THE ARGOSY

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ON STEEDS OF STEEL;

OR,

*THE TOUR OF THE CHALLENGE CLUB.**

BY MATTHEW WHITE, JR.

CHAPTER X.

MY BIG FIASCO.

"I'M sorry, Hasbrouck, but there'll be no chance for you to rehearse your part with the Ellen. It's nearly time for you to go on now," and Vane looking like a clown with the make up washed off half his face, came rushing down into the dressing room where Perry had just finished putting the last touches to my costume.

"Oh, I guess I can get through all right," I told him, although my knees were almost knocking together from preliminary stage fright

*Begun in No. 443 of THE ARGOSY.

He rushed off, for being stage manager he had his hands full, leaving me to go over my opening lines--something I had been doing every five minutes all the evening—with Perry.

Then came my call to stand in the wings, ready to go on at my cue—"Come in young man" from Miss Parker.

By this time I was so scared that I saw nothing—nothing, that is except the lines "Ah, my dear Ellen, I've been anxiously waiting to see you since daybreak"—words which seemed to dance before my eyes in every conceivable style of contortion like hobgoblins, sent to torment me,

Oh, why had I ever consented to put myself in such a position? But there was no time for regret now. There was

INSTEAD OF PUTTING OUT BOTH HANDS TO BREAK HIS FALL, HE STUCK BOTH OF THEM ABOVE HIS HEAD.

Miss Parker as "Bobbin," saying she'd open the door for me, and declaring that I was "the tidiest young man she'd seen between there and the Green Park."

Worse and worse! I had forgotten about these lines. Of course the audience would be on the *qui vive* of expectancy to see the young man thus described. I could imagine the hundreds of opera glasses that were being put in readiness to "take me in."

For one awful instant a wild desire to turn about and flee, took posession of me. I verily believe I would have acted on it, had not Perry, evidently suspicious of my intentions, had one arm thrown across my shoulder.

And now it was too late, for here was Bobbin with her "Come in, young man."

My orders had been to enter hastily and rush up to the Ellen with every indication of eagerness. And rush I certainly did, straight towards a figure which stood up waiting to receive me near the table in the center of the stage. But what appearance this figure had, whether it was man or woman I could not have told for my life during those first few seconds, while I got off the lines: "Ah, my dear Ellen! I've been anxiously waiting to see you since——"

I had gone thus far with my head in the air, speaking the words to vacancy as it were, but now gaining a little confidence from the fact that I had managed to make a start, and realizing that such an ardent young lover ought to gaze at least once upon the object of his affections, I dropped my eyes to the face of the young lady in front of me.

Fatal move! With a thrill of dismay I recognized in the "Ellen" to whom I was making love, none other than the Miss Renwick, of baseball memory. This broke me up completely, and instead of adding "daybreak" to the lines I substituted the words which coined themselves from the association of ideas in my brain, and which were "the baseball game."

Never shall I forget the scene that followed. Miss Renwick gave a little shriek and walked away from me; Bobbin came up behind me and repeated: "daybreak, daybreak," in my ear, till I thought she must have gone crazy or I would, while from the audience there ascended a perfect howl—this is just the word that expresses it--of merriment.

If I had only given expression to my real feelings, I might at least have finished my first speech, for it ended here with "I'm in despair—I'm wretched." But the instant those fatal words "baseball game," passed my lips, I realized what I had done and remained there with one hand outstretched and a tongue as mute as a marble statue's, till Vane mercifully rung down the curtain, when I collapsed into the chair Miss Renwick had been occupying, and buried my face in my hands.

Of exactly what happened next, I haven't a very clear idea. I remember somebody bundling me off the stage and hearing Perry say: "Yes, I can go through with it. I've heard Hasbrouck repeat the lines often enough. I ought to know them."

Then I was hurried down into the dressing room, where two fellows set to work stripping me of my costume, which done, they left me to put on my own clothes at my leisure. I had just collected my thoughts sufficiently to set about this task when the door opened and Hugh came in.

"Will Hasbrouck, what under the canopy is the matter with you?" he began.

"I'm a fool, that's the long and short of it," I made answer. "I had no business to undertake the thing."

"But what made you drag in that about baseball?" he persisted. "You don't know how ridiculous——"

"Yes, I do," I interrupted, adding, "and we make ourselves ridiculous every time we quit our wheels this tour. We didn't start out to play baseball and turn actor, and you see now what follows when we try it. Are they going on with the play?"

"Yes, with Perry in your part; come hurry up and dress so you can see it." and Hugh began buttoning my vest for me by way of hastening my movements.

But I declared that I didn't care if I never saw the inside of a theater again and begged him to go back and join the others.

"Where will I find you?" he asked.

"In bed," I answered briefly, and as soon as I had got my clothes on, I made a bee line for the stage door.

But Vane intercepted me, insisted that it was all right, and that I must stay for the supper and dance, which was to come off in the assembly rooms in the opera house building as soon as the performance was over.

"Come, you and Miss Renwick must make it up," he added. "You owe her an apology, you know, for breaking her up as you did."

So resolving not to be childish, I stayed, and must say I had a very pleasant time. Everybody took my fiasco good naturedly, and during the Saratoga, which I danced with Miss Renwick, I explained to her all about the pins and needles I was on that afternoon at the ball game, and we became very good friends.

It was well on into the small hours of the next morning when we went home, and I was dead tired. But after a late breakfast the following day, and when Steve's and Mac's machines were brought over from the station, I felt in fine trim for the continuation of the tour.

In spite of the two unfortunate incidents which I have recorded, we had enjoyed ourselves immensely at the Robinsons,' who all came down to the gate to see us off.

"This is something like, fellows," I exclaimed, as we bowled smoothly along the road, northward. "From this moment we date our real tour."

And we all certainly did thoroughly enjoy that morning's run. Each man had as good a mount as his fellow, the roads were fine, and all the hills were "down ones," as Mac expressed it. We had left Tiffleton at eleven o'clock and rode straight on till one, when we began to cast about us for a place to get our dinner.

We had whirled past a country hotel in a village but a little way back, but had been so fascinated with our speeding steeds that we hated to stop. Now that the grade began to ascend a little, and stones commenced to crop out in our path, we became sensible that we had appetites for something besides sport.

"I'm getting simply ravanous," announced Hugh, dexterously steering his wheel between two infantile bowlders.

"Suppose we stop at one of these houses we're passing," suggested Steve, nodding his head towards one of those white, with green shutter structures that are such an all pervailing feature of the American landscape.

"No, don't do that," I objected. "Just imagine how you'd feel if four hungry fellows should come to one of our houses and ask for dinner, even though they did promise to pay for it. You know you couldn't help thinking there was something trampish about the thing."

"But where are we to satisfy the cravings of nature then?" Mac wanted to know.

"At the next hotel we come across, to be sure," was my answer.

"But that may not be for a couple of hours yet," grumbled Hugh.

"Nonsense!" I retorted. "You know we've been passing them at the rate of one every twenty minutes ever since we've been out."

Nobody could deny this, so there was "silence in the ranks' for a short time, while we all bent more energetically to our pedals. We had got over the worst of the rough road apparently, and saw a level stretch for a spurt ahead of us, when we overtook a man walking along with great strides his coat thrown over his arm, and the silk hat he wore tipped far back on his head. But we were in such a hurry that we would probably not have given him a second glance had he not hailed us as we flashed by.

CHAPTER XI.

A BELATED BRIDEGROOM.

"HI, hold on there a minute, won't you, please?"

This was the call that caused all of us Challengers to slow down, look around and then dismount. The pedestrian with the high hat and frock coat had broken into a run and was beckoning to us with frantic gesticulations. I now saw that he was a young man, with a faint black mustache. He had on a white satin necktie and white kid gloves, and certainly did look rather out of place here all by himself on the dusty highway.

As we trundled our machines up to him, curious to know what he wanted, he took out his watch, looked at it hurriedly and then exclaimed: "Boys—ah—gentlemen, would it be asking you too much to beg of one of you to lend me his wheel?"

Too much! We glanced at one another and then back at the individual who had proffered such a bold request.

"I am in sore straits," he went on without waiting for any of us to reply. "In short, this is my wedding day——" (here the stranger paused for an instant, and I was conscious of Hugh dodging his face behind me to hide a smile)—"and I am afraid I shall be late for the ceremony. There was an accident to the train ahead of the one in which I took passage. The wedding is to take place at half past one. It is quarter past now, and I still have over two miles to go. I thought if I could borrow one of your bicycles I might make it."

"Do you know how to ride?" asked Steve.

"Well, I can ride a big wheel, so I don't see what's to prevent me doing it with a little one," was the bridegroom's answer, and once more he looked at his watch and his forehead contracted into a frown.

"You can try mine," went on Steve, trundling it forward. "It will fit you better than any of the others."

"Oh, thank you," exclaimed the young man, his face becoming radiant. "If you and your friends will stop at the first brown house on the left of the road, I will take great pleasure in making you honored guests at the wedding breakfast. My name is Smart. Mrs. Peabody Smart will be delighted to welcome you too, I know."

"Hadn't you better take off those white kids?" suggested Steve, as Mr. Smart was about to mount. "You might soil them."

"Oh, I'm afraid if I take them off I'll not have time to put them on again," was the response. "The connection is bound to be a very close one, in any case."

"What does Steve propose to do with himself now, I wonder?" whispered Hngh in my ear.

"Look out there!" we all four exclaimed at that instant in a breath.

Mr. Smart had mounted, told Steve to let go, pressed on the treadles, and gone the way of all those who, knowing how to manage the ordinary, think that of course they can master a Safety.

He wobbled in the balance for an instant or two, and then went over—but *not* in the way most men do. Instead of putting out his hands to break his fall, he stuck both of them above his head, in order that the white kids might be the last things to sustain injury.

It was an awfully funny sight, and we enjoyed it, even on our empty stomachs. Then we all went to the rescue, and gave the plucky Smart such valuable points about the management of the machine, that after five minutes' practice he was enabled to vanish from sight around a bend in the road.

Then we four Challengers stood and looked at one another.

"Well," began, Hugh finally, walking up to Steve, "how do you propose to get over the ground now?"

For reply Steve tapped his long limbs and added: "You go on; don't wait for me. I'll be along presently."

"We stick together," I declared with emphasis, pushing my machine off with my hand on the saddle, as a signal that we were all to walk to keep our generous companion company.

"Say, Steve," suggested Mac, "you think it's all right, do you, and you'll get your bike again?"

"Well, did you ever see a highwayman rigged out in white kid gloves and satin tie?" was Steve's only answer, but it was conclusive.

"I don't want to say anything to make light of Steve's charitable act," remarked Hugh; "but I cannot forbear from observing that we are once more treading on dangerous ground, it seems to me, in departing from the strict business in hand. You remember what resulted from dabbling in baseball, what direful consequences arose from meddling with amateur theatricals, and now that one of our number has involved himself in the meshes of matrimony, I tremble for the result."

"But this time, Hugh," I returned, "it is all in the line of cycling, and remember the invitation to the wedding breakfast. In the present condition of our appetites, I'm sure that ought to atone for everything."

"First brown house to the left on this road, he said, didn't he?" observed Mac.

"Yes; and I shouldn't be surprised if we had a real good time after we get there," I added.

"But such a 'getting there' as this is," interposed Steve. "I declare, all you fellows staying behind with me this way makes me almost wish I hadn't done it."

"Stuff and nonsense, Steve," broke in Hugh. "Didn't you know 'Stick together' was the motto of the Challengers, with a bottle of Spaulding's glue for our crest? But, I say, you'll probably be permitted to kiss the bride."

"More probably I won't want to," laughed Steve.

"Not if she's such a jay as our friend Smart," said Mac. "His satin tie was bad enough, but the white kids—oh my, I wonder if he heard us laugh?"

"To be sure he didn't," returned Hugh. "Don't you know a man doesn't hear anything but the beating of his own heart on his wedding day?"

With such talk we whiled away the time as we went trudging along the road, pushing our steeds of steel by our sides. We met two or three wagons, and were conscious that the occupants twisted around in their seats to look after the strange spectacle of four boys and three bicycles going along amicably together.

"They must have seen our friend Smart," I remarked, when the dust raised by one of these teams had settled and we dared open our mouths. "I'm going to ask the driver of the next one that comes along for a report of his progress."

The next proved to be a farm wagon, creating such a clatter on the rough road that I despaired of making my voice heard above it. However, as the man who was in it came abreast of us he hauled up his horses with a prolonged "Wh-o-a!"

"S-a-y," he drawled, "be you the young fellers what's got a friend ahead on one o' them there pesky machines, what wears a plug hat an' white gloves?"

"Well, we know such a young man," I answered. "What's happened to him?"

"Don't know as nothin' happened to him 'cept a want o' sense," responded the farmer. "But he jist wanted me to say ter ye not to forget the weddin' breakfast. Gee up, there."

"No danger, much obliged," we answered in chorus, then clapped our hands over our mouths to shut out the dust the old man left in his wake.

Re-inspired by this thoughtful message, we trudged on with freshened strides, if I may so express it, and soon Hugh exclaimed: "There it is, the first brown house!" and pointed to a large sized building at the top of a rise in the road to the left.

"Hurrah! now for the feast!" the rest of us cried, and it did not take us long to cover the intervening ground.

"Hullo, doesn't look much like a festivity of any kind around here," commented Hugh, as we reached the gate.

The house stood about ten feet back from the fence, and a box hedge, neatly trimmed, bordered the brick path that led up to the front porch. All the shutters that we could see on the lower floor were closed.

"Perhaps they're very swell and have been married by gaslight," Steve ventured to suggest.

