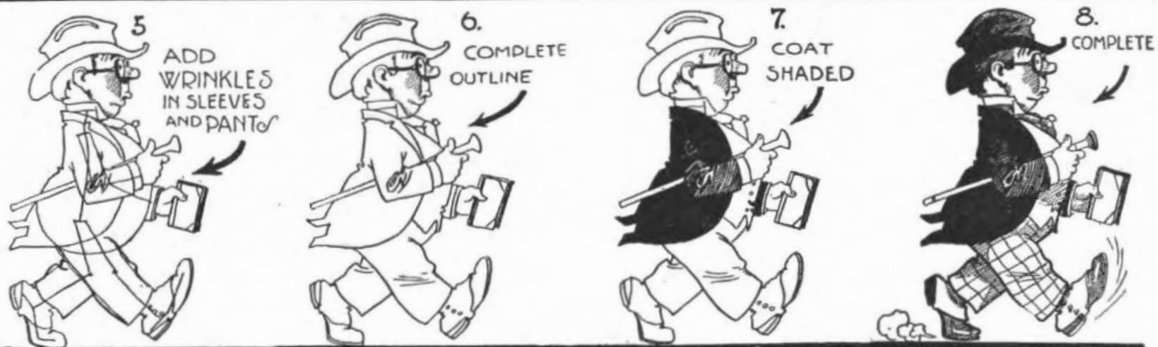
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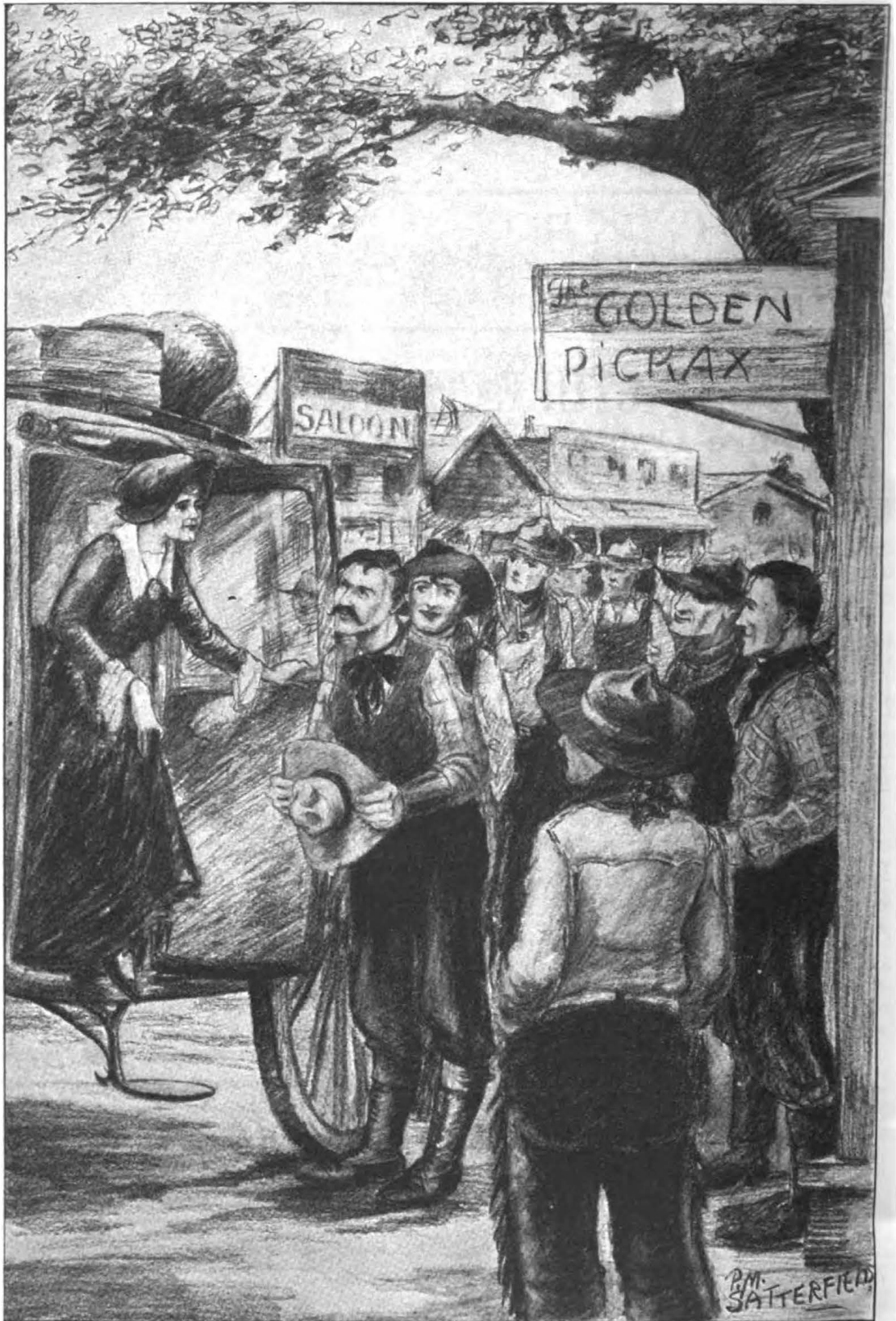
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"'Is the gentleman who wrote me about poor Wilbur, Mr. Partridge, I think, anywhere about?' she asked, in a hesitant, quavering voice." (See page 346.)

WAYSIDE TALES AND CARTOONS MAGAZINE

PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT 6 N. MICHIGAN AVE., CHICAGO

Volume 20

SEPTEMBER, 1921

Number 3

Auntie of Simmering Sands

By Harold de Polo

The Harold de Polo "fan" will find in Hardpan Nichols and Rainbow Morrison two of the quaintest characters in western fiction. The unusual contact between the New England East, as represented in "Auntie," and the sun-parched West, as represented in "Simmering Sands," results in a situation that is funny from the very first line to its hilarious ending.

"Hardpan," exulted Rainbow Morrison, as he entered the dilapidated shack that he and his crony inhabited on the outskirts of Simmering Sands, "may I never see another grain o' pay-dirt if this ol' worl' ain't jest the best whatever!"

The eyes of the pessimist kindled, but he got hold of himself in time as he realized that the optimist was unusually effervescent:

"Panhandlin' prospectors!" he grunted, with almost exaggerated disgust. "But I reckon the self-same words'ud come from *yore* mouth did we git out on the desert with our burros dead an' our water gone an' a drink more'n a hundred miles away!"

"Figger they would—figger they likely would," merrily cackled Mr. Morrison, restraining his exuberance and pretending

to find something sadly wrong with one of the wicks of the oil stove.

Hardpan Nichols bit. The grouchy and ancient ex-pro prospector yawned, and most deliberately gazed at the azure sky:

"Cal'late you done gone an' heard some trash news down to Lon's, heh?" he remarked, endeavoring to speak with the utmost scorn.

His partner, however, had the joyous outlook on life of a child, and the biggest heart in the camp. He held no rancour, and the chief reason for his happiness was because he knew how the information he possessed would please the other:

"Hardpan," he gloated, "you know how you been attackin' this here universe, an' Simmerin' Sands in particular, a-harpin' on it that it ain't doin' no more progressin' an' furnishin' no more excitement? . . .

Well, ol'-timer, aspects looks promisin', yessir. 'Member that there no-account, good-for-nothin' Peasly, him they called Soak, an' that jest died a couple o' weeks ago from D. T.'s an' that—"

"'Member him?" growled the pessimist. "Huh, have I gone an' forgot he owed me four hits more'n a year? I should say—"

"Well, Hardpan, on the stage from Hell's Gulch yesterday Lon Partridge has gone an' got a letter. It's a letter from a Miss Belinda Peasly, what says she's his auntie.

"It's kind o' funny, though, for she goes on to tell a lot about how the family had always despaired o' Wilbur—that was his name—but that how now, seein' as he's passed, they ought to let bygones be bygones an' just go an' look back that he was a Peasly, after all. She comes from some place in Connecticut, up there in that New England land, an' she's comin' to take his body back to the home soil, like she puts it! . . . Yessir, Hardpan: what do you make o' that there situation?"

The pessimist's face had shown what amounted to gleeful interest, yet once more he smothered his feelings and looked even higher and more intently at the heavens above. His yawn was prodigious:

"You shore do get het up about nothin', Rainbow, don't you?" he drawled, as if gently reprimanding an infant.

It was too, too much for the other. Generous and lovable though he was, and always trying to look out for the next fellow, the limit had decidedly been reached:

"Hardpan Nichols," he stormed, practically ruining the wick in his rage, "I shore do resign. Here I go an' do my blame'est to find you somethin' amusin'—here I been doin' it for over twenty year—an' here when I do get somethin' that 'ud make even a mummy rise up an' onwind himself, you can't do nothin' but go an' dis—disparage my news! . . . No-sir, Hardpan, I'm jest about through, I am an' you can go an' stake claim to yore *own* events!"

WITHAL, Hardpan, as usual, was there to meet the next bi-weekly stage, and in this he was no different from the rest of Simmering Sands. The camp was out, en masse. Indeed, one cannot blame them. Anyone—and especially a maiden aunt—who thought enough of the remains of Peasley to actually come with the intent of removing them, must be well worth the seeing. One would have thought, the community argued, that relatives would have been so relieved at the passing of Soak that they would have let well enough alone. Perhaps it seems hard to speak ill of the dead, but Soak Peasley had been—well, he'd been a pretty thorough reprobate, to put it mildly. But all of Simmering Sands realized, when the rambling old vehicle from Hell's Gulch got in, that this fact must be strictly and absolutely kept under cover. To tell the truth, it was Lon Partridge himself, proprietor of The Golden Pickaxe and deemed utterly without conscience, who gave the first hint of this:

"Gawd," he whispered hoarsely, "think o' havin' *her* know what a rum-chasin', small-thievin', low-lyin' no account he was!"

"An'—an' she ain't *goin'* to know," put in Rainbow, who happened to be nearest him.

You would have said the same yourself, had you seen the sweet little old lady who stepped from the stage. She was even more ancient in years than the pair of old ex-prospectors themselves, and she walked with a trembling step. Her body was very frail, garbed in stiff and rusty black satin, and two bright spots burned in her cheeks that showed she was under great excitement. But it was her eyes, as Hardpan later remarked, that got you. They were very wide, and very blue, and very much frightened—so frightened that they looked as if further fright, or any kind of pain, might literally kill her.

"Is the gentleman who wrote me about poor Wilbur, Mr. Partridge, I think, anywhere about?" she asked, in a hesitant, quavering voice.

"He's right here, ma'am," acknowledged Lon, stepping forward with an air of gallantry that surprised the mining camp.

"Oh, sir," she said, "it was so good of you to carry out Wilbur's desires and let us know, and we do so appreciate it!"

"Not at all, ma'am—not at all," assured Lon. And then, clearing his throat and casting a glare at the crowd: "We shore was sorry we had to do it. We mean, ma'am, we was sorry Wil—Wilbur had to make his exit. He—he was a mighty—a mighty fine man, ma'am, was Wil—Wilbur, an'—an' we all o' us shore did hate to see him go!"

"You don't know how happy that makes me," replied Belinda Peasley, unheeded of the gasp from the crowd. "We knew that Wilbur was—was possibly a trifle wild, as all young men of spirit are apt to be. But, whatever his faults, we always were certain that he had a good and true heart!"

"A heart o' gold, ma'am—a heart o' gold!"

It was Hardpan Nichols, none other, who made the assertion. Frankly, his motive is not definitely known. Whether it was his innate love of complicating the situation, or an effort out of pure goodness of heart to give Miss Belinda more happiness, or else to get Lon in deeper, will never be known. The majority, it must be confessed, swing toward the latter belief. If so, the tables certainly were turned, with neatness and dispatch. For the proprietor of the most popular hang-out in the camp had just then a flash of genius:

"An' Hardpan shore is putting' it straight, ma'am—an' he shore oughta be able to know, at that," cried the rotund Lon, with a wave of an arm as if delivering an oration. "Yes, there stands the man, Mister Hardpan Nichols, ma'am, that was Wil—Wilbur's best friend—his pard, his *on*-seperable companion, you might say, for the last couple o' years. Yes'm. Hardpan should ought to know, all right, all right, that he had a heart o' gold!"

MISTER NICHOLS gaped, gasped, turned on the other—but was unable to utter a word in his shocked condition. Before he got hold of himself, fortunately, the efficient Rainbow had managed to sneak up behind him and administer a shark kick on his heel. At the same time, the old pessimist began to get the motions of the rest of the assembly—motions that threatened him with torture and all forms of horrid death unless he played up to his part. But these, perhaps, were not needed. Hardpan was game, and he showed it now:

"Yes'm—yes, Miss Peasley," he gulped, when he could regain his voice, "I knowed Wil—Wilbur, all right. I—I—"

"O-o-o-oh, *you* were his 'pard,' as you dear, big-hearted Westerners call the word?" she cried, rushing up to him.

Hardpan had a violent fit of coughing, and when he got out of it explained tactfully:

"Yes'm—excuse me, ma'am—I—I got kind o' thinkin' o' Wilbur, now seeing' you, an' it—it—"

"I know, I know," said the little old lady gently, "he was your pard!"

We must give Hardpan credit. He blushed, stammered, blushed some more—and looked at the crowd in a manner that said *he* would be the one to inflict right excruciating tortures should his deception ever be divulged:

"Yes'm, he shore was," he almost belated—"an' he shore did have a heart o' gold!"

"Oh, how Wilbur must have liked you, you good man! Such loyalty and affection is wonderful, and—"

"Excuse me, ma'am," put in Hardpan, "but hadn't I better see you to your room, an' get your bags up, so's you can rest after that trip? We—I can tell you 'bout—'bout Wilbur later!"

"Perhaps." decided Miss Belinda, after a minute, during which the old miner trembled, "it would be better for me to rest. I *am* tired!"

"It shore would, ma'am," heartily agreed Nichols.

HARDPAN, finishing supper, departed for one of the very few times in his life from his regular habits. Instead of sitting down with his corncob and chinning with his old crony about days gone by, he got out his ragged razor and proceeded to scrape off bristly stubble. After that, he used plenty of soap, and even carefully slicked down his few remaining hairs:

"Well," drawled Rainbow, "outside o' you gettin' some excitement at last, you shore likewise are accruin' right dude ways, heh?"

Hardpan finished knotting a black shoe-string tie around the neckband of his flannel shirt and plainly glared:

"Yeah? An' let me tell you, Rainbow, that that there Lon Partridge is goin' to accrue some hot lead—someday, soon!"

"Better be thinkin' o' hot-footin' it, Hardpan. You went an' told Miss Belinda Peasley you'd be there at seven, an' it's most that now. Bleatin' calves, but have I even got to tell you how to go courtin' the ladies?"

"I'd never have to do no tellin' you how to court *death*," snarled his old chum.

"Aw, shucks, Hardpan, you wanted excitement—you wanted progression—*an'* you got it!"

But the pessimist did not even deign to answer. Pulling his battered hat down over his ears, he walked out of the shack and strode up the main and only street of Simmering Sands. His air, nevertheless, did not render him immune—even from the smallest youngsters. Apparently they had been well coached by parents, for their remarks were timely. About half wanted to know when he intended announcing his wedding, while the remainder asked many things regarding the life of his pal Wilbur. At The Golden Pickaxe, too, another ordeal lay in wait for him.

"Well, Hardpan," beamed Lon, "Miss Belinda sure is waitin' fer you. She's in the parlor, which I just done opened up!"

"It'll be a comfort to git *some'eres* in Simmerin' Sands, outside o' the seclusion

o' yore own home, where it ain't necessary to look at *yore* face," was the other's gentle answer.

"It will be—when you do find the place," suavely concurred Lon, bowing deeply. "Come on, right this way!"

He led him through the bar, through the dance-hall, through the room reserved for gaming, and on his passage you may be sure that many solicitous questions were asked regarding his little pal Wilbur. At the "parlor," a room unopened for years, and smelling of new plush furniture, the rotund proprietor ushered him in, followed, and spoke as if he were announcing a conquering hero:

"Right here he is, Miss Peasley—right here is Wilbur's pal!"

Hardpan stilled a curse in his throat. To have to keep up the rôle set out for him would be bad enough, but to have to do it, all evening, before the choice half-dozen that Lon had picked, was asking almost too much of a man. For Lon, you may be sure, wanted to enjoy the machinery he had set in motion, and just six of his particular cronies were seated with Peasley's aunt. Even so, she did not slight Hardpan:

"Oh," she said, holding out a hand, "you're the one I've waited for, Mister Nichols.

"Please do tell me just how—how dear Wilbur died! . . . You—you see, Mister Partridge didn't say anything about that in this letter, and all the rest of these gentlemen here say that it was while he was with you! . . . You—you see, we all at home thought poor Wilbur so wild, and it's so wonderful to have all you big, strong men speak so well of him. He—he must have been a *man*, anyway!"

HARDPAN NICHOLS must be given credit. The little old lady was looking him clearly in the eyes with her own luminous ones, and he masked his face like a consummate actor. He paid no attention whatsoever to the grins and winks of the others, but again finally had to resort to coughing:

"Yes, yes, Miss Peasley, he was—was with—me!" he said.

The woman waited, breathlessly, hanging forward in her chair, as if what was to come meant the staff of life to her:

"Yes," continued Hardpan, "he was with me, all right, was poor ol' Wilbur! He—he an' I, ma'am—we was out on a—a prospectin' trip, an'—an' if Wilbur hadn't on'y been so fine an' generous, anyways, he wouldn't of *had* to be out lookin' for pay-dirt. But he allus gave it away, he did, to children, or women, or men that needed it. Why, I remember the time when he on'y had two thousan' to his name an' he . . . But where was I? Oh, yes; I an' him was out on a prospectin' trip! . . . Well, I ain't goin' to go in for no long-drawn details, I ain't, to come to the point where we was out on the sandy desert, about a hundred an' fifty miles to water, an' with maybe jest enough left to last us—with *maybe* enough, remember I said. In fac', ma'am, we was so skeery it mightn't be, that I an' him decides to split our paths, each takin' a different direction, an' to meet up in the evenin' over to a place called Thirstin' Man's Crossin'. We figgered, see, that if either of us hit water we'd be able to fill up the canteens with enough to sure last us 'till we struck more an' made our way out. Well, out we each started, dividin' the water, an'—an'—"

Hardpan Nichols paused. He did more than cough: he extracted a monstrous bandanna and blew his nose several times. Miss Belinda Peasley, now, was leaning far over, her face aglow. For that matter, every other man in the room was sitting there wide-eyed and sagging-jawed, marvelling at the pessimist's story and wildly wondering what would come next:

"Yes," gasped Miss Belinda, unable to hold in. "Yes, go on!"

"Well, ma'am," said Hardpan, his voice slightly husky, his eyes suspiciously moist, "I got to Thirstin' Man's Crossin', I did—I got there with my water gone, an' none found, an' well-nigh perishin' for a drink. It's hard, ma'am, goin' one whole day on

that blisterin' sand with no more'n a drop or two, an' none can tell unless they been there. I was hopin'—I was prayin', more like—that Wilbur had had more luck. But the sun goes down, ma'am, an' dusk comes, an' then dark comes—but still yet he don't show up. No ma'am, there I waited—waited an' worried for Wilbur, an' waited an' prayed he'd have water, an'—an'—"

Again he paused; again he had resource to cough and handkerchief; again he was urged on—and still the boys sat there, pop-eyed:

"An' then he come, ma'am, a-staggerin' an' a-reelin' an' a-fallin'—an' a-droppin' an' a-layin' still jest as I run out to meet him! . . . I—ma'am, I don't like to speak o' it, I don't like to tell it all slowly. I—I—to git right down to it, ma'am, he didn't have no water—nor he hadn't had none all day! He—he wasn't able to do much talkin', ma'am, but—but it come out that jest after he left me, he run acrost a man and a woman an' a little gal, an' *they* was without water. The woman an' little gal—especially the gal, ma'am—was most dyin' o' thirst—an' Wilbur—my pal Wilbur an' yor nephew Wilbur—he give them his! . . . That's the way he died, ma'am, to save a woman an' a child—died in my arms, along towards sun-up. Yes'm, that's the way—"

But Hardpan Nichols stopped. A great sob had come from Belinda Peasley—but it was a sob of utter and infinite joy. The boy that they had all thought a worthless good-for-nothing had died like a man, and that, to the name she bore, meant much.

What is more, there was not a man in the room who did not realize it, and farce, for a few minutes, was turned into serious gravity. She asked a few more questions, and every sinner present acted his part to perfection. Whether they would have or not, if left to their own devices, cannot be ascertained beyond doubt. However, there was something in the eyes of the old pessimist that made them do it. He explained later, out in the bar:

"Before God, boys, I'd 'a' killed any o' you that done wrong. You got me into this, you did, an' I played my hand like she should 'a' been played. What's more, if I hear o' any man here—gr any man not here—a-makin' her know that I lied about her Wilbur, may I never raise my head if I don't go an' get my ol' six-gun an' blow him to halleluyah an' stations further!"

BUT Hardpan's work, after that evening, was not over. Indeed, it had just begun. Until the returning stage arrived, Miss Peasley had begged him to be with her as much as possible, and you may well imagine the questions the poor pessimist was forced to answer. He stuck to his guns, however, like a man, and saw to all the arrangements of preparing the remains of the now exalted Soak for transportation back East. In fact, Mister Nichols, in all his career, had never worked in a whole month as much as he did during those next three days.

The worst part was the lying. Almost repeatedly, he would be made to answer questions regarding what Wilbur had said on this and that occasion, what he liked best of the noble West, how he had handled such and such a situation, did he often speak of the folks back home—and so on and so on!

The ex-pro prospector, withal, did marvelously. As he phrased it to Rainbow was quite the truth:

"Ol' timer, if they was ever a man livin' that done all the things and said all the things that I says Wilbur done an' said, he'd 'a' had to be six hundred years ol', at the least. Moreso, he'd 'a' been such a hero an' a shinin' example that he'd 'a' been took to heaven to teach the angels—honest. An'—an' she believes it all, Rainbow. So help me, the sweet ol' lady believes it an' it makes her happy!"

"I allus did allow, Hardpan," drawled his pard gently, "that you was worth somethin' in the worl'!"

Mister Nichols, at that, used profanity. When he had finished with it his eyes

sparkled mysteriously—and he cackled:

"Think you can make fun o' me 'bout this, heh? Well, Rainbow, they's others likely think they'll be able to, later—Lon an' his crowd—but jest you wait. I ain't done yet, I ain't. I got somethin' ready to explode that'll maybe make 'em most probably wish they hadn't of picked on me!"

"Glad to hear it," nodded the other politely.

"Yeah? Well, I ain't tellin' you, now you ask me. You jest wait 'till this afternoon, that's all!"

Candidly, had Rainbow been anxious—nay, had he been literally trembling with excitement for Hardpan to divulge his secret—he would not have been disappointed when the great moment at last came.

THE stage was drawn up before The Golden Pickaxe, every inhabitant of the camp was there, and to the pessimist fell the honor of escorting Miss Peasley to the conveyance. First, he personally helped with the coffin, put her bags inside, and then, suddenly raising his hand for silence, he turned to her and bowed:

"Miss Peasley," he said, "we shore have been most happy—that is, happy as much as we can be considerin' yore somewhat sad errand, you might say—to have had you with us. You take with you, ma'am, the body o' one we thought a mighty amount of—my pal. We want to show you somewhat, though, ma'am, jest how much we *did* think o' him, an' we won't take 'no' for no answer. We jest got together an' had a little talk, an' we decided that the on'y fittin' way to do it was to donate a certain amount for a tombstone to Wilbur Peasley, to be put over his grave back on his own soil he come from!"

The crowd gasped. Lon looked nervous, Miss Belinda allowed two tears to trickle—and Hardpan boomed on, his voice filled with emotion:

"I'm a pore man. I am, ma'am, an' it wasn't my own idea. It was the great an'

the noble an' the fine idea, ma'am, o' our honorable host o' The Golden Pickaxe—Lon Partridge. He heads the amount, ma'am, he does, with jest five hundred golden dollars!"

Lon purpled, whitened—and stayed white. Before he could say a word, Miss Peasley had uttered a long-drawn "O-o-o-oh!" of appreciation, and Hardpan had walked over to him:

"An' that ain't all, ma'am. Montana Al, ma'am, has come in with a hundred, an' Shifty Pete says fifty, an'—"

Religiously, Hardpan Nichols picked out the six men—all cronies and henchmen of Lon's who had been in the parlor that first night in the hope of seeing him make a fool of himself. Incidentally, he showed excellent judgment, for he judged to a nicety precisely the limit each one could possibly be damaged. What is more, he took occasion to work in a few outsiders, people who, off and on, had offended him, and for whom he had cherished vengeance. Indeed, it was one of the greatest days in the pessimist's life, and it has gone down in Simmering Sands history as about the most brilliant stroke of turning the tables that the turbulent and hustling mining camp has known.

BACK in their dilapidated shack, after the stage had gone, Hardpan and Rainbow sat. They were silent. On the face of the latter was a wide smile, but as one was almost constantly there that was nothing unusual; on the face of the former, however, a grin that could not be held back was playing, and that *was* odd. for Hardpan rarely if ever showed mirth when not speaking:

"Well, Hardpan," opined his crony, "I

shore reckon, I do, that jest for once you're goin' to admit that the worl' has done progressed an' that there ain't even one little thing wrong with it!"

With a start, the pessimist jerked his body upright and set his features in their grimmest and bitterest and sourest lines. Nevertheless, appropriate words for once failed to come to him:

"You think so?" was all he could manage to bark.

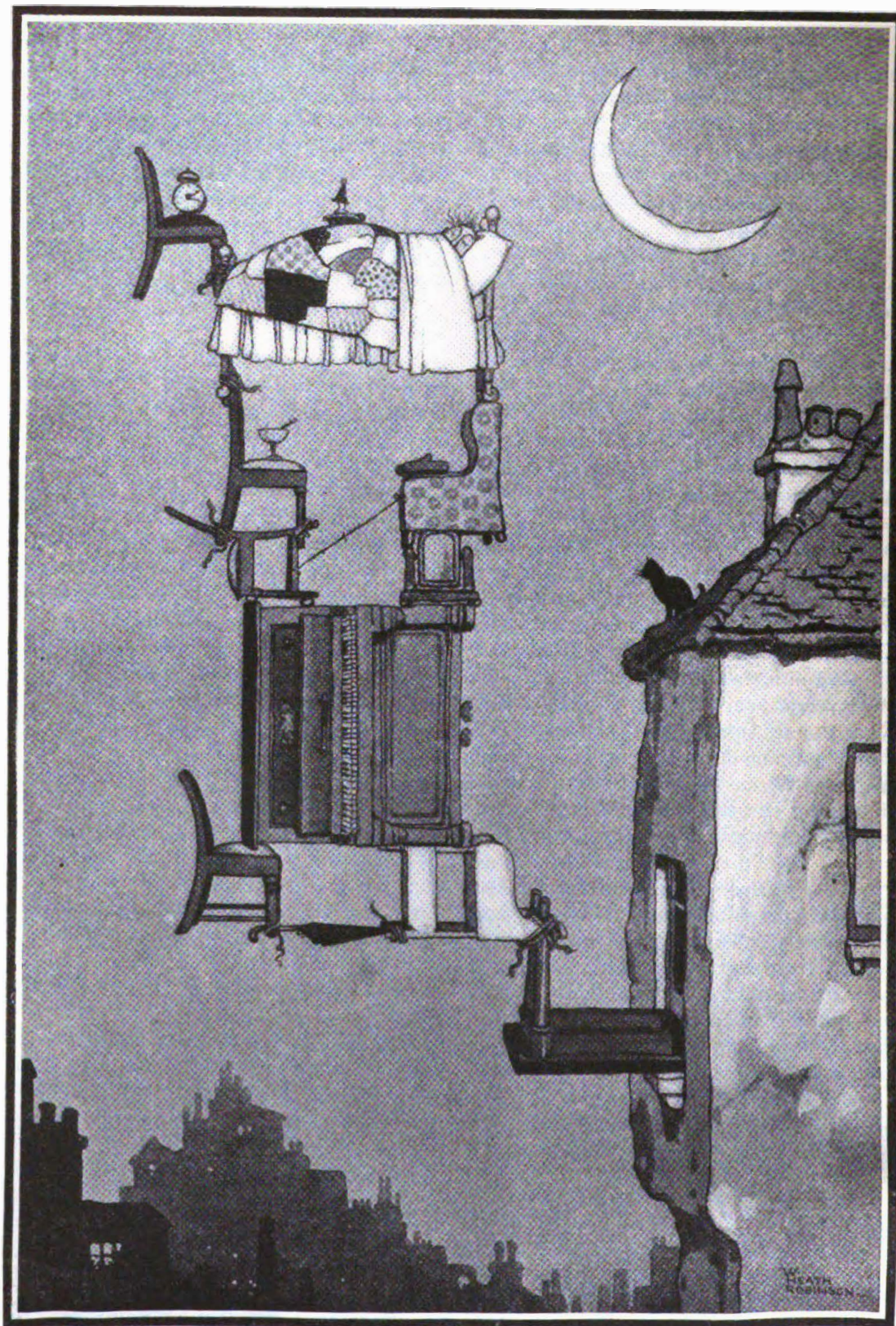
"I shore do, Hardpan, I shore do," continued his genial partner. "There you go an' get in a mess that it looks like they's no gettin' out of—an' do you get out? You does more. You not on'y turns the tables on Lon where it hurts most, but you go an' really make a pore little ol' lady mighty darn happy for the rest o' her life! . . . Yessir, Hardpan, I shore do reckon you can't find nothin' wrong!"

It is not always so difficult to make a pessimist out of an optimist—but it is almost a rank impossibility to make an optimist out of a pessimist. In order to strengthen this assertion, I ask you to listen to what Hardpan Nichols said after a long moment of deep thought:

"Rainbow, you shore are a fool—you shore are! 'Member that there measley, ugly, claim-jumpin' galoot of a Sid Harley that borrered my axe one day some eight year ago an' never come back nor never said no word, even after we heard he'd struck it rich an' made a million? Well—well, Rainbow—why couldn't *he* 'a' bin here?"

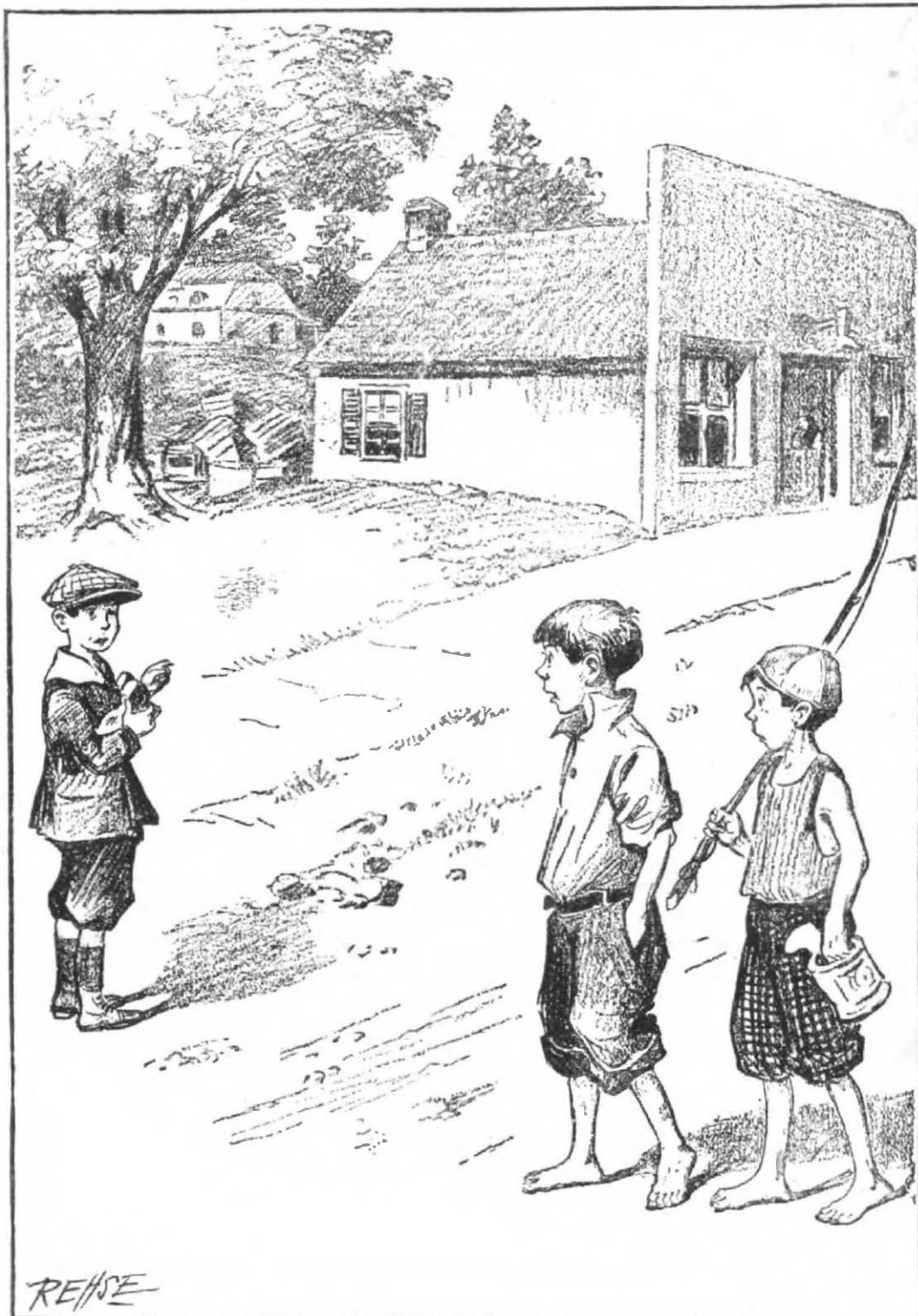
"I could 'a' stuck him, with all his money, for a thousan'! . . . No, Rainbow, it ain't hard to see that you don't know that there never can be no what you might call perfec' situation!"

"When West Meets West," by William H. Hamby, is a powerful story of the West to appear in next month's issue of WAYSIDE TALES AND CARTOONS MAGAZINE, the action affording a converging point of the old West and the new. Don't miss this dramatic tale of a heroic epic in American history!



Heath Robinson in The Bystander, London

A good suggestion for stuffy summer nights!



REHSE

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Rehse in New York World

Gooky: Come on down to the creek, Gimlet.
Gimlet: Can't. Gotta go an' have some new soles put on my shoes. They're so thin the pebbles hurt my feet through 'em!
Gooky: Aw say, Jimmy, why don't cha get some real feet like us?

DAN MORRISON killed his engine, and the Sea Gull slid through the smooth water and came to a stop along the edge of the fish-wharf. With an unconscious thrill of pleasure in his young strength the boy swung a heavy box of groceries from the able, little naphtha boat to the dock, then bent and picked up a smaller package, made as though to throw it, checked himself and laid it gently beside the box of groceries. New hip-boots at nine dollars the pair were to be treated with respect. The Sea Gull moored, he went up the pathway past the store, gaily whistling in the summer twilight.

"Hev ye been to Portland?" a voice hailed him.

"Yes, Uncle Henry," the boy answered, "jist gittin' back."

"Some fellers say the pollack was bitin'. Did ye git some?" the old voice queried.

"Eighteen hundred pound, hand-linin' an' on the trawls. They bring six an' a half cents to Portland."

"Waal, ain't thet suthin'!" continued Uncle Henry. "I don't cal'late pollack bites more'n couple days each year an' ye jist hit 'em right. Six an' a half cents, too, by jeast! You be lucky, Dan'l."

"I sure be," Dan agreed cordially, and passed on to his own home next door.

It was past the usual supper hour, but his mother had some saved for him and the boy fell to the corned-hake, cold biscuits and blueberry pie with a will. Mrs. Morrison watched in that pleased silence common to all mothers who have healthy, hungry sons to feed. The meal finished, Dan put the money for the fish in the old brass kettle, and donned the new sea-boots.

"They look fine," commented Mrs. Morrison. "Be you goin' out?"

"Yes," Dan answered, giving her a grateful look for her praise of his new possessions, "goin' to see Loretta."

Uncle Henry was on his steps and greeted Dan with his customary delicacy:

"Be ye goin' to see Loretty, Dan'l? Cal'late to make a match thar?"

"I ain't rich enough to git married yit,"

The Outer Reef at Amigal Head

By

Elmer Brown Mason

the boy answered, laughing to cover his embarrassment.

"Waal, ain't thet suthin'," squeaked the old man contemptuously. "Ye own your own boat, an' ye be goin' on twenty-one. I married when I was eighteen."

"Cost more to live naow," Dan threw back over his shoulder.

Dan's road led along the sea, dotted with small, rock-bound islands of Casco Bay.

It was a beautiful, clear June evening, water and sky a deep cerulean blue, just the color of Loretta's eyes the boy told himself. He paused and gazed out over the ocean. Its immensity, mystery, sense of hidden power gripped him, the spell of its beauty was upon him, though he could not have translated it into words, even into coherent thoughts. With a final backward glance he turned from the road up a dusty path lined with hollyhocks.

There was no one on the front porch and Dan pushed open the door into the living room, only to find it empty.

"Loretta!" he called. There was no answer, but the sound of a rocking chair

In this delightful New England idyl, Elmer Brown Mason has successfully caught and "fixed" the atmosphere of the Maine fishing village, pre-occupied with its little comedies and dramas, but with the spirit of tragedy always hovering sufficiently near to add a somber note to the background. Into this setting, with its Dan Morrisons and Loretas and Uncle Henrys, bring an Enid Tompkins, from the large city, and there is bound to result an intensely human story.

violently in motion guided him to the kitchen. As he opened the door the chair abruptly ceased swinging and Aunt Jennie Watts spoke from its depths:

"Ef ye be lookin' for Loretty she ain't here an' she ain't goin' to be."

The boy stared at her uncomprehendingly.

"She ain't here!" he repeated. "Where is she?"

"She's went to Portland," announced Aunt Jennie with immense complacency, "My sister's cousin got her a chance to clerk in a store. I sez to her, sez I, 'Ef you got the least git up an' git in you, which the Lord knows none of the Wattses ever did hev, you'll start right up thar to Bath by the night mail waggon an' take the seven-ten to Portland. Ef you ain't you'll stay here an' marry a fisherman an' never be nothin' all your born days. Look at Mabel Taylor,' sez I. 'The Taylors never 'mounted to shucks but Mabel goes to Portland to clerk an' marries a bank man an' naow she has her own home, electric lights, hired help, seven children an' stationery wash tubs!' I allers done right

by thet girl an' I don't aim to see her wastin' 'way takin' care o' no fisherman's children. I . . ."

"Did . . . did she leave any word, any writin' fer me?" interrupted Dan.

"Lan' yes, tho' I sez to her, I sez, 'What's the good o' it? You ain't never goin' to see him ag'in,' I sez."

"I cal'late you're right,' she sez. 'But I'm goin' to leave him this jist the same.' I was in two minds to put it in the stove after she had went but I clean fergit an' left it stuck up thar back of the clock."

The boy took the pink envelope from its resting place and tore it open with awkward fingers. There were only a few lines:

"Dear Dan: I am going to Portland and I ain't coming back. I ain't going to waste my life in a fishing town and if I had stayed I would have married you and never got away from Amigal Head. I do love you, but I want to see real life more. I suppose you will marry Edith Wells now, but you can't give her the ring you gave me because I am going to keep it. So farewell forever.

"Loretta."

Aunt Jennie watched Dan eagerly as he slowly spelled out the note, her small black eyes as bright as those of a sparrow fixed on an unconscious worm pushing up through the mold. When he had finished she spoke again:

"'The sooner you git another girl the better fer all concerned,' sez I. A man ain't no use without a woman to take keer o' him—the Good Book bears me out in thet. Don't stand thar moonin' out o' your eyes like a cod. Set down!" she concluded sharply.

DAN did not even hear her. The pink envelope crushed in his square fingers, he turned and went swiftly back through the house.

The light had all but faded and the moon had not yet risen to flood the world with mystery. Little waves sighed and moaned softly on the rocky shore. The sea lay still, as though holding her breath,

waiting. Through the turmoil and dull ache within him, Dan first became conscious of the steady clump of his new sea-boots on the rocky ground, then of the sound of the water. Why was it that all women hated the sea, the sea that fed them, gave them their livelihood, he asked himself? Why was the lot of a fisherman's wife deemed so miserable in women's eyes? They were loved, bore children, were cared for by their men as were their sisters of the city, and, in addition, they had the sea. Dan tried to imagine living where he could not look out over the water—and failed. But, after all, what did it matter what he thought! Loretta was gone!

The sea boots clumped up the steps of the Morrison home. All was dark within and the boy groped his way toward his room. A door opened at the head of the stairs and his father's voice came down to him:

"Thet you, Dan?"

"Yes," the boy answered tonelessly.

"Be at the store at six o'clock. Thar's a rusticator an' his daughter wants to go fishin'. They was afraid it mout be too early. Hope it ain't goin' to be so fer ye," and the door closed on a laugh.

II

DAN slept late—for him—and it was five o'clock before he awoke to a world of woe. Loretta was gone! It was as though the firmament had ceased to support the stars, the sea become fishless. Nevertheless, nature was far from attuned to his mood. Out of doors was still dew-wet and sweet while the water already sparkled with points of light, giving promise of a calm, hot day. The boy drew in great lung-fulls of the salt air as he came down the steps and, unconsciously, his head rose.

Next door Uncle Henry, his one good leg up on the railing, was already enconced in his rocker.

"Mornin' Dan'l," he greeted the boy, "Be ye goin' to take them rusticators fishin'?" then, without waiting for an answer,

"His name is Tompkins, ain't no one 'round these parts by thet name. He makes bilers fer en-jines in N'York but he doan't look strong 'nough to do much work o' thet kind. Cal'late he's made his pile. He's got one o' them actressy-lookin' daughters, so ye mind out haow ye do—Loretty's liable to give ye up an' daown the country ef ye doan't."

"All right, Uncle Henry," Dan agreed listlessly.

Uncle Henry peered after him out of his dim, wise old eyes. "Suthin' ain't quite right thar," he soliloquized shrewdly, "an' Dan'l's a good boy. Waal, I reckon somebody 's liable to come an' tell me 'baout it ef I set here long 'nough."

ON THE dock a rather frail, middle aged man greeted Dan with the question: "Are you Mr. Morrison?"

It took the boy several moments to recognize himself by this unusual title and even then he did not answer, simply stared at the girl who had come around the corner of the store. Gray corduroy knickers came just above her knees which were bare, below them were heavy stockings ending in half length boots. She wore a middy with a very broad collar, a red tie at her throat and a corduroy Norfolk smartly belted in at the waist. Dan had seen rusticators of the opposite sex in trousers before, indeed the summer visitors rather affected Girl Scout outfits, but nothing so finished as this. His admiration was too plain to escape the girl, and it did not offend her.

"I hope the boat named 'Sea Gull' is yours," she addressed him. "It's so nice and clean. Just a duck of a boat!"

"Thet's mine," the boy answered, with a thrill of pride. "I'll go git her."

It was low tide and the long, slow Atlantic swell was breaking on the reef just off Carrying Head. Dan guided the Sea Gull well clear of it and headed past Mark Island. The engine was running sweetly and a light touch now and then on the tiller was all that was necessary to steer the boat. The man's few questions

as to the fishing he might expect, the boy answered briefly. Then the girl claimed his attention.

"I should think that it would be perfectly heavenly going out over this wonderful sea every day," she said.

"It's rough sometimes," he ventured shyly.

"Then I think it would be just splendid," she cried enthusiastically, "I can see it! The waves rolling mountains high! Oh, I know I shouldn't be scared."

THE boy wanted to laugh and then thought better of it. Instead he turned and examined her gravely.

"Women folk don't holt much by the sea," he said. "Leastwise them at Amigal Head doan't."

"I do, though," she answered, smiling at him. "Of course, I know you go through 'all the perils of the deep,' but don't you love it just the same?"

Dan gave the question some thought. When he turned back to her she was still smiling.

"I guess I'm uster it," he said, "I . . . I . . . well, I'm uster it."

"You mean you love it," she challenged. "Listen:

'What is a woman that you forsake her,
And the hearth fire and the home-acre,
To go with the old grey widow-maker.'

"The widow-maker is the sea, you know, that takes you men away from us women. You can't resist her.

'She has no strong white arms to fold
you,
But the ten-times-fingering weed to hold
you
Bound on the rock where the tide has
rolled you.

Then you drive out where the storm-
clouds swallow:
And the sound of your oar-blades falling
hollow,
Is all we have left through the months
to follow!

"That's Kipling, you know, the English writer. Isn't it splendid?"

"It's . . . it's poetry, ain't it?" queried Dan suspiciously.

"Wonderful poetry," she answered. "Don't you like it?"

"Yes," he answered, after due thought. "Yes, I guess I do. It's so common like—not like no poetry I've hear'd. That piece 'bout the sea-weed is right. It does bind 'round things snug."

"Doesn't the last verse *sound* like the sea to you?" she insisted.

Again Dan gave the matter due consideration before he answered.

"Ye-es, a smooth sea, the rollers comin' in from outside."

The girl gave him a look of surprise, examined him with something of appraisal in her glance, till the boy flushed under her scrutiny and turned away. A moment later he swerved the boat with a slight twitch of the tiller rope, killed his engine and the Sea Gull slowed, rocked nearly motionless on the smooth swell. Slipping past his passengers to the bow he let go the stone bound with wire that served as an anchor and the boat swung head on to the tide.

"Guess we orter git suthin' here," he said.

THE fish bit sharply; hake, cod, rock-cod, even a halibut. Mr. Tompkins soon abandoned his deep-sea pole and took to hand-lining as more efficient. The girl hauled in fish after fish to have them unhooked by Dan; tired finally, of the sport and announced that she would rather watch. The hours went by until, enthusiast though he was, the summer visitor announced that he was ready for home. Enid Tompkins, who had been looking out over the water while the men fished, turned at the homeward rush of the boat and came to sit beside Dan.

"When do you like the sea best?" she opened the conversation.

"I guess I like her all the time," he answered slowly.

"I don't blame you," she assented enthusiastically. "I don't blame you. Think of always looking out to sea, of seeing

the 'old gray-widow-maker' in all her moods! Oh you don't realize your luck! I'd like to live by the sea for ever and ever."

"You ain't like the women 'round these parts," Dan said shortly. "They hate the water."

"I don't see how they can," the girl exclaimed hotly.

"They do," Dan stated drily.

"What *do* they like?" Enid Tompkins queried curiously. "I should think they'd be happy with the sea and . . . and you splendid, strong fishermen."

"Oh, I doan't know for sartain," the boy hesitated. "They want to live in cities, go to the picters, dance—though there's a power o' dancin' in these parts."

"Do you have dances here?" the girl asked. "Where? When?"

"'Bout every day o' the week some place 'round. There's a dance tonight right here at Amigal Head in the hall."

"I'm certainly going," the girl said, "I know it will be most amusing—lots of fun. You'll ask me to dance, won't you?"

"I hain't figured on goin'," Dan answered, truthfully.

"Oh, do promise me you'll go!" she urged, with pleading eyes. "I shan't know a soul there but you."

"All right," he assented listlessly. All his pain had come back to him with the mention of the dances. He had always taken Loretta to them and they were counted the best dancers in Amigal Head—and now Loretta was gone!

THE Sea Gull came to a perfect stop by the dock under the eyes of critical observers. Dan caught the ladder with his boat-hook and steadied while his passengers disembarked. The girl gave his hand a friendly pressure as he helped her on shore and spoke up so loudly that the watchers could not fail to catch each word:

"Remember, you've promised to come tonight and to ask me to dance with you."

"Yes ma'am," Dan answered in a low voice, his face flushing crimson.

III

THANKEE, kindly," Uncle Henry greeted Dan as the boy came up his steps with a small codfish dangling from his hand. "Ye al'lays think to gut 'em clean, too. Talkin' 'bout guttin' fish, Dan'l, 'minds me of the sayin' they is jist as good fish in the sea as has ever been netted, which applies to wimmen, too."

"Thet's right, Uncle Henry," agreed Dan, recognizing the attempt at sympathy but loth to show his gratitude.

"An', Dan'l, the rightest man I ever heard of an' the best church goer hed a motter hung up in his kitchen, 'Dang all wimmen'," and, with this surprising bit of prevarication, the old man stumped into the house, flapping the dead fish irritably against the door jam as he went.

Dan swallowed his dinner quickly and went out to pull his lobster pots. He dreaded meeting anyone for he knew that all Amigal Head was seething with gossip over Loretta's departure and curious to see how he would take it. The afternoon went slowly. Mechanically, as he pulled the last pot, he noticed that the Sea Gull floated exactly above the ledge on which the waves had broken at low tide that morning. He reset the trap near the edge of the reef, gazing down into the clear water to make sure that it sank clear of the rock. Quite a ledge, he told himself subconsciously. A little sea would pile up a wave there that would crush anything between it and the shore, fifty yards away. Quite a ledge!

The afternoon finally gone, Dan moored the Sea Gull, left the dock, and took the path for home.

"Be ye goin' to the dance, Dan'l?" squeaked Uncle Henry after him.

"I be," he flung back over his shoulder. "You goin', Uncle Henry?"

"Who in time 'd call the figgers ef I wahn't thar?" indignantly queried the old man. "I'm glad you're goin'. Perhaps ye might lick anybody who said anythin' to ye?" he hazzarded eagerly.

"Might." came the laconic reply.

COUNTRY dances at Amigal Head care joyous affairs. Everyone goes; everyone has a good time. Grandmas are swung by their grandsons, while grandpas blithely foot it with sixteen-year-old misses. Summer visitors are initiated into the mysteries of "Hull's Victory" and "The Lady of the Lake," while the bolder spirits among the fishermen essay the fox-trot. Dan faced the entire population of Amigal Head with the knowledge that Loretta's flight was the absorbing topic of the hour. One youth ventured a reference to the subject in his hearing and was promptly invited outside. Dan emerged from the encounter viciously victorious and frankly looking for more trouble. He returned to the dance hall and walked across the floor to the girl from the city, all eyes following him.

"So good of you not to forget," the vision in fluffy pink greeted him. "You'll have to be lenient with me, though. I don't know square dances. Perhaps you'd better dance with someone else, and I'll watch."

"Come on, it's easy," urged Dan, marvelling at his own audacity and pleasantly thrilled with it. "I ain't goin' to dance with anyone but you," he added for the benefit of alert listeners.

"I'm afraid you'll regret it," Enid Tompkins answered, rising, however, and joining with her partner the long line of men and women that extended down the center of the hall.

"First an' every other couple change over," comamnded Uncle Henry. Then the violin struck up "Turkey in the Straw," the piano bravely following, and they were off. Through the maze of figures Dan piloted the girl, and it seemed only a few minutes until the final "Swing your partners!" and he was leading the city girl back to her seat.

Dan muttered a hasty "thank you," and started to go but his partner held him.

"Thank you, I didn't know that square dances were such fun," she said.

"That's all right," the boy muttered uncomfortably.

"You and father are going fishing again tomorrow, I understand," Enid Tompkins continued brightly. "Do you mind very much if I go along?" and she turned the battery of her eyes on the young fisherman.

"It . . . it ain't goin' to be rough," he stammered, and this time made his escape, slipping through the crowd of men about the door into the outer darkness.

