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The Black Cat

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BY PAULINE C. BOUVÉ.



JACOB ELICH sat on the back door-stoop and gazed upon his tulip beds complacently. As the rings of blue smoke were blown upward from his T. D. pipe his eyelids drooped until there were only two very narrow rims of greenish blue visible to the flaxen-haired girl who sat on the step below him, knitting a long gray stocking. The flush on her soft round cheek seemed to be the result of some inward rather than external warmth, and the long lashes that fringed her eyes quivered ever so slightly now and then, and the plump little fingers were long picking up the stitches that would drop, no matter how hard the small hands tried to hold the long steel needle steadily and evenly.

"So," said Jacob Elich at last, after an unusually long puff, "so you would marry that young Hosenklaver and leave your old uncle and the house here to do as best they can?"

The flush on Minna Stofer's pretty face deepened to a rich crimson at her uncle's words.

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"Yes, uncle" she said in a very low voice. "But I could come every day and right you up, Claus would not mind and —"

"Claus may go to the devil," said the old man testily. "I care nothing for Claus. He's an idler and a spendthrift and will come to want and ruin and bring you there with him."

"That is not true of Claus!" The voice was quite steady now and a pair of flashing brown eyes were turned upon the old man proudly and defiantly.

Jacob Elich refilled his pipe leisurely, rubbed his bald head reflectively, and then began to puff away again.

"'Tis always the way of a woman," he remarked, gazing upward on the barn roof reflectively. "They never remember the proverb 'Wedlock rides in the saddle and repentance in the crupper.' If you must marry this Claus, niece, why, then I suppose you must. You are your own mistress since last November, when you had your twenty-first birthday. Only, he may understand, you will have no dower from me."

"We want no dower, Uncle Jacob — only, only — if you could spare me a little to buy some clothes — I should not wish to go to my husband like a beggar bride."

"Clothes, clothes, clothes," grumbled the old man. "A woman is always begging for finery."

"Begging," cried the girl, "is it begging to ask you for a few clothes when I have worked and slaved and toiled to make you comfortable ever since I was old enough to sweep and bake and sew for you? Begging, indeed! I am only asking for what is mine by every law of right and justice. That is what Katrina van Tassel and all of the neighbors say." And Minna, no longer able to control her long-pent-up tears began to sob convulsively.

Jacob Elich pulled his heavy steel-rimmed spectacles from his pocket and surveyed his niece with calm disapproval. The pretty, plump Minna Stofer was nearer to his somewhat flinty heart than everything else, except his money. His neat little house, with its trim garden and flower beds, was dear to him because it stood for just so many round dollars. The feather beds, old Dutch linen and china, and squatty mahogany furniture, which were his by inheritance, he regarded merely as articles that might be converted into cash and he respected them accordingly. His pigs, his poul-

try, his bee-hives, and entire property, from real estate to his kitchen tinware, represented to him, not comfort and respectability, but the mere fact of possession, and were dear to him in greater or less degree, according to their intrinsic and pecuniary value.

Jacob Elich was a most respectable citizen. He had the greatest veneration for law and order and propriety, but he was undisguisedly and frankly a miser. He spoke of himself as a man of forethought and prudence, giving measure for measure and taking those business advantages only to which the law entitled him. His neighbors called him a skinflint and a miser, but Jacob smiled shrewdly when such remarks came to his ear and fell to quoting the proverb, "Every man's friend is every man's fool." For every occasion in life he had a proverb tucked away somewhere in his shiny bald head, and it was the reiteration of these familiar old sayings that had come nearer to making Minna ill-tempered than anything else in her somewhat dull young life. But her life was not dull now, for Claus Hosenklaver had asked her to be his wife and she had said "Yes." The course of true love had run very smoothly with the lovers, but, as the wedding day approached, a very serious (or so it seemed to proud little Minna) impediment stood in the way. She had no possible means of buying a wedding gown. And she could not, *would* not, let Claus buy it for her; no, not if she never got married.

Jacob put his spectacles on, took them off, put them on again with great deliberation and then said:

"So, Katrina van Tassel said that, did she?"

"Yes, and she said you ought to be made to give me a silk dress!"

"Katrina van Tassel is, is — a female peacock. No, Minna, you have had a comfortable home, my care and protection and your food and lodging since you came to me a child, and you are welcome to the same as long as you live under my roof. But as for giving you money for a silk dress — that I shall certainly not do. Women are vain and frivolous enough without such follies. As for Claus Hosenklaver, if he wants a silk-gown bride, let him seek a wife who is able to make a fool of herself without aid, or get the gown himself."

"Claus would get me everything if I would let him, but can't

you see what shame I should feel? *Lend* me the money, Uncle Jacob, and I'll earn it afterwards and pay it back. Sometime in your life you must have wanted to marry some one, — you can't refuse to *lend* me the money!"

"Lend you the money, indeed! The minute you were married your debts would become your husband's and where would I be?" I'll trust no Claus Hosenklaver for a penny! As for marrying, I never would have been able to save a cent if I had a woman after me for bonnets and dresses and ribbons and feathers and what not. No, Minna, marriage is an expensive luxury I could not afford. If you and Claus choose to imagine that you can afford it, — you are twenty-one; — I've nothing to say except that I won't give you a red copper. Remember this, however: 'When poverty comes in at the door, love flies out at the window.'

Minna folded up her stocking and walked to the door.

"I won't ask you any more, Uncle Jacob, but some day you'll be sorry for this."

"Maybe," replied Uncle Jacob, with one of his metallic laughs. "Tell your friend, Katrina van Tassel, that I am a law-abiding citizen, and when the law compels me, I'll give a silly young woman a silk wedding dress. Until such a law is made, I'll do what I please about spending my money."

Miss Katrina van Tassel stood in the Lykens public library, with her hand on a musty volume and a happy smile on her red lips. She took out a card from her case and pencilled a number and a title on it and then replaced it carefully, snapping the clasp of her alligator combination purse together with an energy that bespoke secret triumph. She then entered her carriage and ordered the coachman to drive to an office in the business part of the town. There was a merry light in the young lady's eyes as she entered her brother's office.

"I've a case for you, Fred!" Then she stopped and blushed as Charlie Shackford rose up and offered her his hand.

"May I be assistant adviser?" he said, smiling down upon her.

"Yes," she replied gaily. "But neither of you can guess what it is; I have the most delicious scheme you ever heard of. Oh, Fred, is 1904 divisible by four?"

"What on earth are you driving at?" said the young lawyer in a bewildered voice. "Aren't you feeling well this morning?"

"I haven't felt so well for a year. Wait a minute, have you got this book over there?" And she handed her brother the card she had pencilled in the library and passed to the bookcase.

Shackford glanced at it over her shoulder and then taking the volume from the shelf, looked at her in a perplexed way.

"Read that," she said.

"Gad!" said her brother; "that's queer."

"It's odd I never noticed that before," said Shackford. Then both men laughed.

"Sit down, and I'll explain," said the young lady. "Turn to the page I numbered." Then she bent forward, and in a low, rapid tone, outlined her plan. When she finished, two long low whistles followed by long and uncontrollable fits of laughter that seemed to threaten the two dignified young counselors-at-law with a combination of apoplexy and dementia.

"It's the bulliest scheme ever unraveled by a woman," gasped Fred, when he could command his organs of speech.

"It's a flash of genius, Miss van Tassel, you may count on my co-operation."

"But how are we going to get the girls to do their part?" asked Fred, who was eminently practical.

"If you two will do the legal part of it, I'll guarantee the rest," was the confident reply. And then, after a prolonged consultation, Miss van Tassel drove home to luncheon.

The next day Minna Stofer was sent for to come to the van Tassel mansion to take an order for some crewel-work, in which she excelled, and which enabled her to provide herself with a few little articles dear to girlish hearts.

"Now you've given your word," said Miss van Tassel, as her little friend said good-by. "Remember you have nothing to do with it."

"Oh, Katrina, I wish I hadn't told you he called you a peacock," wailed Minna.

"Never mind," said the descendant of a patroon, "I'll have something to be as proud of as a peacock before long."

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Miss van Tassel, to the surprise of her intimates, joined several

church guilds that year and became the most popular girl in Lykens with the very girls who had, before this period of religious, philanthropic fervor, been wont to call her "a society girl" and "a woman of the world, she doesn't care for women." Her mother grew quite anxious at this sudden change of heart fostered by a change of life. Mr. van Tassel pulled his whiskers and smiled. "She has a scheme to put through," he said to himself, while Fred let fall various hints to the purport that "Katie was a corker"; and young Shackford made sundry and various pretexts to call and "talk over little plans" which was disquieting to the prudent *pater familias*.

"Well," said Mrs. van Tassel one morning, at breakfast, "little Minna's wedding comes off next week. I think you might give her some of those Paris dresses you've outgrown, Katrina; it would be a great help to the child, and that mean old uncle is too stingy to provide her with anything."

"Oh, he'll come around," said Katrina carelessly, and the subject drifted into other channels.

Minna's marriage was to be solemnized at the chapel of the Church of the Holy Trinity on Wednesday morning. On the preceding Friday Mr. Jacob Elich had been taking his forty winks in a little back parlor, when he was summoned to the door by a sharp ring. He was rubbing his eyes and yawning as he opened the door and was greatly surprised to see Lizzie Brulaker, the daughter of a farmer in the neighborhood, standing on the threshold.

"Good afternoon," said Jacob crossly, "Minna's not home," and was about to retire, but Miss Brulaker slipped in uninvited.

"Well, no matter," she said, in rather a flustered voice: "I, — I came — I came to see you, Mr. Elich."

"Me! What do you want with me?"

Miss Brulaker eyed him for a moment and then said, hurriedly, "I thought as Minna's going to leave, you might be lonesome and need some one to keep the house and do your baking, and — and it's leap year, you know, — so I came over to ask you to marry me, sir."

Jacob Elich's jaws opened, his eyes bulged, his whole being shook with amazement and anger.

"To do what?" he stammered.

"Marry me!" said Lizzie with a sudden boldness.

"I won't," half shrieked Jacob. "You're out of your head. Go home to your mother, you bold girl. I won't!"

"You refuse?" said Lizzie stolidly.

"I am a respectable man," said Jacob wrathfully "and I certainly refuse!"