"Gas, out here in the wilderness!" retorted Hugh, with a withering wave of his hand toward a corn field across the road.

"Well, things do look pretty quiet to have a wedding going on," I remarked. "But we'll soon find out," and stepping up to the door I doubled up my knuckles and gave a resounding thump.

We waited for three minutes; I thumped once more; again no answer, and then I proposed that we go around to the side of the house in a body and explore.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FIRST BROWN HOUSE TO THE LEFT.

ALL was as quiet as Wall Street on Sunday about that Brown house. The moo of a cow two fields off only seemed to make the stillness more noticeable, and it was with suspicions pretty well deepened that I rapped at the kitchen door.

This was in the form of a screen against flies, and through it we could see a woman, with gray puffs of hair on either side of her temples, busily ironing.

She looked up with a little start when she heard me knock, then put one finger to the bottom of her iron, took the latter back to the stove, and finally stepped over to the door.

"Well?" she said, not making any motion to open it, but speaking through the netting.

"If you please," I began, "we would like to know if Mr. Smart is being married here today."

"Wh-a-t?" The woman came a step farther forward and placing her forehead against the screen, took a more searching survey of us.

"Is there a wedding party going on here today?" I repeated, already convinced that Mr. Peabody Smart was a heartless swindler and that Steve would never see his machine again.

"A wedding! No indeed. What on airth put that into your heads?" and the old lady looked positively shocked.

"Mr. Smart did," here spoke up Hugh. "He invited us to the wedding breakfast, and told us to stop at the first brown house we came to on the left of the road, and this is it."

"Well, this ain't it," and the sharp tongued old lady quietly reached out and shut the solid door in our faces.

"Sold again!" exclaimed Mac. Then turning to Osborn, he added: "It's too bad, Steve, that you should lose your bike doing an act of kindness."

"Lose his bike!" I echoed. "Not much he doesn't. You stay here with him, Mac; Hugh and I will mount our wheels and soon run that Smart fraud down," and I made a break for the gate.

But Steve caught me by the arm.

"Hold on a minute, Will," he said. "In the first place I'm not so sure that Smart is a fraud, and in the second, if he is, I don't want to be left here on that woman's grounds. Come on outside the gate, and let's consider things a little before jumping to conclusions."

"Consider?" exclaimed Hugh. "I don't see as we can consider any more than that you've been most neatly swindled out of your bike, and the quicker we get after the thief the more likely you are to get it back."

"But remember that message he sent by the man in the farm wagon," returned Steve. "Would he do that if he was making off with my machine?"

"Of course he would!" I put in. "That was the bold effrontery, the final fling of impudence of the whole transaction. Rubbing it in, adding insult to injury. See?"

"If that's so," said Steve slowly, after an instant's reflection, "it won't do any good for you fellows to go on in pursuit of him. He'll have taken good care to get off this road entirely."

This certainly seemed a reasonable supposition and we four Challengers, assembled on the strip of grass that ran along outside the fence to the "first brown house," looked at one another rather soberly. For indeed, it was a serious mischance, this loss of a bicycle; so serious that it seemed to threaten the very continuance of the tour.

"It's the meanest swindle I ever heard of," muttered Hugh, wrathfully kicking at one of the fence palings. "We ought to set the police on his track at once."

"The police!" laughed Mac. "Where are we to get hold of an officer out here?"

"Here comes somebody to get hold of us," cried Steve excitedly.

We all turned and saw the woman of the ironing board bearing down upon us at a pretty good gait from around the corner of the house. Mac made a grab for his machine, but I whispered quickly: "Stand your ground, fellows. We've a perfect right to stand where we please on this side of the fence. Don't let it seem as if we were running away."

As I spoke I elevated my chin the least bit in the air, and prepared to stand on the dignity of a free born American citizen. But the woman's first words nearly knocked me flat.

"Oh, I'm glad you're not gone," she began. "I—I wanted to say it wasn't right fer me to talk the way I did ter you, but I'd got behind with my ironin' an' was cross an' I forgot myself."

We fellows couldn't think of a thing to say. If Peabody Smart himself had appeared at that moment with Steve's bike we couldn't have been more amazed. Then, as the rest all looked at me, I said, "Don't mention it, we——" and then I stuck.

"But I want to mention it," the woman went on. "I was afeard you might have gone on, an' it would have worrited me all arternoon; I don't like to treat nothin' ha'shly, not even a dumb brute."

She'd put her foot in it here, but I knew she meant well, so I took off my hat and said we were very sorry indeed to have troubled her.

"You see," she went on, "there war a tin peddler here a day or two ago. He come while I had a loaf of ginger bread in the oven. He didn't seem like the common run o peddlers, so I get interested talkin' to him, 'n when I'd bought a tin strainer an' a new dipper, my gingerbread was browned to a crisp. So when you came to day I couldn't think o' nothin' but that black cake. Be you a relative of the bride?"

The last question come with such suddenness that for an instant I didn't know to what the woman referred.

"No, never saw her!" I answered, and then feeling that frankness called for frankness in return, I told in a few words of our meeting with Smart and what had come of it.

"The worst of it is," put in Steve, coming up to rest his chin on my shoulder and finish the account, "we not only ost my wheel but our dinner. We were counting on the wedding breakfast to take the place of that."

"Do tell, that's a living shame!" exclaimed the woman. "You look hungry now, an' you must be, workin' away at them wheel things. Come on in an' I'll dish you up somehing. It'll ease my conscience," and she hurried off.

"What do you say to this, fellows?" I began.

"Well, I can only whistle," answered Hugh.

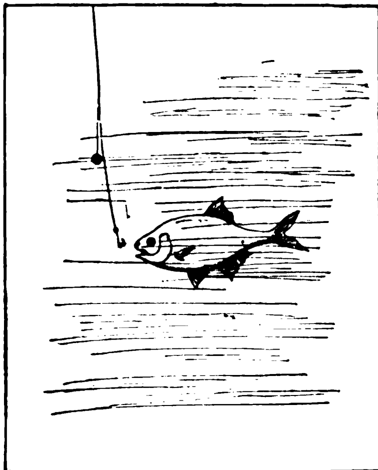
At this moment the front door was opened, not by the woman of the gray puffs, but by a young girl of sixteen, who looked enough like her to be her daughter, but who, in addition to this, was so pretty as to quite take away the power of motion from us for the time being.

"Won't you gentlemen walk in, please?" she said.

You can believe we waited not for a second invitation. Mac and I stacked our machines on the grass by the side of the porch, and Hugh went off to lean his against the house. Then "Great Scott!" I heard him exclaim, and turning my head, I beheld him with his face flattened against the clapboards. What discovery had he made, that had affected him so strangely, I asked myself?

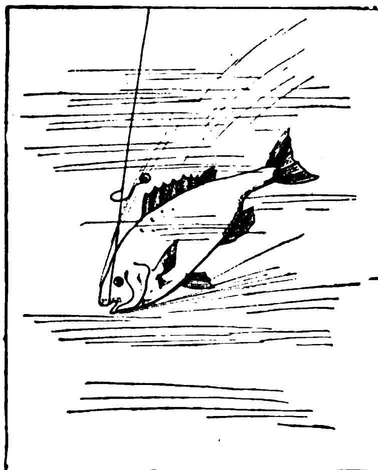
(To be continued.)

THE FISH THAT JONES CAUGHT.

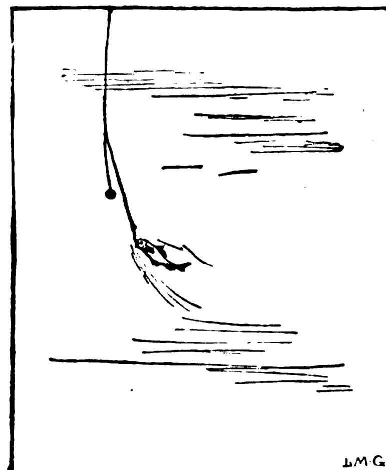


I. The Fish, as it really was.

III. **The Fish**, as Jones described it to his friends.



II. The Fish, as Jones believed it to be.



IV. The Fish as Jones's friends believed it to be.

TRAIN AND STATION;

OR,

*THE RAMBLES OF A YOUNG RAILROADER.**

BY EDGAR R. HOADLEY, JR.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MORE MYSTERY AND A CLEARING UP OF MYSTERIES.

WITH a supreme effort of his will, Dash fought back the faintness that was overcoming him. Letting Paine's revolver fall from his nerveless grasp, he staggered to his feet and stepped toward the robber who had been addressed as Orloff, intent only on discovering if the man was his father.

He was within a few feet of him, and was trying to form his horror stricken thoughts into words, when there was another report from the express compartment, a bullet crashed through the partition, and the other robber, whom Dash had been positive was Cupples, threw up his hands and sank with a shuddering groan to the floor.

At the same moment there was a fusillade of shots outside, and the train started up. Express messenger Meade appeared in the partition door with leveled Winchester.

"Confusion!" shouted the robber, with an imprecation, as he leaped toward the side door, not making any further effort to use his revolver.

Just as he sprang out of the door, a bullet from the messenger's rifle crashed into the door frame, only a hair's breadth behind him.

By this time the mail was getting rapidly under full headway. There was a final discharge of firearms, and the train was free of the marauders.

There was an immediate comparing of notes among the trainmen and passengers, and it was soon learned in detail how the robbers had been repulsed.

Dash's warning to Meade, and his detention of the attacking party from that direction, had undoubtedly saved the messenger and his treasure, and aided him materially in placing himself on the defensive. Meade had instantly slammed his side door shut and fastened it, and then piled his chest and safe against the partition door. He then blazed away alternately with his two revolvers through the side door and the partition. How deadly had been this blind shooting was proved by the bodies of the two men in the baggage car.

Meantime, while a passenger who happened to have a Winchester rifle with him held one of the cars, conductor Blake borrowed a revolver from some one, and the two sallied forth to the platforms. Their fire, together with that of the messenger from behind the door, was so hot that the robbers on the outside had to beat a retreat. The defenders then moved towards the engine, and quickly dislodged the two men guarding the engineer and fireman. The latter lost no time in getting the train under way.

There was no one seriously injured belonging to the train, though two of the robbers were dead in the baggage car, and no doubt a number of the others had been badly wounded. Conductor Blake and the brave passenger had several unimportant scratches, and messenger Meade had a bullet through the fleshy part of his arm. The latter's clothes were torn and rent by the shots, and the express compartment was riddled with holes. It was a miracle the messenger had escaped with his life.

Conductor Blake and the trainmen were filled with horror stricken amazement when they removed the mask from the dead robber in the baggage car, to discover he was undoubtedly conductor Cupples, who had so recently been their companion in the service. Though he had been implicated in the robberies which had just been unearthed, they were not prepared to believe he was a train robber.

And when they were further expressing their sorrow and regret that Bob Paine, the forward brakeman, had lost his life opposing the robbers, Dash added to their astonishment, if that was a possible thing, by revealing the brakeman's true position in the affray, though he said nothing about what had passed between himself and the latter regarding the tickets in the conductor's tin box, reserving that for Mr. Rodway's information only.

Dash deeply regretted to learn that Cupples had become so desperate in crime, and much deplored his tragic end. He felt very grateful toward the conductor, who had undoubtedly saved his life—but from whom?

He dared not even whisper it, and thought with a shudder, could the robber possibly be his father? He fervently hoped that if he was, he was not responsible for his acts. Dash had read of instances of men who had been hurt in the head or brain losing entirely their own identity, and leading lives for years that were radically different from their existence in a normal condition, and he hoped such had been the case with his father, if the robber *was* his father. He could not permit himself to believe that his own parent would be consciously guilty of such desperate deeds.

Would he ever meet the man again, and be able to determine the matter beyond a doubt? It was exceedingly doubtful, but he decided he would reveal to no one his surmises, or the robber's name, though the withholding of the latter might be shielding him from justice.

Dash felt almost crushed by the discovery, and the uncertainty produced a worried and harrassed look upon his unually smooth and smiling face.

At the next station beyond Big Rock Cut, where the attempted robbery had occurred, the bodies of Cupples and the brakeman were left for investigation and interment. A posse of officers and citizens immediately formed and started back to the vicinity of the Cut, but no trace of the robbers could be found, though efforts were made for days afterwards to trace them.

At times Dash wished that the man who had been addressed as Orloff might be apprehended, that all doubts concerning the robber's relationship to him might be settled, and then again, he dreaded the possible revelation that the criminal was his father, and hoped he would not be caught. When the search was given up, he did not know whether he was glad or not, though he was still filled with harrassing doubts that were rapidly having their effect on his usually buoyant spirits.

The next evening, on arrival of the through mail in St. Louis, after he had turned over his run at the union depot, Dash hastened to Mr. Rodway's office, who had advised him by telegraph the day before that he would meet him there after dark to receive his report.

"Why, what is the matter, Dykeman? You look as if you were ill," remarked the superintendent, after he had shaken hands with the young railroader.

"Nothing, Mr. Rodway; I'm as well as ever I was," responded Dash, which was true as to his bodily if not his mental state. It was the first intimation he had had that the troubles of his mind were making themselves apparent to others. He tried to throw off the apprehension and gloom that filled him, and continued, with an attempt at a laugh:

"I suppose the exciting encounter of yesterday, and the killing of Cupples and Paine, have something to do with my looks, sir."

"No doubt, Dykeman; and from what I hear, you have

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no cause to be ashamed of your part in the affair. It would try the nerves of any man."

"It seemed a case of necessity to me, sir, and I didn't wait to consider the danger. In fact, I seemed to be actuated by some force outside of myself," added Dash, in a deprecatory way; and he told himself that if the superintendent only knew it, there were things other than bodily peril that were more shattering to a man's nerves.

