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THE SUBURBAN SAGE



H. C. BUNNER.

ILLUSTRATED
BY C. J. TAYLOR.

“THE RUNAWAY BROWNS,”

by H. C. Bunner, illustrations by C. J. Taylor; publishers, Keppler & Schwarzmann. The experiences of Paul Brown and his wife, who escape a tame, adventureless life, with a view of having “things happen to them,” and to this end leave a pleasant home to be gone a year and a day, are just the reading for a Summer’s afternoon, and there is still enough of Summer in the air to make it enjoyable to its fullest. How the Browns fell in with a band of barn-storming professionals; how they became tin peddlers; how they took charge of a lone hotel, and how they finally and gladly reached their trim cottage, is told in these clever and amusing pages, and will bring more than one hearty laugh even from those unused to smile.

—*N., P. & S. Bulletin.*

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THE SUBURBAN SAGE.





A. C. Bunker

THE SUBURBAN SAGE

Stray Notes and Comments ≡≡≡
On His Simple Life

BY H·C·BUNNER

ILLUSTRATED BY
C·J·TAYLOR



KEPPLER & SCHWARZMANN: PUBLISHERS ≡≡
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A. L. B.

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MR. CHEDBY ON A REGULAR
NUISANCE.

MR. CHEDBY ON A REGULAR
NUISANCE.



"IT seems quite possible," I said to my wife; "and if Chedby ever had anything of his own that I could possibly use, I should certainly go down and make a pretense of borrowing it, just to get a look about the place. But I hardly know the man, long as he 's been here, and I should suppose he might think it strange if I dropped in there at this late date with no ostensible reason — that is, of course, if it *is* so."

My wife pondered a moment, and then came to my rescue.

"You might go down on your afternoon walk," she suggested, "and ask him if that dog that strayed in here yesterday belongs to him."

"That 's a good idea," said I; "I 'll put the dog in a leash, and take him right down there."

"I don't think I would take the dog down with you, dear," my wife said, thoughtfully.

"Why not?" I asked.

"Well, you know best, my dear," she replied meekly; "but I only thought that if you were just to *say* that the dog had strayed in



here, and that he seemed to be quite a valuable fox-terrier —”

“I see,” I said, with a sudden flash of illumination; “and he ’s such a really valuable animal that I hate to take the responsibility of keeping him.”

“I think it would be well, my dear,” said my wife, sedately. “The poor creature cried all night in the cellar, and neither of our dogs will have him about the place.”

Inside of half an hour I presented myself at Mr. Chedby’s gate. He lived the better part of a mile away from me, near the River Road.

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I found Mr. Chedby industriously pulling an iron roller up and down the bit of grass-plot

which is known in our suburban community by a polite and friendly fiction as a "lawn." The roller was old, and of a somewhat battered appearance, and, being unusually small and light, it carried in its inside, beside the usual complement of weights, an extra one in the shape of a small iron glue-kettle, which had been filled up solidly with melted lead. Mr. Chedby greeted me cordially, but he responded to my inquiry with something like suspicion.

"I did lose a fox-terrier," he said, after some hesitation; "but it was most two weeks ago, and I guess he's been snapped up long ago. He was a fine-blooded dog. Is the one you've got a fine-blooded dog?"

I assured him that the dog's blood was the finest of the fine, and this seemed to encourage him to think that it might be his dog, after all; but I could not help feeling that he had his doubts about the genuineness of my enthusiasm. And, for a fact, when you come to think of it, it does n't look natural and unaffected to be *too* honest in horse and dog matters.

This became quite evident when, on Mr. Chedby's proposing to look in on me sometime in the course of the week to see if he could identify the dog, I had the indiscretion to urge him to fix an earlier date. This chilled his interest to such an extent that he hastily decided that it could not be his dog, and that if it was, he did n't want him, anyway.

He must have seen the disappointment on my face, for he went on talking in a soothing strain.

“The fact is, Mr. Sage,” he said, as he and the roller drew up in front of me; “the fact is that a man who lives in one of these suburban towns never knows half the time what he has got and what he has n’t got. I don’t know; that may be my dog, or it may not. Again, it may be some other man’s dog; and I ’ve got so that I sometimes think I don’t care.” He stacked himself up against the roller handle, and began to discourse with the air of a heavy philosopher.

“Yes, sir,” he said; “that’s the state we’re in in these suburban towns; and do you know what, in my opinion, is the cause that brings it about? It’s the borrowing habit, sir; the borrowing habit! The borrowing habit has got so grafted on us that I find it mighty hard, sometimes, to keep out of the way of the fatal infection that I see all around me. It begins—it strikes in—just as soon as a man moves here from the city. Take this family that moved in next door, for instance, two days ago. I don’t suppose they’d ever known what it was to borrow a thing before in their lives, but, Lord! they caught the disease right off. First, they borrowed a box-opener from the man next door on the other side. Then they sent over the way and borrowed a drawing of tea. Then, by Jove! they came over here and borrowed some hot water out of the kitchen kettle to make the tea with. Well, I don’t say anything against that. Of course, when you move into a strange place you have to depend upon your neighbors a little. I had to do it, myself, when I first moved out here. But I only mention it to show how the disease



begins. It will be milk next; they always want to borrow milk. Then it will go on to butter and eggs. Sugar, of course, and tea and coffee right along—that's the regular thing. Pretty soon it will be a bucket of coal or a barrow load of kindlings. Then they get to hanging pictures and putting up shelves around the house, and then it's hammers and saws and nails. Hammers and saws sometimes come back, when you go after them, but nails, never! I knew a man who lent a keg of nails, once, to a neighbor's wife. Some months afterward he met the neighbor, and the neighbor says to him: 'Oh, Smith, did n't my folks borrow some brads or nails or some blame thing or other from you a while ago? I'll tell my hardware man to send them up to you.' Well, when Smith got home, what do you think he found? A paper of carpet tacks from the hardware dealer. Yes, sir; a paper of carpet

tacks. Did he kick? Not much. He knew he was lucky to get even that. And, talking about hammers, I can tell you the funniest story, just to show how this borrowing habit weakens a man's sense of individual ownership in property. Some time ago I missed a hammer that I'd been working with, and had left on the front stoop for half an hour or so. Next day I met a man — I won't say who he is — but he don't live far from here, and says he to me, 'Oh, Mr. Chedby, I was going along the street here the other day, and I saw the hammer I lent you lying on your front stoop. I happened to need it just then, so I took it along with me.' Well, sir, I did n't say anything to him; but that man had no more right to that hammer than you have; and it did n't look anything like his hammer. The hammer he took belonged to Robinson, down the street here, and his hammer was up in the garret in my tool-chest all the time. But, of course, I had to tell Robinson, when he came out for *his* hammer. And I understand that there's been a coolness between the two of them ever since. Well, you could n't expect anything else. That's one of the indirect effects of the disease. Oh, I tell you, the borrowing habit is the curse of suburban life. It's got to be a regular nuisance, sir; a regular unmitigated, unqualified damned nuisance, if you'll excuse the profanity."

Here Mr. Chedby paused and mopped his perspiring forehead. The sinking sun glowed red through the evening haze. It reminded me that my homeward walk up the hill would take me longer than the journey down; and that the real



purpose of my mission had been accomplished, even though I had n't got rid of the dog.

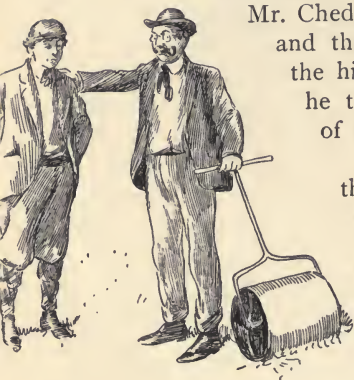
"Mr. Chedby," I said, as I turned away, "when you are quite through with using that roller, will you be so kind as to send your man up to my place with it? I've got a lot of new lawn to roll, or I'd be happy to spare it to you as much longer as you want it. But if you can send your man up with it in the morning, I'll be much obliged. (He had no man; but it is a polite suburban fiction to assume that everybody keeps one.)

If I had cherished any hopes of disturbing Mr. Chedby's serenity, I should have been disappointed.

"Sho!" he said; "is that queer old contraption yours? I was just wondering whoever owned

it. I got it down the street here at Higginbotham's. The family was n't at home, and there was nobody that could tell me anything about it. Why, that old thing has been kicking about this neighborhood for more than six months."

"More than a year, I think, Mr. Chedby," said I. "You'll send your man up with it in the morning?"



Mr. Chedby looked at the roller and then at the long road up the hill to my house. Then he turned to me in a burst of hearty cordiality:

"Why, I am clean through with it," he said.

"I would n't have kept you out of it a minute if I'd known you wanted it. You take it right along with you now. Don't mind about me. My

work can wait. Take it right along!"

I thanked him kindly, but I told him that it would be quite time enough if his man brought it up in the morning.

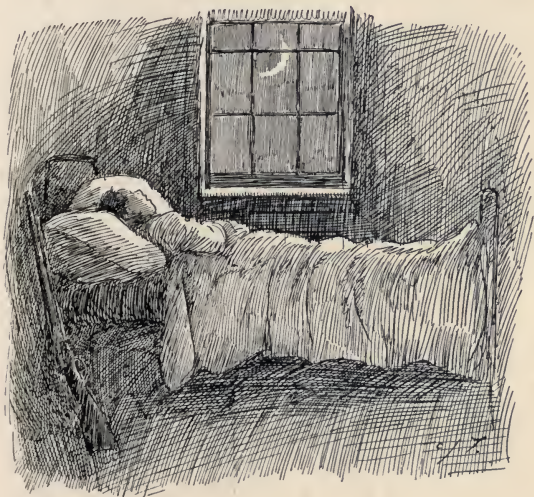
EARLY STAGES OF THE
BLOOMER FEVER.

EARLY STAGES OF THE BLOOMER FEVER.



OR several weeks this Spring I was a hay-widower. I take this term to be the masculine equivalent of "grass-widow" as applied to a member of a matrimonial firm temporarily parted from the rest of the household, and leading a separate but not wholly independent existence. By whatever name you choose to call my state, I was certainly, for the time being, quite bereft of family ties. Mrs. Sage and the children and the children's nurse were all visiting Mrs. Sage's family to foregather with an elderly uncle who had just returned from India in a state of sickening and offensive affluence. Personally, I do not believe that he will ever pan out one cent's worth; but that is neither here nor there. The domestic staff had been allowed a vacation, all except Bartholomew. Bartholomew is our man — or, at least, as near to the man as we have yet got. New-comers in the town speak of him as a boy, until they get into suburban ways, and learn that that is not polite either to him or to his employer. Bartholomew remained

to guard the house, and in this occupation he took great pride and pleasure, for it gave him a good excuse for sleeping with his grandfather's old percussion-cap shot-gun by his bed-side, so that he could be able to repel burglars at a moment's notice. You might have abstracted seventeen steel safes from the house without awakening Bartholomew, and no earthly power



could ever have made that gun go off; but Bartholomew slept proud and happy all the same.

I made no use of my lonely mansion, except to go there to do my work, which is the writing of such things as this. I had no need to dwell within its silent walls. The lot of a hay-widower in a suburban town is not unhappy by any

means; in fact, his condition makes him a valuable member of society. He may be invited to dinner without his wife — and every housekeeper knows what that means. It is one thing to invite the unobservant male animal to take pot-luck with you, and it is quite another to subject the every-day fatigue-dress style of your domestic economy to the keen and critical feminine eye. So it came about that I got not only dinner invitations, but bids to stay a week at this house and a week at that, and I made quite a picnic of my desolation and abandonment.

Now, when I say I am going to give you an abstract of a study in feminine ethics, which I made under the roof of my good friend, Biddleby, I want you to understand that I am violating no confidence imposed upon me by the generous hospitality which I enjoyed. I make this statement with Mrs. Biddleby's full consent and permission.

I am fond of making studies of feminine methods of marital management. I know, of course, that I, myself, am managed at home; but I do not know just how it is done, and I am not likely to be let to know. But while the process of management is generally imperceptible to the husband who is being managed, it is often quite clearly visible to the casual onlooker; and it amuses me greatly to see the manipulation of my fellows. Whatever I may think of myself, I can smile a superior smile at their weakness and blindness. I will now proceed to my brief statement, which is based partly upon what Mrs. Biddleby afterward told me.

It happened one day as, in going to my

room, I passed by the door of Mrs. Biddleby's sewing-room, the draught of an open window blew against my feet three or four pieces of light-brown tissue paper cut into curious shapes, and perforated with many little round holes. Seeing that there was nobody around to take charge of them, I carried them into the sewing-room and looked for something heavy to lay on them. The only thing I found was a huge pamphlet that lay open on a chair. I could not help noticing that the open pages showed a number of designs for a garment then coming noticeably into general use, but still regarded in conservative feminine circles with a certain degree of distrust and even disfavor. I need not say that I got out of the room quickly and quietly; and that I tried not to consider the remarkable likeness



in shape between the pieces of paper I had gathered up and certain dotted designs on the paper under my eye. I knew, of course, that Mrs. Biddleby was taking bicycle lessons.

The next day I brought the Biddleby mail home with my own when I came from the post-office, and it consisted principally of bulky envelopes bearing the names of New York dry-goods houses. I have been so long married that it would be idle to deny that I knew that they contained samples of dress goods. I also knew that Mrs. Biddleby had recently expressed her satisfaction with having got done with the dress-makers, for that season, at least.

It was some two or three days after this, that as I was going from my house to Biddleby's, I encountered Mrs. Biddleby and three of her friends practicing bicycle riding on a smooth stretch of macadam road. They had evidently got beyond the care of their tutor, but they were still taking turns at practice work on a hired bicycle. I joined them, for they were evidently quite past the nervous state, and I sat with those who were not riding, on a low stone wall, and watched the rider on the wheel exhibit her newly acquired skill. Mrs. Biddleby was easily the cleverest and most self-possessed rider of them all, and I was somewhat surprised when she dismounted and sat down beside us, and said in an almost petulant tone:

“Well, I declare, I really don't know what I am going to do about it! I am afraid I shall have to give the whole thing up. I certainly can't attempt to ride if my skirt keeps catching the way it does.”



I had not observed that her skirt had caught, and I was just exactly fool enough to tell her so.

“Oh, well, you could n’t have noticed, or perhaps you ’re just saying so out of kindness, but I came near having a terrible fall twice on my way up the road and once coming down; and I ’m sure I ’ve ripped every bit of binding off on this side. Look there!” and she pointed to where nearly three-quarters of an inch of braid had fetched loose.

“Skirts are a perfect misery, anyway,” said Miss Applegate, the next best rider in the quartette; and she turned to me, and added, audaciously: “I do sometimes wish that women could dress the same way you men do —”

“I agree with you entirely,” said Mrs. Bidleby. “And, do you know, when I was down on the River Road the other day, and saw one of

those women coming along with bloomers on, I almost envied the vulgar thing, she looked so easy and comfortable."

"Oh, Milly! how can you say so?" cried another of the ladies; but a fourth came to Mrs. Biddleby's assistance.

"Well, I saw her, too; and, do you know, I was thinking the very same thing. And, really, Mrs. Biddleby, to tell you the truth, I did n't think she looked vulgar a bit."

"Well, I don't know as I ought to have called her exactly vulgar," Mrs. Biddleby amended; "but, of course, you know, it does look a little — how shall I call it? — unconventional."

Then all the four ladies held a little autopsy on the word, and decided that the English language did n't furnish anything suitable. So they had recourse to French and called it *outré*.

"Well, I don't care," said Mrs. Biddleby, summing up; "I think we 're all of us too much slaves of fashion, and I am sure if I thought I could look half as well in them as that woman did, I should wear them, whatever people might say."

Encouraged by this bold stand, the lady who had been so shocked at first said that she thought so, too, and she had all along.

Then I put my foot into it again. I said:

"If your skirts catch, why could n't you make them a little shorter?"

Mrs. Biddleby turned on me in a very pretty flame of indignation, and exhibited her skirt, which was so high that it absolutely exposed a small sample of her ankle; and she said:

"There, you would n't have me wear any



shorter skirt than that, would you? Why, it's positively indecent as it is! No; of course you men don't know about such things; but I can tell you that a woman takes her life in her hands every time that she goes on a bicycle with a skirt on."

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Mrs. Biddleby had made her husband promise to buy her a machine as soon as she

had learned to ride really well; but Biddleby, for a reason which I will mention later on, was quite cool about the project. Therefore, it devolved upon Mrs. Biddleby to bring up the topic every day, so as to keep him informed of her progress. Hitherto her reports had been cheerful and encouraging; but this evening I noticed that she dwelt at great length on the bruises and sprains she had suffered when she fell, in consequence of catching her skirt in the sprocket. The next morning at breakfast, she was so lame that she could hardly move, and very low in her mind. She told Biddleby that he was n't sorry enough for her. He said yes, he was, and suggested arnica. She explained that she suffered principally in her mind, because she feared she would have to give up riding, just as she was doing so well. Biddleby said just what I said about the skirts, and got just what I got. Then the lady hooked her fish.