"That's all right, good afternoon," and Miss Brulaker descended the steps and walked down the street, leaving Jacob staring after her. Was she crying? Her whole frame shook convulsively as she moved.

"She is a disgrace to her family," said Jacob, as he closed the door. "Thank God I have no daughters!" Then he went in and sat down, put on his spectacles and took them off again a great many times in an aimless fashion. "What is this generation of women coming to? What, indeed!"

The fire had died down, but Jacob had not noticed it. He was sitting gazing at the dying embers, when Minna came in.

"Why, uncle, your fire is nearly out; what ails you?"

"Nothing ails me, Minna," said Jacob. "I am as usual, only I was in a brown study. I had forgotten the fire. '*As had kwat, so is kotten te laat,*'— '*When had comes, have to is too late*' was truly spoken, Minna. Do you know farmer Brulaker's daughter, Lizzie?"

"Yes, uncle."

"What manner of girl is she?"

"She is so clever that some people call her brilliant."

"That may be, but she is no fit companion for a modest maid, Minna. '*A brilliant daughter makes a brittle wife*' is a wise saying."

Hardly had the grouty Jacob finished his words when there was a loud peal at the bell.

"Go see who it is," he said, shortly.

"It's Mrs. Bagley; she wishes to see you, uncle."

Pulling himself together, but with reluctance in every line of his grouty figure, Jacob rose up to greet the young widow of his lately deceased friend, Caleb Bagley, the miller.

"Is it about the lease of the mill, that you have come, Mrs. Bagley?" said Jacob politely.

The widow sighed and shook her head. "No, Mr. Elich, it isn't the mill exactly, and yet I can't say but it indirectly concerns the mill. The fact is, I know that I am a good hand to keep things trim and cozy, for Mr. Bagley always said as much to every one, and I know that you are a good hand to manage and put by; so I thought as how it might be a good thing to unite our forces — make a combination arrangement, you know — and, as it is the woman's privilege this year, I have concluded to make a little matrimonial proposition to you. Of course you can refuse to —"

"Mrs. Bagley, I *do* refuse, I most certainly decline to become a party to your combination. I can't afford to marry, Mrs. Bagley — I must say no to your very — very — er —"

"So you won't accept me? Very well, Mr. Elich, you will remember this before long," and before he could say a word more the front door banged and the rejected widow had gone. He looked around in a frightened way, but Minna was gone — she had evidently heard nothing, for she was singing in the kitchen.

"This is very strange," said Jacob — "very strange, indeed. To think one small town could contain two such fools at once. If I were going to marry I would not 'hang my sickle on another man's corn.'"

That night Jacob slept poorly and dreamed of being convicted of bigamy.

The next day Minna went to visit a school friend, from whose house she was to be married, as her uncle said he could not be at the expense of a wedding breakfast. Jacob was therefore alone.

"I hope you won't be lonesome," Minna had said as she left. "Perhaps some of the neighbors will drop in to keep you company." And her uncle had replied "God forbid." But evidently the overruling Providence was not on his side, for on that day and the next, seven unmarried women came on the same errand that had occasioned Lizzie Brulaker's and the widow's visits. Each one gave a different reason for her action; — two urged his loneliness; one suggested that in his old age he would need a young head to look after his business affairs. One recommended herself as a good cook, one commended her piety, and the last — a saucy girl — had hinted that he needed a wife to teach him to be happy!"

To each one of the six, he had politely but firmly declined; but the saucy girl had shocked him to such an extent that he felt compelled to threaten to tell her parents and the pastor of her behavior.

"Do," said the girl. "It will be the funniest thing that ever happened to hear you. It will be better than the theatre. Do, Mr. Elich!"

On Sunday Jacob stayed indoors and early Monday morning he closed every blind in the house and forebore to build the fire, thinking to give the impression that he was not at home. But the postman stopped at every round he made and slipped letters under the door. They were all offers to share his fame, fortune, and name. They all referred to it being "leap year" and they all wound up with such phrases as: "If I do not hear definitely from you by Tuesday night, I shall take it for granted that my proposition is favorably considered" — or, "If I do not hear from you at once, I shall conclude that you accept the unsolicited love of a modest heart made bold by a desire to confer a benefit," et cetera.

To each of which Jacob penned, in small crabbed chirography, this brief but unequivocal reply: "I cannot marry you. Jacob Elich."

On Tuesday afternoon Minna returned home and was much surprised to find no sign of life about the house. She managed to open one of the cellar windows and made a burglarious entrance into the house. As she approached her uncle's bedroom, she heard him wail out: "Don't come in. I won't marry you. I won't marry any woman. Go away!"

"Uncle Jacob," she called out cheerily, "It's I, Minna — let me in. What's the matter?"

In response to a relieved "Come in" Minna entered. Lying in bed, with wet towels about his head, lay Jacob Elich in a collapsed condition

"Minna, send for the doctor," he said brokenly; "but don't come too near me, don't! don't! don't!" as she approached.

"But, uncle, why not. What is the trouble?"

"I am crazy," moaned Jacob piteously. "I have had terrible hallucinations — I may become violent — I am a madman!"

"Why, Uncle Jacob, how you talk."

“That’s just it, you won’t believe me when I tell you I’ve had horrid dreams. Twelve women have asked me to marry them, but I said ‘no’ to each of them. Yes, Minna, I said ‘no’ to every damned — excuse me, but I am not responsible, I am a madman. I tell you it is the only solution.”

At this moment there was a ring at the front door-bell.

“There, there’s another one wants me to marry her. Tell her no — no — no!” And Jacob, with his hands clasped about his head, fell back upon the pillows.

“This isn’t a suitor, uncle,” said Minna; “it is a lawyer’s letter to you.”

“Read it!” said Jacob weakly.

Minna broke the seal and opening the document, read:—

MR. JACOB ELICH:

Sir:—

I wish to inform you that twelve ladies of the town of Lykens, Pennsylvania, have placed in my hands suits against you for the payment, either in money or merchandise, of twelve silk gowns, or their equivalent in gold, specie, or bank notes, to be paid in twelve equal parts to the said twelve ladies, whose proposals of marriage you have declined. These claims are based upon a statute of Pennsylvania enacted in 1723. You will find it upon page 432 of Colonial Laws in Pennsylvania.* The statute referred to, reads:—‘If a woman, during what is called *Leap Year*, taketh advantage of her privilege to ask a man to marry her and he refuseth, then shall he be liable to the law, if so be that the woman require, to give her one silk gown or the purchase money wherewith to buy such a gown. And if he refuse to pay it, he is liable to a penalty of One Hundred pounds or to twelve months’ imprisonment.’ As this singular law has not been repealed it may still be enforced. We are therefore commissioned to advise you that the twelve ladies whom you have refused to marry within the past week have put their claims into our hands for collection. Hoping that you will settle the same claims at once and avoid the very disagreeable publicity a refusal would entail, we are,

Respectfully yours,

L. VAN TASSEL,
C. SHACKFORD,
Counselors at Law.

* This law was never repealed — AUTHOR.

“Damnation,” roared Jacob, who was ordinarily a man of sober words. “I have been duped by a pack of brainless women! Give me the letter!” Minna handed it to him.

“I knew it,” he said, pointing a gaunt finger at the signatures. “That minx, Katrina van Tassel, is at the bottom of this trick.”

“Hark, uncle,” she said, “here she is.”

“Bring her here,” he commanded, “but first bring me my dressing-gown.”

Sitting in bed, enveloped in a red dressing-gown and looking like a distracted flamingo, Jacob Elich awaited the advent of Miss van Tassel, who entered, wreathed in smiles.

“Oh, Mr. Elich, are you sick? I am so sorry. I came to bring you a message from my brother.”

“I am not well,” replied Jacob. “Sit down; what did your brother say?”

“Why, he said that he had spoken to each of your admiring friends” — replied Katrina, “and they have all agreed that they would renounce their claims —”

“God be thanked!” cried Jacob, closing his eyes.

“Wait” said Katrina, “on condition that you would make over to Minna a sum large enough to cover the expense of the twelve silk gowns, as a sort of nest-egg for housekeeping, you know,” and Katrina smiled seductively.

Jacob groaned. There was no help.

“‘He that hath a head of butter must not come near the oven,’” quoth the sufferer. “Get me my check-book, Minna. Here is the key to the lock cupboard.”

“Now, that’s a great deal the best way out of a bad bargain” said Katrina. “I am sure Minna will be grateful.”

“How much does a silk gown cost?” asked Jacob miserably.

“Why, ten yards at one dollar and a quarter — you can’t get good silk any cheaper — will be, twelve dollars and a half — and twelve times twelve dollars and a half is, let’s see — one hundred and fifty dollars.”

“‘When the wolf grows old, the crows ride him,’” said Jacob, bitterly. And with trembling fingers and glassy eyes he wrote out and signed the check.

“Here,” he said, “give that to your brother. And, — you are a woman, but you have a clever brain, notwithstanding; if you will keep the other women quiet, I’ll put in an extra hundred for Minna.”

“Why, certainly, Mr. Elich, I think I can manage that.”

Jacob took out from between the two feather beds a pouch, from which he counted out twenty five-dollar gold pieces into his amazed little Minna’s hands.

"Say nothing to Claus," he said in a tone of entreaty. "'It's bad marketing with empty pockets,' I wish you good luck. Now leave me. I would be alone."

The girls stepped out together, leaving the miserable Jacob alone with his thoughts. At the door stood Charlie Shackford and Claus Hosenklaver.

"How did it work?" the counselor asked breathlessly.

"Like a charm," said Miss van Tassel.

"Come," said Claus to Minna, "the minister must be waiting for us."

"Look, what he gave me," whispered Minna. "And here is the check for one hundred and fifty dollars," cried Katrina, handing it over to the young lawyer. "Just think what a lucky thing that I found that unrepealed law!"

"Very lucky," murmured Charlie, as he took both the check and the hand that held it in his own.

"I suppose you think you deserve some of the credit?" said Katrina. "I shall have to save up for a month to settle your bill, I dare say."

"What is won by law may be kept by love."

Katrina's blue eyes were lifted to the young lawyer's for a moment as she said, shyly:

"Is that another unrepealed law?"