"A true hero is always ready with plausible excuses," laughed the official. "But to business, Dykeman. I have discovered the mystery of conductor Blake's punched tickets being used again. I find that Blake has always conscientiously done his duty, and he is completely cleared of all suspicion; but let me hear your report first."

Dash gave in detail his close observation of conductor Blake, his efforts to get into the latter's tin box to examine his ticket collections, and the final resort to the bunch of keys to effect his purpose. Then followed the astonishing and exciting encounter with brakeman Paine, and the superintendent clearly showed he was amazed at the revelation.

"You have furnished the missing link in the chain of evidence, Dykeman," explained Mr. Rodway. "Paine has been the one who has been systematically robbing conductor Blake's box of punched tickets. It is clear he was a confederate of the train robbers, and I am satisfied now that the latter, and the parties who have circulated the tickets and stolen the freight from the company at Dead Man's Cut, are all of one gang."

"But how could the tickets be used, if they were punched?" interposed Dash.

"The punch marks were cleverly filled up. Several days ago, I was sitting here, with one of those tickets which had been used twice in my hand, puzzling over the matter. I was thoughtfully jabbing at the ticket with the point of my pencil, when I was startled by the end going through the cardboard, revealing conductor Blake's punch mark, a diamond, which had been filled up so cleverly as to defy detection by the eye. We immediately found out where that ticket had been sold in St. Louis, and in twenty four hours we had every one connected with the place arrested. All the tickets that have been used twice were no doubt doctored in that way, and most probably it was done in the criminals' resort at Dead Man's Cut."

Dash was intensely interested and astonished at the ingenuity and skill the robbers had displayed in their scheme to defrand the railroad company. He was especially pleased to know that all suspicions of Blake's complicity in the scheme of fraud had been proven groundless, and that the veteran conductor was as worthy of the confidence and respect of the company and his friends as ever. It was a satisfaction to him to have his confidence in an "open face" restored, though Cupples had deceived him. It should be added here that conductor Blake never knew he had been under serious suspicion.

The elucidation of the mystery of the tickets suggested to Dash that the superintendent could now probably explain several other things he could not understand, and he hastened to say:

"Mr. Rodway, I heard of the discovery of the band of robbers and their secret hiding place near Dead Man's Cut; that you secured a good many of them, and recovered a large amount of stolen freight, and that Cupples was known to be implicated with them, but escaped. I suppose, now that all this has occurred, you can tell me how my information contributed to it."

"It was all owing to the ghosts, Dykeman," laughed the superintendent, "and Cupples's suspicious attack on you."

"Ghosts!" repeated Dash; "then they were men after all."

"Have you ever doubted it?"

"Not exactly; but I couldn't understand what I saw, especially the headless one."

"The illusion was natural under the circumstances, but it was all very simple. Those men were dressed in long white rubber coats, with flowing sleeves, which served the double purpose of protecting them from the rain, and keeping up the ghost idea among the country people about the Cut. The fellow without any head was merely one of them with an enormous red muffler about his neck, which hid his head and made it appear only as a gory trunk. We have that very same muffler in our possession, and that's why I account for it in that way."

"Which explanation is like those of all apparently supernatural appearances—simple and commonplace," laughed Dash; "but it's a good deal of satisfaction to know it."

"Well," continued the official, "Cupples's heroic measures to silence you was really what convinced us that Dead Man's Cut was the place to look for the stolen freight; and I will add, I believe that if you had let Cupples know you had overheard him, or that you had any suspicions of the real state of things at the Cut, he would have killed you."

"Then you really think he knew whom he was throttling," interposed Dash.

"I certainly do. One of our detectives succeeded, through the assistance of Cass, who was frightened into giving the whole thing away, in getting in with the gang at the Cut, and as soon as their hiding place was located we came down on them."

"Was that the man who relieved me on the local?" interposed Dash.

"Yes."

"Well, I thought he was something of the kind at the time."

"The crews of both of our freights were in it, conductors, engineers and brakemen, and their plan of operation was to stop in the Cut and throw off freight, which was hidden in an excavation in the rocks near by. Under cover of night, the goods were carted to the cellar of a large house one of their number had rented. When you stopped there the first day you were on the local, Cupples had doubtless forgotten for the moment that you were on the train and were "not in it," and failed to notify the engineer, so the latter would not whistle for the flagman. This accounted for Cupples's strange question and action, when he found you had gone back with your flag into the Cut. After you began running, the shortages continued to occur, as you know, though you reported having sealed the local cars at the station above the Cut and finding them intact at the first station below it."

"Yes; and that's what I can't see through, as I always carried the seal," interrupted Dash again.

"He had a duplicate seal," smiled Mr. Rodway.

"Now I remember it," added Dash, "Cupples always went to ride on the engine at the first station north of the Cut. The freight was undoubtedly thrown out and got out of the way before the caboose, where I remained, was pulled by."

"It's a wonder you never looked out to discover the cause of the stoppages at the Cut," observed the superintendent.

"I suppose I would have done so, had I been an older hand," laughed Dash, "but I was attending strictly to business in the caboose, and besides, I supposed we were stopping for water, as there is a tank in there."

"An unused one, Dykeman," smiled the superintendent; "but we'll let that pass. What has astonished me more than

anything else in the business is that the remnants of the robber band should have had the hardihood to attempt to hold up the mail train; and I'm not only astonished but pained to know that two of our men were in it, and were the only ones killed. That man Cupples was full of contradictions; his appearance was deceiving, though he was really a hero in courage."

"Indeed he was," affirmed Dash gratefully, and with regret; and then he thought of the one other inexplicable thing connected with conductor Cupples.

"Did those peculiar facts about car 41,144 ever amount to anything, Mr. Rodway?" he asked.

"I should say they did," with emphasis. "Cupples and the agents at Shufflers and Burrsville, who, by the way, have been discharged, were confederates in that, and there's no telling how many times they have repeated the operation nor how many dollars they have pocketed."

"How did they do it?" asked Dash.

"When the agent at Shufflers had a car of freight for Burrsville for one consignee, or *vice versa*, the forwarding agent made a bill for the car, but did not copy it, and gave it the number of some previous bill that had been copied. He then continued to report the car as on hand empty at his station until it really did return empty, to avoid a possible investigation by the car accountant, and probably discovery that it had been moved on other than a regular copied and reported bill. Meanwhile, the conductor and the receiving agent never made any record of handling the car or having had it. As soon as the freight was delivered, the bill was destroyed, which you saw Cupples do. The car was unloaded so promptly because they wanted to get it back to where it was being reported empty as quickly as possible. When the receiving agent collected the charges on the freight in the car from the consignee, it was divided among the three at some convenient time. You can readily see that it would have proved disastrous to them if the car had been wrecked or disabled, either going from or returning to Shufflers, as it would probably have caused an investigation by the car accountant."

"Well, well," repeated Dash in wonder, "it's remarkable what schemes the unprincipled will resort to to defraud a corporation."

"Yes; but I think I am pretty well rid of them all now, and I'm going to put in some new material. I need three good agents, and to begin with, I'll make you agent and operator at Madrid on a salary of one hundred and twenty five dollars a month. How will that suit you?"

The announcement almost took Dash's breath away. Even if the remuneration named had not been so handsome, the reader can guess what his answer was.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AGENT AT MADRID.

DASH was not slow in expressing his pleasure and satisfaction at his appointment as agent at Madrid, with such a munificent salary. And has the reader any doubt that, after he had done so, his first thought was of Dorothy Orloff?

If it were a possible thing that the superintendent knew of the state of his feelings towards the orphan maiden, it would not have taken much to convince him that the appointment was a "put up job."

It was, therefore, with the liveliest anticipations of pleasure in the future that he left the office. It is safe to say that a letter went through the mails to Madrid that night, and that somebody else would look forward with interest to the arrival of the new agent there.

When Roberts returned, Dash was relieved and paid for his services as baggageman at the rate of seven dollars a day. He immediately prepared to go to Madrid, where he had been ordered to report at once.

After he had paid his board at Mrs. Fedmore's and other expenses, he still had something over seventy five dollars. He began to feel that he was making some headway towards accumulating a fortune. It was certainly more comfortable to have a reserve fund to fall back on in case of sickness or need.

He felt some regret at leaving the landlady and her daughter, for he had enjoyed their home-like society, especially that of Miss Fanny, though he was a slave to a sentiment in another direction.

After he had had his trunk sent to the depot, he paid a final visit to Mrs. Barton's. Then, as it was still not after business hours in the afternoon, he called on Mr. Hummon. The superintendent of telegraph received him as if he had kept him in remembrance and was anxious to put him in a good position. He had undoubtedly heard of Dash's latest exploit with the train robbers and the elucidation of the ticket mystery.

"You're making great progress, Dykeman," smiled Mr. Hummon. "You didn't make any mistake going out on the road, after all."

"I don't know, Mr. Hummon," responded Dash doubtfully, and with a rueful grimace, as he extended both his hands with the palms outward. "It has almost disabled me for doing good work at the key, though I was well paid for it."

His hands were indeed a startling contrast to the soft, white ones he had had on his arrival in St. Louis. They were blistered, calloused and swollen, and the fingers stiff from twisting brakes and handling freight and baggage.

"You'll get over that soon. I've got a good place for you now, but Mr. Rodway is so enthusiastic about you I fear he won't want to let you out of the transportation department."

"What is it, sir?" asked Dash, with curiosity, as the superintendent paused.

"Agent and operator at Madrid, which is one of our best stations."

"Why. Mr. Rodway has already given it to me, sir," announced Dash, wondering at the coincidence.

"Is that so? Well, well, Rodway got ahead of me that time. But he must have known you wanted something off the road," and the superintendent laughed, as he puffed at his pipe.

"He did, sir. I told him before I began to run baggage; but I'm just as much obliged to you."

"That's all right, Dykeman. He told me he wanted three good agents—one of them for Madrid—and I had decided to send you there, without knowing he had already selected you for the position. I hope you will make as brilliant a record at the station as on the trains. You will find some nice people at Madrid, and lots of pretty girls. Beware of the girls, Dykeman, or we'll very soon hear of your marriage," he concluded, with a chuckle.

"Thank you, I will," laughed Dash, though he blushed a little as he thought of the only girl he would care to see at Madrid.

Dash took his departure, and, as he descended in the elevator, he could not help contrasting his present situation and prospects with those on the first day he went up in the great building.

He took the night express, which arrived at Madrid at nine o'clock in the morning. While the train stopped at Joyville Junction, early in the morning, he got the deed Dorothy had sent him, which he had left with the agent there for safe

keeping. It was with some realization of his increased importance that he thought he would now have a safe of his own in which to keep it and other valuable papers.

It was not without some nervousness that Dash stepped from the train at Madrid, for his new position was in a department of the service in which he had no practical experience. But he was determined that no one should know of his diffidence, if he could help it.

He made his way at once to the agent's office, with assurance and confidence expressed in his face and bearing, though his feelings belied them.

The retiring agent, who had resigned to accept a better position on another road, was all ready to turn over the agency; and as the traveling auditor had arrived, the transfer was immediately begun as soon as Dash introduced himself by a letter from Mr. Rodway.

In three hours the lists of all tickets, freight, cash balances and movable property about the station had been made out. When these had been checked over and found correct and Dash had receipted them, he was entitled to affix "agent" to his signature.

As the ex-agent was not to leave till the following morning, he agreed to remain at the station the balance of the day to initiate his successor into his duties.

When Dash had an opportunity to look about him, he found that the town of Madrid was situated some distance from the depot. He was told that it had a population of nearly five thousand, from which he judged that the station was of considerable importance. The surrounding country was undulating and hilly, with green fields and forests about evenly divided.

The depot building was a two story structure, in the conventional parallelogram shape, with no effort at architectural ornamentation. In one end was the division superintendent's office, he having made his headquarters at Madrid. Then followed two waiting rooms and the agent's office, which had a ticket window into each of the former. The back of the office had a door and two windows on the outside and a door opening into the baggage room, which was in the other end of the building. A freight depot was just across the track, where all goods were received and forwarded by the freight trains.

When Dash was shown into the second story of the station he found there two very comfortably furnished bedrooms. One of them belonged to his predecessor, who, like himself, was a single man.

The ex-agent agreeed, for a very reasonable sum, to relinquish his ownership in the entire outfit to Dash, and suggested an old colored woman, who had been doing that service for him, to keep it in order.

After the arrangement had been concluded, Dash heard that Mr. Brakewood Forsdyke occupied the other room, and he doubted if he would have a very pleasant or agreeable neighbor. He had overlooked the fact before that the superintendent's clerk was also stationed at Madrid, and he realized then that he would have to see a good deal of the consequential young man and have more to do with him than he cared to.

Dash's first day as an agent was not a fair sample of those that followed, as the transferring of the station took up considerable time, and the retiring agent relieved him of many of his duties.

But the second day, when he was left entirely alone, was indeed a hard and trying one. Of course he had a night operator, who sold tickets and did some clerical work in connection with the telegraphing at night, but he could be of no assistance to lighten the duties of the day.

When he had sold tickets for six passenger trains, checked, loaded and unloaded baggage for the same, received and forwarded goods for four freight trains, sent and received a score or more of messages and train orders, and with it did all the necessary clerical work and answered questions till his brain was dizzy, Dash was ready to believe he would earn every cent of what he thought was a munificent salary. He was kept on the jump, there not being a moment when he was not "rushed," and he had to keep his wits about him, that nothing should be forgotten or overlooked.