“Well,” said Biddleby, as he got up to take the train, “if that 's the case, I don't see what you can do about it, dear, unless you get a pair of those two-legged thingumajiggers — what do you call them?”

“Oh, Henry!” cried his wife, in tones of horror; “you would n't have me wear bloomers!”

“Better than breaking your neck, I should think,” said Henry, absent-mindedly, as he went out of the door.

* * *

Next day it rained, and the day after that. The third day, however, was fair, and, as soon as the bicycle lessons began, I joined the ladies.

They had not reached the ground more than two minutes in advance of me, but as soon as I came up I heard Mrs. Biddleby saying :

“Do you know, my dear, I really don't know what I *shall* do. Henry is absolutely set on the idea of my wearing bloomers, and you know how determined he is when he gets an idea into his head. Why, only day before yesterday he said to me, as he was going to the train: ‘My dear, it is simply a case of life and death, and you should not let any other considerations outweigh that!’”

I lingered with them only four or five minutes; but before I left, the three other dear humbugs had banded themselves together to wear bloomers, just by way of giving moral support to Mrs. Biddleby.

* * *

But this is not quite all. Here is Biddleby's reason for looking coldly on the bicycle project, as stated to me when the lessons first began.

“I 'd be more than glad to get my wife a bicycle if it was n't that I 've heard so much about accidents that happen to women riding in long dresses; and, of course, there 's no consideration on the face of the earth that would make Mrs. Biddleby put on one of those sensible Zouave trouser rigs — what do they call them, now? — Bloomers? Oh, yes! that 's the name.”

THE SUBURBAN HORSE.

THE SUBURBAN HORSE.

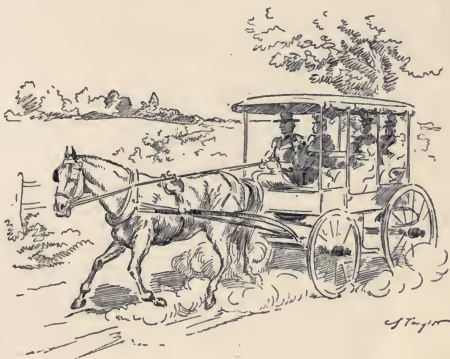


HAVE often wondered where the suburban horse lives before he comes to the suburbs; and I have sometimes thought that there must be people who make a special business of going about all over the country and collecting misfit horses of odd, job-lot sizes and styles, for distribution in suburban towns.

City horses and real country horses may be readily divided into various grades and classes; recognizable even to one as ignorant of such matters as I am. Though every householder here — except myself — owns one horse, at least, I am sure that you could not pick anything remotely resembling a matched pair out of the whole lot. I am speaking, of course, of the true suburban horse. I have several neighbors of sporty proclivities, who own costly teams of high-blooded horses, which are spoken of in a reverential sort of way as “fine actors,” or “grand steppers.” I do not speak from personal knowledge of the quality of these animals; I only know that they walk as if they had corns, and that they are always sick; and these, I am assured, are signs of high blood and great commercial value in a

horse. But I am not speaking about animals such as these. You may see their like everywhere where people are trying to get rid of their money. But the suburban horse belongs to the suburbs, and is a thing to be studied all by himself.

In the first place, he is no particular kind of horse — or he is any and every kind, as you please to put it. His quality, character and station among horses depend almost entirely upon his ownership and employment; and he has only



to change hands to change his nature. He is one horse if *you* own him, and another horse if *I* own him; and he may be any number of horses in the course of his long and peaceful but much varied existence. Having no horse or carriage of my own, good or bad, to provide for, I am a mere spectator of other men's horses, and how they play their parts, and you have no idea how diversely they are presented unto me.

Take the case of Rix, for instance. I take

his case because he is the horse I know best, and because he is one of the very few that I can recognize at sight. In the way of horse-flesh it takes something, as a rule, about as showy as a calico circus pony to attract my attention and fix itself in my memory. But Rix and I got personally acquainted when I first came to the town, and I have since watched his checkered career with a friendly interest.

When I first knew him he belonged to a market-gardener in the next county, who used to come to my door with his vegetables. The gardener was a very intelligent man, and I got into the habit of talking botany with him while I fed his own things to his own horse. The town was quite small then, and decidedly lonely at times, and even tree-peddlers and book-agents were welcomed with a cordiality and courtesy that sometimes lured them into thinking that we meant to buy. So I used to be very glad to see Rix and the market-gardener, and when the latter gave up the business because he said there was no profit in it, I really felt considerable remorse for the way I had pampered his animal with luxuries at his expense.

The gardener asked me if I knew anybody who wanted to buy a horse. I told him that I had heard the old butcher in Orchard Lane say something about buying a horse; and he asked me to speak to the butcher about it. This I did, and they met in my back yard, and the bargain was struck. I never saw my friend, the gardener, again; but when Rix came around with the butcher's meat, I felt as though he were quite an old acquaintance.



Now, up to this date, I wish you to observe, the horse was devoid of any noticeable characteristic. He had no pedigree. The gardener had bought him from a wandering Swede, and had named him Rix-Dollar, with a vague idea that he ought to do something Scandinavian in the matter. He was a very dark bay horse, neither large nor small, of an equable disposition, and quite sound and healthy. Indeed, I may say for Rix that he was never sick but once in his life. I was present when the butcher bought him, and I heard his points discussed; but I could not make out that they were different from those of any other horse.

In the course of a few months the old butch-

er died, and left no immediate successor. I had to go elsewhere for my meat; and I really missed the sight of Rix jogging deliberately on his daily rounds, with the white-bearded old butcher half-asleep in the wagon.

But one day we heard that a new butcher had taken the old place; and that the new butcher was a great sport, and was going to make things hum in the meat business in our town. I strolled around to Orchard Lane to see what the new butcher was like. He was not in his shop; but as I started homeward I heard a furious clatter of hoofs down the street, and, casting up my eyes, beheld a large, red-faced stranger in a showy vehicle of the dog-cart sort, driving a dark bay horse at a rattling clip. The man was the new butcher, and the horse was Rix — Rix in a showy harness with brass trimmings all over him, with bracelets on his ankles, and with a patent-leather shine on his hoofs. I marvelled much. The butcher did not interest me; but it was clear to my mind that either Rix was acting a part now, or that he had heretofore dissembled his true character. I did n't particularly object to his present frivolous worldliness, but I thought he ought to have let me know before that he was that kind of a horse.

Shortly after this, a friend of mine, whose knowledge of the noble Horse was so profound and pervasive that it came out in his clothes, spent a few days with me looking about the town, with a view to taking a house in the succeeding Fall. He happened to see the butcher drive by behind Rix, and he was as much impressed as a really horsey person ever allows himself to be.

❖ The Suburban Horse. ❖

He told me that the dog-cart was entirely incorrect in the matter of style, and that the butcher did n't know how to drive; but that the horse was an uncommonly neat little animal, and that if he, my friend, had that horse for six months, he could make something of him.

"I've owned worse, myself, my boy, before this, I can tell you," he said, patting me encouragingly on the shoulder; and I felt that his praise of Rix reflected a certain glory on the whole township, including myself. I did n't say anything to him about Rix's earlier days; for I always make it a point to go light on such particulars when I am talking with a man who wears horse-shoe pins, and has gold whips and wheels



and axle-trees, and other miniature imitations of stable upholstery on his watch-chain.

A few weeks later my friend wrote to me, asking me to see if I could buy Rix for him, and have him kept on a neighboring stock-farm until the Fall. He named the figure which he was willing to "go" for the horse. It was a figure that amazed me greatly, when I remembered the modest price for which he had been sold in my back yard. But I knew better than to say anything about this to my friend; for he was a very good friend, and I should have hated to lose him. Fortunately, it made no practical difference; for the sporty butcher had failed and fled from his creditors, and Rix was legally in the custody of the Sheriff, and bodily in a pasture lot adjoining my place, whence he occasionally wandered into my wife's flower-garden, and ate indiscriminately. Later in the season, a retired clergyman, with a family of five elderly daughters, came to board in my neighborhood, bringing letters of introduction to me. He was in search of a retired place in which to write a six-volume work on palæontology. After he had paid me six or eight protracted calls and set this fact forth at full length, I found him a retired place at a distance of about seven miles. He rewarded my kindness by hiring Rix from the Sheriff and driving his whole family into town three times a week.

In the Fall my friend, whom I shall call Mr. Fornand, came, and took a house in the town. He had to run out every day for a week or so, to get settled, and he frequently took his luncheon at my house. This was very pleasant for me, not only because my friend was good

company, but because I stretched a point and told the palæontological clergyman that I had a gentleman who raced horses staying at my house, and he promptly stopped making visits to town. He stopped for so long, indeed, that I had almost forgotten him and Rix, too, when one day I came across his capacious carryall standing at the station. He told me that he was going away, and that the Sheriff was going to meet him there, and take charge of Rix again. Part of this was not pleasant news to me; and when, as I was hurrying homeward, I caught up with Fornand going in the same direction, and, shortly afterward, the Sheriff drove past us behind Rix, I said somewhat hastily to my friend:

“There, Fornand, there’s that horse of the butcher’s you wanted to buy in the Spring. I think you could get him now.”

As soon as I had said this I knew that I had made a mistake. A Summer of palæontology had told on Rix, and he had absorbed something of the depressed and mildewed appearance of the prehistoric carryall behind him. But I confess I was somewhat startled when my friend burst out in wild guffaws of derisive mirth, and shouted:

“That horse the one I was looking at? Why, Great Scott! if that is n’t the funniest thing I have heard in a year! That horse the butcher’s? Well, Sage, I always knew you were pretty green about horses, but I *did* think you had enough gumption to know a first-class animal from an old plug like that.”

I did n’t attempt to argue with him; I was ashamed, anyway, of Rix’s present appearance,



and I thought I would let the matter drop. But it did n't drop. He guffawed all the way up to the house, and then he told my wife what a big joke he had on me. Afterward my wife said to me, kindly but pitifully:

“Well, my dear, I did n't think you knew much about horses; but I *should* have thought you would have known *Rix*.”

For one moment I thought of setting myself right; and then I concluded to accept my humiliation as a deserved punishment. When a man carries Christian forbearance to the extent of making a plumb fool of himself, he ought to take the consequences.

Rix went at Sheriff's sale to the teamster who carted away my ashes, and to whom I advanced twenty dollars to buy him. He came to the house twice a week, but I hated to see him now, for he had become a neglected-looking, disreputable, shaggy-haired brute, with worn

spots here and there on him, and a generally moth-eaten appearance. I was glad when the teamster sold him to the local expressman, although he was not a success in his new place. Having grown accustomed to hauling shamefully heavy loads, he suddenly found himself hitched, one fine Spring morning, shortly before Easter Sunday, to a light wagon, laden principally with paste-board boxes that had just arrived from New York. When he started to pull on this, he became intoxicated with his comparative freedom, and ran away down the street, scattering Easter millinery and dry-goods right and left. He was sent to the livery stable for safe-keeping; and there a tramp stable-boy, who had been a jockey, bought him for five dollars, took him in hand, treated him in the mysterious ways that are known to jockeys, and actually got him into such a condition that he sold him to an undertaker who had just started a shop in the town. The undertaker was a man who took pride in his business, and he fattened Rix up and groomed him and broke him to hearse so thoroughly that in a few months he was as sleek and wholesome-looking a horse as you would wish to see, and I felt proud of him whenever I met him. He attended only two or three funerals, but his dignity and style were much admired. When the undertaker gave up and went in search of an unhealthier town, there was lively competition for Rix at the auction of the business effects. He went to a local horse-dealer for one hundred and forty dollars. I attended the sale out of curiosity. As I was going away I met my friend Fornand, and I saw from his sheepish manner

and from his vain endeavors to keep the catalogue which he held, out of my sight, that he had been among the unsuccessful bidders. I could n't help it, and I did n't want to. I asked him what he wanted with that old plug. He reddened up; but he had too much capital invested in horsey jewelry to let me call him down.



“That horse is no plug,” said he, “though he may have looked like one at one time. The man who ’s driving may be a plug, and that makes a horse look like a plug; but if you knew as much about a horse as I do, Sage, you ’d know that in the hands of a right kind of man that would be the right kind of horse. And

when your uncle tells you that, you don't want to forget it."

Consequently he hired Rix from his new owner, and put him into a scratch spike-team that he got up to impress a Bergen Point man who was thinking of buying his house. This occasioned Rix's one sickness. He caught pink-eye from a thoroughbred.

Since then Rix has been in several hands; but he is still recognizable to his old friends. He worked on a milk route for a while, which quite incapacitated him for the work of the homœopathic physician who bought him next, and who was dreadfully embarrassed by being drawn up in front of various houses where nothing on earth would have induced the inmates to call in an irregular practitioner.

He is now pulling the phaeton of an aged invalid lady, under the guidance of a groom in half-livery. From what I know of him, he is trying his best to assume the demeanor of quiet, slow-going and responsible respectability suitable to his present position. What changes of social status and personal appearance may be in store for him I can not tell; for he is hardly more than fourteen years old, and, for a suburban horse, that is the prime of life.

THE BUILDING CRAZE.

THE BUILDING CRAZE.



I DROPPED in to see my young friend Pinxter the other night. I knew that it was Mrs. Pinxter's Singing Society night, and I thought that Pinxter might be lonely. He has not been long enough in the town for people to get in the way of dropping in on him; and he can not go out when his wife is absent; for they are on their first baby, and they don't think it ought to be left alone with the nurse. On such occasions Pinxter is generally almost effusively grateful for my visits. But the other night I noticed a marked difference in his manner. I could not call him cool; indeed, he remarked, in the course of conversation, that he had never met such friends anywhere as he had met in our town, and that I was the dearest of them. But he certainly was absent-minded and preoccupied, and could not help showing some slight signs of relief and satisfaction when I got up to depart, after a very brief stay.

Do not think that I was offended at my reception, and left early for that reason. I was not in the least hurt. As I was approaching the room through the hallway, I had seen Pinxter



hastily slip some loose sheets of paper into a big flat book, like an atlas, and thrust the book under the side-board. During all my call his left hand was playing with a newly sharpened drawing-pencil. Having seen this much, I had but to look at his abstracted countenance, and to calculate the length of his residence in the suburbs, to know perfectly well that Pinxter was under the spell of the Building Craze, and dead to the social world for the time being.

I have seen so many, many cases that it is an old story to me; especially as one case differs from another only in degree of virulence, and not at all in character. Pinxter's will be like every other case that I have seen; and the breaking out of the fever at the normal and usual period only shows that he is a natural-born suburbanite, for such alone does the disease attack. A man who can live a year in a growing suburban town without wanting to build is a man whom Fate is

pointing with inexorable finger to the penal cells of a New York flat.

The disease usually begins to fasten itself on young people like the Pinxters during their first Summer in the suburbs. Its approach is gentle, but insidious. It begins to come on when they find out that they are permitted to roam at will over cottages in process of construction. This is a new and strange joy, and at first they go about in simple, unaffected wonderment, making innocent guesses at the mysteries of carpentry and mason-work. Then they get bolder and begin to criticise and offer suggestions, which last are rejected by the mechanics with profound scorn and a flow of technical language that utterly abashes the suggester.

But nothing checks the progress of the disease when it has once started on its course. In the next stage, the victim begins to learn the technical talk for himself. By the end of the Summer it is not uncommon to hear the victims using lightly and airily such words as: "flashing," "rabbet," "mould-board," "valley," and "pop-out." Some even learn that in the building trades there is no change in the plural of certain familiar names, such as "sash," "strip," "blind" and "joist;" and that "cornice" is not pronounced as it is spelled. That is, for instance, the professional builder does not say "those cornices," but "them cornish."

Then comes the Fall, and they see the buildings finished that were a while ago only a mystery of naked timbers. Until the new occupants move in, they may still roam through the bare rooms, and pick out what they don't like



about each house. And when the tenants move in, there is the delight of calling upon them, and finding out what *they* think of the habitations that are supposed to have been shaped to fit them.

Winter, of course, puts an end to all this; but it initiates the most interesting and active stage of the disease. The Pinxters begin to DRAW PLANS.

The first plan that Pinxter draws will be drawn on the back of an envelope. It will be a simple geometrical figure — a Maltese Cross, perhaps, or an L, or a semi-circle, and he will submit it to his friends, and ask them if they don't think that would be a good shape for a house. He will find that his friends do not seem to be particularly impressed; and, after a while, he, him-

self, will begin to feel that there is something unsatisfactory about it; and that it requires an effort of the imagination to connect that empty outline with the idea of a habitable house. So he fills it up with rooms, pretty much at random, and tries it on his friends again — “just as a rough idea, you know.” Then hard, unsympathetic persons will call his attention to the fact that his front vestibule is larger than his parlor, and that it is unusual, to say the least, to have a dining-room that occupies more than half of the house, and that is accessible only through the kitchen and butler’s pantry.

He begins to see that there are realms of architectural knowledge which it behooves him to explore, if he wants to get people to look at his plans. So he stops at the railway news-stand and buys a twenty-five cent book of ready-made dwelling plans. Of course he despises the plans; not because they are despicable — as they certainly are — but because the book cost twenty-five cents and not one dollar. However, he acquires from the book the art and mystery of drawing plans; and, with the aid of a foot rule and a T-square, he finds himself able to turn out a couple of dozen in the course of a single evening.