THE moonlight was turning the little waves to silver as he went down the path and out on the fish wharf. There, his legs dangling over the water, he sat thinking. Loretta had gone out of his life—the pain of it seemed unbearable. Suddenly he rose to his feet and, actuated by some motive he did not himself understand, stretched his arms out to the sea. "Must be goin' crazy," he muttered, and, with a shake of his head, turned back to the dance hall.

He did not stay long. The city girl had gone and he took no other partners. Twice Aunt Jennie beckoned to him imperiously, but he only shook his head.

IV

LORETTA WATTS, inspired by her aunt's tirade against the life of a fisherman's wife, had left Amigal Head, reached Bath and taken the seven-ten for Portland, all in one breath as it were.

It was only on the train that she began to think. There was, of course, the pleasurable excitement of going to the city, but there was also the wrench of leaving Dan. A little sob gathered in her throat. Loretta resolutely swallowed it and turned her thoughts to the delicious mystery of her future—to a dream of the Prince Charming that Aunt Jennie had evoked with her praises of city men, the Prince Charming who was to give her a home bright with electric lights, stationery wash-tubs, perhaps—a maid! She drew a tiny mirror from the metal-clasped handbag that had been Dan's Christmas gift. It gave back a picture of brown

eyes and a skin glowing with the vitality that the sea gives her daughters, a wealth of brown hair in which golden lights gleamed. Yes, she was sure the Prince would think her pretty.

Cousin Amos Williams, a tall silent man, and his spinster sister, Cousin Sarah, met the girl at the train and took her to his home where she was to stay. It was in the outskirts of town, a small white house where the reality of electric lights and a white porcelain bath tub more than lived up to Loretta's expectations. Her own room, just above the kitchen, seemed to her a bower of luxury.

Cousin Amos was one of the partners in the store where she was to work, and the next morning found Loretta installed behind a counter of notions, with an elderly woman to initiate her into the mystery of supplying the needs of people in search of needles, thread and safety pins. It was a triumphant day. Loretta's mind quickly assimilated the prices of articles, and the most exacting customers failed to ruffle her good nature. More than one admiring glance paid tribute to the fresh young face and happy eyes. And there was no lack of Prince Charmings!

Loretta saw them all about her in the "natty dressers" among the male employees of the store. One of them, during a lull at her counter, managed to invite her to go to the movies, an invitation that she promptly accepted.

She was very tired from being on her feet all day when he called for her in the evening, but fatigue was quickly forgotten in the sight of the crowded theatre, the lights, then the sudden darkness and the thrilling story that leaped to life on the screen. Back in her room, she dropped to sleep happily almost as soon as she touched the bed. Once she woke with a start of terror at the sharp scream of a switch engine, then lay awake to listen for something that was unaccountably wanting—it was the sound of the sea she suddenly realized—and turned back to sleep with a laugh.

THE next day began inauspiciously. Under a cross-examination, held by Cousin Sarah at the breakfast table, Loretta admitted that she had only met her admirer of the night before at the store. She received a sharp rebuke with a warning that it must not happen again.

It was a sultry day and the girl, accustomed to sea breezes, suffered accordingly. Also a customer asked where she might get just the shade of color that Loretta had, infuriating the girl when she realized that she was being indirectly accused of the deadly sin of "paintin'." In the evening Cousin Amos tried to teach her to play checkers, but found her a dull pupil.

The week went slowly by. Once Loretta was allowed to go out in the evening with the son of a partner in the store. During the ride in the young man's car he talked a great deal and made jokes that Loretta was not quick enough to grasp. In mortification she realized that she failed to laugh at the right time and that the young man found her "slow." The rest of the evenings were passed with Cousin Amos and Cousin Sarah, the former playing checkers with her or asking questions about the folks at Amigal Head, the latter knitting in stony silence. It was alone in her room, however, that she suffered most. Thoughts of Dan *would* steal in. Did he miss her very much? Perhaps he had found quick consolation! The vision of another girl sitting in her place in the Sea Gull made her choke.

FRIDAY night Cousin Amos suddenly suggested taking her to the movies. His sister gave him a furious glance, then compressed her lips to the thinnest of lines. Loretta, tired of staying in the house, welcomed the diversion, and took his arm with a happy laugh when they reached the street, blissfully unconscious of the picture of May and December they presented.

The unexpected presentation of some chocolates, a seat well in front, and she nestled down comfortably to the evening's

pleasure. A slight "Oh!" escaped her as the screen presented two children, bare-footed and dirty, stepping across a mud flat, their eyes fixed on the ground. Came the tiny spurt of a buried clam and they dug frantically. Loretta knew how deliciously oozy the mud felt to their bare feet. Her own toes curled involuntarily in the new patent leather slippers. The simple plot worked itself out until nearly the end, when a fisherman in his naphtha boat swept clear of the docks, fading smaller and smaller out to the horizon. But it was not at the hero that Loretta was gazing, it was at the sea! Pale green waves rose and fell on the screen. She could feel the heave of them, taste the salt of the spray, plunge her eyes into their cool depths. Then, for one breathless moment she remembered the look in Dan's eyes as they gazed out over the restless waves, the far-off look that was one with the heave of salt water, she remembered. . . . The picture on the screen changed. Loretta came back to the sigh of dim forms about her, to the heat, the stifling heat! She fought for breath, heard her voice as though from far away: "Cousin Amos, I'm sick. . . . I want to get out . . . the sea."

Loretta found herself in the street clutching her companion's arm.

"What is it, dear?" he asked in bewilderment, "What got wrong with you?"

Loretta began to sob hysterically. "It's everything," she gasped. "It's hot . . . an' my feet hurt . . . an' seein' the sea . . . I want my home . . ."

"Don't cry, Loretta," he said, a strange note in his voice, "You don't have to work any more if you don't want to. . . . You can have everything, a home of your own."

"What do you mean," the girl asked, forgetting her tears. "I dont' guess I understand."

They had reached the house, Amos Williams unlatched the door with a hand that shook slightly.

"You can have this house for home, any house in town," he said, unsteadily.

"I'm rich. You can have everything if you'll marry me, Loretta. I'm . . . I'm only your second cousin, you know," he added, lamely, at the look of consternation on the girl's face.

For a moment Loretta gazed at him wide-eyed, then in a flash she ran past him, throwing up her arm as though to ward off a blow.

"But you're old," she cried in horror, "Why, you're—you're old!" and she darted up the stairs, the sound of her weeping coming down to him until it was cut off abruptly by the closing of a door.

V

WHAT was that piece 'bout the star an' the tide?" asked Dan. Boy and girl had been together for four mornings and two lazy, summer afternoons. Under her friendliness Dan's shyness had worn thin.

"I'm so glad you like it and remember it," she replied. "I only wish I could sing it to you. This is the one you mean:

'I must go down to the sea again,
To the open ways and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship
And a star to steer her by.'

"Oh, yes, the tide verse, too:

'I must go down to the sea again,
For the call of the running tide
Is a strong call and a sure call
That will not be denied.'

"Masfield must love the sea the way you do, Dan, or he never could have written that. Isn't the idea of the star lovely?"

Dan thought it over.

"I like the tide best," he answered judicially. "You can feel it, jist as though it was pullin' you out to sea on the ebb."

"You've made me understand the sea better," the girl said softly. "I don't know how I can bear to leave it now. I wish something would happen to keep me here always."

The boy's heart gave a great leap. It was not for nothing that she had prac-

ticed her charms on him in these sea-filled days they had been together—and hearts are caught easily on the rebound.

"Let's go home now," suddenly spoke Mr. Tompkins from his end of the boat, winding up the heavy line as he spoke. He beckoned to his daughter while Dan bent over the engine.

"I don't want any more of that, Enid," he said, angrily. "I've been watching you and I don't like it. That boy is much too nice to play with—and hurt. Understand me, I don't want any more of it."

"Hush, daddy, he'll hear you! Don't be silly," she warned.

DAN'S mind was a medley of emotions as he drove the Sea Gull homeward. The image of Loretta reproached him—but then, Loretta had deliberately abandoned him. He owned his own boat and had money in the bank, and—and she loved the sea. He'd teach her to love it more! And she said she wanted to stay.

He steered the Sea Gull between the reef at Carrying Head and the shore through force of habit. Then he looked back to see the swell of calm green water above the hidden ledge. Ten minutes later he had stopped the engine and glided smoothly up to the dock. Mr. Tompkins got out first and Dan gave his hand to the girl, detaining her.

"You—you can stay by the sea al'lers," he stammered. "That is, if you want to. I've got my own boat . . ."

"We shan't go fishing tomorrow I'm afraid," she interrupted quickly. "My fiancé—that is, the man I'm going to marry—is coming up from Boston."

Dan stared at her, then groped for words: "The man—oh, yes! Well, it's goin' to be rough, anyway . . . too rough!"

Fitful sleep, broken by long periods of wakefulness, was Dan's portion that night. What was wrong about fishermen? The girl of his own kind would have none of him, the girl from outside who professed to love the sea had mocked him. Why

was it? The sea was kind to those who understood her, gave of her bounty generously to them. It was the sea that smoothed out troubles, absorbed them somehow in her vastness. Dan arose, dressed, and went down to the dock.

The gray morning light showed how rough the water was outside the harbor. Not too rough for fishing, he told himself. There was plenty of bait in the Sea Gull, and he pushed off. Another boat was just ahead of him in the morning haze and Dan drew alongside it.

"Ye'll not git enough fish to pay fer gas'lene this weather," Uncle Henry greeted him.

"Whar ye goin', Uncle Henry," the boy asked sharply. "Oh, I forgot, it's the first of the month—your pension time. It ain't no weather . . ."

"Fer an old cripple feller to be sailin'," cut in Uncle Henry. "Well, I hain't ever steered no boat with my feet yit, Dan'l, an', talkin' 'baout steerin', your steerin' gear ain't much."

"Thet's so," agreed the boy, "I got to rig new lines right away. Well, so long, Uncle Henry!"

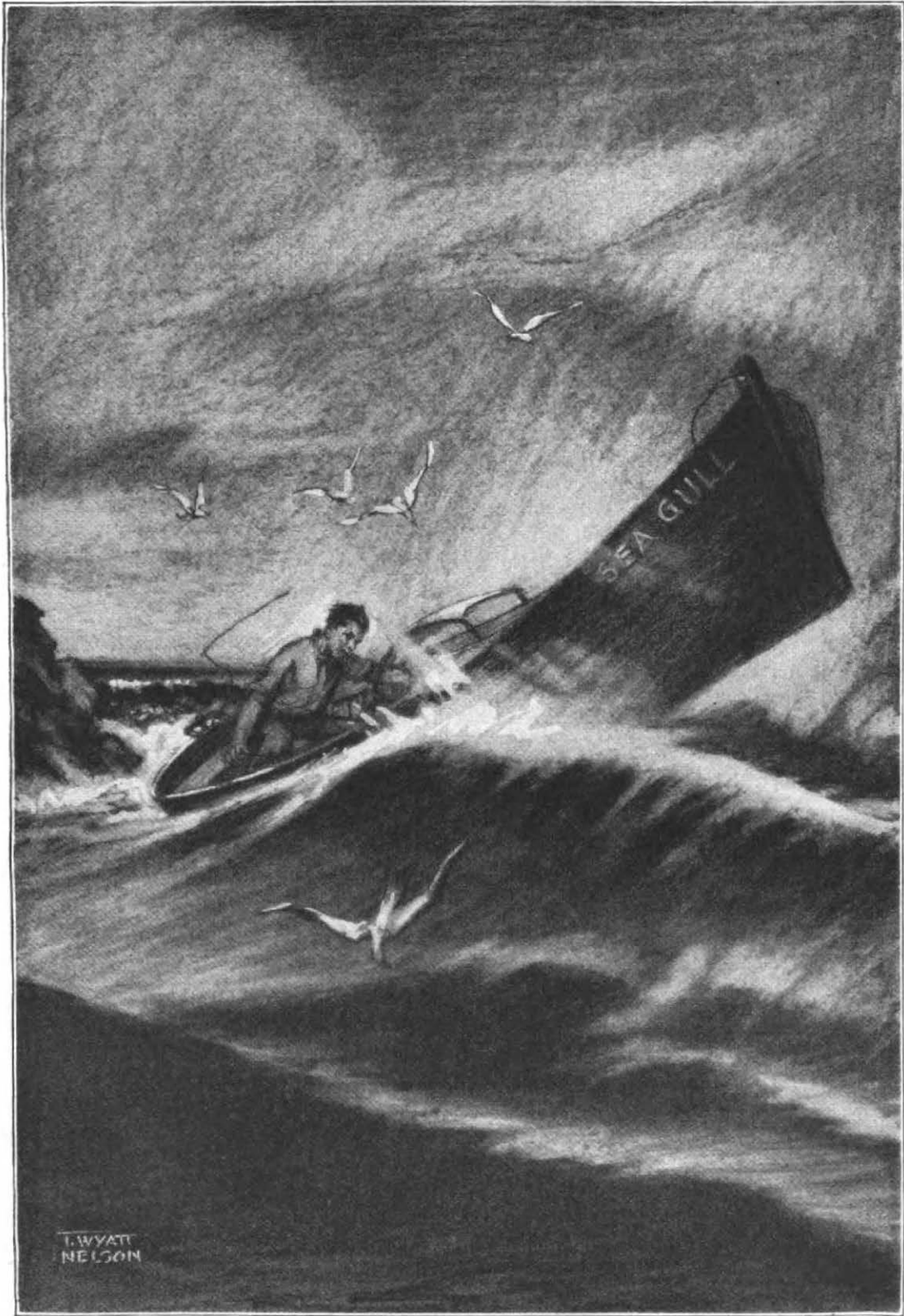
"Wait a minute," the old man commanded. "Do you reckon a fisherman would make a good city man, a bank president, fer instance?"

"Why, no, of course not," replied the puzzled boy.

"I agree with ye. Naow, do you think a city girl would make a good fisherman's wife?" And, as Dan opened his mouth to angry words, the old man added, "Ye be a danged fool, Dan'l," and sheered off with a quick twitch of the tiller ropes.

VI

LORETTA cried herself miserably to sleep, to dream blissfully of the sea. Cousin Amos was absent from the breakfast table in the morning, and his sister gave voice to the acrimonious opinion that there "weren't no fool like an old fool," adding the pleasing statement that "them as nourishes vipers in their hosoms is pretty apt to get bit." The



"Quick as thought the boy jerked his tiller rope to meet the wave bow on. The rope snapped like a thread."

girl was glad to escape and face the unaccustomed heat of the streets.

In some mysterious fashion, the life of the store had lost its lure. The Prince Charmings who had so recently delighted her eyes seemed pale shadows of men whose natty clothes only accentuated the narrowness of their shoulders. The day wore wearily on, broken only by a sharp reproof from the floor walker for some fancied impertinence to a customer. Noon came and the store gradually emptied.

LORETTA sank on a stool behind her counter, too weary and dejected to think of going to lunch. A familiar voice came to her ears.

"I'll take a hull mess o' them safety-pins, ef ye don't mind," it said.

The girl opened her eyes and sprang to her feet with a glad cry:

"Uncle Henry! My, ain't I glad to see you! I was thinkin' I'd never see nobody from the Head no more!"

"Waal, ef it ain't Loretty!" the old man cried in badly-simulated surprise. "Naow ain't thet suthin'! Settin' on a stool as happy as . . . as a lobster."

"Oh, I ain't happy," quavered Loretta. "Uncle Henry, tell me what's happenin' at home." She leaned forward eagerly.

Uncle Henry looked over his glasses with an appraising glance. "Your Aunt Jennie's mighty peart," he volunteered, then cautiously qualified this statement, "Leastways she was when she gave me daown the country 'baout Dan'l Morrison a few days back."

"What has Dan done?" demanded Loretta swiftly.

"Oh, it ain't no wise his fault," drawled Uncle Henry. "In coourse he's a mighty good-lookin' young feller an' well off in this world's goods. So's she, fer thet matter. . . . Oh, it ain't worth talkin' 'baout. Reckon your aunt wants to marry him herself, thet's why she's so rarin' mad."

"You tell me who she is?" demanded Loretta furiously.

"It's too hot to talk here," the old man objected. "You come daown to my boat

an' eat a smack with me, Loretty, an' we can talk ca'm an' collected like. I got an ottermobile out here some'eres."

In a moment Loretta had abandoned her counter and followed Uncle Henry, pinning on her hat as she speeded down the aisle.

IN THE boat, Loretta demanded in no uncertain terms what he meant about Dan.

"Well, I dunno's I've much to tell ye, Loretty," the old man began cautiously, "thar's this girl from the city that's spendin' the summer at Amigal Head. Pretty she is; yes, tol'ble pretty, an' dresses in not much clothes, breeches an' sich. She pays Dan five dollars fer her an' her father to go fishin' with him in the mornin's, an' then she goes lobsterin' with him in the afternoons—I don't cal'late he charges her much fer thet. Your aunt didn't think he was good 'nough fer her, I guess, an' so she comes . . ."

"Not good 'nough fer her!" repeated the girl scornfully. "She ain't good 'nough fer him, makin' a dead set fer him in that shameless way! Uncle Henry, when be you goin' back?"

"Waal, I cal'lated to start right soon."

"I'm goin' with you," the girl announced, defiantly.

"An' what be you goin' to do 'baout the store?"

"Nothin'," she replied, stamping her foot. "I never want to see the store again. I want to go back with you."

"I kinder cal'lated ye would," mused Uncle Henry below his breath as he cast off and turned over his engine.

VII

DAN found that the sea did not run so high in the lea of Big Wood Island, and slipped to the front of the Sea Gull to tighten the canvas that tented the bow of the able little fishing boat. Once clear of Big Wood he ran out past Mark Island over a rough sea and reached the fishing grounds. He was late, and drew scant returns for his ef-

forts. It was not bad fishing that bothered him, though. Unconsciously he was trying to solve the riddle of the universe, mentally laboring over the why of his existence. What did the future hold for him? Was it all laid out, as some people said? Were there definite lines outside of which he must not stray? By rights he should marry a girl of Amigal Head, but the one he had chosen had scorned him. . . .

Long rollers were coming in from the open sea, lifting the Sea Gull high on their crests, nursing her down into their hollows. The girl from the city had been right, Dan mused, the sea *was* beautiful, he loved it. Well, he would go on fishing, saving money. Then, when he was old, perhaps Loretta would come back to Amigal Head and hear of him as the richest man in those parts. He would be nice to her when they met, he decided, but distant. Perhaps in her heart she would wish that she had treated him differently—but then it would be too late! This train of thought comforted him.

DAN came back to the present with the sharp realization that he was hungry. He had had no breakfast; it was now afternoon, and the wind blew keen over the sea. He hauled up the wire-bound stone and turned the bow of the Sea Gull homeward. Wind and tide were with him and the little boat drove ahead like a frightened thing. Carrying Head loomed up; he skirted it, then saw too late that the sea might break any moment on the outer reef.

The Sea Gull was already inside and the boy, remembering his frayed tiller ropes, hesitated to turn her abruptly, preferring to take the chance of the sea not breaking over the ledge in the moment it would take him to win through. He edged a little nearer shore, glanced to his right. The sea sucked back till the teeth of the reef showed, jagged and black, then it rose and the water caught under the rock, tipped forward in a wave twenty feet high.

Quick as thought the boy jerked his tiller rope to meet the wave bow on. The rope snapped like a thread. He jerked in the other direction, that he might meet it stern on. Again the rope parted. With a deafening crash the wave caught the little boat broadside and smashed it on the great rocks of the shore.

Dan, in the water, was beaten down to the kelp. Fighting to the surface he kicked off his heavy boots and struck out from the shore. Well he knew what would be his fate were he carried in on the rocks. The back wash of the wave caught and swept him far outward, then he was buried under the next one just as it seemed to him a voice came over the water.

IT WAS Uncle Henry who first caught sight of Dan's boat, as he and Loretta were rounding Carrying Head at a safe distance from the reef.

"Pretty close in, that feller," he said, then added, "Why, it's Dan'l, sure as shootin'!"

"Is that girl with him?" demanded Loretta sharply.

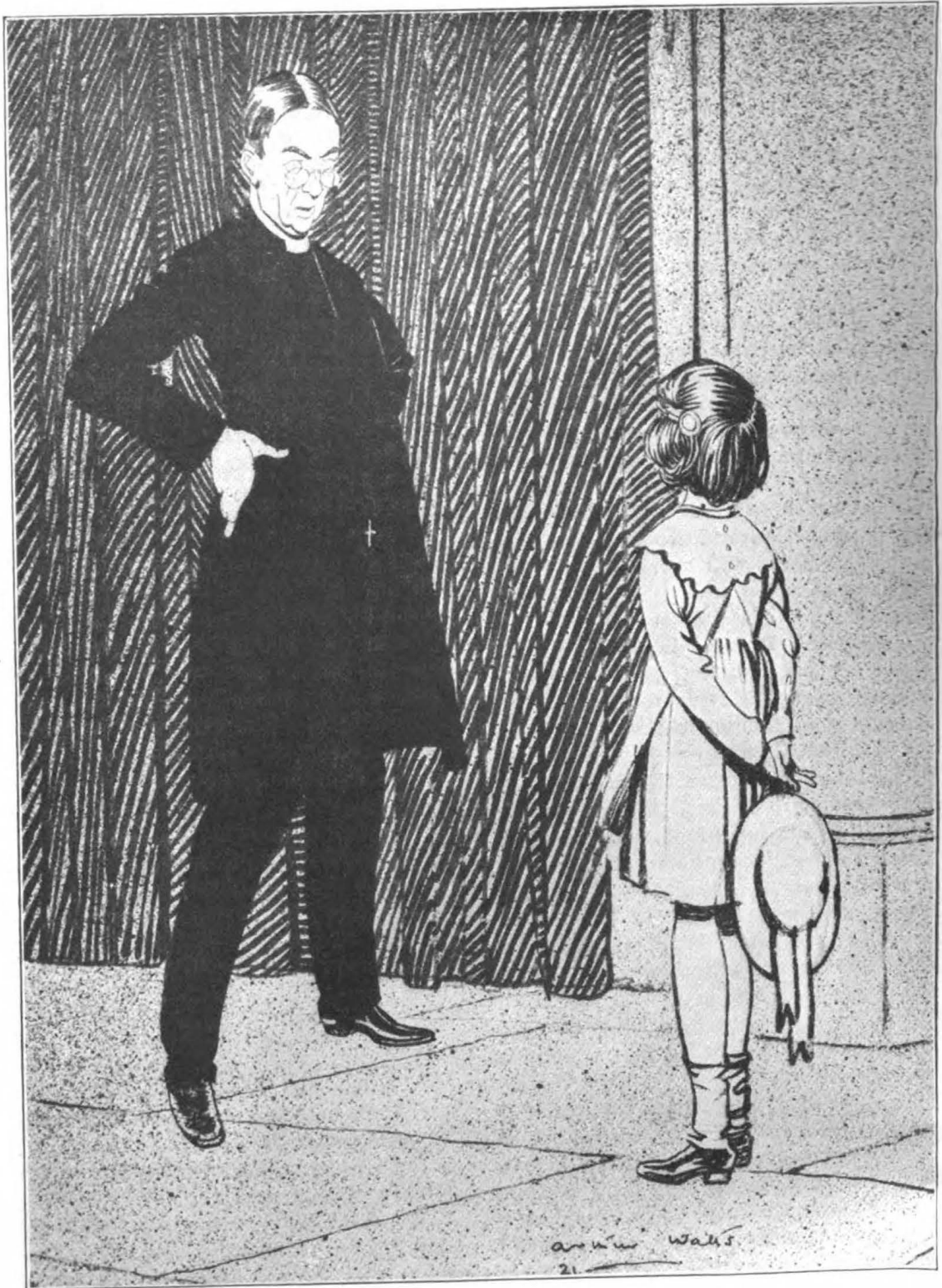
"Can't see, the ledge is breakin'. Dan'l better mind—Land o' Goshen!"

Uncle Henry put over the tiller and went straight in with the sea. The water was boiling over the reef from the back sweep of the last wave. There was every probability that the next wave would lay it bare, smash his boat to atoms, but the old man did not hesitate. Over the rock he drove to the very spot where Dan was struggling feebly to keep afloat.

AS THE boat rounded beside him, Loretta caught the boy under the arms, put forth all her splendid young strength, and drew him to safety.

"Dan, Dan!" she cried, and pressed her warm red lips to his eyes, his cheeks, his mouth, the corners of which sagged wearily, "Oh, Dan . . ."

The boy stirred in her arms, opened his eyes and gazed up at her. Then he closed them again and snuggled closer with a little sigh of content.



From The Sketch. London

HALF CALF?

The vicar (to small parishioner): By the way, what's your father, my child?
The S. P.: A bounder, sir.
The vicar: A bounder?
The S. P.: Yes, sir; 'e bounds books!



GENE CARR

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Carr in New York World

"Oh, don't let's take in that chow, mother!"
"Why?"
"I got a hunch it's one of those problem plays."

The Wise Guy and the Gal

Faint heart never won fair lady. Not that the "gal" was particularly fair, though she was fairly particular, as you will see, or that Philander had ever won a Carnegie hero medal. Philander was just brave without anybody having told him about it, and the sudden discovery of this strange quality astonished him completely. The discovery of bravery in ourselves is like that.

By

Edwin L. Sabin

When Philander Whittemore's father died he left to Philander one parting piece of advice as a legacy: "Don't tell everything you know."

And Philander dutifully cherished this against the time when he might know something to tell, he being a callow strippling whose receding chin countered the intellectual promise of his long nose. He could add two and two, but he stopped at the square root of four. The League of Nations was beyond his horizon.

The world, therefore, was very wide to him; whereupon as a free man, and under that Providence which looks after babes, fools, and pilgrim itinerants, he set out to seek fortune and journeyman jobs as a flivver mechanic. He was a wiz with a flivver, which does not require higher mathematics, and speaks simple language in plain terms.

By dint of sundry sojourns and lifts along the way he arrived at Baker's ranch and road-house in the Colorado Rockies. Here he fixed the Baker machine for his board, and received another piece of advice:

"On your way to Sunset, steer clear of Old Man Mitchell's."

"Why?" Philander asked.

"Not friendly to strangers!"

"Where does he live?"

"Off the trail a little. If you keep to

the main-traveled road you'll be all right." Directions followed.

There seeming to be no reason why he should intrude upon Old Man Mitchell, Philander trudged out in the brightness of the early morning and the fragrance of the pines, his pilgrim's staff for company. Pretty soon he reached a forking of the road, to right and to left, without much distinction of travel for the naked eye. Having, of course, forgotten all that he had been informed upon, Philander took the left-hand fork. The trail proved pleasant, conducting through the timber.

Now in the bottom of a valley, he came to another forking, and a sign. The sign said, facing him at the forks: "Hell's Crossing." Philander read and scratched his head, and seeing scarcely any difference in the two trails he took the left, up the left-hand draw.

The trail had lessened by division. He toiled up where the draw pinched out, and threaded among gloomy jack-pines grown to cumber an old wood road. But the trail certainly went somewhere, and somewhere was good enough for him. He was sure to find a Lizzie at the end.

When he arrived at a rotted log lying across, with brush gathered against it, he put out his staff preparatory to vaulting over; then he heard a quick snap, and the staff jerked almost from his grasp. It

was fast in the steel jaws of a venomous trap—a bear trap, although Philander did not know. Had he made an advancing step his foot would have been in the trap.

Philander thanked the brave staff; he could not extricate it and accordingly had to break it off, which he did with a slight wrench. He trudged on, a little more circumspect, but undaunted. A person with greater sense than Philander might have turned back to the other trail, for bear traps are ugly obstacles. But Philander possessed no great stock of sense.

He did, indeed, poke with his shortened staff, the way getting gloomier and the path crooked, until when he emerged into a sunny park all green and flowery and smiling, behold the trail forked again, with a double sign set "V" shape. And the one sign told of smallpox, and the other of "suden deth."

Philander scratched his head. Evoking no idea he took the left-hand fork, into the waiting timber. He had gone scarcely twenty paces when a rabbit jumped up before him, and throwing his staff after it he was astonished to witness the missile sink upright half its length into the apparently solid twig-strewn way. Yes, the trail here was hollow; when he poked, the surface fell in with a crash and his staff again broke under the twist of poles that had formed a roof.

PHILANDER stared. This was a bear pit and dead fall, but he did not know. Had he stepped upon it—good-night for Philander. Verily he should have turned back. He was not desired in here. He would do better to try the other forks. But he circuited the cave-in and with his staff reduced to a cudgel he followed his nose.

The trees were thickly interlaced overhead; young saplings crowded between the finest trunks. Idly striking about with his cudgel to make a noise to frighten the wild beasts, Philander heard a swish; a bent sapling had whipped straight, and his cudgel dangled out of his reach, snared by a loop of swaying rope. His

strokes had dislodged the loop, fastened down before him, and the spring sapling had hung his club high and dry.

Philander failed to solve the problem; but he managed to climb a tree and rescue his cudgel; and, satisfied but bewildered, knowing naught else to do he pursued the trail.

Presently it forked once more, with another "V" shape sign, of which one board pictured a skull, and the other board crossbones. "Ha ha!" Philander gawked and laughed. He had been choosing the left-hand trail all along, and for same reason, if any, he chose it again. He could imagine no more accidents and ambushes. Three should be sufficient. But he had not reckoned upon the diabolical ingenuity of the trail; for when he dropped his cudgel, at a turn, and stooped to pick it up, his fingers brushed a taut string; he heard a thunderous report, felt a hot blast, and his hat sailed into the brush. Smoke enveloped him. Beside the trail a shotgun was still settling from its recoil.

Philander explored his head; then he ran to his hat. Its crown had been gashed open.

"But," he reflected, "nobody really shot at me. It was only a gun."

And with apologies for the trouble he was making he hastened as fast as possible, to get somewhere.

First he came to another rude sign which announced:

"BEWAIR OF THE DAWG!"

Issuing to the edge of a clearing set amidst the grim hills he saw a lowly ranch and here rushed the dog itself as though put upon the qui vive by the report of the spring-gun.

Philander had no time even to climb a tree. The dog, a mixture of bull and mastiff and Airedale and collie (judging by his guise), bounded barking ferociously. He lunged—Philander left-stepped and struck him lustily upon the nose with the cudgel, and the brute fled,



"And then a bellow interrupted—a bellow not of brute, but of human; and a large man in boots, overalls, flannel shirt and red whiskers came running from the barn."

yelping. Philander entered the ranch yard where in the open before a lean-to shed a girl was cranking a Lizzie.

"What's the matter? No juice?" he hailed.

The girl looked upon him. She was a tremendously pretty girl, albeit hot and bedraggled.

"I can't make it go," said she. "It hasn't gone for two days."

"Aw, pshaw! I can fix it," Philander prated.

And then a bellow interrupted—a bellow not of brute, but of human; and a large man in boots, overalls, flannel shirt and red whiskers came running from the barn.

"You—, you—, you—!" he addressed with infinite variety of profane accusation. "How'd you get in?"

"I walked, sir," Philander explained.

"Oh, he'll hurt you!" breathed the girl.

"You got to fight, you got to fight! I'm going to skin you alive!" blared the man.

Philander did not know just how he did it, but as the man charged in he stepped aside and when the man dived past he hit him—hit him full under the ear. Down sprawled the man. Up he jumped, cursing horridly; in he charged, striking out; whereat Philander affrightedly ducked and gave him a left uppercut on the nose. Down sprawled the man, to sit and hold his nose with reddening hand.

"I quit," said he. "By gosh! 'Nuf! That's me." He rose. "How'd you find this here ranch?"

"By the trail," said Philander.

"Didn't nobody tell you to avoid Old Man Mitchell's, hey?"

"Yes, they told me, but—"

"Signs didn't skeer ye?"

"They might have, but—"

"Trap, dead-fall, twitch-up, and spring-gun didn't stop ye?"

"No," said Philander. "But—"

"All them blind forks didn't fool ye?"

"Well," said Philander, "but—"

"And ye follered the trail right through, spite o' hell?"

"I guess so," said Philander. "But—"

"And you licked the dawg and you licked me, and by gosh you can stay and welcome! She's yourn, she is. I know a man when I see him and I'll be proud to be your daddy! What can you do?"

"I can fix your flivver," said Philander, who had been itching with that purpose.

"Go to it!" bade the man. "Hooray! It's yore outfit! Gal, machine, me, the dawg, and the hull ranch!"

Philander fixed the Lizzie, with the girl tremulously hovering by.

"It hasn't gone for two days," she said.

"It'll go now," Philander assured. "All that was the matter was the dumoodle. Where do you want it to go?"

"Just around the yard," said she. "That's the farthest I've ever been since ma died."

"Let's try her out!" said Philander. And they rode around the yard.

"How wonderful!" she sighed. "How wonderful that you came clear in here and fixed the flivver. The trail's awful!"

"I didn't mind," said Philander.

"And the left-hand forks are worse!"

"Yes," said Philander. "But—"

"Pop did it to scare folks off, unless they're very smart and determined. He wouldn't let me marry any man who isn't smart and determined. Did somebody tell you to keep taking the left-hand forks?"

"No," said Philander. "But—"

"You are the prince sent to find me, aint' you?"

"I dunno," said Philander. "I made all them turn-offs, but—"

"You'll stay, won't you, then? Pop'll be mighty proud of ketching you and we got a fine ranch and a Lizzie. Nobody else's ever had the gump to come."

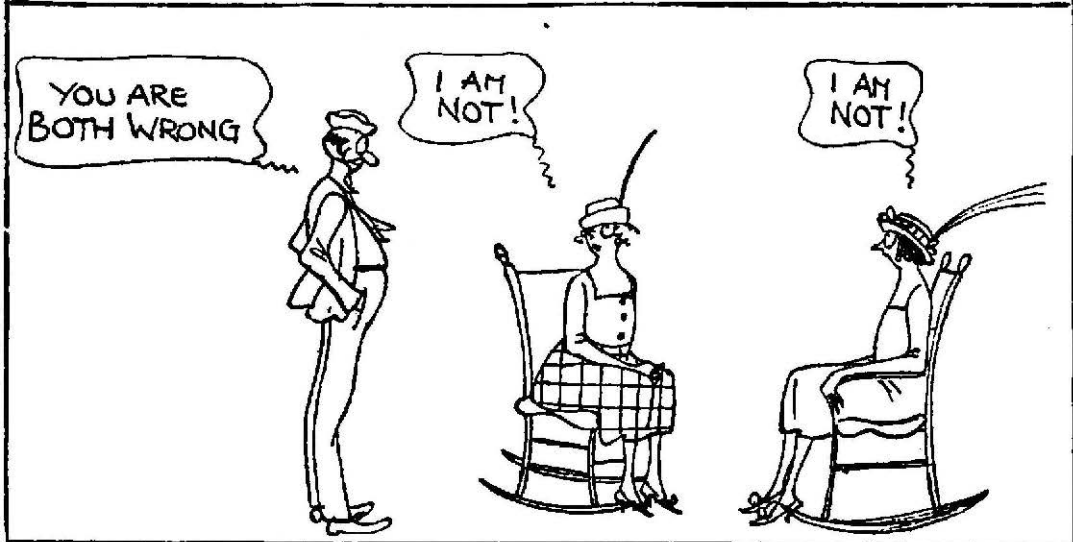
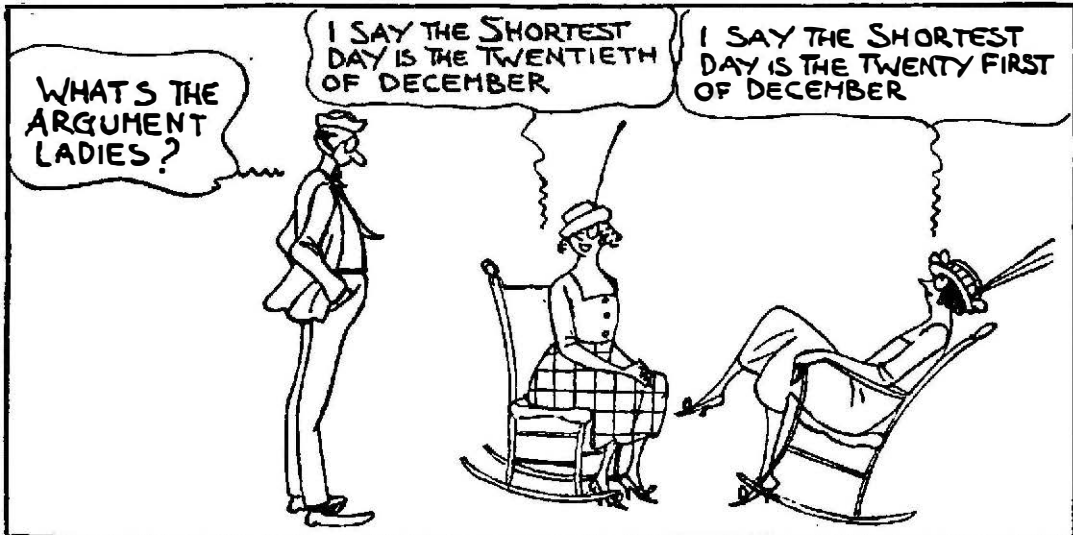
"Yes," said Philander. "But—!" He gulped, and he added, only: "Yep, I'll stay, and thank you!"

For his sentence long deferred might have completed: "But you see I'm left-handed and left-footed and I alluz make off to the left," had he not remembered his father's parting injunction: "Don't tell everything you know!"



from Punch, © London

Burglar: Er—dy'e mind if I 'phone the missis to say I shan't be 'ome to breakfast?



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Ketten in New York Evening World

Can you beat it?

The Revenge of "Vagalume"

By H. M. Hamilton

A fascinating story of passion, intrigue, and vengeance, the "Rio-Mar" and the wondrous Rio harbor combining to form a South American background as beautiful as the story of the matchless "Firefly" is captivating.

Steadily The Recife ploughed southward, leaving behind it a wide swath of foam, gleaming white and startling in the purple of twilight. A strong offshore wind lifted and tore away the black smoke that poured from the funnels, trailing it off to the eastward. It was a moist wind, warm, rich with a tropical fragrance. With a sensuous joy Lois Heberton let it blow her hair back from her forehead, and leaned far over the rail, striving to catch sight of the invisible land she felt the presence of so near.

"That is the breath of Brazil—that wind," whispered a velvety voice at her ear. She did not turn; she preferred to listen to Senhor Alvaes—rather than to look at him. She knew his face well: white teeth flashing in an olive darkness, under a clipped black mustache; ardent eyes—the eyes of a poet, and the mocking untrustworthy lips of a cynic. She wished she could control her involuntary aversion toward dark-skinned races. Senhor Alvaes was distinguished—by all odds the most distinguished man she knew, and one of the most delightful. Why was it she always shuddered a little when her eyes met his?

For—oddly enough—she loved to be with him—to hear him talk. In his English—purer than her own—was a peculiar slurring of consonants at the expense of

vowels; his voice was lazy, sonorous, thick and throaty—filling her soul with an almost physical delight. With parted lips she listened as he went on:

"That wind—it comes from dense tangled jungle-forest, where no man has ever trod; deep shades where there are panthers, and parroquets of crimson and green; where there are bright butterflies that dart in and out of huge blossoms—the purple Bougainvillea, poinsettias, hibiscus—a thousand kinds that have never been named. There are lakes bluer than the sea—palms—thickets of leaves where the sun never penetrates—and always and everywhere, a moist vapor rising from the drenched land into the clouds—that is this wind."

She scarcely heard the words; pictures came of themselves.

"Tell me more," she said. "That sounds pretty."

"At night," he went on, leaning closer, "all this is changed. There is only a velvety darkness, and stealthy sounds—and fireflies. You do not know fireflies until you see the 'vagalumes' of Brazil. They do not flash and disappear—they hang motionless for whole minutes—with a slow green glow. They are in the forests by thousands, and it seems the easiest thing in the world to put out a hand and gather them in. In reality it

is the hardest; pursue them, and they are gone—and one is lucky if he does not lose his way in the swamps as well."

"How horrible! I'll not care for Brazil—if it is like that."

"Ah, senhorita; so you say! But wait until you know it. One cannot judge Brazil—or the Brazilians—from the standards of the cool, temperate north—no, nor of the cool temperate south either."

He stopped; there was an edge of anger in his voice.

"Ah! How I hate the Argentine! With its smooth shaved pampas—its propriety—its smugness! We of Brazil are as Nature made us; and you cannot know us until you have lived here. For it is a country unlike any other. Here the stars are brighter, the air purer; hearts are simpler and more passionate. . . ." His voice was like far-away music. "For in Brazil one does not merely prefer; one loves—one is not ashamed of loving. . . ."

He drew closer, and laid a soft hand on hers as it clutched the rail. And she let it stay. She did not know whether she loved or detested his way of making love to her. It was almost mesmeric in its effect on her; it fascinated her, it made her long to escape to something it represented. Tomorrow—she might repent; but there would always be time for tomorrow, when it came!

But even while she felt her fingers tingle from his touch, she remembered the one other man she had allowed to make serious love to her. Poor Bartley: he had long ago vanished from her life—from the lives of all who knew him. He had left her—not broken-hearted so much as empty-hearted—daring, desolate and forever seeking. The remembrance of Bartley brought no joy—but it made her move her hand away abruptly from the hand of Luiz Alvaes.

"Don't please," she said. "It's—it's too warm. Tell me, what makes the boat rock so?"

"That? It is the pulse of our Rio-Mar;

the sea-river, whose other name is Amazon."

"But I thought we were far out to sea!"

"If you were to dip a cupful of this ocean water, senhorita, you would find it to be sweet river water. And we are a hundred miles at sea! Not even the ocean itself can conquer the Amazon! That is the true spirit of Brazil."

His silky voice was a whisper close to her ear. "Other nations live by rules; Brazil and Brazilians know no rules. And when I tell you that I love you, it is not a love like the love of other men: it is a tremendous thing—as strong as Amazon—as never-ending as this wind in our faces!"

Again he covered her hands with his; this time she did not draw away. What matter tomorrow? What matter anything? She had been desolate and unfriended; but here—with tropic stars burning in the sky—there was a rich, throaty voice to whisper romantic love in her ears. She knew that his arms were encircling her; she felt her senses swooning with a pleasurable languor. . . . She had so far yielded, that the sound of her name querulously being called roused her to a fury of resentment.

"Lois! Where are you!" A tall, spare figure clad in white emerged from a companion-way. Her uncle!

Abruptly she thrust away the Brazilian's arms.

"No—no!" she whispered. "Here is someone coming."

She took a step or so forward.

"Did you see my spectacle-case? I can't find it anywhere."

"No, uncle," she replied, biting her lip. "But—I'll find it for you. You talk to Senhor Alvaes—he's been telling me all about Brazil."

She drew a long breath, half of relief, as she raced down the corridors to their staterooms.

"He's more insidious than Bartley ever was. He's delightful, too—but I can't let him sweep me from my feet. I won-

der—what's wrong with him—or if anything is."

SHE had known him four days. He had played at a ship's concert—so brilliantly out of place in that galaxy of mediocre talents that she had inquired about him. He was what she had felt sure he must be—an artist of international importance, fresh from triumphs in New York and London.

But this had not accounted for her sudden surrender. That lay deeper. She had lost her bearings when she had lost Bartley—that dear, weak, generous Bartley she had truly loved. After that—well, what did it matter? If she had to suffer, it might as well be the suffering of action as that of inertia.

She did not come back to deck; but her uncle had a word of warning when he came down.

"You see, my dear," he began clumsily, "you can't very well marry a Brazilian. He's all very well, no doubt—but for a Heberton, with a long line of good ancestry—well, it's quite out of the question."

Lois paused only long enough to reflect that Senhor Alvaes had not mentioned marriage at all. Then she answered, bitterly:

"Maybe that long line of good ancestry is what ails us all. If you remember—Bartley had it too."

She took a savage delight in the pang Bartley's name always gave her. Her uncle looked troubled.

"Yes—but Bartley was a gentleman; and he knew the things we all know—the good old traditions."

"There may be other things to know," she replied stubbornly. But in her heart she was troubled.

"I'll have to watch out for him," she thought sleepily. "He's strong where I am weak."

She half-expected him to follow up his triumphs; and she was not sure whether his failure pleased or piqued her. At any rate, he seemed singularly reserved, al-

most diffident. Only once did he turn the conversation to personalities; that was later.

"I'm truly your friend, senhorita. And I want to be allowed to come to see you in Rio. Where are you going to stay?"

"At the house of Senhor Miguel Barras, Avenida Beira Mar. Do you know of him?"

"But of course!" cried Alvaes. "I have played in his drawing-room. I shall pay my respects at once. And then—perhaps—"

Lois Heberton felt the old spell of his voice casting itself over her. With an effort she evaded it.

"I understand that we are to reach Rio before sunset. Will you show me the first signs of the city?"

SOON the steamer turned in toward a narrow defile between steep green wooded hills, rising mistily one behind another; then it glided silently into an immense blue harbor, whose waters changed in color as the sun approached the horizon. From somewhere on shore the sound of band-music came wistfully over the waters. Shadows lengthened, and a pale mist of purple spread itself over the distant mountains. Then the sound of a sunset-gun from a fortress—and the colors deepened, suddenly grew dark.

All at once, magically, the whole panorama twinkled with lamps; along the shore in great sweeping arcs—upon the hillsides sprinkled like stars.

"That is Rio!" came the soft, slow, musical voice at her ear. "A city to love—a city for lovers! You have not forgotten, senhorita? For I shall have things to tell you—when you have learned to understand Brazil. Until then—"

She did not dare to let him see that she was moved—not so much by his pleadings as by the exquisite beauty before her. After all, what did anything matter? Why not be happy if she could? If that little ache that had never been banished

from her heart since Bartley Conover had left could be exorcised by pleasure—why not exorcise it? True—she did not trust Luiz Alvaes; but—she had trusted Bartley, and he had failed her!

Impulsively she put her hands in his.

"Come to see me. I do not promise—but I shall expect you."

"Até a vista!" he cried, and stood looking after her, hat in hand, while she went to find her uncle.

He was standing on deck, chatting to a white-bearded, portly old gentleman, who smiled at her with benign eyes as she came up to him.

"My niece, Senhor Miguel," said her uncle. The old gentleman bowed over her hand. Then he turned to a shy young girl at his side.

"And this is my daughter Gloria!"

Quickly, affectionately, the girl clasped Lois in her arms.

"I know I shall love you!" she cried rapturously. "It is so wonderful to have some one in the house like you! If you like I shall teach you Portuguese."

"But—how do you come to speak English so well?" asked Lois, smiling at her eagerness. The girl made a gesture of deprecation.

"Ah—that is nothing! We must learn the languages of the outside world—for it will not learn ours. Every one here who is anyone speaks three or four. But come—my father has his launch here. It is all arranged; we shall have no formalities."

Chattering gayly, she led Lois by the arm as if afraid to release her—in the wake of the two elderly men.

It was like a dream—that trip in the darkness across the glassy waters; then in an immense automobile that dashed at high speed through crowded streets, sparkling with lights, filled with throngs of well-dressed people—

"The Avenida Rio Branco!" exclaimed Gloria Barras proudly.

"But—it is more splendid than anything in New York," exclaimed Lois in bewilderment.

"Ah—New York!" The girl shrugged her slim shoulders expressively. "Yes—but this is Rio!"

Not until they had turned in at a marble house like a royal palace, set in a garden colorful even in the darkness, did Lois Heberton realize with a start that she had not thought of Luiz Alvaes once since she had parted from him on the ship.

II

SHE had been in Rio for a week; this was the first time she had peeped into Gloria's little room. It looked out toward the garden; it was sunny and cheerful as Gloria herself—and Lois felt something healing in its very simplicity. She walked around the room, looking at the pictures, listening to the girl's artless talk. Suddenly she stopped and touched a photograph on the mantel.

"What an interesting face!" she cried, and took the picture down to examine it. It was of a young woman of a dark Spanish type of beauty, with splendid eyes and abundant black hair. Gloria smiled.

"That is O Vagalume," she said. "She is a good friend of mine."

"Vagalume," mused Lois. "I have heard that word."

"Of course you have. All Rio is mad over her. 'Vagalume,' you know—that means 'The Firefly.' Have you never heard of the opera 'Os Vagalumes'? It is the success of the season here. And she is the name-character. Ah! She is enchanting!"

To Lois there came a swift vision of that night on The Recife; a memory of the sumptuous pictures of tropical beauty he had evoked for her. He had spoken of "Vagalume" also!

"It is very interesting," she told the girl. "But what is it all about?"

"But I supposed everyone knew! The fireflies—you must know—are in swampy forests; they glow brilliantly until you put out your hand for one; you think you have it—and eis ali! it is gone! Thus it is in the opera; Vagalume entices a

man whom she wishes to destroy; he follows her—on and on—then he puts out his hand! She is not there! That is all the story. But—the way she does it!”

Gloria was talking as if half to herself, in her naive young voice. She added:

“And to think—she is not Brazilian at all—she is Porteña!”

“I’d like to hear her—to see her,” said Lois.

“But—what a shame! Did you know that my father invited her to sing Friday night of this week—here? And—it is desolating!—she will not come! I asked her myself. No; she is mourning the death of a dear friend named Paula.”

Gloria glanced around her cautiously, then added:

“It is a sad story. Paula was betrayed; Vagalume is quite beside herself with grief and anger. It happened in Buenos Aires.

“The man went away—he will never come back; he fears to come back. But—” her smile broke out again—“this sadness is not ours. Let us go out into the garden. But I am sorry you may not see her.”

ALL that warm afternoon Lois had the feeling that Gloria wanted to say something to her—and feared to. At last she exclaimed:

“What is it you are hiding? I shall suspect the worst, unless you tell me!”

Blushing, the young girl smiled, and said:

“It is no great thing—indeed it is not. But I have been thinking—what a pity that Senhor Alvaes comes so often—yet has no opportunity to speak to you alone.”

Lois felt her own cheeks grow hotter at the candid remark.

“But how do you know I want him to talk to me?”

“Oh—but I am a woman. And it is so stupid—this custom of ours, which never lets a woman have speech with a man alone. And I pity Senhor Alvaes. He comes—he goes away again. And I can

see that he is troubled. If it were not an impertinence, I think I could—”

“Out with it, Gloria!” as the girl stopped, abashed.

“It is only this; when we go tomorrow to Urca—I have an idea!”

She would not explain her idea; it was only the next afternoon, when the whole party stood on the summit of the hill of Urca, looking out over the wide panorama of Rio at their feet—that it materialized.

“Ah—see!” she cried to Lois—“there is something more wonderful than anything you have yet seen here!”

She pointed to a tiny black object, which appeared to be moving in mid-air from Urca toward a steep conical mountain which stood isolated in the midst of the harbor.

“That is Pão d’Assucar!” she cried—“The Sugar Loaf! If you would see the most remarkable thing in Rio, you will ride in that little basket to the top of Sugar Loaf Mountain!”

Her father smiled benignly, indulgently, but shook his head.

“No; it is not for old men with weak hearts.”

“But there are young people here,” insisted Gloria. She looked at Lois’s uncle pleadingly. “May she not go?”

“I shall be glad to accompany your niece,” Alvaes broke in eagerly. “It will only take a little time.”

“I’ll not go,” Gloria announced. “I must stay with my father. But we shall await you.”

SENHOR BARRAS seemed troubled as he watched Lois and the Brazilian step into the little aerial tram-car, which was to carry them across a half-mile of sagging wire cable to the pinnacle of Sugar Loaf. But in Lois’s heart there was a queer little choke of triumph—of apprehension.