Then he was compelled to close up the business of the day by making daily reports covering cash, tickets, freight and cars, which had to go to St. Louis on the night express. This carried his day's work, which had begun at seven o'clock in the morning, two hours into the night.

Dash soon began to believe that all the real hard and trying work was not done either by a brakeman on a freight or the baggageman on a passenger train, though his labors were less physically exhausting.

As his station was classed among those required to make a remittance of all receipts every other day, Dash's office was furnished with a small iron safe—a primitive affair, locking with a key instead of a combination—for the security of his cash till it was forwarded to the treasurer of the company in St. Louis.

On the evening of the third day Dash prepared his remittance, and opened for the first time his express receipt book to fill out the necessary blank. Then he was surprised to discover that Brakewood Forsdyke's name was appended to each of the previous receipts, which showed that he was the express agent.

At many stations the agency for the express is added to the numerous duties of the regular agent. Dash had been aware of this, and when he found he was not to have it—for which he was not sorry—he had wondered at the moment who was the express agent, but he had not asked. He had afterwards noticed a young man at the express car of the passenger trains attending to the business, and supposed he was the agent, but now he concluded he must be only an assistant to Forsdyke.

Dash was kept so busy for some days after his installation as agent at Madrid that he saw very little of the superintendent's clerk, except to return the nod of recognition the latter deigned to favor him with occasionally and to take his receipt for the remittances; in fact, the young agent did not have an opportunity for nearly a week after his arrival to call on Dorothy, though she sent him a note, kindly inviting him to take tea at Mrs. Handiford's.

Though Forsdyke had a room opposite his, Dash had never seen him in it when he retired. At what hour the superintendent's clerk was in the habit of going to sleep the young agent was unable to tell, though he heard noises in the opposite chamber at various hours—from midnight till towards early morning—that would indicate that the occupant was just getting to bed. This was repeated so often that Dash was forced to conclude that Forsdyke was dissipating and running with a fast set, for he was positive the superintendent's clerk had no occupation to deprive him of his sleeping hours. But the young man, whenever Dash saw him after a night when he knew he had been keeping late hours, appeared as fresh and wide awake as if he had gone to bed with the chickens.

It soon became clear to Dash, without any demonstration or words from Forsdyke, that the latter was anything but pleased by the advent of the young railroader as agent at Madrid. The superintendent's clerk never failed to seize an opportunity to let the agent know, directly or by insinu-

ation, that the latter was immeasurably beneath him, but Dash was only amused, and had but pity and contempt for his pretensions.

It was not till one day lacking a week after his arrival that Dash had an opportunity to call on Dorothy and her aunt ; and to do so, he had to bend all his energies to get his reports made before supper time.

Just before six o'clock, as it was remittance day, he carried a money package into Forsdyke's office to get the usual receipt.

"Ah, Dykeman," exclaimed the young man, as he took the book and package on his knee, without relinquishing a cigarette from one hand, or the elevated position of his feet across one corner of the desk.

Dash ventured no remark, as he found that was the best method to get along with a self conceited and disagreeable person. He knew that the young man had not addressed him in a familiar manner because he wanted to be intimate, or even friendly. Forsdyke spoke in a patronizing way, much as a gentleman would to a favored servant.

Dash noticed that as Forsdyke scanned the money envelope a frown gathered on his brow.

"Why, how is this, Dykeman ? Your remittance has fallen off to nothing almost," the latter continued.

"That's all the receipts that I have had, Mr. Forsdyke," replied Dash shortly, with slight emphasis on the mister. He knew why the remittance was less than usual, but he felt that it was none of the other's business, and did not advance an explanation.

Forsdyke receipted for the package, and handed the book back to Dash, who started out.

"Hold on, Dykeman, I want to speak to you," interposed the superintendent's clerk.

"Well ?" responded Dash, stopping and turning on his heel.

"I was down at Miss Orloff's the other evening, and she was saying that she thought it odd you had not called."

"Well ?" repeated Dash, not very much pleased to hear the other use Dorothy's name, or that he was a visitor at her house.

"Well, I understand you are going down there this evening," continued Forsdyke.

"Yes ; what about it ?" and Dash flushed, wondering how he got his information. Then his heart gave a bound, and he was filled with a sickening doubt, as he asked himself: Was it possible Dorothy was on such intimate terms with Forsdyke as to tell him such things?

"If I was you, Dykeman, I wouldn't go down there," replied the latter, as if he was conferring a favor.

"Why?" asked Dash, quickly and with curiosity.

"Because Mrs. Handiford dosen't want you there, and besides——"

"You're a liar, Brakewood Forsdyke," flashed Dash unwilling to believe the statement, and not waiting to hear more.

"What ?" shouted Forsdyke in a rage, springing up and advancing towards the young agent with clinched fists.

Dash promptly put himself on the defensive, feeling fully able to take care of himself and give the other a warm reception But before a blow could be struck, a shadow crossed the door, and turning, Dash saw Dorothy Orloff.

(*To be continued.*)

OUT OF SIGHT.

ICEMAN—"Shall I leave ice here this summer, mum ? I left it last summer."

MRS. PHLIGH—"Did you ? Well, we didn't find it."—*Puck.*

BRAD MATTOON;

OR,

LIFE AT HOSMER HALL.*

BY WILLIAM D. MOFFAT.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BRAD VISITS MR. PARKER.

LATE the next morning, after a heavy sleep, Brad awoke with a splitting headache, and with lips parched and dry. The first sight that met his eyes was the figure of Eugene Clifford, who stood by his bedside gazing at him curiously. Brad was about to speak, when the recollection of the previous night's experience suddenly flashed back upon his mind, and, unable to utter a word, he turned his face away in mortification.

"Well, old boy," said Eugene, "I was just going to rouse you. I thought you'd never wake up."

Brad lay silent, momentarily expecting Eugene to make some allusion to his conduct, but the latter talked on cheerfully without approaching the subject at all. Whatever he might be thinking, it was evident that he was bent upon relieving Brad from the embarrassment he so plainly suffered. This consideration, when he felt he deserved nothing but the severest condemnation, was more than Brad could stand.

"Oh, Eugene !" he exclaimed at length, "what must you think of me ?"

Eugene's face sobered.

"See here, Brad," he said, "what on earth could have possessed you anyhow ? I thought you never touched spirits of any kind."

"Nor do I ; but I was feeling so warm I was afraid to drink ice water, so I thought I would try that wine just for once."

"Wine! That wasn't wine. That was some very old whisky which my father has had for a great many years. It is as strong as chain lightning. I was simply dumfounded when I found you had taken three glasses of it. You must feel pretty seedy this morning."

Seedy, indeed ! Brad would have been only too glad if that had been all he felt. As it was, that troubled him least.

We will pass over the terrible humiliation and burning shame that oppressed him ; the severe and bitter self reproaches. Suffice it to say that Eugene did all that so kind and considerate a friend could to cheer him up. Fortunately for Brad, the hour of his retiring had been so late that a number of the guests were taking their departure, and his absence was noticed only by a few. To them the explanation which Eugene made—that Brad was feeling unwell and had retired, seemed quite natural and aroused no further comment beyond expressions of regret.

Even Mr. and Mrs. Clifford failed to detect anything unusual ; and Brad, upon meeting them at the breakfast table, received only the kindest greetings from both.

This was a source of great relief to him, for he would not have dared face them had they known the whole truth. As it was, he was almost too confused to acknowledge their greeting.

"No wonder you didn't feel well," said Mr. Clifford emphatically. "You must have been entirely played out, hustling around the city from morning to night for the past week. I am afraid you haven't had much of a vacation. Eugene has worked you too hard. You must come up to our country place on the Hudson during the summer, and we'll give you

*Begun in No 436 of THE ARGOSY.

a good rest to make up for the strain we've put on you this time."

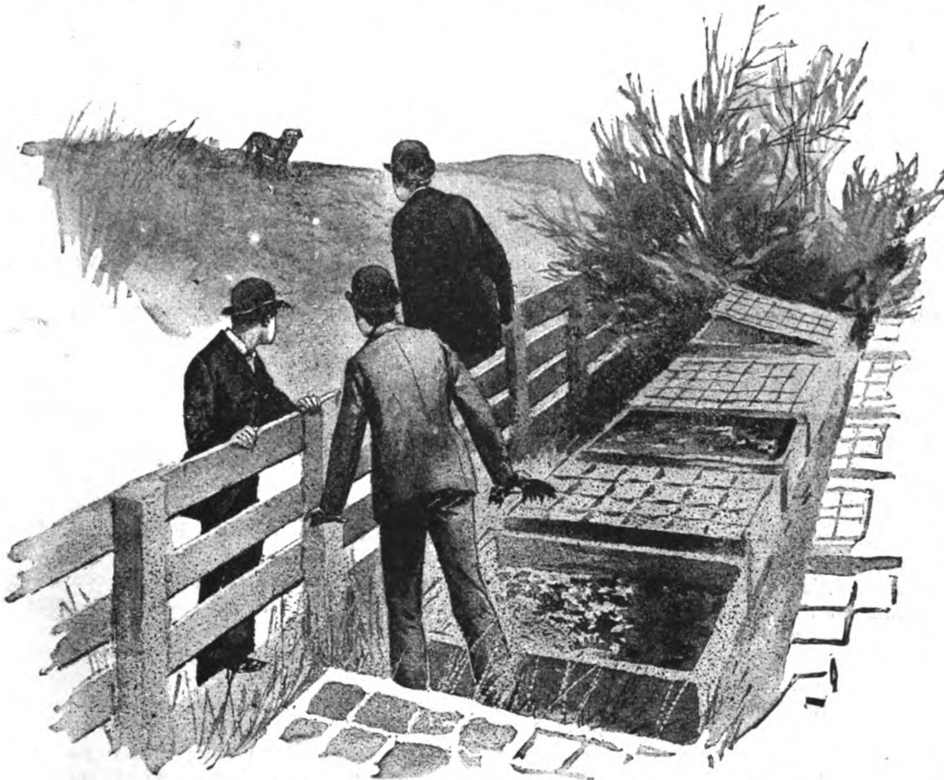
"It has been a delightful week, Mr. Clifford—one of the pleasantest of my life. I shall always remember your kindness," answered Brad fervently.

"We haven't begun to pay back the debt we owe you," said Mrs. Clifford with her sweet smile.

Brad could not answer, but bowed his head, and buried his face in his coffee cup.

To cover his embarrassment, Eugene exclaimed:

"Come, Brad, you must hurry. I don't like to rush you through your breakfast, but you know you have an engagement with Mr. Parker in an hour, and his office is away down town below Chambers Street."



FOR AN INSTANT THE DOG PAUSED, THEN DASHED TOWARD THEM.

"Why, I thought you were going right back to Bramford," said Mrs. Clifford.

"We were, but Mr. Parker wants to see Brad this morning, so I am going to wait for him. We shall probably go back on the 2:30 train this afternoon."

Breakfast was soon over, and Brad, after many kind words of farewell from Eugene's parents, left the house.

"Remember, I will expect to see you at the 2:30 train," Eugene called after him "I will take your valise over in the carriage with me and have it ready for you"

In half an hour more the elevated train brought Brad to Chambers Street, and from there he walked quickly to Mr. Parker's office. As he entered, he found his old friend standing by one of the desks in the outer room, dictating a letter to a stenographer. He nodded pleasantly to Brad, and motioned him to enter the inner, private office.

Brad knew this cozy little retreat well, for it was the room in which Mr. Parker had always received him on the occasions of his flying visits to New York.

He had hardly time to seat himself on the leather covered sofa by the window when Mr. Parker entered.

"Well, Brad, good morning," he said. "How are you feeling?"

Brad did not dare look up, and never knew that Mr. Parker's hand was extended; that his face was bent toward him, not sternly, as he thought, but yearningly, tenderly. Fearing to meet a harsh glance from the eyes that had never looked upon him but with the kindliest expression hitherto, and expecting nothing but condemnation, he remained motionless, with eyes downcast, and unable to utter more than a low, half audible response to Mr. Parker's pleasant greeting.

The latter gazed at Brad for several seconds, then he seated himself by his desk.

"Come, come, my boy," he said. "This won't do. Speak out. Don't sit there as if you were on the way to the gallows."

"Mr. Parker, I couldn't feel worse if I were," exclaimed Brad, his pent up feelings suddenly finding utterance. "What can I say? To say that I am ashamed is so little. I cannot condemn myself enough. When I think how near I came to disgrace—how I would have disgraced myself if you had not come upon me when you did, I feel myself grow hot with shame and mortification. I have no excuse to offer. I scarcely know how it happened. That decanter was there. I thought I would try one glass; and then it seemed as if my senses completely left me. I don't know what could have taken hold of me——"

Brad paused. Mr. Parker did not answer him, but a sad expression came over his face as he slowly shook his head, and repressed an involuntary sigh.

"One thing I have sternly resolved," continued Brad. "I will never make such a mistake again."

"And will you keep that resolution, Brad?" asked Mr. Parker seriously.

"Yes, yes." Then, detecting something peculiar in Mr. Parker's tone and expression, Brad continued: "Do you doubt me, Mr. Parker? I solemnly promise——"

"I believe you are in earnest, Brad—but this is the time when all make resolutions. Tell me first and honestly: Have you never touched spirits before?"

"Never, except when Captain Bunn dosed me when I was sick. He never allowed me the chance at other times."

"You remember the warning I gave you long ago?"

"Perfectly. Captain Bunn has often repeated it."

"And you have always heeded it?"

"Always."

A somewhat relieved expression passed over Mr. Parker's face.

"Then it was not a frequent or occasional habit of using spirits that prompted you last night?"

"Oh no, sir."