There wasn't anybody in sight except a baby in a go-cart, and Charles's answer was a kiss.



The Dead Line.*

BY WARD WILSON.



One at Water Tank understood the strange ehumship of the Sinner and Bill Teneh. Not that the subject was ever much discussed, for no place was less inquisitive than Water Tank. It realized very satisfactorily the much maligned sentence, all men are created free and equal. They were at Water Tank. Every man was what he said he was. If he kept up to the current standard of conduct, or, as they called it at Water Tank, "kept within the dead line," he could stay.

Bill Teneh had somehow been able to keep inside the line for nearly two years. He was drunk a good share of the time and surly all the time, but neither of these things was, in Water Tank's estimation, cause enough to ask him to move on. So he stayed, working little, drinking much.

Four times in the months Teneh had been there, there had come to him a letter with a Mexican stamp. Always after this event Teneh was his worst. As credit was limited, Water Tank concluded that the letters explained how Teneh got a maximum of drink for a minimum of work.

Yet, though he had kept inside the "dead line," not one of those who had stepped over it had been so much disliked. It was instinctive, this distrust. Each man felt it and felt, too, that he was not alone. There was something about the fellow, hidden part of the time, but at others standing out shamelessly, a brutishness, a capacity for evil.

These thoughts, and all others, for that matter, were swept away by a fresh interest when the Sinner came.

Water Tank was worn out. Everyone was a little too much

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like everyone else, which made the Sinner when he came as welcome as a water hole on the desert to the tired and parched cattlemen. The Sinner's ingenuousness, his enthusiasm, his youth, all were wonderful to them, and they were frank in their admiration. Out of their affection they dubbed him "the Sinner," because, as they explained, he so transparently wasn't.

Quickly on top of the admiration came a new amazement. The Sinner had picked out Bill Tench as his chum!

Water Tank looked incredulous.

Dick Sands, the discoverer, swore it was so, swore with an insistence and fervor that convinced the most skeptical.

"I dunno but p'raps we didn't name the boy so far wrong after all," said "Doc" Boulder meditatively, after a pause.

But they had named him wrong, for, though the chumship indubitably existed, the Sinner remained, after six months of it, quite the same as when he first rode into camp. He seemed as immune to Tench's grossness as, in another way, he was to the sun which dried the spirit and hope of the other men.

How it was the Sinner had ever come to choose Tench for a friend was a riddle much puzzled over but never solved. Water Tank ethics were simple. A man lived his life as he saw fit—always, of course, provided he kept within the "dead line." The Sinner and Tench were left alone, while Water Tank looked on and wondered how it would all turn out.

Six months added to themselves six more. Nothing happened except that the general luck grew, if anything, a little worse. Nobody but the Sinner minded much, for prosperity and Water Tank never had had more than a nodding acquaintanceship.

But the Sinner fretted. To work twelve months and find at the end of them he was \$50 poorer than when he began hadn't been at all as he'd planned it. So no one was surprised when he said he was going to pull up his stakes and cross the line into Mexico, whence came alluring stories of strikes in the Silveria mines.

Before he left, the Sinner gave Water Tank another sensation. He made a will. Not that he had anything, the Sinner was careful to explain, but his few little odds and ends he'd like to go as he wanted and if it were done on paper it might help some.

All he had or might have the Sinner left to Tench, to whose keeping the will itself was intrusted.

A day or so later the Sinner rode over the border. He was good-naturedly laughed about for a while, he and his will, and Dick Sands went so far as to predict that when the Sinner came back he'd probably introduce finger bowls.

If the will at its making had been regarded as wholly the product of eccentricity, it was to gain seriousness of attention soon enough. What brought it about were the reports, vague at first, but increasing in definiteness, that the Silverica mines had proved for the Sinner to be the big thing. He had made a wonderful go of it and was pressing his luck for all it would bear.

The reports were true. The Sinner was pressing his luck, pressing it with a nervousness and an energy far in excess of what even his young strength could stand.

The motive of it, though, was not to make the Silverica mine yield up to him its last ounce of treasure. The thing he strove for was to forget the hopelessness of his fortunes in a quite different direction. That he did not forget and could not he came at last to see. The other one had seen it from the first, and had stood by, torn with impotent sympathy.

These two knew; these two alone. For all the rest the Sinner's shield had only its bright side.

Finally, wearied with his futile struggle, the Sinner turned back toward Water Tank as to a possible haven.

Water Tank welcomed him as a "favorite son" who had prospered. He was rich? He supposed so. As rich as they had said? Richer. Then why, asked Water Tank, which held no illusions regarding itself, had he come back? To which the Sinner returned nothing coherent.

He was changed. They all saw that. The mines or something else had done what the desert sun had failed to do. The old fire was gone, the old spirit broken. In its place there was the sense of a new strength, the sort that fights temptation. This, despite all, had not given way, and it gave to him a fineness that his careless days had but suggested.

The weeks went by and from exclaiming over the Sinner's wealth Water Tank turned to anxiety about the Sinner himself.

He grew more listless. Attempts to goad him into his old time lightness fell flat. Life had lost its tang and the Sinner cared so little he did not even try to get the taste baek.

"If that's the price of Mexican luck, I reckon Water Tank will about do for me," commented Dick Sands.

The day came when the Sinner did not leave his bunk. "Doc" Boulder shook his head. "The boy is almighty sick, sure enough," he said. "But that ain't the worst, he don't seem to care, and *that's* damn bad."

Sickness increased the strength of its hold upon the Sinner. When the symptoms showed unmistakably worse he asked to see Bill Tench alone.

The doctor demurred, argued a little, gave way.

Tench entered and closed the cabin door behind him. He was pale and obviously ill at ease. He began to mumble his sympathy.

The Sinner cut him short impatiently. "I'm obliged, but that ain't what I got you here for. I've got something to say."

Tench nodded.

"I'm not exactly fond of talking about myself," the Sinner went on deprecatingly, "but I've got to, for there's things to be done by somebody and it don't just look as though that somebody would be me. That means it's you."

The other man was silent.

The Sinner continued slowly and a little awkwardly, "It's special hard to talk about, because, you see, it concerns—a woman." A softness and reverence came into the Sinner's voice. "A woman," he repeated, "*the* woman—Mary Harbin."

A quick pallor spread over Tench's face. His eyes pierced the Sinner.

The man on the bunk saw the change and interpreted it after his own fashion. "Oh, don't worry," he hurried on, "I shan't be too bad!"

Then, confident he had reassured his friend, he proceeded to his story:

"After all, it's soon told. I met her there at the Silverica mines, doing the only thing a decent woman can do at the mines, running a boarding house. It was hard, smashing work and she wasn't the build for it, though if your eyes didn't tell you you'd never

have known. Not a whimper, no matter how bad the things ran against her. Pluck, — she was made of it. She was young, too, pitiful young, and she'd have been more than usual good to look at, if she'd had a chance.

"I dunno as I'd pick out a boarding house as a training school for courage, but I reckon that little woman could teach most any-one considerable more about it than he'd find it comfortable to practice.

"What came of it couldn't help coming. I loved her, as a man ought to, with head as well as heart, the kind of love that lasts to the end, the kind that's worthy of her."

The Sinner lay back for a moment. Some of the old fire had come to his eyes again, but it was gone now. His voice became hushed as when one speaks of the dead. "She saw what was coming and tried to stop me. Looking back I can see how in a dozen ways she struggled to keep me from saying the word. But I didn't see then and it wouldn't have made much difference if I had, most likely.

"So I spoke — and I learned. She was married already."

Tench was white, silent, immovable, except for the fingers of his right hand, which twitched nervously at his belt.

The Sinner took up his story. "What he had made life for her I came pretty nêar guessing, not from what she said so much as from what she didn't.

"This thing she called a husband left her in the lurch three years ago without two bits to call her own. Then, when she got a little on her feet again he found it out and wrote her for money." The Sinner's voice was tense. "That stopped a year ago, and where he is, or whether he's living or dead, she don't know. Neither do I, worse luck."

The sick man sank back exhausted. Tench breathed deep and seemed suddenly to gain control of his twitching fingers.

With an effort the Sinner raised himself. "Bad as the cur had treated her, knowing there wasn't any hope ahead, she wouldn't divorce him. Not that she cared for him; he'd knocked that out of her. But the way she'd mapped seemed the only right way to her; her church said so, too, and she'd have had to throw that over to marry me and I was a good ways from feeling I was

enough to take its place. That's why I didn't urge her any more.

"I fought night and day to forget the pain of it. At last, worn out, hopeless, I gave it up. The night before I came away I wandered out to a little half-sheltered place near the mine. I wanted to be alone, that last time. And then she came to me.

"The odd thing was it didn't seem strange, but just what was bound to be. Her face was pale, but it was her eyes held me. They were full of sadness, but of something else, too, something sweet and lovely that I'd only got a glimpse of times past. It struck me as if she was going to let all there was, that she'd never said, speak just once, through her eyes.

"She came up to me as I stood there in the moonlight and laid her hands soft like on my shoulders. 'You are going away never to come back,' she said. 'I know, and I know why. You have been brave and kind and good. I can't make it up to you, but perhaps it will help you some to know' — her voice dropped very low — 'how much I love you.' With that she was gone — and I never saw her again."

The sick man had forgotten Tench, the crude cabin, all about him. When the vividness of what he saw faded somewhat he smiled wanly. "So much for stories. Now to business. I know my shape; sometimes doctors say most when they don't say anything. It's because I know it I asked for you. It's about that will I gave you. I want you to tear it up."

Tench started. "Tear it up?"

"Yes, for I've made another. I haven't forgotten you, of course, but the most I've left to her. It will make life easier for her, thank God."

The Sinner rose upright and pointed his finger at a tall chest in the corner. "You see those drawers. The new will is in the top one where I can keep my eye on it always. I feel safer, some way. When the time comes, you'll look after it, won't you?"

"I'll look after it," Tench assured. He went over to the chest and pulled tentatively at the top drawer. It slid open easily. He closed it. "In this one, you say? You don't lock it!" he added apprehensively.

"My eyes are the best guard," answered the Sinner. "And then you are the only one besides myself who knows about it."

"Just as well," said Tench. He mumbled a second caution, shook the sick man's hand, and left the cabin.