They crossed the deep chasm without words, looking over their shoulders at the white-clad operator in the front of the car. Only when they had stepped out, at the summit, did Alvaes speak to her—

then his voice was tremulous with eagerness.

"I've been trying to talk to you ever since you came. Now I must tell you everything in the few minutes we stay here.

"I have been offered a splendid contract for a series of concerts in Paris. It will make my fortune. But I must go at once if I accept. The ship sails Saturday, the morning after the concert at Senhor Barras's house. I play then, you know. But—how can I go, loving you as I do? Senhorita—will you not go with me? I love you madly: as I have never loved before. What does anything else matter?"

"All aboard, senhor," said the white-clad boy.

"Yes—yes!" cried Alvaes impatiently. "One moment." He turned back to Lois. "We must go back to the others. But—will you go?"

His voice was hypnotic—she seemed not to have the will or the power to oppose him. He seized her in his arms and kissed her.

"I do not know," she murmured. "I cannot tell. But—at the concert on Friday—then I shall tell you my answer—"

They were back with the others in a few minutes. Gloria seemed quite overcome with delight. On the way back, she held Lois's hands in hers and pressed them repeatedly.

"You are happy," she whispered. "I can see it in your eyes."

Lois could not speak. But she shook her head.

THEIR big motor car took them back through Beira Mar and into Rio proper—down the wide palm-shaded Avenida Rio Branco. It was late afternoon; the throngs were at their height—in cafés—pouring out of places of amusement—of relaxation. Lois gazed at them without interest—then at sight of a face which evoked memories she laid her hand on her uncle's arm.

"I—I thought I saw someone!" she cried. "Some one from home. Let me

walk for a little while—Gloria can come with me!"

Paying no attention to the surprise—not unmixed with disapproval—which crossed the faces of the two old men—she seized Gloria's arm, and went back with her a little distance toward a café, where at a sidewalk table still sat the person Lois had seen. She went up to him abruptly and said:

"Bartley! Bartley Conover!"

He put down the cup of coffee he was lifting to his lips and rose to his feet.

"Lois!" he cried; only the one word.

They looked into one another's eyes. He was pale; slenderer, cooler, browner than she remembered him. His hand trembled a little as he held it out to her. Finally she said:

"You! What are you doing here, in Rio? I thought—"

He laughed shortly.

"You thought I had gone to the devil! I was headed that way. But I didn't. I found when I cut out the old crowd, and came down here where no one knew me; and where I had to work—that I could go straight enough. I've been here two years, in a bank. But you?"

"I'm here with my uncle—at Senhor Barras's." She introduced him to Gloria, who regarded him with shining eyes—then stepped deferentially out of earshot. Bartley seemed unable to express himself—he hesitated, finally stammered out—his eyes lowered to the fanciful black-and-white mosaic of the pavement:

"Lois—I feel just the same as always about you—except that I've grown up at last. Is there any chance for me?"

Her heart fluttered; it crossed her mind that Alvaes was not able to move her thus. She lowered her eyes; a rich color flooded her face, but her mouth was set in a stubborn line, and in her eyes was disillusion.

"You had your chance, Bartley. I'm afraid it's too late now."

White-faced, but impassive, he took the blow. Then he smiled a little, with bloodless lips—a wistful, defeated smile.

"I know; I was a rotter. I don't blame you, Lois. Then its good-bye, is it?"

She could hardly trust herself to answer.

"I—I don't know, Bartley. I'm afraid so. But—if you should care to come to see me Saturday—I'll know—that is, if I'm there. If I'm not—you'll know it was too late. Good-bye."

She felt old, and sad, and as if all her bridges were burned when she caught up with Gloria. He would not come—she would never see him again! Well? She laughed harshly.

"O—what a wonderful young man!" cried Gloria ecstatically. "Such eyes! and so clean, and brown, and American! I think I shall marry an American. They are so nice!"

THEY walked through dense crowds—people who turned to stare at the handsome young woman with flushed cheeks and the half-awkward, half-graceful young girl who walked unaccompanied. At a certain street-corner Gloria touched her companion's arm.

"If it isn't too late, would you mind stopping with me? I go out so seldom without my father—and I'd give anything to see her for a moment. It's just around the corner her."

It was a quiet by-street of latticed blinds, of palms and white stone house-fronts.

At one of these houses Gloria stopped and rang a bell.

"It's where Mercedes Vallena lives—you remember—'O Vagalume,'—the girl whose picture you saw in my room. Perhaps if I ask her again—while you are here—she will come."

A white-capped maid opened the door, and smiled to Gloria.

"The señorita will be down in a moment," she said in Spanish.

The door opened noiselessly, and a young woman came in—the girl of the photograph, but sadder, softened; with dark circles under her brilliant eyes. She

embraced Gloria, who clung to her, toying a pendant.

"Will you not change your mind, dear Mercedes? I have come all this distance to ask you again. It is for this American friend of mine that my father gives his concert, and I hoped—"

"Ah, no, my little one," said the singer, in a peculiarly sweet, thrilling voice. "I have told you; I am in sorrow. I cannot sing when I am sad."

Gloria hung her head. "If you cannot, you cannot. But—there are to be all the other artists of Rio—it is a pity to lack the greatest. Senhor Perez is to sing; Senhor Alvaes plays—"

Into the singer's pensive face there flashed a new expression—one which Lois could not analyze.

"Not Luiz Alvaes? The pianist? For he is in New York—"

"No; he is here—for a few days. Saturday he goes to Paris. But he is to sing on Friday at our concert. Tell me; do you know him?"

A queer little smile played across Vagalume's expressive face.

"No—and yes. I have never seen him. But I have heard of him—I long to see him." Suddenly, engagingly, she smiled and took Gloria's hands in hers. "Listen, querida, I did not know this when I said I could not come. Perhaps—who knows—I may sing after all—just to meet the famous Alvaes."

LOIS could hardly recognize in the gay countenance she turned on them, the sad creature she had been a moment before. Gloria shook her curls knowingly.

"Ah! Coquette! But you will find Senhor Alvaes no easy conquest—especially since—" She paused, glanced at Lois, and finished her sentence lamely:

"Besides, he does not like the Portefias of Argentine."

"That does not matter. He shall like me if I wish him to." Then she turned to Lois. "Forgive me senhorita; perhaps you like Senor Alvaes. We are friends—you and I, remember—already."

Lois felt the color come into her cheeks.

"How can I say!" she replied. "He fascinates me—a little."

Vagalume smiled, a gloomy smile.

"That would be true; I have heard of his fascinations. Ah, well—I would have you remember—whatever happens—I mean it kindly to you, senhorita."

Puzzling over her words, Lois could nevertheless scarcely credit the change that had come over the singer. She moved quickly, lightly, and her face was lit by sudden flashes of changing expression.

"You are going home now? I shall go with you; I wish to tell your father."

Outside, they took a taxi to the house of Senhor Barras; as they hurried up the marble steps the door opened, and Alvaes came out. He bowed silently. Gloria ran ahead of the others, and said:

"Ah—Senhor—we have just made a great conquest for our concert Friday. 'O Vagalume has consented to sing."

Quickly, with a sinuous lithe step like a panther's, the singer advanced with hand outstretched.

"All the world knows of Senhor Alvaes; I particularly desire that honor—since I had a friend who spoke of him so often."

She lifted her great brilliant eyes to look the pianist squarely in the face. Lois winced; she herself could scarcely have done that.

"A friend?" Alvaes smiled uneasily.

"Yes—my little friend Paula Branca, of Buenos Aires—"

He seemed suddenly to change color; to grow livid.

"Paula—your friend! Is she here?"

INTO Vagalume's eyes came the unreadable expression Lois had seen there before.

"No; senhor. She is with God. But—she died asking for 'Luiz.'"

His heavy-lidded eyes fell; he was silent. At last he said hoarsely:

"Dead; I swear I never knew of it! I was in London—"

The singer's eyes were hard, brilliant, gem-like; her voice suave and conciliating:

"Ah—but let us not spoil a meeting with sorrowful things! My friend was dear to me—" her voice broke a little—"but—she was not strong. *Vae victis!* You and I, senhor—we are strong; my little Paula was weak—she paid for it. But let us not talk of her: the Past is the Past."

Like the sun coming out from clouds, her smile appeared; and in its sudden radiance, Luiz Alvaes warmed himself. she held out both hands to him.

"I had refused to sing—until I learned that a great artist was to play. Then, senhor, I consented."

He smiled contentedly; he seemed almost to bask. She released his hands.

"But I must seek Senhor Barras, for just a moment. If you care to wait for me—" to Alvaes—"I shall not be long. And—I am anxious to talk to you again."

Alvaes bowed. "I shall wait—gladly."

They left him at the door. Inside, Vagalume looked at her hands and made a gesture of distaste—almost of horror, murmuring:

"Ah—these hands! What a lot of purification they will need! But come, child—let us go in to see your father!"

III

TO LOIS it seemed as if Friday night—the night of the concert and of her decision would never come. Hot and cold she had looked ahead to it; had wavered back and forward from yes to no, and back to yes again. On one side—Paris; a world unknown—cut free from all ties—from all codes. On the other side; nothing definite—nothing to look forward to—nothing to look back to—except Bartley Conover's wistful little smile!

But—Bartley had promised nothing; she would perhaps never see him again. Alvaes had promised her everything. She sighed.

"Poor Bartley—but you're too late!"

Then it came—the long-awaited night. From an alcove in the great drawing-room she had heard Alvaes play, exquisitely, but leaving the hearers cold. After him came Vagalume. She was dressed in a pale green costume; the lights were lowered—she sang her Fire-fly-Song from the opera in a dark hall, with a dreamy soft light upon her.

Lois could not understand a word of the song; but she felt the mockery, the fascination, the lure, the treachery of it; and it held her by the force of sheer artistry.

Then, from the shelter of her nook, Lois saw Alvaes go over to the singer, bowing low above her hand. And Vagalume smiled up into his face, subtly, provocatively; a smile that told of an intimacy that had grown enormously since the meeting at the door, a few days previous.

"He has been seeing her!" flashed into Lois's thoughts. "And—he's not been here since—"

Then she dismissed the thought as petty. Another followed it:

"But if so—what of Paris?"

ALL at once she felt physically sick. The assemblage—of formal precise old gentlemen, of over-dressed, over-rouged, over-jewelled ladies, and timid young people—wavered before her eyes. She slipped out of the drawing room to a balcony overlooking the garden. There she drew a long breath of relief.

How long she sat there she did not know; but she seemed to gather strength from the fragrant darkness, from the odors of flowers, from the silence. Overhead were stars, jewel-bright, and a breath of soft warm wind fanned her hot cheeks. It gave her the illusion of being on ship-board.

Then she heard a voice; a soft, throaty, velvety voice—persuasive and pleading; she could make out the words:

"What matter if I have only known you for a day or so? A lifetime can happen in a day! Is it not so?"

Lois could see two figures below her, in the darkness of the garden; but on one there was a faintly luminous garment. She had the impulse to run away—to hide herself. But—she could not move without being seen. Suddenly she heard Vagalume's clear note:

"Ah, you say these things to every one, *senhor*. Perhaps—even—you said it to the American girl—"

"What? That ninny! No—it is as you say; the strong are drawn to one another. And—since you think I am not in earnest, I shall tell you this: tomorrow morning I sail for Paris. I have contracts which mean fame—fortune. But—soul of my soul! I cannot go alone. I must take you along!"

"No, *senhor*. You ask too much of me. If I were free—I do not say. But I am an artist—and I have my own contracts—I am to sing in Buenos Aires this coming week. I thank you for the honor you have done me—but I must go to Buenos Aires."

Her words, her tone breathed only finality—but Lois could feel at the same time their taunting, provocative lure.

"But—*senhorita*—I cannot go to Buenos Aires—even if I were to throw away all prudence and give up my Paris trip—after what has happened. It is too full of unhappy memories—"

"Ah, then, my friend—farewell." The light-colored figure moved lightly away—"I see that your protestations meant nothing at all. I shall go alone. I wish you good-night."

From Alvaes came a hoarse, passionate cry—almost a sob:

"But I cannot let you go alone! What matters Paris? What matters anything? I shall go to Buenos Aires with you tomorrow."

Lois could see him clasp the other in his arms; there was a silence. Then Vagalume's clear, seductive voice added:

"Ah—my lover! My own true lover! You will always be true?"

"I swear it! My love is not as the love of other men. It is strong as the Ama-

zon—as endless as the wind that blows in our faces!”

“But—my beloved—you must not go on the same ship. That would be too open. We must be crafty. Two vessels sail tomorrow; The Corcovado at eight; The Voltaire at noon. I leave on The Corcovado. Very well. At noon, you may follow me on The Voltaire. At Buenos Aires we meet. Is it understood?”

Then there was quiet. Lois could see them walking away together, disappearing from her sight at a turn in the path. She hid her face in her hands. A voice in her heart cried:

“Oh—Bartley! Bartley! And—it’s all too late!”

IV

THE next day she turned a deaf ear to all Gloria’s pleas for admittance. To the timid knocking on her door she had only the one answer:

“I’ve a frightful headache, dear. But—I’ll see you this afternoon.”

She felt she could not bear to face the innocent young girl again—or, for that matter, anyone. She was humiliated; shamed. She had been ready to give up all—and she had not even been given that privilege!

Yet even in her disgrace she could not help feeling that Vagalume had shamed herself more—forgetting and laying aside her anger, her holy indignation—for the sake of a sordid conquest.

“I’m low enough,” she said to herself grimly. “But—she is viler.”

Late that afternoon Gloria knocked again.

“No, Lois, dearest—I’m not annoying you. But there’s someone here to see you. May she come in?”

Lois unlocked her door reluctantly, and opened it. There stood before it Mercedes Vallena—O Vagalume! In her eyes was the sadness of her first meeting with Lois; but her lips trembled with an expression at once cruel and triumphant.

“What are you doing here?” gasped Lois. “I thought—”

With a gesture the singer stopped her.

“You thought I was in Buenos Aires with my paramour! No; I and the captain of The Corcovado are good friends. All men are my friends when I wish it. He allowed me to leave his ship, and to come back in a small boat, before we had passed Sugar Loaf. But that is not what I have come to tell you.

“I had a friend—Paula Branca. I loved her as I never loved anything in this world.

“She was betrayed by this—this reptile—Alvaes. He did not dare to return to Buenos Aires—until I lured him on by thinking he could capture me as he captured Paula—as, perhaps, he once dreamed of capturing you. But—praise God, I have avenged her!”

With flaming eyes, with hands clenched she cried to Lois:

“You think I mean merely that I have spoiled his contracts in Paris? But that is not all; when The Voltaire docks at Buenos Aires the brothers of Paula will meet it—I have no fear—no fear at all of my revenge!”

She sank into a chair; all the life seemed to have gone from her face. She murmured softly:

“Paula! My little Paula!”

LOIS was on the point of going to her side, to comfort her with the words one desolate soul can offer another, when Gloria’s knock tapped again at the door.

“Senhorita; I do not wish to disturb you—but he is asking for you—that wonderful young American we saw in the Avenida Rio Branco.”

Lois ran to the door swiftly:

“Tell him, Gloria, that I will be down in just a minute! And—Gloria darling—don’t—*don’t* let him go away until I come!”

Then she came back and knelt beside Vagalume; into her own eyes, for the first time, the tears came freely; they were in part tears of sympathy—but even more they were tokens of supreme happiness.



Wilmot Lunt in *The Bystander*, London

THE LAST WORD

"I should like to see any man try to kiss me!"
"No doubt—but you shouldn't admit it!"

The Fifth Guardian

Part Three of a Three-Part Romance

By Victor Rousseau

Author of "The Big Muskeg," "The Messiah of the Cylinder," and "Wooden Spoil"

[ALREADY TOLD: When Colonel Sanford passed away he left his fortune to his stepdaughter, Miss Polly Seaton, a prim though comely young woman, with decided leanings toward the puritanic codes of conduct. The will provided that a capital sum invested for her should be held in trust until her marriage, and that until the age of twenty-five, she should be under the guardianship of one of five men named in the will. Her choice of guardian should be made only after she had become the guest for a longer or shorter time of one or more of the gentlemen named. The Colonel, who could not, even by the wildest flights of the imagination, be spoken of as puritanical, being a connoisseur of now prohibited beverages, of cards, of tobacco, and of affairs of the heart, cautioned Miss Polly particularly against one Richard Cresswell, as displaying a regrettable tendency toward prohibition and a general abstinence from the pleasures of life. Him Miss Polly favored with her first visit, only to find that behind his pretensions of virtue and uprightness he hid a profligate nature that displayed itself in a secret addiction to cigarettes and drinking and amateur theatricals. The visit Miss Polly paid to Mr. Clarence Strutt, bachelor, was hardly more successful. If Dick Cresswell was too worldly, Clarence Strutt was too good, as Miss Polly found after several unsuccessful attempts to put him to the test by means of skillful "plants" of tobacco and whiskey. Theodore Hammond, third on the stepfatherly list of guardians, lived with his sister, and pretended to a viciousness of character that enlisted Miss Polly's liveliest efforts toward reformation. Chance, however, brought to her ears snatches of conversation which revealed a plot by which Miss Polly, in her missionary zeal, was to lose her heart to Theodore, and with it her stepfather's fortune. At the opening of the present and concluding installment Miss Polly is telling Nan Draper of the Hammond treachery, not without a tender regret, one notes, for Richard Cresswell.]

"I can't understand men at all," said Polly Seaton, disconsolately, to Nan Draper.

"There's no human being can, Miss Polly," answered the old servant. "That's what we women marry them for."

"What do you mean, Nan?"

"To try to find out what the mystery is that makes us like them," said Nan.

"Well, there isn't any likelihood of my ever getting married," said Polly, "so I

suppose the mystery will have to remain unsolved forever, so far as I am concerned. But I was thinking of men in general, without reference to marriage.

"Here Stepfather made that absurd will requiring me to select myself a guardian out of five gentlemen, and I've tried three of them, and they have proved simply impossible. Sometimes, I really think all men are monsters, in one way or another, Nan."

"Some of 'em are. Some of 'em aren't," said Nan, philosophically.

"They all are," said Polly in a tearful voice. "Aunt Jane used to tell me that somewhere in the world there might exist a good man, to be discovered after years of testing, and that a woman, a good woman, could use her quiet influence as a magnet to bring him to her feet. But Aunt Jane had lived a very secluded life, Nan, and she admitted to me once that she had never found a man worthy to worship her and lead her to the altar."

Nan Draper, remembering Aunt Jane's features, tried to suppress a smile.

"She said that if a man was faithful and proved worthy for seven years, at the end of that time one might believe in him. But they don't wait to be tested. And they're not faithful. They're a pack of deceivers, even when one only wants to find a worthy guardian, Nan."

"Now don't take it that way, my dear," said the old servant, patting her mistress's shoulder. "I'm sure that Mr. Cresswell—"

"He was the worst of the lot, Nan. He was simply vicious. And Mr. Strutt, the second, was too good to live. And Mr. Hammond, the third, pretended to be bad so as to arouse my interest in reforming him. Aren't there any men who are human beings like us women, Nan?"

"I doubt it, Miss Polly," answered Nan Draper. "I used to hope there might be. But I've never met 'em. No, I guess not. The Almighty made men to be a plague and a puzzle and a curse to the human race, bless their simple hearts!"

Polly, wrinkling her pretty brows, did not seem to notice the paradox, which had been uttered quite unintentionally by Nan. She was thinking deeply.

"I've come more or less to a conclusion, Nan," she said. "I don't believe there's any such thing as a good man, unless he isn't worth his salt, like Mr. Strutt. I've got to choose a guardian, and, as Stepfather evidently selected the worst assortment he could think of, I'm going to take number four, lest number five be the worst of the lot. Let me see—"

POLLY broke the fourth of the five envelopes which Mr. Brose, the lawyer, had given her.

"Mr. Joseph Cranford, 109 Main Street," she read, and wrinkled her forehead again. "I seem to have heard somebody speak of Mr. Cranford," she said. "Who is he, Nan? Do you know him? Was he very friendly with Stepfather?"

"I guess it must be the son of Judge Cranford, Miss Polly," said Nan. "The judge is a very rich man, and quite an aristocratic gentleman. I think that would be a wise choice of your stepfather, my dear."

"O, I do hope so," said Polly enthusiastically. "What sort of man is young Mr. Cranford? Do you know him, Nan?"

Nan Draper hesitated. During her many years of service with the late Colonel Sanford she had become, in large measure, his confidant, especially since the death of Polly's mother. And she knew a good deal more than she was prepared to tell; and what she was prepared to tell she had pledged herself not to.

She knew, in the first place, that Colonel Sanford had idolized his stepdaughter, and that he had always carried unhealed the wound inflicted on him when the girl's aunt insisted on removing her from his home, alleging that the house of an old widower, who drank, smoked, and entertained his friends with cards played for small stakes, was no place in which to bring up Polly.

The Colonel had loved Polly enough to acquiesce in her aunt's decision; he had even thought it might be right; but he had not been prepared for the rigidly puritanical training, inculcated by a soured old maid, animated by hatred of the most innocent of those amusements which had never been hers.

When Polly came home for short visits the Colonel would hide his bourbon in his bedroom, and go into the stables to smoke his cigars; and there were few parties, indeed. But Polly pursued him with her schemes for converting him, and looked upon him as a perishing soul.

When he made his will, requiring the girl to select her guardian from among five of his acquaintances, he had already considered his plans very carefully. His aim was to give Polly a progressive education in that subject which was taught more perfunctorily in the Misses Tibbetts' school than any other branch of natural history—man.

It had always been his hope that Polly would marry Dick Cresswell. He had put him first on the list, in the hope that they would come together.

Failing that, he meant Polly to have her experience with Clarence Strutt, who was to act as a foil for Dick. And, failing Clarence, he hoped that the revulsion of feeling she would experience through Theodore Hammond, whom he detested, would enlarge her in her attitude toward the world. He knew that the Hammonds would plot to get her into their family, and he was confident that her intuition would frustrate them.

After the Hammonds came Joe Cranford, whom he liked only second to Dick. He believed that here, at any rate, Polly would learn her lesson, and that there would be no need of the shock of guardian number five.

Nan Draper turned away. "I don't remember young Mr. Cranford very well, Miss Polly," she said, crossing her finger and thumb, to make the lie no sin.

But Polly did not detect Nan's guilty manner. She was bubbling over with a new confidence.

"Nan," she said confidently, "what would you think if I were to tell you that my moral principles have all vanished?"

"The Lord be praised, Miss Polly!" ejaculated Nan, so vehemently that both were startled.

Polly gave Nan a reproachful little look and continued:

"It's true—it's true, Nan. All men are monsters, that's my firm conviction. They may not all be vicious monsters, but they are abnormal all the same. Aunt Jane's idea that somewhere in the world one true man existed isn't true. If it is true

I'm not likely to meet him. And—you understand me, Nan, don't you? I'm only looking for a man worthy to be my guardian.

"And—I'm going to be of the world worldly, Nan!"

"But, Miss Polly, what has come over you?" cried Nan.

"I told you, Nan, my moral principles have broken down. I—I'm not going to look for an impossible ideal any more. I'm going to be tolerant, and to take things as I find them."

On the following morning Nan was amazed at the transformation in her young mistress. The dress which Polly wore was not by any means what might be called startling, but it was startling in connection with its wearer. The skirt was fully two inches from the tops of Polly's shoes, disclosing a pair of immaculate white gaiters, and completely transforming her.

In an instant Nan had taken her in her arms and was busy patting and pressing and smoothing in that mysterious manner understood only by women, until at length she released her, stepped back and surveyed the result of her few moments of dexterity with a look of satisfaction.

"The very first young man that sees you is going to fall head over heels in love with you, Miss Polly," she said.

And for the first time Polly showed no signs of dissatisfaction at hearing what had hitherto been unwelcome news.

POLLY had written to Mr. Joseph Cranford, and in due course a letter of welcome arrived. The Judge was entertaining a small house party, and they would be delighted to have her spend a few days with them. The letter ended with the modest hope that the writer would have the honor of managing Polly's affairs.

Polly packed the little suitcase immediately, and departed. A minute after the front door had closed behind her Nan was at the telephone, and, as soon as the connection had been established, she was

talking to a very agitated young man at the other end.

"She's just started for the Judge's house," said Nan.

"She'll be taking the 10:10 then," said Mr. Richard Cresswell. "O, Nan, how can I thank you?"

"That's all right, Mr. Cresswell," answered Nan. "I'm doing it for the Colonel."

"Nan, I know you are aware of a lot that you don't tell. But sometimes, when I get to thinking things over, I feel quite desperate. You see, she's so hard to satisfy, Nan; and how can I be sure that Joe won't round on her and win her away from me?"

"Well," said Nan Draper indignantly, "if Miss Polly's too fastidious for you to suit her, I guess she isn't likely to take to Mr. Cranford."

"Of course he's my friend. But you can't trust even your best friend in a matter like this. Oh, Nan, do you think she cares for me the least little bit? You see, it was all an absurd mistake, and I could explain it in a moment if only she'd let me get a word in edgewise, but she won't. Next time I see her I'm not going to let her drive me away. I shall insist on an explanation, however peremptory she is. Do you think she cares for me, Nan?"

Nan reflected, and Dick did an impromptu tightrope dance at the other end of the line in his anxiety.

"I don't believe she knows herself," said Nan Draper, finally. "But I've thought, from the terrible things she says about you—"

"Nan! Oh, Nan Draper!" cried the young man in anguish.

"I shouldn't be surprised if she did care a good deal more than she knew," said Nan. "But don't you go butting in and spoiling—"

She did not have time to complete her sentence, for a sharp metallic click at the end of the line told her that her warning was not even heard. Dick had been unable to control himself any longer.

THREE-QUARTERS of an hour later a young lady, carrying a small bag demurely along a quiet road, was startled by a taxicab that came racing up behind her, swaying dangerously from side to side as it pursued its mad career. Polly had barely time to leap out of the way when the cab stopped, and out sprang Dick.

"How you frightened me, Di—Mr. Cresswell!" gasped Polly, letting the suitcase fall.

"Never mind, Polly. I'm sorry, dear. Listen, Polly!" Dick began.

He stopped, for he saw an ominous gleam in the girl's eyes.

"P-Pol—Miss Seaton, you're not angry with me still, are you?" Dick pleaded. "If you'll only let me explain—"

"There is nothing for you to explain, Mr. Cresswell," said Polly, coldly. "I am not your judge. None of the other gentlemen whom I tried to see whether they would make good guardians has followed me up like you."

"I don't want you to go where you are going before I have—" began Dick.

"How do you know where I am going, pray?"

"There's only one house along this road where you can be going, and that's Judge Cranford's. Oh, Polly, Joe Cranford hasn't—isn't—can't make you a good guardian. He hasn't the—the qualities," ended Dick, miserably, conscious that he was playing a shabby trick upon his best friend.

"Have you?" asked Polly caustically.

Dick swung upon his heel and raised his hat. "I shall not trouble you again, Miss Seaton," he said, with suppressed violence. "Don't be afraid that you will ever see me after this."

He leaped into the taxi, which had remained close by, the driver calmly watching the scene with a man-of-the-world expression upon his face, and the vehicle started back furiously toward the city, leaving Polly temporarily speechless.

"Oh, Dick," she cried at length, stretching out her arms toward the departing vehicle, "I—I—Oh, if you ever cared for



"'P—P—Miss Seaton, you're not angry with me still, are you?' Dick pleaded. 'If you'll only let me explain——'"

me the least bit in the world you would stay and explain it all, instead of being so angry every time I meet you!"

It was fortunate that there was nobody passing to see the pretty girl in the severe dress wiping her eyes by the dusty roadside. When the eyes were quite dry, out came something that Polly had achieved recently with much misgiving, and with much sense of secret sin. It was—a powder paper. It went daintily all over the tear-stained cheeks and the grief-reddened nose, and was rubbed up and down, and round and round, with an intuition that might have been the experience of years. If it did not betoken the old Adam, let us call it the original Eve.

Then Polly took up the bag and resumed her walk. A few minutes later she passed up a very large garden and rang the bell of an old-fashioned manor house, standing curiously forlorn but splendid among the vacant building lots which had been cut out of the property.

AN HOUR before dinner that night Polly sat in her bedroom in Judge Cranford's house, dressing slowly, and analyzing her impressions, which were certainly bewildering ones.

Polly had expected to find a worldly atmosphere, such as she had braced herself to meet, because she considered it inevitable. And it is certainly startling, when one has finally cast all moral principles to the winds, to encounter them again in others. She had found herself plunged into an atmosphere that would have gone straight to Aunt Jane's heart.

There was, first, the Judge, an old-world gentleman of charming manners. Then there was his son Joe, a young man of about seven and twenty, whose face seemed somehow oddly familiar, although Polly could not remember where she had met him. Joe seemed distinctly promising as a guardian.

It was the character and occupation of the other guests, however, that proved amazing. In place of the gathering of lawyers, worldly wise, and shrewd finan-

cial magnates, that the girl had pictured, she found the following:

A Mr. and Mrs. Davenant, who were spending a few days with the Judge while acting as delegates to a national anti-poker convention, which was to be held shortly in a neighboring town, and would, it was expected, be instrumental in banishing the great vice from American life.

A Miss Reeves, a young lady with a wealth of fair hair, and a very engrossing manner, who was secretary to an organization for the abolition of tobacco.

And a Mr. Jones, a handsome young fellow with dark hair, who, as treasurer of an organization for abolishing the theatre, and an old friend of Joe's, had come for a week-end visit.

Polly's spirits had risen wonderfully at the familiar atmosphere of the gathering. She was bitterly repenting her rash resolution to cast away the teachings of Aunt Jane. She felt almost a pariah at the dinner table, in her stylish dress, which contrasted vividly with the sombre hues of the other ladies' attire.

She resolved to put herself right with the company. But she soon felt at her ease, for Joe Cranford proved the most delightful of dinner companions.

Presently Miss Reeves leaned across the table to the dark-haired young man on Polly's right.

"Mr. Jones, what is the chief paper to be read at your meeting next Thursday?" she inquired.

"Our leading paper will be by Professor Slocum, on 'The Intimate Association between Drink and the Drama,'" responded the dark-haired young man with a bow.

"It is terrible, the amount of secret theatricals that is going on in this country all the time," said Mrs. Davenant.

"And I am told that they actually smoke—the spectators of these private gatherings," interposed Miss Reeves. "The women, I mean. The men are past praying for."

There sounded a sudden noise like an explosion from the head of the table,

where Judge Cranford was seated. It resolved itself into something more like a clicking chuckle; but when Polly turned her head to look the Judge was eyeing his plate and apparently clearing his throat.

"I know how true that is about theatricals," said Polly sadly, thinking of Dick. She tried to remember the name of his friend who had led him into the vice, but it would not come to her. "In my opinion," she continued, "the stage is the great curse of the country. It is worse than drink in a way, because it entices people to drink. All actors drink, and actresses too, I am told," she ended.

Judge Cranford coughed violently and turned red in the face. Joe sprang to his side and began thumping the old man hard upon the back until he recovered.

"I quite agree with you in some respects, my dear," said Mrs. Davenant, leaning across the table to Polly.

"I want you to let me show you the greenhouse after dinner, Miss Seaton," interposed Joe, with rather startling suddenness.

BUT dinner was just ending, and, as is customary in houses where liquor and smoking are taboo, the gentlemen accompanied the ladies at once into the drawing-room. In the process Polly got separated from her escort. Seeing Joe leading the way a little distance ahead, under the impression that she was near him, she hurried after him into the passage, and, as she emerged, a large object rebounded from another smaller object, with the resiliency of a rubber ball.

It was Mr. Jones, very unnecessarily startled and confused. About ten feet away from him was Miss Reeves, in the act of performing a Swedish exercise.

Polly did not think much of the episode. She accompanied Joe into the greenhouse, a large place filled with flowering shrubs and ferns. They wandered about rather aimlessly for a few minutes. Then Joe began to hem and haw.

"About this guardianship business, Miss Seaton," he began abruptly. "You know, Miss Seaton, that I should be delighted to undertake the task. But I am not sure—at least I was not quite sure until dinner time that we should hit it off well."

"Why?" inquired Polly.

"Well, my father and I have very—very strict principles about things which are commonly looked upon as venial."

"Why, the idea!" said the girl indignantly. "I am sure nobody could have been brought up more strictly than I!"

"I hope I am not offending," said Joe bluntly. "But until you spoke as you did about the stage I had almost decided to decline the post. You see, though it is to be a business arrangement, it carries with it a certain moral responsibility.

Polly turned and looked at Joe with her most chilling expression.

"Will you kindly tell me why you should imagine that I am a—a person who is unworthy to be associated with yourself?" she demanded. "Or why you think I am so inferior morally?"

"Now, Miss Seaton, please don't take my words in that way," said Joe, pleadingly. "I only meant that most wealthy young ladies are not brought up nowadays as their grandmothers were."

Polly's look was perfectly freezing.

"Yes, yes, Mr. Cranford, I quite understand that you are altogether too good a person to become my guardian," said the girl. "It may occur to you, a little later, that I haven't asked you, and that it is for me to do the selecting."

"My dear Miss Seaton—"

"I don't question that," continued Polly. "But why—just why did you find it inevitable that you should arrive at this conclusion? You must have some specific reason."

"Well," said Joe, driven into a corner, "if I had—"

"If you think my character makes me unsuitable to be a guest at this house—"

"Miss Seaton, I implore you not to take me in that way. It had no reference—no direct reference to yourself."

"What is it?"

"Well—your stepfather."

"What?" cried Polly, staring at him aghast.

"The late Colonel Sanford, your stepfather, was not a good man, Miss Seaton."

"My stepfather was the best man in the world!" cried the girl defiantly. "How dare you say such a thing?"

And at the moment she meant it. Afterward she wondered what had given rise to that spontaneous utterance.

"He drank."

"He was brought up to drink."

"He smoked."

"Well, yes, he did smoke. But only cigars—never cigarettes. People hadn't reached such a pitch of development when he was a young man."

"He flirted," said Joe Cranford sternly.

"He didn't flirt," cried Polly in desperation. "He was just fond of young women about him and he used to tease them."

"And, he went to the theatre," said Joe.

POLLY hung her head. She knew, too well, that the charge was irrefutable. Hadn't he taken her to see "The Broadway Twinklers," young women kicking their limbs shamelessly about the stage? She tried to defend the Colonel, but she could not. So in self-defence she took out her pocket-handkerchief and cried just the least bit.

Joe was all remorse in a moment. "Miss Seaton, can you ever forgive me for being such a brute?" he begged, clutching in agitation at her sleeve. "I—I was wrought up, and I—I want to be your guardian."

"Not if you think me vicious and immoral," said Polly, with a sob in her voice, tearing herself petulantly away from Joe's arm, which, as if beyond his control, showed signs of a tendency to encircle her. And yet, all the while, Polly was aware of an insane desire to laugh.

"You are an angel, Miss Seaton. You—"

The handkerchief fluttered to the ground. Polly stared out of her blue eyes at Joe. And, astounding as his statement had been, Polly was glad.

She was so perfectly proud to be thought an angel, and there was only one thing missing to make her joy complete. She wanted Dick to hear.

Oh, how much she wished that Dick could be hiding just then behind the rubber plant. And he *would* be, if he had any enterprise. He would discover, even if he did not appreciate her, that there were others who did.

"What's that you said?" demanded Polly, trying to look severe.

"I don't know," gasped Joe. "I guess it just leaped out of my heart."

"Mr. Cranford," said Polly, shaking her finger at him, "you are a very unguarded young man. You are far, far too rash ever to make a good guardian for me."

"O, Miss Seaton," began Joe in deep distress.

"Altogether too rash. Why, you'd put my money into the first gold mine that—"

"No, I wouldn't! Indeed I wouldn't! I'm a hard-headed business man," cried Joe. "I'm only rash when I'm terribly in earnest about anything, and—and making a fool of myself. Please give me a chance!"

"Well, we'll see," said Polly, in conciliatory tones, laying her hand on Joe's arm. "I shall try you out, perhaps, before I go home."

It was the very first time that Polly had laid her hand on any young man's arm. Their eyes met—and Polly knew that Joe lay, a victim, at her feet. Yet it was her first conquest—really it was; at least, it was her first face-to-face conquest, so to speak, for Dick, who had just pretended to—well, to care, had been deceiving her, and nobody else counted. And how did she know she had done it?

HOW *did* she know? She asked herself that question the following morning, leaning out of her window in the glow of a glorious sunrise. She had awakened very early, excited beyond measure at the discovery of this extraordinary power over the male of the human race, of which she had so often read in

books, and also unutterably miserable because Joe was not Dick. She wanted Dick to know about it.

She wanted Dick to see Joe lying, bound in the chains of love, before her. She wanted to torture Dick. If she couldn't torture Dick, she wanted to torture Joe, to punish him because of Dick's faithlessness.

Of course Polly did not know what she wanted. She was merely struggling to put Joe on the foreground and keep the memory of Dick suppressed.

"Why shouldn't I?" demanded Polly suddenly, of nobody and nothing in particular.

Nobody answered, until an early robin came on the scene.

"Every woman does—every woman does," it chanted, between bursts of energetic warfare upon a worm.

"It's wicked—wicked!" sang a song-sparrow from the top bough of a tree.

"I don't care if it is," said Polly defiantly. "I'm just going to."

A cluster of early asters underneath her window winked their yellow eyes and nodded their heads approvingly.

IT WAS quite a different-looking Polly who went downstairs to breakfast. A mask seemed to have fallen from her face. Her eyes were shining, and behind the shine was something that started Joe's heart beating wildly.

On a previous occasion a certain Belgian maid named Mathilde had offered to show Polly how to bring a man to her feet. Polly had been horrified at the suggestion, but the failure of the object-lesson had banished her belief in Mathilde's statement that any woman could do the same. Now she knew it was true. She had learned to flirt in an instant—the instant when she looked into Joe's eyes.

And she meant to wreak a terrible revenge for Dick's treatment of her. All that day Joe was alternately in joy and despair. Joe, too, was going through a critical period. It was during one of the despairing intervals that he withdrew

to his study to meditate. Three times he began a letter, and three times he tore up what he had written. Then he set his teeth and wrote it a fourth time from beginning to end, addressed it to Mr. Richard Cresswell, and started out to mail it. In the hall he met Polly.

"O, Mr. Cranford," she said, "I was wondering what had become of you. I am feeling so lonely."

Joe snatched the letter from his pocket and prepared to tear it into shreds. Yet he hesitated, and Polly went on:

"It is so desperately secret, all this private meeting of your other guests, and my not being admitted."

Joe stared for an instant.

"O, yes, Miss Seaton, and we all feel very badly about it," he answered. "But, you see, the organizations to which the Davenants, and Miss Reeves, and Mr. Jones belong are affiliated branches, and the—er—the by-laws make secrecy positively essential. You know, they are debating some plans of immense national importance. That's why they just had to lock themselves into my father's study to discuss them."

"O, well, I don't care," answered Polly. "But, you see, I did feel a bit lonely; as there was nobody else I wondered what had happened to you."

Joe groveled—metaphorically. Also his clutch upon the letter relaxed. Well, if she was so horrid he'd mail it.

"I was just going out to post a letter."

"May I come, too?" asked Polly.

"I shall be delighted," answered Joe.

They walked to the letter-box at the bottom of the garden. With a firm hand Joe thrust in the letter. It went into the box's maw, like a sacrifice to an awful god.

"You're very silent," said Polly. "I don't think you're at all nice, Mr. Cranford, after arousing my—my interest in you so much."

Joe stared in agony at the mouth of the letter-box. He was planning some desperate scheme of burglary before the postman came round.

"But, of course," the girl continued, "all people interest me just now, because the world is rather new to me."

Joe turned from his temptation like a man. Dick might get the letter now and he didn't care—much!

Can a man's friendship and loyalty to another be proof against love? That was poor Joe's problem. He had been wrestling with it practically from the moment when he first set eyes on Polly—which was some time before he met the girl at his father's house. And Dick and he had been inseparable at college, and ever since. Joe was devoted to his friend. He was in love, too, desperately.

HE WAS more madly in love than ever by evening, for Polly had been very gracious. When the girl went up to her room to dress for dinner they stood at the door, chatting. And here a remarkable episode occurred.

The mysterious meeting of the affiliated organizations had lasted most of that afternoon. Mention has been made of a strange leap undertaken by Mr. Jones on the first evening, outside the drawing-room. Now, all of a sudden, the young man came darting up the stairs toward his bedroom, which was just around the corner of the passage from Polly's. There was nothing remarkable in the speed with which he ran; what was unusual was that he was wearing a frock coat, a silk hat, and a striped lavender waistcoat.

He cast one glance toward Polly as he reached the head of the flight, uttered a sort of low moan, and disappeared into his room, slamming and locking the door behind him.

Polly clung to the jamb in terror.

"Mr. Cranford," she gasped, "did you see that?"

"Ye-ye-yes. Miss S-S-S-Seaton," stammered Joe, who appeared absolutely paralyzed with terror.

"What does it mean? What is it? Is he—is he insane?" demanded Polly, panic-stricken.

"Ye-ye-yes," stammered Joe. "No—

that is—why, yes, Miss Seaton—that is—you see, it's this way. Poor Jones is perfectly harmless, but he's been overdoing it in the cause of his society and he—well, he came down here to recuperate. The doctor says he'll be quite well in another week or two, but—but his campaign against theatricals, you know. He throws his whole soul into his work, and sometimes he has a momentary touch of insanity. He wouldn't hurt a fly!"

"Poor fellow!" said Polly.

"Yes," went on Joe volubly, "and that's really why we have to let them hold their meetings in private. You see, Jones gets a trifle erratic, especially after an hour or so. He oughtn't to be allowed to go, but he insists, and so we humor him. Don't be afraid of him, Miss Seaton."

"I'm not afraid," said Polly, hesitant.

"I knew you couldn't be," said Joe. "Miss Seaton, I think you're such a splendid girl. Would you mind very much my saying something?"

"Is it very personal?" asked Polly, smiling.

"Well, yes. But I can't help saying it. Ever since I saw you I've been thinking what a lot of blind dolts there are in the world that some young fellow hasn't snapped you up. I know how crude that sounds, but the man that won you, Miss Seaton, would be just the luckiest fellow on earth, or, rather, in heaven."

Here interposed the tiny, very much subdued voice of conscience.

"Aren't you thoroughly ashamed of yourself, you—you hussy?" it asked. "What do you mean by bringing the poor fellow to that, when you know you said you never would marry anyone? Of course you didn't mean it—"

"I did!" said Polly.

"What you meant was that you wouldn't marry anybody unless you could get Dick. But that makes it all the worse, letting Joe lose his head over you in this way. Oh, for heaven's sake turn them down! Turn them down, I tell you. He thinks you mean business when you look at him like that."

"You are a horrid thing," said Polly, "and I think your phrases are coarse in the extreme. I shall look at Joe Cranford just as much as I want to."

"Miss Seaton," said Joe wistfully, "there's something that I've been wanting to say to you for some time. I want to say it very badly indeed. Tonight I have to go over to Darlington to see an old client of my father's, and I don't expect to be back until about this time tomorrow afternoon. I wonder whether I could have a chance to meet you in the garden about then, so that I can see you by yourself."

"No!" shouted conscience.

But, since conscience speaks only in a still, small voice, however hard it tries to raise it, the reply was drowned in Polly's fluttering "yes."

Joe went away springily, his whole personality radiating satisfaction, and Polly retired into her room. She looked so demure as she sat down before the mirror that nobody would have dreamed of the agitation in her heart.

"Well, you've done it now," she said to herself. "Yes, you've done it. You've gone too far. You'll have to marry Joe, or pass as a shameless, abominable flirt."

Suddenly the girl found herself crying tempestuously, without having suspected that she was going to.

"It's a wicked shame," she whispered. "Oh, Dick, if only you could be here now! If only you could care for me, and make me forget my stubbornness. I love you, Dick, and I can't—I can't marry Joe."

She was quite unhappy when she went down to dinner that night. The only unhappier person at the table was Mr. Jones. He looked at Polly furtively; once their eyes met, and the girl saw a pleading expression in his. And the temptation was almost irresistible to wonder whose it was, and what he had done with that—that thing!

But Mr. Jones was certainly a composed lunatic. His conversation seemed quite rational. It was not until late in the evening that he had an outbreak.

AND it happened in this wise. You know that when you don't want to see a thing, you are sure to find yourself placed unintentionally in the position of a sort of spy. Well, Polly, having determined to keep her attention away from Mr. Jones, happened to be near the door of the drawing-room. Miss Reeves, who had been singing, had gone outside, and in the mirror over the mantel Polly saw her standing in the hall, looking at a vase of flowers. Suddenly Mr. Jones's head came into the picture.

Mr. Jones descended the stairs, crept up to Miss Reeves, and deliberately implanted a—you know—on the back of her neck!

Polly, aghast, saw the girl spring round and face the madman. Then the eyes of the three met in the mirror, and Mr. Jones simply vanished.

Polly took the bull by the horns. She went out. Miss Reeves still stood near the flowers, but Mr. Jones was nowhere in sight. The poor girl's face was pink with mortification.

"Miss Reeves," said Polly, "I—I couldn't help seeing that. I thought I'd tell you something. Poor Mr. Jones—but you know, of course, that he isn't responsible?"

Miss Reeves turned from pink to scarlet. "What do you mean?" she stammered.

"I thought you knew he has been overworking and is a little light-headed at times. It's the arduous nature of his task, you know. I'm sure—I'm quite sure he didn't mean to insult you."

Miss Reeves looked both astounded and curious.

"Do you mean to suggest that Mr. Jones is out of his mind?" she asked.

Polly nodded.

"Just overwork," she said. "I know he would be the last man to think of doing such an abominable thing as that to you, of all persons."

"Oh, thank you!" gasped Miss Reeves, and hurried away.

Mr. Jones did not return to the drawing-

room that evening. Polly went to bed early.

In Joe's absence the conversation languished a good deal, and it was evident that the other guests were tired out from their conference, for Polly's attempts to open a discussion on vice proved mainly abortive. The next day was a wet, miserable one, and everyone was gloomy, even the Judge, who was usually full of fun and spirits.

POLLY felt more and more depressed as the hour for Joe's return drew near. About four o'clock the sun came out and the damp ground began to steam. The others were hard at their conference in the Judge's study, at the back of the house, and not only were the doors locked, but a curtain was drawn before either window. Polly felt dreadfully out of it all.

She walked round and round the house, each time approaching nearer the study windows, and, like Eve outside paradise, she began to long to be inside. Like Eve, too, she began to feel an insatiable curiosity. What could be so very mysterious about this conference, that is should be so scrupulously concealed.

The third time she walked around the house she saw that a fold of one of the curtains had caught on a hook inside, leaving a little triangle of vision for anybody outside. The fourth time she went so near that she could make out the Judge's back as he stood before the window.

The fifth time Polly stopped.

"I'm going to take just one peek," she said to herself.

She saw that her eye was on a level with the middle of the triangle. Polly tried to go on, but her limbs wouldn't move. She tried to turn her head away, but it was fast upon her shoulders. And, of course, she was not responsible for lines of vision.

Next moment she started back in amazement. For, in the brief moment's glance she had seen:

Mr. Jones in his silk hat, frock coat, and lavender waistcoat.

Miss Reeves wearing a Japanese kimono, and with her hair down.

Mrs. Davenant, in a maid's cap and apron, holding a broom over Mr. Jones's head.

And Mr. Davenant in a wig, lying, apparently unconscious, on the floor.

None of which costumes was in the least appropriate for a crusade against vice.

"They're actors!" said Polly. "Common actors! They've—they've all been deceiving me. And Joe—"

A surge of anger went through her heart against Joe. Oh, how she would pay him out for it all!

Suddenly she saw Joe in the distance, coming up the garden path. And, being a woman, she composed herself instantly into serenity, and went forward to meet him, smiling, and holding back the invisible burden of her resentment.

JOE took her hands. "Miss Seaton," he said earnestly, "you don't know how much I have looked forward to this meeting all day. I—I want to talk to you about something that means all the world to me. Sometimes," he continued, as he drew her to a seat under a big tree, wiped it with his handkerchief, and sat down beside her, "sometimes I've wondered whether you had a heart. At others I've been sure you have. But I'm not quite sure even now," he added.

"The only way to find out is to try," said Polly sweetly.

"You almost give me courage to tell you."

"Mr. Cranford, of course I don't know—I don't know exactly what you are going to say," said Polly, "but if it is something of which your conscience approves I think you are right in wishing to say it. Only I hope it isn't like what you said to me in the greenhouse."

"No—indeed no," answered Joe earnestly. "My conscience tells me I ought to say it. I don't want to, Miss Seaton."



"None of which costumes was in the least appropriate for a crusade against vice."

Polly was stupefied. "You—don't—want—to?" she asked, turning toward Joe. "I thought you wanted to."

"I want to with all my heart, and yet it involves a bitter disappointment for me. I'll come to the point, Miss Seaton. Do you care—could you learn to care—for my friend, Dick Cresswell?"

Out of the darkness all about her Polly heard her own voice answering.

"Is Mr. Cresswell not capable of speaking for himself?" she asked. "Mr. Cranford, do you think you are entitled to speak for him, after inviting me to be your guest and deceiving me—shamefully deceiving me?"

"Miss Seaton, I'll explain."

"There is no need to explain."

"I'll explain," said Joe again, doggedly. "I admit I lied to you and I see you know everything. The Davenants, Mr. Jones—who is perfectly sane—and Miss Reeves are prominent members of the theatrical profession, who are staying here to rehearse a play which I have had the honor of writing. When you proposed your visit, knowing your prejudice against the stage, and being most anxious not to offend you, for Dick's sake—"

"O, never mind your friend Mr. Cresswell!" cried Polly vehemently.

"For Dick's sake," repeated Joe implacably, "we decided that they should play the parts they assumed. I am responsible for that. When I saw that you were deceived, I hoped to show you that your strict views of life were unfair and a little—may I say inhuman? For that reason I pretended to be still more puritanical than yourself. I insulted your stepfather's memory, which is most dear to me, in order to provoke a reaction in your own mind in favor of one of the best men who ever lived. I meant to tell you everything tonight, and to ask your forgiveness."

"And it was all unnecessary!" cried Polly, hardly able to refrain from crying. "I came here—I came here already decided that my views were a little too strict. I was a fool—a child, looking upon the

world with the eyes of prejudice, and you have humiliated me and made me a laughing-stock. Do you call that fair, or gentlemanly, Mr. Cranford?"

"No," answered Joe.

"And now," said Polly, "you may be interested to know that you have swung me back to my first impressions. I see now that the world is bad, and that people who would conceive any such wretched scheme against one girl—a fool, if you like, but still one against half a dozen—such people are—are—"

"O, Miss Seaton, don't take it that way," begged Joe. "Think what you like of me, but at any rate Dick knows nothing of it. He loves you, and you won't give him a chance to speak to you. And now I want to tell you of an absurd misapprehension you are under about a certain night at the theatre—"

Polly rose and flashed an annihilating glance at Joe out of her blue eyes, wet with tears.

"I may be absurd," she said with dignity, "but that is no reason why I should stay here and be insulted further."

"Miss Seaton! It's hopeless, I see. But listen, then. Just give Dick his chance to tell you. In common fairness give him one chance. He is waiting to know the result of our interview, and—look, there he comes, Polly!"