"I am glad of that, Brad, and I can the more easily believe your resolution. It will go a great way, however, towards strengthening that resolution if I can give you a clear idea of the peculiar danger that threatens you."

Brad looked at Mr. Parker questioningly.

"Don't expect a temperance harangue. I am not going to try to scare you into fits, nor am I going to preach you a sermon. I am merely going to tell you a story—a true story of events that took place some years ago. It will interest you, I know, and you will see the point of it when I have finished."

At this unexpected beginning, Brad's interest was throughly aroused, so when Mr. Parker paused a moment, he leaned forward, eager and attentive.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MR. PARKER'S STORY.

"I WANT to tell you the story of a college mate of mine—a member of my own class, and a close friend," began Mr. Parker, resting his head upon one hand, and gazing thoughtfully at the floor.

A short silence ensued. Then he went on in a low tone, as if talking to himself:

"I think I can see him now as he was in the old days—handsome, dashing and popular. I shall never forget the first time I met him. It was the opening day of my college life, and I thought him then the finest specimen of a boy I had ever seen. Congenial tastes and pursuits brought us largely together, and we soon became the best of friends. During the last two years of our college life we were room mates.

"Every one liked my room mate. To know him was to like him. Take him for all in all, he was one of the most lovable characters I ever met; and the wide and immediate popularity he gained among his college mates was but the natural tribute to his many attractive qualities. He was far too fond of a good time to care much for study, and, though naturally bright, habitually neglected his books in pursuit of pleasure. It was this love of good fellowship that ruined him—at least this was the means. The real cause was further back—back somewhere in the line of his family.

"It became evident to me soon after I had met him that he was rapidly becoming the victim of a taste for strong drink, plainly inherited. Recognizing the great danger of this in one who was so fond of pleasure and conviviality, I used all my influence to prevent him from indulging himself. But he only laughed off my advice, and later, my entreaties, with that good humored, easy going way of his that left me no means of reaching him.

"I was compelled to witness this habit growing in strength year by year, until it had firmly fastened its cruel clutches upon him. With the close of our college career we separated, he going to his home, and I to study law in this city. Though I saw but little of him then, I heard occasional rumors, and these convinced me sadly that he was going the way I feared. His father, who was his only parent living, saw his danger, and proposed to free him from the companionship that was dragging him down, by sending him abroad. With promises of reform, he set out from home. I believe he made a brave struggle, and kept those promises, for, on his return after two years' travel, he seemed much improved.

"After another year of travel he again returned, this time, to the utter surprise of his father, with a wife. It was a sad occasion, that meeting. His father, who was a proud man, disapproved utterly of his son's marriage and his choice of a wife. He slighted her in many ways, and his son, fully as proud, resented it with heat. A quarrel ensued, and the son abruptly left home with his wife, and with the resolve never to return. Utterly reckless now, his downward path was rapid, until at length he dropped out of sight altogether.

"Some time later the news came to his friends that he had lost his wife soon after leaving his home, had wandered aimlessly about for a year or more, and had finally died in Paris, penniless, homeless, friendless."

Mr. Parker paused, and, raising his eyes, gazed steadily at Brad's face. The latter, who had not lost a word, waited a moment, and then, perceiving that Mr. Parker had finished, said:

"I think I understand your story, Mr. Parker, and I see the point of it—I see what a meaning it has for me. Be assured I will not allow a habit of this kind to grow upon me."

Mr. Parker shook his head.

"You do not yet appreciate the full force of my story, Brad, nor the special bearing it has on your life."

Brad's face suddenly changed. Dim suspicions of the full truth began vaguely to shape themselves in his mind.

"Mr. Parker, what can you mean?" he cried, leaning forward intently. "What bearing can this story have on my life? Who was this man?"

"*He was your father*, Brad," said Mr. Parker gently.

Brad did not move. For a moment his heart seemed to stand still. During that moment scarcely a sound was heard—only the clock on the mantel, which ticked with alarming distinctness, and the car which just then went jingling by on the street outside.

At length Brad found his tongue.

"My father!" he gasped.

Mr. Parker inclined his head.

"My father lived and—died so! Oh, Mr. Parker, must I believe it?" and Brad buried his face in his hands.

"Why have you never told me this before?" he continued, a moment later.

"Believe me, Brad, it was for the best. It could have done you no good to know the sad story—at least before today."

Again Brad was silent. Then, in a more composed manner, he said:

"Mr. Parker, you and Captain Bunn have been the only parents I ever had. Of my real parents I have known little. Captain Bunn could tell me almost nothing, and the few facts I have known I learned from you. I knew that they died in Paris, and that I had no near relatives living. It wasn't much, but those few facts were pleasant for me to think of, and now to learn that my father was—was—oh, Mr. Parker, I would rather not have known it."

"And I, Brad, would rather not have told you. Only the present necessity forced me. You would have learned some day, and it was better that I should tell you in the way I have. Don't mistake me, Brad. You have no reason to think of your father otherwise than with loving tenderness—I cherish his memory so. He possessed many noble qualities, and was the very soul of honor. Indeed, could the whole story of his marriage be known, I believe, from the little information I could gain, that it would only the more fully reveal the true nobility of his nature. But the story I fear will never be told. Of his wife I knew nothing but the name—Estelle Leclair."

"My mother," breathed Brad softly.

"I only speak now of this hereditary taste, and the injury it did your father, because I feel that it is a fact that you ought now to know. Brad, there are two influences that shape and determine a boy's character: heredity, or

the total sum of his inherited traits, and environment, or the circumstances surrounding him as he grows up. Knowing the story of your father's life, you can see the effect heredity wrought in his case. A terrible demon was born in him, which might, at one time, with proper environment, have been overcome.

"Concerning you I was not sure, though I hoped for the best. Five years ago, you remember, Captain Bunn brought you to me, and from him I learned who you were. Since then I have watched after you as my own son, knowing well your father's weak spot, and fearing its appearance in you. By surrounding you with proper influences I hoped to prevent the growth of such a taste. You may imagine, then, my feelings, when I found you at the Cliffords' last night, and you can understand now why I tell you this story. Brad, you are a boy of considerable character, and you can fight your own battles strongly. I have pointed out to you as forcibly as I could the main point of weakness in your makeup. You must now summon all your energies to cover it. Let me see you crush this hidden enemy. Come, now, will you do it?"

There was something as inspiriting as a trumpet call in Mr. Parker's tone and manner. Brad stood up.

"Yes, Mr. Parker, I will," he answered. "I understand it all now. I understand why you have said nothing of this before, and I understand why you speak now. You have done it for the best. In the five years you have known me, you have been a father to me, and I will try to deserve your kindness. I know where my weakness lies, and I will conquer it."

"I believe you, Brad," answered Mr. Parker, clasping him warmly by the hand.

At this instant a sudden and unexpected interruption occurred. The door flew open, and in came Drake, Mr. Parker's confidential clerk, bearing in his face and manner evidences of unusual haste and excitement.

"Excuse me, Mr. Parker, but there is not a minute to lose," he exclaimed. "Peck versus Barlow has been called on."

"Why, how is that, Drake?" asked Mr. Parker in surprise. "I thought you told me Judge Patterson's calendar was full, and there was no chance of our case coming up before this afternoon or tomorrow."

"So I did, but one case this morning was thrown out of court, and on the second the plaintiff failed to appear, so our's will be on now."

An expression of annoyance escaped Mr. Parker's lips, as he opened his desk, and took out a number of papers.

"Well, Drake," he said, "is everything prepared?"

"Oh yes, sir, everything; but we have no time to spare.

"All right. I am ready."

Then taking down his hat, Mr. Parker turned, and again gave Brad his hand.

"Well, good by, Brad, you see how it is. I must fly. I am sorry we were interrupted, but, remember, I trust your resolution perfectly."

Brad also regretted keenly the interruption, for he had many questions yet to ask, but there was no help for it, so, after a hasty handshake, he left Mr. Parker at the office door. Having no particular destination immediately in view, he started out to City Hall Park, and seating himself on one of the benches there, gave himself up to the serious thoughts which his conversation with Mr. Parker suggested. So absorbed did he become that he lost all sense of his surroundings—all consciousness of the flight of time.

At length with a sudden start, he recalled himself, and hastily snatched out his watch.

"Phew!" he exclaimed, springing to his feet. "Two o'clock already. I'll have to run for that train."

He hurried down to the ferry, and reached the Jersey City railroad station just as the doors were opened upon the platforms. There he found Clifford impatiently awaiting him.

"Sorry to be late," said Brad as they pushed their way through to the train. "I ought to have started sooner. As it is I haven't had a bit of lunch. I suppose now I'll have to go hungry."

"Hurry into the lunch room and buy a sandwich," answered Eugene. "You have time, and I'll keep a seat for you."

This occupied Brad but a few minutes, and Eugene had scarcely seated himself when his friend re-appeared, sandwich in hand.

"Pretty slim picking for a hungry man," he said, as the train moved out of the station, "but it will have to serve until we reach Hosmer."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE BOYS MEET WITH AN ADVENTURE.

THE two boys had ridden about twenty miles, and Eugene was buried in a paper he was reading, when some one slapped him on the shoulder.

"Hullo, boys!" exclaimed the voice of Dan Ellis. "What are you doing here? I thought all the fellows went back yesterday."

"We stayed over on account of a reception at home last night," answered Eugene. "And how about you?"

"Oh, the usual trouble—didn't want to go back yet—been having too good a time. I was to have gone out early this morning, but I overslept myself—of course I couldn't help that," here Dan winked. "Father had to fire me out of the house this noon to make me go at all."

The boys could not have desired more cheerful companionship than Dan, who found room in a seat just in front of them, and sat facing about so as to make a group of the three.

It was a jolly group and the time passed rapidly enough as the train sped on towards Bramford. It was quarter past four when they reached their destination, and stepped off upon the platform. They expected of course to find the omnibus awaiting them there, but, to their surprise, no vestige of that antique, though robust vehicle appeared. An inquiry of the stationmaster elicited the fact that the omnibus driver, tempted by a fair offer, had been induced to desert his customary duties and lend his services to a picnicing party.

"What's the difference?" said Dan. "We can walk it in half an hour."

"Well, will you carry our valises?" asked Eugene ironically, pointing to the two heavy leather bags.

"Naw; what do you think I am—a beast of burden?" answered Dan. "Give them to the express man. He'll deliver them at the Hall tonight."

This suggestion was promptly adopted. The two valises were deposited in the express room with directions concerning their delivery, and the boys set off up the road.

In about fifteen minutes they reached a point where the highway curved off towards the right. Here Brad paused.

"Look here, fellows. Did it ever occur to you what a roundabout way this is? There is Hosmer Hall off towards the left. What is the matter with taking a short cut straight across country? We could save a good many minutes—a consideration worth something to a hungry man."

"Well, there's nothing the matter with your plan at all,

except that it takes us right across the fields of Mr. Gordon Ivers," answered Eugene.

"Well, and what's the differenee?" said Dan Ellis.

"Nothing under ordinary circumstances, but just now you know how matters stand between old Ivers and the academy."

"Oh, bosh!" exclaimed Dan impatiently. "That Ivers makes me tired, with his everlasting ugly ways. I think he is an old humbug and a blower. What can be the possible harm of our walking across his fields, and why would he care if we did?"

"He would probably make a good deal of trouble if he saw us," answered Eugene.

"What could he do?"

There was a moment's pause. Then Brad spoke.

"Simply nothing, Eugene, except order us off, and what would that amount to, inasmuch as we would simply be on our way through the fields anyhow, and would be willing enough to get off?"

"Well, I'm going across any way," said Dan in his impulsive manner, laying his hands on the fence rail and vaulting over. "What do you say, boys. Are you 'wid us?'"

"Begorra I am, thin, my darlin'. Do yez lade the way," laughed Brad, promptly following Dan's example. "Come on, Eugene. Old Ivers is probably at his house, and we're not likely to see his ugly face at all."

Without a moment's hesitation, Eugene covered the fence at a single bound, and came down in the weeds as light as a feather.

"Off we go, then," he said; and, with that, they started on a straight line towards a point still far in the distance, where the cupola of Hosmer Hall reared itself amid the surrounding trees.

"Phew!" whistled Brad. "Is this all Ivers's estate?"

"Every bit of it," answered Eugene. "Nice stretch of land, isn't it?"

"Well, I should rather say so. He must be mighty wealthy."

"I'm not so sure of that. He has the reputation around here of being a spendthrift. He is a regular plunger on horse races, and has been mighty unlucky of late years—at least, so I've heard, and I don't believe he can account today for much more than half what his uncle, Mr. Hosmer, left him."

"Still, here is the estate. That is wealth in itself."

"Perhaps—if it is well kept up. But I've heard people call Ivers 'land poor.' You know what that means."

Brad shook his head.

"Well, he has more land than he can afford to take care of. You see, he spends money so fast and recklessly that he hasn't enough cash to keep up the place and get all there is to be had out of it, so lots of it goes to waste and is simply an expense to him for taxes."

"Why don't he sell some of it?"

"I dare say he would if he could get the price he wants——"

"Jerusalem! Here's richness for you!" suddenly exclaimed Brad, pausing and leaning on the fence that skirted a field by the side of which they were walking.

The other boys joined him.

"Where—what do you mean?" they asked.

"Where! Why there. Look at those hotbeds; a whole field full of them."

"Well, what of it?"

Brad laughed.

"It's quite evident you fellows are not as hungry as I am. Do you know that choice and elegant '*fruit*,' called the radish—red as a cherry and even more toothsome? Well, these hotbeds are simply crammed with the finest radishes that I ever saw. I can see them—smell them—almost taste them. Why, look right under your noses. Here are some of them."