Of course he does n’t get just what he wants right at first. He did n’t expect to. Building a house is a serious matter, and his means are limited. By this time, too, he has discovered the fact that the size of his house must be fixed by the size of his pile; and that the proportion of one to the other is to be determined by a mathematical calculation of a very strict and inflexible

sort. This does n't really trouble him. He finds that for the money he has to spend he can get a house thirty-five feet square. But, then, he really does n't want anything larger. All that he has to do is to utilize the space at his disposal to the best advantage. So he sets to work and draws plans, and more plans, and other plans, and dif-



ferent plans again. By this time he has got to doing his work privately and keeping it to himself, so long as it is in the experimental stages. He sees other suburbanites of recent establishment trying the patience of their friends with plans born too young; and he determines that *he* will make no such mistake. When he finally settles upon his plan, it shall be one that is open to no criticism, and that will be instantly accepted, by all who see it, as the ideal house to be constructed in that space for that amount of money. And, when it is done, he will bring it to me and exhibit it with an aspect in which defiant

pride blends with patronizing superiority, and he will say to me:

“There! if there ’s anything wrong with that, I would like you to let me know what it is.”

Oh, how well I know that plan! It is neatly ruled out on a single sheet of paper; but no single sheet of paper could contain all its glory. It looks at first glance like the ground-map of a municipal building with an orphan asylum annex. Pinxter sits down by me and explains it all, pointing out its beauties with a lead pencil.

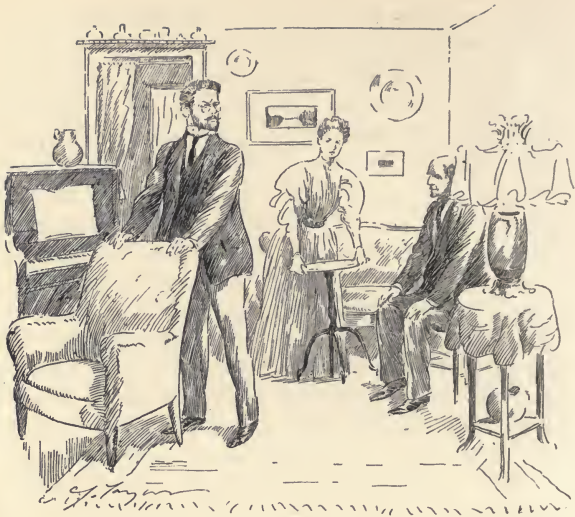
“This is the front door,” he says, “and here is the vestibule. I’ve made that good and roomy. I hate these cramped little entrances, don’t you? You see, I have left space here for a hat-rack and an umbrella-stand, and on the other side there are shelves, and a little cupboard to hang coats in. And here, you see, is a place for the baby-carriage, and right opposite it is a locker for my tennis things. Oh! I’ve thought it all out. Now we come into the hall. I like a good big hall, don’t you? I got the idea for this one from one I saw in the house of one of those Standard Oil fellows on Long Island somewhere. You see, I figured to get it big enough to play a game of badminton in. May be that ’s unnecessarily large, but that ’s better than being all cramped up, you know. Now, there ’s the dining-room. May be I might have cut that down a little bit, but my great-aunt has left me her mahogany dining-table in her will, and that seats twenty-two people, you know. Perhaps we should n’t really want to use it, but I thought I would take it into consideration. Here ’s the library: I have n’t got books enough to fill it yet; but you must think of the

future, you know. This is the drawing-room, with three bay-windows opening on the garden. Won't that be nice in Summer? And for the Winter I've designed this alcove for an ingle-nook, with a great big old-fashioned fireplace; and a long settee on each side of it. That brings us around to the kitchen; and there I've had to cramp a little to keep within the bounds of space — but ten feet by eleven-and-a-half is quite ample, don't you think so? This little odd corner here I've utilized for my den — just a cozy, snug little place, big enough to put a billiard table in if I should want to. Oh! I tell you, I've used up every inch of space. And now tell me candidly, Sage, do you think that, considering what the house is going to cost, I really could get anything more than I have got out of those dimensions?"

I tell him that I don't see how he possibly could; and he is so pleased by my saying so, that, in a burst of unselfish gratitude, he offers to leave the plan with me over night to feast my eyes on until I go to bed, if I will solemnly engage to give it to him at the station in the morning.

And, as his footsteps go out of hearing down the gravel-walk, I take a pencil and add up the little figures that freckle his neatly drawn plan — 7×11 , 9×14 — and so on. His thirty-five foot-square house is 72 feet one way by $92\frac{1}{2}$ the other.

Next Winter, when Mrs. Sage and I go to call upon the Pinxters in their new house, Pinxter will move the big arm-chair out of the parlor to make room for unfolding the card-table, and he



will say to me, in a casual way: "You see, I had to make a few minor alterations in my original plan. But if ever I build *another* house —"

That, however, is looking too far ahead. Even at the plan-drawing point, Pinxter is only in the incipency of the disease. There are several interesting phases to record before Pinxter gets where he is able to talk about "another house."

MOVING IN.

MOVING IN.



AS I look out of my window, my eyes tempted from my work by the grateful sight of the Spring-time green, I see an imposing and dignified procession pass majestically, at a dignified rate of progress, along the highway. It is a procession of four gigantic vans, like small barns mounted on wheels.

The vans are beautifully painted in the brightest and shiniest of carriage paint, and on their ample sides they bear pictures of mighty warehouses — warehouses of the reddest red brick imaginable, and of such vast dimensions that the perspective looks too good to be true. These vans are drawn by huge, well-groomed, handsomely caparisoned Percheron horses. Each van carries a crew of three or four sturdy-looking men. There is an air of well-to-do respectability about the whole outfit; and the great, tightly closed doors at the back of the vans give a suggestion of decent privacy and seclusion, which imply a proper respect for the goods and chattels of a home on the move.

Very presently the procession will stop at its destination, which is at a house where the sign "To Let" has just been removed, and the stal-



wart-looking men will jump down and open the great doors, and dive into the cavernous depths within; and in an incredibly short time, with a wonderful skill and precision, they will shift their bulky cargo of trunks and furniture from van to house, depositing every article according to directions, and being so obliging and pleasant about it all, and never breaking or scratching anything, that the delighted owner of the goods and chattels will give them twice as much beer-money as he had intended to. Then the doors will be closed again, the crews will mount to their perches, and the imposing procession will roll away along the pleasant, saloon-dotted road to the great city.

Now, this is all as it should be. It is a proper, orderly and economical way of performing a task whose difficulties and annoyances and general cussedness used, once upon a time, to drive strong men to drink and desperation. I am not the least inclined to sneer at the pageant; I only wonder, as I gaze, how a people who do more moving from house to house than any other race on the face of the earth, ever managed to get along without a system that saves so much

discomfort, loss of property, petty annoyance and humiliation—yes, bitter, biting, cruel humiliation.

I sigh as I look back across the years and think of our own moving in—or, rather, moving out—from the city. Things were very different then. Nowadays these mighty vans roll upon their errands of mercy from early Spring to late Fall; and even a comparatively humble family may do its moving with dignity and style, on the shortest notice. But when I moved here the tortures of May-day were still in vogue. The man who wanted to move had to hire his truckman long before he hired his house. Prudent people generally went to the truck-stands about the Christmas season, calculating on the genial influences of the time to soften even a haughty truckman's stony heart, and move him to throw a dollar or two off his price. People in whom the moving habit was highly developed used to hire their truckman from year to year; but up in Harlem, where no one ever keeps a house for two consecutive years, they used to sell options in truckmen.

The truckman whom I engaged was a genial, active, encouraging person with whom I drove my bargain in January. He promised to be on hand at six o'clock in the morning on the first of May, and he offered to turn up at four if I preferred that hour. I told him that I thought it was ostentatiously early, and that six would do. He had four or five trucks of a size that at that time was considered large; but in case they proved inadequate to the occasion he promised to bring his brother-in-law's one-horse wagon, to which said one horse was attached. He entered

my name and address in his engagement book ; and, for further surety, I made a point of passing that way about once a month and recalling myself to his memory, and giving him one of my best cigars.

On the morning of the first of May we were all up and dressed at six o'clock and waiting for the truckman — my wife and I and our whole domestic staff, and my wife's eighty-two year old uncle, who would come in to help us move, and who had to be fed all day with light, unbreakable ar-

ticles to potter around with. Even the baby was with us—at least, she was crying, and I suppose it was for the truckman. She had cried for every conceivable thing else already, and it did n't seem as if there were anything left to cry for except the truckman.

Six o'clock came, and seven, but no truckman. We sat around on trunks tied up with clothes-line, and discussed the chances of his having been bribed to desert us for the service of some millionaire. We hung out of the windows and strained our eyes to catch the approach of the army of chariots. Scores of truck-



men passed, but ours came not. When it came to the point where my wife began to ask me whether I was sure I had given him the right address, I felt that the need of a temporary absence was clearly indicated, and I said I would go to the truck-stand and see what had become of my man. At nine o'clock I went. The truck-stand was a long way off, and the day was hot and sulky. When I got there I was a perspiring crucible of pent-up profanity. There was not a truck on the stand. The policeman told me that my man had left early, but he could not say whether he had gone in my direction or not. He kindly advised me not to wait for him after twelve o'clock.

I went back to the house. I found the truckman there with his caravan. He explained that I had given him the wrong address; but he saved me from a lasting misunderstanding with my wife by adding that I gave him the wrong name. The truckman's manner had entirely changed. He had a contemptuous and commanding aspect; and there was the flush of pride upon his face. At least, I thought at the time it was pride. I tried to explain to him the ingenious scheme my wife and I had devised of apportioning the furniture of a given room, or set of rooms, to one particular truck. His manner was so abstracted and absent-minded that by the time I had got him to show any interest at all, his men had distributed the greater portion of the furniture among the various trucks, on an entirely inferior system of their own. He then told me that he had moved more families than I had ever seen, and requested me to keep my

wife's uncle out of the hall-way unless I wanted somebody to let a feather-duster fall on him and kill him.

Most of the morning I spent in keeping the truckmen away from a little back hall where we had stowed away a lot of discarded furniture and household belongings generally, which we had given to an obliging junk-man, who had kindly



consented to take them away. It was quite an accumulation of legless chairs, broken-down kitchen furniture and worn-out bedding, and it included a number of those atrocities in the way of highly and cheaply decorated furniture and idiotic objects of ornamental intent which find their way into every household, even those that really mean well. Some of those truckmen would pass by an ebony bookcase six feet long without seeing it, and would hurl themselves upon that collection, and try their best to carry away a

wash-pitcher without a handle or a foot-rest with a broken back. My unresting vigilance kept the assortment intact until the last truck was loaded; and then, in an evil hour, I turned my back for a few minutes. I had not counted upon the brother-in-law and his one-horse wagon. He arrived about this time, and, finding nothing else to make a load of, he took the whole disreputable-looking outfit and drove merrily away. By this time everything had been removed from the place; the servants, with the exception of the nurse, had been started off on an early train to our new suburban home, and my wife and I sat down to eat a bit of luncheon — on the floor. After luncheon I sat on the window-sill and smoked a pipe. My wife remarked that she was thankful that we had got out before the new tenants had begun to move in.

“We have n't missed it by much,” I said; “for there are their trucks in the street. And do you remember, my dear, my telling you that the way that this fool of a landlord was treating his tenants would result in lowering the character of the street? Now look out there at the furniture of these people who are going to move in here. Did you ever see anything so sickeningly cheap and utterly common? Why, it's hardly one remove from what you'd expect to find in a tenement house!”

My wife looked out of the window.

“Why, my dear, how *can* you?” she said.

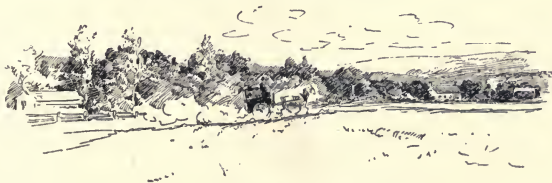
“Well,” I went on, “just look at it. Did you ever see such a lot of cheap, worn-out, poverty-ridden stuff to move into a nice, smart-looking house like this?”

“Why, dear,” said my wife, “that ’s *our* furniture, and those are our trucks. They were loaded almost an hour ago, but they have n’t started yet, and I *think* the men are all in the saloon on the corner.”

By the time I had hurried the men out of the saloon, and started the caravan, it was too late to take the train by which we had meant to go out, and we found that there would be no other for three hours. There was nothing for it but to take another railroad to a larger town five miles nearer New York, and hire a carriage to ride the rest of the way. We rather liked the prospect, however, for we thought the ride would rest us, and that baby could take her nap in the carriage. But we had taken too cheerful and optimistic a view of the livery-stable accommodations of suburban towns, as we realized when, an hour later, we found ourselves jogging over a dusty country road in an ancient two-wheeled herdic coach, drawn by a lame horse, and driven by an Irishman who had more time on his hands than he knew what to do with.

* * *

We had just begun the ascent of a hill so long that it seemed to end nowhere in particular



this side of the zenith, when I heard a sound of creaking wheels, and, looking up, I saw ahead of me a caravan of heavily-laden trucks; and a chill struck to my heart when I realized that the furniture on them was OUR furniture. It was no use my saying to myself that, as a matter of fact, our furniture was very good and comparatively new, and that all furniture looks at its worst in the process of moving. It seemed to me that I had never seen such a wretched, pitiful, worn, scratched, battered, faded and frayed collection of cheap and nasty household articles in the whole course of my life. That furniture had been very much admired by our visitors when each article stood on its proper end, and was kept up to the highest standard of domestic cleanliness. But with its backs and bottoms and wrong sides generally exposed to the public gaze, with its legs sticking up in the air, with the half of its castors jolted out, tied up with knotted shreds of rope, with pieces of worn counterpane stuffed here and there to prevent chafing, and with a thick coating of roadside dust all over it, it looked very much like the outfit of an emigrant gang that had busted up in Kansas, and was coming home regardless of appearances. Just as we drew up even with it, one of the wagons gave a lift to a Polish Jew peddler with a bundle of second-hand clothing tied up in a red table-cloth. He stretched himself out on the top of the load, on something that I subsequently discovered to be the baby's crib, and assumed an air of easy proprietorship. I asked my driver to whip up, and he told me he would as soon as he got to the top of the hill. At the top of the hill we came

to the town, and drove together down the principal residential street to my house. As we drew up, my wife grasped my arm convulsively and pointed to the front lawn. The servants had not yet arrived to open the house, having left the train, with the unerring instinct of their kind, at a station several miles away; and the brother-in-law of my truckman, being the lightest laden of the moving throng, had arrived an hour before anybody else, had deposited his entire load of *bric-à-brac* on the front lawn, and was now waiting to be paid.

It was the close of a beautiful May afternoon, and in the pleasant twilight a number of people were going home from the first tennis practice of a field club in the immediate vicinity. I saw at once that the place teemed with life and vivacity; and yet I did not feel entirely sure that I should not have preferred something more retired and secluded.



A WATER-COLOR HOUSE.

A WATER-COLOR HOUSE.



THE Pinxters are really building. Indeed, they are quite a long way on in their troubles. There is no more drawing of plans on the back of envelopes: they are in bondage to a professional architect, and to a professional builder in league with a professional stone-mason. They are not the same lithe young things that they were a few months ago; but they know more.

First, Pinxter bought his lot. Then came a short period of rose-colored hope. As soon as he had got his deed, Pinxter became convinced that he had got the very best lot in the very best neighborhood of the very best town in the world, and he wondered at his own acuteness in doing it. Every afternoon when he came home from business Mrs. Pinxter and he wandered about that lot, feeling their ownership in the very soles of their feet. They visited it in all sorts of weather; they brought parties of friends to visit it. Pinxter never allowed any postponement on account of the weather. He asked everybody's advice about the proper location for the house. He and Mrs. Pinxter selected a number of possible sites and marked them out with stakes.



They let their friends drive stakes, too. They got so many stakes in the ground that after a while passers by used to stop and wonder what sort of a camp-meeting it could have been that was so free with its tent-pegs.

Then they had a great time deciding upon an architect; but when they did settle on their man, they were delighted to find that they had made exactly the right choice. They found him an uncommonly pleasant person. He let them tell him all their ideas—a practice in which their friends had not encouraged them much of late. He took the kindest sort of interest in the whole business; and he suggested all sorts of little comforts and conveniences which need not add at all to the expense if they were put in at

the first instance, but which would be beyond the reach of wealth itself after the house was completed. They had thought at one time of dispensing with an architect, and building the house out of a book; and they shuddered as they thought that in that case they would never have known of all these delightful possibilities. Then the architect brought them a little water-color sketch—something he had dashed off to give them an idea of what he thought they would like. It represented a most charming little cottage, with a great many kinds of roof, and it had the most alluring dormer windows and round windows and lattice windows, and it had a pretty little porch with big benches at the side, and with a trellis with vines clambering over it. Then there was a lawn with flower-beds on it, and a neat little driveway with a pony-phaeton standing at the door, presumably waiting for Mrs. Pinxter. Back of the house were stately trees, and a deep-blue sky hung over all, with fleecy white clouds upon its bosom. A little more and you could have heard the birds sing.