The name slipped unconsciously from Joe's lips. Polly hardly heard it. She saw Dick in the distance, coming a little uncertainly toward her from the end of the garden. And, gathering up her skirts, she turned and ran.

Joe held Dick Cresswell's hand and looked at his friend compassionately.

"I did my best, old man," he said.

"I know you did, Joe."

"You'll get her, Dick. I know you can."

Dick raised his eyes and looked at his friend curiously. Did he suspect the mighty struggle in Joe's heart? If he did, he knew that nothing could be said. Silently he grasped his hand again, and wistfully both men looked toward a distant figure hurrying toward the road.

IT'S the fifth," meditated Miss Polly Seaton, holding unopened in her hand the last of the five envelopes which Mr. Brose, the lawyer, had given her.

Within each of these envelopes Polly's stepfather, the late Colonel Sanford, had written the names of a potential guardian. One of these gentlemen had to be selected by Polly to manage her estate. And four of them had proved hideous failures.

There had been Dick Cresswell, who had pretended to care for her, and had broken an engagement for a sociological lecture to meet a horrible, painted actress at the stage door of the theatre. He had smoked, besides, and had been generally vicious. Polly drew the veil very quickly over those memories, for if Dick had really cared he would have explained—there must be some explanation—instead of going off in a huff whenever they met.

And there had been Dick's friend, Joe Cranford, who had been more impossible than Dick. And two others besides, each worse than the other. Now the fifth guardian would have to be chosen, whatever he happened to be.

"It makes my blood run cold," said Polly to Nan Draper, her old housekeeper. "Stepfather must have been out of his senses to put me to such a terrible ordeal as this."

"The Colonel had a good deal of sense, Miss Polly," answered Nan enigmatically.

"Do you suppose he knew I'd refuse all those dreadful men for my guardians?" asked the girl. "And then he meant to spring a surprise on me at the end?"

Nan was silent. Whether or no the late Colonel Sanford had had any such idea in view, one thing was sure: Polly had had a varied experience in mankind since she opened the first of the five envelopes in that same room some weeks before.

And it had not broadened her. Nan looked with disapproval at Polly's shapeless dress—the same dress in which she had come home from the Miss Tibbetts' boarding-school; at the beautiful hair, done up in a flattened bun and smoothed

tightly back above the forehead. Nan had almost thought that the Colonel's design was bearing fruit, until she came home from Judge Cranford's house almost hysterical, and exclaiming that Joe Cranford had humiliated and insulted her, and, to put the coping-stone upon his villainy, had tried to inveigle her into a private meeting with Dick.

Polly turned toward Nan, the envelope still unopened in her hand.

"Nan," she said, "Nan, dear, I've been very foolish, and I have suffered for it. You know, before I went to Mr. Cranford's house I came to the conclusion that I was wrong in my attitude toward life, and that I must be more tolerant, but I realize now how truly Aunt Jane spoke when she warned me never to compromise with sin."

"But, my lamb, Mr. Cresswell isn't sin."

"Nan, please don't speak that name to me again—never! As I was saying, I went to Mr. Cranford's house resolved to abandon what Miss Patience Tibbetts used to call one's moral armor. And I deserved what I got. Henceforward I shall be absolutely unbending. And if my fifth guardian isn't a man of the highest principles and absolute integrity, I shall refuse to accept him and let somebody else have my fortune."

Nan Draper sighed heavily. She did not know who the fifth guardian was. The only hope which sustained her was that Colonel Sanford, whom she had almost worshipped, had devised his scheme cunningly enough to make the fifth lesson absolutely operative.

Polly broke the seal and pulled forth a piece of paper.

"Mr. Elias Goodenough," she read, "The Old House, Sudbury." She held the paper out to the old servant. "It sounds a good name," she said thoughtfully. "But Sudbury is twelve miles away, and in the heart of the hills. I wonder what Mr. Goodenough's occupation is. Do you know him?"

"I never heard of him, Miss Polly," said Nan.

"Well," said Polly with decision. "I've got to go through with it, so I shall start tomorrow. And this time there will be no preliminary letter from me, so it will be impossible for Mr. Goodenough to prepare to deceive me."

TRUE to her word, Polly set off to the station next morning early. She was dressed in the very severest manner. And she was quite unaware that the shapeless dress and the strained hair merely made her look like an entrancing Quaker maiden, and she thought that the people in the car, who looked at her in covert admiration, were extremely impertinent.

It was a long ride to Sudbury, and the wild character of the country, which was well outside the range of the commuting zone, made Polly wonder more and more who Mr. Goodenough was, and what his occupation could be. At the station nobody seemed to know him, until she thought of mentioning The Old House.

"Why, Miss, that was Colonel Sanford's hunting place!" said the clerk in the ticket office. "He bought it years ago, and when he stopped coming here he let it deteriorate. Yes, there was a Mr. and Mrs. Goodenough rented it from the agent some time ago, but I guess they haven't arrived yet."

"They came up last week on the night train," put in the baggage-master. "Queer old couple, too—'The Old House'—I remember their baggage had that on it."

Polly's heart sank lower and lower. She had known that she did own a piece of property somewhere in this district, but not that it was the identical residence of her fifth guardian. The thought of her stepfather having built in this desolate region and ceased inhabiting his house struck her with a sense of the instability of life. And so Goodenough had a wife, and both were "queer." Polly disliked queer people. And hadn't she had enough of them?

"When is the next train back?" she asked.

"Not for five hours, Miss. If you like, Dick here will drive you up to Mr. Goodenough's place, and you'll have plenty of time to catch the down train at 4:48."

Polly considered. The name Dick had somehow come to her as an omen. Then she dismissed her irresolution. The business had to be undertaken.

"How far is it?" she asked.

"Three miles, Miss."

"Then Dick can drive me," said Polly graciously.

And she experienced quite a pleasant surprise when the Old House came into sight at the crest of a mountain road. Huge pines grew all about it, and it was set in the midst of a flowering garden. She dismissed the driver at the gate of the long drive, and, taking her suitcase in hand, walked briskly up toward the house.

She rang the bell, and after a short interval of that suspense that one always feels under such circumstances, the door opened. Polly knew at once that the elderly gentleman who stood before her was Mr. Goodenough. He could not have looked any different with such a name.

HE WAS about fifty-five. That alone pleased Polly—no more young guardians for her! He had gray hair and a growth of snow-white whiskers that came almost up to his eyes, and almost met under his chin, having been warned off the premises, so to speak, after progressive trespassing, evidenced by successive lines of incomplete shavings.

Mr. Elias Goodenough had a severe face and was clothed in sombre black. No frivolity about Mr. Elias! That pleased Polly still more.

"I'm Miss Seaton," said the girl. "You know why I've come, don't you. My stepfather—"

"Aye, I know all about that," answered Mr. Goodenough, without, however, stepping aside. "Why didn't you write?"

"Mr. Brose told me that my guardians would be expecting me."

"Aye, I've expected you for a long

time," said Mr. Goodenough. "Why didn't you come before? Never mind, you're here now and you'd better come in, and we'll have a talk together."

Polly, a little disconcerted, followed Mr. Goodenough meekly inside. The living-room was not quite so sombre as she had anticipated from her guardian's manner. The furniture was modern and good, except the center piece, which was one of those old-fashioned lounges with a circular stuffed seat around a sort of padded pillar, just the thing for half a dozen guests who are not on speaking terms with one another. Upon this sat an old-fashioned lady, also dressed in black, with jet earrings and a jet brooch with a white cameo in the center, and a face even more severe than Mr. Goodenough's and yet somehow reminding Polly of Dick.

Yes, Dick seemed everywhere that afternoon, and in Polly's heart too. She hardened it and resolved to forget.

"Miriam, this young lady is Colonel Sanford's niece," said Mr. Goodenough. "She's been the rounds of her other guardians, I guess, and finds them not to her liking. And so she's come to me. Have I sized it up right?" he concluded, turning to Polly with a sort of chuckle.

"You have," said Polly.

"Then you can shake hands with my wife."

Polly, now very much disconcerted, and conscious of a strong impulse to turn and flee, took the icy hand that was partly extended out of the black mitten.

"And now, Miss Seaton, we'll talk business," said Mr. Goodenough. "First let me ask you a question. What sort of man do you take me for?"

POLLY caught her breath before answering. Mr. Goodenough's manners were not nice. But "self-control in difficult circumstances is the true test of genteel breeding," had been one of Aunt Jane's aphorisms. Polly repeated it under her breath.

"Well, Mr. Goodenough, you see I don't

know you yet," she said with a smile that was intended to be winning, but produced no relaxation of the muscles of Mr. Goodenough's face.

"You don't know me yet," repeated Mr. Goodenough, nodding his head. "True, and I don't know you. But if I'm to be your guardian I mean to, Miss Seaton. I can guess what you are like from my knowledge of Colonel Sanford."

"O!" cried Polly. "You mean—you mean—"

"I'll tell you the sort of man I am," continued Elias Goodenough, as if she had not spoken. "I'm a sober, sedate, serious man, and I have no use for worldly people. I talk straight and I act straight. If you wish me to act as your guardian you'll have to show me what sort of young woman you are."

Polly felt much relieved at this frank statement. She had always known that good people are apt to be unpleasantly direct, and if Mr. Goodenough was a trifle curt, that was no reason for resentment.

"My stepfather was a splendid man in many ways," she said, "but of course he wasn't a good man, in the best sense of the word. He was a man of the world, and I was brought up away from him on account of it. I don't believe in drinking, smoking, gambling, or theatricals, Mr. Goodenough, and I believe you'll make just the sort of guardian I want."

"That sounds good to me," answered the old man. "So we'll try each other out for a week. You'll sign a paper agreeing to place yourself under my guardianship for one week, and we'll try each other in different ways, and I'll see the stuff you're made of."

He stopped and smiled rather sourly. "If you're not the sort of young woman I take you for," he continued, "you'd better go home. I'm a man of my word."

"And I'm a woman of my word," cried Polly, nettled by the challenge. "Bring on your paper!"

Mr. Goodenough plunged his arm into the open drawer of a desk and produced a document.

"I had it ready in case you came," he said. "Read it."

Polly looked through it quickly. It bound her to accept Mr. Goodenough as her personal guardian for the space of a week, without including her property. There seemed nothing objectionable in it. She put her name to it.

POLLY affixed her name deliberately, and stood looking at Mr. Goodenough in laughing defiance. Her guardian folded up the paper and replaced it in the desk.

"You may go to your room," he said. "It's the second from the bath-room at the head of the stairs. You may employ your afternoon in any manner you think advisable. We dine at five. I'll carry up your bag."

He did so, preceding the girl, who was choking down an irresistible inclination to laugh wildly. He sat down the bag at the door of a very comfortable little bedroom and withdrew.

Polly flung herself down on the bed and buried her face in the pillow.

"You're a dear," she said, when she had recovered from her mirth. "I believe your heart's just as good as gold, in spite of your uncouth exterior. And I believe Stepfather knew just what he was doing when he appointed you number five."

She washed away the stains of travel and prepared to adjust her hair. To her surprise she found that there was no mirror in the room.

She opened the door, uncertainly. At the sound Mr. Goodenough came out of a room at the end of the hail.

"Oh, Mr. Goodenough," called Polly. "there's no mirror in my room."

Mr. Goodenough came quietly toward her.

"Hush that noise!" he said sternly. "My wife's gone to bed. She's an invalid. You won't see much of her."

"O, I'm so sorry," said Polly penitently. "Let me go to her."

"The woman can take care of herself. What's that you were saying?"

"Why, I haven't a mirror." answered

Polly, a little nervously, "but I don't want to trouble—"

"Trouble?" scoffed Mr. Goodenough. "You can't trouble me. And what sort of upbringing have you had, that you want to see your face in the looking-glass?"

"But I want to do my hair, Mr. Goodenough."

"Your hair's all right," said Mr. Goodenough. "When it's wrong I'll tell you sharp. I don't allow slovenliness in my house."

"Mr. Goodenough, this is past a joke—"

"Joke? What do you take me for? I'm not one of your worldly-minded, carnal-spirited jokers, Miss Seaton. I see you don't understand me yet. And—"

He stopped, not for want of words, but because Polly had executed a strategic retirement into her room and closed the door. Deliberately, and without knocking, Mr. Goodenough opened it.

"And you'll please attend respectfully when I'm talking to ye," he added.

POLLY sprang to her feet. "Mr. Goodenough. I've had enough of this. I'm going home," she said.

Mr. Goodenough put his hand in his pocket; took out a key, inserted it in the outside of the door, and locked Polly in. The girl heard him retreating along the passage.

Furious at the insult, Polly sprang to the door. But before her hand touched the knob common-sense reasserted itself. After all, she reflected, the old man was only eccentric; she could undoubtedly humor him and make the week an easy one.

Of course he was impossible as a guardian, but if things got too bad she could go home.

She unpacked her bag and adjusted her hair as best she could. Presently she heard her guardian coming along the passage. There came the sound of the key being thrust into the door. The lock snapped, and Mr. Goodenough's head appeared.

"If you've had your discipline, you can come to supper," said the old man.

"All right," said Polly.

Supper was laid in the reception-room, upon a tiny table. It consisted of a bowl of milk and two slices of bread apiece. Polly sat down and began to eat, resolved to say nothing. This, she supposed, was Mr. Goodenough's test.

Mr. Goodenough, who had taken his seat opposite her, sprang to his feet and snatched the spoon out of her hand.

"Infamous woman!" he shouted. "Have you never heard of asking the blessing before the repast?"

"Well, I don't call this much of a repast," said Polly suavely.

"Maybe not! Maybe ye's been accustomed to steaks and stews and such-like trappings of the world. Maybe ye're a tea drinker?"

"I am, and I want a cup. My head aches after my journey," answered the girl.

"Aye! The poor, drugged body's calling for its stimulant," sneered Goodenough. "Go on with your meal. You'll get no tea in this house."

Polly, being simply hungry, went on as she had been instructed, the old man gobbling down his food and watching her keenly. She thought he seemed almost sorry when she had finished.

"If you want more bread and milk you'll find it in the kitchen," he said.

"Thank you, I have had enough," said Polly. "And now I think there are a few things that I must say to you—"

"And I've got a few things to say to you," answered Mr. Goodenough, "but I'll finish my meal first, and you can wait till I'm ready. Oh, you needn't be looking at the front door. It's locked."

Polly smiled contemptuously and seated herself on the unsociable lounge. Actually she began to realize that she was in a serious situation. If Mr. Goodenough was not actually insane, he was not far from that condition.

When he had finished he came toward her and drew up a chair.

"Now, my girl, I'll hear what you have to say, and then I'll tell you what I have to say," he said. "Go on! Ask me for tea and coffee and such-like drugs. Ask me for looking-glasses to pamper the vanity of the soul, and hot water to minister to the luxury of the body. Ask me!"

"You will unlock the front door at once, Mr. Goodenough," said Polly, heatedly, but with majesty. "And I shall leave your house immediately."

Mr. Goodenough threw back his head and burst into laughter of the most unpleasant nature.

"Now, my girl, we'll have it out together," he said. "I've heard about you. I've heard how you've been traipsing round the country trying to find a guardian that's good enough for you. I hoped you'd come to me in the end, and you've come. And I'm going to do my duty by you, according to that contract that you've signed."

"I just wanted a chance to take you in hand for a long time past. Your stepfather, Colonel Sanford, was the most carnal minded, wicked man that ever—"

THE GIRL was upon her feet, her whole body tense with indignation.

"How dare you say such a thing to me?" she cried. "Aren't you ashamed to speak that way about the dead? My stepfather was the best man that ever lived. Yes, he was, and my contact with the world has brought me to see it. If he did drink and smoke, which I don't approve of, it didn't stain his nature. He was generous and good, and I was a little, narrow, mean-hearted wretch to make him so unhappy."

"Granted, granted!" sneered Mr. Goodenough. "But, as I was saying, I've heard about you. I've heard all about your affair with that actor-monger Richard Cresswell—"

"Mr. Cresswell is no actor-monger. He is a gentleman, and he happens to take an interest in private theatricals."

"You flirted with him."

"Oh!" gasped Polly, stunned.

"And I'm going to cure you with discipline or bust," went on the terrible old man. "I planned it all long before I saw you. You came here this afternoon with a simper on your poor, silly face, and—"

"How dare you speak to me like that?" demanded Polly, at white heat.

"And a dress that must have cost eleven-fifty if it cost a penny."

"Eleven-fifty!" cried Polly, half crying and half laughing. "Oh, you're crazy, that's what you are. Why, it cost twenty-five dollars to make it—just to make it, understand?"

"Aye, five-and-twenty dollars spent on the vanities of the heart, to make fools of honest men with those unprincipled styles. You got it out of some fashion book, I suppose. And then you came here to find out if I was good enough to be your guardian. You thought you'd sit here and drink your tea and coffee, drugs that corrupt the body and the soul, and use looking-glasses to see how your face looked, and corrupt my home as you've corrupted others. I'm a simple man, but I know wickedness when I see it."

Polly walked toward the door with all the hauteur that she could muster. She laid her hand upon the knob. The reception room was locked, too. She shrank back in rising fear, and Mr. Goodenough chuckled.

"You've made a contract with me," he said, and you'll keep it, unless you're a quitter. If you're a quitter and a contract breaker I have no use for you. But there's no train tonight, so you'll have to stay till morning. Then you can go, so don't be afraid. I don't want you. I'm trying to see what I can make of you, if I'm to be your guardian, that's all."

Polly, relieved to find that she was not to be physically restrained, suddenly felt a reaction of strength. She turned and went up to the old man.

"Mr. Goodenough," she said. "I don't know what sort of people you have met in your life, but if you've met many you must know that you are acting foolishly and unkindly. Why, I'm called a puritan

wherever I go, because I object to drinking and smoking, but I've never heard anyone object to tea and coffee. And my dress is quite simple and plain. And I thought I was going to like you," she pleaded, coming close and looking at him winningly.

Mr. Goodenough sprang back in terror.

"Don't touch me! Don't lay a hand upon me, temptress!" he panted.

"Why, Mr. Goodenough—"

"You're one of those women that can wheedle the soul out of a man with your plausible words. I spotted you. Go to bed! Begone! Tomorrow I'll release you from your contract. Don't speak to me! Don't look at me! I'm not a strong man; I'm only a good one!"

Polly obeyed. She could hardly contain herself as she flew up the stairs. She flung herself upon her bed and gave way to irrepressible mirth. The situation was too ludicrous, her relief at being dismissed was too intense.

IT MUST have been a quarter of an hour later, when she was just thinking of going to bed, that a tap came at the door. She opened it. Mr. Goodenough was standing outside.

He laid his finger across his lip, and then alongside his nose, and the expression on his face was so remarkable that Polly was positively astounded.

"Come out here. I want to speak to you," he whispered. "Don't talk too loud. The old woman will hear us."

Polly hesitated, and then followed Mr. Goodenough to the end of the hall.

"I've been thinking over what you said to me about not having met many people," he began. "It's true. I've lived a miserable life. I married young; I was only seventeen when that old woman got me to marry her."

"Mr. Goodenough, if you refer to your wife—" began Polly.

"See here! I'll tell you a secret," he interrupted. "I pretend to be a better man than I am. It's not my natural instinct to be a good man. It's fear of that

female monster with the fox ears in there."

And he pointed toward the bedroom with a ghastly grin. Before Polly could protest he resumed:

"I'm not nearly so old as I look. I could spruce up and shave clean. All the smartest men are clean shaved. And we'd have some good times together."

"What do you mean?" gasped Polly.

"I wouldn't have been so strict with you if I hadn't been fighting my own nature. I took a fancy to you the minute I saw you, with your pretty face and dress. I'm going to get rid of that miserable vampire and marry you. I can get a divorce in Arkansas or Minnesota, or maybe Nebraska. Will you be true to me?"

"Certainly not!" cried Polly. "I thought you were crazy, Mr. Goodenough, but now I see that you are just plain bad. Don't dare to speak to me again. I shall take the first train—"

"Come to my arms!" said Mr. Goodenough in ecstasy.

Polly fled, and as she ran she heard the miserable old creature come pattering along the passage after her. She gained her room and shut the door. Then, panting, she dragged the washstand in front of it.

"If you dare to try to break in I shall scream, and your wife will hear you," she called through the key-hole.

Mr. Goodenough pattered aimlessly about on the other side of the door. Presently he went away without a word. Polly heard him shuffle into his room and close the door behind him.

For five or ten minutes she did not stir. Then she sank down in a chair, hysterical from terror.

She must escape at once, before Mr. Goodenough could change his mind and come back to frighten her. Desperately, she ran to the window and looked down. It was about twenty feet from the ground—too high to risk a leap, unless compelled to. Polly glanced back. She had an idea of knotting the sheets and blankets to-

gether, a device of which she had read. Then she looked down again. And suddenly her heart gave a fearful leap and then began to gallop, gallop, until she could hardly breathe.

For in the garden, below the window, clearly outlined in the moonlight, stood Dick Cresswell. And he looked up and saw her.

Polly leaned out of the window. "Dick! Dick!" she called. "I am in great trouble. Oh, Dick, save me!"

DICK'S response was instantaneous. He stooped and raised an extension ladder which lay alongside the house. It was the work of a moment to set it in position. The top reached almost exactly to Polly's window. Dick scrambled up, and, standing dizzily upon the top rung but one, Dick leaned forward, grasped the window-sill, and pulled himself into the room.

"Polly—Polly—Polly!" he exclaimed, and, taking the girl in his arms, he smothered her with kisses.

And Polly lay there, supremely happy and perfectly motionless. She knew it was a terrible thing to let Dick do, but—well, she had to.

"Polly, I knew you were coming here, and I guessed what would happen!" said Dick. "The infamous old scoundrel! His reputation is terrible, Polly. I'm going to take you home, but first I'm going to break every bone in his body."

"No, no, Dick!" pleaded Polly. "Take me away. Don't touch him—for his wife's sake. She's an invalid."

It was curious what a sobering effect Polly's words had upon Dick.

"Well, in that case—" he began, hesitating.

And suddenly Dick's intentions, whatever they may have been, were nullified by an unexpected diversion. For the door was pushed inward against the washstand, which yielded about three inches of space; and in that three inches of open door appeared the face and whiskers of Mr. Elias Goodenough.

Dick leaped toward him, pulled the washing-stand aside, and, seizing him, dragged him into the passage outside. The two men struggled furiously. Polly ran to the door.

"Don't hurt him, Dick!" she pleaded. "Don't hurt him!"

"You scoundrel! You infamous ruffian!" shouted Dick, shaking his captive. "I'll teach you a lesson that you'll never forget. 'I'll—"

"Dick!" begged Polly, running up to him as he struggled with Mr. Goodenough.

"Go back, Polly!" cried Dick.

"Leave him alone, then. His wife's an invalid!"

"You can thank your stars that Miss Seaton has intervened for you, then!" shouted Dick, giving Mr. Goodenough one fling which sent him flying against his bedroom door.

The door, which had appeared closed, yielded, and Mr. Goodenough was precipitated violently upon the floor, where he lay looking very woeful in the glare of a big electric light.

"Dick!" began Polly—and stopped.

She had been about to remonstrate on account of Mrs. Goodenough. But Mrs. Goodenough was not in the room, and the bed was unmade. And suddenly the girl uttered a cry. For Mr. Goodenough's hair had fallen off, and his whiskers were hanging by a strip of what looked like plaster; and the face was the face of Mr. Joseph Cranford.

And, as Polly stared, first in terror, and then in wild hysteria, Joe rose to his feet sheepishly.

"You—you—" began Polly.

"Yes, I'm Joe Cranford," acknowledged Mr. Goodenough with a feeble grin.

"Where's your wife, then? I mean—I mean—oh, what do I mean?"

She turned to Dick, and suddenly screamed and started back.

"Dick!" she gasped. "You—you—"

"Polly, don't be angry with me. I—"

"Who are you, Dick? Who were you, Dick?"

"I've been Mrs. Elias Goodenough," said Dick, almost in a whimper.

"You've tricked me, then, the pair of you. This is the last and the worst thing—"

"Polly," cried Dick, "now we've got you and you're going to listen to me at last."

"That's right," cried Polly. "Use violence with me. It would be just like your infamous trick, you—you actor-monger."

"I'm going to make you listen," said Dick very sternly. "You drove me to this. And I'll have you understand I'm not an actor-monger. I'm a gentleman, and I happen to take an interest in private theatricals."

"So you were listening! Just like you!"

"Yes," said Dick, "I overheard everything."

"Where were you, Dick—Mr. Cresswell?"

"Under the circular sofa."

"Oh, this beats everything!" gasped the girl.

"You flirted with me in your eleven-fifty dress."

"I didn't, and you know it. And the terrible, awful things that Mr. Cranford said to me—"

"Ah, Polly, my dear, you made us do it," pleaded Dick. "It's all been a wretched mistake from the very beginning. Listen!"

"I won't listen!" said Polly, covering her ears with her hands. But Dick caught them and held them, and somehow Polly didn't struggle very hard.

"I had to break my engagement with you that night. I had forgotten that I was pledged to attend the amateur theatrical performance. I couldn't go back on my word. And I didn't dare tell you, because I knew you'd never speak to me again.

"I loved you, Polly, dear."

"A—a nice way you have of showing it," said Polly.

"That actress you saw me talking to was Joe. Look in his face and see if you don't remember him. Yes, it was Joe, and I've tried to explain dozens of

times, and you've never given me a chance."

"Dick, what an awful thing to say. I've tried to get you to explain, and you've always gone away angry. And you said you'd never trouble me again. Not that I cared, but it hurt me. And if you care to explain—not that it makes any difference to me—you can tell me why you planned this wicked trick."

"Because I loved you, Polly, and I hadn't any other way. I tried and tried, and then Joe suggested this as a last chance. I hated the very idea, but he kept urging me and saying how easy it would be to let you think I'd saved you from a horrible old man, and at last he won me over."

JOE emitted an extraordinarily long whistle: but, as Polly looked at him, loyalty held him silent.

"It wasn't planned that you should ever know. We'd deceived everybody in the neighborhood, and they thought us an eccentric old couple. If Joe hadn't been such an ass as to burst in at the wrong time—"

"I told you it would frighten her," said Joe, "but you insisted that it would give you a higher rating with Miss Seaton."

"Joe, you infernal liar, shut up!"

"It's all right," said Polly. "It doesn't make the smallest difference. I was just curious to know to what depths you could descend, Mr. Cresswell. Let go my hands; you've made my wrists all red."

"And, Polly, dear, there really was a little more to it all than that," went on Dick, not in the least abashed. "You see, you really were a little too—too

severe, and the only way to show you was to give you a sort of object-lesson in somebody worse than yourself. And then dear old Colonel Sanford—"

"Dear Stepfather!" said Polly. "How I wish he were alive today, so that I could tell him what a wretched little fool I've been, and how ungrateful!"

"I guess the Colonel understood human nature quite well," answered Dick: "And he understood you, Polly. He loved you more than anyone on earth, and I shouldn't be surprised if he knows now that his hopes have come true."

"Wh—what hopes, Dick?" asked Polly, looking at him with tears in her blue eye.

For answer Dick put his arm about her.

"Is it all right, sweetheart?" he asked.

"Yes, Dick," said Polly. "I guess I lacked charity and kindness, and—I'm sorry as I can be."

"Then what are you feeling in my pockets for?"

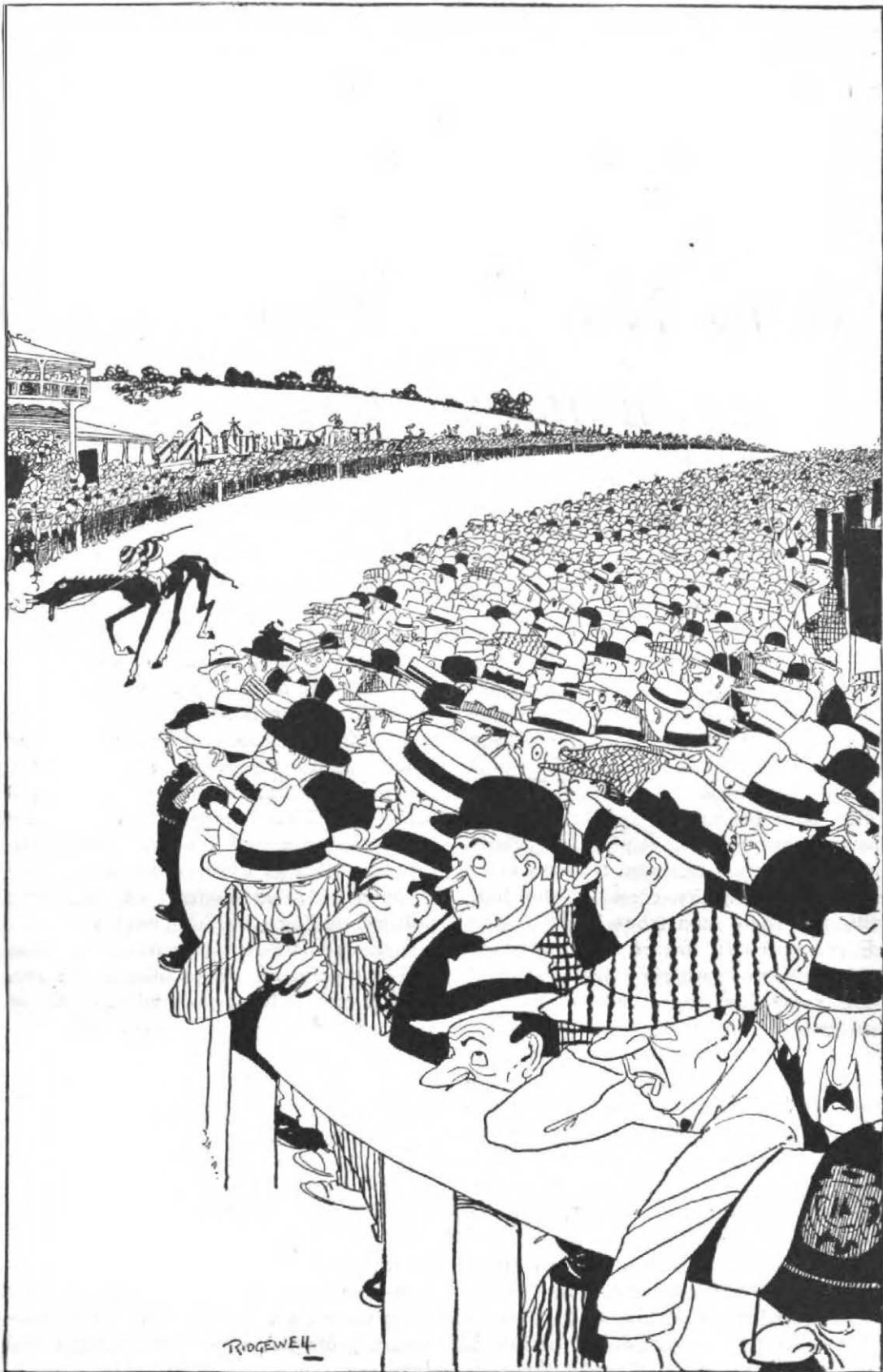
Polly plunged one hand into Dick's right coat pocket and pulled out a silver cigarette case. Extracting a cigarette, she placed it between Dick's lips. And Joe came forward with a match. Dick drew in a puff or two and handed the cigarette to Polly.

"Just one puff, to show that you don't object to a husband who smokes a cigarette occasionally."

"Oh, no, Dick! I can't bear the thought of women smoking. It's so unwomanly. It's—well, for the first and last time."

And in the middle of a spasm of Polly's coughing, Joe Cranford slipped out of the room, and closed the door upon the terminating kiss.

W. Carey Wonderly will be back in **WAYSIDE TALES AND CARTOONS MAGAZINE** next month with another of his inimitable racing stories. "Romance" is the title, and it is every bit as good a yarn as Mr. Wonderly's "In and Out of Arcady," which we published in our July issue.



When the favorite is "down the course!"

From The London Opinion

A Little Adventure in Drouth, being a story about a Druggist, a Deacon, and the Desert. Oh, yes—and about what old "Sixty-Three" had on board.

"Why Not Try Beezelum?"

By Harriette Wilbur

"Why not try Beezelum?" suggested Shursen, who, by turning his head to squint up the track in the direction the daily-except-Sunday train would come, made the question seem one of brotherly kindness and fraternal good-will instead of the bit of business finesse it was intended to be.

His companions in waiting followed his glance, also his line of thought—all except Deacon Hiram Adkins, who sauntered up just then.

Day after day a select coterie of Brantfordites, confirmed depot platform lizards, watched for the afternoon train to creep into sight over the crest of the long grade like some monstrous black bug on the prowl, coast toward town at awe-inspiring speed, gathering size as it came along, zoom down the trembling, clicking steel pathway as if it would sweep all before it, and then, just when it seemed that Engineer Watkins would miss Brantford by a mile and end up in some farmer's potato patch, come to a neat stop while Conductor Hart made a light leap out upon a certain squeaky platform board. This was a bit of adventure not to be missed, even for a day.

But attractive as these well-anchored landmen found it to watch old Sixty-Three snort into town for her half-hour's wait before starting back down the line, it was the conversation filling in the wait

that gave life its chief zest. For the longer the wait the more pleasantly meandered, even babbled, the conversational stream. Had old Sixty-Three ever been on time there would have been great disappointment among Brantford's faithful platform roosters, for it would have cut short the daily discussion of the topics which never fail to interest mankind.

Yet this afternoon, when Deacon Hiram Adkins sauntered down to the platform in time to hear Shursen the druggist make his off-hand suggestion that Beezelum be given a trial, the apparently innocent remark was wholly misleading. For it happened that instead of discussing politics, telling tales of boyhood days, boasting of past achievements, or of those still in the future, or detailing those gossip tid-bits of local news villagers are so fond of pondering, the clique, taking advantage of the Deacon's absence, had been holding an experience meeting on the subject never long out of their thoughts. In Brantford, as elsewhere, there was one conversational spring that showed no signs of running dry, though the country might be parching; often, too, it threatened to reach the boiling point because Deacon Hiram's manner of chortling over the way the wets were being wrung dry put on their mettle those whose principles were not so high and dry.

"Yes, times have changed; nowadays the weemen talk pol'tics an' the men swap receipts."

So Lute Ballou had remarked, with a sad wag of his grizzled poll, after listening to Tim Rafferty and Dan'l Black discuss, pro and con, the advisability of scalding wild cherries before squeezing out the juice, or extracting it raw. It seemed that the "setting" fermented better if the juice were left raw, but there was more of a "hatching" if the cherries were first scalded.

NEARLY every one of the members of the gang now assembled had "an old hen on" something. Herman Schenckweiler's clutch of hops, malt, sugar, rain-water and wigglers had "too much yeast and fermented all over the place; tasted more like dish-water 'n anything else!"

But if reports as to various "hens' and "settings" were disappointing, those regarding the effect of the various brews were still more gloomy.

Chet Wilson's raisin mash had "pretty nigh kilt him, it was that piz'nus!" his "stummick wan't right yit, an' prob'ly never would be, dang pro'bitio!" Others were complaining of a certain lack of pep they had formerly enjoyed, of a disinclination to eat, of a loathing for what had to suffice them for drink. Some had fairly ruined their constitutions on home-made brew no stronger than a newly-foaled colt; others had accomplished the same result with a villainous concoction that kicked like a full-grown and rambunctiously healthy stallion.

About the time the Deacon appeared coming down Main Street, the remarks had long since reached the condolence stages, with a recital of symptoms showing that appetite and health were rapidly declining under this monotonous régime.

"Divil a bit o' use my stummick's been to me sence," sighed Tim Rafferty, referring to the mess of ground horseradish and potatoes he had made, on the assurance that it would have a kick—one he had found "th' aqual of a slingin' clout

in th' solarplex from th' fut of a shod mule, 'twas that powerful!"

"Why don't you try Beezelum?" Shursen had suggested, with that canny up-track glance, just as Deacon Adkins straddled up and seated himself at the end of the line. Then he added, with the sprightly zest of the natural-born vender, "I'm getting in a trial shipment on this train, and I'd like to have you fellows with weak stomachs try it out. From reports it's selling big everywhere. It'll cure—well, it will make a shorter story to tell what it won't cure—nothing. It's a general tonic for the ills that afflict mankind—modern mankind, too. Only a dollar a bottle, and the very best cure-all known. Why, I've reams of testimonials from people all over the country—it's a sure-fire hit."

And just at that instant old Sixty-Three peered over the hill and came swooping toward Brantford like a bird of good omen, with healing in its wings in the shape of a consignment of Beezelum.

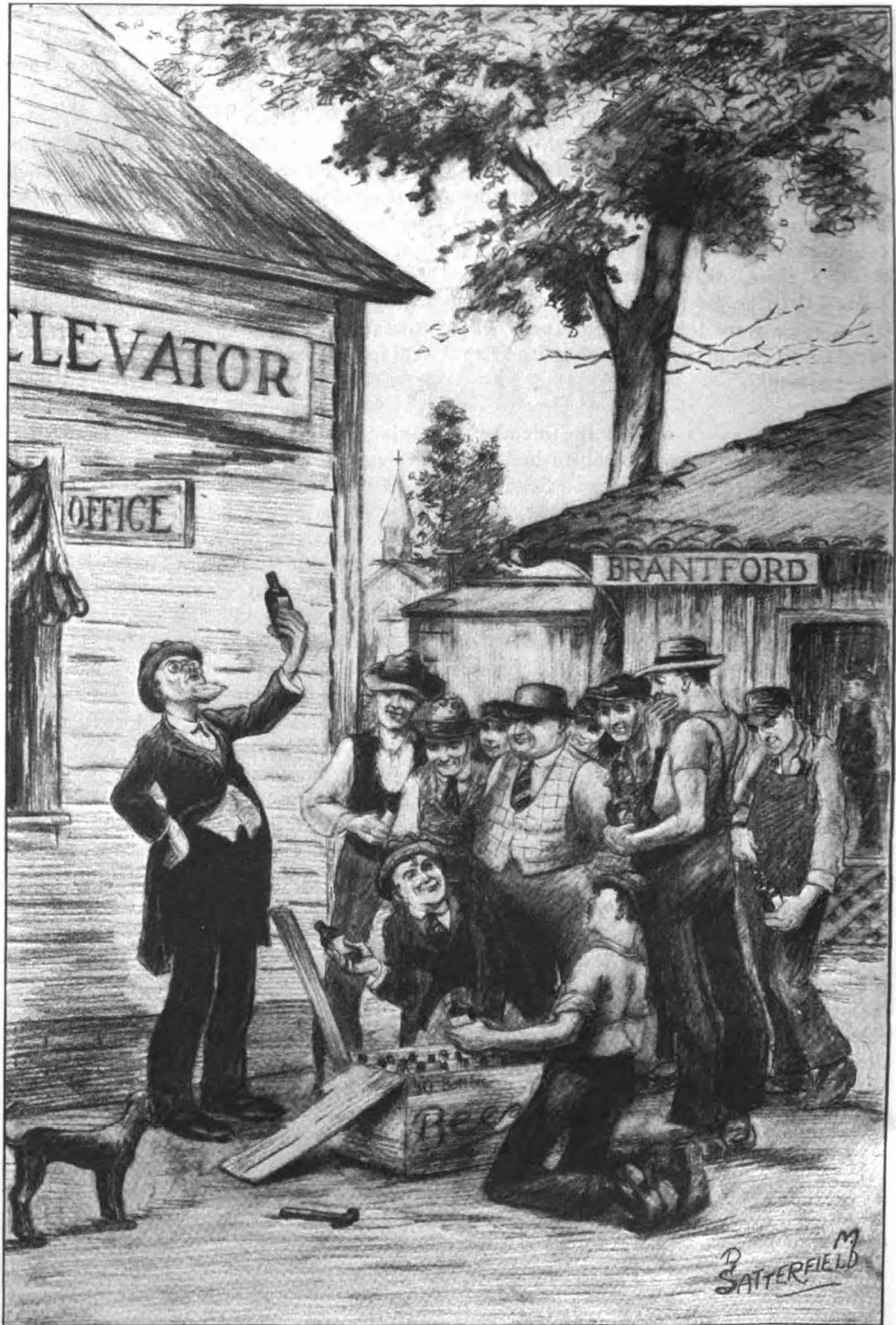
Shursen identified the box, then turned to his platform confreres.

"Tell you what, fellows. I've got to take the train back down the line, so if any of you want to try Beezelum you can have it now. I only ordered fifty bottles as a trial shipment, and—and—"

"I'll take one," interrupted Herman Schenckweiler.

"I'll take five," chimed in Dan'l Black.

OTHERS were keen for a try at it, and promptly produced the money for as many bottles as could conveniently be toted home. Shursen, with the help of several husky and eager aides, lugged the box around to the shady, breezy driveway of the Farmers' Elevator. Bert Budlong, the manager, produced a hammer, and the lid was soon off. Having nothing better to do, Deacon Adkins had sociably followed the crowd. Too, he was always glad to get a bit of doctoring free, and was not averse to patent medicines—rather, he had always put considerable faith in them, as a cheap substitute for



"Shursen gave the crowd a wink that the Deacon did not catch, being engaged in shaking the bottle, holding it up to the light, and shrewdly appraising its general appearance."

physician's bills. And Shursen, thanks to his rather ingratiating ways, combined with keen business perspicacity, filled almost as many prescriptions of his own as of Doctor Stinson's.

But the Deacon would not venture on a purchase without some bickering.

"Let me have a look at one o' them bottles."

"Make you eat better, sleep better, work better, feel better. You ought to try it, Deacon. Make a new man of you."

Shursen gave the crowd a wink that the Deacon did not catch, being engaged in shaking the bottle, holding it up to the light, shrewdly appraising its general appearance.

"Hum! Nice color!"

"Here, Deacon," proffered Dan'l Black, who already had one of his five bottles uncorked. "Sample her once."

The Deacon took the open bottle, sniffed at the neck, nodded, wiped the rim with his shirt-sleeve, wrapped his lips about the nozzle, threw back his head, and "sampled" generously, in one convulsive gulp. He blinked his eyes, made a wry mouth, but smacked his lips.

"Seems all right!" He squinted at the bottle once more, then again upended it to his lips for another gulletful. "Bitter, but the bitterer the better, they say. It oughter be good for something."

Another swallow left the bottle about half emptied, which caused Dan'l to reach out a grasping hand and rescue his property. "Hum! Wahl, I guess I'll take—money back if not satisfactory?"

"Sure!"

"Hum! Wahl, I guess mebbe I'd better try a bottil. Or here's a five-dollar-bill. Gimme five. Been feelin' sorter off sense this hot spell come on. Guess I do need a tonic."

SHURSEN disposed of his fifty bottles without the trouble of getting it up to the store, and as old Sixty-Three pulled out on her return trip, Shursen, standing on the rear platform, saw the crowd still gathered in the elevator driveway, even

Deacon Adkins with bottles under his arms, all chatting sociably.

"That was a quick turn-over," he congratulated himself. "And everybody apparently satisfied, too."

When Shursen hopped off the train two days later, he greeted the crowd of platform lizards with a gay "Hello, boys! How's Beezelum?"

"Fine and then some!"

"Feel chipper as a striped squirrel!"

"Can't beat it!"

"'Tis a grand little invintion, tubbe sure!"

"Good! I've got another consignment in on this train, and when you're out just call again. And I'll want some recommendations!"

His wandering glance took in Deacon Adkins, standing apart, in his usual severe, judgematical manner of shunning the very company he sought.

"How about it, Deacon? Will you write me one—a humdinger?"

He felt a sort of ghastly silence follow his words, so hurried on deferentially, "You're a man of consequence in the community—a recommendation from you would be great."

A little stifled titter broke out, rather to Shursen's confusion. He knew the men rather had it in for the good Deacon, and supposed that had inspired their snickers. Depot platform lizards are prone to giggles and cheap jokes at one another's expense, and he thought his singling out the Deacon had been made the occasion for such a bit of guying. But this only roused his dander; they couldn't bluff him.

"Will you write me one for today's Weekly Courier?"

He saw by the Deacon's scowl that the choleric gentleman didn't like this publicity, so hurried on with his winning-over tactics.

"It's two now, but you've just time to get it in before the Courier goes to press. It would be a fine send-off if you'd just drop in there and get in something for today's paper. Hatton'll help fix it up."

Another ghastly silence, broken by repressed titters, which seemed to decide the Deacon.

"Hum! Wahl—yes, I'll write y' a recommend!" he spoke up with a grim glare for the whole crowd.

"Thanks, Deacon. Make it a hummer."

Shursen flicked the gaping lizards with a triumphant glance. "Well, boys, I'm sure glad to see Beezelum has already begun to improve your old carcasses. You look younger, and pearter, and handsomer, and huskier, to a man. Keep up the treatment, is my advice. So long!"

And he was off up-town to ascertain how his wife had managed things during his absence, chuckling all the way over his triumphant wheedling of the reluctant Deacon.

MRS. SHURZEN had done well enough. "Only there had been several calls for that new medicine you were going to take on—Beezelum, wasn't it? I told the men you expected a shipment the other day, but it had n't come, and to call again in a few days. Was that all right?"

"Certainly. There's a case at the station now; Tim Rafferty will probably have it right up." Shursen grinned to himself. "Those old scouts are advertising Beezelum all right, all right."

At four he stepped into the Courier office to get his copy of the weekly paper—hot off the press.

Hatton grinned as he handed one over.

"Deacon Adkins was in. Said you wanted him to recommend Beezelum. I helped him with the wording and spelling. I got that grandiloquent style in it, but the sentiments are his. Hope it suits you. It's a hummer, anyway."

"Good! That's what I wanted. Thanks."

Shursen was in a hurry, and darted out without further comment. Tim Rafferty, the city drayman, was just backing up to unload the consignment of Beezelum.

"Begob," he sniggered, "'twas grand romancin' you had out of you over beyant

at the dee-po, axin' th' Deacon would be write you a bit of a recomind for th' sthuff."

"Say, what's wrong about that? He said he'd write one. And he did."

"Thin be my way o' thinkin' you've a right to be a-readin' the scrawn he's writ you."

Shursen found the letter on the back page, and read, with eyes that bulged more and more as he gulped down the words:

"I have been asked to write a recommendation of Beezelum, five bottles of which I bought and paid for in good faith that it was an effective stomach tonic. As many Brantfordites already know, and as all will learn sooner or later, it made a changed man of me. Before taking I was a respectable citizen of the community; after taking I spent the night in the calaboose as a disorderly and disreputable low-life. Fellow Brantfordites, look not on Beezelum, when it is red or any other time, nor take it for thy stomach's sake, or woe and disgrace will be your portion, at home and throughout the town. Hiram Adkins."

"Why—what—?"

"Th' rale right of it is this. We thought to be roostin' in th' driveway that day be way of findin' a taste o' cool air an' to sample our bottuls in pace and quiet. But masha to goodness! Th' Deacon was put into sich a bedivilmint wid thim three big swallys he'd out o' Dan'l Black's bottul, he wint an' opent up wan of his own an' afore we knowed th' right of it, 'twas a sizeable stew th' ould lad had on him, tubbe sure."

"Stew!"

"Bedad yis! An' 'twas enough to make a skewbald horse laugh to see him a-cuttin' capers an' quare monkey-shines. 'Twas pluther-pluther like an ould gander gahblin' to hissif wint th' Deacon, an' jiggety-jig like a last-year's grasshopper gone crazy in th' head, an' sorra a bit o' sinse in it whatsomeiver, till at last he dropt hissif down right there on th' flure for a taste o' slape. Thin, be way of a

joke, we inviited up a plan for his eddification. We drayed him over to th' cala-boose; the place bean't locked until afther th' Deacon was abed there."

"Oh, this is awful!"

"Troth an' twas that, tubbe sure. For midnight, or thereabouts, whin th' old slieveen keme to, 'twas ragin' he was. He up an' tore down th' bit of an iron bed they're afther hev'in' in th' lockup, an' broke his way out a windy, clare an' clane, an' got home after his wife, th' crathur, had been a-bawlin' th' whole town over in th' greatest constarnation iver was, to find where he might be at. Sense thin we haven't been sayin' much about Beezelum, you may bet your old brogues, wid th' Deacon black out an' not speakin' to us. Not that I can rightly blame him for that, though."

"If I'd only known! Why, this will kill Beezelum in this town deader than a smelt! Just wait until I get hold of Hatton!"

"Wait a minute," interrupted Hatton, when Shursen tumbled into the printing office a moment later, in a tumult of rage and recrimination. "Wait a minute. You must admit the good Deacon had a come-back due him. As for your precious Beezelum—you don't happen to have any more of it on hand?"

"A big shipment in on today's train," wailed Shursen.

"Well, save ten bottles for me. Here's the money. I'll be in late to get them, after dark, say."

SHURSEN stared, then grinned. And a few days later he called up Deacon Adkins, who had been avoiding the crowd of depot loungers, though he still went down to see the train come in. That habit was too well-formed to be easily broken.

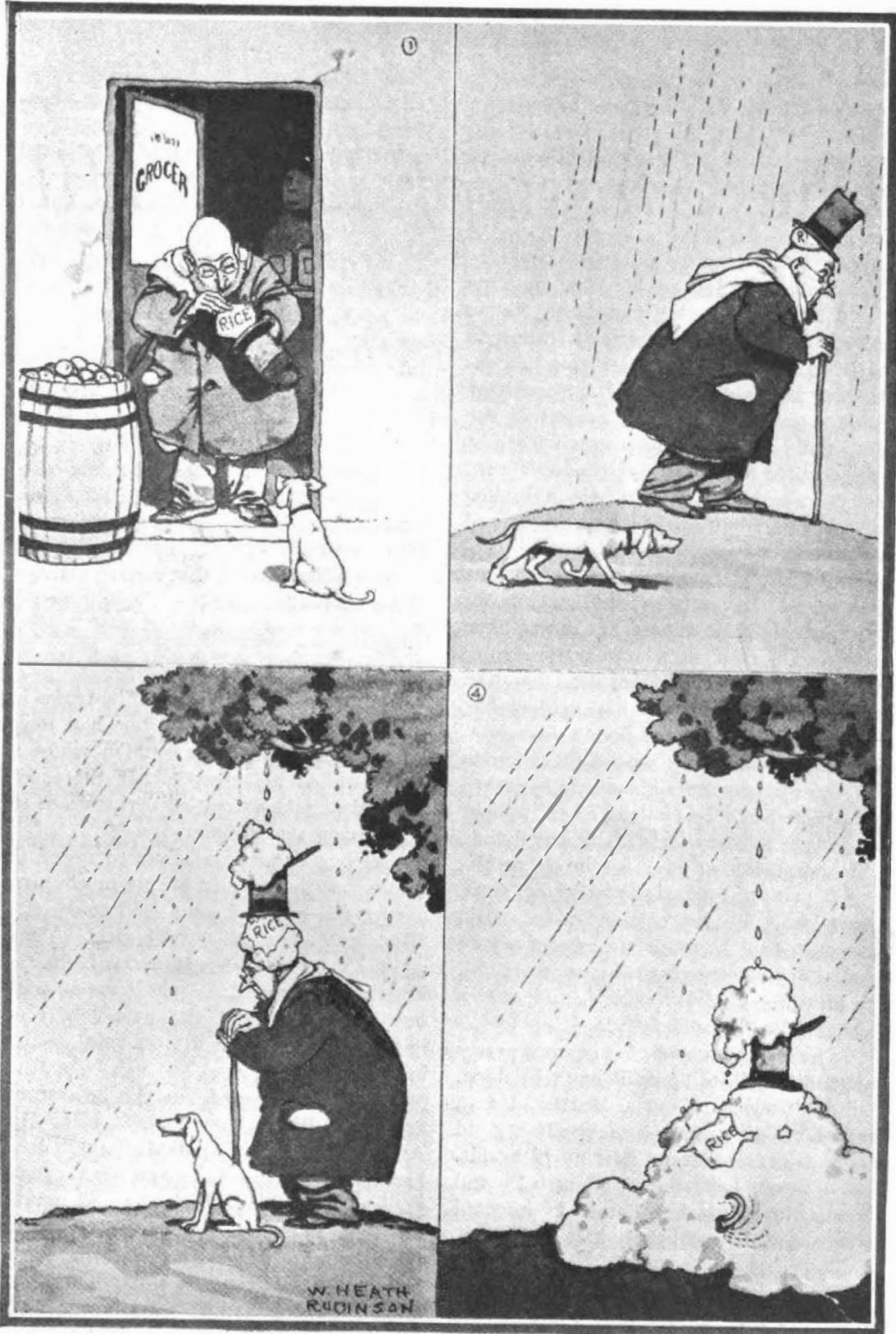
"Mr. Adkins, this is Shursen. . . . Oh, now, you're a fine fellow, Deacon, and we mustn't have any hard feelings in Brantford over that little affair. . . . Sure, you weren't to blame; you were merely a victim of circumstances. . . . Yes, that's the way to look at it. And say, by the way, I want to thank you for that recommendation. . . . I said, I want to thank you. . . . Why, I've had such a call for Beezelum from the readers of the Weekly Courier all over the county I've just had to telegraph for a dozen cases. . . . Sure, human nature's depraved, but I can't help that. Well, I can't make folks over—anyway, it's my business to sell what the public wants—and they sure do want Beezelum!"