Brad thrust his arm through the bars of the fence, and, reaching down through one of the half opened hotbeds, uprooted a fine, large radish and drew it up.

Eugene looked at him curiously.

"Why, do you like those things raw?" he asked.

Brad burst into a hearty laugh.

"Well, that's a brilliant question," he said. "Did you ever eat them any other way?"

Eugene instantly saw his mistake.

"Oh, of course; I forgot. Still, it seems to me radishes must be mighty poor food. Good enough for a relish on the table, but pretty slim eating by themselves."

"Oh, you city fellows don't seem to appreciate the gifts of nature," answered Brad. "Here, take a bite of this, and see if you don't like it."

Here Brad wiped the radish clean on the inside of his coat and handed it to Eugene.

"Not so bad," said the latter, seating himself on top of the fence and and gnawing away at the root. "It has a very nice sting to it. I like it better every minute. Throw me up another, Brad."

No sooner said than done, for Brad was already down by the hotbed helping himself, and, with an upward toss, landed another radish on Eugene's outstretched hand.

Dan Ellis had apparently needed no introduction, for his hand had gone through the fence almost as soon as Brad's, and he now stood leaning against the upper rail, munching like the others. He was standing with his back against the rail, looking in the opposite direction from Eugene and Brad, and towards the distant Ivers residence.

A full minute had elapsed, during which none of the boys had spoken, when suddenly a startled exclamation escaped Dan's lips.

"Jerusalem, boys! We're in for it now."

"What's the matter?" cried Eugene, as both he and Brad turned hastily around.

"Matter enough. Here comes Nero, and I'll bet he's on our tracks. We'll stand a slim show if he once gets his teeth on us. Look out, fellows. Quick! or we're goners."

Dan's warning was but too well founded, for along the high ground behind them came Mr. Ivers's black mastiff—Nero—nose to the ground, and running straight in their direction.

At the moment Dan ceased speaking, the animal suddenly caught sight of them. He was scarcely sixty yards distant. For an instant he paused, then, with a hoarse and angry roar—half bark, half growl—he dashed down towards them.

(To be continued.)

WHY THE HAT IS LIFTED.

WHY does a gentleman raise his hat when he meets a lady he knows on the street? To be polite, to be sure, you answer. Yes; but why should the removal of the head covering be a mark of politeness? To find the reply to this question you must go back to the middle ages, where, according to the *Detroit Free Press*, the custom had its origin in the following manner:

During the age of chivalry it was customary for knights never to appear in public except in full armor. It became a custom, however, for a knight, upon entering an assembly of friends, to remove his helmet, signifying, "I am safe in the presence of friends."

The age of chivalry passed away with the fifteenth century, but among the many acts which can be traced back to its influence none is more direct in its origin than that of lifting the hat to acknowledge the presence of a friend.

ARTHUR BLAISDELL'S CHOICE.*

BY W. BERT FOSTER.

CHAPTER XXII.

CÆSAR PLAYS THE HERO.

FOR one fearful moment Arthur Blaisdell thought of his mother, while the frightened horse charged up the slope, past the scales and office, and along the rough country road beyond. At the first shock he was thrown to the bottom among the cakes of ice. Young Louey clung like a burr to the seat, and not even a cry of terror escaped his lips.

It seemed only an instant before a turn in the road hid the ice houses, office, and the crowd of excited and shouting men from view, and still Black Bob thundered on. Arthur quickly raised himself to his knees, and found the reins where he had left them, tied to the whip socket. Then commenced a battle for the mastery, in which the odds were all against the boy. All his strength brought to bear on the bit had no more effect on the horse than had Louey held the reins.

Just here they entered an open piece of timber, and the white, dusty road stretched out before them for a quarter of a mile. Instantly Arthur beheld a female figure approaching, and by her side trotted a dog. In that brief instant Arthur recognized Annie Remington and the mastiff, Cæsar.

She seemed to comprehend his peril at once, and, although the sight of Black Bob thundering down upon her must have been frightful, she bravely kept the center of the road, waving the basket she was carrying, over her head, in a vain endeavor to stop the frightened horse. But Black Bob swerved not from his course, and she stepped to one side just in time to escape the plunging hoofs.

There was still another spectator to the scene, and he quickly became an actor in it. As the horse shot past, Cæsar leaped into the air and seized Black Bob's bridle in his teeth, dragging his whole weight upon the horse's jaw. It had a surprising effect. As the dog fastened upon his bridle, the horse swerved to one side, ran the wagon a little way into the bushes, and came to a sudden stop.

Arthur was out and had him by the head in a moment, and the intelligent mastiff capered about him with every expression of joy at his success. Annie Remington hurried to the spot at once, and lifted Louey from the seat, and in the distance appeared the men who had followed the runaway from the ice houses.

Black Bob's sides were heaving, and his breast was flecked with foam. He was still quivering with fright and excitement, and it would have taken but little to have started him off on another mad race.

Arthur, however, spoke quietly to him, patted his neck soothingly, and before the anxious men arrived, had led him out into the road, heading him back towards the ice houses.

"Oh, Mr. Blaisdell, that was terrible!" exclaimed Miss Annie, as Arthur continued to sooth the excited horse.

"Brave old Cæsar," said Arthur, laying one hand on the mastiff's head; then he continued, with a perceptible tremor in his voice: "I dare not think what might have been our fate had Cæsar not stopped us; but," and his voice changed to one of stern resolution, "I am going to make the rascal suffer who was the cause of Bob's running away."

"Who was it?"

"Bob Harris."

At that instant the men reached them.

"For heaven's sake, how did you stop him?" gasped Mr. Remington. "I thought nothing would hold him up this side of kingdom come."

His daughter explained the nature of the escape, and while one of the bystanders held the quieted horse, Arthur unbuckled the reins.

"What are you going to do?" inquired Mr. Remington.

"I'll show you," returned Arthur.

He carried the reins on either side from the saddle rings through the rings in the breeching, and then buckled them together again.

"There!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "I'll wager he don't get away from me now. If he starts to run, I can pull him together in an instant, and, unless the reins break, he won't run far. Now I'll drive back for that ice. Pile in if you wish to ride, gentlemen."

THE SLEEPING CHILD LED HIM TO A GREAT OAK TREE.

The men accepted his invitation, and Miss Annie and Cæsar followed in the rear.

"I wouldn't take a thousand dollars for that dog!" declared Mr. Remington proudly. "He couldn't have shown more sense if he'd been a human being. But what started your horse to running away, youngster?"

Arthur informed them of Bob Harris's contemptible trick.

"Ain't he a sneak—just like his father?" declared one of the men.

"He deserves a good horsewhipping," said Mr. Remington.

"And that's just what I intend giving him," said Arthur, starting Black Bob into a more rapid pace as they came in sight of the ice houses.

Bob Harris had evidently hastily finished loading his wagon, and was about to mount to the seat, when a wagon load of men, with Arthur Blaisdell driving the now quieted black horse, came into sight. The bully's face turned pale, and he looked frightened.

For a moment he seemed to hesitate, trying to decide whether to run away or to mount to the seat and try to escape by the fleetness of his horse. But his hesitancy was fatal to either plan.

Arthur threw the reins to Mr. Remington, sprang from the wagon

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*Begun in No. 439 of THE ARGOSY.

before Black Bob had come to a standstill, and with all the momentum of his leap, charged Bob Harris like a young cyclone.

His older and much heavier antagonist was slow to think, and much slower to act, and in an instant he was bowled over into the dusty road. Before he could rise, Arthur grasped a stout switch from Bob's wagon seat, and rained a shower of blows upon his prostrate foe until the bully howled for mercy.

Half a dozen such blows as Arthur delivered were sufficient to splinter the switch, and, throwing what remained away, he stepped back and allowed his enemy to rise.

"There!" he exclaimed, entirely breathless from his exertion, "you'd ought to be imprisoned for starting that horse to running."

"He'd ought ter be hung!" said one of the men, who had dismounted from the wagon. "S'pose that child, or the young feller here, had been thrown from the team and killed—it would have been your fault."

But Bob Harris was not cowed, although he had had all the fight taken out of him for the time being. With tears of anger and pain forming rivulets down his dusty cheeks, he climbed into his wagon, and, from what he considered a safe distance, shook his fist at Arthur, exclaiming:

"You hain't seen the last o' me yet! I'll be even with ye, see if I ain't! I'll—I'll—" and, choked for utterance, he drove rapidly away.

"You've got an enemy there," said Mr. Remington, "that you'd best look out for."

But Arthur paid little heed to Bob's threat, believing that the bully would do nothing further to injure him. But in this he was mistaken.

Mr. Remington and one of his men assisted in reloading Arthur's team, and then he started for home. At the top of the hill he found Miss Annie and Cæsar standing beside the wagon track.

"Miss Annie," he exclaimed fervently, stopping Black Bob beside her, "I shall begin to think that you are my good angel."

"Rather, that old Cæsar is," returned Annie, laughing. "After saving you from the unknown terrors of a ghost, he saves you from a smashup. It was not I."

"But he would not have been present to assist me had it not been for you."

"No; it was all 'happen,' I assure you," she returned gayly. "I arrived home this noon earlier than usual from the office, and mother sent me over here on an errand."

"Well, if you won't allow me to thank you, then, I don't see how I can thank Cæsar."

"You might agree to take Cæsar's mistress part of the way home with you—as far in her direction as you go."

"I will do that with pleasure," said Arthur, "if you're not afraid to ride behind Black Bob."

"He looks meek now," said Annie, fearlessly patting the horse's nose. "I really think he is ashamed of himself."

Arthur assisted the young girl into the wagon, and Cæsar trotted sedately in the rear as they continued along the shady road. They had gone only a few hundred yards when Louey exclaimed excitedly:

"There it is, Art! Lemme get off an' get it."

"What?" inquired Arthur, drawing up his horse.

"My whang," returned the youngster, climbing nimbly down from the seat and securing the shoe.

"But where's your other one?" asked Arthur, noticing for the first time that the child was barefooted.

"Oh, that's back at the barn," was the calm response. "I kicked it off when I got in."

Louey climbed into the rear of the wagon and rode the rest of the way on the ice cakes in preference to the seat, for he was a little shy of Annie.

"You have not been down to the temperance club again," began the young girl, as they continued their journey.

"No," returned Arthur slowly; "I haven't yet."

"Well, why don't you come?"

"Well—I—you see, I'm pretty busy now Hi is sick, and the club keeps so late," was Arthur's rather lame excuse.

"It will do you good to come," responded Annie. "I should think you would get awfully lonesome."

"I do," admitted Arthur frankly; "but then," he added, with a twinkle in his eye, "I have Bill Olney's company occasionally."

"That must be considerable consolation," she returned with a laugh. "Sadie and I have that every temperance meeting night. It really would be a relief to have that fellow stay at home. He always walks along with us after the meeting."

"So you want me to come along as a sort of a relief?" inquired Arthur.

"You know better, Arthur Blaisdell!" she exclaimed, flushing very prettily. "And if you don't—there! you shall pay for that intimation, sir. I shall not forgive that wicked speech of yours unless you promise to call at our house this very night and beg my pardon."

"I'm greatly obliged, I'm sure," began Arthur.

"But you don't want to come?" interrupted his companion. "Oh, I never saw such a bashful fellow in all my life."

Before he could deny this imputation she continued:

"Mother has said two or three times that we ought to invite you over. You must have a lonely time of it up at the Harts', there are so few folks near there."

"It would be impolite for me to refuse such an invitation," said Arthur, "even should I wish to do so. I shall enjoy coming very much."

"There; I am glad you have promised at last," said Miss Annie. "I wanted you to meet my aunt and Cousin Fay."

"Why, have you got company?" inquired Arthur. "You didn't tell me that."

"Of course I didn't," returned Annie, laughing gleefully; "but you needn't be afraid—they won't harm you. Now you will let me out here, if you please."

They had reached the place where the road which led to Miss Remington's home branched off, and Arthur accordingly pulled up, saying:

"If I didn't have such a heavy load I would take you the entire distance, Miss Annie."

"I'm just as much obliged," she returned, springing down before he could assist her. "Now, remember, you are to appear at my house this evening," and laughing, she turned away, while Arthur continued his journey home.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN WHICH THE SPECTER AGAIN WALKS.

"I DIDN'T really expect to see the youngster or you alive again," said Ben Norton, as he helped Arthur to unharness Black Bob. "And the old man was scared, too. At the rate you were going when you went out of sight, I thought you were just as likely to bring up in Halifax as the ice houses."

"It was a fearful ride," said Arthur, as he recounted the particulars of the runaway. "But," he added, "I've got him now so he can't get away, and I shall use him on the route tomorrow."

"Say, that is an ingenious idea," said Ben. "I never should have thought of it. You've got those fixed so that the first pull on them will bring his head right down."

"That's just the idea. I shan't have any trouble with him after this, I reckon."

Before it became time to go for the milk, Arthur got young Louey to show him the path across the swamp meadow which cut off fully a mile in the distance to the Remington house. So quite early in the evening he set out for his contemplated call.

Miss Annie ushered him into the parlor, and Arthur was quickly at his ease. Mr. Remington was not present, but Arthur was already acquainted with Annie's mother and sister, and was introduced to her aunt and cousin.

The aunt—Mrs. Dahlgreen—was a tall, majestic looking lady, with smooth, gray hair and a pleasant, though rather sad face. She was richly and tastefully dressed, as was her daughter, whom Annie introduced as "My cousin Fay."

The younger lady was a small, dark haired and dark eyed girl, who might have been eighteen, or again, twenty five. In manner and general appearance she seemed as youthful as Annie, but there was a certain dignity about her which led one to believe that she was a person of more years and considerable experience.