After that day Tench was a changed man. The solicitude he showed for the Sinner was extraordinary compared with his former acquiescence with the conditions. The doctor had insisted that always there should be two men with the Sinner. Tench in his new zeal was sure he could do everything alone. He won several to his side, but "Doc" Boulder was firm; two must watch.

The morning after his talk with Tench the Sinner was noticeably weaker. He called in Tench, Dick Sands and the doctor, to whom he made the request that when the end came he should lie with his face toward the old chest in the corner.

In the afternoon the Sinner relapsed into a stupor from which the doctor failed to rouse him. For nine days this lasted. In the weakened frame life grew less and less perceptible until, on the tenth day, as the doctor came slowly from the cabin, his silent nod told those waiting it was over.

Tench and the parson arranged for the funeral. The parson had read people as well as books, which perhaps accounted for the regard Water Tank had for him. No one certainly could have been considered a fitter man to speak at the Sinner's funeral.

The small cabin was crowded. Tench, his face haggard, sat on a stool well to the front. The coffin lay as the Sinner had asked, the face of the dead man turned toward the chest of drawers.

It was the simplest service. The parson prayed a little. Those who could, sang. If the words were not distinguishable the feeling was there, and nobody minded the rest. Then the minister began to talk of the Sinner, using plain, homely words to tell of the sweetness and strength and goodness of the man just dead.

Tench listened for a while, then, with a gulp, rose from his stool and pushed his way to a less conspicuous place over in the corner. No one heeded him.

The minister went on. Tench edged close to the chest. Stealthily he drew a long envelope from his pocket. He tried the top drawer; it slid open noiselessly. Tench dropped the envelope inside and drew forth another, similar to the first, but fresher. This he thrust deep within his coat and slid the drawer into place again.

He shot a quick, anxious look about. Water Tank was intent upon the minister's words. The parson, absorbed, had no thought for the huddled figure in the corner. No one had seen him. He was safe. Tench breathed full. Anxiety faded from his face, and over it crept an ugly triumph. He turned upon the still figure in the coffin. "The little fool," he muttered.

But he got no further and his face of a sudden became ghastlier than that at which he looked. With a low cry he staggered through the door and fell fainting on the other side.

The Sinner had opened his eyes and given him back look for look!

The animal in Water Tank was always dangerously near the surface, so that what happened in the next two hours was, considering the place and the conditions, practically inevitable.

When, in due time, they cut Tench's body down they found the new will and two much worn, Mexican-stamped, letters.

The Sinner knew nothing of these things for many weeks. It was a fortnight before he was allowed to talk of his experience. The specialist who came out to investigate the case said it was the most remarkable example of a deep cataleptic trance he had ever personally encountered. It was not strange the man had been pronounced dead, since the two conditions so closely resemble each other that the ordinary tests of death may be applied to a cataleptic victim with the result, often, that life will be found apparently extinct.

The Sinner, telling about it, said there had not been a moment through the whole ordeal when he had not been fully conscious of what was going on around him. He heard himself pronounced dead, understood the arrangements being made for his funeral, and yet was incapable of moving a muscle or indicating in any way whatever that life was yet in him.

"The part of it I can't for the life of me understand," he said in a perplexed way, "is that 'though I knew everything you folks were doing I didn't care a bit. Now, I can't even think of it without feeling queer, but then it seemed the unimportantest thing in the world. But when it came to me that the only thing I cared for was going to smash through the meanness of the man I'd trusted most, something seemed let loose inside me. For a

second it was hell — then my eyes opened." The sweat stood out on the Sinner's brow.

"It appears to me," broke in Dick Sands, "that a few minutes' table stakes would make the air of this cabin some breathier." And it did.

When they told him of Tench's fate the Sinner took the news gravely, but made no comment. They showed him the recovered will and the worn letters.

"Seems he had no more right to the name of Tench than you have," said "Doc" Boulder.

The Sinner opened the envelope uneasily. After all, what mattered the rest about this man. He knew far too much already.

The next instant the Sinner grasped excitedly for the second letter. "My God, it can't be, it can't be," he said over and over again to himself.

The letters contained merely the statement that money was enclosed. They were both signed, "Your wife, Mary Harbin."

Two days later, accompanied by "Doc" Boulder and Dick Sands to see that he made the journey safely, the Sinner started a second time for the Silverica mines.



Easy Money.*

BY BORDEN H. MILLS.



“It isn't really a trick at all,” said the dentist to his patient, the drummer, “though I don't understand it myself, to tell the truth. It's a marvellous faculty possessed by a friend of mine for knowing what's going on in a place, though he may not be personally present, or have any means of communication. You can lay out here on the table an entire pack of cards, face up, and touch any one of the fifty-two. Then step to the telephone and call up my friend, and he'll tell you what card you have touched.”

“Impossible,” said the patient. “I'd bet almost anything that it can't be done. It might be worked if you did the telephoning, and had some combination of words, or code of signals to use in talking to your friend, from which he could tell what card had been picked out. But if I do the telephoning, — why, I'd wager a ten-spot he couldn't tell the card.”

“Done,” said the dentist.

He produced a pack of cards and handed them to the drummer, who shuffled them thoroughly, and laid them out, face up, in four rows of thirteen cards each. At the dentist's request the drummer touched one, that chanced to be the ten-spot of diamonds.

“Now,” said the dentist, “step to the 'phone, call 309 Cortlandt, ask for my friend, tell him that you're at my office and have touched a card, and ask him what card you touched.”

The drummer did as directed, and after a moment's pause, the words came over the wire, — “That was the ten of diamonds you picked out.”

The money was the dentist's.

The loser pressed him for an explanation of the trick, for trick

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he believed it to be, but the dentist insisted that he was as much in the dark as the drummer, who thereupon left the office.

"There's a catch somewhere," said he to his friend, the credit man, to whom he related his experience, "and I'd give another ten dollar bill to know just where."

"Well," said the credit man, "I'm not averse to making a tenner or two myself, and being forewarned, I think I can detect his little game,—for it must be a game, as you say. Suppose I drop around to see your dentist friend this afternoon? I have a little filling that might just as well be done now as any other time. He'll likely get talking cards with me,—I'll steer him on to it if he doesn't. I'll make a little wager with him myself, and watch him closely, and perhaps I'll see the game before it is really worked, and be able to catch him in the act. You said it was worth ten to you to know how it was done. If I meet you here at six and tell you how, is that tenner mine?"

"It is," exclaimed the drummer, "provided, of course, you do not get the secret by persuading the doctor to tell you,—and as for that, I'll trust to your honor."

"Done," was the reply, and they went their several ways.

Six o'clock came, and they met in the dining-room.

"Well," began the credit man, "you're stung,—and so am I. I went through practically the same experience that you did,—picked out the ace of spades, and the dentist's friend promptly told me what card I had touched. I watched the man carefully during the whole proceedings. While I was getting 309 Cortlandt he paid no attention to me at all, but continued to read in a book he had picked up but a moment before I selected the card."

"It's certainly a most mysterious affair all the way through," was the drummer's reply, "and I'd give anything to know just how it was worked."

The two did not meet again for nearly a year, when they ran across one another on lower Fifth Avenue one day, and stopped to chat, and the credit man remarked:

"By the way, do you remember how we two got fooled on that card game of your dentist's last year? That Ransome, who worked with him, must be a pretty slick one. I'd like to look the doctor up and ask him to introduce me to the fellow."

"Ransome?" exclaimed the other, "I don't remember that the name was Ransome. My memory isn't very good as to that part of the occurrence, but it strikes me it was more like Ramsay."

"No, I'm pretty sure it was Ransome," was the reply, "but of course I may be mistaken. Ramsay or Ransome, however, he was a pretty clever fellow, and we were neatly done, both of us. Lunch with me on the strength of it."

Accordingly they adjourned to a near-by café, and were selecting from the dinner card when the telephone bell on the bar behind them rang. "Yes. This is 309 Cortlandt," they heard the bartender say.

They pricked up their ears on the instant. That was the very number the dentist had used in his card game.

The bartender waited a minute. "Yes, this is Mr. Roberts talking to you now," he said.

Then came another pause, and then, "That card you touched was the king of clubs. Yes, the king. Good-bye," and he hung up the receiver.

"Excuse me," said the drummer, as the man turned from the 'phone, "But that's a queer conversation to have over a telephone. Here's the price of a good dinner for you, if you will tell us the game."

The bartender hesitated a moment, and then, accepting the proffered bill, replied:

"It's the greatest ever. I've a friend round in Twenty-third Street who's a dentist. He gets a customer talking about tricks with cards, and tells him he has a friend who can tell what card is touched in a pack laid out face up, without being present at all, just by being called up on the 'phone and told that a card has been picked out. The customer gets excited about it, and nine times out of ten offers to bet it can't be done. If he doesn't make the offer himself, my friend does, and it's mighty seldom that he isn't taken up. The guy lays out the paste-boards, touches one, and then calls me up, and I tell him what card's been touched,— every time. We knock out a hundred or more some weeks, for the doc has a big practice,— mostly among sporting men and other geuts that think they know a good thing when they see it. I tell you, it's the greatest thing ever. 'Easy money' is no name for it."

"But," said the credit man, "I don't see it yet. How can you tell from here what card's been touched?"

"Easy," was the reply, "I have a little book here,—you can see it hanging by the 'phone, and if you'd been watching me, you would have noticed that I looked in it before telling him what the card was. The doctor has the same thing pasted in the middle of his engagement book. It's a list of the fifty-two cards in the pack, and opposite the name of each card is the name of some person,—the same names in his list as in mine, in the same order.

"Suppose the guy touches the Queen of Hearts. Doc looks in the book,—that's easy, because he has opened it a moment before,—maybe to put down another engagement for the patient, for all he knows. Opposite the words 'Queen of Hearts' is written the name 'Jackson.' Doc says, "Call up 309 Cortlandt, and ask for Mr. Jackson." The fellow does so. I answer the 'phone, look for Jackson in my list,—there's the Queen of Hearts opposite. "You touched the Queen of Hearts," says I,—and the money's ours.

"Cinch? Well, I should rather say. It's almost a shame to take the money."

"It is, indeed," said credit, looking sadly at drummer.

"Shame isn't the word," said drummer to credit.

"Have one on the House, gents?" said the bartender.