Readers who have been delighted with Victor Rousseau's charming story, "The Fifth Guardian," concluding in this issue, will welcome the announcement that Mr. Rousseau will contribute a story to the October issue of **WAYSIDE TALES AND CARTOONS MAGAZINE**. The story, which will be complete in one number, is entitled "Out of Arcady," and is written in the finished style which distinguishes every Rousseau tale.



Reid in New York Globe

Can't take chances these days!



MARKET MOVEMENTS
A rise in rice!

Heath Robinson In The Bystander, London

The Ghost of Lilac Hill

By

Frank Dorrance
Hopley

A ghost story that is "different"—because the ghost is different. And Frank Dorrance Hopley has given us more than merely a "ha'nt," he has pictured a cameo-like setting that is very satisfying of itself.

On a morning late in May, an omnibus drawn by a rather forlorn looking horse, made its way from the railroad station to the house on Lilac Hill. Its sole passenger was a girl who wore a somewhat diaphanous dress, for that season of the year, and was further adorned with a large picture hat. The hat shaded a very pretty face, and the eyes which looked out from under the brim were bright and roguish.

Before she arrived at the house, the girl opened her vanity case and taking out a puff, carefully powdered her nose. Then surveying herself in a mirror, she gave her hair little pats and adjusted her hat. Satisfied that she was fairly presentable, she leaned back contentedly.

As the bus drew up before the veranda and the girl got out, a woman appeared and greeted her cordially. Then holding the girl off at arms length she exclaimed:

"I didn't know your were so pretty, Angela. It's three years you know, since I saw you. You've changed a lot. Mr. Lawrence said he wouldn't have a pretty woman around the place this summer and I'm afraid——"

Angela laughed gleefully.

"So he's coming up here to escape pretty women! Well, tell him it can't be done. But don't worry, Cousin Martha, I've a scheme. Wait until you see me in my old gingham dress, and my hair up in braids. You'll never know me. Homely!" and Angela threw up her hands in affected dismay, and danced lightly into the house.

THE house on Lilac Hill had belonged to the Lawrence family for nearly a century. The present owner, Philip Lawrence, somewhat blasé despite his scarcely

thirty years, had inherited it from his father three years before, but had never entered it. Then, on a sudden whim he had installed his housekeeper there, and planned to make week-end trips from the city during the summer.

"Get one of your relatives to spend the summer with you and keep you company during the week" he had said to Martha. "But remember, no pretty girls. That's what I'm trying to get away from," so Martha had invited Angela Warren, without a thought that the past few years might have wrought a wonderful change in a girl of eighteen.

True to her word, on the day of the arrival of Philip Lawrence at Lilac Hill, Angela prepared in a faded gingham dress, her hair tied in pig-tails, and her face covered with freckles which she had painted on that morning. Her most intimate friend would never have recognized her as one of the Warrens of Boston, who but a year before had led the daisy chain parade around the grounds at Vassar.

She was standing just behind a lilac

bush when the carriage came up and Philip got out. As he turned to greet Martha he noticed the girl peering at him from between the clusters of blossoms. There was something so grotesque about the freckled face with its crown of pig-tails, that Philip laughed.

"Who is that?" he asked.

"My cousin, Angela Warren," said Martha not without some trepidation at the deception in which she had been made an unwilling accomplice. You won't mind her will you? She is very quiet."

Philip laughed again.

"No, I won't mind her being about, but—such a face. You certainly followed my directions," and with another look at the blossom-framed face, Philip entered the house.

THE house on Lilac Hill was filled with furniture and antiques of the Colonial days. The bedsteads were high with four square posts. The beds were thick with feathers, and the quilts down-filled. The chairs were of wood, hard, with straight, high backs, and in the living room the furniture was upholstered with horse-hair cloth. The most vivid reminder that the house belonged to other days was the spinning wheel of Grandmother Lawrence. It had stood in the same corner for nearly a hundred years, and one of the bobbins was still wound with the yarn which Betty Lawrence had used.

Into this house, breathing of antiquity, came Philip Lawrence, and reveled in it.

"It takes one out of the busy world of today and back to the peaceful times of long ago," he said, as he stood in the hall on the day of his arrival. "That painting of grandmother Betty Lawrence, when she was a girl, is delightful. It's a masterpiece, Martha. The painter, whoever he was, has caught her true spirit. What a modest, sweet girl she must have been. I can almost detect the odor of the perfume she used. Musk, I believe it was in those days or, perhaps, it was lavender. That's the kind of a girl I've been look-

ing for, for a long time, Martha. They don't exist these days, I'm afraid."

"I tell you what I'm going to do," he continued. "I'll have that picture moved and put in the library. At the end, between the two doors, where I can see it all the time. It's an inspiration."

Angela, listening on the floor above, came down the stairs with little awkward jumps, and landed at Philip's feet.

"Oh, Mr. Philip," she burst out. "Don't you do it! 'Twill bring bad luck. I've heard it said that if you move a picture of some one who has been dead a long time, their ghost will come back and haunt you. I'm afraid of ghosts," and Angela shuddered.

"But I'm not," laughed Philip, "and I'm going to have the picture moved tomorrow. If the ghost of Betty Lawrence comes back I'll be here to greet her. Keep watch, Angela, and if she returns lead her to me."

Angela, with wide-open eyes, shook her head ominously.

"I've warned you, Mr. Philip," she said. "If she comes back and haunts you, it's not me that will be to blame."

NEXT morning the picture was taken from its ancient habitation in the hall, and placed at one end of the library, where Philip, sitting in his easy chair by the window, could look full upon it.

"Seen any ghosts yet, Angela?" questioned Philip upon his return to Lilac Hill at the end of the week.

Angela slowly shook her head, and made little holes in the gravel walk with her foot, before she answered.

"Not yet," she said, "but I heard a rustling in the lilacs last night and there wasn't a breath of wind stirring. I was afraid to look out, but pretty soon I heard an owl hoot, and then all was still. They say that ghosts like a storm best to come out in, perhaps—"

Philip laughed.

"I wouldn't be surprised if we had a storm tonight, Angela, it has been so warm today. If we do—well, look out."

Angela studied the western sky where huge banks of white-capped clouds were slowly rising.

"Look!" she said, pointing to a fluffy-looking cloud higher than the rest. "Don't that look just like a ghost, with her finger pointing right at us! and her hair flying in the wind. Mr. Philip, you didn't do anybody any good when you had that picture moved."

Philip's prediction of a storm came true. All the evening the thunder could be heard in long, distant rumbles, which were slowly coming nearer. Philip, in his chair by the window, was smoking idly, and contemplating the picture of Betty Lawrence as he sat facing it. As the evening wore on, he dozed. Then, it seemed to him half asleep and half waking, he felt a presence by his side. The girl in the picture seemed to have stepped out of the frame and was standing before him.

There was a sharp peal of thunder and Philip roused quickly. The room was dark and lighted only, now and then, by the flashes of lightning from the approaching storm.

During one of the flashes Philip looked at the picture. It was still within the frame.

"I must have dreamed it," he said, "but I'd a sworn she was here by my side."

Then there came to him a faint, but very distinct breath of perfume. The odor of lavender. As he wondered where it came from, he saw through the long, window, the unmistakable figure of a girl glide swiftly along the veranda and disappear in the darkness.

In two bounds Philip was out upon the lawn. He could dimly see the figure some distance ahead of him. There was a flash of lightning. The figure turned, hesitated a moment, and then passed behind a clump of lilacs. In that brief instant, however, Philip saw the face and form of Betty Lawrence, as she was depicted in the portrait in the library.

When Philip reached the lilacs there was no one in sight. Nothing to indicate that any one had been there except—a

faint breath of lavender, which Philip caught in the freshening breeze. Before he could search further, the rain came in a blinding gust, which drove him into the house.

AT BREAKFAST Philip was more than usually silent, and Angela watched him keenly.

"Did you see her last night?" she ventured, as she brought him his second cup of coffee.

"See who?"

"The lady in the picture. Out on the lawn—I—"

"What do you mean?"

"It was just before the storm broke. I was looking out of the window upstairs. I saw her run out of the house and go toward the lilacs. Then it was dark and I couldn't see any more. There came a big flash of lightning and I saw her again. She stopped and looked scared like, then she ran behind the lilacs and the rain came. I knew she'd haunt you if you moved her picture. Did you see her too?"

"Angela, you're a fool," said Philip as he rose. "I don't believe in ghosts," at which Angela laughed uproariously.

PHILIP LAWRENCE was greatly mystified at the occurrence of the previous evening. He was possessed of the cool, practical philosophy of all things material. Ghosts, to him were but the distorted imaginations of a weak mind. He did not believe in them. Yet—with his own eyes he had seen the face and form of Betty Lawrence—the girl in the picture—and Angela, much to his surprise had seen her also. He did not know what to make of it.

The next two days passed without anything occurring to mar the quiet of the house on Lilac Hill, and again. Philip returned to the city. When he came back the following Saturday, Angela was eagerly awaiting him.

"She was up in your room last night looking for you," she said excitedly. "I didn't see her, but I heard a rustling in

there like I heard in the lilacs. It kept up for some time and then it stopped. I was scared to get up but in the morning I peeked in the door. I didn't see anything but I smelt her. Lavender! All over the place! Wait 'till you go in, it hasn't gone yet."

Philip laughed in spite of himself at Angela's grave face.

"This is getting to be serious," he said. "If the lady comes tonight I shall lay a trap for her. I'll——"

"Right in the middle of the room," broke in Angela. "A great big one with a chain on it. I saw one down in the cellar. I guess they used to catch bears with it. I'll go and get it."

"No, no. We don't want to hurt the lady ghost. I'll pretend I'm asleep, but I'll keep watch and if she comes I'll jump up and catch her."

Angela laughed immoderately.

"Think of grabbing a ghost," she said. "Why, Mr. Philip, there isn't anything to take hold of. You can walk right through them. I heard a story once——"

"Never mind the story, Angela, but tonight we'll both keep watch, and it will take a pretty lively ghost to get by both of us. I'm going to be here a week, and before I go back to the city this ghost business is going to be solved."

THAT night when Philip went to his room, he threw open the blinds, and then settled himself in an easy chair and watched the moonlight streaming in. Its rays, through the strands of woodbine, which covered the entire side of the house, formed little silver etchings on the floor. The etchings made a frame, and in the frame Philip imagined he could see the face of Betty Lawrence. For a long time he watched it, and then as the moon went slowly down the face on the carpet grew less distinct, until at last, it disappeared altogether. The next thing Philip knew, the sun was shining in where the moonlight had come, and nothing had happened.

The following evening, however, as

Philip sat upon the piazza, the ghost appeared again. It was dark, with the moon just showing itself above the tree-tops. It cast a long, pale ray across the lawn some distance from the house. Into this streak of moonlight there suddenly walked a figure—the counterpart of the lady in the picture. For a moment it hesitated and looked toward the house, and although the light was dim, Philip was positive that he saw the apparition smile. Then it slowly went toward the lilac bushes and disappeared behind them. A moment later Philip had reached the spot but could find no one.

In the night Philip suddenly awoke. As his brain cleared he heard the clock in the hall chime three. The air was sweet with the odor of lavender as on previous occasions when the ghost had been seen. Through the slightly opened door Philip caught a glimpse of a figure in white. He sprang from the bed and rushed into the hall.

The light was dim, coming only from a half-shaded window. At the further end of the hall, just starting down the stairs, was the spectre. It turned its face toward Philip for an instant, and it surely was the face of Betty Lawrence. Philip dashed forward, tripped over a chair that had been placed in the middle of the hallway, and fell sprawling. That moment's delay was sufficient to enable the ghost to make its get-away and, as on other occasions, Philip could not find it, and after a search returned to his room.

REPEATED appearance of the figure with the face and form of his grandmother, as shown in the painting in the library, had filled Philip with an eager desire to delve into the mystery and discover, at all hazards, where the strange being came from and where she disappeared to upon being pursued.

For a long time the next morning he sat pondering the question. Then he walked across the lawn and inspected the various clumps of bushes, behind which the figure had disappeared. Finding nothing worthy



"With a quick movement he put out his hand to grasp her, but the girl was still quicker, and leaped away."

of interest he returned to the house with no plan of action decided upon.

When evening arrived, however, instead of taking his customary place on the piazza, Philip walked cautiously around the grounds, and by a circuitous route came to the largest of the clumps of lilac bushes, behind which he secreted himself.

For some time he stood there listening. There was no sound but the chirping of the crickets. Then, suddenly, Philip detected a faint scratching sound which seemed to come from the very center of the lilacs. There was a quivering of the bushes and, with a little jump, a girl thrust the branches aside and stepped out upon the lawn, almost at Philip's side. For a moment she stood peering into the darkness and Philip, whose eyes had become accustomed to the gloom, could see that she was the counterpart of the picture in the library. At last the ghost of Betty Lawrence was within reach.

With a quick movement he put out his hand to grasp her, but the girl was still quicker, and leaped away. In an instant she had started to run. Across the lawn she went, dodging behind bush and shrub, with Philip only a jump behind. At last, as if weary of the chase, the girl suddenly stopped, in a beam of moonlight, and faced Philip half defiantly. Without a word she allowed herself to be led by him toward the house, up the piazza steps, and into the library where he switched on the light.

AGHOST is always supposed to be transparent, but the one that Philip had captured was of a very substantial material. A ghost too, has the reputation of being cold, with icy fingers and chilling breath, but the arm that Philip held was warm and yielding, and the quick breathing of his captive showed that she was far from being a maid of ice.

For a moment Philip stood looking at the girl. He was quite sure that he had never seen her before. Then he looked at the portrait of Betty Lawrence. The girl was an exact duplicate of his ancestor.

The same brown, wavy hair; the same plaintive face; the same manner of dress of the days of long ago. Even the perfume was not lacking; the odor of lavender was sweetly strong. As he looked at the girl Philip Lawrence was more mystified than ever.

"Sit down," he said at last, "and tell me who you are."

The girl did as she was bid and motioned Philip to a seat at her side.

"I am the ghost of Betty Lawrence," she said in a tone which she endeavored to make sound sepulchral, but which was so young and fresh that the attempt was a failure.

"I have come back because you moved my picture, after all these years. I wanted to frighten you, but I see that you are a man who cannot be made afraid even by a ghost. So, instead, I have a request to make. One, Angela Warren, has been deceiving you. She is not the homely, awkward girl she appears to be. She played the part because she was told you hated pretty women, but now she wants to become her real self again, she——"

"Stop," broke in Philip. "Never mind Angela. Tell me who you are. That's what I want to know."

For a moment the girl was silent, looking into Philip's eyes. Then she burst out passionately:

"Can't you understand, Philip Lawrence? Don't you see that I— I am Angela Warren?"

"Angela Warren! Impossible! You are beautiful, while she——"

"Not the Angela that you know, but the Angela as she really is.

"Listen! When I accepted Cousin Martha's invitation to come here for the summer, she was dismayed to find that I— I was so pretty, as she said. She told me that you didn't want any pretty women around and that I would have to go. But I wanted to stay, so I made myself up to look ugly. I put my hair up in pig-tails, and painted freckles on my face every morning, and put on an old dress. I fooled even you.

"Then, when you moved the picture, I had an idea for some fun. I remembered the old superstition that if you changed a dead person's picture around, its ghost would come back and haunt you. I went to the city and got a dress made like that of the lady in the painting, then I fixed my hair and everything like hers. I did it just for a lark. By day I was Angela Warren, the homely cousin. By night, the ghost of Betty Lawrence. Then I grew tired of playing the part of 'pig-tail Sue,' as you called me. I wanted to be my own self again because—I wanted to make you—you like me."

Angela's face grew rosy and she hesitated, while Philip looked at her admiringly.

"What a girl!" he said, musingly, under his breath.

"But I thought," continued Angela, "If I told you about it you would despise me for being so foolish, and perhaps be sore at Martha too, although she doesn't know a thing about the ghost part.

"The first day I was here I discovered a secret passage behind a panel in the wall in the cellar, which was probably used by the soldiers at the time of the revolution. I explored it, without saying anything to any one, and it came out right in the middle of the lilacs. You would never see the place unless you knew it was there. That is how I disappeared every time in the lilacs.

"I decided I would let you catch me

tonight and would plead for Angela—myself as I really am—but I guess I've made a mess of it now."

Angela began to dab her eyes with the bit of lace which she carried for a handkerchief.

FOR a long time Philip looked at her without speaking—at least it seemed a long time to Angela. She knew that he was very angry, so angry that he would never forgive her. She would be sent away and, perhaps, Martha. She felt sorry for Martha, as she had been with the Lawrence family so long. Angela closed her eyes and waited for the storm to break.

Instead of the denunciations she expected, she suddenly felt an arm around her waist.

"Angela," said Philip softly. "Do you remember the day I said I had been looking for a girl like Betty Lawrence, for a long, long time? I meant just what I said. I had been. But now, I have found her, and my quest is ended. She is the same sweet, lovable girl that Betty used to be. The same, even to the perfume, musk and all."

"It isn't musk," said Angela indignantly, opening her eyes. "It's lavender. I spent three hours in the city hunting for it, and it cost two seventy-five with war tax."

Then, as Philip drew her nearer yet, she closed her eyes again and sighed contentedly.

H. M. Egbert, whose "Jacqueline of Golden River" was one of the much talked of novels of its season, will contribute, beginning with the October issue of WAYSIDE TALES AND CARTOONS MAGAZINE, a two-part mystery story entitled "The Four Dumb Men." It is a most engrossing tale of intrigue and suspicion, with an end that is wholly unexpected, and as gratifying as it is unlooked for.



From The Sketch, London

WHEN HE ROSE TO THE OCCASION

The customer: Why do you always say the roses were painted by Billingsley?
The dealer: Ah, roses by any other name wouldn't sell as sweet!

Wanted: A Coward

For the equal of this merry enterprise, entered upon in the spirit of pure adventure, one must go back to the pages of Robert Louis Stevenson. Whimsical, elfish, with a waggish tongue in cheek, Vincent Starrett's "line-up" play their parts with a blithe gusto that makes us love them, hero and villain alike.

By

Vincent Starrett

"In the abstract order," said Devereux, "two and two are four; but in the distorting atmosphere of our material interests the mere mathematical statement becomes often antecedently improbable. It depends whether black is white, and that depends upon circumstances."

A typical Devereux dictum. I can almost hear him now, with his odd drawl, and his malevolent but humorous eye seems still to glitter down the length of the table that is long since kindling. In the light of events which I am about to relate, that particular paradox remains in my memory as peculiarly applicable; almost as prophetic. Poor old Devereux!

That was a mad party that used to foregather at the Dalzell, on the first and third Mondays of every month. Ostensibly we met to plot treason, but in reality it was to drink and smoke, and to damn modern life and letters. There was seldom a vacant place, for we were a vagabond lot, and an evening together nerved us for the desperately unhappy existences we led between meetings. I used to think of the Suicide Club—that fantastic Stevensonian creation, with its membership of dispirited adventurers—when I looked around our bizarre apartment and studied the hard faces of Devereux, Damerel and

Darling (the Three Dees, we used to call them), and the rest of our curious group. The analogy was hardly a perfect one, however; our membership never had been curtailed by volitional removal, whether self-negotiated or by proxy. We lacked the courage—or cowardice—required for any such sublime adventure.

The community has gone the way of other haphazard organizations founded on loneliness and discontent, and prolonged only by a tolerant sympathy one man for another and each man for himself. Damerel and Darling are enriching French soil for future generations, and Devereux is a decrepit hypochondriac in some foreign garret; I have not heard of him for years. Greubel, the Swiss, who at the second meeting of the club held his finger in a candle-flame for a full minute, on a wager, is also in exile (after internment on suspicions not ill-founded), and Considine is in Congress. . . . I wonder what Considine would say were I to jostle him, gently, in the street, some fine evening, and whisper "Largesse!" in his ear!

The rest are scattered to the four winds. I am certain there are more than four, since thrice that number have blown me ill fortune over a decade. Some of us are dead. I am turned scribbler, and must

needs seek "copy" from half-forgotten associations that were better left unchronicled. It is a lone thought.

I AM thinking of an evening in the fall of our third year. The atmosphere was blue with smoke and profanity, and the hour was nine-thirty, when Devereux tardily entered and waved us to silence with an unfolded newspaper.

"Have you seen the personal column of the Globe?" he asked. There was an air of mystery about him. Without awaiting our reply, he proceeded to read the following astonishing advertisement:

Wanted: a Coward. None other need apply. Good position for right man. Call in person, Room 17, Vendome, between 8 and 9, Tuesday morning.

He chanted the paragraph in his accustomed drawl, then fell back, eyeing us with sardonic gaze; whereupon we all laughed together, thinking he was making it up.

"Laugh, fools!" he pleasantly observed. "It is your way when Opportunity knocks."

"Opportunity with a waxed moustache and a cheroot!" shrilled Grayling, the Latinist. "Have you applied and been rejected, Devereux?"

The reader grinned evilly, and tossed the paper onto the center table.

"The description," he replied, "does not fit me."

Greubel sputtered like an angry cat.

"Perhaps you will suggest which of us it *does* fit!" he invited, with a baleful glare.

DAMEREL had captured the news sheet, and was verifying the announcement.

"It interests Damerel, at any rate," smiled Devereux, with composure. He added, good-humoredly: "I am making no invidious suggestions. I suggest merely that here is Opportunity in its proverbial rôle. The applicant need not be a coward, I take it. Indeed, no coward

will apply, since only a very brave man will acknowledge himself a coward."

"What *is* your idea, Devereux?" I asked, impatiently, for the advertisement interested me. I had been restless since the failure of my purposed marriage to the daughter of the (then) Secretary of State, and would welcome a diversion.

"Only that there is something here for a brave man to capture," he answered. "It interests me, but hardly enough to warrant my exerting myself; and, again, I am engaged up to the hilt, as it is. I have no idea what is behind it, but the paragraph is too fantastic not to be valid. Somebody wants somebody-else for a peculiar service. I bequeath you the adventure, Garland, if you care to take it up."

"I think I shall accept," I quietly replied, before anyone else could speak. And I added with a laugh: "I believe I am an excellent practical coward. Already I begin to feel a thrill of apprehension."

My determination and my confession were greeted with flattering acquiescence, and the incident was closed. It was an unwritten but inviolable rule that no member must interfere in the declared intention of another.

"Let us hear the story, some time," said Devereux, lightly, as he seated himself for an exciting game of solitaire.

I regret that my *confreres* will be unable, in the flesh at any rate, to enjoy the tale, now that it is told. As connoisseurs of grotesquerie, they would not fail to be amused and delighted.

II. Room 17, Vendome

THE Vendome was casually known to me as a middle-class hostelry, largely frequented by transients, and not unknown to the police. This latter situation so paralleled my own, however, that I felt no qualms as, precisely at eight-thirty the following morning, I rapped with my knuckles upon the panel of a closed door bearing the figures "1" and "7."

I managed my brief tattoo, it seemed to me, with just the proper shade of hesitation, for I had not forgotten the sort of person I was supposed to be.

There was no response.

I strolled as far as the next door to assure myself that I had assailed the right room; but there had been no mistake. Returning to No. 17, I raised my hand for a more vigorous advertisement of my presence, when, quite suddenly and before I had knocked, the door was opened in my face. My hand dropped to my side; I receded a step, involuntarily removing my hat.

A handsome young woman was regarding me, with some astonishment, from the doorsill.

Her attractiveness was considerable; her surprise seemed genuine. It instantly occurred to me that the absurd "personal" had contained a misprint, or had been intended as a hoax upon this pretty, wide-eyed creature. I began a lame apology, mentioning the newspaper, but omitting the nature of the position I was seeking.

"The error must have occurred in the newspaper office," I concluded. "I am sorry to have disturbed you."

She heard me out, smiling a curious little smile; then, as I was about to turn away, she carelessly observed: "You are the first who has knocked before entering. It is an excellent beginning, for I believe a coward may be a gentleman. Will you come in?"

This speech completed my discomfiture, and I fancy I gave further satisfactory evidence of timidity in the embarrassment with which I followed her into the room. The encounter was salutary, however, for it sharpened my wits. I had expected a man, I suppose, and the surprising revelation of this handsome girl had thrown me off guard. Well, I would not be caught again!

Her voice was low and curiously vibrant. It thrilled me indescribably, in spite of the few words she had spoken. And now I heard it politely request me to be seated. As I crossed the room, I

felt that I was rather precariously supported by my trousers legs, and it was with relief that I sank into a chair, wafted there, it seemed, by that remarkable voice.

THE room was plainly furnished; an ordinary hotel sitting room, obviously hired for the purpose—whatever the purpose might be! A small table near the window held a pen, a bottle of ink, and a quantity of ruled paper. I raised my eyes to the chamber's occupant.

She was studying her latest applicant. Under the disquieting scrutiny, I think I blushed—one of my valued accomplishments. She seemed pleased, if I could judge, and her eyes, I now noticed, were not so much brown as gold—an odd phenomenon—and when not too personally engaged, quizzical and reassuring.

"You are a—coward?"

There was a trace of compassion in the extraordinary voice. I fought down a desire to smile.

"Yes, Miss," I humbly replied.

"You must not be ashamed of it," she said. "It is an excellent thing in a man. . . . Married or unmarried?"

"Unmarried—twice!"

She smothered a laugh, and I repented of my witticism. It was not in keeping with the part I was playing! I assumed an air of stupidity.

"What is your profession?"

My asinine sense of the ridiculous again lifted its head. I was on the point of saying, briskly: "I am a professional coward," but I caught myself in time.

"I am a book-keeper," I replied, instead.

"The third this morning," she commented. "I wonder why book-keepers are cowards. Or are they, necessarily?"

"The life is one of slavery," I hazarded.

"True," she mused. "Peonage is forbidden by statute, yet we chain our servants to the bench, like captive volumes in a monastic library. Lives bounded by a time clock and . . ."

"Indigestion!" I bitterly put in, as she paused.

"Yes," she smiled. "I am glad you have wit and intelligence. You are sure you are a coward?"

My eyes dropped.

"My best friend cut me because, once when I was called one, I did not resent it."

Was there scorn in her eyes?

"Are you cursed with curiosity?"

IT OCCURRED to me instantly that this question was "loaded." It was no doubt the first important question of the catechism. But my reply was as ingenuous as it was disingenuous.

"A little perhaps; we all are. Not much! Chiefly, I ask to be let alone. But I confess I am curious about this position."

"Doubtless," she smiled, grimly. "How about your habits?"

I shrugged.

"I am a poor drinker, if that is what you mean. I smoke a bit."

"Well, that is not very serious; and you may be required to do a bit of drinking, too. Have you any references?"

"As a coward?" I smiled wanly. "I have lost all my positions. I'm afraid I have not been very aggressive."

"I was about to say that I did not care to see them." She smiled indulgently, adding dryly: "I congratulate myself!"

It was evident that the more I convinced her of my fitness for the position, the more I lost ground in her personal esteem. I rather liked that. But I wondered who her incredible employer might be—the strange figure in the background who needed a coward in his mysterious establishment.

"Names are unimportant," she continued, after a pause. "but it will be necessary to call you something. Have you any preference?"

I instantly gave my own. It was as good as any.

"Very well. Mr. Rupert Garland! You come to scratch, so to speak, not badly. I like your answers. Your name is obviously not your own; it is quite too

stagnant and attractive; but that is your affair. I hoped you would conceal your name, for the action is in keeping with the character of man I want."

THIS time the sneer was scarcely veiled, and I chuckled inwardly. She was a glorious creature. This employment agent.

I then vowed I would know her very well, some day. As for my name, it was not the first time I had been accused of assuming it, for all its authenticity. A name that savors of Zenda romance has its advantages. On this occasion, had I called myself William Brown, I might have lost the position.

Again I dropped my eyes before her gaze.

"You will report at ten in the morning, at the address I shall give you," she said, abruptly. "Ask for Mr. Paradise."

"You, then," I cried, exultantly, "are an angel from Paradise."

But I did not cry this aloud. It was my heart that shrieked.

"At ten," I repeated, taking the card she extended.

"By the way," she asked, carelessly, "have you any relatives? I forgot to ask. You have no wife, I know."

Again instinct cried a warning that here was a question of tremendous importance, casually tacked on to give it the appearance of a mere postscript. I shook my head, and answered her thought as well as her words.

"No," and for the first time that morning I was telling the truth. "If I were to be killed today, or were to vanish overnight, there would be none to miss me or inquire about me."

A strange gleam appeared in her eyes, I thought; certainly they narrowed. I was satisfied that my shot in the dark had been accurate. In a moment she smiled.

"If you should find others waiting, as you go out," she observed. "please let them know that the position has been filled."

I COULD have laughed aloud. She was underestimating me beautifully. She had as good as told me that a man would be waiting. Thus, I was not unprepared to find a disreputable fellow loitering in the hall, when I had closed the door of No. 17 behind me.

He was a large person, and a rough one, wearing upon his undershot jaw a two-day growth of blue-black beard. Him, I timidly approached.

"Pardon me," I said, "but if you are here in response to an advertisement for a—a coward" (I boggled over the word) "I am instructed to tell you that the place has been filled."

The man glared savagely.

"By you, I suppose!" he insolently returned.

"Y-yes, sir!"

"Hell!" he commented angrily. "That's the second job I've had taken away from me this week." He fixed his protruding eyes belligerently upon me. "Well, I guess the job's well filled," he sneered.

Now here was the veritable coward; a brutal, truculent bully who would fawn before a spirited glance. But I did not give him the glance. I could have killed him with ease, and I would have half-killed him with a great deal of pleasure, if I had not been certain he was playing a part. Instead, I turned my back on him, and scuttled for the elevator like a frightened rabbit.

I watched for this objectionable person in the lobby, when I had descended; but as he did not appear I surmised that he was closeted with my attractive friend in No. 17—reporting, no doubt, on my excellent fitness for the position of coward in the establishment of Mr. Paradise, whoever that celestial gentleman might be.

I TOOK the card from my pocket, and noted that the address I had been given was far out from the city, in Owlhurst, a fashionable suburb on the north shore of the lake. A new wonderment came over me. It began to look as if I were to be active in high society. I

whistled pensively, and, as if my melody had been a signal, a singular thing happened.

A boy suddenly approached from the street and, calling me by name, handed me a folded slip of paper. After which, he quickly mounted a bicycle that stood at the curb, and sped away.

I looked stupidly at the paper, when I had unfolded it. The message was typewritten and unsigned. It read, simply:

"If you go to Owlhurst you will be kissed."

III. A Reconnaissance

OWLHURST is not a long run from the city on the special suburban trains, labeled Express, that run for miles without a stop. The jolly little engines are built on the general lines of a teakettle, and act and sing in much the same way, but in spite of the explosion that always seems imminent they come and go in good time and with few accidents.

I am an early riser, and with plenty of time to spare I boarded the Owlhurst rattler, resolved upon a reconnaissance before I should ring the doorbell at ten o'clock. It occurred to me that an hour or two spent in the village, making discreet inquiries, would not be spent amiss.

As we sped along the shore of the lake, my thoughts were upon the curious events of the day before, and the undoubted mystery nearer and nearer to which I was now approaching. The sudden note, outside the Vendome, had been the final deciding factor in determining my course. In the face of such a threat, I could not very well retreat; for, of course, it was patent to me that the ludicrous line contained an error. It was equally plain that the error lay in the final word. Someone, writing hurriedly, had written "kissed" for—there could be no doubt of it—"killed."

I operate a typewriter reasonably well myself (albeit with two fingers instead of eight), and if my memory did not serve

to reconstruct the keyboard, my fingers did. Closing my eyes, I drummed the message on my knee, first using the word "kissed," then "killed." The "S" and the "L," I saw at once, were at opposite ends of the keyboard, but the unconscious association of the letters with the words which sound so much alike, might very well account for the mistake; indeed, the alternation of hands made it easier to write "kiss" than "kill."

But—was one to deduce a man or a woman from the error? After careful thought, I decided that the evidence did not overbalance in favor of either as the writer of the note.

Certainly there had been no typewriter visible in No. 17. And, in any event, why should Miss—whatever her name might be—warn me against Owlhurst, after ordering me to report there? Was this another cowardice test? Then, as a confessed coward, I must take fright and stay away. If I did not stay away, I was no coward! All of which appeared silly to me. I decided that my charming friend had nothing to do with the warning message. The counter proposition, then, must be accepted seriously: the warning was authentic and not lightly to be ignored. The boy who delivered it had called me by name! But who knew of my intention to go to Owlhurst?

With such unprofitable reflections I whiled away the journey, and with two good hours to spare, I alighted from the train in Owlhurst.

I HAD no difficulty in locating the house whose street number I carried in my vest pocket, and I was surprised at its size. Big and rambling as undoubtedly it was, however, it appeared dwarfed in the great acreage surrounding it. The body of the place was of good brick, but curious wings and additions of less durable materials were tacked on in the most surprising fashion. Three stories up, the roof was surmounted by a conical tower, pierced by embrasures like portholes, and on this metal chamber the sun shone

hotly. About the wide grounds ran an iron picket fence, higher than a tall man. The pickets, though, were not too closely spaced, and it occurred to me that a slim man—say myself!—could readily slip through, if the need were sufficiently great. Inside the railing, and forming, as it were, a second line of fortifications, reared a thick and prickly hedge, not yet full grown.

In the early sunlight, the house and its grounds were highly attractive.

I did not like to make inquiries in the village that might seem too curious, and so contented myself with some shrewd gazing. But it soon developed that I was, myself, an object of curiosity.

As I lighted a cigarette, under a friendly awning, some blocks distant from the scene of my investigations, a man approached and courteously asked for second rights on my match. He was a big fellow, dark and of middle age, and evidently very powerful. He might have been a detective, but somehow I sized him up as a man of considerable intelligence.

"Stranger in town?" he asked, casually.

"Yes," I said. "Thought I might buy a small place, hereabouts, if I could find one to suit."

"Lots of places," he returned, "but expensive. The smaller houses are across the tracks. This section is supposed to be particularly toney. Half the millionaires of Chicago live here, I suppose."

"Which one are you?" I asked, with a smile.

He laughed amiably.

"I don't belong at all," he answered, frankly. "I'm almost as much of a stranger as you are. Only I've been here before. I saw you looking at the old Cowdery place. I suppose that's not for sale?"

"You mean the big place with the wide grounds back there? Not that I know of! It attracted me by its picturesqueness, although it's out of my class."

"A strange place," he said gravely. "I've felt drawn to it, myself. It has an ex-

traordinary history. Two of its owners have died violent deaths at their own hands, supposedly as a result of the influence of the house itself. The present owner, I believe, is an invalid. At least, he never appears in the streets. He walks at night in the grounds, and with so much mystery that one would think he had something to conceal."

"Indeed!" I said, surprised at all this voluntary information.

"Yes," he continued, and shook his head seriously, "it's a good house to avoid. Indeed, the whole village, attractive as it appears, is a dead little hole. I strongly recommend the townships further north."

"Thanks," I said, dryly, "but I fancy I shan't stay long in any of them. This is more of a holiday than anything else. What you say of the Cowdery place is interesting, though. I am a student of old houses, and I am very much tempted to beg a sight of the house. Do you suppose I could gain admittance?"

Certain, now, that his interest in my movements was genuine, I challenged his glance.

"Don't do it!" he said earnestly. "Unless," he added swiftly, "you have actual business there, that is none of mine."

"At any rate," I said, "I shall remember your warning."

NODDING carelessly, I turned away, and he resumed his stroll in the opposite direction. I did not care to be followed, and so I made a wide detour, and shortly before nine o'clock approached the mysterious house from the rear. The trees and bushes were thick at this point, but above their tops rose the tangle of turrets and gables that marked the house. At one point, the sun shone upon a window that flashed back a note of color, and I concluded that the strange place boasted one window, at least, of stained glass. The shades of all the windows within view were still drawn. No one seemed to be abroad in the grounds. Nor was my friend of the casual encounter in sight.

With a quick effort, I writhed through the fence, and found myself confronting the hedge. This was more formidable, but with infinite patience I broke down the spiked arms and managed to effect a narrow passage.

I was in a grove of fine trees, beyond which a spread of green lawn leading to the back of the house was visible. The trees and bushes, I could now see, were a third line of fortification, and extended around the house, save at the front where they thinned out toward the entrance.

I looked about me; then choosing a giant tree whose branches offered a fine view of house and grounds, I deliberately climbed into it and hid myself among the leaves. The heavy foliage was an excellent screen, and in an excess of idiocy I lighted a cigarette and soothed myself to fancied security.

After a time, I pushed aside the screen and looked out, and as I did so the door at the rear of the house suddenly opened, and a man stepped out. It required only a glance on my part to know him for the disreputable fellow whom I had met in the Vendome.

There was something furtive in the man's movements. He had flung into the yard briskly enough, but now he cautiously looked about him as if surveying the grounds with his eye, then at the windows of the house he had quitted. Finally, he turned his red eyes upon the very tree in which I sat, and instantly his attention was riveted by something he saw in the branches. Without turning his head, he called to the house:

"Jack! Bring my rifle quick! There's a funny bird in the tree here!"

There was indeed!

I might have stopped to argue that, after all, he had not seen me; that, in fact, a "funny bird" *had* engrossed his attention. But there was a savage humor in the fellow's voice that I did not like.

I negotiated the last fifteen feet of tree trunk with a rush, and dashed for the fence; but it was too late. A rifle bullet hummed past my ear, and another neatly



"I negotiated the last fifteen feet of tree trunk with a rush, and dashed for the fence; but it was too late. A rifle bullet hummed past my ear, and another nearly removed a piece from my hat. The devil was shooting to kill."

removed a piece from my hat. The devil was shooting to kill!

Ignoring the fence, I darted into a clump of bushes, and behind this frail shelter ran swiftly toward the front of the house, pursued at intervals by the spiteful pellets from the rifleman's weapon. Then a heavy crashing sounded behind me, and I knew that my blue-jawed acquaintance had struck the trail and was after me.

AVAILING myself of every piece of cover, I flew about the house like a frightened hare. The affair was ludicrous enough, on any count, but this mad pursuit in the timbered grounds took on the aspect of a nightmare. Whenever the armed maniac in cry behind me caught so much as a glimpse of my coat tails, he halted and pumped lead into the foliage.

Suddenly, as I rounded the front of the house, and for a moment was in the open, I pitched over a heavy stone and went down with a crash. Half stunned, I lay for a moment, expecting the arrival of the madman with the rifle.

But the accident was fortuitous. As my wits returned, I saw that I was still partially screened, and rising to my feet I plucked the stone that had thrown me, from its bed, and sent it smashing through the bushes in my rear. It fell with a tearing of branches in a clump of vegetation some hundreds of feet distant.

Instantly my pursuer was off in the direction of the sound, and I heard the crack of his rifle at a safer distance. The weapon seemed to be a perfect arsenal in itself.

I FOUND TIME for a glance at my watch. It was almost ten o'clock. I was due on the doorstep. Panting, I ran for the front door, quickly mounted the steps, and plunged my thumb into the doorbell. On the far side of the house, my pursuer was still beating up the bushes and firing at random.

A click sounded on the other side of the door, as the latch was sprung by a

button pushed in a rear room. Then the heavy door swung inward, and I sprang into the aperture and closed the paneled barrier behind me.

I passed through a second door and into a corridor noiseless with fine rugs, and saw a woman advancing toward me from the far end of the hall.

"Mr. Garland?" she queried, looking curiously at my disheveled clothing. "Mr. Paradise will see you at once."

She was a plump body of perhaps forty-five, with an amiable face and an ample bosom; a motherly, reassuring person. I liked her at once. In her wake, I trod a handsome, curving stairway to the second floor, dusting my garments as I went; thence to the front of the house and into a snug library, attractively paneled in oak.

"Mr. Garland to see Mr. Paradise," spoke the servant, casually, and retraced her steps.

I found myself fronting my pretty friend of the day before.

"Good morning," she said, evenly, looking shrewdly, I thought, at my tousled appearance.

I bowed.

"You see I am prompt. I hope Mr. Paradise will be pleased."

"I am sure he will be," responded the young woman, dryly. "I am Mr. Paradise."

My face, I suppose, showed my surprise.

But it was evident she was not jesting, and it occurred to me that I dared not seem curious. I bowed again, in acknowledgement of the introduction.

"You seem upset," she said. "You would appear to have been running. And you have lost your hat!"

It would be easy enough for her to discover what had happened. Realizing this, I resolved to tell the story myself, which I managed with some really excellent faltering.

"My hat," I stammered, "was shot from my head! I *was* running. I was never so frightened in my life."

"Yes? Tell me about it!"

INSPIRATION gripped me. I would confront her with the typewritten note, and call it the basis of my fright. I slowly produced the message and handed it to her.

"It kept me awake half the night," I confessed, when I had told her how I had received it. "And so I came here, this morning, before ten o'clock, to look around. I was afraid . . . I didn't know what to think . . . and then that man . . ."

"Harper?"

"If that is his name! He found me looking at the house, and chased me with a rifle, and . . .!"

Mr. Paradise suddenly threw back her shapely head and laughed merrily.

"You are a quite flagrant coward, Mr. Garland, if you are afraid of being kissed!" she taunted. "I shall not blame you for running from Harper."

I rapidly adjusted a blush, and contrived to stammer.

"If it were only that!" I said. "But surely you see that—that it is a mechanical error—that word! The writer intended to say 'killed'."

"Do you think so?" she asked, mockingly. "Why?"

I gave my reasons in detail, setting forth my Sherlockian deductions with some pride. She listened patiently, with a little smile at the corners of her lips. When I had finished, she stood up and came around to where I stood.

"That is very clever," she said, "but you are quite mistaken. I assure you that the writer of that note meant exactly what he said."

"You mean . . .?"

"I know," said Mr. Paradise, kindly, "because I wrote it!"

My head began to feel light. The room revolved with the chandelier as an axis.

"When you kiss me," she added, "please put enough enthusiasm into the action to suggest that it is not distasteful."

"My God!" I said.

Suddenly she was at my side, and her voice was hissing in my ear:

"Quickly, you fool! We are being watched!"

Well, it was a gift of the gods, and not for me to refuse. I kissed her with considerable fervor, and, having started, found it difficult to stop.

IV. In The Moonlight

IT DEVELOPED that I was to be a courier—a fine-sounding word, with a flavor of old days in it. But of its immediate application, I was given no clew. I was to do as I was told, that was clear, and in due time I would be ready for the higher test, whatever it might be. There seemed to be amazingly little done about the place. The servants went about their ordinary tasks in leisurely fashion, and the duties of the lovely creature who called herself Mr. Paradise, as nearly as I was able to make out, had to do with the reading of innumerable novels. As she did her reading at a desk, there was lent to the performance an air of business. The objectionable Harper seemed to spend his time alternately on the roof and in the gardens, and he was seldom without a pipe.

We dined together in almost complete silence, in the early afternoon of the day of my arrival. My presence, perhaps, was responsible for that. Harper, for all his ungentle appearance, conducted himself at table like a gentleman. We were waited upon by the pleasant, middle-aged woman who had greeted me at the door, and when we were half through the meal, I saw her passing upstairs by a set of steps at the rear, with a tray of steaming food.

Somebody on the second floor was having his dinner in privacy! I thought of the "invalid" of whom my street acquaintance had spoken, and wondered mightily. But I said no word.

"I'll be obliged, Harper," said Mr. Paradise, when we had pushed back our chairs, "if you'll show Mr. Garland about the place. It will be well for him to know his way about. Return him to me, please, in an hour. Mr. Garland is to be my pri-

vate courier, and you are to accept such orders from him as come from me."

THE man nodded politely enough, then turned his murderous red eyes upon me. I stepped forward without a word, and together we passed from the room.

"You won't need to see the grounds, I suppose?" he sneered, when we were clear of the dining hall. "But the house will be new to you. This big room in the center we call the 'Meeting Room'! It isn't much used just now; and there's a row of bedrooms off this long hall that are private. None of 'em occupied at present, but as you may be sent to 'em, you'd better glance into 'em. This is called the 'Red Room,' on account of the wallpaper, and next door's the 'Blue Room,' and beyond that's the 'White Room.' If you ain't color blind, you can't miss 'em. But don't make any mistakes. If you're sent to the Red Room, it's just as well not to go to the Blue Room—and don't you forget that!"

"I'm sorry there's no Green Room," I said. "It's my favorite color. This is a regular Bluebeard episode, isn't it?"

He looked at me suspiciously, and grunted.

"We'll go downstairs," he said, and led the way into what seemed to be a half basement, fitted out as luxuriously as the floor above. In a moment we had entered what appeared to be a music room, since two upright pianos were there, one at either end of the chamber. There was also a tall cabinet of heavy mahogany. My guide looked at me with half a grin on his wolfish face.

"This," he observed, "is the armory!"

Stepping quickly forward to the nearest piano, he threw back the top lid, and bade me look within. When I had done so, I received a shock. The piano was a hollow shell, and the cavity within was crammed with rifles, packed in neat rows.

My eyes swung to the second instrument.

"No," he chuckled, "that's real." To

prove it, he ran his heavy fingers brutally over the keys, bringing forth a furious discord. "The cabinet," he added, "is loaded with ammunition."

I smiled feebly.

"Where are the machine guns?" I asked.

"We couldn't get 'em into the room," he grinned, "so we put 'em in the grounds. They're hidden by the bushes—four of 'em—one at each corner of the grounds."

But in that I was certain he lied, for I knew every inch of the grounds, myself.

"Jack," he said, "has charge of these things. He sleeps in a little room off this one, and he wakes easily. Don't ever come in without letting him know who you are. If you need a pistol, in the night, you'll find one in your own room. Every room has its automatic, and plenty of ammunition. This is only a reserve."

By this time, I may as well confess, my head was whirling.

"There's a sub-basement below this," he added casually, "but we needn't go down. We keep the dogs there, and they're death to strangers. I'll introduce you to 'em, some day, and if they take to you, all right. If they don't—" He shrugged eloquently.

NO WONDER they wanted a coward! What they wanted, apparently, was someone they could stuff with lies, thinking to frighten him so that there would be no prying curiosity into the real meaning of this strange house and its inmates.

We climbed to the second floor, and, avoiding the room where Mr. Paradise read novels at her desk, swung down a central corridor. The elderly servant was leaving a bedroom on the right, with an empty tray. This room my guide deliberately ignored.

"No one goes in there," he said, "but Mrs. Balcom, the woman that let you in, and Mr. Paradise. Mr. Purviance is an invalid, and can't be disturbed. But you'll know him a damn sight better, later on. The bedroom opposite yours belongs to Mr. Paradise, and that one at the far end is mine. You needn't look in, and

I'm seldom there. Now we'll go up to the roof."

We ascended a narrow, coiling stairway, somewhat like a fire escape, and emerged suddenly on a flat roof, in the center of which reared the observatory I had seen from the street. This we entered, and I was looking at a fine and powerful telescope.

"We command the country for miles around," waggled the blue jaw. "We are prepared for any emergency. I believe we could even repulse cavalry!"

I did not doubt it.

"Take a look," he invited, and I bent my eye to the telescope. The village below leaped up to meet me, and through a second story window, half a mile away, I could see a pretty young woman drying her hair.

A man was busily painting a flagstaff on the roof above her, and in a tree, in the street below, a small boy was contentedly puffing a cigarette.

Catching the direction of my gaze, Harper sprang at me savagely.

"Damn you!" he shrilled. "That's my girl! Turn it the other way!"

It developed that the telescope was pivotal, and obediently I swung it about gradually, sweeping the landscape and the lake. Suddenly, I arrested its progress.

A pleasant little cove had come into my vision, landlocked on three sides, and within this enclosure a small steam yacht swung at anchor. Her brass fittings shone brightly in the sun.

"Ah, you've found it!" said my guide, composedly. "Well, that's ours, too, and a right powerful little boat she is. You'll see more of her before you're done with this place."

He calmly placed a cap over the end of the telescope, without waiting for me to remove my eye from the other end; and I understood from the sudden darkness that the peep show was at an end.

"Come on," he ordered, brusquely, "it's time to go back. I'd as soon face a machine gun as Mr. Paradise in a rage!"

AFTER this surprising confession, he led the way down, by the same devious route, and piloted me to the sunny front room where, at her desk, still sat the lovely figure of Mr. Paradise.

"Well," she asked, looking up from her book, "how do you like the place?"

"It's very interesting," I said, lamely, "and very—mysterious!"

She laughed lightly.

"When you are accustomed to it, you won't ever care to leave it," she said, significantly.

"I don't care to leave it now," I said.

"There is nothing for you to do, at present," she continued, "so you may lie about in the grounds, if you like, or in your room. Or, there is an excellent library downstairs; you might read, if you care to."

And so for the rest of the afternoon, greatly wondering, I puttered about the house and grounds. With every minute my mystification increased, but of one thing I was already certain. The whole house was waiting! Something was to happen, and that probably very soon. Until it happened, there would be nothing for me to do. This knowledge came to me more by instinct than anything else, but I was sure I was right.

I retired early, and smoked innumerable cigarettes in my room. My window was up to its fullest extent, and a pleasant breeze was blowing in from the lake. My room overlooked one side of the grounds. It was an admirable night to see, and to be seen. A fine, full, silver moon floated, like a newly-minted coin, in the heavy velvet sky, and a million stars were points of ice against the same dark background.

AFTER some hours of tobacco and speculation, I yawned and looked at my watch in the moonlight. It was nearly midnight. I determined to turn in, and was on the point of doing so, when a patch of light sprang out of the earth, below and to one side of my window. I knew that the lights in one of the adjoining bedrooms had been lighted. From

the position of the light, I judged that it was Mr. Paradise who was astir, and once I saw her shadow, colossally distorted, cross the square of light on the grass.

Then the light vanished. I looked out of the window, and heard the door at the front of the house open and close. Steps sounded on the verandah, and on the stairs. I pulled my head back, standing in darkness so that I could look diagonally onto the lawn. The steps now had left the asphalt of the walk, and were treading earth.