Of course that settled it. It is true that there were no trees on their lot; and that the architect had made no provision for drying clothes anywhere except in the back yard. But from the moment that Pinxter saw that picture their doom was sealed. Then came the estimates and contracts and specifications, and a very lucid and precise explanation of the system of first, second and third payments, and so on. This was the first jarring note in the lovely symphony of hope.

There were more jarring notes later on when it came to cutting down the estimates to fit the

appropriation. They never thought, poor children, of cutting down on the external beauty of the cottage in the picture. The fancy windows, and the roofs with their valleys and peaks and gables and angles and what-not, and the ornamental porch, all cost money—a great deal of money; and yet it never once occurred to them that the one house that they best knew and best loved and admired was the simple, unpretentious old hip-roofed homestead where Mrs. Pinxter's mother lived, and where Pinxter had done his courting. There was n't a fancy window in that building, and a ten-dollar bill would have paid for all the tinsmith's work on the roof; but its simple, well-chosen lines had a home-like beauty that had endeared them to generation after generation.

No; the Pinxters made their architectural economies out of the needs of their domestic life.



They cut down a foot on this room and six inches on that. They made their kitchen range so small that their joints of meat would have to be measured to fit the oven. They substituted cast-iron fixtures for brass, and they decided on a cheap grade of window glass. They agreed upon ready-made mantels and single floors; and they decided to go without a laundry, although they retained a butler's pantry that could not have been more commodious had they owned an ancestral butler. And they ordered for the bath-room a tub so short that Pinxter could only sit in it in the shape of a letter N, and take his morning bath in sections.

Then comes a hole in the ground in the middle of the lot; and then the masons begin to fill this with a stone lining, stopping short for the day every time that an April shower casts a two-minutes' sprinkle upon the earth. Then up goes a bewildering lot of hemlock framework before Pinxter has a chance to find out for himself whether it conforms to the plans or not.

About this time a chill comes over the cordial relations between the Pinxters and their architect. They begin to be disappointed in him. When they engaged him to superintend the construction of their house they fancied him going merrily to his work with the earliest laborer, and watching over everything with an eagle eye until the setting sun released him from his important task. When they find that he makes an inspection about once a week, and then only exchanges a few friendly technicalities with the master mason, and asks him how soon he is going to start that next job down the street, they are surprised, grieved and indignant.



They appeal to the architect's friends to rouse him to a sense of duty, and to a realization of the great professional opportunity he is missing. It gives them a certain shock to learn that the architect had not calculated to support himself, his wife and a growing family, for a whole year on the \$250 that he is to make out of the Pinxter's job, and that he is erecting houses for several other people, and will erect more if he gets the chance. Later on they are better satisfied with him. He comes oftener and assumes a more active command of the work. But even then they find him a different man. They discover that very few of his brilliant suggestions have been incorporated in the plans and speci-

fications. When they appeal to him to repair these omissions he tells them coldly that they ought to have seen to it before, and that if they want any alterations they must pay for them as extras. When Mrs. Pinxter tells him that the closet in her room is not large enough, he tells her that it is larger than any closet he has ever built. When Pinxter finds out that he can not put his Chippendale sideboard between the dining-room windows, he is told that a Chippendale sideboard would n't match the room, anyhow, and that he had better get another. Not room — sideboard. It does not take the Pinxters long to learn that the moving of a window two inches one way or the other will utterly destroy the whole artistic scheme of the architect — that is, after the contracts are once signed. After the contracts are once signed, architecture is always a delicate and fragile art, and should be dealt with reverently by people who can not afford extras.

The Pinxters get this idea firmly impressed on their minds when they make what is termed a "kick" about the front-stairs. They and their friends can not see that a newel post about as big as the capstan of a man-of-war harmonizes with a lead-pencil rail and baluster. The architect stakes his professional reputation that the proportions are artistically correct. He also refers them to the undeniable fact that the dimensions are those given in the specifications, and that they ought to have objected before accepting the latter. It is of no use their saying that they did n't know that the structure would look like that when it was done. Neither did he. He is a



young architect; and he has got to practice on stair-cases if he ever wants to get them right.

Pinxter is on his third payment now, I believe; and I, somehow, feel as if true delicacy ought to keep me from obtruding my society upon him unnecessarily. But I wonder with a friendly interest how he will come out of the game of house-building into which he has put his poor little stakes.

What will come to him from his speculation, undertaken in almost childish ignorance and inexperience? Will he get a cozy, comfortable little home that he will learn to love the more dearly as the days go by? or will he have a poor make-shift, misshapen habitation on his

hands that will make him for years discontented at home, and envious under his neighbor's roof?

Who can tell? It is a mere chance either way. But do not blame poor Pinxter if he yielded to a natural weakness of human nature, and let a pretty picture of a pretty house tempt him to forget that a man builds the inside of a home for himself, and the outside for his neighbor across the way. How many of us are wiser? Did not the makers of fashion-plates long ago learn to make the women in their costumes graceful and beautiful, and the men stately, tall and deep-chested? And, shall we blame the architect if he tries to set off his design with the attractions of ideal surroundings? No, indeed! If your wife goes shopping to buy a Winter wrap, does the head of the cloak department look among the saleswomen for one just



❖ A Water = Color House. ❖

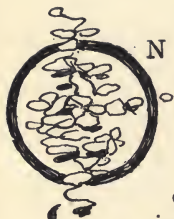
as short and stout, or one just as tall and angular as his customer? No, no! He calls up a young lady with a perfect figure and the carriage of a queen, and he drapes the garment over her faultless shoulders.

It is human nature all around, and that is why so many people are living to-day as the Pinxters will live until their house is finished, in a water-color picture of a dainty dwelling, enshrined in luxury and foliage, with a pony phaeton waiting at the door, and with a front-yard where a lawn is ever green under the perpetual green skies, and where, in trim beds, the springtide forcythia and the hardy Fall chrysanthemum blossom side by side in innocent and unconscious defiance of the laws of nature.



THE POINTERS.

THE POINTERS.



ON Summer Saturdays the Suburbanite hastens from town on the midday train; and Mrs. Suburbanite arrays herself in cool and dainty garments and goes out on the lawn to meet him. On other days of the week, when he comes home just in time for dinner, she meets him in the front hall and says: "Oh, is that you, dear? Hurry up and get ready for dinner, please, for your train is late to-night." But on Saturday she goes out on the lawn and says: "Oh, darling, I'm so glad you've come! I was so afraid you would n't get the train." I don't know what makes the difference, but I suspect that there is a good deal of swivel silk and French hat and fancy tan shoes about it.

And pretty soon the Suburbanite gets into *his* Summer bravery of white flannel and colored shirt, and, standing with Mrs. Suburbanite on his front steps, he looks up and down the pleasant street, comparing his lawn with his neighbor's. According to suburban etiquette, he must always praise his neighbor's lawn and speak slightly of his own; but in his heart of hearts he believes that his own is the best in sight. From this



harmless and gratifying amusement he is startled by his wife's indignant voice.

"Oh, Henry!" she cries; "there's a lot of those horrid Pointers coming up the road. They must have come out on the train with you."

"Gad!" says Henry, in deep disgust; "look at the pair of them over the way!"

On the walk at the opposite side of the street two people are slowly passing — a man and a woman. Though their dress proclaims them from the city, they loiter and gawk like country folk; and they stare at everything they see about them like people wandering through a waxwork show. The stare is sufficiently frank and undisguised and contemptuously careless enough to irritate a hippopotamus if it were directed at the thickest spot on his hide.

But the stare is forgotten — wiped into oblivion by what comes next. The male person of the pair extends his arm, points his forefinger straight in the direction of the modest front porch of Mr. and Mrs. Suburbanite, and demands of his companion:

“There! how do you like that one?”

The female person gives one brief glance in the direction indicated, and then replies in ringing tones of contempt:

“I think it’s perfectly hideous! I would n’t live in it if you gave it to me. Why, the little one with the red roof is better than that!”

They pass on down the street; but even when they have got as far as the corner their conversation is still audible to Mr. and Mrs. Suburbanite. The female person inquires in loud but languid tones:

“I wonder what sort of people live in a town like this, anyhow?” and the male responds, in clear and vigorous tones:

“Oh! pretty devilish common, I should think.”

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Is it really possible that there are such people in the civilized world? Oh, yes; there are plenty of them, and they are not bad people at all. Indeed, they are not, at home, rude people, even. In the city they would never think of pointing their forefingers at a man’s front door, and commenting upon the appearance of his dwelling in any way that would attract his attention, — nor do they mean to do so now and here. The unfamiliar scene, the novel distances,

the sense of a wholly unfamiliar mode of life — all these things make them feel as though they were walking in a world in which they had no part, and they hardly feel at the first as if it were just as real an every-day life as their own. And then, the silence of the country cheats them into talking loudly, as it does every one.

For the rest, their intent is not at all offensive. They are simply "Pointers" — a married couple of moderate means, who, having some idea that they may, at some time, be obliged to move from the city to the country, have come out to look about them and see how they would like it on the whole.

It is all a matter of speculative unreality to them, and they no more think that they are seen and heard in their finger-pointing and too frank criticism than — well, than you did, my dear Mr. Urban, when you did pretty much the same thing in a university town in Holland, where every second man on the street spoke English quite as well as you did.

The Pointer has all seasons for his own. He has been known to make his explorations in midwinter, and I have encountered one cheerful soul who never went house-hunting in the country except on a day of genuinely mean rainy or snowy weather. He said that if you could see anything to like in a suburban town under such conditions, it must be a pretty good town when you came to try it dry and comfortable. That man, I believe, is still living in town. But, of course, late Spring, early Summer, and the first of the Fall are the chosen times of the Pointer — especially if he is a Pointer of limited means. It



is always pleasant to take an afternoon stroll through a pretty country town; and this luxury the Pointer may enjoy at no greater cost than the railway fare for himself and his wife. For, if they arrive in the morning, they generally bring their luncheon with them in a paste-board box, and eat it in the railway station, to the great disgust of the station agent. That is, they do this when they are new beginners at the pointing game — Greenpointers, so to speak. Afterward they ad-

❖ The Pointers. ❖

vance in knowledge of the possibilities of the game. And, after they have had their first free ride in a real estate agent's carriage, they begin to see that there is something more in the pastime of pointing than trailing aimlessly around on foot and staring at the outside of other people's homes — or else, peeping furtively into the dismal interiors of empty houses. There are free rides in it; cakes and ale in it, free, too; and, more than this, there is consideration and respect and even deference and delicate flattery — undeserved, it is true; unearned, enjoyed only for a brief hour, and then on false pretenses — but sweet, sweet, sweet on the tongue while the taste lasts.



* * *

For, sooner or later, there comes a Friday afternoon when the Pointer climbs to his airy flat with a lightsome step and a beaming countenance.

“My dear,” he says to his wife, “we’ll go and look at some out-of-town houses to-morrow, but this time we’ll go in style. I’ve struck a real estate man downtown, a man who’s interested in property at Howsonlotville, and he’s going to

take us out to see the place. It won't cost us even our fares; he puts up for everything, and when we get there he blows us off to luncheon at his own house, and in the afternoon he drives us all around, and shows us all there is to be seen. Great scheme, is n't it?"

"But, my dear," timidly remonstrates his wife, "is it quite right, do you think? You know we have n't the least idea of going to Howsonlotville to live, and would n't it be, somehow, like getting a good time on false pretenses?"

Then the Pointer explains to his wife that women don't know the first thing about business. This is entirely a matter of business with the real estate man. He takes such chances right along in the hope of getting his property known. It is simply an advertisement of his business — nothing else — just the way the grocer sends you a sample cake of soap or a can of some new brand of baking-powder. And in the end, of course, she says she supposes that he knows best.

From that day on their doom is sealed. A new era dawns for them. They travel out to Howsonlotville on the family ticket of the agent of the great Howsonlot estate. They accept of the agent's hospitable board, eat the excellent luncheon he has provided, show a refined appreciation of his good wine; talk casually and carelessly of their rich relations, and make incidental mention of horses they have owned. In the afternoon, perched high and proud on the agent's drag, they look down with a feeling of infinite satisfaction upon the less experienced Pointers wandering about on foot

and unattended. Then they go and look at a house which they never in the world could afford to take; and condescendingly promise to give its merits their kind consideration over Sunday. This is not entirely duplicity; it sometimes takes quite a while to trump up an insuperable objection to a pretty good house.

Once embarked in this fascinating game, the true Pointer never tires of pitting his ingenuity and evasive skill against the cunning of the real estate agent. Of course the ultimate fate of every gambler lies ahead of him. For a longer or shorter time he may enjoy free luncheons, free drives, and all the consideration which the real estate operator keeps on tap for his victims until he has them safe. But, be it soon or late, the day will surely come when



❖ The Suburban Sage. ❖

he is cornered, when the compromising word is said, when he sees his name on an innocent-looking "memorandum of agreement" — and then it is all over before he knows it. The fatal Deed and the ravenous Bond and Mortgage are signed, sealed and delivered; his bridges are burnt behind him, he stands trembling and apprehensive at the beginning of a new life; and the Pointer has become the last thing that he ever meant to be — a Suburbanite.

THE FURNACE.

THE FURNACE.



WHEN I first moved into the country, (I have told this story before; but only in the comparative privacy of the poetic form,) I inquired for a suitable man to take charge of my furnace.

One was recommended to me, and we opened negotiations, which were conducted warily on both sides; for each of us was wondering how much the other knew about a furnace, and each of us was conscious of plenty of ignorance to betray. Finally, the man asked me how much time I wanted him to devote to the furnace. Here I turned and rent him. I told him that if he were applying for the post of furnace tender, he ought to know how much time it was his duty to devote to that particular furnace. This disconcerted him, and he said that he had asked the question only because it had occurred to him that I might want him to stay with the furnace all day. I asked him why he should stay with the furnace all day, and he said: "To prevent its blowing up."

Now, in my simple city ignorance I supposed that that man was simply trying to impose upon me and to get a profitable job for himself; but I have since come to know that he merely



reflected, in his uneducated, exaggerated way, the attitude of all suburbanites toward that domestic Moloch, the Furnace.

The furnace is, for eight or nine months in the year, the heart of domestic life, and it may be said to feed the pulse of all suburban conversation. Even the question of domestic service has to yield to it in importance, as a topic; for you may, or you may not, at any given time, have a cook, but you *always* have a coal-bill.

Now, I wish to do all that lies in my power to reprehend this tendency. It not only imparts to suburban conversation an ashy and uninterest-

ing flavor, but it spoils the furnace. Long experience has taught me, and I do not hesitate to affirm it, that furnaces are just like children — you can spoil them and set them all wrong in life by making too much fuss over them; by coddling and petting them; by paying attention to their little whims and fancies; and, above all, by talking about them to their faces in the presence of visitors and strangers. You all know how it is with children: if little Claribel is in the room, and you say to the lady who is visiting you:

“Oh, I don't know what to do! little Claribel is so sensitive! Do you know, the other day she wept for five hours together because the cat killed a little bird on the lawn!”

Do you know what happens after that? Little Claribel's one idea is to beat her own record for sensitiveness by weeping six hours over the next dead bird she finds; and if she can't find any other way of attracting attention and winning praise for her delicate susceptibilities, she will drop a tear on a deceased tumblebug, just to attract a moment's notice. In the same way, if you tell your visitor in the youngster's hearing, that your dear little Reginald has such a wonderful flow of spirits that it seems impossible for him to control himself — why, you must not be surprised if Reginald seizes the opportunity to kick his foot-ball through the parlor window, by way of showing the exuberance of his spirits, and the impossibility of restraining them. Well, you can spoil a furnace much in the same way as you can spoil a child.

Do not for an instant imagine that I began



my suburban life with any superiority of knowledge over my neighbors — at least, so far as the management of a furnace was concerned. In many other respects I knew more than they did — although I am not using so much knowledge now. I treated my furnace with the same familiar indulgence and familiarity; and gave it just as absurd an idea of its own importance as did the most thoughtless of those about me. Many and many a time has that furnace heard me talking through the thin floor that separates the cellar from the ground story — telling of its ways and its fancies; of its extravagance in coal one week, and of its strict economy the next; of its entire unwillingness to work in an east wind, and its furious enthusiasm to roast the house every

time there was a breath from the south. Beginning that way, no wonder I turned the poor thing's head.

But this was only the least of the foolishness with which I encouraged that furnace to misbehave. I discharged the man whom I had first engaged to take care of it; not because I could find any real fault with him, but because he seemed to me to have no real sense of the seriousness of his responsibility. I thought he treated the furnace in a slighting and disrespectful manner; and I did n't like the way that he slammed the door after he had put the coal in. I hired a small boy to sleep in the house, so that he might be at the service of the furnace day and night. I can say for the boy that he carried out one part of his contract. He slept in the house.

It was I who went down late at night after I had got home from a dinner or a dance, or a trip to the city to hear the opera, and dove into the cellar to study the immediate needs of that furnace, drowsily summoning to my aid what small scraps of knowledge I possessed about draughts and heat-units and cold air supply — only in the end to stir up something or other, I did n't know why; to let down something, about the end and aim of which I knew still less; and to make some combination of dampers and slides and doors, for which I never in the world could have offered the slightest reason.