The Truthful Hobo at White Ridge.*

BY JOEL SMITH.



HEAVY, dark night, gathering darker with every downpour of rain, hung over White Ridge. Harvesting around the little country village had been belated by bad weather, and hands were scarce; so there were two good reasons why Job Thorne did not turn the lusty-looking but thoroughly drenched stranger from his door.

"Come in, come in; never mind, the wet won't hurt the floor. Shake your hat and your coat and hang them up on those hooks by the stove. Had any supper?"

The stranger owned frankly that he had not had supper, and was very hungry, whereupon good Mrs. Thorne bustled about, and soon had a tempting meal set before him. He sat up without the formality of an offered blessing, as no inhabitant of that burg would fail to note, and began in a striking manner to prove the truth of his statement.

This aged couple, like all the people of White Ridge, were religious. They lived alone, having lost their only child many years before in a sad accident—the burning of the school building where they lived at Forney. It was soon after that occurrence that they moved to the present location, but Thorne had often confessed to disappointment with the quiet Eden here sought in which to live out his remaining days. This good man seldom openly judged his kind, but he felt that his neighborhood was growing year by year more disagreeably religious, and in his heart he realized that it was already far gone.

"Any chance to get a job around here?" asked the stranger, pushing his chair back from the table with a very satisfied air for a man wet to the skin.

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"Yes," answered Thorne, "you can get all the jobs here you want. But before we talk that over, I'll get you some dry clothes."

"Oh, never trouble yourself," said the man, "I'll soon get dry here by the stove. I don't mind the wet a bit, and when I say anything I mean it. Maybe you never heard about me—I'm the fellow they call Truthful Henry."

Thorne gazed in wonder at his guest. From the first the fellow had seemed to have an odd, straightout way, and now the assertion regarding his moral quality changed the common tramp at once into a man worth watching. Was he a thief or a robber, seeking to work on the well-known good instincts of the White Ridge people? Or was he simply a harmless hypocrite, seeking congenial company?"

"May I ask what's your full name, friend?" said Thorne.

"Truthful Henry is the name I go by. It generally distinguishes me from any other Henry that's around, and that's enough. Names, you know, are just to mark one person from another. If there were only one man, he wouldn't need any name at all but just, man."

"Correct enough," admitted Thorne, getting puzzled more and more in the kind of man he had to deal with.

"Is there any church here?" asked the stranger. "I always like to go to church."

"Yes; we just got home from church before the storm set in. Having no pastor now, we members get together and hold a sort of service Sunday evenings. There's two churches here—the Methodists, and the Christians."

"Which is the biggest?"

"The Methodist; that is, there's the most Methodist people here."

"But the Christians are the best people, of course?"

"Well, stranger, I don't know. You see it's just a name for their church. The Methodists are supposed to be Christians, too."

"Oh," said the man, seeming to be struck by the pleasant situation, "then they're all Christians."

Here Thorne, straightforward soul though he was, began to grope around in such a way that his good wife came to the rescue.

"Why, father," she said, "everybody knows it's a quiet, reli-

gious place. Invite the gentleman, if he's going to work here, to come in with us. Surely, we shall get a pastor before long?"

"What's the reason you haven't a pastor now?" inquired the stranger.

"It's a hard job to keep one here, mister," said Mrs. Thorne, being compelled to again answer for her husband. "Our church here has had hard luck, or maybe, as Mr. Thorne says, the preachers have. It was found that one didn't preach what he believed in, and the last one savored of the world too much to suit most. It was found that he smoked tobacco on the sly, and voted the Democratic ticket, and —"

"Hush, now, mother," warned Mr. Thorne, "you'll get started and say too much. It's enough, stranger, to say that charges were made against the last man, and he had to go."

"I see it all, I see it all; there is no need to explain further. That old jewel of truth this people have long sought in their teachers, and alas, where is it to be found? Yes, I see it all; and now, my kind friend, if you will show me any place to sleep, even by the warm stove here, if there is wood to last, I shall be content. Tomorrow I will see what the prospect is for work hereabout."

Taking Truthful Henry at his word, without delay, Thorne showed him to a good, comfortable bed. Mrs. Thorne's admonition that her husband supply the stranger with a dry night-gown to sleep in only aroused the response: "Tell the good woman what I want, I'll ask for," and soon all were slumbering soundly beneath the rain that now pelted steadily on the roof. Job Thorne had come to the conclusion that his visitor was nothing worse than a harmless erank; and so, peaceful in mind and upright in heart, he slept as soundly as the truthful guest that stormy night through.

With the morning's dawn, the clouds broke away; and after partaking of a hearty breakfast, the stranger thanked host and hostess most feelingly, and took his way toward Deacon Melvin's, where he had been directed to apply for work. Thorne had no work to offer, as his main source of income was a snug sum he had banked in days ago, but Melvin was ready and quick to avail himself of the lusty looking tramp's help.

"Most of you fellows come on a Saturday night, and get through work in time to leave Mouday morning, but since you come in the beginning of the week, it's a good mark, and I'll try you. What might your name be, sir?"

"Truthful Henry, sir," was the respectful answer.

"That's a nickname; what is your right name?" persisted the deacon, book in hand, ready to set down the name when he got it.

"Why, I think that's a very right name, Mr. Melvin. It generally distinguishes me from any other Henry that's around, and I don't need anything more."

"Well, I'll write it down that way, then, and I hope that as long as you work for me you'll live strictly up to your name. I've got a son named Henry that's quite a promising lad, and if your name will distinguish you from him, it's all I'll ask."

Thus came the truthful hobo into the employ of Deacon Melvin, who was accounted one of the most important men, both financially and religiously, in White Ridge. It being too wet to go into the harvest field that day, the two Henrys were set to sort out a wagon-load of old corn in the ear, which was to be sent to the town market, about three miles distant. While the corn was being sorted the deacon came around, and said:

"It's a trifle musty, and my horses are so used to having the best that they're dainty on it. But any hog will eat it, and most horses. I've promised the livery stable man a load, and you might as well take it there, Hank."

When Melvin's Hank got ready to go he was given Henry the tramp for a companion, so the corn could be disposed of quickly. They were admonished to get back home as soon as possible, for everything must be put in readiness for a start at the grain in the morning.

The corn looked well as they started away, for the few bushels of fine yellow ears, among the forty bushels that the load contained, had somehow found the top. The good Melvin could hardly have told when or how he got used to doing things that way. Perhaps nothing was further from his mind than the idea of doing wrong in thus trying to keep up with enterprising neighbors.

Not the most patient man in the world was the deacon, so when

he waited till after four o'clock for the two Henrys to return, it was no wonder that he should grow uneasy. What if that fair-spoken tramp were a bad man, and had done away with young Hank, sold the load of corn, and run away with the horses? But, what was the use of being a believer, if one could not trust Providence to look after its own? This thought came to him, and he went in to comfort his anxious wife. He insisted that they both trust for the best, and she must go about getting the supper as usual, for it must be ready when the dilatory marketers should come. Faith had its reward. Soon a wagon drove into the barnyard in the dusk of twilight, and young Hank was heard clattering through the gate toward the house. But heavenly goodness! the boy was crying.

"Hank, Hank! what is it? What did he do to you?" inquired the father.

"He didn't do anything, but keep me from sellin' the corn," bawled the promising son, in a pitiful way. "He told Jenks at the livery stable that you said yourself it was musty, and Jenks wouldn't buy it."

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Melvin, and nearly fell on the plank walk. "Told him I said it was musty? Oh, heavens!"

"Yes, but that ain't all," sobbed the boy, "I then went to sell it to Jarley, for his hogs, and the man said you thought that hogs would eat the corn all right, if horses wouldn't. Jarley wanted to know what was wrong with the corn, and the man told him right out that it was musty, and that you had slung a few bushels of good corn on top. Then Jarley called you a hypocritical old — Oh, father, it's too bad a name to tell!"

Now the mother came up, wringing her hands, and inquiring: "Oh, oh, what's the matter?"

"Enough's the matter, mother, and it's that man father hired that did it. I went to four places to sell the corn, and he'd just sit on the load and always tell 'em it was musty, and I had to bring it back. That's what took so long."

The mother wept with the boy, and the father's groans were pitiful to hear; but he at last gathered his manhood, and started out to interview the hired man, who had just finished feeding the horses and was pulling off the harness.

"So you brought the corn back, I see."

"Yes, they all say they don't want musty feed for stock any more than you do yourself."

"But, heaven save us, man, I didn't tell you to tell them the corn was musty!"

"Mr. Melvin," said the hired man, quietly, "my name is Truthful Henry, and you said yourself that if the name distinguished me from your Henry, you would be satisfied. I didn't speak in any case till it was clear that your son wasn't going to. Besides, you said that I couldn't stick to the truth too closely to suit you. Anyhow, sir, I wouldn't give a cent for a man who had to be told to tell the truth. My name is Truthful—"

"Never mind that harness!" roared the angry Melvin. "Here's a dollar and a half for your day's work, and you can go to the house and get your little bundle. You can go to the devil if you like, who is a wicked meddler like yourself. Get you gone, the quicker the better to suit me!"

That finished the scene, for the man said not another word, but took the proffered silver with a graceful bow, and started for the house. Soon Truthful Henry's figure vanished in the darkness on the road toward Thorne's. The Melvin family gathered in the kitchen to talk over the horrible blunders that must go far toward blasting a fair business reputation, and to quiet down as best they could.

The next morning found the tramp seeking work over at Harburn's, and as the harvest was pressing, no denial could be given so promising an applicant. He went out into the field, and at noontime Harburn came in enthusiastic over his new hand. The fellow was no common tramp, that was certain.

"I shouldn't think he was," said Mrs. Harburn, "for he told me this morning that his name was Truthful Henry, and that he meant everything he said. You don't find many like that, tramp or no tramp."