They came on slowly, and in a moment the walkers were in view. Two figures were outlined in the moonlight, and I saw that one was supporting the other. The heavier figure walked with a pronounced limp, and with some panting. The supporting figure was lighter, and could only be that of the mysterious Mr. Paradise. Undoubtedly, then, the lame man was the still more mysterious Mr. Purviance. I watched them with eager eyes.

The figures passed below my window in silence, and there was an interval of even deeper silence before they reappeared. They had traversed the grounds in a circle, when again I saw them, and were beginning again to make the circuit. But now they were talking.

I strained my ears, but could catch no sentence of their conversation. Only one word was my reward, and that a strange one. The word was "Prince."

A third time they made the round, and then a window was flung up farther down, and a low whistle floated across the lawn. Instantly, the two below wheeled and retreated to the house. I heard the click of Purviance's stick on the gravel and on the asphalt, his heavy steps on the front stairs, then the opening and closing of the front door. After that I heard nothing; and suddenly, out of nowhere and dreams, it occurred to me that I did not know that this was an *old* man that had leaned on a young woman's arm.

Something flicked my imagination for a moment, but when I tried to grasp it, it

was gone. Nor could all my thinking recapture it. For a moment something very strange had been almost clear to me: the next moment nothing was clear, and I had a headache.

Hours later, it seemed, when I was in bed, I heard the door of Mr. Paradise's room close softly.

V. The Duel

THE following day was similarly eventless, so far as I was concerned, and for a time I was threatened at the very outset with ennui. Inaction is not my best rôle. I was courier to Mr. Paradise—very well, indeed!—but who was Mr. Paradise, and what were to be my actual duties? Did they involve journeys by the trim yacht concealed in the bay?

Had they a bearing upon the affairs of the strange man who kept his room by day, and tramped the gardens at midnight? The fact is, I yearned for some excitement, and the prospect of weeks of inactivity, waiting for something—I knew not what—to happen, was far from alluring.

However, the episode was yet young. I would give it a fair trial.

My mood changed, later in the day, as an idea struck me. I resolved to have a look at the mysterious Mr. Purviance. I wanted to see this person with his swathings torn away, to look into his face and know the man I served. Harper's half warning had indicated that Purviance was important and dangerous. Very well, I was important myself, and upon occasion I, too, could be dangerous. But my intention was to be secret, at this time, and give the invalid no opportunity to discover me in the act.

I would wait until midnight—until the lame eremite had gone forth from his room for his midnight stroll. Then I would enter his room and await his return. Beyond this point, I made no plans. Circumstances must direct me thereafter.

THE scheme was simplicity itself, and with the departure of the concealed Purviance, I had no difficulty in entering the chamber. I heard the approach of Mr. Paradise, the opening of the door, the steps of both descending the stairs, the opening and closing of the front door. Now, in the darkness, I turned the knob of the door leading to Purviance's room and boldly pushed in.

The blinds were tightly drawn, and the place was heavy with blackness and silence. I flashed a thin light around it, from my pocket torch. Apparently it was an ordinary enough bedchamber. The furniture was rich, yet simple; the papering severe and cold. No pictures adorned the walls, and the closet revealed only a few suits of men's clothes, well-made and with no revealing clues to their owner's identity. All this was very discouraging.

My search must have lasted longer than I had thought, for, suddenly, I heard footsteps approaching, and concluded that the strollers were returning. Hastily slipping back into the closet, I drew the door to, leaving a thin crack for light, and concealed myself beneath (or at least partly beneath) a heavy suit of gray tweed. The door opened.

Silence lay around me as thickly as a blanket. Yet I knew that a man had entered the room. Only one man, and therefore it was not Purviance! Or, if it were, what had become of Mr. Paradise? No light heralded his approach. With catlike footsteps I heard him slip about the room; then his hand was laid upon the handle of the door behind which I crouched.

Discovery was inevitable. Here, too, was an intruder like myself, or so I chose to believe. It was an interesting situation—for a coward!

I gripped my electric torch and waited. . . . The door was pulled slowly open. On the instant, I flashed the full strength of my beam into the face of the intruder, who fell back with a cry of surprise, then came at me with a rush.

It was Harper, the bully of the Ven-

dome, and my guide of the day before.

"Damn you!" he panted. "I knew you were snooping here. Come out, you adjective spy, you! Come out quick, or I'll let daylight through you!"

I SNAPPED off my light and caught his wrists, and we wrestled for a moment in darkness. He was a powerful animal, but I was not a child, myself. And I knew a trick or two unknown to him. In a moment he was helpless, though his tongue still worked furiously.

"Dry up, Harper!" I said at length. "If I let you go, will you keep your mouth shut and come to my room, for the end of this discussion?"

He assented with surprising readiness, and taking him at his word I released his wrists. Pushing him ahead of me, I left the room, and in a few moments we were facing one another in my chamber, with lights on full. We kept our shadows from falling on the shade, however, an excess of caution at which we both grimly smiled. The whole episode of Harper's descent upon me, our grapple, and our peaceable settlement of the immediate difference, had taken less than ten minutes. It had been less than half an hour since I had pushed into Purviance's room.

"Well?" I queried, briefly.

"Who are you?" he asked, with equal curtness.

"A coward!" I smiled at him.

"You're a hell of a coward!" was his flaming tribute.

"Well, a hero, then," I said, amiably.

"What's your game?" he demanded, again.

"No game," I assured him. "I am simply curious about your Mr. Purviance. I thought I'd have a look at him. What was *your* game?"

"I thought I'd have to look at *you*!" he retorted, ferociously. "I know you, Mr. Rupert Garland, or whatever your name is! You're a gov'ment spy, that's what you are! And what's more, I'll let that silly little female know about it before I'm an hour older. Then we'll see!"

"Why should a government spy be interested in the movements of you people?" I asked.

"Why is a mouse?" he asked, sardonically. "You don't know anything, do you? Oh, of course not!" His irony was rich and broad.

"Well," I said, "if you're going to denounce me—although I'm *not* a government spy!—I don't see how I can let you go. I'll have to keep you prisoner until you listen to reason."

He laughed boisterously.

"Quit kidding!" he commanded. "Do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to see Mr. Paradise as soon as she comes up, put your goose on ice, and then take her orders. And do you know what her orders will be? To slit your throat!"

"You wouldn't do that!" I said, reproachfully.

"With real pleasure," he assured me, evilly.

"A cheap murderer, eh?"

"Not *very* cheap," he said, shrewdly.

IT DAWNED upon me that this persiflage was getting me nowhere, and that this disreputable hireling meant what he said. He was, in fact, willing to talk and kill time as long as I was agreeable. So I took the affair into my own hands.

"Look here, Harper," I said, "apparently this is your life or mine, since you put the case so baldly. It is plainly your idea that you will have no difficulty in 'slitting my throat,' as you elegantly express it; and so I offer you the opportunity to do it. Will you fight?"

"Will I?"

"Very well, then," I said, "where shall we go, where we will not be disturbed? The armory?"

"All right!" he said, with alacrity, and leaped to his feet. "And don't think, old bird, that you've got a chance," he added, "for if you had I wouldn't be taking one. But Mr. Paradise has a soft spot for you, and it's just as well if I put you away before she finds it out. She might object, after all."

"Go ahead," I said, laconically.

Thus it was that, while Mr. Paradise and his—or her—mysterious employer tramped the gardens without, two desperate men negotiated the lower hallways of the grim old house, and came at length into the quiet room known as the armory.

"Swords?" asked Harper, with a grin.

"As you please," I answered. "Swords will do."

He flung open the tall cabinet, and produced a set of duelling swords with the celerity of a conjurer. One he handed to me, and I tried it a bit awkwardly, for I had no intention of letting him know that I was an accomplished swordsman.

He carefully closed and locked the doors at both ends of the room. Then he fell into position with tight lips that boded ill for me if he should reach me.

No sooner had our blades crossed than I knew, with some surprise, that here was a fellow who knew the game. He was no mean duelist, this blue-jawed Harper. My utmost skill would be necessary to touch him. His wrist was of iron.

FOR a time we fenced carefully, feeling one another out. Harper's surprise must have been as great as mine. I had not his brute strength, but I was more agile; and if his wrist was of iron, mine was of steel.

Our feet danced in circles about the room. Now he was at one end and now at the other; we advanced and retreated, changing positions one with the other.

I tried a number of easy thrusts, all of which were met and parried with great skill. The man was a master. After one of my childish thrusts, he smiled, and replied with a vicious lunge over my guard that all but took me in the throat. I leaped back, and his harsh laugh grated through the room. He, at least, had no doubt about the outcome.

I fenced more carefully, and managed, after a time, with a swift forward plunge of body and arm, to put my point through his sleeve. He avoided the thrust by a miracle, and his face changed.

The ring of our steel filled the room, as the contest waxed hotter, and I thought his breath began to come more heavily. I was wearing him down. Yet neither of us had drawn blood. We fought with greater equality than I had fancied.

Quite suddenly he wavered, and made the thrust of a boy. I turned it aside with ease, and now it was my turn to smile. My arm straightened as he lumbered forward—then, before I knew what had happened, his point was at my heart. It had been a trick, and I was nearer death than at any time in my wild career. Desperately I leaped away, pushing aside his blade with my bare left hand. I felt the warm blood trickle down my fingers, and then a searing pain in my left shoulder. His point had found a bed; but I had deflected his lunge sufficiently to save my life.

He laughed again, and his little red eyes flamed death at me; his yellow teeth grated through his half-opened, snarling lips; his blade sang against mine with sinister melody. The tear in my shoulder, and my lacerated left hand were giving me pain. . . . Well, I would try a trick of my own.

My eyes glazed, and my point wavered downward. He leaped forward with furious joy. As he leaped, I fell forward beneath his blade, until my left knee was upon the floor, and my left hand was daubing the boards with blood. And as I fell, my right arm straightened, shoulder-high.

He plunged forward against my point. . . . I felt the steel pass into flesh. . . . His horrible, gasping cry sounded above me. . . .

"Let me in!" cried a low, thrilling voice beyond the door—the voice of Mr. Paradise. "Let me in, I say! What are you doing? Harper! Rupert! You are fighting! Oh, let me in!"

All in a low, furious, distracted whisper.

I wiped my blade on Harper's limp shirt, and walked to the door. Slowly I turned the key, and pulled open the barrier.

She rushed past me into the room, and with a cry fell on her knees beside the body of Harper.

"Dead!" she whispered. I nodded gravely.

"Thank God!" said Mr. Paradise, suddenly.

And then she was weeping quietly on my shoulder, while I endeavored to hide from her view the red tear in my shirt, and the torn fingers of my hand.

VI. The Man in the Street

THE loyalty exacted by Mr. Paradise from her servants was a thing to wonder at. This Harper affair, instead of involving me in enormous difficulties, as I had confidently expected, seemed to be accepted as the most natural thing in the world. Mr. Paradise herself had bandaged my hurts, and I had turned in and slept soundly in spite of myself, to wake in the morning refreshed and eager to arise. This Mrs. Balcom, who attended me, forbade, explaining that her orders were strict. I pleaded that my shoulder was just a little stiff, and that I had no immediate use for my left hand; but she was adamant, and so perforce I remained in bed, while the world about us wagged on much as ever.

What had become of the body of the unfortunate Harper I had no means of knowing until the following day when, having risen in the face of protest from my bed, I was summoned to the presence of Mr. Paradise.

"I shall not ask embarrassing questions, Mr. Garland," she said, quietly. "This affair between yourself and Harper seems to have been of some days' standing, and it has ended unfortunately for the man I am best able to spare. I confess, however, I am beginning to view your cowardice with something akin to suspicion."

"It was my life or his," I stammered, "and even a rat will fight for its life."

"Your knowledge of the sword must be remarkable, at any rate," she said. "How-

ever, that is past. I have had Harper removed, without ostentation, and we shall forget the incident. I fancy I owe you some explanation, which unhappily I cannot give you just yet. You have been kept in the dark as to your duties, and have had to find employment for yourself. It could not be helped. The fact is, affairs have not turned out as we had planned, and at the moment we have no use for you in the rôle for which you were employed. We may have before long; I can not tell. It may be that we shall never employ you. This may not be satisfactory to you, but it is all I can say, and, as it happens, it is quite impossible for us to let you go, now that you have come among us."

"I have no wish to go," I said. "And whenever you need me, I hope I shall be ready."

"Indeed, I hope so, too," she said, smiling strangely.

But my employment was to begin sooner than either of us thought. It began the following afternoon.

I HAD BEEN up on the roof in the morning, and looking through the telescope had failed to discover the little vessel in the bay. This had set me to wondering, until it occurred to me that possibly Harper had been given a burial at sea, as it were. In the afternoon, Mr. Paradise sent for me, and I was directed to go down to the lake and receive a package from the captain of the yacht. Minute directions were given me, as to my journey to the bay, and it was evident that I was to make the trip unobserved by strangers.

What was much less evident was why I was told, almost in confidence, that I might come back through the village and stop off at the post office to ask for mail.

No mail was delivered at the house, and there was no reason to seek it in the village. Further, the village certainly contained strangers, one of whom, at least, was interested in our movements. Yet I was to make the journey to the boat in

secret, and come back from it (with whatever package it was I was to get), through the very heart of the town. This looked to me like folly, but I said nothing.

By a circuitous route, I reached the little bay, and was taken off to the yacht in a small launch or tender, operated by a single man whom I had not before seen. The day was fine and the water delightful. I would gladly have remained indefinitely, but beyond an invitation to smoke a Havana on the deck, while my dispatch box was being procured, I received no hint that my presence would be welcome on the yacht. And, of course, I had orders, after all, to return. She was a fine and clean vessel, *The Flame* (the name painted on the yacht's stern), and her brass railings shone brightly in the sunlight. She carried a small crew, so far as I was able to ascertain. The captain was an affable enough fellow, who wore a sort of half uniform; that is to say, he wore a cap and a blue serge jacket, and carried some exceptional binoculars.

My return package turned out to be a small portfolio, such as lawyers carry, apparently stuffed with papers. This I took, and was taken back to the shore, where without further word my friendly seaman left me.

With a parting look of admiration at the trim craft I was leaving, I set off along a path toward the nearest thoroughfare, and before long was in the center of village activity. I bore off for the post office, where, quite as I expected, there was no mail whatever for Mr. Adrian Purviance.

AS I LEFT the doorway, a man jostled me, and I turned to see the detective-looking individual who had stopped me on the first day of my employment.

"Pardon me!" he apologized, and then exclaimed: "Hello, it's you! So you decided to remain for a few days."

"Yes," I replied, readily, "but you were right. The place is dead enough in all conscience.

He laughed.

"Did you manage to get a view of the Cowdery place?" he asked. "You were bent on seeing it, you remember."

"I got into the grounds, at least," I said, and made a face. "And I had a talk with a fellow there, who seemed to be gardener. But the man's not Cowdery—not now, anyway. It's Ad—something like Adriance."

"Purviance," he said, instantly; then scowled, and looked at me as if he had spoken without thought.

"Yes," I replied, "Adrian Purviance, that's it! A collector, I believe—rugs, pictures, porcelains, and the rest."

He smiled politely.

"I understand he has a beautiful daughter," he mused.

"Indeed!"

"Yes, she is a sort of legend in the village."

"I should like to see her."

"So should I," he said, rather grimly I thought. He added: "I thought perhaps you had had a glimpse of her."

"Just a glimpse," I returned. "Of course, I had no knowledge of the relationship. His daughter, you say?"

"So *they* say," he sneered, suddenly. My face colored, and my impulse was to knock him down. Yet I had invited his remark.

It was apparent that we were talking at cross purposes. He, too, felt it.

"Shall we drop our masks?" he asked, at length.

"With pleasure," I said.

"What are you doing there, Mr. Garland?" he asked, instantly.

"If you will prove your right to ask, I will be happy to answer," I said.

"That's fair!" He dived a hand into his pocket and produced a small leather card case, beneath an ising-glass pane in which lay a printed card. The card certified to the bearer's entire trustworthiness and probity, and revealed the not surprising information that he was a member of the government's detective force.

"Very well," I said. "The fact is, I don't know what I'm doing, yet. I was em-

ployed through an advertisement as a messenger, and for what purpose I have no idea."

"I believe you," said the detective. "Permit me to tell you that Mr. Adrian Purviance is one of the most dangerous men in America, today. He plans nothing less than the overthrow of government and civilization on this continent. Not that his plans will ever carry through; but he is always a menace. He has been watched for some time, and it has been our hope that he would be caught with—as the saying goes—'the goods on him'."

"And his—daughter?" I asked.

He shrugged.

"Why do you tell me this?" I pressed him.

"Because," he answered, "you can be of service to us. There is little you can tell us that we do not know. But if we had a friend in that house, it would spare us much labor. Purviance had an accident, not long since, and still has a bad leg. It is his leg that has kept him idle. His yacht is below here, and almost any night we expect him to make a break for it. If we had knowledge in advance of the night he intended to leave. . . . You see?"

"Yes," I said, slowly. I was turning his words over in my head.

I had no intention, of course, of betraying my employers. But I did wish to ascertain how much was known to this man, and what his intentions were.

"We could arrange signals," he said. "and apparently you are trusted. You can come out and meet me here."

"If you still lack evidence," I said, "what good will an arrest do?"

"You will procure the evidence," he said, coolly. "Indeed, you possibly have it on you."

His significant glance fell upon the portfolio beneath my arm.

"Come," he added, "let's have a look, at least. That will do no harm. Or turn over the whole thing to me, and tell them at the house that you were held up and it was taken from you. Believe me, they

will accept your word. They know quite well that their game is about up."

But there I rebelled.

"No!" I said, and smiled into his eyes.

"Yes!" he replied, with equal firmness. But he did not smile.

His right hand came out of his side pocket, casually, and in the palm of his hand lay a small and deadly pistol. The little black hole looked at me unwinkingly.

"I can take it, you see," he observed.

A GREAT light came over me, a sudden, paralyzing thought. I was supposed to be a coward! I had been sent on this journey, with deliberate instructions to return through the village! Could it be possible that Mr. Paradise . . . ?

But I would not think it.

He watched me closely. Suddenly he came nearer, and pushed the muzzle of the tiny death-dealing pistol into my side, while with his left hand he seized a corner of the portfolio.

"Have sense, Garland!" he said. "The government is behind me. You are a dupe."

I released my hold on the portfolio. The thought now was clearer. After all, it was this great detective who was the dupe. It all pointed to that conclusion. Undoubtedly, the packet of papers was intended to be taken from me; had indeed been prepared to fall into enemy hands. I, as a coward, would of course give it up. And at the house, Mr. Paradise would be pleased. These papers . . . what were they? At any rate, they were planned to lead the detectives astray.

"All right," I grumbled, "but you've got to take care of me, when this thing is over. I'm not rich."

He smiled.

"You'll get yours," he said, reassuringly. "Now beat it back to the house as hard as you can. Run in panting, if you like, and report the holdup. Make it good! And meet me here the next time you get out. If you hear anything at night, get out whatever happens and let me know.

I or another will be outside the grounds, at the intersection with the next estate. Don't fail!"

"What's your name?" I asked, boldly.

"Emmett," he answered.

"All right, Emmett," I said; and again he laughed. What an ass he thought me!

And what a coward Mr. Paradise would think me, even though she would be pleased! I began to be highly displeased with myself.

On my return, I went directly to the office-chamber of my fair employer. She looked up expectantly, and I hung my head. I thought she smiled.

"I've been robbed," I said, without introduction.

"Of the papers?" she asked, swiftly, breathlessly.

"Yes!"

She drew a long breath. Was it relief? I did not look up.

"How did it happen?"

I stammered out my tale, and she heard me through without a word. Then her scorn flamed out.

"For a time I suspected you," she said. "I doubted your cowardice. When you killed Harper I was almost glad—God help me! Glad that the man I thought was a coward, was not a coward! Now, I know! Oh, what a creature!

I could have laughed aloud at her distress.

"But a coward is not necessarily a fool!" I said, when she had finished.

She turned like a flash of light.

"What do you mean?"

"Only, Mrs. Purviance, that I have fulfilled my task with intelligence, and now ask to be released from my position. It grows distasteful."

She stared at me as if I had gone crazy.

"A real coward," I continued, acidly, for I was enjoying myself now, "might have bungled your plans hopelessly. As it is, all is well; the false papers have been delivered as you wished, and I am still at your personal service, although no longer in your employ. Why you ever thought you needed a coward," I added,

"I do not know. Why did you not turn over the papers yourself? Or let Harper do it? Or Mrs. Balcom?"

SHE gasped. After a long moment, she seemed to grasp the purport of my words. She laughed a little, I am sure.

"You mean you gave up the papers, believing I wished them turned over?" she asked. "Believing them to be false, as you say, and intended to deceive?"

"Quite so?"

Suddenly she was laughing in earnest, and coming forward she seized my hand.

"Forgive me," she begged. "What led you into this adventure, I don't know, but I see I have been more fortunate than I thought. And you are partly right. I *did* want those papers taken from you, but—" Her voice sank to a sibilant whisper—"they are not false!"

"Not false?" I echoed.

"Not so loud! No, the papers tell the truth about this Purviance! The truth that I wanted known, but did not dare to tell myself. I was bound. And so I got a coward—" She laughed again. "A coward!"

"Then we are allies!" I said.

"Perhaps," she replied, "but I cannot betray him—and tonight is the night!"

VII. The Flight

THE house used as headquarters by Purviance and his gang had been leased furnished, and none of the servants, save only the dead Harper, was concerned in the affairs of Adrian Purviance. They would no doubt be questioned and bothered, but no ultimate harm would come to them. They could not be connected with the rifles, since the rifles were to be taken to the ship, and a hollow piano means nothing in particular. The dogs, as well as "Jack," it developed, were inventions of the ingenious scoundrel whom I had killed—the right hand man of Purviance, and a rascal well out of the world. The fine telescope, I was told,

would have to be sacrificed, but I privately resolved to make application for it myself, when all was over.

I had confessed everything to Mr. Paradise, and she was not displeased.

"And you," I said, "are Mrs. Purviance, after all?"

"Yes," she admitted. "I am his wife in name, and that only through the deceit and trickery of my guardian. Purviance was supposed to be dying, and to help my guardian—who is my uncle—out of a grave difficulty, I consented to marry this man, and become his widow. I was told he would not live twenty-four hours. It was all a lie. He was not even ill. But it was too late, when I discovered that, to withdraw. I hated him from the first, and it was agreed that we should keep our separate rooms until he was out of trouble. He really loved me, I think. At any rate, he was kind enough to me, although savage with others."

"You could have easily dissolved the marriage," I insisted.

"Not without bringing disgrace upon my mother's brother," she said. "No, I thought it all over, and decided to wait and see what happened. I was certain that sooner or later he would be taken in a criminal act, and I could then apply for a divorce without any suspicion. I pretended to fall in with his plans, and even became what I am now—a sort of secretary, with a fantastic name to deceive the curious. When I learned that it was his plan to flee the country, taking me with him, I made up my mind that I had gone far enough. The plan to hire a coward was my own silly idea—received from much reading of novels, I suppose—and I was obliged to tell Purviance that I was hiring a young man who was in love with me, and who would do our every bidding. We needed such a man, and I was encouraged to deceive you. You recall that I forced you to kiss me. He was watching then, and I thought he was suspicious. The note I wrote you was a silly test of your alleged cowardice. I think that is all you have not surmised."

"The fact is," I made answer, "I am a coward!"

She looked at me amazed.

"I want to tell you that I love you," I continued, "and I am afraid!"

She looked serious.

"I am glad," she said, at length. "But I am still in a sad predicament. Please say no more just now. We are still surrounded by great danger."

"You will aid him to escape?" I asked.

"Yes," she said, "but praying all the time that he will not! If the detectives cannot get him now, certainly they are not worth the name. But if I flinch, he will kill me."

"Then I shall hinder his escape," I said.

"I don't like it," she answered. "I should prefer that it come about in some other way. You can't kill him, you know, without its being murder; and I don't want him killed! Don't think that I'm entirely cruel and bloodthirsty! I only want to free myself from this fearful tangle."

I said no more.

NIGHT was all about us, and the final light in the house had been extinguished, when we were ready to depart. The servants were asleep. In the silence, then, the door of Purviance's room opened, and I heard his limping step in the hall.

"This, then, is Prince Rupert," boomed a low, mocking voice, at my ear.

I laughed and bowed in the darkness.

"I am the Prince, then?" I asked.

"It is our pet name for you," he said. "Have a care tonight, my dear Prince, for I shall be behind you all the way, with a pistol at your back. Your little play with Mr. Paradise is at an end, and we have no time for tricks. When we are safely on board, you may go."

"Where?" I asked, as if bewildered.

"To the devil, if you will," he answered, politely.

"Mr. Garland will not betray you," said his wife, coldly. "Are you ready?"

"All right," he said, "open the door!"

I stepped forward and slipped the latch; then softly drew the door inward. I would have shouted, but that I feared he would injure the woman beside him.

Somewhere, not far off, was Emmett.

We descended the steps, slowly, one on either side of Purviance.

"Captain Osterman is close at hand, sir," I whispered. "He is to meet us beyond the gate. Shall I signal him?"

"Yes," he said, "and remember what I am carrying in my hand!"

My low whistle to Emmett floated across the night, and a moment later we passed through the gate.

On the instant, I flung my arms about the man at my side, pinning his arms to his sides.

"Emmett!" I shouted.

"Coming!" came the voice of the detective; and a pounding of feet sounded along the walk. Two men came into sight, running hard.

With a furious oath, Purviance tore himself from my embrace, and fired once at the oncoming men. They did not pause, and hurling the weapon from him the desperate man turned and fled. The girl's hand was on my arm.

"Let him go!" she whispered.

THE dark form of Purviance was speeding along the pavement on the far side of the street, away from the oncoming detectives. The night was so black that only his movement served to keep him in sight.

Suddenly two revolvers went off almost together, as the government men opened fire . . . And near the corner of the next street, Adrian Purviance tossed his arms in the air, clawed in dark circles, and fell upon the sidewalk.

"That done it!" called the voice of Emmett, and the two detectives passed us with a rush. "Hold the girl, Garland!" roared back the former, over his shoulder.

But his injunction was unnecessary.

I was holding the weeping girl very tightly; but not more tightly than she was holding me.



From Punch, © London

Doctor (vainly trying to telephone telegram): Facial—F.A.-C-I-A-L. Look here, "F" for fool; "A" for ass; "C" for cuckoo; "I" for idiot; "A" for ass; "L" for lunatic!

THE MONTH'S BEST CARTOONS

(In this and the thirty pages which follow will be found a digest of the month's best humorous cartoons, drawn by the world's greatest funny men.)



From Excelsior, Mexico City

OUR RESTAURANTS!

"Imbecile! The fish you served me eight days ago was better than this."
"You are the imbecile. I will show you that this is the same fish!"



Copyright, 1921, by Press Publishing Co.

Carr in New York World

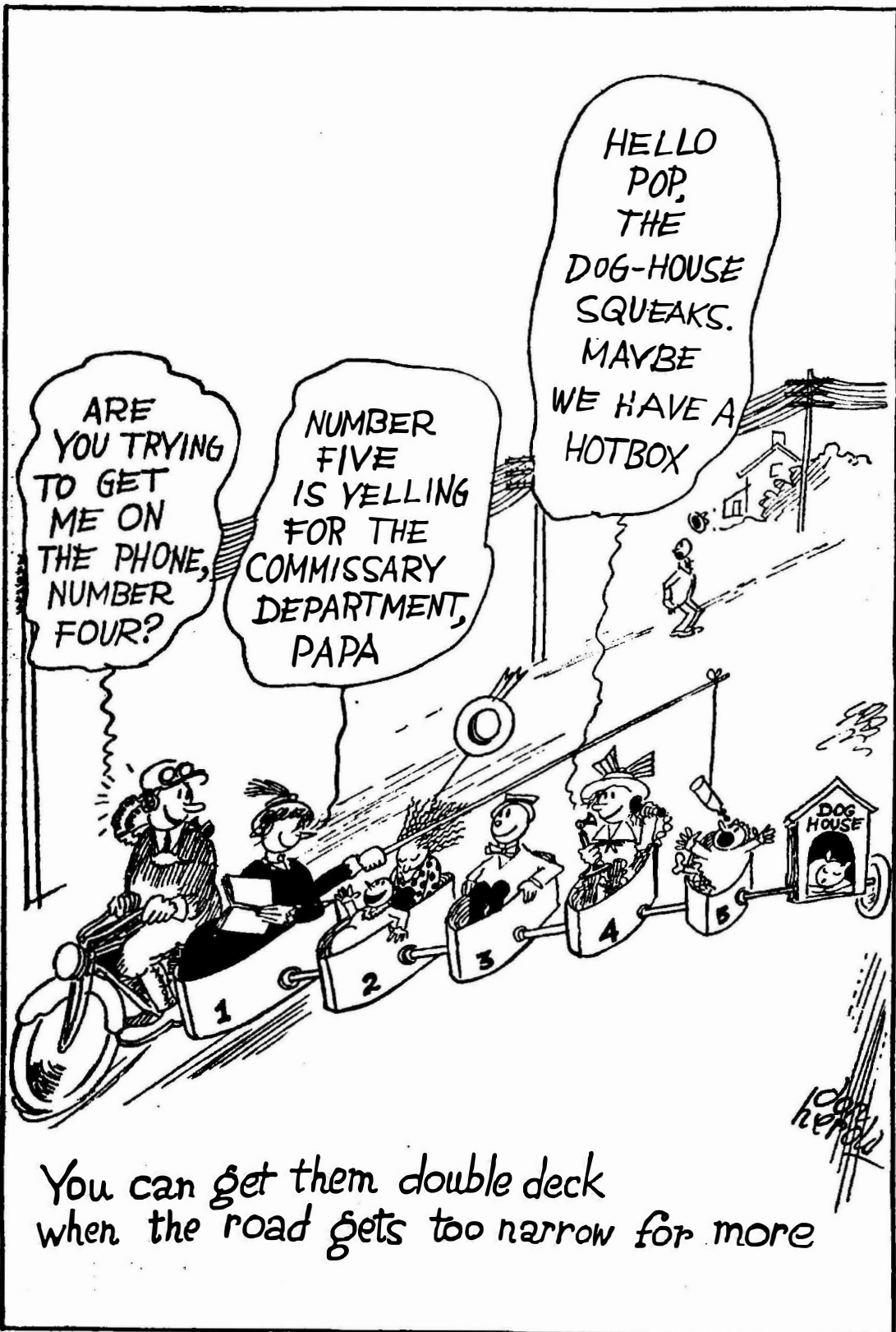
"I betcher hafter put up with a lot of queer lookin' birds who try to vamp you, hey, what?"



Lemen in St. Louis Post-Dispatch

MUCH-NEEDED INVENTIONS

Especially constructed hat for the woman who hates tobacco smoke!

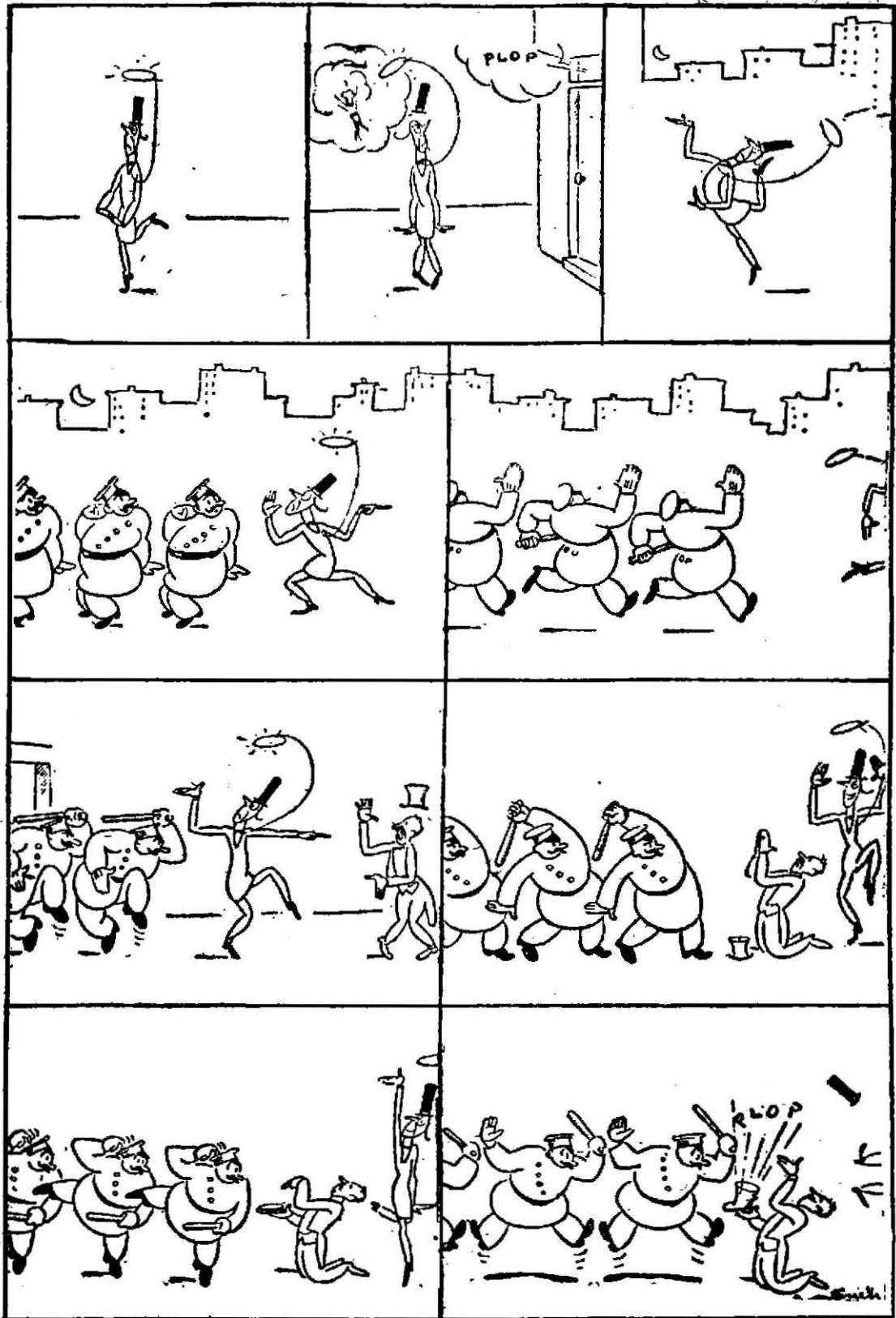


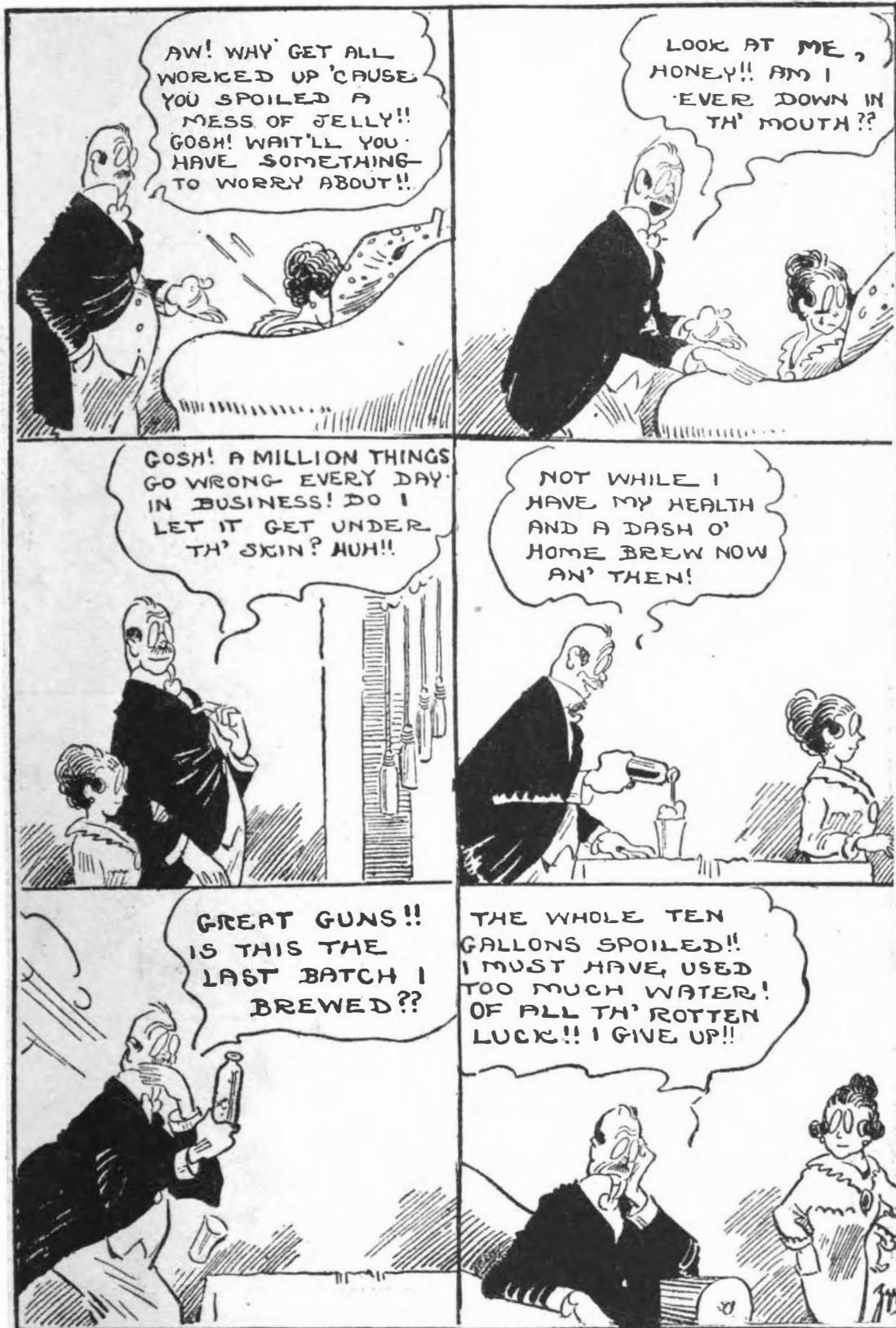
You can get them double deck when the road gets too narrow for more

Protected by George Matthew Adams

Herold for George Matthew Adams Service

As the family increases just add another side-dish to this sectional motorcycle!



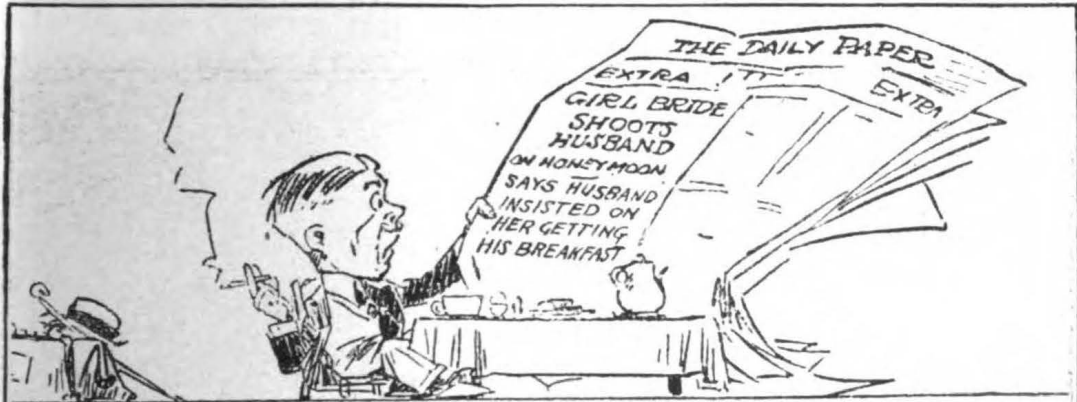




Thomas in The Sketch. London

THAT'S THE STUFF TO GIVE 'EM!

He: What about that stuff for your dress?
She: Oh, nobody's wearing that now!
He: Well, what about this stuff?
She: Why, everybody's wearing that!



Why bridegrooms are nervous during the ceremony!

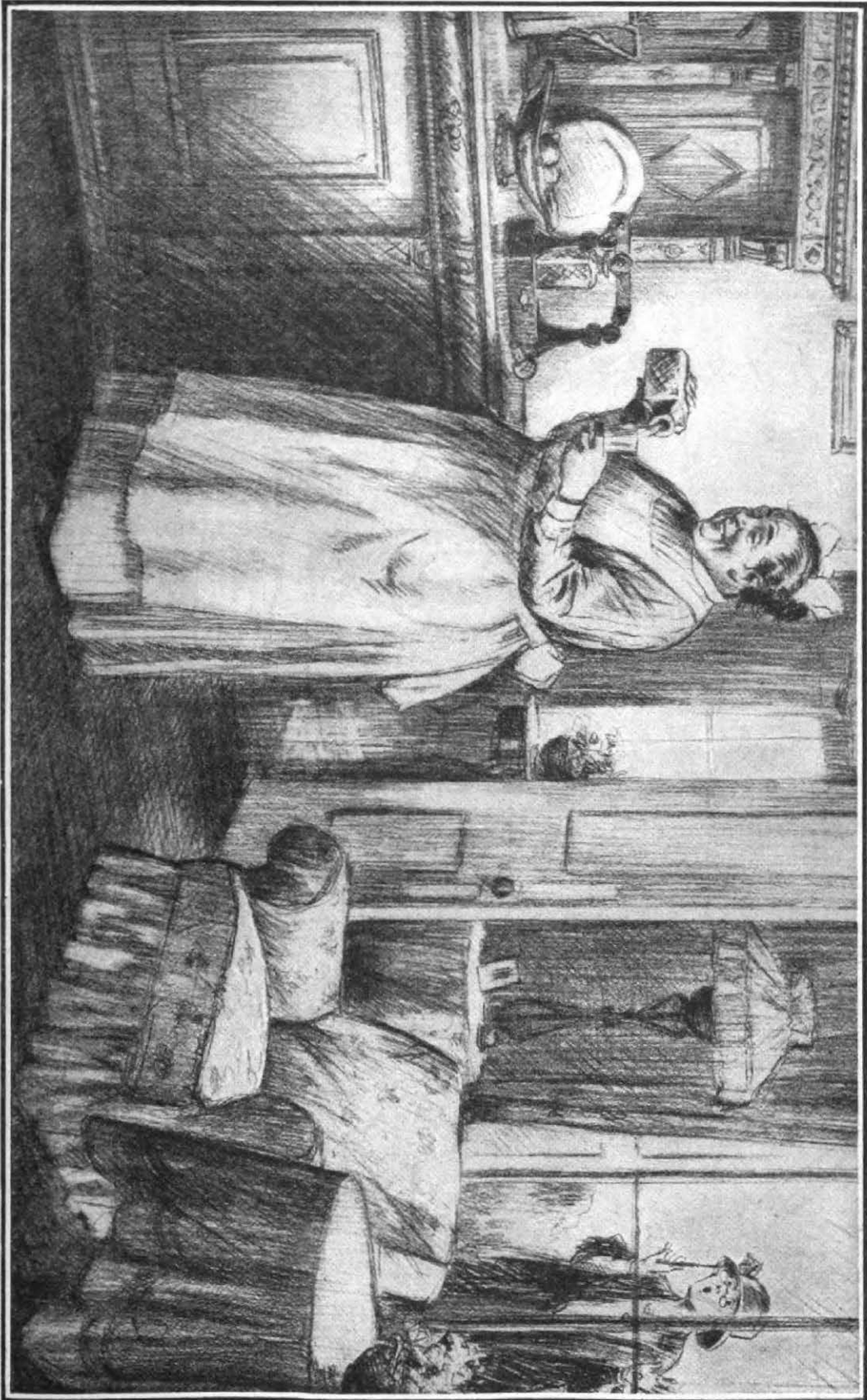
Darling in Des Moines Register



Carr in The Philadelphia Inquirer

Copyright, 1921, by The Press Publishing Co.

"I'm surc, cook, you'll like it out in the country!"



"Cook's Scotch tour!"

Lunt in 'The Bystander,' London

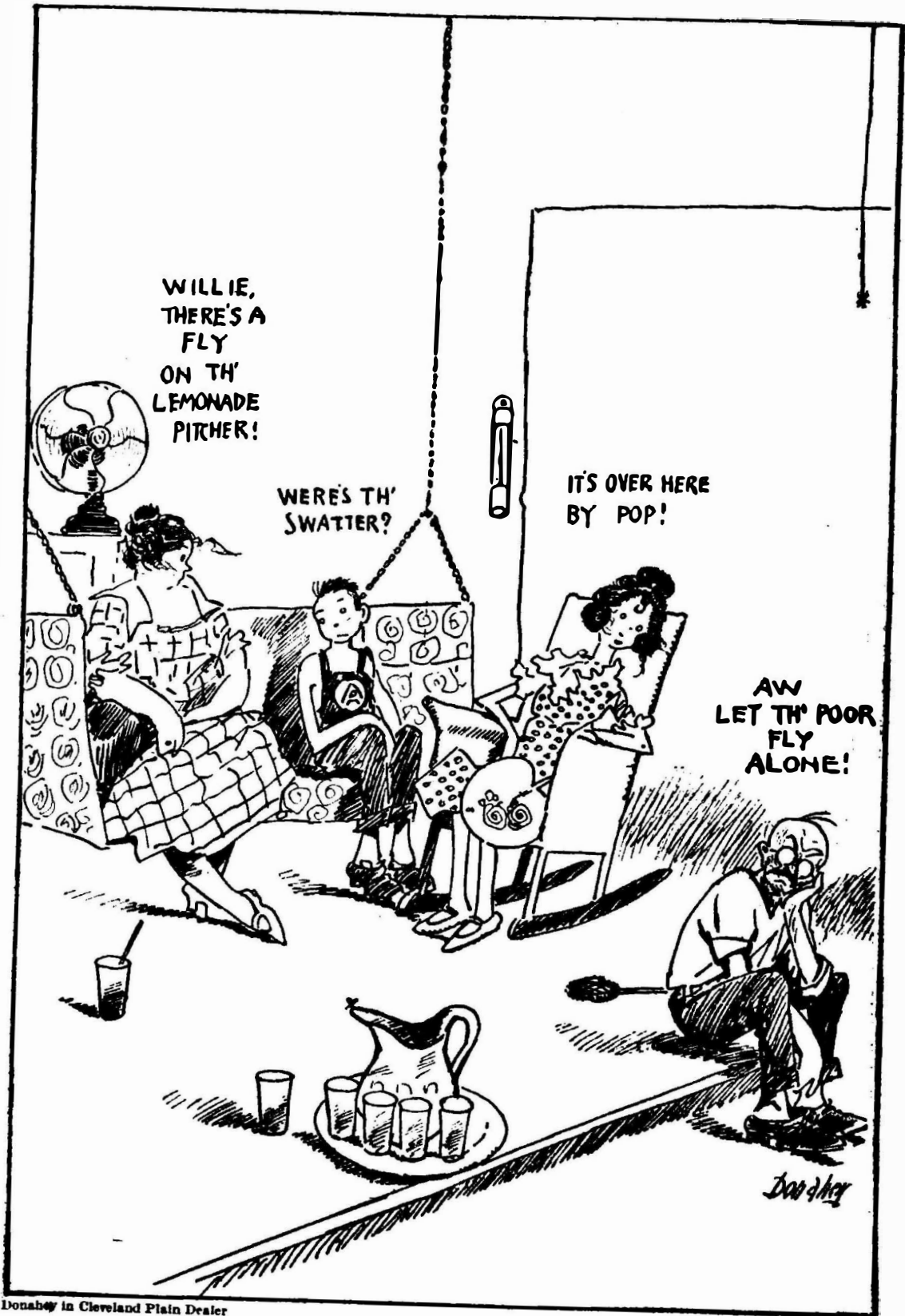


The stake-holder at last week's game had run away with the money!



"Pull 'er tight!"

Temple in Louisville Times



Donahay in Cleveland Plain Dealer

After that long hot spell will we EVER get the old pep back?



Darling in Des Moines Register

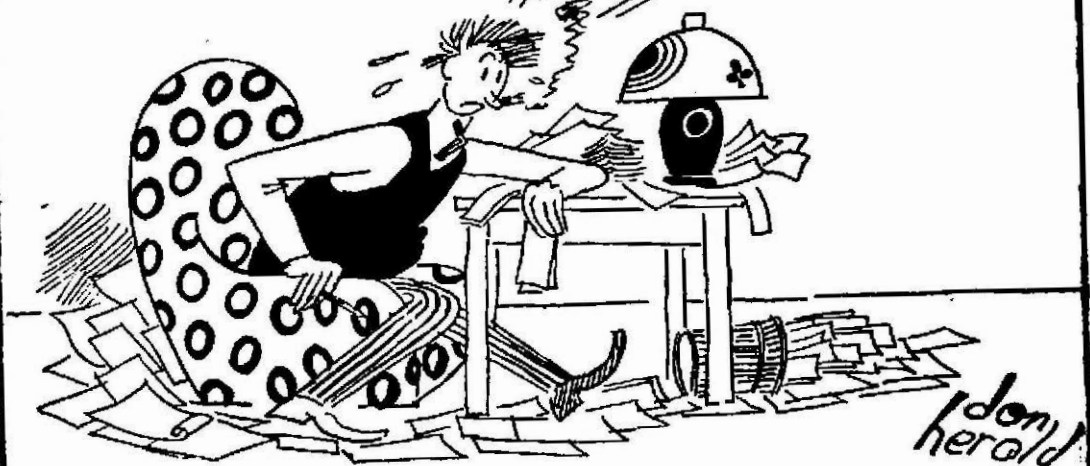
In loving memory of the summer of 1921!