Of course, in my earlier suburban days, I was even more foolish in my treatment of my furnace. I took a number of plumbers down to see it, and consulted with them — one at a time, of course, — in its very presence. Each one laid

❖ The Furnace. ❖

out for me a different set of rules by which to work it, and explained to me a different set of principles which governed each set of rules. You could not have told them from so many doctors. At first, too, I showed the furnace to friends of experience and to distinguished strangers who occasionally honored my humble roof. On one occasion I took down a distinguished poet, a scientist of wide reputation and a man who had recently invented a ten-cent puzzle; and this overdose of glory and dignity was quite too much for the furnace. It would not draw for the next three weeks, and it gave out very little more heat than the refrigerator.



❖ The Suburban Sage. ❖

The furnace did not improve as the years went on; and the members of the household learned with each successive twelve-month to rely more and more upon open fires and upon a gradual toughening process that went on from September to April, and that made an indoor temperature of fifty degrees Fahrenheit bearable, if not, perhaps, enjoyable. Then there came a day — a happy day — when the owner of the furnace asserted himself. It was a mild January day of a Winter which I had begun by laying in twenty tons of coal for the consumption of that furnace. The boy came up to tell me that they were consumed. He was not the first boy who had made of his young energies a burnt offering to my furnace; he was only one in a long succession. When I heard from his lips that the coal was all gone; and when I reflected that the chilly annoyances of the Winter were to be succeeded by the cruel inclemencies of Springtime, I was bitterly angered; and for the first time in my experience I went down into the cellar, conscious of an angry and unkind feeling toward my furnace.

The boy had spoken truth: yet not all the truth. The twenty tons of coal had vanished from the bin, and now, slightly charred, formed a large portion of what was supposed to be a pile of ashes, in a lonely region of the cellar. One door of the furnace was broken, another had lost its hinge; and a huge crack rent its fire-pot half way through. I gave my orders sternly and precisely. The food for the furnace was no longer to be purchased in twenty-ton lots. It was to be fed from hand to mouth: ton by ton at a time.



No plumber was to heal its gaping wounds — and I was never to hear one solitary word about it until the Summertime should come, when I could tear it out and sell it for old iron, and put some more modern device in its place.

That was six years ago, and all is changed since then. That day the furnace learned its lesson: in bitterness of spirit, I have no doubt; but faithfully and fully. Never since then have I had to contend with it. Perhaps its duties are not performed in absolute cheerfulness of mind; but so long as it locks up its discontent in its breast and locks no clinkers there, I shall not complain. A dull and sullen servant it may be, but so diligent and loyal and steady that I try to shut my eyes to the fact that the crack in the fire-pot is steadily widening; and that before long the

❖ The Suburban Sage. ❖

companion of many days and nights of suburban solitude and solicitude will be loaded on a truck, and will be borne dangling and clanging away from its home to lie in some river-side junkyard and rust itself redder than it ever would fire up for me.

In the meantime it patiently eats and turns to good account, short rations of coal, grudgingly doled out to it, too often from the sifted ash-heap.

THE TIME-TABLE TEST.

THE TIME-TABLE TEST.



ONCE upon a time, in the days of my young and green suburbanity, I served on some society for the improvement of everything in general; and I was appointed a committee of one to call upon the residents of a certain street and find out how they were disposed toward some project the society had in hand. I was appointed, I suppose, because I knew hardly any one in that particular quarter. In fact, I knew but one man, and him very slightly. So, as I knew that he was a man of wealth and reputation, I thought I would save myself trouble by calling on him only, and letting him voice the sentiment of his district.

Mr. Banker was out, but Mrs. Banker received me graciously, and even treated me with a certain affability until I told her my mission. Then her manner underwent a change. She said she thought Mr. Banker was in favor of the project, but that she knew nothing of the other people of whom I inquired. I said that I had thought Mr. Banker would be able to tell me something about the probable attitude of his next door neighbor, Mr. Smallsales. Mrs. Banker did not think, however, that Mr. Banker would be

likely to possess any information as to the views of Mr. Smallsales. I then suggested that Mr. Banker might at least be able to tell me how Mr. Pettycash, across the way, might happen to stand on the subject. Mrs. Banker was very sure that Mr. Banker could do nothing of the sort. I named several other residents of the neighborhood, but in every case Mrs. Banker was confident that Mr. Banker could not possibly be acquainted with the gentleman's opinions. The



coldness of her tone increased with every inquiry; and at last it became so disapprovingly chilly that I meekly rose to retire, wondering wherein I had offended.

Mrs. Banker saw my confusion, and she relented sufficiently to afford me a hint of enlightenment. With a severe, though pitying rebuke, conveyed in voice and manner, Mrs.

❖ The Suburban Sage. ❖

Banker drew herself up majestically and said, icily, looking over my bowed head:

“We have not had the pleasure of having you long in the town, Mr. Sage, and you probably do not know that Mr. Banker *never* goes in earlier than the 10:17!”

In one instant I recognized the vast social gap which separated the husband of my hostess from poor Smallsales who “went in” on the 7:27. Blushing for my obtuseness, I went home and resigned from the society. I told the president that I thought I was too new in the suburban field for active work; and when he said that it was only the new men who ever would do any active work, I knew that I was right.

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It was this incident, I think, that first led me to find diversion in studying the humors and humanities of the Children of the Time-table. There is an upper window in my house that commands an uninterrupted view of the little railway station, and it is a daily pleasure for me to stand there and watch our little suburban world going to business. We are all slaves of the bell: they of the locomotive-bell, and I of the one that jingles in a corner of the typewriter, and keeps tab of the lines as they crawl along.

I have got so now that if I were to wake up out of a sound sleep, look out of that window and see so much as the back of a man, or even the top of his hat — there is a good deal of expression in hats — going to the train, I could tell you instantly what train it is, whether it is



the man's regular train or not — and more or less why he is taking it.

There is no affectation or self-consciousness about the men who go into New York on the very early trains. Life is too serious a matter to them, and too dull a matter; and it holds no bright possibilities. On the first six o'clock train or on the second six o'clock train they go in; and on the first six o'clock train or on the second six o'clock train they will go in until the time comes for another journey which will not involve their getting up so early. Perhaps there are some among them who might ease their weary lives and work themselves up a train or two; but as this would involve the execution of several extra licks of work, I do not think that it is at all likely.

❖ The Suburban Sage. ❖

It is the first train after seven o'clock that brings forth the passenger to whom the timetable assumes the appearance of an ascending social scale. He is only an office-boy at present. If he is employed by a very large commission house, rating at A1 or A2 in the books, he may be called a junior clerk; but even in that case his duties are the same, and his pay is likely to be less. His companions on his townward trip all occupy similar positions, and he knows them all and greets them with airy familiarity. They skylark noisily on the platform, and behave just as much like college boys as they dare to. They have to put some restraint upon themselves, however, for the neighboring commuters are jealous of their rest. And, while they are accustomed to stand a great deal of noise from locomotives, they naturally draw the line at boys.

The 7:03 train is a pleasant sight to watch, as it begins to puff on its way, for even if the boys do show off a little they are genuinely happy and full of the joy of life; and I like to see them scramble up the steps like young monkeys. But the 7:27 train is quite another affair.

The errand-boy has got his promotion. He is really a junior clerk of some sort; and he has the glorious privilege of getting to his office exactly twenty-four minutes later. But, with his first step upward, he leaves light-hearted boyishness behind him and becomes a prey to cankering ambition. His companions are men now, but mostly men who have barely escaped the bondage of the 6:38, and in whose breast the hope of ever rising even to the 8:01 is slowly



dying out. There is no companionship among them, for they all hate the doubtful limbo in which they are placed; and those who may get out of it despise those who never may, while the latter hate the former with all the cordiality of a healthy human envy. It needs only a glance to tell a 7:27 man. He appears long before train time, and he hurries along and casts furtive glances up and down the street, fearful that some 8:01 man may be ostentatiously loafing around his garden, flaunting to the world his thirty-four minutes of superiority.

And yet the 8:01 man — that is, the regular

❁ The Suburban Sage. ❁

every-day 8:01 man — is not a happy creature. It is true he puts a bolder face on as he goes to the station, and assumes a jauntier carriage. He cultivates an air of being extremely fond of early rising; and he sniffs the morning breeze with such an affectation of enjoyment that he sometimes awakens late sleepers under whose windows he may chance to pass. But his arrogant pretenses desert him when he gets to the station. There you see him glance nervously about, anxiously seeking for some 8:48 man who has been forced by an exceptional emergency to take an earlier train. Him he will pursue and catch, and fasten on him with the grip of death; and he will not be shaken off. The 8:48 man has business on his mind; he has got up three-quarters of an hour before his usual time — and every morning minute counts with the suburban commuter — and he is sleepy and cross, and his breakfast is sitting crosswise on his stomach. But the 8:01 man will stick by him, and walk up and down the platform with him, and nod loftily to his regular companions, as though he, too, were one of the favored children of fortune who usually took the train of the day.

For, of course, the 8:48 is the train of the day. WE take it — the WE that is WE in every suburban town — oh! too often most tiresomely WE, and most unkindly nobody else. The passing of the 8:48 train is decidedly a social function. The men approach it by twos and threes, never hurrying, but with an air of elegant leisure that may have taken ten or fifteen minutes in preparation. They are all spick and



span in their clothes: for a commuter's clothes improve from train to train until he gets to taking the 10:17, when he is reputed so rich that he may safely dress shabbily. There is always a crowd at this train, and many ladies take it who could much more conveniently go in later. There is a great deal of tipping of hats and shaking of hands in the latest imported style; and, altogether, you would think that the people assembled on the little platform had come together to go to a meeting of the Fourhundred Hunt, instead of going to New York to make money downtown or spend it uptown, — and no great money at either end.

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I saw a perfectly happy man the other day. It was my friend Pettycash. For many years,

❖ The Suburban Sage. ❖

Summer and Winter, he has served the 7:27 train faithfully and unfailingly. The other day he came into his old aunt's money, and he promptly resigned his clerkship. He told his wife that for a few days before he entered on the management of the estate he would stay at home, and they would have a splendid time together, looking over the garden and figuring out what the house needed in improvements. But on the very first day of his freedom he surprised and disappointed her immediately after breakfast by telling her that he had forgotten something in town which he ought to attend to, and that he positively must go in. He tried to placate her by offering to do an errand for her; but I think that only aroused unjust suspicions in her mind. She need not have been troubled, however. He only wanted to take the 10:17 train, and he took it. I happened to be at the station, where the train was delayed for a few minutes, and I saw him roaming uneasily from car to car, although it had been his invariable custom to travel in the smoker. But when I saw him at last settle himself in the forward car, just in front of the great Mr. Banker, and begin, with an air of indolent ease, to read an illustrated paper, I knew just how he felt.

THE SOCIETY CHURCH.

THE SOCIETY CHURCH.



“VERY pleasant people, I have no doubt, my dear. In fact, I have heard that Mrs. Chasuble met them and thought them very agreeable, indeed. But I really don't know anything about them, myself. They don't belong to *our* church, you know!”

Do not imagine, my startled friend, that good Mrs. Burrage is speaking in an un-Christian spirit when she answers thus a newcomer's question about some resident of older date. There is not a hint of un-Christian spirit in Mrs. Burrage. She has the highest respect for the people of whom she speaks; her manner is most cordial to them when she meets them here, and I am sure it will be even more cordial when she meets them in heaven after the burden of her social responsibilities shall have rolled off her much-tried suburban back. In speaking as she does, she is simply asserting the right of her own beloved church to call itself the Society Church

of the town. She and other earnest workers have won for it that distinction; not by zealous religious effort — for she knows no more of the doctrines of her church than she knows of the doctrines of Confucius — but simply by good, solid, indefatigable financiering.

What has she not done — what has she not gone through, to attain that much-desired end? She has wrung gold out of rocks, silver out of stone, and nickel and copper out of the very pebbles and dust. She has coaxed and cajoled and wheedled well-to-do home-seekers into settling in our town; and she has lured their wives and daughters from other folds by an extravagance in the way of social entertainment which has driven Burrage almost to the verge of distraction. He told me that he completely wore out one dress suit while Mrs. Burrage was getting the church-spire built; and that he worked a hole in his new trousers over a series of dinners which she gave to rope-in some people who had n't subscribed to the font.

For the rock on which the suburban Society Church rests, is, I am afraid, a rock of gold-bearing quartz that has little likeness to the rock on which Peter founded *his* church. I do not mean to say, or even to hint, that the church, as a church, is not all that a church should be in the way of disinterested and devoted spirituality. I should not presume to bear testimony upon such a point. I am only speaking of the church as the dominant social organization of the town, to point out that it attained that proud position — or, as the vulgar say, “got there” — because its congregation had the most money and the best workers.

The opposition church — we have a number of churches in our town; but only two of what you might call the first magnitude — thought it had done a very clever thing when it got its corner-stone laid; covered up with a neat little wooden box, and left to await the growth of a building fund to visible proportions. Little the congregation of that church knew Mrs. Burrage. She laid her corner-stone later, it is true, but in it she put attested copies of all the builders' contracts, and of the guarantees of fifteen well-to-do citizens to pay for the construction of the edifice up to the roof-line. It may have been this move; or it may have been her chartering a freight-train, decorating it with flowers and green things, and running a church-fair on wheels the whole length of our section of the railroad — but one way or another victory perched on her banners. People



said that the freight-car church-fair was undignified and even irreverent; but it was a glittering success; and, in the end, there was the beautiful little brown-stone church to show for it, on the best corner lot in the best quarter of the place. And when the newcomer in town looked around

him and saw that church and the other churches, and the weather-beaten box, rain-streaked and gray, that sheltered the corner-stone of the opposition church, it is small wonder that he (or his wife) promptly exchanged the religious convictions of his (or her) ancestors for the social convictions of Mrs. Burrage.

I have not told you what particular church it is for which Mrs. Burrage has struggled so hard; but I may say that in most suburban towns the struggle is apt to lie between the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians. The Presbyterians have the most money and the Episcopalians have the most skill. I suppose that all the churches are equally capitalized in respect to Christianity; but when it comes to cash capital, these two denominations loom up like light-houses. The Methodist Church is rich in spots, and the Congregational Church of New England has a few well-provisioned outposts; but if you want to see a real good, lively tussle for the possession of the top place in a new town, you want to see an Episcopal congregation and a Presbyterian congregation tackle each other for blood.

The struggle is rarely a long one. The first stone church up gets the prize. There is no gainsaying that sure and certain proof of certain financial superiority. It is the Stonechurchites henceforward who will build the finest club-house, organize the largest entertainments, and set the social key for the whole town — deciding whether the majority shall go in for athletics or for intellectuals; for the higher culture or for fashionable frivolity. If the Presbyterians get the inside track, the town is sure to get the higher culture,

and will probably come in for athletics; but it does n't stand a ghost of a show for frivolity. If the Episcopalians get there, the fashionable frivolity and the athletics (of a mild sort) are quite safe; but there is absolutely no chance for the intellectualities of the higher culture: the idea of an Episcopalian's needing to know any more than he naturally does know being too preposterous to consider.

Let me say here that although my range of observation has covered, by-and-large, a dozen small towns of this countryside, I have never seen one instance where defeat, in a fight of this sort, was not accepted loyally and bravely. If the Presbyterians are conquered, they simply screw the armor of sanctity a little tighter, and move among their neighbors as stern old Puritans might have moved amid Papists and mummers in the days of the second Charles. If the Episcopalians lose the game, they simply smile a pitying smile of amused tolerance, and the vestryman's wife says to her guest:

"Oh, no, my dear! you must n't expect anything in the way of gayety here, you know. This is the very stronghold of Presbyterianism; and we poor idolators are quite looked down upon. There are only enough of *us*, you know, for two or three tables at whist, and I'm afraid that our good neighbors think we are very shocking people."

Yet it must be very hard. Of course everybody discounts the fact that nine out of ten of the newcomers in town will have neither religion nor politics until they find out which is the fashionable church, and which is the party with



the normal majority. But it must be trying to the Shepherd when his best ewe lambs begin to stray from the fold.

Here is the case of Mrs. Chedby, for instance. Her pastor met her on the street the other day, and remarked:

“I have not had the pleasure of seeing you lately, Mrs. Chedby.” (In church understood.)

“No,” says Mrs. Chedby, a little pinkish, but with the air of one who has prepared herself for the fray: “you see, Mr. Chedby’s mother is visiting us, and she’s *such* an ardent Stone-churcharian, you know, and counts *so* much upon never missing a service; and being nearly eighty, you know, I really *had* to go with her. And I’m sure, much as it is that I miss there, it’s been a great comfort to me to be a help to the

old lady, finding her places in the prayer-book. It came quite easy to me, of course, for my mother was an Episcopalian, you know."

"Yes, he knows; the poor pastor knows. And he knows that her father was a hard-shell Baptist; and he knows that if she were to go to Paris to-morrow her grandparents would turn out to have been Roman Catholics. And he knows that she is slipping — slipping — slipping away from him.