Everything went on nicely at Harburn's till just before bedtime, then—it having been ascertained beyond a doubt that the hired man was trying to live a right life—Henry was invited to join in family prayers. When it came his turn, the man began thus:

"O Lord, would it not be a great shame to be called truthful before men, and to shrink the truth before Thee? Bless, O Lord, this good couple, for I believe their hearts are right, but do reform their children before the little ones get further set in their bad ways. By what I have seen today of one boy, I take him to be the making of a bad man, a useless one, at least, if he is not soon curbed. All I can say to them will do little good, but I wish the family well, and so am glad of the opportunity to lay their needs before Thee. I trust them with Thee, for these two good people can never be made fit to rear children by any other wisdom than the heavenly. I like Mr. Harburn and wife too well to leave them without a commendation to the only true wisdom, the great source of power, and the fountain of truth—to thee, O gracious Lord! Amen."

When morning came, it did not seem the same house. Everybody ate breakfast in silence except Johnny, and he only called his sister a few hard names and threw a pickle at her head to emphasize his words. Father looked so troubled and mother looked so cross that Johnny failed to raise a racket at the table proportionate to his strength of will, for probably the first time in his young life.

After breakfast, when they had gone outside, Harburn said to the hired man:

"Henry, I am a little sorry to part with you, but cannot help it. My wife says that either you'll have to leave, or else she will, so I see no way out but to let you go. Here is your pay for yesterday's work. I think, Henry, you can get a job over at Munstall's."

"Is he a churchman, Mr. Harburn?"

"Oh yes, stiff and strong. He is the man who brought charges against the Methodist preacher. You'd suit him all right I think."

It was yet time to do a day's work, and again the little red bundle was strung on the end of a stick and slung over the truthful and industrious Henry's shoulder. Harburn noticed that the stick had been carefully set up against the house the day before, from which he figured that his late assistant had not been greatly disappointed—at least, that the sudden loss of a job was not a surprise. Harburn really liked the tramp, for all his outspoken

way of praying, but felt then he could not take the risk of retaining him.

Munstall snapped at the chance to get such a likely looking harvester, and Henry went straight to work without giving his strange name or doing much talking. Munstall was a rather austere man, who believed first and foremost in keeping things going. The new man seemed to be a hustler, and that at once set him up in favor. At noontime, during the hour's rest, the employer found time to grow familiar, and said:

"How is it, friend, that you are so good a man at work, and still go tramping about the country? I should expect a man like you to be rich in worldly goods."

"Mr. Munstall, my name, for one thing, is against me; I am called Truthful Henry."

"Why, that name shouldn't be against any man."

"No, it shouldn't be, but it is. The trouble is, having the name, one must live up to it. To do that keeps a man moving. I struck here three days ago, and I'm now on my third job."

"Well, your name will never hurt you with me, friend," asserted Munstall, emphatically.

"Perhaps not," said Henry, "but your ways may not suit me; in fact, from what I have already seen, it is impressed on me that I shall soon have to move again. You were driving a horse in the field this morning that no humane man should try to work, not to mention a professing Christian, as I understand you are. A man who objected to his minister's smoking tobacco, as I understand you did, would do well to observe the common feelings of humanity toward poor dumb brutes. I could hardly eat my dinner thinking of that horse being doomed under so cruel a master to drag a leg as large as his body after him till he falls down in utter exhaustion. I would rather be a truthful, feeling hobo as I am, than —"

"My dear Henry, you do not know the circumstances — you are not just with me. You have not been truly informed for what reasons I objected to the minister."

"Perhaps you are right in that, Mr. Munstall. But I can clearly see for what reasons you work your pitiful wreck of a horse. In this you are certainly moved by covetousness and greed,

sins that Christ puts along with the worst crimes of fallen humanity. Sir, I do not see how a man like you, making a high Christian profession —”

“Never mind, Mr. Truthful Henry,” interrupted the employer, grown very red in the face, and the sweat standing out in big drops on his forehead, “we won’t argue such deep questions further. It’s time that we got out to work.”

That afternoon the Harburn atmosphere seemed to have settled over Munstall’s. However, the well-meaning messenger of truth who was raking up the quiet, self-sufficient little community, had the satisfaction of knowing that his efforts were taking some effect. The crippled horse stayed in the stable all that afternoon. It seemed that for very shame Munstall was like to weather the storm, but when Henry went out to feed the pigs that night, and came back telling about the shameful condition of their pen, considering what one should expect of the owner, even the steady-going farmer went adrift — or more properly, perhaps, the truthful hobo did.

Again the old refuge at Thorne’s was sought; and now Henry lost a whole day, while the air began to grow heavy with all sorts of stories of the strange man who was going about the place. The evening of that idle day came the regular prayer meeting service, and old Mr. and Mrs. Thorne, accompanied by Henry, wended their way to the church. Melvin, Harburn, and Munstall were there, but Harburn’s was the only face among the trio that bore a pleasant look. He had evidently heard of the troubles of the others, and his own experience seemed nothing in comparison.

Munstall, as usual, led with a long prayer, praising God for His goodness; then a half dozen others prayed, showing a tendency to follow the leader’s high theme. After this came singing. At last a deep and solemn voice arose from a back seat, and all knelt quickly to get as far down out of observation as possible.

“O Lord, we tell Thee of thy goodness, while forgetting our own evil ways. Alas, I am a bad man compared to what I ought to be, but if I have courage to tell the truth, what of those who cannot even hear it?”

“Father, no need to say that many of these people are hypocrites, for Thou knowest it, and they themselves know it well.

The only question is: how may they be bettered? At the rate I am going, I shall soon run out of work in this place. I cannot meet people in the road, take them by the neck, and tell them how mean they act, and how insinere they are. • They might then have me arrested for a prowling hobo. One must have some chance. O Father, make them hire me! I can thus the better watch their ways and tell them the soul-restoring truths that are so far lost as to be a new gospel to many. I thank Thee that I can love men in spite of their false, hollow lives. This people sorely need the truth, and I am longing in my soul for a chance to give it to them — longing to be hired by someone here this night.

“O great Lord, do not be angry with me because I keep back, being weak, many things I ought to say. Give me strong words, even the words that Thou didst use to the buyers and sellers in the temple, and to the Pharisees and Sadducees. Let not such a brood as infested Jerusalem of old be trained up at White Ridge, a lovely gem of nature from Thy hand, O Lord God!”

A few plaintive attempts at prayer came from the half-hidden people, some of whom seemed to have crawled under the seats. It was very much like the faint and fearful peeping of hidden chickens when a hawk is known to be near. All finally joined in the most solemn singing of the doxology that had ever been known at a meeting there.

After the meeting, to the crushing astonishment of Melvin and Munstall, and the wide-eyed wonder of all, Harburn came up and requested the dreaded stranger to come and work for him in the morning. There was fearful looking in one another's faces, and a hurried shuffling out. Was there ever such a wonderful answer to prayer known, or was there ever such a foolish man as Harburn? These two questions divided that bewildered throng as it marched homeward with little in mind but the now famous tramp and his strange doings.

No sensation like this had ever come to the village. Busy tongues set White Ridge in a ferment during the two remaining days of the week that were quietly worked out by the stranger at Harburn's. The startling report got around that Mrs. Harburn had promptly picked up and left her husband, rather than put up with the man who had insulted her in such an uncalled

for way before her family. Everything that Truthful Henry had said or done seemed to be rapidly going the rounds, with some things that he had not said or done. It proved to be a false report about his parting husband and wife, but some other wild rumor immediately came to fill the vacancy. In the midst of it all came a happy gleam of certainty on another subject of interest — happy because it served to greatly cool the heated public mind. A message came from the presiding elder.

DEACONS MELVIN AND MUNSTALL,
White Ridge M. E. Church.

Dear Brethren,—

It is with pleasure I announce that you will have a temporary supply sent to you next Sabbath, and if you like the man, he will probably consent to stay. Your church has proved one of the hardest to suit in the district, but I have chosen this man with your late troubles in view. It is my sincere hope that he will not prove another disappointment.

Faithfully yours,

JAMES CASTRELL, P. E.

It was no uncommon thing for a preacher from outside to come at the very hour of service. But when the people gathered at the regular hour on this occasion, more nervousness and impatience than usual were to be noted. Thorue's and Harburn's tramp sat stiff and straight in the same back seat he had taken at prayer meeting. How cruel to get where the people could not watch him. But lo, the dreaded truth-teller arises, and slowly makes his way forward to the pulpit. Heads go together, and the whispered, "I told you so!" is not absent. It is still the common humanity, insincere under a striking and severe lesson.

"Brethren,"—the deep voice seemed to echo and awake strange sounds through the church—"certainly I have tried to live up to my name, Truthful Henry, among you. I have now to give another name, which I hope to live up to as well—George Henry Thorue.

"In the old days when the Forney school burned, I was not in the building, as was supposed, but a gang of roughs, seeing me hidden in an old shed in the darkness, and in dire fright, stole me away, knowing that the accident would shield them from all suspicion. Under what strange conditions, what help of divine

Providence, I grew to be a man, need not now be told. It remains only to say in this connection that your worthy presiding elder was my acquaintance and friend long before he or I came here. Through him my parentage was lately discovered, and I was brought to the arms of a loving father and mother. My short but eventful stay among you would lead me to give this aged couple a strong tribute of praise, were it not for the near ties of relationship.

“Now, I shall not preach to you much of a sermon today—I have been preaching for a week past. I have been trying in a simple, and I hope an effective way, to make you people see yourselves, as the Scotch poet has said, as others see you. The humblest of you may be able, some time, to do me the same service I have tried to render. If I have spoken with a surprising plainness to any who may hear me now, think a moment;—you will realize that a just God will certainly speak plainer to you in the day of judgment. You people have sense enough to know that what I found wrong among you was your fault, not mine.

“Understand, brethren, I had never come among you as I did without the prompting of a far higher motive than to act the spy on your manner of living. I knew this people nearly as well before coming here as I do now. The pit that most preachers are cast helplessly into was here open before me. I was to be sent here among your selfish prejudices which you imagined to be religion—a bound and gagged victim. Should I try to say an honest word to better you, I knew the gag would be tightened. So I besought the presiding elder to let me come to this people in my own way. Now I know that there shall be, so long as I remain among you, perfect freedom between us, and no minister can faithfully do God’s work among any people in any other connection.

“Your friend and brother, should he remain as pastor, will know no other creed but that all men should have reasonable condemnation for wilful wrong doing, and reasonable praise for right doing. So the only thing like a sermon in my talk today shall be a just tribute to Brother Jacob Harburn. He had probably more cause to get offended than any of you, and his situation was most delicate, yet he accepted the truth at once, and with an honest heart. Not that the man remained my friend, but that he

remained friendly to the word of truth, he shall have praise of his divine Master, and deserves it of his neighbors. Amen!"