*I know I'm right. I couldn't
have made a mistake. I'll
go over it again*



**TWO HOURS
LATER**

*Aw, banks never make
mistakes. I'll just
accept their figure*

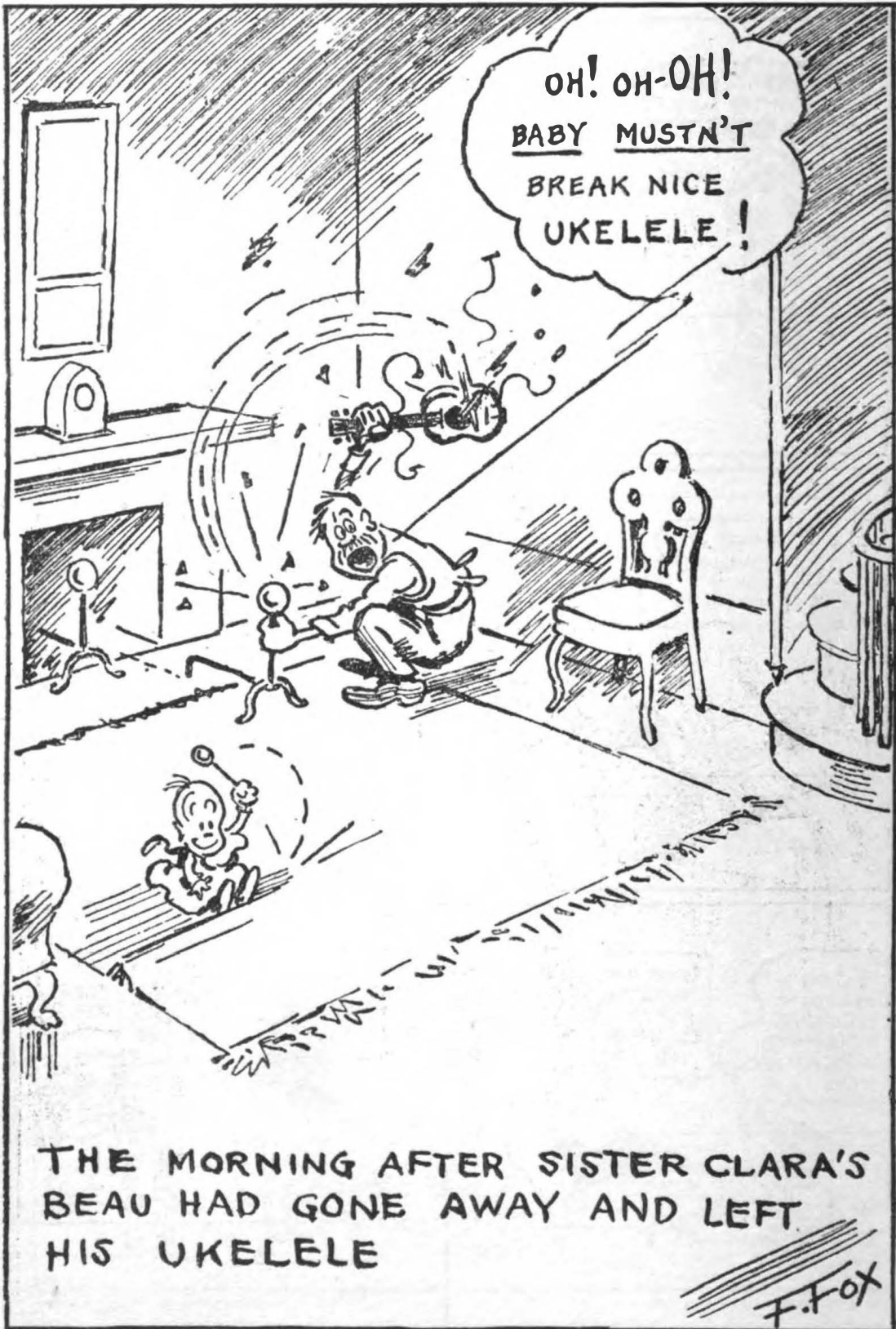


Herold for George Matthew Adams Service

Protected by George Matthew Adams

The monthly compromise—making your check book tally with the bank's balance!





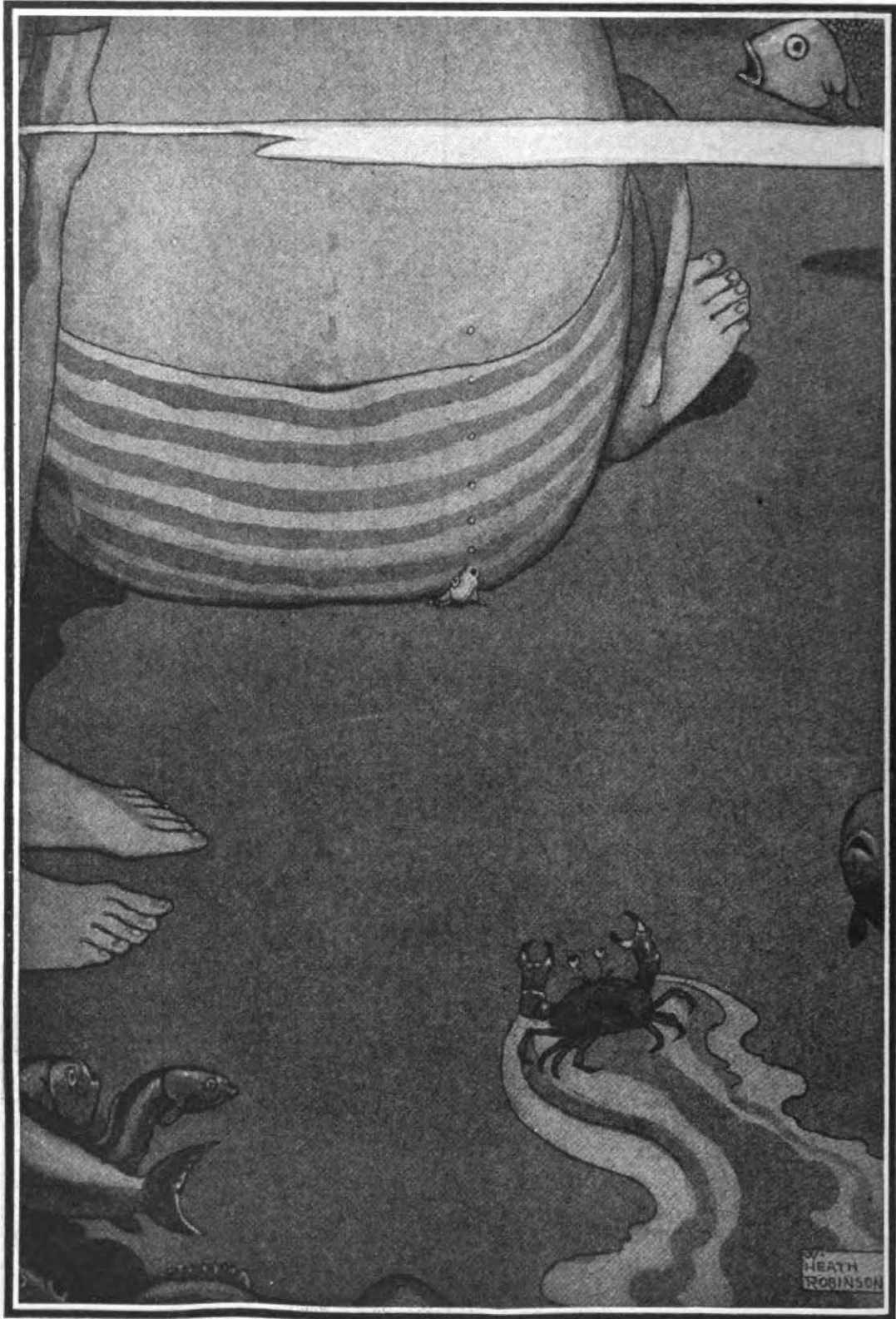
Fox In Louisville Courier Journal

Copyright, 1921, by Fontaine Fox

Dad and the baby were the first ones downstairs!



Will someone explain this, please?



Heath Robinson in The Bystander, London

To the rescue.



From The Sketch. London

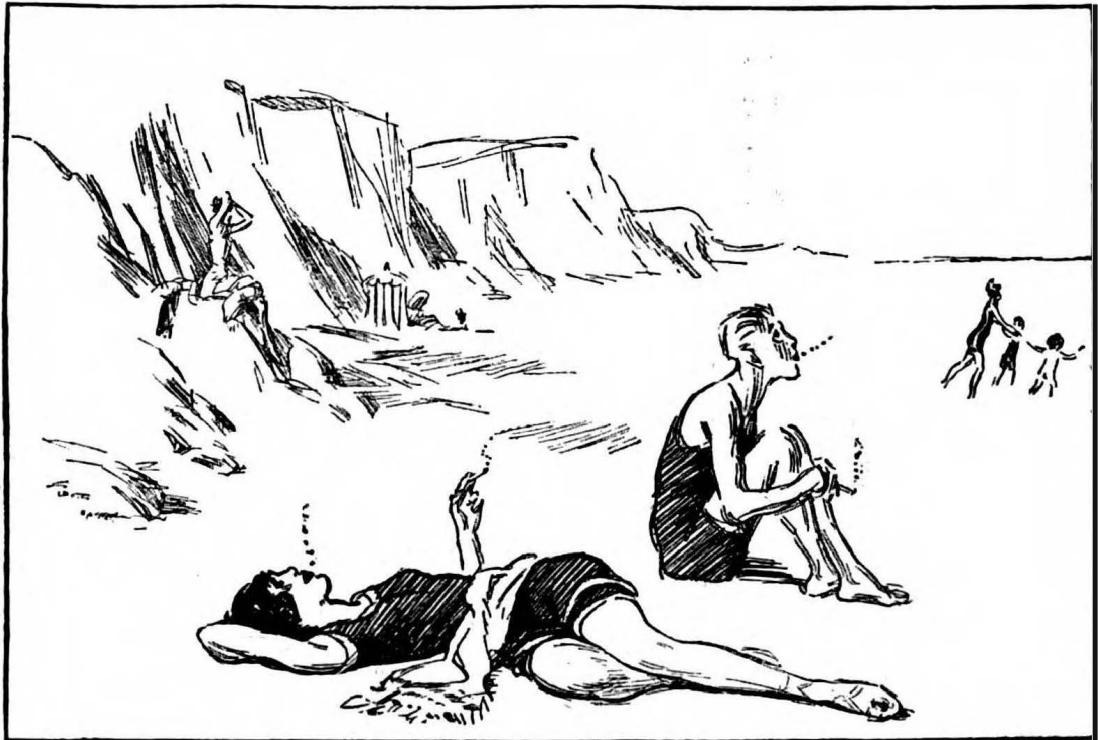
Sybil: She looks after No. 1!
Grace: No. 2, you mean—she's a widow!



From Punch, ©. London

THE INDEFATIGABLES—In Four Scenes!

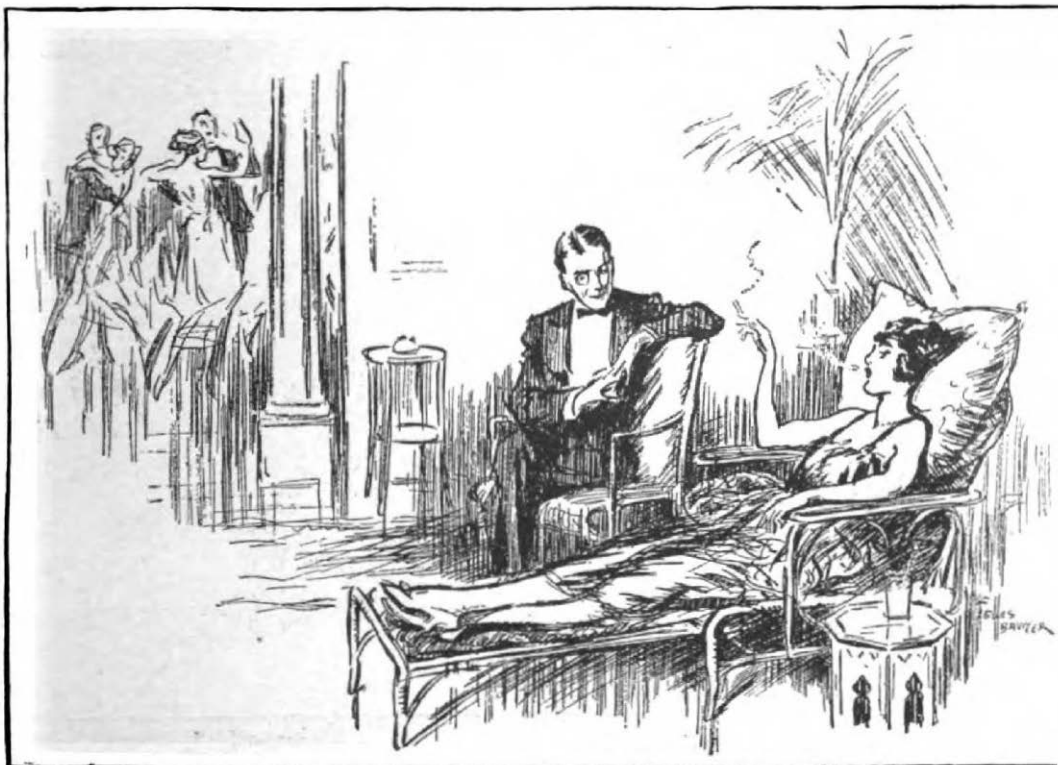
Scene 1: Extract from young lady's letter: "Dearest Mother: This must be a very bracing place. Although I golf—"



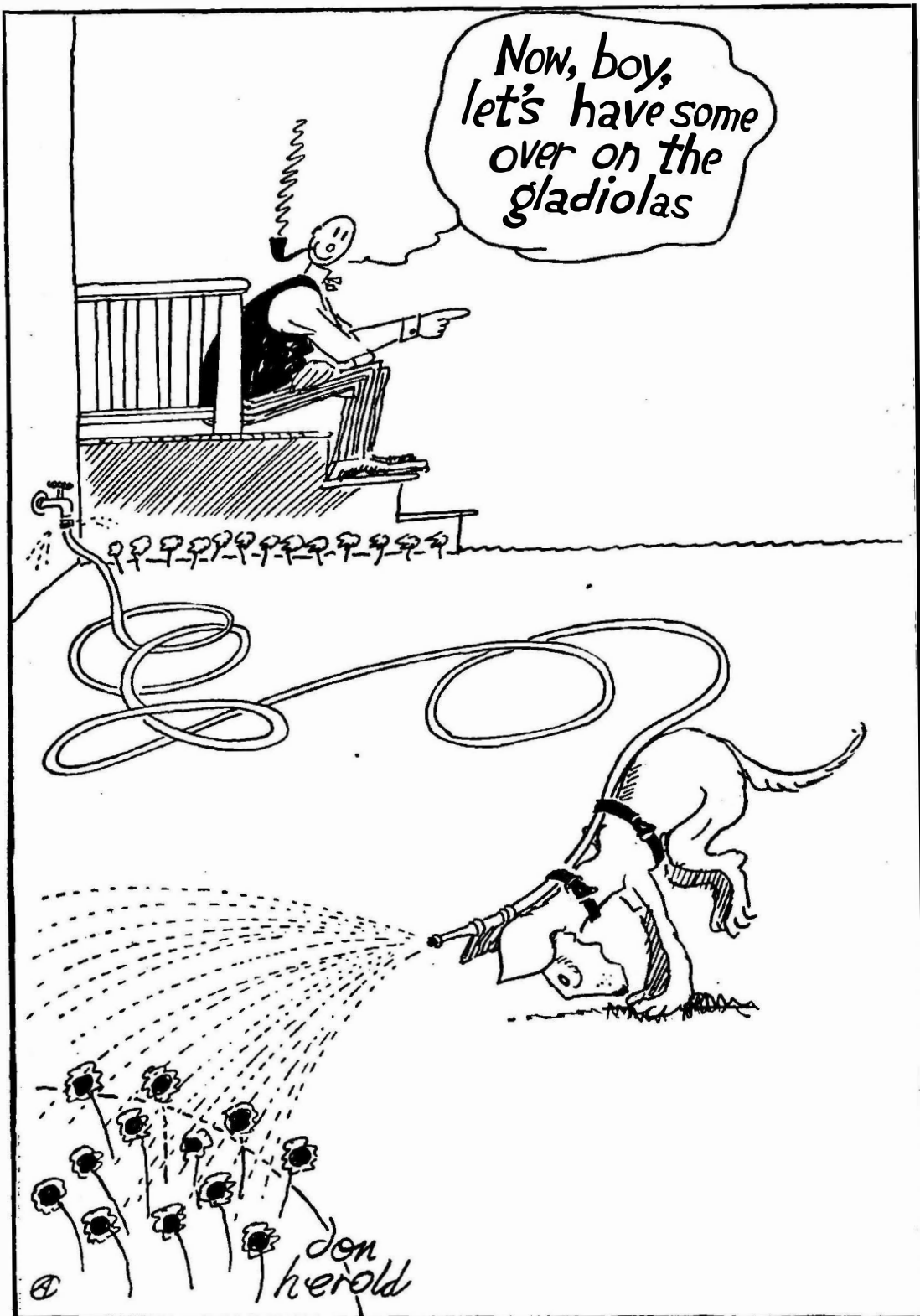
Scene 2: "—and bathe every morning—"



Scene 3: "—and sail in the afternoon—"



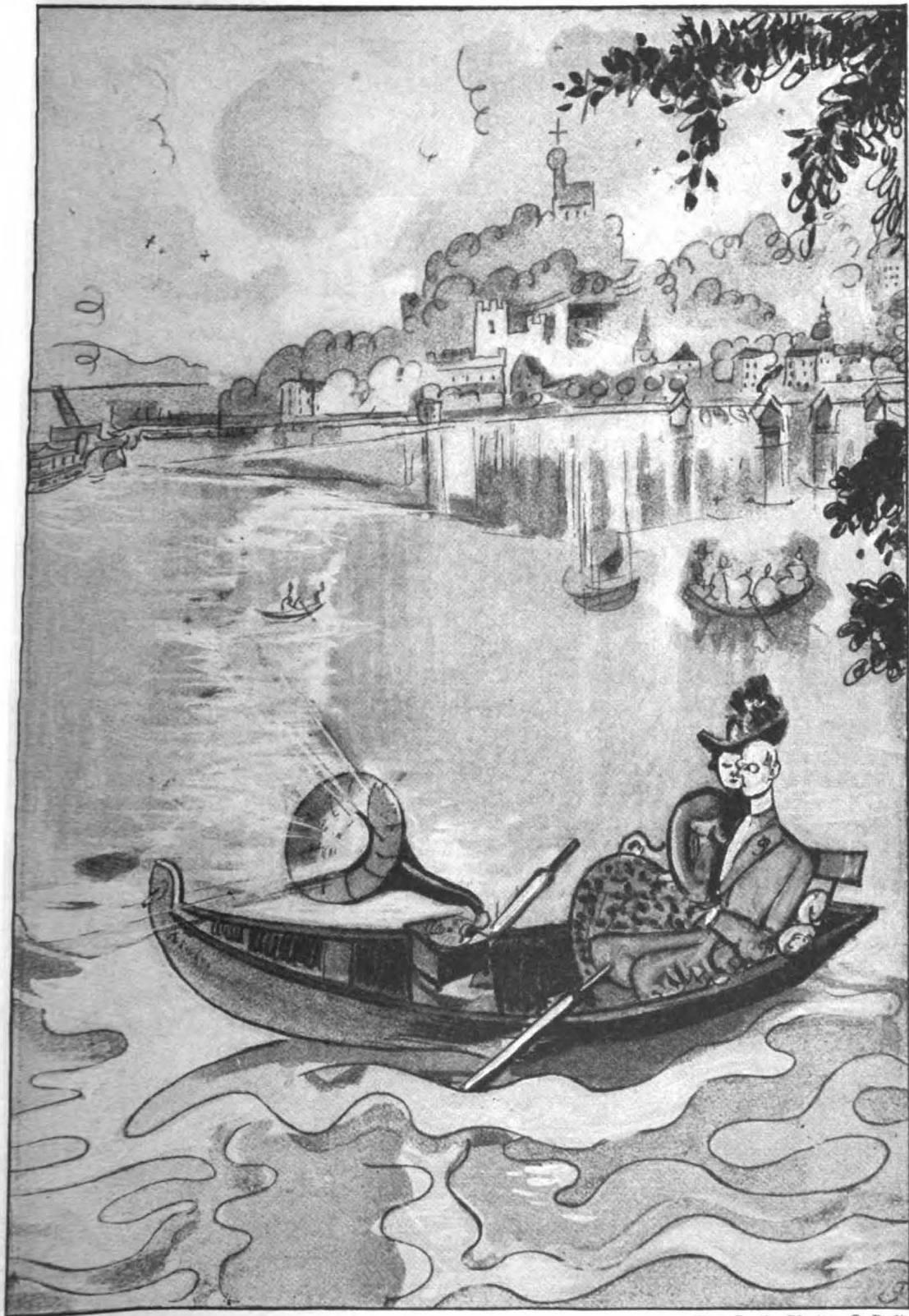
Scene 4: "—and dance all night, yet I never seem to get tired."



Herold for George Matthew Adams Service

Protected by George Matthew Adams

With a smart dog, using the garden hose becomes a mere matter of generalship!



From Lustige Blaetter, ©, Berlin

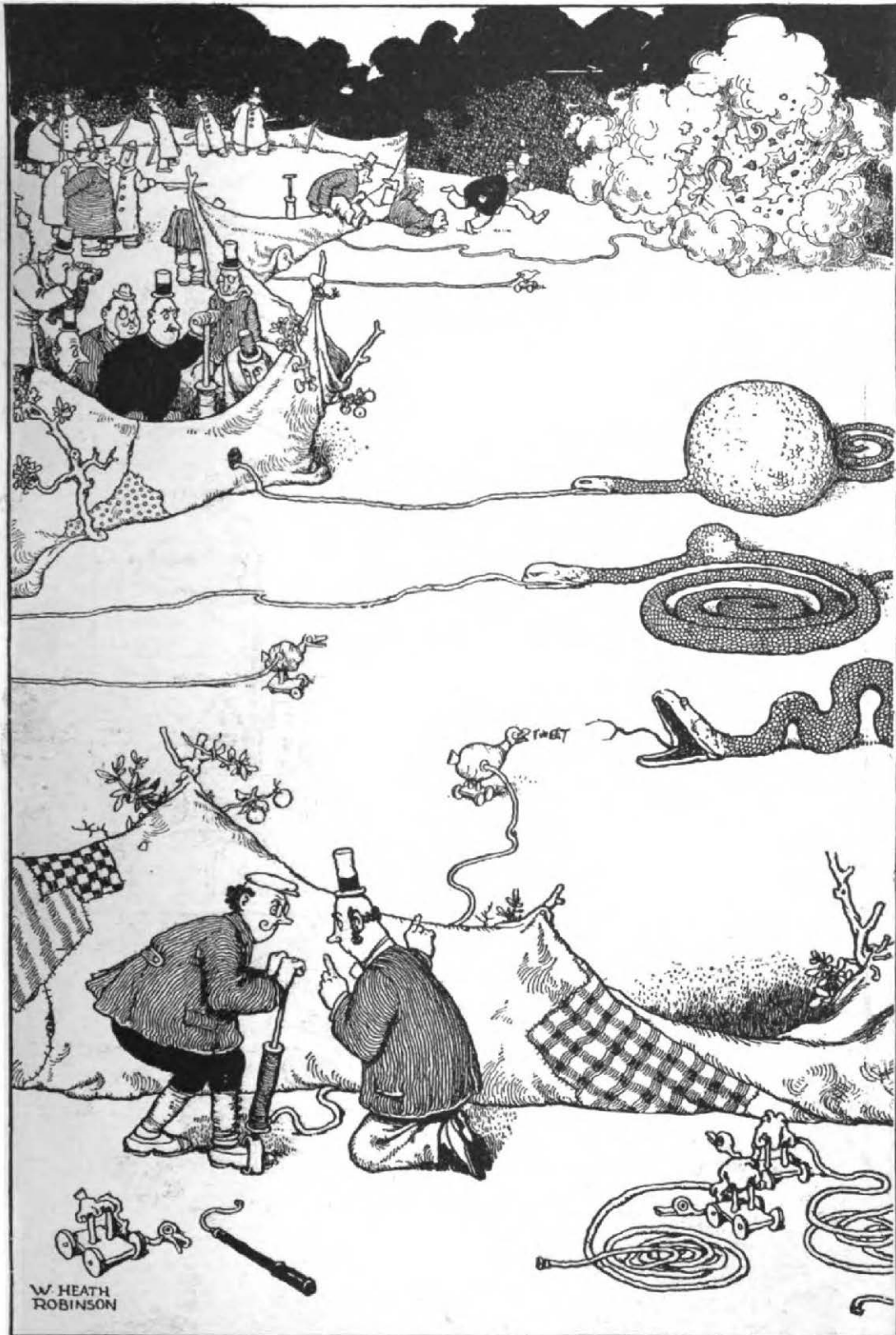
THE EVENING SONG

"Ah, Gustave, the old folk-songs always sound so melancholy!"



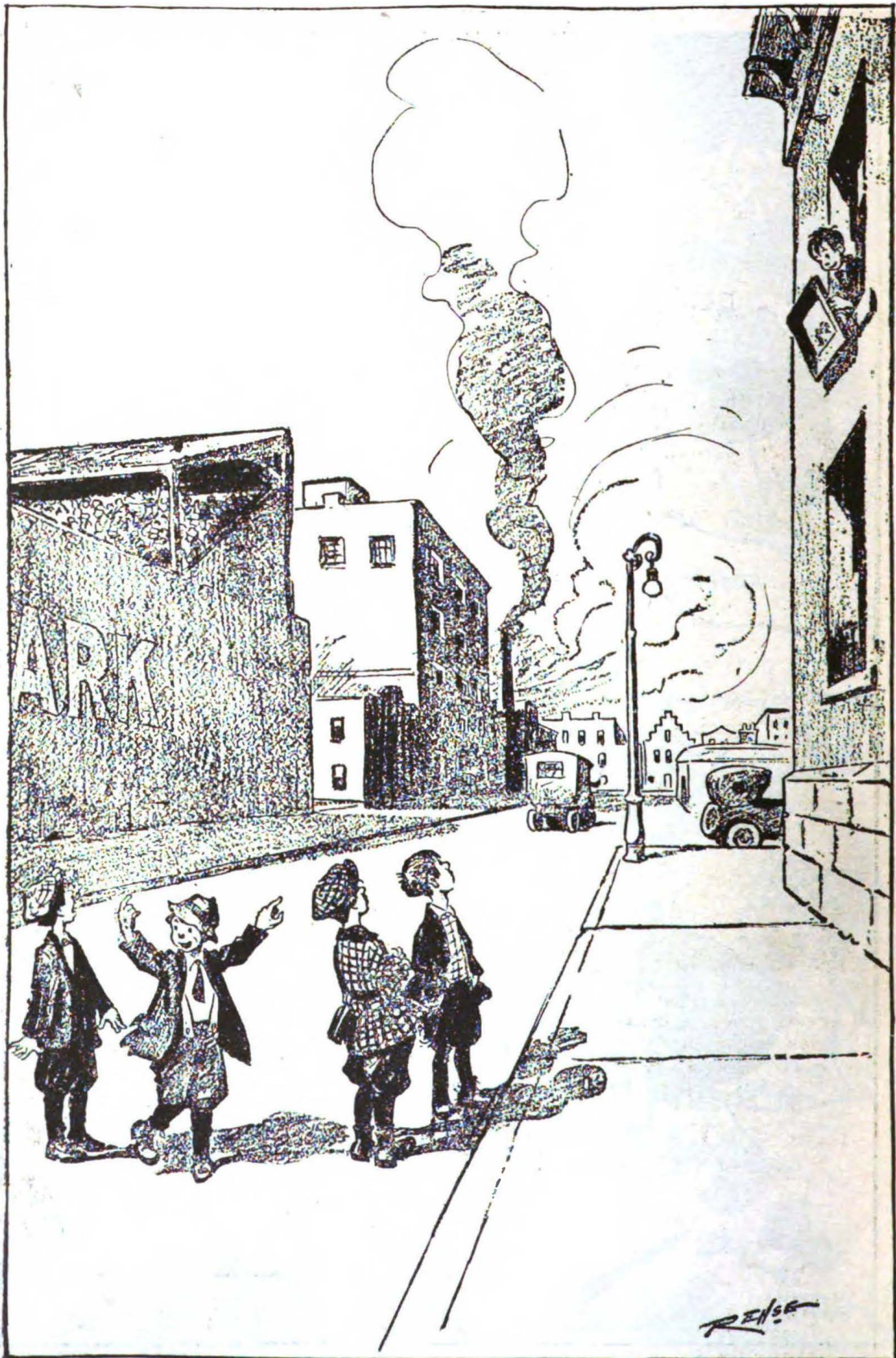
From Passing Show, London

A-HUNTING WE WILL GO—First Snapshot!
Stag-hunting in the What-Not Valley.



From Passing Show, London

A-HUNTING WE WILL GO—Second Snapshot!
Snake-blowing in the upper reaches of the Pip-Pip.



Reise in the New York World

Copyright, 1921, by Press Publishing Co.

Jimmy McKnutt seems to have the stuff in him for a successful business man. By employing an old mirror of his mother's he gets a nickel apiece from the gang for flashing important features in the game across the way.



Copyright, 1921, by H. T. Webster

The beginning of a beautiful friendship!

Webster in New York Herald



Newbould in The Bystander, London

AN ANCIENT "WOODCUT"
Ye Hanging Committee



From Kasper, Stockholm

"TERROR"

"In this picture I have reached the summit of naive art. I have, after twelve years of study, succeeded in drawing a picture as it would be done by a child of eight."



Somebody Satisfied!

The vegetarian is on the job,
 His features wreathed in optimistic leer.
 The price of meat he scorns. Corn on
 the cob
 He now consumes, and smiles from ear
 to ear.

—New York Sun.

Two Are Not Company

Bored wife: I wish a friend would
 come to see us.

Ditto husband: Yes, or even an enemy.
 —London Opinion.

Worth Something

The schoolmaster was explaining the
 meaning of "B. C." and "A. D.," and to
 see if his lesson got home he asked the
 boys what they would do if they found
 an old Roman coin stamped with the
 year B. C. 68.

"Ignore it as a forgery," said one boy,
 whose experience as a stamp collector had
 sharpened his wits.

"Very good," said the master. "Obvi-
 ously the minters of that time would
 know nothing of Christ."

"I'd pick it up, though," said the
 schemer of the class; "it might fit a slot
 machine."—Detroit Free Press.

Both Divorced

"I call the Blanks the cream of society."

"Well, they've both been through the
 separator."—Boston Transcript.

Obliging

"She screamed for help when I kissed
 her."

"What did you do then?"

"I gave her a second helping."—Kansas
 City Star.

That's Suitable

Bullying lawyer: Have you appeared
 as a witness in a suit before?

Witness: Why, of course!

Bullying lawyer: What suit was it?

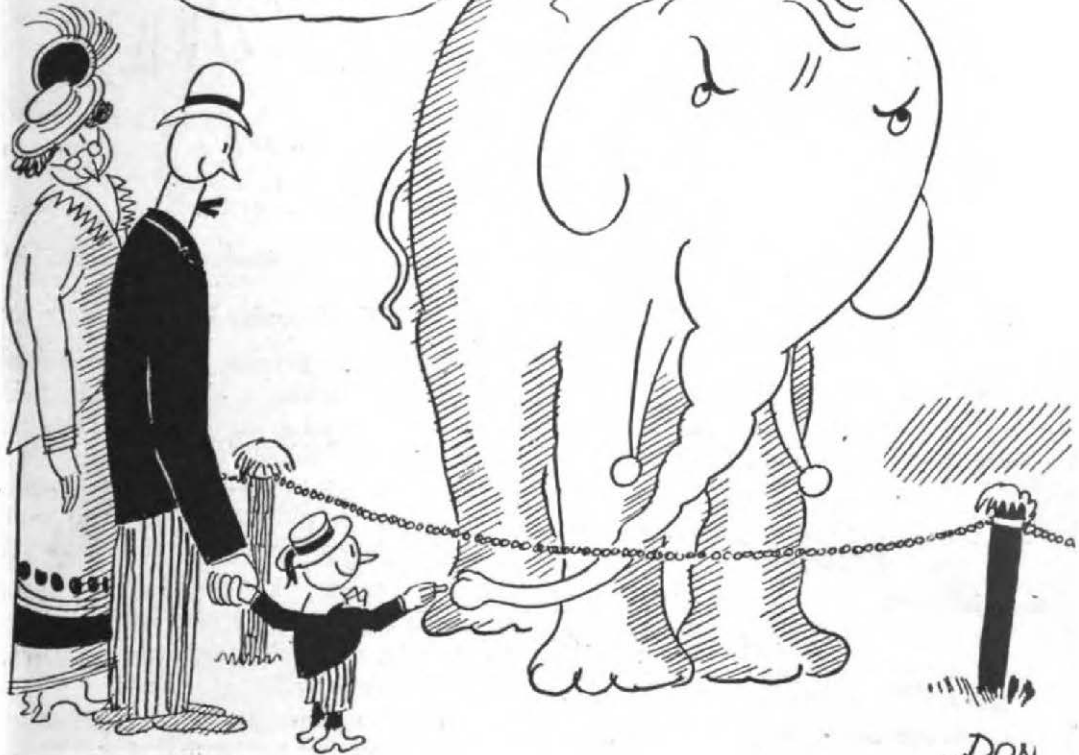
Witness: Blue serge. — London An-
 svers.



From *Londags Nisse*, Stockholm

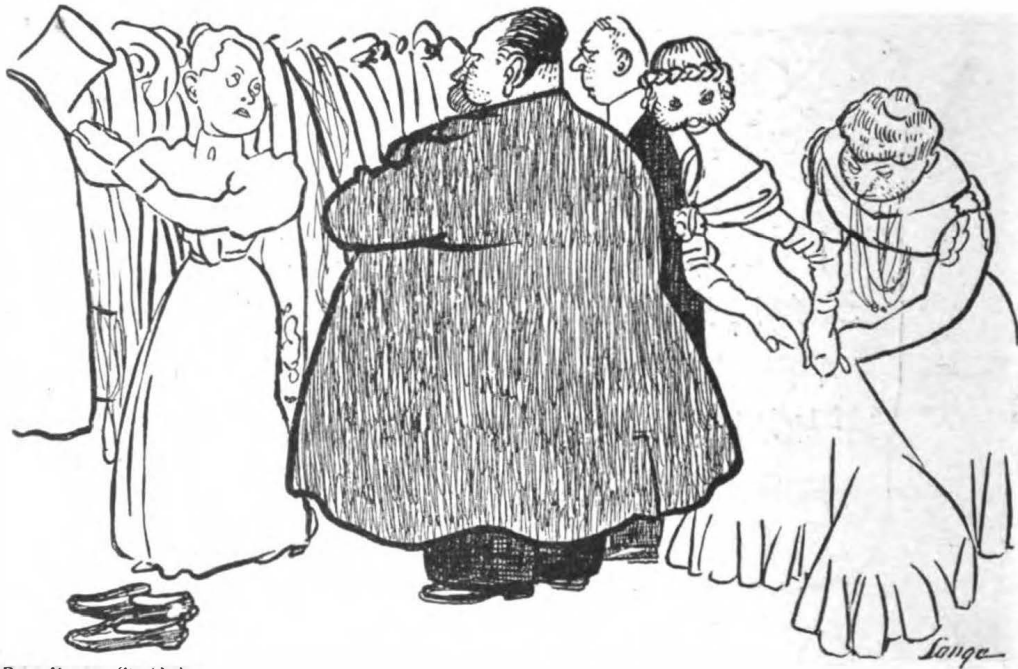
"Farewell! We shall meet again!"
 "Are you going abroad?"
 "No! I'm going round to the other side of
 you!"

OH ME! OH MY!
SOMETIMES I GET
DISCOURAGED.
I HAVE TO SWING THIS TRUNK
3,421,864 TIMES TO MAKE
A FULL MEAL ON PEANUTS.
PEOPLE EXPECT A FULL SWING
FOR ONE
PEANUT



DON
HEROLD

A MIGHTY SLOW WAY FOR A FULL GROWN
ELEPHANT TO GET SUSTENANCE



From Kasper, Stockholm

THE PROFITEER ARRIVES LATE AT THE CONCERT

"What are they playing now, Miss?"
 "Beethoven's Ninth Symphony!"
 "What! Have we missed the other eight?"

An Impromptu Definition

Willie: Pop, what is an "impromptu" speech?

Father: One that has been carefully memorized and then forgotten at the last minute!—Washington Star.

Experience

Recruiting officer: So you wish to join the army? Have you any military experience?

Applicant: Yes, indeed. I have worn a wrist watch for two years.—Portland Oregonian.

Worse and Worse

Kansas paper: We wish to apologize for the manner in which we disgraced the beautiful wedding last week. Through an error of the typesetter we were made to say "the roses were punk." What we should have said was "the noses were pink."—Boston Transcript.

Matrimonial Problem

Among those present at a colored function in Mobile was a Mrs Melinda Jackson, who evinced great interest in the lady in the booth labelled "Clairvoyant." Mrs. Jackson immediately consulted the seeress with respect to her future.

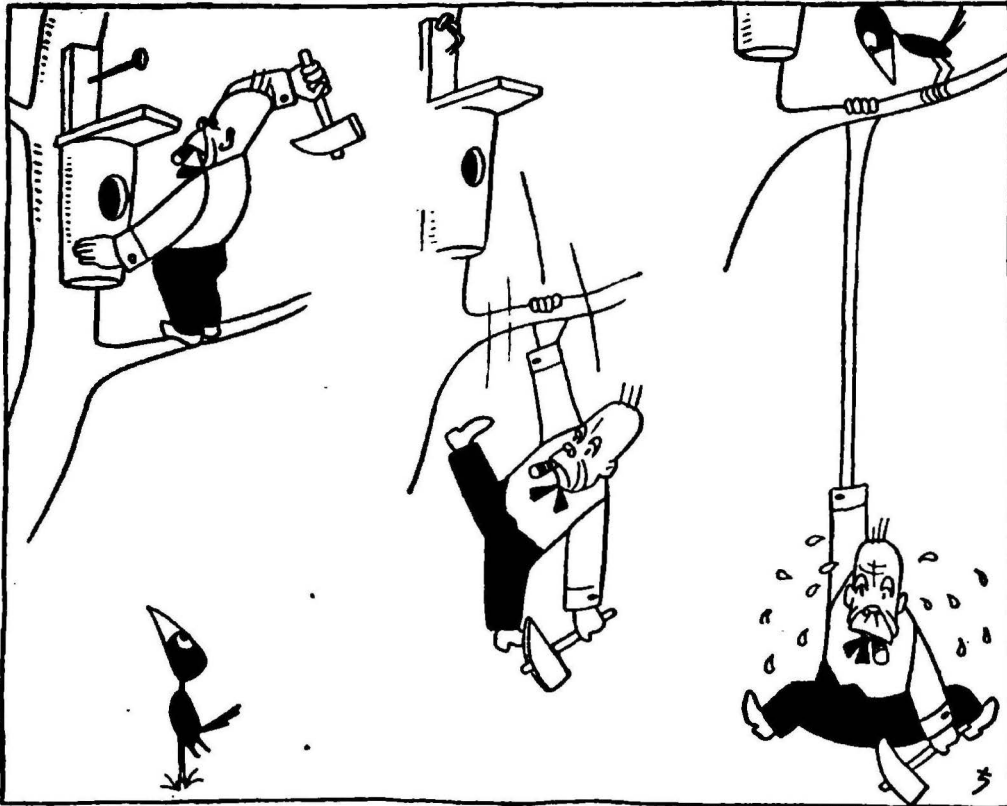
"Yo' is gwine to visit furrin lands," said the clairvoyant. "Yo' is gwine to conquer all rivals an' marry de man of yo' choice. He will be tall an' handsome an' aristocratic an' wealthy."

"An' is he gwine to be young?" asked Mrs. Jackson, her bosom heaving with excitement.

"Yes, he's shore to be young," said the clairvoyant.

Whereupon Mrs. Jackson clasped the fortune teller's hands and pressed them hard.

"I thanks yo', an' now tell me one thing mo'. How's I gwine to git rid of mah present husband?"—Philadelphia Public Ledger.



Adamson

From *Sondags Nisse*, Stockholm

The Reason

“Why do the nobility so seldom marry for love.”

“Many of them would like to, but their creditors won’t let ’em.”—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Love Must Eat

She: “And will you always love me—all the livelong day?”

He: “Ye-es, I think so. You’ll give me a chance to stop for meals, I suppose?”—Philadelphia Inquirer.

The Resentful Tramp

A woe-begone specimen of the tramp tribe made a call at a rural residence to ask for aid. The door was opened by a woman of angular proportions, severe in demeanour, and of uncertain age and temper. Having speedily ascertained the

object of the visit, in raspy tones she observed: “I shall not give you anything. Do you know who I am?”

The weary wanderer replied that he had not the pleasure of knowing. “Well, I’m a policeman’s wife, and if he were here he would take you, and very quickly, too.”

The tired tramp looked at her quietly for a minute, and then replied: “I believe you, ma’am. If he took you he’d take anybody.”—Passing Show.

She Liked It

Father and mother came to the city for a few days, leaving little Elsie with grandpa and grandma.

There being other guests, Elsie slept in the folding bed. A few days later Elsie sent the following letter to her grandma: “Dear grandma, I slept in your bureau drawer and liked it very much.”—Indianapolis News.



From The Mail, London

Lady (gently but firmly refusing all substitutes): No, thank you, I must have Scroggins! I notice the advertisements speak so well of it!

How Much and How Well

Business man: As soon as I found there was a possibility of dishonest profit being made in the position, I got out of it.

Reporter: Yes, go on and finish the sentence.

Business man: I have. I say I got out of it.

Reporter: Yes, yes; but my business is to discover what you got out of it.—
Detroit News.

Mid-Victorian

"Those people who just moved into the house next door are awfully old fashioned."

"In what way?"

"She won't let him smoke in the house and he won't let her smoke outside."—
New York Sun.

Why Men Go Wrong

Don't you know that you are married?
Don't you know you've got a wife?
Will I have to keep on nagging
The remainder of my life?
PUT THAT PAPER DOWN!! You
coward;

You can read it on the train.
What's that smell? (Sniff-sniff) So;
that's it!

You've been brewing beer again.

Have you no consideration
For my feelings? Don't you think
It's a rotten bad example
For the children, when you drink?
Have you put the ash cans outside?
Where's my kitchen butcher knife?
Put that paper DOWN!!! Stop swear-
ing!!

And remember; I'm your wife.

Do you think it's elevating
When the children hear you swear?
Can't you please improve your language,
Or have I that too to bear?
And the drain pipe from the wash tubs—
Have you fixed that yet? Or will
The Day of Resurrection
Find me asking you that still?

Don't you ever pay attention
To the little things I ask?
You know how hard I work for you;
How difficult my task.
There's the matter of the clothes line;
And my oil can—where is that?
How can I do the washing
With the cellar one large vat?

—New York Sun.

Class Wanted

Mr. Nouveau Riche (selecting devo-
tional gift book): "Common Prayer"—
'aven't you got any a bit more clarsy?
—Dallas News.

Measure in All Things

"Should Film Actresses Marry?" asks
a cinema-paper headline. Yes; but only
now and then.—Los Angeles Times.



POOR MAN! POOR MAN!

From The Bulletin, Sydney

"My husband has had indigestion for the past month."
 "Really! I'm so sorry! I had no idea you were without a cook."

A Test

Diogenes was searching for the honest man.

"Ask him how he enjoyed his vacation," we suggested.—New York Herald.

The Bathtub Pirate

Though gales be strong and billows rough
 And black with storm the skies,
 From Faucet Point to Porcelain Bluff
 His evil signal flies,
 And well may mariners turn pale
 And head their craft toward home,
 When they decry his bellying sail
 Across the tossing foam.

Where he has cruised, along the beach
 Are stately ships and grand
 Whose gaunt and naked timbers bleach
 Upon the sunlit sand.
 Where he has sailed, beneath the waves
 Are heaps of human bones
 Consigned to the eternal grave
 Watched o'er by Davy Jones.

Blow high or low, he holds his course
 Forever in pursuit.—

(Untouched by pity or remorse)—
 Of galleons to loot,
 And treasure vessels seek in vain
 To double Shower Cape,
 When he appears upon the main
 He baffles all escape.

But even pirates need must rest,
 And when the shadows fall,
 Across the ocean's heaving breast
 A deep and purple pall,
 He says farewell a while to crime,
 For Mother pats his head,
 And murmurs: "Don't you think it's
 time
 That children were in bed?"
 —New York World.

Exactly

Binks: We are becoming a nation of snobs.
 Jinks: Why so pessimistic?
 Binks: It's gotten so a telephone girl will hardly say hello to you, no matter how much you ring.—Knoxville Journal and Tribune.



Fox in Providence Journal

Copyright, 1931, by Fontaine Fox

Family Too Tickled to Lick Him!

An Episode of the Texas Panhandle

If I'd only took the water back to Ma,
'Stead of stoppin' by the trough to chin
with Sam,
Things had been better. And I might 'a'
known,
For I never fell down yet in what she
wanted
Without some pesky business comin' of
it.
Sam bought the horse at a dollar more'n
my price;
Six months I'd had my eye out for a sale.
But the trouble was that Sam and me's
been friends
Nigh onto thirty years; and since he went
And sold my horse same day for a dollar
more,
Somehow or 'nother things ain't been the

With Sam and me. And I hate to lose
a friend.

There's nothin' better in this world than
friends.

If I'd only took that water back to Ma,
Things had been *all* right. And I might
'a' known.

—Witter Bynner in New York Tribune.

Sad Case

The two mermaids were seated side by
side on the resort hotel porch; one read,
the other looked wearily about the girl
infested place.

"Oh," sighed the first with tender sym-
pathy, "could anything be sadder than 'A
Man Without a Country?'"

"Yes," the other replied gloomily, "a
country without a man." — Providence
Journal.



Touahey in Cleveland Plain Dealer

The first time Smith wore his Palm Beach suit down to the office!

Clara Declares

John was certainly a steady man; but he was a bit too steady for Clara. They had been engaged to be married fifteen years, and still he had never asked her to name the happy day.

One evening John called in a romantic frame of mind, and asked Clara to sing something tender and touching—something that would move him. After a mo-

ment's thought she sat down at the piano and sang an old ballad with meaning. It was entitled, "Darling, I Am Growing Old."—London Opinion.

Wonder

"Mother, why did you marry father?"
 "So you've begun to wonder, too, have you?"—St. Louis Post-Dispatch.



From Kasper, Stockholm

"My dear son, I have talked it over with your mother and we have decided that next New Year's you can take over the business and we will have a rest!"
 "Say, dad, why not keep going a few years longer and then we can all rest and retire?"

Perpetual Youth

"All my life I've wanted to do something big! But the managers tied me to young-girl parts, always young-girl parts. I'm still playing sweet young things."

"But why don't you try to do something big, something dramatic, tragic?"

"Oh, I'm too old now for anything but an ingenue."—Passing Show.

Just Like That!

A well-known statesman was present at a dinner party. At his side sat an old country gentleman.

A conceited young man spent most of his time during the meal in making fun of this old gentleman. He kept on referring to him as the Philistine.

Finally the old gentleman said angrily, "I don't know what you mean by contin-

ually repeating that word. I really can't think what you mean by a Philistine."

The statesman interrupted. "A Philistine," he said, "is a man who is annoyed by the jawbone of an ass."—Chicago Daily News.

The Problem

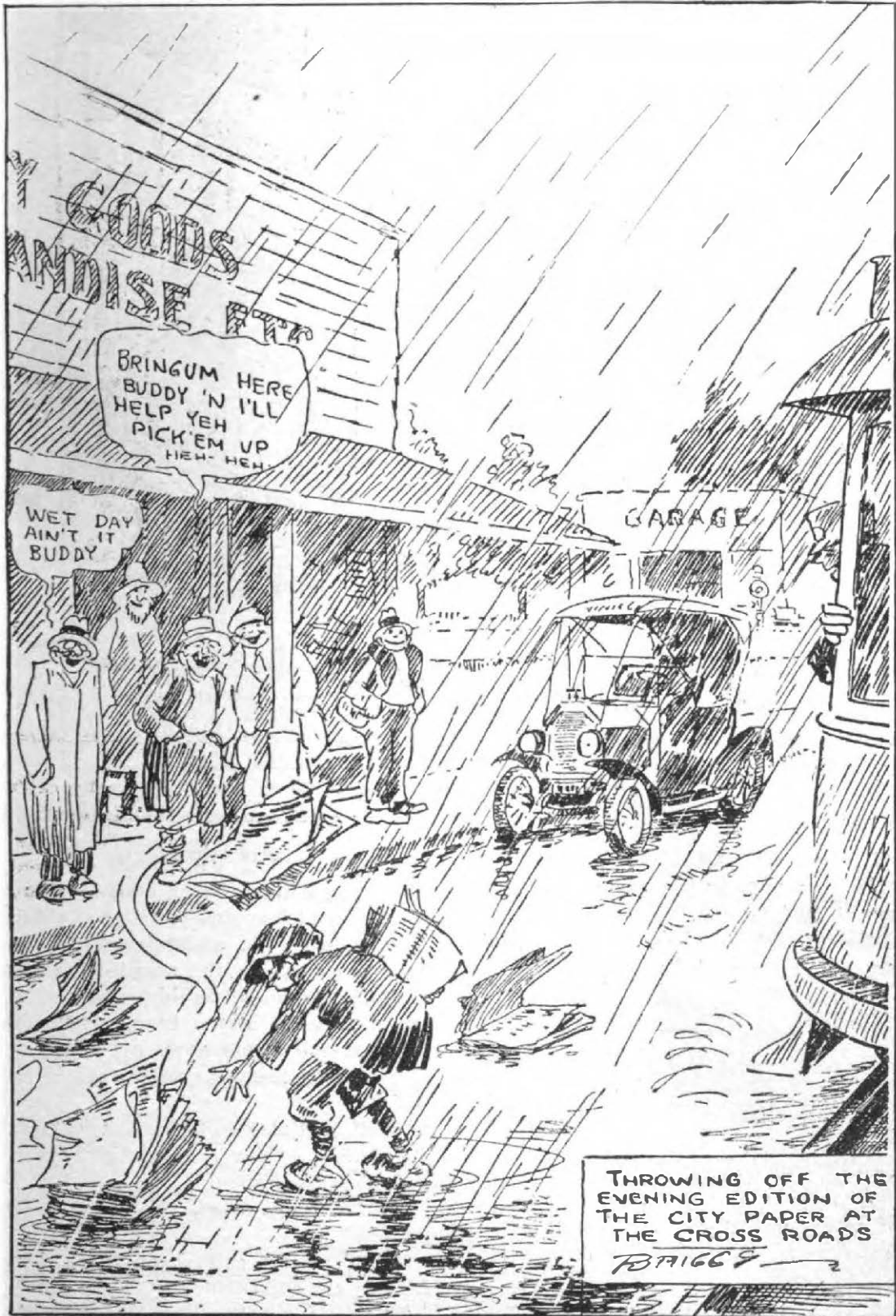
A girl is quite queer with her beaux,
 What will she do next, no one neaux.

Sometimes she will smile,
 Nearly all of the while,
 And other times turn up her neaux.

—Passing Show.