A little before the end of dear Mama's visit, Mrs. Chedby "gets at" Mr. Chedby to induce him to go to church once in a while — just for the look of it. That question having been settled for ten years or so, Mr. Chedby does not understand her at all. Then he thinks she wants more money. When he finds she does n't, he becomes a little worried about her health, and privately asks the doctor if women ever get "nutty" from going to church too much. Finally he begins to dimly perceive that she has some object in view which she means to keep to herself. He waxes wroth. He lays back his ears and stubbornly refuses. She pleads with him for his mother's sake.

"You know, my dear, she has n't said one word about it since she's been here, though I'm sure it's a grief to her, you're not going. Your father *always* did, you know. Now, if you'd only go once, just once, to please her, and I promise you I won't ask you another time. You know, dear, you may *never* see her again."

Finally Chedby compromises to the extent of one solitary service, and Mrs. Chedby reminds him of his promise the moment he opens his

eyes on the beautiful Sabbath morn. It is well she does, for it is no trifling job to get Chedby off to church. In the first place, he is a man who spends most of his waking hours in a cheviot shirt, for he is an electrical engineer of renown, and he is the superintendent for this region of some great company that is scarring this fair country with trolleys and power-houses, and all manner of evil inventions; and most of Chedby's time is spent in driving furiously hither and thither in a sulky with a bottom like a big yellow soap-dish.

He swears profusely as he struggles with his collars and cuffs, alone in his little dressing-room. Mrs. Chedby, in the next room, hears him; but she rebukes him only with a gentle "Hush!" He swears still more every time that he looks out of his dressing-room window, and his eye lights on his little workshop in the garden, where for so many years he has spent his Sunday mornings, peacefully tinkering away at his inventions and improvements and contraptions generally; for Chedby is a mechanical genius on his own hook — I wish he would make himself a lawn-roller.



However, he has got ready at last, and is steered into the church-going throng on the

highway, red in the face, and suffering much in the region of the collar. He gets redder yet as he hears low whistles of surprise and incredulity from passing golfers and bicyclers; but with his eyes firmly fixed upon the prayer-book, which he grasps with perspiring fingers, he marches on behind his womenfolk. At church he gets along pretty well through the service; although Mrs. Chedby has to take his silk hat away from him two or three times, because he will play a tattoo on the crown. In the first of the sermon he fidgets, then he calms down into a state of absolute abstraction, and Mrs. Chedby knows by his drumming on his knees with his finger tips and puckering his lips as if he were going to whistle, that he is deep in mathematical calculations. In fancied security the good lady folds her arms and begins to study Episcopalian styles in sermon-hearing attitudes. The clergyman draws the main argument of his discourse to an end with one of those sweeping, triumphant questions which are only asked because there is n't any answer to them; and Mr. Chedby, dimly conscious in his mathematical depths of an interrogative pause, gives a loud, absent-minded snort of assent. A little titter titters around; Mrs. Chedby flushes crimson, and the Rev. Mr. Lilymouth turns the pinkest he can, and reads the rest of his sermon as if it were an auctioneer's catalogue.

But Chedby has served his turn. The paths of the two congregations cross each other; and Mrs. Chedby takes good care that her old pastor shall see her turn-out.

"Oh, yes," she will say to him later, when



he makes his hopeless remonstrance; "I got into the habit of going when Mr. Chedby's mother was here, and Mr. Chedby showed so much interest in going to his old church again; and I knew he would n't go by himself; and as the children are to be brought up in that faith, *anyway*, and as both Mr. Chedby and his mother felt so *strongly* about it, it did n't seem to me as though I ought to consider myself. And of course it would have been different, in a way, if dear Mama had n't been a Church-of-England woman!"

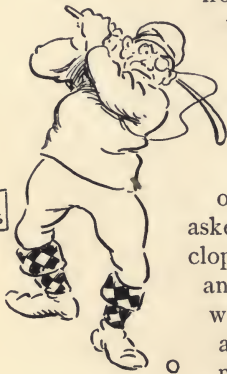
And when he hears the "dear Mama" and the "Church-of-England woman" the poor Shepherd knows that the brand of the other flock is on his ewe lamb.



THE SUBURBANITE AND
HIS GOLF.

THE SUBURBANITE AND HIS GOLF.

ONE day last Summer, Mygatt called on me at about five o'clock in the afternoon. I saw from the evening paper in his hand that he had just come from the train; and I wondered a little at this, for he is a regular man in his goings and comings, and my house is well out of his way. With an air that was at once mysterious and diffident, he asked if he might look at my encyclopedia. I took him to the library and asked him what volume he wanted. He seemed uncertain about it, and something in his manner suggested to me that he wanted to be left alone. I strolled out upon the verandah, and I had not sat there long before Hix came in at the gate. He, too, wanted to look at my encyclopedia. I was about to tell him that Mygatt was at that moment looking at it, when, glancing over my shoulder, I saw that the library was empty, and that one of the volumes was missing from the big leather-bound set. Mygatt must have slipped out of my own back door of retreat, and I could





not but infer that he had his own wishes for having his errand kept private. I told Hix I would go with him to the library as soon as my smoke was finished, and I got him to sit down by me on the side farthest from the door, and smoke until Mygatt should have had a chance to cover his retreat. In the meantime I asked Hix if I could be of any service to him in his researches. At first he did n't think I could, and then he hemmed, hawed, and finally blurted out:

“Why, it 's this way, Sage: I want to look up something about an English game that they call golf or goff, or something like that; and I guess I 'll have to get you to help me, for I 'm hanged if I know how to spell the blamed thing.”

“Oh!” said I, much relieved; “is that what you want?” A hasty glance showed me that Mygatt was gone, and his volume was back in

the book-case. I led my guest to the old red cherry book-case in the hall, that enshrines the sporting library of the family for several generations—a curious collection that ranged from Izaak Walton, by way of Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour, to the Base-ball Guide of the current year. Here I hunted up two or three recent works on golf which I had to read in boning up for a *Quarterly* article on "The Specific Moral Influence of Certain Assorted and Selected Forms of Physical Exercise;" and I was just simple enough to give him a condensed account of what I had boned up. I thought Hix looked a little frightened at the books; but he took the thinnest one of them and departed, thanking me more warmly than seemed necessary. As I went back into the library, I could not help noticing that Mygatt had not put his volume back properly. I pulled it out, and the book split itself open at the pages headed—

GOLDSMITH
GOLF

GOMER
GOMPHIASIS

It did not require any great sagacity to put the one two and the other two together; but I felt pretty sure of my guess, when, late the next night, just as I was closing my book to go to bed, a man who had not crossed my threshold for two years slipped stealthily in on me and said:

"Oh, Sage, they tell me you're a great authority on the new game they call garf. Would you mind telling me something about it? Pretty much the same thing as shinny, is n't it?"

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I was away from home for a few weeks in the latter part of the Summer. The first night that I got home Hix and Mygatt came to see me. It was the hottest September night, I think, that I ever remember; but those two dear simians wore heavy tweed suits, hand-me-down cloth caps that fell over their noses, and golf stockings an inch thick, with a diamond pattern on them, in a ghastly orange that somehow suggested a dish of fried eggs gone astray.

They told me that they wanted me to play golf; that it was the greatest game on earth; and that I did not want to lose an hour in making myself acquainted with its mysteries.

❖ The Suburban Sage. ❖

"I suppose," said Mygatt, "you think it 's something like shinny. Most people do. But it 's not, in the least. You see, it 's this way—"

"Hold on!" interrupted Hix; "you let me explain to him. I 've shown so many people I 've kind of got the hang of it. May be he 's heard something about it, anyway. You 've heard of the game, have n't you, Sage? G-O-L-F—You must have seen something about it in the papers."

"My dear," inquired Mrs. Sage, when I had toiled upstairs that night, an hour or two later, "what on earth were those men talking to you about all this while?"

"Golf," I said, wearily.

"What!" cried Mrs. Sage, indignantly; "not that ridiculous game that they 've been trying to get us to play all this time up at Seacaddie?"

"I am afraid, my dear," I said, "it is the very same."

* * *

Now, I am not going to say anything against golf; and I do not doubt that to the unfortunates of Lenox and Tuxedo, idle and incapable of intellectual enjoyments, it must be, indeed, a precious boon. But to the plain suburbanite of modest means it is nowhere in interest to the game the conductor plays making holes in his commutation ticket.

I think that perhaps the golf enthusiasts might have made better progress in their great mission, had they not too early in the day let out



the fact that there is more golf played off the grounds than on them — in fact, that it is a great ferry-boat and station-platform game.

In the beginning, Hix and Mygatt and the rest of them took turns at carrying broken golf clubs into the city, and expatiating on the delicate points of the instrument.

“Best mashie I ever had,” one announces, as if he had been brought up with mashies. “I got it the day I got that craigenputtoch and that gloomer — you know, Hix?”

“Little bit like my stymie-boddle, is n’t it?” inquires Hix.

“No,” says Mygatt, judicially; “I think you will find it has a little more whoof on the wimsie side — just a thirty-second of an inch, may be; but that ’s what does it.”

And they all agree that that is what does it; and they tell stories about strikes they have

made and they have n't made, so long, and so specific, and so utterly pointless and uninteresting that they would turn a trout-fisher green with envy.

An indiscreet excess of this sort of thing led to a chilly, suspicious feeling about golf in the more active athletic circles of our town. Members of the base-ball team went down to the golf-links, watched the proceedings for a half-hour or so, and then demanded :

“ Say, when are you fellows going to quit practice and call the game? ”

This treatment so irritated the golfites that they worked themselves into a sort of religious fury of enthusiasm. They ravaged the town for converts. Men, women and children were torn from happy homes and forced to swing deformed war-clubs in the air, and to pound the inoffensive earth. Brasseys and craigenputtochs were thrust into the trembling hands of age, and even innocent childhood was not exempt. The church itself was invoked to exert its powerful influence ; and the Rector obligingly went around saying to recalcitrants : “ What ! not play golf ? I thought *everybody* did ! ” It must have looked that way to him Sunday mornings — for the Church of England, you know, golfs on Sunday with perfect propriety.

But somehow all this was of no avail. The game enjoyed a sort of hectic prosperity during the latter days of Fall, when there was very little else to be done out-of-doors ; but the snow buried it for the Winter ; and when it was brought forth again in the Spring, only a handful of sneezing devotees gathered in the cause. The practice

❖ The Suburbanite and His Golf. ❖

games for the tennis openings diminished even this number; and when the base-ball season opened, the first swing of the bat knocked golf galley-west.

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When the crusade was at its hottest, I was dragooned, against my natural instincts, into buying a pair of crazy-quilt stockings an inch thick, and a couple of crooked sticks with fool names to them. The stockings were a good investment, as I find on chilly days; but I never knew what to do with the sticks until Mygatt, who had made me buy them, moved into my neighborhood.

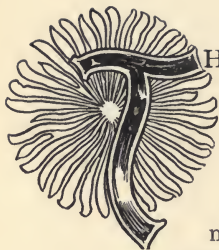


❖ The Suburban Sage. ❖

Then I painted red spots on them, fixed them up with leather ears and bristling manes, which I had made out of an old hair brush, and gave them to my two youngest children for hobby-horses. Mygatt has to pass my door twice a day, and every time I see him watching those children with eyes of horror, and shuddering at the desecration, I feel that those sticks are earning an honest penny for the first time in their crooked lives.

THE SUBURBAN DOG.

THE SUBURBAN DOG.



HERE is a small, sweet patch of silence that comes over the suburban night just as it is turning into morning. There is no other really silent period in all the stretch between bed-time and get-up time. A man never realizes with what a variety of animal life he is surrounded, until he lies awake one Summer night in the suburbs. It will be borne in upon him, in the course of that experience, that between the moo of the calfless cow and the buzz of the sleepless mosquito, there is as large a choice in nocturnal noises as the most exacting could demand.

But, for this little space, there comes a silence so profound that it occasionally wakes me up. It did the other day, and I did not try to go to sleep at once, but lay still for a while, drinking in the charm of it.

The stillness was perfect. Even the little birds in the vines had let up on their sawfiling lullabies; and there was not enough wind to move the leaves in the tree-tops. For ten minutes the spell lasted, and then, far, far away, in a distant street, I heard the opening and shutting of a house-door, and my ear



faintly caught the sound of a heavy, regular foot-fall on the hard macadam.

“Ruh-ruh-ruh-ruh-ruh!”

It was only the engineer at the mill, going to his daily work, and I knew it, and the dogs knew it; but it made no difference to the dogs.

“Ruh-ruh-ruh-ruh-ruh!”

It might have been a college yell, but it was n't; it was the real thing. Somebody's dog had seized the chance to be smart. Then another one answers him — a querulous little kiyi, who goes:

“Rih-rih-rih-rih-rih!”

• ❁ The Suburban Sage. ❁ •

Then a big hound comes in with a heavy bay —

“Roo-roo-roo-roo-roo!”

Then a lady-dog somewhere comes in with a hysterical yelp, telling the world that her nerves are all unstrung, and that it gave her a terrible start to be waked up so suddenly, and what *is* the matter, anyway? Then there is a vague dog, who must live somewhere where he is not in the habit of seeing things; and he barks in a doubtful, inquiring way, as if he had done a good deal of barking in the course of his life, and had never seen any particular good come of it. Then there is a peculiarly offensive dog who yaps so shrilly and persistently and penetratingly that I know he can not be much over six inches long, and the kind of dog that would run away from a rubber-doll.

One by one they all come in. Under my window two familiar dog-voices break forth — the bass of my big dog and the treble of my little one. On sweeps the chorus in every key and cadence; and I know that the spreading ripple of melody will not die out until it has reached the confines of the town. It does not last long — five minutes, perhaps — and then it subsides all of a sudden. One low cur, who must have jackass blood in him, tries to get up an encore, but it does n't go.

A nuisance? Well, perhaps. But it is a nuisance that goes with the dogs; and, so far as I can judge, from the volume and extent of that chorus, it has not deterred one single person in town from keeping dogs. But it is totally unnecessary. Why do they do it?

❖ The Suburban Dog. ❖

Purely as a matter of sentiment. That is their way of reminding us that they still cling to the old title of service by which they earned the right to share men's homes, and to be the companions of men. The barking simply says:

"Here we are, you see; not wanted at present, but just as ready to warn you of danger and to fight for you as the best of our forefathers. We know that it is all right just now; we don't even get up to bark; we just lie here and wag our fat tails, but we 're here — oh! we 're here!"

Very foolish, you think. Well, perhaps so; but there are four or five old gentlemen right here in this State of New Jersey who meet once every year in a remote town in the woods, and go through certain legal formalities to assure the myriad house-owners of the State that they, the old gentlemen, are still the Proprietors of New Jersey — which they are, indeed, by right of succession, although the original grant has dwindled to a few pine-barrens. Now, either there is a good deal of human nature about a dog, or — we will let it go at that.

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I suppose it must be confessed that the suburban dog is, as a rule, a job lot. His owner, of course, affects to see signs of blood and lineage about him; but his owner's neighbors call him a mongrel cur, and as his past is generally hazy, perhaps the neighbors size him up rightly. Once in a while you find an inexperienced suburbanite who is rash enough to



pay good money for a real canine aristocrat, but he never repeats the experiment. To keep the noble beast from contaminating associations with the lower orders, he has to be cooped up in a cage or pen, and taken out to walk at the end of a leash. Under this treatment the animal pines, and becomes a burdensome object of compassion. Veterinaries, amateur and professional, work over him with no better effect than to increase his depression of spirits. Finally he takes hold of the case himself, breaks out of the cage one fine night, and is not seen again for a couple of weeks, when he returns home with every sign of having led a highly disreputable life. His escapade can not be concealed from

❖ The Suburban Dog. ❖

a censorious world. In fact, complaints of his uninvited visits come from dog-owners near and far, and in the end, he is given to the farmer who makes the most fuss over his claim for damages.

But in the case of the average dog, he is either given, or he gives himself. Some dogs lead a varied and unsettled life, involving a constant repetition of both processes. A. moves to town and gives his setter pup to B. Setter pup does n't like B., and goes and inflicts himself upon C. C. won't have it, and passes the dog over to D. The dog runs away every chance he can get, and goes back to C. That makes D. mad, and he tells C. to take his wretched pup back. C. goes to E. and labors hard with him to take the dog. E. finally consents, and then it is discovered that the dog has established himself in the household of F., from whence he will probably be ejected as soon as he exposes the objectionable ways that he has picked up in the course of his many changes of ownership.



❖ The Suburban Sage. ❖

But whatever may be the ultimate fate of this dog, he will for the rest of his days carry around his affections, not in a solid chunk, but cut up into sections, like a closely divided pie. From A. to F. — or to Z., if he lasts long enough — he will feel that he has a dropping-in acquaintance at every house; and not one of all the people through whose hands he has passed will ever get wholly rid of him, except C., who, having had more trouble than anybody else with the animal, may have found some clear and comprehensible method of expressing his feelings on the subject.