Arthur found himself greatly interested in both of these ladies, and began to wonder before the evening was half gone what it was that made the elder lady's face so sad. He discovered in the course of the conversation that their home was at Newton, near the capital of the State, and that they spent most of the time traveling about.

The evening passed most agreeably, and Arthur realized more than ever that there was considerable difference between the Remingtons and the majority of their neighbors.

Before he left, Miss Annie had obtained his promise to attend the next meeting of the temperance club, and so it happened when Bill Olney started the next Tuesday evening for the meeting, Arthur accompanied him.

"I didn't spect ye'd be goin' down agin, yet awhile," remarked Bill, who evidently was not exactly pleased to have Arthur go. "Ain't ye afeared Bob Harris 'll be there ?"

"I told you I didn't stay away because I was afraid of Bob Harris," returned Arthur tartly.

"Yes—I know," returned Bill slyly ; "but ye'd jest's lief not meet him, hadn't ye ?"

"Well, as I gave him a good thrashing the other day that I reckon he won't forget for awhile, I don't think I care whether I meet him or not.

"Yew did ?" cried Bill, in open eyed surprise.

"Yes, sir, I did. I don't believe he'll molest me again."

"Wal, that beats all !" exclaimed Bill. "I didn't think ye had it in yer."

"I've got considerable in me when I get mad," returned Arthur.

"Gee-whiz ! I sh'd say yew hed. Why that feller's twice ez big's yew be."

Being urged by his companion, Arthur related his adventure at the ice houses.

"So Annie Remington was there, was she ?" commented Bill, a shadow crossing his face. "I don't 'spect there's much chance f'r me naow you've got in with her," and the laugh he tried to give was a dismal failure.

"Now look here, Bill," said Arthur firmly, "you've got to stop this sort of nonsense. I have no intention of 'getting in' with Miss Remington, as you call it, to your disadvantage. But she is my friend, and above all, she is a lady, and for those reasons I don't intend to have her name used in this manner. After this you may as well understand that this is a subject that I shan't discuss."

"Hoighty-tighty, youngster !" exclaimed Bill, his face getting redder than usual, if that were possible. "Yew needn't git so uppish."

At that moment they reached the schoolhouse.

"Well, remember what I say," said Arthur, and, opening the door, he entered without further remark.

Mr. Prentice, the master, hurried forward to shake hands, and Hal Kenyon came along and slapped Arthur familiarly on the shoulder.

"Haow air ye ?" exclaimed the hearty young farmer. "Glad ter see ye here agin, even if we ain't got no fightin' ter do ter night," and he laughed good naturedly. "Mr. Prentice here says he 'spects he'll have a model school nex' term."

"Not just that," responded the young master ; "but I expect to have the people assist me better than they have before in keeping order."

"Come on up back here and get a seat, Blaisdell," said Hal, turning away.

Throwing a hasty glance around, Arthur saw that Bill Olney had taken a seat beside a young fellow on one of the front forms, and so, feeling at liberty to go where he pleased, he followed the young farmer.

Hal seated himself next to Miss Ross, the young lady with whom Arthur had before seen him. On the opposite side of the aisle from Hal Arthur espied a vacant seat beside—Annie Remington. She smiled and beckoned to him. Miss Sadie, and their cousin, Miss Dahlgreen, occupied the form in front, and Arthur found himself among friends at once and entirely forgot Bill Olney's lowering glances from the opposite side of the room.

After the usual programme had been carried out, the company spent half an hour or so in social chat, and Arthur became acquainted with the majority of the party. Then they dispersed, and Arthur and Annie Remington started off together, with Miss Sadie and her cousin, Miss Dahlgreen, accompanied by the schoolmaster, just before them.

"Why, how is that ?" said Arthur, drawing his companion's attention to the trio in front of them. "Has your cousin made a conquest so soon ?"

"I guess not," replied Annie ; "didn't you know it was Sadie ? Why, that's been going on some time. Do you know," and she laughed roguishly, "I didn't know my precise and stately sister had so much sentiment in her. I don't wonder you thought it was Fay. Isn't she pretty ?"

"Very," returned Arthur ; "but, to tell the truth, I am much more interested in your aunt."

"Why—do you like auntie ?"

"Very much, indeed. She seems so pleasant, yet her face looks continually sad."

"Every one loves auntie. She is so sweet and good. But she has had enough to make her sad. Uncle died years ago—before they had been married very long. And then, about five years ago, she lost her son."

"Did he die ?"

"No ; he left home and they never heard from him. Since then she and Fay go traveling about nearly all the time ; I think partly with the hope of falling in with Cousin Ben."

"He must have been a heartless fellow to leave such a mother."

"No ; only thoughtless and wild. But here we are, and here comes Cæsar to meet us," as the dog trotted down the graveled walk and sprang over the low fence. "Here is your good angel, Mr. Blaisdell ; won't you come in ?"

"No, I thank you," replied Arthur.

"Do come over some evening next week then, before auntie and Fay go away.

"I will try to," and lifting his hat he departed, while Miss Annie and Cæsar approached the house together.

Arthur had only gone a few rods when he heard a heavy tread behind him, and in a short time Bill Olney overtook him. Arthur had been thinking over his recent conversation, and had about half decided that he had been perhaps too severe, so during their walk home together he tried to be especially pleasant. But Bill evidently had not forgotten their discussion, and said but little. As they passed the end of Croft's woods, near the spot where Arthur had met with his supernatural adventure a few weeks before, Bill remarked :

"There, 'twas jest about here that I see that—that 'ere thing that night."

"What, the ghost ?"

Bill nodded.

"Great blazes ! There it is now," added Bill the next instant, and breaking away from his companion, he fled as if the fiends were after him.

Arthur stood still—not petrified with terror, but shaking with laughter ; for of course he had already recognized in the "ghost" only the small boy, Louey, walking in his sleep.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A RUNAWAY.

ARTHUR hurried forward, and overtook the "specter" before it reached the house. The unconscious child was appareled just as lightly as he had been before, and held tightly clasped to his breast one of his "whangs."

Curious to see what Louey would do with the article, Arthur followed on. The sleeping child led him to a great oak tree which grew beside the wall, and, wedging the shoe carefully in between the tree and the wall, he returned to the house.

"I guess Mrs. Hart forgot to tie him in again," thought Arthur, with a chuckle, as, after seeing the little specter safely to his bed, he entered his own room ; "but it'll be lucky if the little scamp don't break his neck some night when he's up to his tricks. He'll be howling 'round for his 'whang' in the morning."

The first chance he had the following day, Arthur went over to Pegrim's in search of Bill Olney. Bill was picking tomatoes in the field, and was looking dreadfully solemn.

"Why, Bill, what makes you so down in the mouth ?"

Bill stopped working, stood up, and rested one broad, flat foot on the barrow as he spoke.

"Artie," he said solemnly, "I've had a warnin'. I hain't long f'r this world, an' I know it. I've had two warnin's, and I don't 'spect but one more. My time's come."

"For heaven's sake, Bill, you don't suppose what you saw last night was a ghost, do you ?" inquired Arthur in disgust.

"I know it was. I seen it once afore, an' it's jest the same both times. I've heard my gran'ma'am tell abeout sech things, an' I thought 'twas all bosh—but I know better now. It's plum true."

"You go on," returned Arthur coolly. "That wasn't any more a ghost than I am. It was young Louey walking in his sleep, and that's what it was when you declared you saw a ghost down by Croft's woods, for I came along right behind you that night, and brought the youngster home. So much for your warning."

But Bill did not appear to be at all grateful for the information. Instead, he brought his foot to the ground with an angry stamp, and exclaimed :

"An' did you know this 'ere right erlong ?"

"Why, of course."

"An' never tole me, hey ? Wal, yew be the meanest feller ! I s'pose ye been all around tellin' the neighbors how I got scared, hain't ye ?"

"Not a bit," returned Arthur, laughing, expecting Bill to soon cool down again. "I don't think I have told but one person."

"Who's that ?"

"Miss Remington," replied Arthur.

"You hev !" shouted Bill, interrupting him, and doubling his fist aggressively. "You hev, hey ? I hev ez good a mind ter lick ye ez ever I had ter eat !"

"Oh, come, Bill, I wouldn't get mad," said Arthur, sorry now that he had aroused the young fellow's anger.

"Yes, ye would get mad, too," returned Bill, still with lowering looks, and he returned to his work without paying any more attention to his companion.

Arthur soon went away, and left him to cool off, but Bill had become more thoroughly enraged than the other supposed. When Arthur had disappeared beyond the wall, Bill stood up again and shook his fist in the direction he had taken.

"I'll fix ye—I'll fix ye, ye little upstart !" he exclaimed, and, still shaking his head and muttering, he returned to his work.

* * * * * * * *

"Summer boarders are getting as plenty as potato bugs," declared Ben Norton, a day or two later, to Arthur, who occupied a seat at one end of an old, moss grown log, idly watching Ben, who was cutting birch poles. "Peck's folks and Wilmarth's are overrun with 'em. There's usually half a dozen down here to get a drink of spring water 'bout once an hour. The well up to the house has the best water by a long sight, but they don't think so. The women and children come trooping down here as though all they had to do was to drink."

"Here comes a couple of 'em now," said Arthur, throwing a chip at an inquisitive red squirrel, who was frisking about a dead oak.

Ben looked up from his work and saw a middle aged lady and a very pretty little girl of six or eight years coming along the woodpath.

"Ah, that's my little girl," he said, a smile lighting up his face, and he threw down his axe as the child came running towards him.

"Hello !" Ben exclaimed, catching her outstretched hands ; and, sitting down on the log, he drew her to him.

She was a pretty little thing, with large, dark blue eyes and fluffy yellow hair, and, although she was shy of Arthur at first, she chattered away to Ben like a little magpie. The lady who was with her, and who proved to be her aunt, came down for a drink of spring water every day, and it was thus that Ben Norton became acquainted with them.

While the lady went on to the spring, the little girl stayed and talked to Ben. He continued to hold her on his knee as though he thoroughly enjoyed her prattle, and Arthur could not remember of seeing him look so happy before. He wondered, as he leaned against a tree and watched them, if this was the same Ben Norton who, but a few weeks before, had come very near killing a man on this very spot ?

"Surely," thought Arthur, "there must be *some* good in the fellow. I wonder what his past life has been—what crime he has committed, instigated by that wretch who came upon him so suddenly that day ?"

"That is Mrs. Marcy," said Ben, in answer to Arthur's question, when the lady and her charge had departed. "And the little girl is Flossie Davidson, her niece. They board at the Pecks'."

"Flossie Davidson, eh ?" repeated Arthur. "I wonder if she is the daughter of the Mr. Davidson who owns the Providence *Journal*. But that can't be, for they go down the river summers."

"Maybe it is," said Ben. "She says her papa runs a newspaper. I guess it is the same folks."

This conversation reminded Arthur very forcibly of what he had lost in giving up his chance on the *Journal* to Hal ; and, although he had not allowed himself to think of the matter before since his advent at the farm, he could not help wondering, as he walked away from the wood lot, just what would have happened had he retained the position first offered him. Mr. Davidson had promised to look out for him. He wondered if he had ever made any inquiries. Hal had never said anything about it. In fact, he seldom saw Hal nowadays.

Then there was his promise to Hi ! He was nearer throwing it all up at that moment and going away than he would even admit to himself afterwards. While he was tied down here he could not accept any other position—even one on the *Journal*—were it offered him.

For the next few days Arthur went about his duties with anything but a light heart. He thought continually of his ill fortune in being placed in the position he occupied, and began to accuse his brother of selfishness. He was constantly reminded of the matter by having Flossie Davidson about. She was always running over to the Hart place, and when Ben was not about, she attached herself to Arthur, although he was not exactly in the mood to make friends with any one.

Finally it got to be a regular thing for Miss Flossie to go to ride with Arthur when he went for the milk in the evening, and perhaps it was a good thing for the boy, for he could not help being roused out of himself by her artless prattling.

One evening, a week or so after Arthur had first met the little girl with her aunt in the wood lot, she came over as usual to accompany him. Black Bob had been harnessed to the light wagon, and stood in the barnyard, stamping his feet impatiently, but not offering to start until Arthur, who was in the carriage house, should be ready. However unmanageable Black Bob might be, he would never start until his driver was ready, unless something frightened him.

Not seeing Arthur about, Miss Flossie boldly climbed up to the wagon seat. Just then Arthur appeared in the door of the barn.

"You mustn't get up there until I'm ready, Flossie," he said, "for the horse might start——"

At that instant young Louey came shrieking around the corner of the barn like a miniature locomotive, with the two dogs at his heels. His sudden appearance and ear splitting scream really startled Arthur—no wonder that Black Bob did not know what to make of it.

He jumped as though he had been struck with the whip, and was off like a shot. As he dashed out of the yard, one wheel caught the stone wall, pulling over six or eight feet of it, and greatly increasing his terror. He swerved to the left, and the wagon careened so far that for an instant it seemed impossible for it to right itself.

Flossie was thrown into the bottom, and, as Black Bob dashed down the road, past the wood lot and out of sight, her white, terrified face was turned appealingly in Arthur's direction.

(To be continued.)

WHAT HAPPENED TO A POOR STENOGRAPHER.

Don't be discouraged by apparent defeat. Despair never yet won a victory ; hope and the "try, try again" spirit have had innumerable conquests set down to their credit. Read this item, clipped from The Daily Continent, about the general manager of the Edison laboratory. To be sure he was fortunate in having certain opportunities opened to him, but if he had not been equipped with something better than luck, he would not have profited by availing himself of them.