Their Little Joke

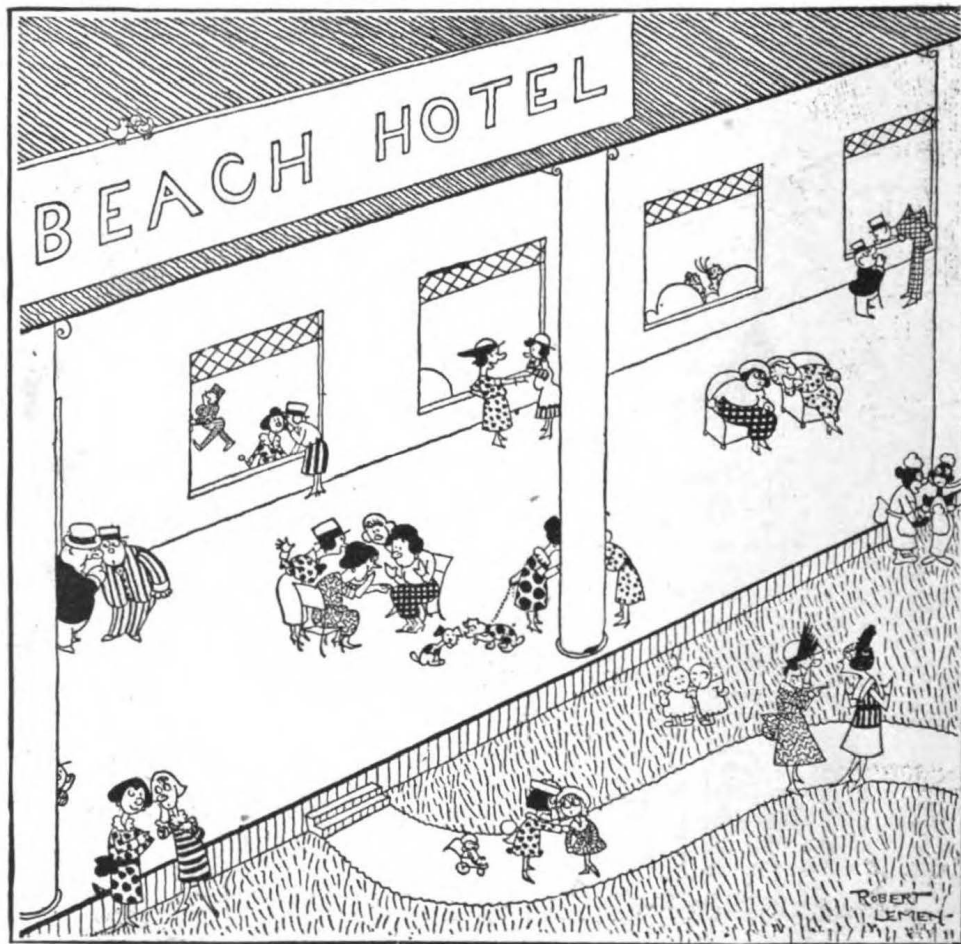
Every politician jokes with the country to the extent of telling it that it is intelligent, liberty-loving, generous and patriotic.—Philadelphia Public Ledger.



Copyright, 1921, by New York Tribune

Briggs in New York Tribune

WHEN A FELLER NEEDS A FRIEND!
Throwing off the evening edition of the city paper at the cross roads!



Lemen in St. Louis Post-Dispatch

The Shock Exchange!

Envious

"It's outrageous the way women dress nowadays."

"It certainly is. What right have they got to be cooler than we are?"—Dallas News.

A Mental Strain

"I'm thinking of a trip to Paris this summer."

"Really, old man, you can't afford that. You're not accustomed to that sort of thing."

"I merely said I was thinking of it. I can afford to think, can't I?"

"No; that's what I meant. You're not accustomed to thinking."—Boston Transcript.

Animalcule

A young scholar, taking his first lessons in natural philosophy, had the existence of animalcule, the minute creatures too small to be seen by the naked eye, which are to be found in liquids, explained to him. After the lesson he was asked to tell what animalcule were.

"They are animals you can't see," he said.

"Well, that may do for an answer," said the teacher. "Now, will you give me an example of animalcule?"

"The hippopotamus, the gorilla, the whale—"

"Stop! What makes you think those animals are animalcule?"

"'Cause I never saw one of them!"—Boston Post.



From A Careta, Rio de Janeiro

THE SPINSTER

Poor, poor me! The only animal I can't get is a man!

A Punning Acceptance

She: What are you thinking about?

He: About asking you to marry me—but you should have offered me the proverbial penny.

She (coily): I give assent.—Boston Transcript.

It Comes High

"If you were a man, Timothy Toddlebury," said his wife, "you would go right straight to your employer and demand a raise. The trouble with you is that you haven't any courage."

"I know I haven't, dear," admitted Mr. Toddlebury, "and the worst of it is that I can't afford to buy any on my present salary."—New York Sun.

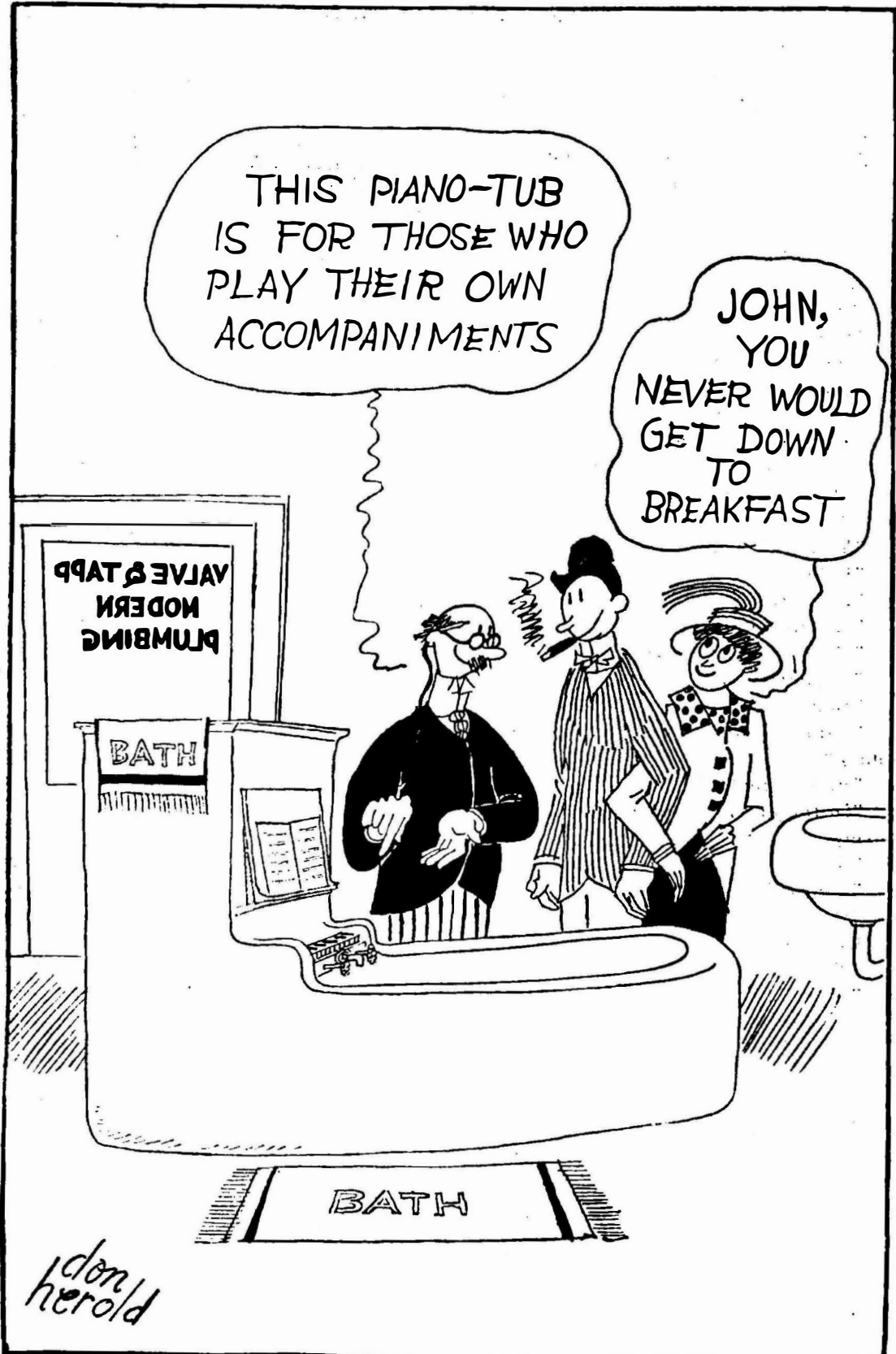
Censored

A school-girl was required to write two hundred words about a motor-car. She submitted the following: "My uncle bought a motor-car. He was out riding in the country when it busted going up a hill. The other 180 words are what my uncle said when he was walking back to town, but I know you wouldn't want me to repeat them."—Passing Show.

Same Thing

Mrs Gabb: Why do you have to support your husband? Is he crippled?

Mrs. Fagg: Oh, no; he's just writing for the movies.—Film Fun.



Herold for George Matthew Adams Service

Protected by George Matthew Adams

Quite Reasonable, Too

Doctor: What will it cost me to have my portrait painted?

Artist: Twenty-two prescriptions. — Nashville Tennessean.

Short History of the War

"Now cough."
 "Sign here."
 "When do we eat?"
 "Haven't any 8s? Take a pair of 10s."
 "You're in the army now."
 "Treat 'em rough."
 "Read 'em and weep."
 "All we do is sign the payroll."
 "The first seven years are the hardest."
 "Where do we go from here?"
 "You can't stand there, soldier."
 "Lafayette, we are here."
 "Let's go!"
 "Encore the vin rouge, see voo play."
 "Toot sweet, monsieur."
 "Is your right arm paralyzed?"
 "Bon soir, ma cherie, ou allez vous?"
 "Paint it with iodine and mark him duty."
 "Fini la guerre."
 "In the army, the army, the democratic army."
 "So this is Paris!"
 "Hinky-dinky, parlez vous."
 "If I ever get out of this man's army—"
 "Who won the war?"
 "There's a long, long trail a-winding."
 "When do we go home?"
 "We've paid our debt to Lafayette— who the heck do we owe now?"
 "When the cruel war is over."
 "Say 'ah-h-h' and sign here."
 "Let's eat."

—American Legion Weekly.

At the Ball Game

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed the girl in blue. "That ball goes so fast, I don't see how the umpire can tell whether it is a ball or a strike."

"A great many people think he can't," replied her escort.—Minneapolis Journal.



From The Mail, London

Palmist: You will be married within a year— your husband—
Modern young person: Never mind about him. How long for?

A Very Vulnerable Man

A minister spoke very strongly against betting. One of the wealthiest members of the congregation was a great gambler, and some one told the preacher about this. After the service he went up to the gambler, and said: "I'm afraid I must have offended you to-day, but—"

"Oh, don't mention it," was the reply. "It's a mighty poor sermon that doesn't hit me somewhere."—London Opinion.

Mean Trick

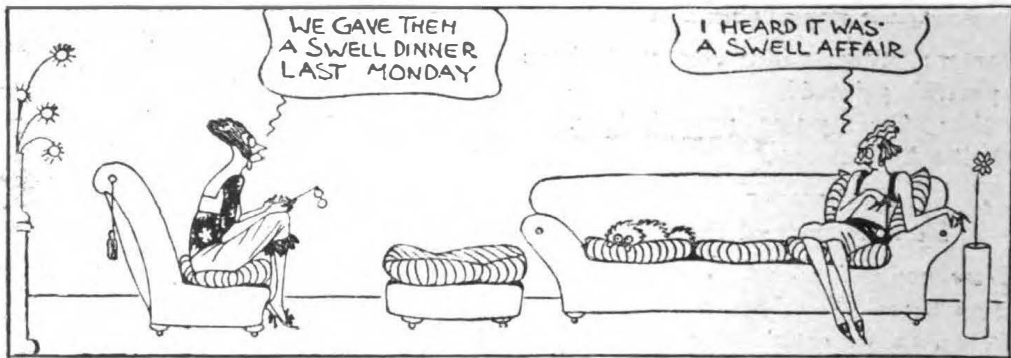
"That druggist played a mean trick on the gang."

"How so?"

"He had a pretty salesgirl."

"Well?"

"Got a lot of customers and then married her himself."—Louisville Courier-Journal.



Ketten in St. Louis Post-Dispatch

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CAN YOU BEAT IT!

Fickle Public

Despite his shabby clothing and empty pockets, it was evident that he had seen better days.

"Yes," he said, "I've been quite a personage in my time; in fact, the cynosure of all eyes."

His auditor waited in silence for an explanation.

"I was the tattooed man in the circus," he went on.

"And how did you lose your job?" he was asked.

"Public went crazy on moving pictures," he replied sadly, "and mine won't budge!"—London Opinion.

Not Far to Go.

Exasperated husband: If you don't stop your nagging I'll go crazy in a minute.

Sarcastic spouse: You could make it all right, and not exceed the speed limit either.—Boston Transcript.



From The Sketch, London

NOT FASHIN' HERSELF!

"But, my dear, when I left this morning you were prostrate over Fido's illness!"

"Yes; but I've just read that his breed is out of fashion—so I've sold him!"



Lemen in St. Louis Post-Dispatch

ON THE FARM

Smith accidentally backs into a blackberry bush while viewing the bee hives!

The Ocean Tramp

Where are you bound, old cargo boat,
Who, damp with mist, and ghostly dim,
Slips down the bay at break of day,
To sink beneath the ocean's rim?

I'll surge my way through frosty spume,
Where cold green peaks are drifting by,
Where dark clouds fret and oceans fume;
And, swept by spicy winds, I'll lie
Where ghost white vines of coral stream
And ripple down in light lagoons;
I'll rush o'er depths which only dream
Of long lost suns and vanished moons.

And scrambling yellow men shall stack
My hold with precious stuffs; amain
The knotted arms of brown and black
Shall wrench them from my depths
again.

My decks shall clamor with the sound
Of babbling tongues; I shall behold

The strife of men the world around
Where gold is trade and trade is gold.

I'll stand by cities drunk with might,
With wharves encroaching on the main,
With towers which thwart the stars of
night,
With men who bend their backs for
gain;
I'll creep along weed ridden coasts
By many a ruin haunted shore,
Where waves are mocking at the ghosts
Of things which lived, but live no more.

O, could I wander far with you,
Old frog clad tramp who, ghostly dim,
Slips down the bay at dawn of day,
And sinks beneath the ocean's rim.
—Ashley T. Locke in New York Sun.

The Diplomat

"Didn't you know it is against the law
to beg for money?" said the lady to the
tramp at the back door.

"I wasn't goin' t' beg for no money,
ma'am."

"It's just as bad to beg for bread."

"I wasn't goin' to beg for no bread,
ma'am."

"What were you going to beg for then,
pray?"

"Only for one o' your photographs,
ma'am."—London Opinion.



From Karikaturen. Christiania

"Say, I have dreamed twice lately that I have
been at work. If it happens again I shall buy a
dream book to see whether it means anything!"



From London Opinion

Gloomy longshoreman: No, sir, since Mary 'Awkins threw me over I don't reely care wot 'appens!

A-plenty

Father: Haven't you got any ideals, young man?

Son: You should see them, dad. They're peaches.—Film Fun.

Prudery

We can recall the farmerette,
Who toiled between the garden rows;
In war's red days; we can't forget
How she deployed with rakes and hoes.

We wonder where she is today,
To what far field her fancy goes;
And where she flung her tools away,
Of course, we mean her rakes, not hoes.
—Portland Express.

Or the Sphinx

Mrs. Nagg: Before you married me you swore that your love was as enduring as the Rock of Gibraltar.

Mr. Nagg: I did, eh? Well, I'm glad I didn't mention the Rock of Ages.—Detroit News.

Malice Aforethought?

"What's the idea of Jazzfoot, the comedian, suing the Slambang Productions for damages?"

"They left the shells in a cocoanut pie that was thrown at him."—Cincinnati Enquirer.

The Cheerful Abstainer

I know a hundred ways to die;
I've often thought I'd try one;
Lie down beneath a motor truck
Some day when standing by one.

Or throw myself from off a bridge,
Except such things must be
So hard upon the scavengers
And men that clean the sea.

I know some poison I could drink;
I've often thought I'd taste it;
But Mother bought it for the sink,
And drinking it would waste it.
Edna St. Vincent Millay in
New York Evening Post.

Cuttings from the College Cut-ups

In Jeopardy

A bold and ravaging leopard
Was shot by a flock tending shepard—
Next morning 'twas found
Lying dead on the ground,
The leopard the shepard had peopard.
—Puppett.

After an Hour's Ride in the Country

She: Don't you think you have gone
far enough?
He: Why, I haven't even put my arm
around you.—Banter.

Some Day You May Have Troubles of

Friend: Have you named that new
baby yet?
Proud father: No, he's a hard kid to
handle.—Lehigh Burr.



From *The Cornell Widow*

"I wish you would stop drinking for my sake."
"I'm not drinking for your sake."

No Robbery

Stude: Remember that dog I used to
keep up in my room that howled so
much?

His Neighbor: I'll say I do.

Stude: Well, you won't be bothered
by him any more; I got rid of him.

Neighbor: Great stuff—now I can get
some sleep! What'd you do with him?

Stude: Traded him for a cornet. —
Michigan Gargoyle.

When the Movie Craze Hits the Authors

"Sillyass and Fullisande," a rip-roaring
symbolical drama by Maurice Missing-
linck.

"Pippa Passes Out," a Keystone Com-
edy, by R. Browning.

"A Woman Could, But a Lady
Wouldn't," a gripping story of New
York's slum-gullion, by Laura J. Libby.

"Riders to the Sea," by Harry Singe,
featuring Annette Kellerman.

"Lust, or the Five Little Peppers," hot
stuff from the pen of Cardinal Newman.

"The Great Divide," with Charlotte
Greenwood.

"Idols of the King," featuring Gaby
Deslys.

"The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," a great
serial. Have you seen the first? Don't
miss the third and fourth!

"The Four Horsemen of the Apoca-
lypse," the greatest racing picture since
"Ben Hur."—Harvard Lampoon.

Minus Mike!

Holme: Did you know that Mike lost
three fingers shooting craps?

James: No, how did he do it?

Holme: He didn't know they were
loaded.—Voodoo.



From The University of Washington Sun Dodger

Pierre: I would gasp out my last breath for you.
 Jacqueline: Old stuff! You told Suzanne that.
 Pierre: Sure I did, but I've caught my second wind since.

'Snuff—

"Sneagle."
 "Snotneagle, snowl."
 "Sneither, snostrich."—Lehigh Burr.

Static

She: Do you like me still?
 He: Well, I wouldn't mind if you were a little more demonstrative.—Purple Cow.

Zero

Old lady: What was the score?
 Rooter: Nothing to nothing.
 Old lady: Thank goodness, I didn't miss anything.—Lemon Punch.

The Original Joke!

When woman was made out of man's rib someone pulled a bone.—College Mercury.



From The University of Pennsylvania Punch Bowl

He: For heaven's sake, look at the rouge you have on your lips.
 She: Oh well, the evening's young yet.

The First Second

Lulu: Serious results may come from kissing a girl just once; doesn't that ever make you think?

Lou: Makes me think about a second.
 —Sun Dial.

Knotty!

'24: How can I tell if this is wood alcohol?

'23: Strain it through your handkerchief and see if you find any slivers.—Medley.

Any Time

Chaperon: Young man, the lights of this house go out at ten o'clock.

Lounge Hound: That suits me; don't delay on my account.—Octopus.

A Rising Financier

"I see the Y. M. C. A. sharks are having a hard time raising money."

"Yeah, they ought to hire Jones; he used to run an elevator in the mint."—Penn State Froth.

The Fad

"This little cup and spoon were given to me on my first birthday."

"Oh, I must show them to Mama! she has a perfect rage for old silver."—Cornell Widow.

The Limit

Old lady to drunken student: Young man, don't you know when you have had enough?

Student: Madam, I don't know anything when I've had enough, I'm unconscious.—Virginia Reel.



From The Harvard Lampoon

Music enthusiast: Say, you know a lot about that fiddle, don't you?

Budding virtuoso: Yes, you see my bow is educated, too!

Music enthusiast: How's that?

Budding virtuoso: Why, it's taut.

Reserved Section?

"Is my wife forward?" asked the passenger on the Limited.

"She wasn't to me, sir," answered the conductor politely.—The Drexlerd.

If They Keep On

"They seem to be making cigarettes smaller and smaller."

"Yes, it won't be long before it will be a cinch to put a camel through the eye of a needle."—Purple Parrot.

Ouch!

He: My brother is just the opposite of me. I don't suppose you've ever met him, have you?

She: No, but I'd like to.—Yale Record.

Repeater?

Lawyer Brown: Have ah made mah point, yore honor?

Judge White: You have, nigger, shoot again.—Jack-O-Lantern.

Scene on Street Car

Boo: What time ish it?

Zee: Thurshday.

Boo: Great Scott, I musht get off here.—Cap and Bells.

Osculatory

He: What shape is a kiss?

She: I don't know.

He: Well, give me one, and we'll call it square.—Voo Doo.

Something Awful

Little Bobbie: Mother.

Paternal One: What, dear?

Little Bobbie: Did Mr. Bates marry a squaw?

Paternal One: No; what made you think that?

Little Bobbie: Billie says his brother is such a squawker.—Sun Dodger.



From The Cornell Widow

She: Do you summer in the country?
He: No, I simmer in the city.

Double-Crossing the Bar

(With unconditional apologies to Alfred, Lord Tennyson)

Sunset and evening star,
So late! it cannot be.
I must not stay here moaning at the bar;
So just one more for me.

But now, when I should surely be asleep,
My lips are flecked with foam.
Just one little night-cap, sighing deep,
I reel towards home.

Midnight and curfew bell!
Please God the door won't slam!
And may my muffled sleep conceal it well
How dry I am.

For though my gait is steady, there's a trace
Of you know what they are.
I'd hate to meet my father face to face
When I've been at the bar.

—Harvard Lampoon.



A Double Reply

Husband: What's your opinion of matrimony?

Slangy wife: You've got me!

Contrary

A woman will contradict a fact that is as plain as a chaperon.

The Coming Blues

"The worst is yet to come?"

"Yes?"

"Yes, I hear that even lollypops are to be prohibited on account of the stick in them."

The Way With a Worm

"What is that squirming, dangling thing?"

The fishes joked. "Let's quiz it."

Until a member of the school

Spoke up: "I'll bite—what is it?"

Saving Grace

Mrs. Browne: I must say my husband is most economical. Does your husband save much?

Mrs. Towne: Before we were married he saved me from drowning, but he hasn't saved anything since.

Face Homage

Fair maid, those rosy lips of yours

I love in every mood,

Now uttering honeyed words, and now

Impertinently rude!

I love them, when I see them smile,

As I my greetings pay;

I love them, when they droop with grief,

I try in vain to stay.

One shape alone from these fond eyes

No approbation wins—

To see those ruby lips pursed up

To hold a row of pins!



Drawn for Cartoons Magazine by John Irvin Wagner

"Where is your brother?"

"Out West!"

"Homesteading?"

"No—Volsteading!"



Drawn for Wayside Tales by G. B. Inwood

PROBLEM OF CONDUCT

"Dear Miss Fairfacts: During our clandestine meeting tonight my sweetheart sat on my lap until my legs went to sleep. . . . Her father has just appeared. What shall I do?—Puzzled."



Drawn for *Wayside Tales* by Perry Barlow

THE LITTLE VOICES

'Lady-Luck, 'count fo' yo'se'f.'
"Come on yo' li'l mawgawge listah!"

The Soft Answer

"Oh, what's the use?"

"Use of—"

"Of getting mad. You can bottle up your wrath, but some fellow is pretty sure to come along with a corkscrew."

An Edward Lear-ic

I went to hunt the troglodyte
Once in the middle of the night.
(Or was it in the day?)
I armed myself with gun and sword,
And thought to catch a goodly horde.
(Or seven, anyway).

But then I thought the bandicoot
Would be more practical to shoot.
(Or was it bandoleer?)
I armed myself with sword and gun,
And said, "I'll give the hounds a run!"
(For taxicabs are dear).

"But no! I'll shoot a platypus
At sunset with a blunderbuss!"
(Or was it with a pie?)
I armed myself with line and hook,
And gazed up at the sturdy rook.
(At least, I saw the sky).

I said, "I'll stalk the jelly-fish
For appetizing breakfast-dish!"
(Or was it for my tea?)
I armed myself with hook and line,
And brought down one of rare design.
('Twas Bar-le-duc, you see!)
Blanche Elizabeth Wade.

A Fable

There was a famous tenor
Whose voice could reach high "C,"
With voice robust this chap was just
As fond of flatter "E."

The Voice of Experience

"Dad, I'm thinking seriously of getting married."
"Seriously'? . . . Don't lie to me, son."



Drawn for Wayside Tales by Frank Ryder

"You say a mysterious stranger's been hangin' 'round your place for a week! Why don't you tell him to move on?"
"Cos he's hangin' to a tree!"

A Marrying Man

Judd: There seems to be some question about Billington's former wives.
Budd: Yes; I hear he has asked for a recount.

That's How

Browne: I never saw anyone quite so agile as Brooks. He's a regular contortionist.
Towne: Yes, he gets that way from patting himself on the back so much.

What Do You Mean, Serious?

"Did you ever make a serious mistake in a prescription?" asked the customer.
"Only once," replied the drug store clerk. "I gave a fellow a quart when his prescription only called for a half pint."

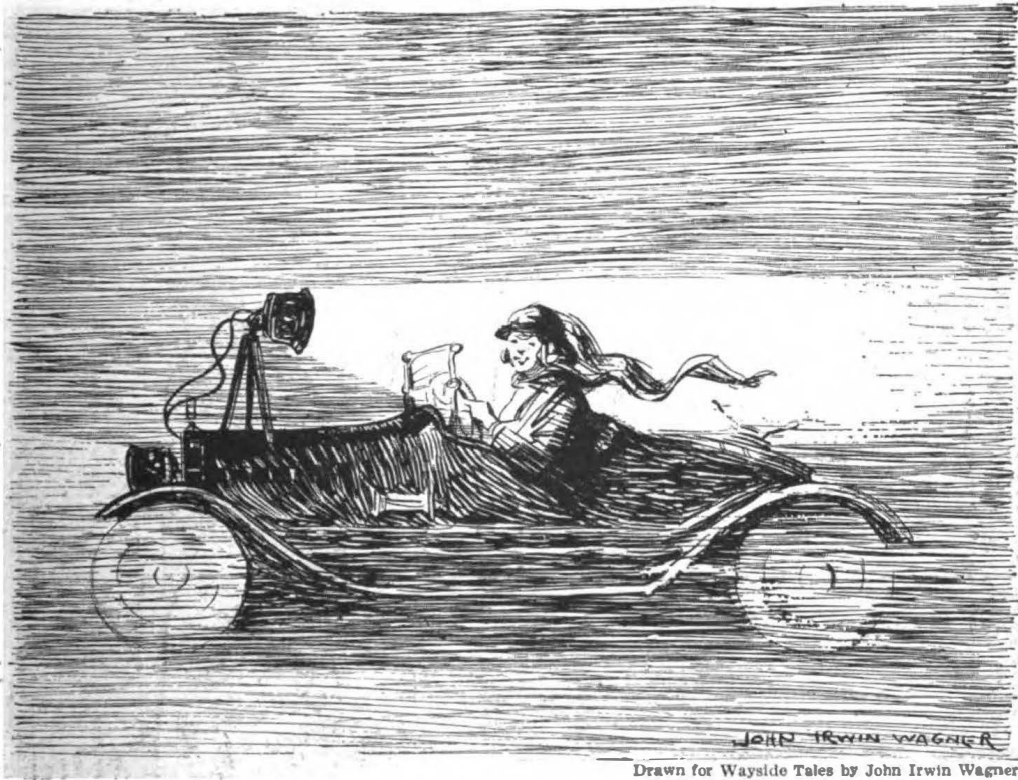
Tide!

Browne: Faith will move mountains.
Towne: That's why I prefer a vacation at the seashore. It's there when you want it!



Drawn for Wayside Tales by Carl T. Anderson

"Do be careful of my china, won't you?"
"Don't worry, mum! If I broke one o' dese dishes it ud make me so mad I'd bust de whole set!"



Drawn for Wayside Tales by John Irwin Wagner

Dolly Follystar just can't keep out of the spotlight!

**To a Lady With Atropine in Her Eyes
and Spectacles Impending**

Sweetheart, Bella Donna has made you
hypnotic;
Your gaze holds me chained to this
place.
Those eyes, which are deep and most
darkly exotic,
Would quite set my bean off its base
If I wasn't so sure they were only half-
seeing,
Though staring right into my face. . . .
Perhaps I may seem to you now like a
being
Of infinite beauty and grace,
A young Belladonis—a sketch pointillis-
tic.
You can't tell a deuce from an ace,
And though you have eyes like a far-
seeing mystic
The shell-rims creep on you apace.
All too soon you will join the poor lense-
ridden masses,

The growing, quadruple-eyed race,
And hear the soft, passionate tinkle of
glasses
When spectacled lovers embrace
Weare Holbrook.

They're Alike

Young Son: Father, what is the dif-
ference between a taxidermist and a taxi-
cab?
Father: No difference, my son; they
both skin you.

The Sharp Ones

The bitterest words are those of our
own we are forced to eat.

Even As You and I

North: My new car is black, trimmed
with red.
West: My car is black too, but I got
the trimming!



Drawn for Wayside Tales by Frank Ryder

Doctor: If the patient coughs up during the day, let me know!
Nurse: Why, doctor, you haven't sent in your bill yet!

Plunging in Authorship

"Can't you lend me a ten spot, old man?" remarked Black, who had chanced to meet White at the corner. "I'm dead broke. Been writing stories for the magazines and haven't made a cent!"

"What became of that five thousand dollars your uncle left you?"

"I used that up for postage."

The Reason

"Was his bankruptcy due to a lack of brains?"

"Yes—a lack and a lass."

Taking No Chances

The man who flees from temptation generally blazes the trail so he can find his way back!

The Wise One

Bicker: Did you ever stop to think—
 Knocker: Of—
 Bicker: This, that it's a wise child
 that knows its own father—likewise, a
 wise cork that knows its own pop.

With a Little Pinch of Salt

Permit me to inform you of the fact,
 A fact I've told a heap of girls before
 you,
 (I say this at the risk of getting "sacked"),
 That tenderly I love you and adore you!
 Your laughter lends sweet fragrance to
 the breeze,
 Your kiss is wine—the finest in the
 vault, dear—
 (Be good enough, however, if you please,
 To take this with a little pinch of salt,
 dear)!

I saw you, and my heart was all afire
 With passion quite impossible to
 quench, dear;
 You represented all that I desire
 In ladies, say, American and French,
 dear!
 I sighed for you exceedingly, and wept,
 And vowed the laws of loving were at
 fault, dear.
 (Be good enough, however, to accept
 This statement with another pinch of
 salt, dear)!

If destiny should come to me, and say
 That never would you likely be to love
 me,
 I'd walk about quite aimlessly all day,
 And tearfully address the skies above
 me;
 And when, dear, to the water's edge I
 came,
 You would not find me hesitate, or halt,
 dear.
 (Be good enough, however, all the same,
 To take this with a final pinch of salt,
 dear)!

La Touche Hancock.



Drawn for Wayside Tales by Jim Henderson

Footnote on "Page" three!

The Bass

'Tis not the joys of summer time
 That fill him with delight;
 Nor does it worry him at all
 That money now is tight.
 He dons his oldest coat and cap,
 And takes a can of bait,
 And casts his line, and in the boat
 He sits, content to wait.

He ambles home at sundown with
 A solitary prize
 Reposing in the basket, lo!
 A bass of modest size.
 But after it is fried and served
 And but a memory glowing,
 For years to come that little bass,
 Behold, will keep on growing.

Minna Irving.

Paradisiacal

His "precious pearl" tripped lightly;
 Her step he could not wait.
 And smiling at him brightly,
 His "precious pearl" tripped lightly.
 His Heav'n drew near, for rightly,
 Her steps were pearly gait!
 His "precious pearl" tripped lightly;
 Her step he could not wait.



Drawn for Wayside Tales by S. Delevante

Teacher: Now tell me, Willie, where do naughty boys go who don't go to church on Sunday?

Willie: Fishin'!

Straight Goods

There appears to be a joker in the game
entitled poker,
For the man who's always *chipper*
seems to lose;
While it's odd (you get me, Steven?) if
you break exactly even;
And the heavy winner always has the
blucs!

Compensation

"That's fair enough?"
"Yes?"
"Even the fortune hunter sometimes
has to pay the guide."

"You probably won't agree with me,
but—"

"But what?"

"Any politician will tell you that fac-
tions speak louder than words."

The Old School of Medicine

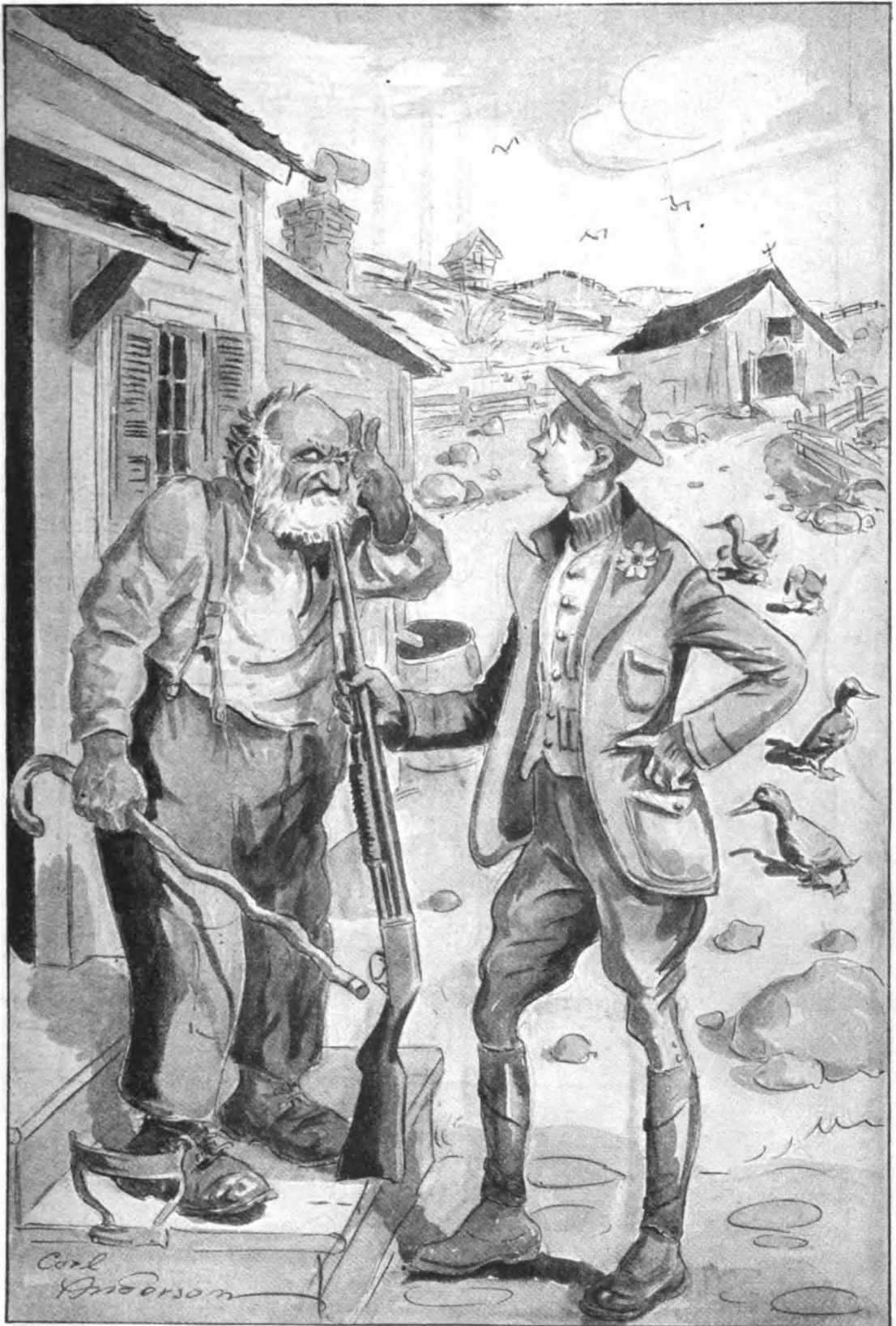
De Gush: What would you prescribe
for the ills of the world today?

De Crush: The Mosaic tablets.

Don't Get Caught, Eh?

Black: I notice Corinne Filmstar has
just completed "A Kiss in Time."

Blue: 'S matter, her husband?



Drawn for Wayside Tales by Carl T. Anderson

"I've come to announce that I'm going to begin operations!"



Drawn for Wayside Tales by John Irwin Wagner

Visitor: I'd like to ask you a question!

Prisoner: Aw, gwan! Ask someone connected wid de prison, will yer?

A Capillary Attraction

She wore a mighty fetching hat,
 The sweet coquette with look so prim.
 She wore a mighty fetching hat;
 And that was what the youth looked at.
 Nor dreamed when passing for a chat,
 Her cap was set for him.

She wore a mighty fetching hat.
 It fetched the youth by pose demure.
 She wore a mighty fetching hat;
 And soon beneath his best cravat,
 His heart was thumping pit-a-pat,
 A love-sweet overture.

Blanche Elizabeth Wade.



Drawn for Wayside Tales by Perry Barlow

Try this on their piano!



Drawn for Wayside Tales by P. M. Satterfield

"Boy, I sho' was foolish to come way out heah in dis storm!"
 "Say, what fo' yo' fussin'? Ain't I in de' same boat wid you?"

When We're Waiting!

Browne: It's the unexpected that happens.

Towne: Yes, especially when we are expecting good luck.

Yes!

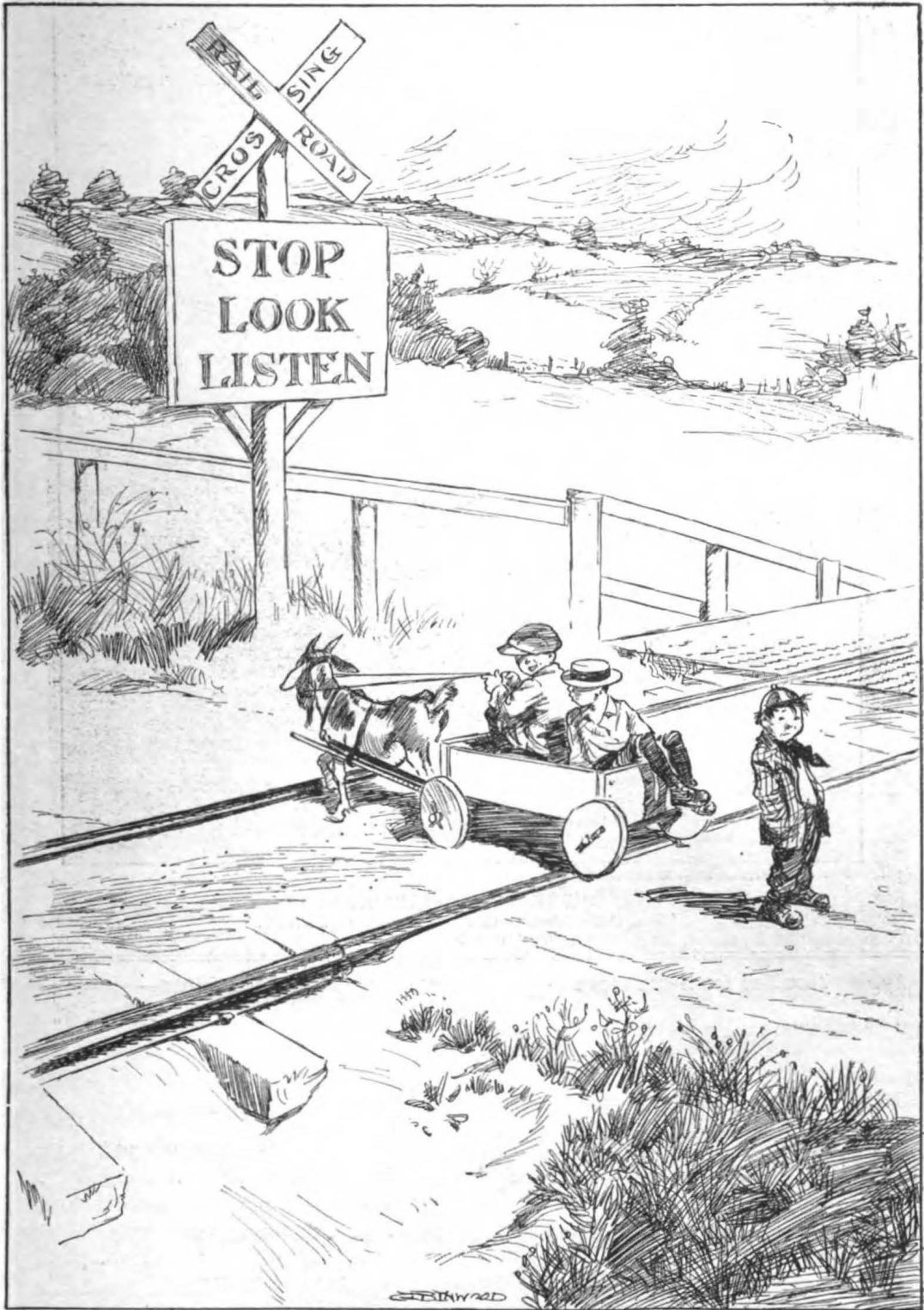
Isn't it curious how a woman can call a man dear and then make him cheap?

Who's Who in Matrimony

● On the sea of matrimony
 'Tis a knack to keep afloat;
 He who pays the alimony
 Is the fool that rocks the boat.

Or Burn the Bridges

Be sure you are right, then go ahead,
 but don't destroy your return ticket.



Drawn for Wayside Tales by G. B. Inwood

Driver: Ye notice how much quicker we git across by havin' Willie stop, while you look an' I listen?



Drawn for Wayside Tales by Jim Henderson

FIGURATIVELY SPEAKING

"Son, shake hands with N. Steen, my third cousin."
"Where's the other two, pa?"

Not Far from the Ooze

Professor Garner reports that the female ape says "Moo-hoo," and the male ape replies "Wahoo."

Evolution doesn't seem to have carried us very far. At a dance last week we heard a chap address a girl, "Who is oo?" And the girl replied, "I's oo's."

Hasty Introduction

Breezer: Mr. Sneezer, meet Miss Pepper.

Sneezer (chronic hay fever victim): Ah-Ah-Hoo-is-shee!

Breezer: My cousin.

Fashion Note—

The petticoat rule—don't wear any!

The Styles

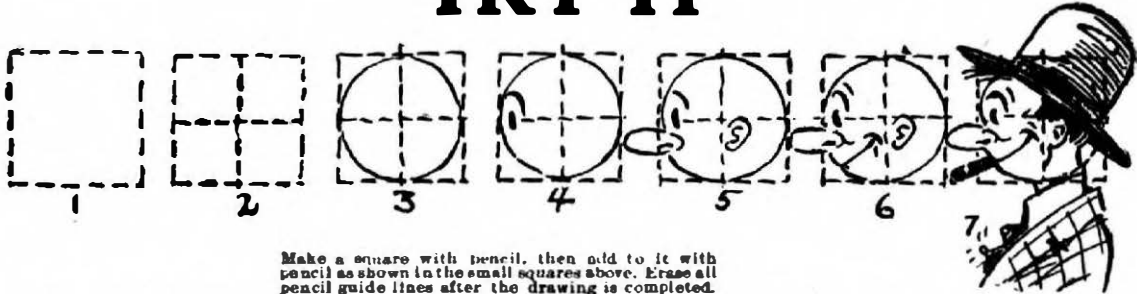
Milady's skirts affect me so
That I burst forth in song:
"Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long."

Beauty Hint

"Beauty sleep": Handsome is as handsome doze.

Here Is a Simple, Easy Way to Draw a Comic Face

TRY IT



Make a square with pencil, then add to it with pencil as shown in the small squares above. Erase all pencil guide lines after the drawing is completed.

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FONTAINE FOX — makes more than **\$200 a day!**

MILLIONS of tired eyes light up, gloomy looks give place to smiles when Fox's "Powerful Katrinka" starts moving things. His Toonerville Trolley, Inventions of Thomas Edison, Jr., Grandma, the Demon Chaperon, and other series of humorous cartoons are laugh producers that have won him both fame and fortune.

Mr. Fox's income is over \$200 a day and over \$1,200 a week in round figures. In a recent letter Mr. Fox says: "There is always the chance that the boy who is entering your school today or tomorrow may turn out to be the highest salaried cartoonist the world has ever known."

With masters of illustrating and cartooning like Fox to instruct and guide you through the eighty-four lessons in the Federal Course, you are bound to succeed. The Federal School in

Illustrating and Cartooning has taught thousands of people. It has trained hundreds of successful cartoonists and illustrators whose work is appearing in newspapers and publications all over the United States. Sixty of the leading artists of the country give you advice, counsel and examples in these lessons. Their years of hard work and training save you from making the same mistakes they did.

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* Cartoons by Fontaine Fox for The Centre; Press Association.

Little figures earn big money for Fox. Six drawings a week make Fox more than \$70,000 a year.

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FEDERAL SCHOOL NEWS

A RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENT IN
ILLUSTRATING AND CARTOONING

EDITED BY

CHAS. L. BARTHOLOMEW

Bart



CHARLES KEIL

CHARLES W. KEIL, discount correspondent in the Continental Commercial Bank of Chicago, illustrates the regular monthly magazine published by the bank. He is completing the Course in Illustrating and Cartooning, and utilizing lettering in connection with bank business. He finds it profitable as

well as interesting.

EARL BUTLER'S cartoon, "Our New Farm-hand," picturing Secretary Wallace in charge of transportation, made a big hit in the daily Register of Oelwein, Iowa.



PERCY HOFFSTROM

PERCY J. HOFFSTROM first entertained the Seattle Press Club, since which he has performed at political meetings, local movie houses, and entertainments of various kinds, receiving good compensation, and giving an average of two programs a week.

Young Hoffstrom is connected with the engineering department of a ship building company, whose house organ he illustrates, receiving additional compensation for his illustrative work, thus making his Applied Cartooning bring him interest and profit.



WILLIAM ALGER

WILLIAM H. ALGER, JR., of Baltimore, has recently made use of tone drawing, which he has just completed in Division Nine of his course in Illustrating and Cartooning, by the production of a political cartoon in wash, reproduced in the magazine "My Lady Beautiful," published by the Marinello Beauty Parlors, endorsing a bill before the State Legislature to protect the public and shop owners of Maryland.

THOS. E. CHALMERS of the Exchange Printing House, Atlantic City, occupies spare time illustrating place cards, doing lodge sketches, and other piece work, which he says has more than earned the price of the course. One wash drawing from a photo brought him ten dollars.



THOMAS CHALMERS

CHARLES GOLDBERG, active student, has recently obtained a position as an apprentice in the Commercial Art Studios of Chicago, and is studying the use of tone for cover designs and advertising illustrations.

HOMER CHERRINGTON of Logan, Ohio, sends in an enthusiastic letter stating that he has made twenty dollars with the lettering outlined in Division Two of the Course in Illustrating and Cartooning, and is pushing ahead in Division Three with new zest.



HOMER
CHERRINGTON

PAUL BRATTEN of Harrisburg, Pa., first obtained honorable mention, a five dollar prize in the second contest, and a twenty-five dollar first prize in the third Wiggle Wobble contest in Judge.

GEO. S. MOFFATT, a freshman in the Polytechnical School of San Francisco, won the editorship for the school paper with his first poster. He carries his sketch pad into athletics, winning distinction thereby. His cartoons appear in various coast publications, encouraging him to open a studio for commercial illustration. "There is not another school teaching drawing and cartooning equal to the Federal School in its practical methods," says the young cartoonist.



GEORGE MOFFATT

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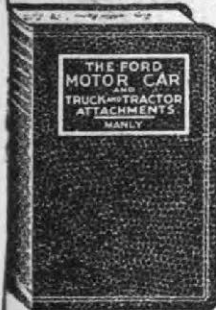
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Department 715

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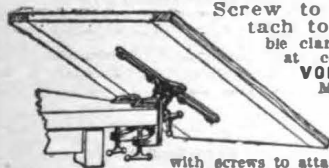
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To insure ads being inserted under proper classification in the October issue, copy must reach this office not later than August 25th

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KODAK Film developed 5c, prints 2 1/2c each. Young Photo Service, 431 Delaware Ave., Albany, N. Y.

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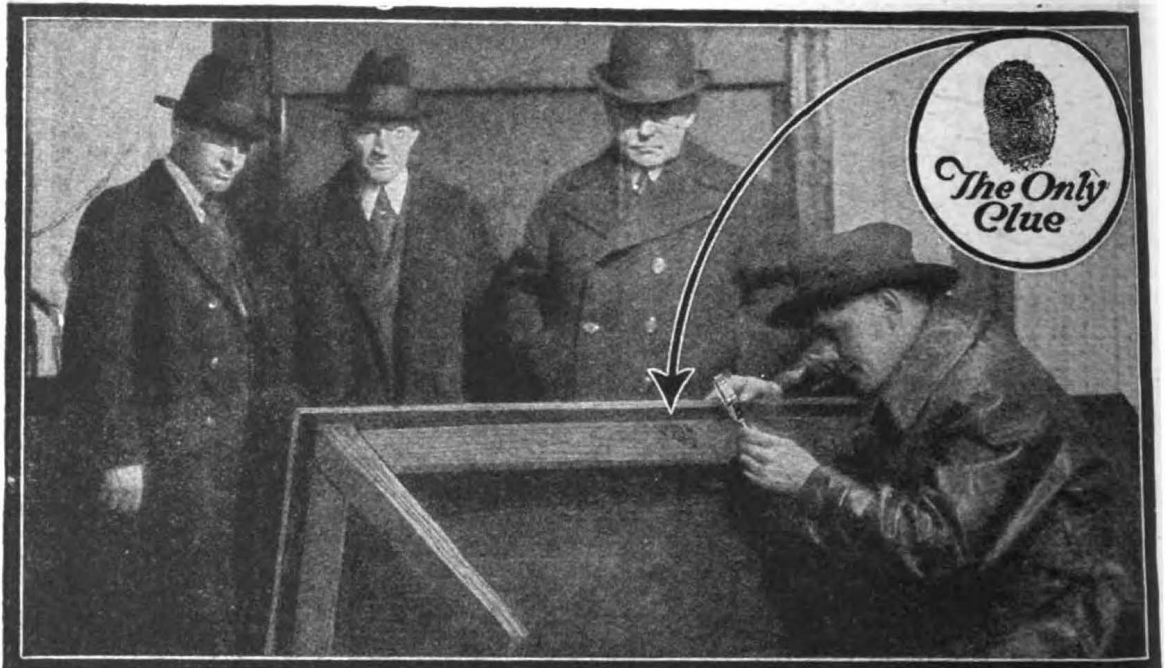
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WARREN BIGELOW, the Finger Print Detective, was making his usual review in the morning newspapers. He had just finished reading the press reports of the daring robbery of the offices of the T—O—Company when the telephone on his desk rang. Central Office was calling, asking him to come immediately to the scene of the robbery.

Although he drove his high powered roadster rapidly and arrived very shortly at his destination, he had plenty of time to consider the main features of the case as reported by the press. The job had undoubtedly been done by skilled cracksmen and robbers of uncommon nerve. Sixty-five hundred dollars in currency—the company pay-roll—were gone. Not a single, apparent clew had been found by the police.

Finger Print Expert Solves Mystery

On his arrival, Bigelow was greeted by Nick Austin, Chief of Detectives, who had gone over the ground thoroughly.

"Hello, Warren. Here's a job that has us stumped. I hope you can unravel it for us."

By this time, the district officers and the operatives from Central Office had almost given up the investigation. After hours of fruitless efforts, their work was at a standstill. They were completely baffled.

With lively interest and a feeling of relief they stepped back to await the results of the Finger Print Detective's findings. They were plainly awed at his quiet, assured manner. The adroit old Chief himself was manifestly impressed at the quick, sure way in which Bigelow made his investigation.

Almost immediately Bigelow turned his attention to a heavy table which had been tipped up on its side. Examination of the glossy mahogany showed an excellent set of finger prints. The thief might just as well have left his calling card.

To make a long story short his prints were photographed and taken to Central Office, where they were matched with those of "Big Joe" Moran, a safe blower well known to the police. Moran was subsequently caught and convicted on Bigelow's testimony, and the finger-print proof. Most of the money was recovered. In the meantime the T—O—Company had offered a \$500.00 reward, which was given to Bigelow—his pay for two hours' work.

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