The new preacher captured everybody at once, with the exceptions of deacons Melvin and Munstall. Melvin actually backslid, but returned again when the dust of musty corn got out of the air. It was Munstall that proved the wary Abner of White Ridge, to be won only by slow and tedious campaigning. He could not forget that lame horse long after the faithful animal had gone to the bone-yard. But he got tired of standing alone, and came around at last. The aged father and mother rejoiced much in the rare manliness of their lost and returned son; and brother Jake Harburn and wife, whose children soon became as mannerly as any, held ever an honest pride in the part they took in the advent of Truthful Henry, the hobo reformer of White Ridge.



When the Parrot Spoke.*

BY CLIFFORD HOWARD.



TOWN gossip was in a flutter of speculation: Doctor Harriman was among the bidders at the public sale of Ann Motley's furniture!

It was, of course, common knowledge that once upon a time the Doctor had been the accepted lover of Ann Motley, but that their tranquil courtship had come to a sudden ending and that from that time to the day of her death the timid and reserved spinster and the kindly doctor had gone their separate ways. What had come between them, why they never again spoke or met, nobody knew. Evidently, there had been a quarrel — proving that love's course runs no more smoothly in the summertime of wooing than in its season of bud and blossom; but beyond this there was naught but rumor.

There were those who professed to note a change in the Doctor since he had ceased to call at the garden-cloistered cottage on the hill. Nor were these observers far amiss; for whatever may have been the extent to which he gave visible sign of his troubled heart, the estrangement between him and Ann Motley was to the Doctor an unending source of sorrow and bitterness. It was not so much because of what he had said to her in the moment of their little storm, for he had spoken with obvious unmeaningness, but it was because she would not forgive him.

After the first day of ruffled temper and pride he had chivalrously acknowledged himself in the wrong; and, unheeding the words she had uttered in the stress of overwrought emotion, declaring their love and their friendship at an end, he went to her in penitent love, craving forgiveness. But she refused to receive him. Prim, sensitive Ann Motley! The timid love that had had its first awakening in the sunlight of his presence had shrunk back

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into her heart, wounded and affrighted. He had profaned her proud sensibilities, and she felt that she could not forgive him. And therefore it was that she refused to see him and that when he wrote to her she declined to answer his letters.

"Your silence tells me," he wrote in his final appeal, "that you cannot know how deep and all-absorbing is my love for you. If the few hasty, unmeaning words that escaped me in a flash of thoughtless irritation have outweighed with you all I have said or done, it is useless for me now to attempt to convince you to the contrary. I shall not again ask you to take back the love you have cast aside. I pray only that you will forgive me. Surely, you cannot deny me this. Let me know by some word, or sign that I have your pardon for my cruel though unintended words, and I shall ask no more. Grant me this — not for my sake, if you so will it, but for the sake of the friendship, the love, the happiness that once were ours."

These were the last words he ever addressed to her. She did not respond. Silent and unforgiving, in obedience to the dictates of an exacting conscience, she shut herself out from his life.

Then, with the pride of lofty manhood, he respected her decision and thereafter bore himself toward her as a stranger. Never again did he approach her nor mention her name. Yet there was not a day during all the weary years that followed that he did not bow in spirit before the shrine of his buried love and pray to heaven that he might some day know she had forgiven him. In vain he sought to ignore the blight that her unforgiving silence cast upon the sacred memory of her being. It lay upon him as a curse; and as time went on his prayer became a craving — a morbid, brooding passion — inspired by a dread lest he or she should die before his soul should be cleared of its deepening blot.

Throughout his daily life it haunted him with a restless fear. Yet he gave no conscious outward sign to the world nor to her of the torment of his spirit. Ministering to others in their trials and afflictions; ready always with his kindly interest and words of cheer, and giving to weary hearts the comfort and the benediction of his tender sympathy, he shared with no one the burden of his own cross; but, alone and un comforted, he bore it in mute desolation through the unbroken silence of the years.

And when, one evening in June, she passed away suddenly and without the herald warning of sickness, — her heart having gently ceased its work as she dozed in her chair, — the blow fell upon him with crushing despair. She was gone; leaving him alone, utterly alone — and unforgiven!

Yet withal there remained the nebulous hope that perchance she had left among her papers some message for him; something that might tell him she had not departed without an answer to his prayer. And thus it happened that he was present at the sale of her little property and was the highest bidder for the old-time mahogany desk, which the auctioneer described and put up for sale with irreverent harangue. And because of the sacredness attaching to the things that had been hers — to the things associated with the bygone days of their love — he bought her books and her clock; her ivory-type portrait of herself as a girl; her little cushioned rocking-chair, and the old piano — with its brass-mounted legs and its candle-racks — upon which she used to play for him the sweet melodies of the long ago as they sat alone in the dim light and quietude of love's happiness.

"Two fifty I'm offered for this parrot and the cage," shouted the auctioneer in noisy fluency, breaking in upon the Doctor's wandering thoughts. "Do I hear three dollars? Two fifty, two fifty! Do I hear three? Three dollars I am offered; three dollars is bid; going at three dollars!" he sang on, interpreting an undesigned nod on the part of the Doctor as a bid at the higher figure. "Going — going at three dollars! Three dollars! Going, going — gone! — to Doctor Harriman."

The Doctor started in surprise and was about to protest, as the cage with the parrot was brought forward and placed with the other things he had bought. Checking himself, however, in order to avoid possible controversy, he accepted the situation without comment. He had not meant to buy the bird, nor did he want it. It had for him no association with Ann Motley; for, in truth, according to the statement of the auctioneer, it was a comparatively recent acquisition. Nevertheless, it was now his; and thinking to dispose of it in time to some one who might care for it, he had it taken to his home with the other purchases.

In the solitude of his library, breathing now an atmosphere of

another presence and of other days, he opened her desk. With trembling hands and with a disquieting sense of profanation, every drawer, every recess was carefully, tenderly, explored; but his search was fruitless. There was nothing—nothing for him; no message, no word, no token, not even his own letters, to comfort him with the belief that she had retained some lingering regard for his memory. Was it then true, as his embittered soul had feared, that she had gone without loving him, without remembering, without forgiving him?

He closed the desk and sank upon his knees. A convulsive sob shook his bent frame; and, throwing himself forward, he buried his face in his arms upon the little rocking-chair that had once been hers.

About him were the deepening shadows of twilight and the hush of eventide. The old furniture of Ann Motley, with its generations of hallowed memories, lent a mellow sanctity to the stillness of the room; and in the enshrouding calmness, with the face of sweet Ann Motley looking down upon him from the desk beside him, his heart poured forth its anguish in silent, sobbing tears.

Then suddenly a voice, low and quavering, and seemingly afar off, broke softly upon the shadowed silence:

“Grant, O Lord, that he may yet come back to me and know that I love and forgive him.”

For a moment after the voice had ceased the Doctor remained motionless. The slight flutter of wings and the tapping of a beak upon the bars of a cage alone disturbed the ensuing quiet. Then, raising his head, the Doctor clasped his hands before him in sudden fervency, and as his eyes were lifted up to heaven, filled with the light of a strange awakening, a smile of illumining peace shone upon his countenance; and as spirit communing with spirit his face grew beautiful in the softening radiance of revelation, and upon his parted lips there trembled a soul-uttered prayer—an answering message of love and thanksgiving.



On the Lee Shore.

BY BROUGHTON BRANDENBURG.



WHEN the business day was over and the lights were lit in the peaceful valley town that lay at the foot of the hill, it was an unfailling sign of the hour that Col. Denby Grier should come in a slow dignified fashion out of the great door of the hill house and seating himself in a big roomy porch chair light a long cigar which glowed through the evening like a great rosy firefly in the soft dark.

From my window a little farther down on the opposite side of the street I have watched the old banker countless times as he sat there tilted back, his foot against one of the huge colonial pillars, and on the steps descending to the terraced lawn before him would be the dim group of white and color, his three daughters and some of their friends. Perhaps the tall, graceful slender white figures moving about among the peony beds would be Grace and Carolyn, the older girls, while the animated elf that always clung close to her father's place in the evening time was certain to be Mildred, the child who in that day was shyly entering the mysterious world of womanhood. But no matter where they were dispersed at dusk, the later dark always found them clustered about their father's feet and ever and anon till a late hour I could hear his resonant, drawing voice in one of those stories which had made him famous throughout the state.

The last time I was in Virginia I passed up the street and by the door of the old mansion. I stopped abruptly as it came into view above the thicket of lilac bushes that hedged the lower corner of the ground. A ruthless, marring hand seemed to have wiped from its prospect all of its rare old spirit, charm and beauty.

The imposing white gate-posts with their capitals were gone. The peony beds lay fallow, the steps were sagged, the pillars were hacked and scarred, the walks and the terraces sadly unkempt, and the sign of a boarding-house hung before the open door. The familiar chair and its venerable occupant, the master of the house, the gay friends and the stately daughters were gone. I knew the story well. I was informed of each detail of the thing that had befallen the family on the lee shore, for the wreck is spoken of to this day in all the region and so I was, I thought, fully prepared for the sight of the place. but I confess that I stopped short with a quick choke and stood for a moment looking abstractedly at the ghost of what had been.

It was the final chapter in a long lesson of protection of all that any man loves from what may befall it when he is no longer able to stand between his dearest and most treasured and the steady march of attacking circumstance. I am going to tell this story with its two wings that touch in conclusion. In fact, in these latter days, it has seemed to me that there was a commanding excuse for its being written and now it shall be set down, perhaps spread broadcast, and may it do the good that seems to me to lie within its scope.

I first knew the old colonel and his attractive family through his sister, one of the finest types of the southern gentlewoman it has ever been my privilege to encounter. She had married a New York broker, Edward Raymond, sprung of Connecticut Yankee stock, and a member of one of the best known firms in

Wall Street. Their house on Madison Avenue was one in which the gracious unobtrusive hospitality of the South was blended perfectly with the exact and brilliant life habits of New York. There one met people who were distinctly interesting on their own account, and with Mrs. Raymond the power to attract a coterie which any woman of society might envy was never used for any purposes of family aggrandizement but was merely recognized as the factor that brought to her door the friends about whom she really cared. Her days at home were a pleasure, where with other hostesses they might have been regarded as mildly unfortunate but necessary occasions.