Young Alfred Orr Tate—he is only twenty seven years of age—has had a phenomenally lucky career since he came to New York about seven years ago. I first remember him as a station agent and telegraph operator in a small inland Canadian town on the line of the Midland railway. His active brain tired of the quiet surroundings in time, and he emigrated to Virginia. From there he came to New York. The Edison Company, wanted a stenographer. He applied and his application was accepted. He was a superlatively bad shorthand writer, so his superior, Sam Insul said, and the company was about to dispense with his humble services, when the second bookkeeper's health broke down. Young Tate asked to be given a chance in that department ; he was put on trial. The trial was more than satisfactory, and the place was finally given to him for good.

During Thomas A. Edison's casual visits to the office, he noticed young Tate, and took a fancy to him. He finally insisted that Tate should forsake office work, and interest himself in Edison's new experiments. The principal one of them was the phonoplex—a system of sending and receiving several telegraphic messages over the same wire. The young man's executive ability was the for the first time brought before the heads of departments in the Edison concerns. He was recalled to New York and installed as manager of he New York office at No. 40 Wall Street. A few months after his installation Edison called him to his side in Orange. He now reigns there supreme. I met him in Wall Street the other day, and it is a pleasure to record the fact that the hat he wore when a seven dollar a week telegraph operator, will fit him now.

WINNER, OR LOSER ?

George—"Would you marry me under any circumstances ?"

Maud—"No ; why do you ask ?"

George—"Just to decide a bet."—*Puck*.

HOLDING THE MIRROR UP TO ITSELF.

THERE is an article of which all our readers make use every day of their lives, and yet we venture to assert that not one in ten could tell how it is made. We refer to the "looking glass," concerning the manufacture of which the Philadelphia *Times* gives the following description:

A large stone table is used, which has underneath it a screw, by means of which the table can be inclined when desired. Around the edge of the table is a groove, the use of which will be made known presently. While the surface of the table is perfectly level, tin foil is carefully laid over it. A strip of glass is then laid on each of three sides of the foil, and quicksilver is poured on till it is nearly a quarter of an inch deep. The affinity of the quicksilver for the tin foil and the obstruction made by the strips of glass prevent it from flowing off. The plate of glass intended for the mirror, having been carefully cleaned, is now slipped in upon the quicksilver through the side where no glass strip was placed, and is held firm while the table is inclined by means of the screw, so as to let the superfluous quicksilver run off into the groove along the edge of the table. That having been done, the table is brought back to a level, heavy weights are put upon the glass, and it is then left for several hours.

The next step is to take the glass from the table and put it in a frame, the coated side up. The coating, or amalgam, as it is technically called, soon becomes hard enough to allow the plate to stand on its edge, but it cannot be used for several weeks longer.

This method of making mirrors is the best in use, and was invented by the Venetians in the sixteenth century.

THEN AND NOW.

OURS is indeed the country of contrasts. The hod carrier of today may be the millionaire of—well, if not of tomorrow, of a very few years hence. Nobody need complain that he hasn't a fair field; the only conditions demanded are ability and industry. Says the Chicago *Tribune*:

Mark Twain was once an impecunious reporter in San Francisco, often not having money enough to buy his dinner. He was standing disconsolate one day on the corner of Montgomery Street, with a cigar box under his arm. An acquaintance saw him, and asked him what he was about. "I am moving," said the humorist, "and carrying with me all my worldly goods." He then opened the box and displayed his entire wardrobe, as he styled it—an old clay pipe, a paper collar, and a well worn necktie. He is now worth probably $1,000,000.

A NEW USE FOR MATCHES.

WOULDN'T you like to know a good way in which to remove ink stains from your fingers when you have neither soap nor pumice stone at hand? Well, simply take a match, and, after wetting the stain, rub the sulphur end briskly over it. The stain vanishes like magic. Isn't it something worth remembering?

THE DEEPEST RIVER.

THE biggest things are alway things of interest, no matter in which direction their bigness lies. Going down into the bowels of the earth, the "bigness" of the Saguenay in the way of depth is really remarkable. The Saguenay, as you all know, is a river in Canada, and concerning it the *St Louis Republic* prints the subjoined facts:

Excepting in a very few places, where great ranges of hills seem to cross its bed, the average depth is 900 feet, the bottom at the spot where it joins the St. Lawrence being over 600 feet below the bottom of the last named stream. Thus a low point of rocks at the shore, or an island, is really the top of a moderate sized mountain springing up from the mysterious depths of this deepest of all rivers. As the spring tides rise about eighteen feet, the currents of the river are violent and eccentric; in some places the ebb stream runs four to five miles per hour; the eddies along the shore are like those of a rapid, the undercurrent sometimes laying hold of a vessel to turn her about or to hold her in spite of all efforts to escape.

Before the use of towboats on the Saguenay a vessel left helpless by a calm sometimes drifted against some submerged mountain peak, and, when the tide fell, capsized in deep water. An anchorage being very rarely found, large iron rings have been set in the rocks which show themselves above the water, and vessels often tie up to these "hitching posts" and await a fair wind. The tide of the Sanguenay, for some unexplained reason, advances with extraordinary rapidity, thus, notwithstanding the fact that the ebb current very rarely ceases to flow out of the river, high tide arrives at Chicontimi only forty five minutes later than at Tadousac, seventy miles away. On the St. Lawrence the tide advances in the same time only from Tadousac to Murray Bay, thirty five miles distant.

CORRESPONDENCE.

R. A. C., New York City. See reply to S. E. M's second question in No. 445.

INQUIRER. Yes, you can get the last fourteen numbers of Vol. X from us on receipt of $1.00.

M. C., New York City. 1. See reply to first query of S. H. 2 We can supply separate numbers of THE ARGOSY as far back as 313, inclusive.

R. G. S., Austin, Tex. THE ARGOSY has already published two serials about baseball, so that there is no opening in the immediate future for another.

E. F. S., Chicago, Ill. The choice of a pen is a matter of individual preference. Some prefer "stubs," others the Spencerian. There is no "best" for everybody.

H. S. B., Lowell, Mass. Your plan seems to be practicable so far as the red powder is concerned, but we doubt your ability to manufacture the firecracker. Thanks for your praise.

W. T. F. Your question is somewhat obscure. You ask us for the dimensions of 20 foot type. Does not this savor of the absurdity of the well known query: "What time does the three o'clock train leave?"

A READER, Salem, O. Questions of this sort, regarding the financial standing of business houses or companies, are out of the jurisdiction of journals like THE ARGOSY, and cannot be answered in this department.

B. E. I., Brookville, Pa. Yes, you would be quite correct in calling an 18 karat ring solid gold. Coins and all articles of jewelry are supposed to have some alloy in their composition, as perfectly pure gold is not durable.

X. Y. Z., Yonkers, N. Y. The note you describe may have some small value as a curiosity simply; for further information we must refer you to some one of the coin dealers, whose advertisements you will find on our cover pages.

YOURS TRULY, Rockville Center, N. Y. Send a rubbing of your friend's coin to some coin dealer—you will find address of such firms in our advertising pages. We cannot undertake to give the valuation of rare pieces of foreign money.

S. H., Philadelphia, Pa. 1. We must refer you to our prospectus for Vol. XII, printed in No. 442, for list of forthcoming attractions. 2. There are fourteen cruisers in the new United States Navy, and five armored vessels. 3. The price of bound Vol. VII of THE ARGOSY—the first of the ten cent series—is $2.

COLUMBUS, Birmingham, Conn. 1. The southing of the moon is its transit across the meridian of a place. 2. The term "red ray," used in respect to a lighthouse, indicates that the light used is a red one; "two red and one white" sector implies that the light is of the flash order, showing twice red and once white.

E. H. L., Charitan, Ioa. Vol. V of THE ARGOSY contained in Nos. 243–244 an article entitled "How To Make a Canvas Canoe," and in No. 245, "Wooden Canoes." In Vol. VI was a series, "Canoes and How to Build Them," in Nos. 288–291. These separate numbers are now out of print, but you can obtain either of the bound volumes at the reduced rate, $2, exclusive of express charges.

L. S. E., Dodge City, Kan. 1. Monkeys, in their natural haunts, live about twenty five years. 2. The name "monkey" probably comes from the old French term for old woman, in consequence of the supposed resemblance of the animal to the weazen face of a crone. 3. It is not known positively when gunpowder was first employed in war. The earliest authentic record of its use seems to have been at the battle of Crecy in 1346.

E. G. M., New York City. 1. Yes, the Sunday CONTINENT will be sent to you six months for $1, or three months for 50 cents; the WEEKLY CONTINENT, six months for 50 cents; three months, 25 cents. 2. You can get MUNSEY'S WEEKLY for six months for $1, or three months, fifty cents. 3. Back numbers of MUNSEY'S POPULAR SERIES are out of print. The publication of the library will not be resumed at present.

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FRANK A. MUNSEY, Publisher.
239 BROADWAY, COR. PARK PLACE, NEW YORK.

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

Any reader leaving home for the summer months can have THE ARGOSY *forwarded to him every week by the newsdealer from whom he is now buying the paper, or he can get it direct from the publication office by remitting the proper amount for the time he wishes to subscribe. Three months, fifty cents ; six months, one dollar ; one year, two dollars.*

* * * *

PLEASED READERS.

SUCH are those who are now taking THE ARGOSY. That a beautfully gotten up story paper, high in tone and refined in all its features, is approved by the public, is proved not only by the way in which subscriptions are coming in, but by the warm words of commendation which letters from our young friends bring us. Says a Lowell boy :

" It is a hard thing for me to wait for the next ARGOSY. I think that it is a better paper today than ever before, and that is what my friends say. All other papers of the same kind are simply 'out of sight.' "

* * * *

RESPONSES to THE ARGOSY'S premium offers are coming in with gratifying rapidity, and our readers express themselves as delighted with their prizes. Show the paper to your friends ; tell them that by beginning with No. 443 they can read all four of the splendid serials now running, that the numbers will be mailed to them to any resort at which they may contemplate spending the summer, and that the attractions in reserve for the immediate future include some of the most stirring, spirited stories of adventure ever written.

* * * *

WE feel confident that the wash rag hating small boy will rise up and call us blessed, for spreading the intelligence that the doctors have discovered a disease due to cleanliness. Its ravages are found principally among the ladies, who, in their efforts to secure a perfect complexion, rupture the epidermis of the face by constant washing.

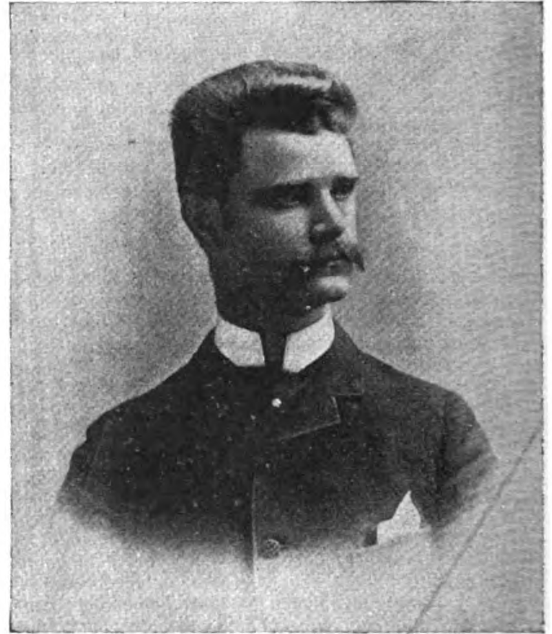
Lest the parents of the small boy aforesaid, should have trouble hereafter in getting the young gentleman to perform even his morning ablutions, we may add that by constant washing we do not mean 365 times in a year, or even twice or thrice that amount, but will instance the case of a young lady in society, who, according to the skin journal, to which we are indebted for these facts, applied soap and water to her face thirteen times in twelve hours. It will thus be seen that we can all keep up a respectable appearance without running the risk of wearing out our complexions in an over vaunting ambition to improve upon them.

THOMAS F. MAGNER.

REPRESENTATIVE FROM NEW YORK.

ONE of the youngest men in public life today is Thomas F. Magner, Congressman from New York. He is a Brooklyn boy ; was born there, went to school there, and now represents his native city in the nation's legislature. Like many other statesmen he was once a teacher.

On the eighth day of March, 1860, the future statesman entered this world. Men who were once young Magner's boyhood companions and



THOMAS F. MAGNER.
From a photograph by Bell, Washington.

who are now prosperous merchants in the City of Churches, remember the active, ambitious " Tom," who attended the public schools. While always at the front in the matter of sports, he never neglected his books, and lost no chance in securing an education which afterwards brought him social recognition and political honor.

The finishing touches to his student life were put on within the walls of Columbia College. True and manly in all his acts, young Magner won universal admiration. When he started out to fight his way in the greater world, he had all the benefits of a good character to back him.

At this period of his career he asserted most strongly his inflexibility of purpose and determination to succeed. Firmly resolved on entering the legal ranks, the college graduate began to teach in the public schools of Brooklyn in order to acquire the funds necessary to the pursuit of his law studies. While he taught he read Blackstone, thus working day and night to accomplish his object.

In 1883 the young teacher left the duties of the schoolroom and began to practice law. He won a high reputation at the bar, and was soon called upon to serve in the State Assembly at Albany. Shortly after, as the nominee of the Democratic party, Mr. Magner was elected to the Fifty First Congress. Last November the Fifth District again elected him. Popular with his constituents and an earnest worker, he carried his campaign through cleverly and successfully.

In his rapid rise to high political positions, Mr. Magner has always shown a zeal and energy which is destined to win him high honors in years to come.

WILLIAM J. BAHMER.