I feel somewhat conscience-stricken for having given this instance to the world, as I look out of my window and see the flock of innocent, harmless and wholly unobjectionable dogs reposing on my lawn and the neighborhood lawns — it is the very hottest of the day, and they *are* quiet for a while. There are red and black setters, and calico setters, and fox-terriers, and bull-terriers, and Scotch terriers, and Newfoundlands, and skyes, and basset-hounds, and mastiffs, and every kind and variety of dog, down to the plain yellow, or common dog dog. There is not a pedigree among the whole lot of them; few have any beauty, and the usefulness of the best of them is a doubtful quantity. True, they bark at night, but they bark as sensationally at the squirrel in the tree as they do at the lurking burglar; and they might bark their heads off before any of us got up to bother with them. They certainly do accompany the baby-carriages on their rounds, with an air of proud, protecting importance, which nothing in the world ever attains to, except an officer in a militia regiment;



and there is a widespread belief that if a tramp attempted to raid a baby carriage, the largest of the attendant dogs would eat him up. This must, however, be always a problem of the future, for tramps who are collecting babies are scarce in these parts.

Perhaps they are not valuable or beautiful or useful — our dogs — but we keep the most of them for plain, honest love of them. They play gently with the children; they submit to awkward, childish caresses that hurt them; even the great, big short-haired St. Bernard puts his policeman's-club of a tail between his legs and shrinks meekly away when the baby prods him with a sharp stick. When, having been away, we come

❖ The Suburban Sage. ❖

home, they are the first to meet us, wagging their honest tails, reaching us far ahead of the children, and yet patiently waiting for their meagre word and caress of recognition until the young ones have been fully greeted.

How could we spare them — our dogs — for are they not part and parcel of the suburban household? When the Master of the House comes home at evening, and looking up the roadway from afar off, sees the big yellow tail and the

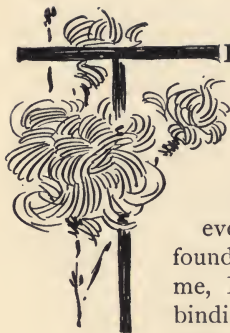


❖ The Suburban Dog. ❖

little brown tail wagging cheerfully as he heaves in sight, he knows that all has gone well with the home company, and that he need not fear that change or sickness has come to pass in his absence; for, had it been otherwise, the dogs would have known it, with their wonderful and mysterious dog knowledge, and they would have hid themselves from his sight at the time of his home-coming, instead of going out into the road to wag their honest mongrel tails, and tell him that all was well with those he loved.

THE NEWCOMERS.

THE NEWCOMERS.



THE other evening my wife reminded me that I had promised to lend a road-map to a man who had recently moved into town from New York. This surprised me somewhat, for I did not remember that I had ever made such a promise. But when I found out that my wife had promised for me, I realized that it was a much more binding engagement than any I could have made, because it was one that I should not be allowed to forget. So I laid down my pipe and book, found the road-map, and strolled out into the night alone; for Mrs. Newcomer had not yet returned Mrs. Sage's call, and my visit was to have no standing in social law—to be a thing existent, but unrecognized, like a drink between drinks, or a Philadelphia alley.

In a spirit of informality, I put on my oldest slouch hat and walked leisurely and luxuriously through the mellow August evening. I say "luxuriously" advisably; for I had not walked a hundred yards before I realized that I was enjoying one of the best luxuries that our generous but somewhat confused climate has to give us. The stars made a faint light in the brooding

❖ The Newcomers. ❖

skies; and the darkened earth was peaceful and silent with a temperate air, neither hot nor cool; and a pleasant green smell to it.

Ahead of me the gray macadam road stretched dimly on till it lost itself in a vista of arching trees. I was surprised that I seemed to have it all to myself. Perhaps it was too early in the evening, and my fellow-townsmen preferred the charms of nicotine to those of nature. I smiled a smile of kindly contempt for their preference, as I lit a cigar, which I happened to find in my pocket.

I soon perceived, however, that the night was not attractive to me alone. Away off in the distant woods, I heard the performance of a nocturnal tragi-comedy, familiar enough at this



❖ The Suburban Sage. ❖

season of the year. It had only three acts, or rather, three sounds. The Owl said:

“Whoo-oo!” the gun said “Pop!”; and then the boy with the gun made an unspellable noise that expressed surprise and delight — for he had hit the owl.

This little episode brought out another evidence of human companionship. Away up the road the pale macadam suddenly turned white where a small but brilliant disk of light was projected upon it. Then the light dashed around and lit up the tree-trunks and the underbrush. Then, after an interval, in which I could not hear a sound, except the insect noises of the night, it appeared on the other side of the road, and apparently nearer to me. I stood stock-still and watched the peculiar antics of the light. It went backward and forward in an uncertain sort of way, not as if its bearer were looking for anything, but more as if he were trying to find his way out of a thicket or a marsh. But there were no thickets or marshes on the broad level road, and even the underbrush in the vacant lots was sparse and low. Besides, the light was sometimes full on, sometimes shut off to a tiny crescent, and sometimes hidden altogether. Moreover, the night was so clear that if it had not been for the blackness that enshrouded whatever was in back of the glare, I should have been able to see the figure of the lantern.

I quickened my pace; but at the first sound of my feet on the hard road the light began to dance backward and forward like a will-o'-the-wisp in a fit; and when I got to the corner of the road that turned down to the Newcomers' house



and shouted "hello!" after it, it took itself out of sight up the road, with such speed that I had no temptation to follow it.

When I came in front of the Newcomers' house I stopped in astonishment, and mechanically pulled my watch from my pocket and lit a match to see the time. It was fifteen minutes past eight, but not one light peeped from the closed shutters of the comfortable old-fashioned cottage. A hundred yards on either side lights glowed in the neighbors' windows; but not so

❖ The Suburban Sage. ❖

much as a glimmer of a night-lamp in a bedroom broke the blackness of the Newcomers' house.

I knew they were all at home, for Mrs. Newcomer had told my wife they would be; so, after some hesitation, I concluded to try a ring at the bell. I think I found the idea that they might be asleep somewhat galling to my spirit. It was showing too frank and unaffected a contempt for the charms of suburban life, and I resented it. I pushed the button in the door-post, and heard a response from the distant kitchen, too loud and clear to escape the notice of any waking person. Then I heard a scratching sound above my head, and, stepping back off the porch, I saw the blinds of a front window pushed out about an inch and a half; and by the faint light that appeared at the chink I judged that some one was holding a candle far back in the bed-room hall. Then a woman's voice, husky and tremulous, but still to be recognized as Mrs. Newcomer's, whispered with intense agitation:

“Oh! what is it? — Who is it? — Please go away! — We don't want anything! — I'll wake my husband! — Mr. Newcomer will see you in the morning! — We've all gone to bed! — Oh, dear!”

This exclamation was caused by the action of a gust of wind which blew one leaf of the blind out of the lady's hand and revealed that Mrs. Newcomer was anything but accurate in her statements, for she wore a very pretty and rather elaborate dress, and, as the blind swung back, a piece of fancy work fell at my feet.

❁ The Newcomers. ❁

I established my identity and stated my errand, and was welcomed with an effusiveness such as no stranger had ever greeted me with before. The maid in the hallway, devoutly thanking the saints, as if my coming had saved the house from an attack of Apache Indians, produced a lamp, and the two females descended the stairs and were joined in the hallway by some more of the domestic staff. The process of letting me in was a long one. Bolt after bolt was withdrawn, key after key was turned. I knew the old house in its former tenant's time, and remembered that an iron lock with a brass key was its only equipment. The mighty armament was evidently new; but at last the door was pulled open, or, rather, pulled and pushed, for it stuck so tight in the frame that I had to put my shoulder to it before it would yield. As it went back a gust of chokingly warm air rushed out into my face; and it did not take me long to discover that every window in the house, from cellar to garret, was shut tight, although several large lamps were going at full blaze in the kitchen and library, where blankets had been hung up at the windows to keep the light in.

Mrs. Newcomer, with beads of perspiration standing on her forehead, cordially invited me in, but I told her I had not come to stay, and had only meant to leave my map at the door, as I had another pressing engagement. This, however, she would not hear of; and she so earnestly begged me to remain, at least until Mr. Newcomer returned from the Doctor's, that I had to consent. Fortunately, in my utter astonishment, I had forgot to dispose of my cigar, and Mrs.



Newcomer, observing this, suggested that I should smoke on the porch while she sat near the doorway. She admitted that it was rather close in the house, but said of course she did n't dare to have anything open when Mr. Newcomer was not within doors. So I sat outside and smoked, my hostess sat within the door and talked, and from the servants in the kitchen I could hear fervent ascriptions of thankfulness for the presence of the "good jontlemin."

❖ The Newcomers. ❖

“I feel quite ashamed of myself for making you stay with me, Mr. Sage,” began the lady; “but I know you would n’t mind — if you knew how nervous we all are — over these dreadful nights in the country. I suppose you ’ve got used to them — you must have, because you ’ve lived here so long, — but I should think it must have required a great deal of courage. And how you get around at night, I don’t see. Why, you have n’t even got a cane, Mr. Sage! Last night we counted five electric lights that were out, and to-night they ’ve only just lit them up; and poor Mr. Newcomer has to go to the doctor’s in all this dreadful darkness! We could n’t remember whether the baby had to have his pills first and the powders afterward, or the other way. And Henry — that is, Mr. Newcomer, is so *very* near-sighted that he ’s just as likely to run into a tramp as not — and, anyway, they tell me that the night air is full of malaria germs, and that you never should sleep with your windows open. You don’t think anything could have happened to Henry, do you, Mr. Sage? I am sure I expected him back by this time. If you ’ll excuse me a minute I ’ll go up to the corner room and look down the road through the opera glass. Oh! you don’t know what a relief it is to have you here.”

Henry — I mean Mr. Newcomer — arrived at last, and although he hailed me cordially when his wife told him who I was, I noticed that he slipped hastily past me, and went with his wife into a little reception room just behind my back. Perhaps he supposed that I would think he was delivering an important medical message to his wife; but I could not have thought that, for from



where lay an accumulation of old junk, with the rust of many years upon it. There was not much left of it, and I had quite forgotten all about it, but I could not help recognizing some coils of insulated wire, several gong-bells, two or three patent window fastenings, and a dark-lantern.

THE FIRST OF IT.

THE FIRST OF IT.



THE question that his old friends of the city oftenest ask of the suburbanite in the course of his first year is this: "Do you really like it, living out there?"

To this, if he is unwise — it being assumed that he can not help being a little bit snobbish — he will reply that he despises suburban life; that he only takes to it for the sake of the children, and that it is merely a temporary expedient in the interests of sanitary science. For this little indiscretion he will pay dearly later on, when he buys his house and settles down. But if he is wise he will say Yes — and say it in very large letters, too, and feign an appropriate enthusiasm.

Yet, if you ask me whether there ever was an indurated resident of a metropolitan city who really enjoyed his first year of suburban house-keeping, I should have to tell you that I do not believe it could be truly said of any man of the sort.

How could he enjoy it? — enjoy the new responsibilities — the new problems — a struggle with the furnace that ends only when the struggle with the front lawn begins — the new con-



ditions of butcher and baker-dom, and the strangeness of keeping your water supply in a box in the garret? No; certainly he does not enjoy these things, although they surely occupy his mind; nor does he enjoy the breaking up of his settled ways of city life—the loss of his pleasant stroll uptown from the office; of his half-hour's smoke at the club; of his careless

stroll through art-gallery or auction-room ; of his luxurious idle hour before dinner, and of his easy transition to the theatre or the opera afterward. These things are a part of his life, and he misses them ; and deep in his heart he believes that he always will miss them to the end of the chapter ; but, after all, this is not where the shoe pinches. His new world must have joys of its own, even though it denies him those of the old. And, after all, it is one whose importance he has calculated exactly, and to which he has thoroughly made up his mind. No, no ; the pinch is not here. He could readily enough accommodate his old foot to the new shoe if only — his old friends would n't step on it.

But, oh ! those old friends ! How the faces of them have changed ! For years he has been familiar with their kindly jests and gibes ; and he has never regarded them as anything worse than pleasant tributes to his pleasant individuality, and he laughs as heartily as they do when he is rallied on the peculiarities of his tastes and habits and fancies. Now, however, he is made to understand beyond peradventure that he has put himself out of the pale of that generous communion, and that his claims to delicate consideration are held to be forfeit unless he is willing to bow himself in the dust and humble himself before the righteous.

At first he is only surprised and puzzled and pained when he finds the jests of his old city companions taking on a tone not in the least suggestive of urban courtesy. It is more in wonder than in anger that he perceives the bitter, resentful undercurrent of the humor that

makes only a clumsy pretense to be as genial as of yore. He knows, of course, that he must expect some jokes on his desertion to the ranks of the Hayseeds; but he can not understand why, for the first time, these jests that come from friendly lip should be edged and pointed to cut and wound; why they should come so strangely close to the verge of the positively offensive; or why they should convey a suggestion of contemptuously indiscreet familiarity. After a while he gets a light on the subject, but it is not a very pleasant light. He gets an idea of the double crime he has unconsciously committed against the little world he has just left. In the first place, he has taken, with deliberation and foresight, a step to which his old comrades know that they all may be forced sooner or later; and they feel toward him as the other passengers would naturally feel toward a man who said: "Oh, well, if nobody really wants first choice of berths, I 'll take the extra large lower one in the middle section." In the second place — and this is the real galling, maddening, stinging thing that he has done — he has shown them all, quite unconsciously and unintentionally, but all the more convincingly, that he does n't think it worth while to sacrifice to their gods any longer; that he has made his own estimate of the game that they are playing, and that he does n't think it worth the amount of combustion which it gets out of the candle of human vitality.

And yet they think he might have done it a little longer, just as they are doing it, bravely and uncomplainingly. He might have figured to

❖ The Suburban Sage. ❖

get the children to the seaside, one after another, and he might have managed for his wife a week or two at Narragansett, and for himself a few days on somebody's yacht. With a small new economy here, and another one there, and a bit of self-sacrifice of this point, and a risk skillfully evaded at that, it ought to have been possible for him to remain at least a few years longer a resident of the city, though one dwelling sixty or eighty feet above its soil, and to enjoy the blessed favor and privilege of inquiring superciliously of the suburbanite:

“What! You live in the country? And do you really like it, living out there?”



❖ The First Of It. ❖

After a while a sort of resigned pity succeeds to resentment in the comments which the suburbanite's friends make upon his dark and discreditable life. There even comes a time when they accept presents of flowers and fruit and early vegetables from him with the patronizing kindness and curiosity which we extend to the prisoner who carves ingenious knickknacks in his lonely cell.

Then there comes a time when they begin to ask casual, indifferent questions about the price of lots in his neighborhood; the sort of society he has; what he does to amuse himself; and what it costs to keep a horse in the country. It is unnecessary to say, however, that it never enters the innocent mind of the suburbanite that these questions are anything but a desire to obtain general information, or that they display any intention on the part of his haughty associates to join him in his rural walk in life.

And so the time goes on, the suburbanite settling himself, day by day, more comfortably in the ever-increasing shadow of his own vine and fig tree; but always at the bottom of his heart, just a little bit pitying himself; until —

It so happens that early in June Mrs. Shingleroof takes the children to pay a visit to her family, and Mr. Shingleroof is left a bachelor for a couple of weeks. Mr. Shingleroof is to spend the term of his bachelorhood in a New York hotel. Mrs. Shingleroof has suggested the plan, for her husband may not soon again have such an opportunity of re-visiting the glimpses of the urban moon that shone so brightly on his bachelor vigils; and she does not want



to feel that marriage has wholly separated her husband from his old friends.

Shinglerooft has just seen his family off at the Grand Central, and is wending his way downtown when he meets Brownstone. He has not seen much of Brownstone within the last three years; for while Brownstone is a very good fellow he is known as a great wit of the clubs, and at one time he was so confoundedly sarcastic upon a certain subject, that really, — you know —

“Hello, Shinglerooft!” is Brownstone’s greeting, “you’re the very man I want to see. I want

to ask you some questions about that place you live in, and I want you to make some inquiries there for me. Are you going out there to-night?"

Shingleroof explains, and Brownstone has a brilliant idea. Shingleroof must spend a week with him, and he a week with Shingleroof. The first week is to be a mad revel among the wonders of the town; the second week is to be one of quiet recuperation and exploration in suburban scenes. "We'll have a rattling high old time," says Brownstone; "just like the old days, and then we'll go out to your place and loaf it off. You are in for a holiday, anyway, and I can get my partner to run the office for a few days."

The rattling good time rattles less than they had expected. Three or four nights of the theatres and music halls make them both more than willing to spend a quiet evening at home — Brownstone's home — but the evening is so quiet that Shingleroof goes to bed at half-past nine o'clock — but not to sleep, for the roar of the city breaks his slumbers. In the day-time he finds Brownstone's clubs somewhat too prim and poky. He has lost track of the personalities. He feels out of place, too, among the pale, precise people, he with his ruddy brown face, and his clothes that are just the same as theirs, only they are n't. One stranger takes him for an African explorer.

On Friday night they see their last show, and go out of town on the midnight train to see a tennis tournament at Shingleroof's Field Club. And, as he walks up the broad, silent road, breathing in the sweet night breeze under the

❁ The Suburban Sage. ❁

great arching elms, Shingleroof is conscious of a new, strange and glad sensation.