Raymond in those days was, outside of his home, a hard bold man of business, intent on building up a great fortune. I have been in his office at more than one critical hour on 'Change when he sat at his desk, quietly giving brief succinct orders whose success or failure meant almost everything to him, and yet his voice never seemed to change in those times, his kindly eyes rarely lifted from the papers before him, his unlit cigar was set at a precise right angle to the firm line of his mouth and jaw, and when his hands passed to execute some detail, to pick up a pen or a telephone receiver, they moved with the steady manner that meant certainty combined with wonderful alertness. He was the highest type of the efficient American business man in the crux of battle. When the crisis was over he would lean back, strike a match slowly, light his cigar and let his mouth relax in an easy smile. This picture of him in that day I have drawn in this manner because I must pair it with another and a sadly different one later on.

One evening at a club dinner he met Senator John F. Dryden, of New Jersey, the head of the Prudential Life Insurance Company, and they spent some little time in the discussion of conservative New England investments in which both were deeply interested. Raymond in telling me of the occurrence next day said:

"I had always thought of insurance as a sound business, good enough for those whose families are dependent on their efforts, and also the cause of a violent mania which possessed certain persons called agents and evidenced principally by an unflinching persistence. No *personal* application of it had ever occurred to me. Of insurance officials I have had little acquaintance and mentally pigeon-holed them as benevolent old gentlemen who would not discount twenty dollar gold pieces under thirty days' notice, but in the Senator I found a man of fire and steel, just as keen as I or any one I know in the accomplishment of his hands and brains and within himself a perfect business dynamo, well-governed and secure. Now, you know every man stands for a principle in his life work. Senator Dryden impressed me wonderfully and I decided to do honor to his principle, the principle of sound life-insurance. I asked a friend to do me the favor of finding out for me, if I could get written up for twenty-five thousand in his company."

It was not a difficult matter, Raymond being physically what is termed a good risk, in fact when I knew him many years later he still seemed such in every way. The policy was of the twenty-year endowment sort, and, as indicated above, was taken out in the Prudential Company.

It was merely a matter of chance that Raymond took this step, and I know to a certainty that he forgot it completely only at stated periods, because matters, seemingly, a score of times of more importance were constantly before him. Quite different were the events which form the connecting link between this consideration and the pathetic story of the Griers.

The old colonel was of that provincial type of business man with an ancient style of letter book, and to whom the conduct of no deal was so important as to prevent the introduction of some long, whimsical, highly irrelevant darky story. He drove down to the bank an hour after it had opened each morning and at noon climbed into the antique rockaway and went home. Perhaps he came down in the afternoon, perhaps he was off astride of Bay Ben visiting some of his many farms or galloping furiously along some of the hill roads laughing with the exhilaration of a boy.

One of the young clerks in the bank was the son of an old friend and was supplementing his slender pay by collecting commissions for Northern business houses, representing tobacco buyers in making contracts, and soliciting life-

insurance. He was a reckless youngster, and had asked the old colonel so frequently for the hand of Mildred, and been told with such regularity and emphasis that her father was not yet ready to give up his baby, and certainly not "to a cussed young splinter like him" that he had no hesitancy about approaching him on any subject.

One spring Colonel Grier had found that with his knowledge of tobacco-growing conditions, his wide-spread friendships with Virginia growers, and his excellent location, he could venture into speculation on the crop with much assurance of large profits. This he did, and one day when he had cleared a hundred thousand for a month's efforts, the clerk went into his desk, and the following conversation ensued according to the colonel's gleeful relation of it many times thereafter.

"Colonel, I thought I would come in to see you about something that concerns Miss Mildred's future."

"You just let her alone, young man, and the devil will lose his best means of harming her future."

"Well, I am interested in this, too. What right have I to allow you to fail to protect the future of the girl I am going to marry? Suppose you shot me in a moment of self forgetfulness some day, as you have said you might do. Suppose business reverses and your being hanged should leave her penniless —"

"You audacious little cub —" gasped the nearly speechless colonel.

"I may be audacious, but those are cold facts, and I have come to ask you to take out a life-insurance policy in my company."

When the old banker had recovered from his rage, the whimsical humor and certain salt of sense in the situation appealed to him strongly and recalling the youngster he authorized him to procure a policy for \$5,000. The examiners found Grier to be a good risk. He was written up and signed it over jointly to the young lover and his daughter, telling them they might have a basket picnic and a month's house party if they should come into the money by his demise. It was all done in his capricious jocular way.

A few months went by, and again the wheel of fortune had turned up for the colonel in still more extended tobacco speculations, and one day the young man broached the subject of increasing the amount of the policy.

One of the colonel's oldest friends, Judge Sam Tucker, was sitting with him swapping tales of their boyhood, and both were in rare spirits. The visitor asked to see the policy, read it carefully and then said:

"Denhy, I never saw one of these before, but I tell you it is a fine thing. You can do it. Build it up to \$50,000 for the three girls. You are taking long chances on everything else. Give them a little protection."

"By George, I'll do it, Judge Sam," answered the colonel with a bang of his fist on the desk, and he did.

Raymond was handling the New York end of the successive deals that were being put through in tobacco by his brother-in-law, and spurred on by Raymond's boldness the colonel went farther and farther afield in his operations. The little bank and the farming business of his numerous tracts became very minor matters indeed. The people of the South were beginning to call Col. Denhy Grier, the "Virginia Tobacco King," when suddenly the scene changed.

The spring of the year following the increase of the policy, the New York stock market turned on Raymond to pay up its old scores of raiding he had perpetrated upon it. His enemies saw he was hit and gathered together their full forces to hatter and crush him if they could. In two weeks he was crippled. In a month he was approaching a crisis, and early in June he took train one Saturday, after the close of the Exchange and hurried away to Virginia for a Sunday morning conference with Colonel Grier, who had not known thus far that Raymond was in any real danger.

It was a morning that I shall never forget. The beauty of the valley, clean washed by a heavy rain the night before, was that radiance of yellow sunshine, that white flecked blue sky, and those stretches of brilliant varying green with white houses picked out among it, which have made June in that region

famous. All the flowers but the tardy roses were in full bloom; the peonies made the terraces before the hill house seem one enormous burst of color hurled on a green velvet tapestry. The quiet of the Sabbath lay brooding over the town, and coming up the hill were little groups of neighbors returning from church. Mrs. Raymond had been staying with the Griers for the month, and she and the girls with some friends were just turning into the gate when she caught sight of her husband's white face as he and the colonel, standing before an upper window, saw our party and turned away to come down. Instinctively she ran a little way up the walk to the wide-open door within which we could see the double stair and its old-fashioned turn and landing.

Vividly, as if it were an hour ago, I see the two men, so different in type, so utterly unlike in life, descending the steps, care and anxiety written on every feature of their faces.

Just at the landing, the colonel reeled, caught feebly at the rail, pitched forward as Raymond cried out in horror and caught vainly at his arm, and came crashing down the flight to lie bleeding and dead across his own threshold.

Still in my mind's eye I see the hurrying figures, hear the bitter cries of anguish, and watch the startled neighbors coming to tender their aid to the stricken household. Leaning against one of the pillars, looking off across the far hills of the old state, stood Raymond, his face like white clay and every line of his mouth and jaw so changed that I knew Fate held the victory over him.

The next day he was of necessity in the saddle again in New York, but all the tide was against him, his last bulwark was gone, and when the Exchange opened the next morning the first feature of the day was the announcement of the failure of the old firm of which he was the real head, and among the brokers who paused a moment—a moment only in their own affairs—the whispered truth went abroad that Edward Raymond had collapsed physically and mentally and was at that moment battling with death in an uptown sanitarium.

Strange to say he survived, but all his former powers of aggression were gone. When the entangled affairs of his house were straightened out it was found that the ruin was complete, and when the courts were through all that was left of the splendid fortune was a little house in a suburb of Brooklyn, in his wife's name, something she had bought intending to give it to a faithful servant some years before. There I saw them the last time—she sewing peacefully on the little porch, he pottering around the small lawn looking after his pet plants and shrubs, the two of them living quietly and perhaps more happily than ever before on the \$1,200 per year which comes in from the investment of \$25,000 which they received last winter when the endowment policy matured.

Of course the colonel's death left his tobacco deals half finished, his estate losses through Raymond's failure did the remaining execution, and when the administration had cleared up the affairs of Col. Denby Grier, the sole ward between his children and complete dependency, the only thing to keep his daughters from going into the town mills to earn their own living was the \$50,000 Prudential Insurance policy. In the words of old Judge Sam, the colonel's life-long friend, a poor man himself, "It stood out like a chimney tower above the blackened ruins of a mansion that had been swept by fire."

So, it seems to me, the lesson is complete. In setting it forth, I am glad it redounds to the benefit of that great institution which in the stress of a late hysterical day has not been found vulnerable to assault any more than that mighty Rock, the impregnable Gibraltar, the Keeper of the Eastern Gate, whose staunchness it has taken for its emblem. The principle is good and the millions who have their welfare bound up in the conduct of this company have shown their complete approval of that same conduct. I cannot forget the monition in the sight of Col. Denby Grier at the height of a noble and unsullied career of success, plunging down to lie white and silent before the eyes of those entirely dependent on his continued existence.



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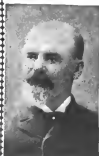
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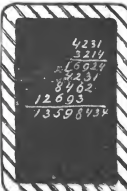
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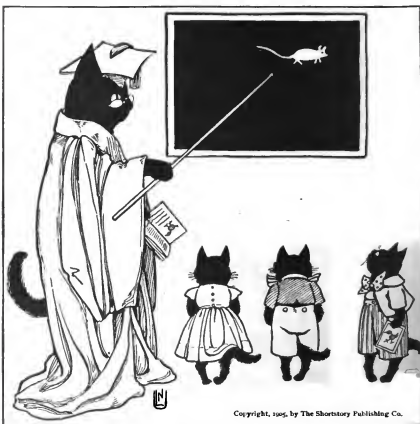
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