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He is up bright and early the next morning, happy in the sunlight, the whispering trees, the wind blowing through his many windows; happy in the songs of birds; happy even in picking out the voices of individual dogs from among the great and tireless orchestra that barks and yelps and bays all around him. He gets into his flannels and goes downstairs and shakes hands with everybody in the house, like a patriarch in old days coming home from a journey. He hears the homely news of the town — who is sick, and who has got well; how the water is n't roily any more, and what Mr. Dogberry said about the sick terrier. He and his Man (or nearly so) inspect every corner of his small domain, and look his seventeen-year-old horse over as though he were a probable winner of the Suburban. In his trim garden he rejoices in his radishes and is content with his corn. He strolls out on the highway and receives a cheery greeting from every passer-by; from the easy-going townspeople to the brisk commuters; from the butcher in his snowy-hued wagon, and the doctor in his rusty gig. The boy with the milk stops to inform him that "We waxed de Woodstocks, and I swiped t'ree ball off of dem." The young tennis enthusiasts, coming back from before-breakfast practice, cross the street to tell him of the chances of the game. Before he has been out ten minutes he has been asked to score



for a ball match, referee in the tennis finals, subscribe to the fund for a new church organ, and buy three tickets to the picnic of the Friendly Sons of Abyssinians. He feels quite at home.

Then he looks up and sees Brownstone standing by him. Brownstone in patent-leather shoes, pearl-gray trousers, black cutaway coat, high-collared shirt, and, for some mysterious

❧ The Suburban Sage. ❧

reason, in a silk hat. He, too, has been out for a walk, and he has got into the only patch of underbrush within a mile. Clinging green mementos of his trip decorate him from head to foot. He feels that Brownstone is not doing him credit in the eyes of the young tennis players, but he is too happy to be cross, and he inquires if his guest has had a good night.

“Ye-es,” replies Brownstone, doubtfully; “that is, those wretched dogs and birds of yours kept me awake a good deal of the night. I say, what will take grass stains out of my trousers, and is this prickly stuff here what you call poison ivy?”

Brownstone will go to town on Monday morning just to see if his partner is doing all right, and he will tell his host that he will surely be back that evening unless pressing business detains him. Shingleroof knows that pressing business will detain him, but he cares not a cent. He can get along without Brownstone's company, even though his wife and children be absent; he is at home, — not at Brownstone's home, — at Shingleroof's home.

And that makes all the difference.

THE SPORTING SCHEME.

THE SPORTING SCHEME.



HE train had been flagged at a little station in New Jersey, and I looked out the window to see if any passengers were likely to come aboard, for I was getting lonely in the great empty smoking-car. It was a gloomy day, too dark to read with comfort, and a fine, drizzling rain was beginning to fall.

The sight of the company on the platform at once awakened my interest. They had just crossed over from a little real estate office which stood across the way from the station, and they formed a curious and striking collection of individuals. One was a sour, saturnine, middle-aged man, who carried a dinner-pail. He was shaking his head obdurately in negative answer to what were evidently persistent pleadings on the part of another man, a small, spry person, cheaply clothed, who looked as if he might be a sewing-machine agent or the "advance" of a circus. The other six men were startlingly different in appearance from the other two talkers. They were all large, burly men, with rosy cheeks, close-cropped hair, a well-groomed appearance generally, and clothes that were at once ex-

❖ The Sporting Scheme. ❖

pensive, English and loud. Two wore riding-breeches, one under a great white box-coat, the other with a covert-coat. Another was in the "pink" of an English fox-hunter; and the fourth wore a tweed suit with checkerboard stockings, baggy knee-breeches, and a cap. This man carried a golf stick. The other two men, although they belonged to the same general type, wore coachmen's liveries. Each of the six carried a heavy black rubber overcoat on his arm. The big men accompanied the two others in silence.

My window was open, and I could hear the conversation as they approached.

"You won't do it, then?" the little man was saying; "not even if I find the horses? Well, all right; just as you say; but I tell you, man, you are losing the chance of your life!"

The man with the tin-pail shook his head and went away, and the little man suddenly turned upon his companions, full of the rage of disappointment.



❖ The Suburban Sage. ❖

“Climb on there, you tarriers!” he said, addressing the elegant group with every manifestation of disrespect. “It ’s your fool mugs that hoodoo the business. Get aboard, you damn micks! You ain’t worth your feed!”

And he drove them before him into the smoking-car.

“Get up there, you potato-peelers!” he said. “Get up to the further end of the car. I won’t sit with you. I am sick of you. And put on your coats, you yahoos. I don’t care if it *is* hot; I ain’t going to let you spoil those clothes.”

He had sunk down into a seat across the aisle before he perceived me and caught my wondering eye. At once he crossed over.

“Sounds kinder queer, does n’t it?” he said. “Well, just be so good as not to give it away, and I ’ll explain.

He produced a business card and handed it to me. It read :

I. LEGGET,

SPORT BOOMER,

Refers to every Real Estate Dealer in New Jersey.

“Don’t catch on?” he inquired. “Well, it ’s a pretty original scheme of my own. It did n’t work at that place, and I was a fool to bother with a real estate agent who would carry his dinner in a can. But, you see, that ’s

❖ The Sporting Scheme. ❖

a religious community. All towns in New Jersey may be divided into two classes — religious and sporting. Now, my business is booming sport towns. Want to see how I do it? Well, you wait until I get two stations further on, where I drop this gang to relieve another one. It's a junction, that station is, and we'll be just in time for a train from New York on the other branch. You'll see my boys work a train, and you'll see how my scheme can build up a community. Here, I've got to give them some orders!"

Going up to the other end of the car, he talked earnestly for a long time to the six big men, who listened with awe on their faces. I caught his closing words:

"Now, behave yourselves for once, you chumps, and show the gentleman how the trick's done, and you shall have a can of beer when you get paid off."

"Yis, sorr," said the man in the covert coat; "we will, sorr; thank you kindly, sorr."

The little man came back to me just as the second station hove in sight. This was a very different place from the desolate domain of the agent with the tin-can. Through the trees in every direction I could see the light wood of unfinished houses. New paint shone on a score of commodious villas. There was also a real estate office near the station, but it was a neat and attractive structure, and a portly, well-fed gentleman stood in the doorway.

"Drill, ye tarriers!" shouted the little man to the big ones. "Hustle over to the other platform. There's Mickey's gang over there. Tell Mickey to drill them with you till the New York

❖ The Suburban Sage. ❖

train is gone. They 'll have plenty of time left to get aboard here."

As the men hurried across the platform they were met by another group similar in appearance, several of whom led horses. One had a horse of some blood drawing a dog-cart. One of the footmen immediately took his station at the head of this animal, while the other received from the agent a dressing-suit-case and a leather gun-case, which he held, one in each hand, standing erectly in the station door. Four of the magnificent gentlemen then mounted the horses, with considerable difficulty — in fact, they had to be boosted up by their companions. The others assumed much easier attitudes upon their own feet. One or two lit cigars. The man in the checkerboard smoked a brierwood pipe. The agent distributed hunting-crops among them, and a small boy came out with a case of gleeks and teeing irons and putters, and the rest of them, and stood behind the checkerboards exactly like



❖ The Sporting Scheme. ❖

a Scotch or English caddie. All maintained absolute silence.

It was on this ravishing spectacle of sport and fashion that the New York train drew up. Out came a group of seekers of suburban homes. They were probably mostly city people; but when they saw that display of sporting style they stared about them like a lot of hayseeds on Broadway. Before we started I saw the whole group safely herded into the real estate office. Then the little man brought his second shift of men back into the car.

"There!" said he; "that catches them every time. There were n't ten houses in that town six months ago. I did it — every bit of it."

"But don't they discover the imposition after a while?" I inquired. "Surely your new settlers must some time find out that these decoy-ducks of yours don't live in the town."

"There is no imposition, my dear sir!" rejoined the little man, less warmly. "The people who are attracted by that sort of thing are every bit as bad fake-sports as my bog-trotters here. These poor fellows of mine are honest laboring men out of employment. They do this thing for their board and lodging — you see I feed them well — and they 're a good deal better men than most of the dudes who think they can't live without white boxcoats and balloon riding-breeches.

"Of course," he resumed, after a moment of reflection, "it don't do to work a town too long. There *have* been revulsions of feeling, and my tarriers *have* had the hose played on them. But, you see, it 's the regular secret society business. The people who are caught want to catch others.

❖ The Suburban Sage. ❖

I've known them to go out in their own sport clothes and drill with my boys when the express trains came in. Oh, man, you don't understand the real estate business!"

Mr. Legget sank into a deep reverie on the greatness of his scheme, from which he awoke with a sudden start.

"Here," said he, "I 'm forgetting myself. I've got to inspect these men before I go to Jersey City. I have got to have them out on two more of these infernal criss-cross New Jersey railroads before dark. Here, you flannel-mouths, stand up in the aisle and be inspected. Larry Dooley, you wear your pants too hard. If you ain't more careful of them I'll lay you off for a week. Maloney, your red-flannel shirt is showing over your shirt-collar. Corrigan, I



❖ The Sporting Scheme. ❖

saw you at the station without gloves. I 've a mind to stop your supper for that. Do you think those red mud-scoops of yours look like Tuxedo or the Meadowbrook Hunt? McCarty, if you strike any more matches on yourself you 'll hear from me. Owney Muldoon, my friend, the next time you hold on to a horse's ears to keep yourself steady, you 'll get the sack. Now, hustle over to the Greenwood Lake branch, every mother's son of you, and take the tobacco out of your mouths before you get into the train."

"Say," said Mr. Legget to me, turning back after we had parted; "you don't know any lady-like young women in reduced circumstances, do you, who 'd do the tailor-made girl for me? I 'd pay them well, and they 'd beat the Micks out of sight."

I said "No!" and he chased his four sporting swells and their footmen into another smoking-car.



THE EVOLUTION OF THE
SUBURBANITE.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE
SUBURBANITE.

A DRAMATIC SKETCH IN FIVE TABLEAUX.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

- MR. SUBURBANITE *A married New Yorker of moderate means, lately settled in Commutahville, N. J.*
- MR. CITT *His friend, an unmarried New Yorker of moderate means.*
- MR. NEXT *Friend of Mr. Citt. Also an unmarried New Yorker of moderate means.*

TIME: The Present.

TABLEAU I. *SCENE: A Pleasant Suburban Road. Neat Cottage in foreground, with front lawn. View of hills, etc., in distance.*

MR. SUBURBANITE *discovered, escorting MR. CITT to the Sunday afternoon train. The latter*

❖ The Evolution of the Suburbanite. ❖

carries a hand-bag. He has been spending the day at Commutahville.

MR. CITT (*with an expression of kindly superiority, gazing carelessly and superciliously about him*). — Nice sort of little place you have here, Subby. I suppose you 'll get to like it pretty well, too, after a while. Let 's see, you used to say that you rather liked country life, did n't you? Seems kind of funny to see *you* in a place like this, though. I should think you 'd find it slow a good deal of the time. *I* should, I know. However, as you say, the children — you know best, of course, what suits you — but I should think — Oh! is that the train? (*Shaking hands warmly and hurriedly.*) Well, good-by; I 've had a charming day! Tell Mrs. Suburbanite how much I 've enjoyed it! So long!

(*Exit, running.*)

TABLEAU II. *SCENE: Same Pleasant Suburban Road. Same neat Cottage in foreground, with same front lawn. Same view of hills, etc., in distance.*

MR. SUBURBANITE *discovered, accompanying MR. CITT to the Monday morning train. MR. CITT still carries a hand-bag, but his demeanor is less proud and more genial. He is thinking of a girl he knows in town, and wishing that MRS. SUBURBANITE knew her, and would ask her out.*



MR. CITT (*gazing about him, approvingly*).— Really, you are very nicely settled here, Subby, old man. Seems to have done you good, too. Gad! I never knew you were such a walker. Say, these macadam roads must be elegant for tandem bicycles, must n't they? I s'pose you really like it out here, don't you? Of course you do, or you would n't stay. Well, if you *do* want to live in the country, I suppose you could n't have chosen a better place, in its way. That little view down there (*pointing*), that's really very pretty a morning like this, don't you know. Spring makes everything look pretty, though, I suppose.

(*Exeunt, strolling, to catch the train by one-eighth-of-a-second.*)

TABLEAU III. *SCENE: Just the same Pleasant Suburban Road. Just the same neat Cottage in foreground, with just the same front lawn. Just the same view of hills, etc., in distance.*

❖ The Evolution of the Suburbanite. ❖

MR. SUBURBANITE *discovered, accompanying MR. CITT to the Wednesday morning train. MR. CITT carries no hand-bag. He has got to the point of leaving his things at the house, and running out when he feels like it. He is engaged to the girl in New York; and he looks around him with balmy ecstasy bubbling in his heart and beaming out of his eyes.*

MR. CITT.—No, old man; I 'm sorry, but I shan't be out again to-night. Nellie will be at Narragansett at the end of the week, and I must hurry up and get some work done if I want to get off and see her. If it was n't for that, I 'd love to stay. Really, I don't believe you fellows who live out here all the time quite appreciate what a good time you have. Why, I met Lugsby in town the other day, and he was perfectly enthusiastic over his visit here. Said he had n't enjoyed himself so much in—he did n't know when. Oh! there 's no doubt about it, you 've got a most delightful, rational way of life. Of course Nellie and I would n't care to live anywhere except in New York; but I suppose there 's no doubt about it, you fellows out here in the country get more in return for your money than we do in the city. Now what, for instance, did you say that little gray house over there on the hill rented for? Oh, yes; five hundred dollars. Cheap, is n't it, for such a location? And then that view! Why, Lugsby — you know how undemonstrative he is? —he was quite enthusiastic over that view. He said there was something Swiss about it.

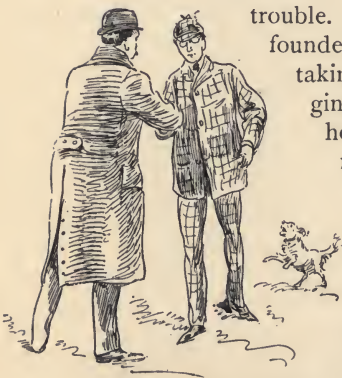
(*Exeunt MR. CITT, talking steadily.*)

❖ The Suburban Sage. ❖

TABLEAU IV. *SCENE: Same identical Suburban Road. Same identical neat Cottage in foreground, with same identical front lawn. Same identical view of hills, etc., in distance.*

MR. SUBURBANITE discovered, escorting MR. CITT to last Sunday afternoon train. MR. CITT's bearing is no longer either proud or exultant; but humble, grateful and anxious. He is married and is the father of one child, aged at the present moment 21 days, 4 hours and 56 minutes. He wears an ulster, and he grasps his friend's hand with effusive warmth at parting.

MR. CITT. — Well, good-by old man. You've been awfully kind to take so much trouble. I feel as if I'd been con-foundedly selfish, don't you know, taking up your Sunday in dragging you all over those cold houses; but, really, I should n't know what to do if it was n't for your advice. No; I positively can't stay to dinner — Mrs. Suburbanite is just as good as she can be — but I must get back to the flat. The doctor says Nellie can sit up to dinner to-day, if she's had a good day, and I know the poor child has simply set her heart on it. Your wife understands, I am sure. I can't tell you how relieved I shall be when I get Nellie and



the baby out here in the fresh air and quiet! She can't help getting back her strength here; don't you think so? And she 'll enjoy it so! And that view! Think of having that view to look at instead of that miserable dark city street! Why, every time I see that view, it reminds me of Switzerland! And you 'll tell the agent that I 'll take the Dusenberry cottage — the gray one, I mean, not the other — you know. Good-by, again, and thank you ever so much. Nellie will be simply delighted when I tell her.



(Exit, computing interest.)

TABLEAU V. *SCENE: Same Pleasant Suburban Road. TWO Neat Cottages in foreground, with TWO front lawns. Same view of same hills, etc., in same distance.*

MR. CITT *discovered, escorting MR. NEXT to the Sunday afternoon train. The latter carries a hand-bag. He has been spending the day in Commutahville with his old friend and former bachelor companion, MR. CITT, late of New York. With an expression of kindly superiority he gazes carelessly and superciliously about him.*

❖ The Suburban Sage. ❖

MR. CITT (*with feverish enthusiasm*). — Pretty nice now, is n't it? I don't believe there 's another place like this within twenty — no, sir, within forty miles of New York. I 'll tell you what it is, Next, my boy, what you want to do is to marry a nice girl, and come out here and settle down with us. It 's the only real way to enjoy life. Now, there 's that house I had before I built my present one — the Dusenberry cottage up there on the hill — put a few hundred, or may be a thousand dollars' worth of repairs into that — to the plumbing and that sort of thing — and it will make a cottage fit for a king. And that view! — man alive, look at that view! Could you imagine you were within one hour of New York? Why, man, it 's Switzerland, that 's what it is! It 's Switzerland!

(Exeunt. The train booms in the distance.)

SO SPINS — TO END IT WITH A RHYME —
THAT VENGEFUL WHIRLIGIG OF TIME!







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