

THE ARGOSY

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WHOLE NO. 449.

BRAD MATTOON; OR, *LIFE AT HOSMER HALL.**

BY WILLIAM D. MOFFAT.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MR. PRENTICE MAKES A STARTLING REVELATION.

As they drew nearer, Brad was surprised to see that the man, whose queer manner had attracted their attention, was none other than Mr. Prentice; and well might his behavior have aroused curiosity. He was pacing up and down before a rustic seat, which half encircled one of the trees by the fence, gesticulating excitedly, and talking rapidly to himself, betraying every evidence of the deepest agitation.

They were now only a few yards distant from him, but he was evidently quite unconscious of the fact, and continued pacing back and forth, with his face bent toward the ground, entirely absorbed in the turbulent thoughts that had taken such thorough possession of him.

Brad stood in silent astonishment. Had not the dress, figure, and face been so familiar, he could not have believed that this was really the assistant instructor. As it was, he almost doubted his eyesight for a moment. Like all the boys at the academy, Brad had known Mr. Prentice as a quiet, undemonstrative gentleman of a retiring and almost morbid disposition. Though always kind and courteous, and never failing in the performance of duty, he mingled very little with the boys, and his manner, though pleasant, was always subdued, and inclined at times to be a little cold. He rarely spoke except when necessity demanded it, and then only in the lowest tones and fewest words.

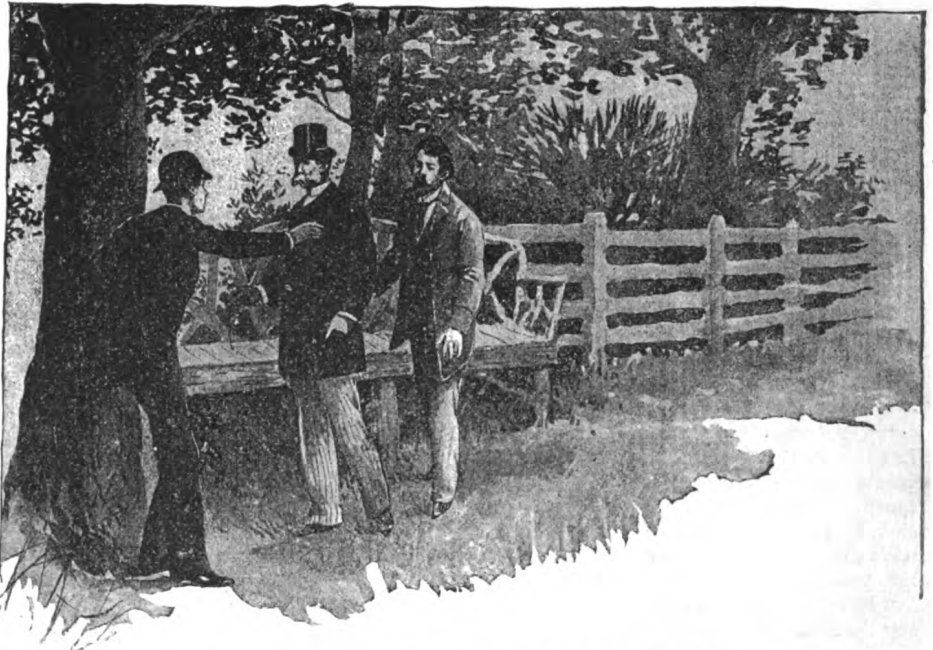
Now every characteristic seemed reversed. He was excited, nervous, and demonstrative; and his thoughts found

expression in oft repeated exclamations, and brief, hasty, incoherent sentences. He spoke in French, but Brad could hear and understand enough to convince him that Mr. Prentice's mind was seriously disturbed. Certainly some very unusual thing must have occurred to have wrought so complete a change in him.

Finding that Mr. Prentice remained wholly unaware of their presence, Mr. Parker, who was fully as astonished as Brad, at length spoke.

"Mr. Prentice, you seem distressed. What is the matter?"

Mr. Prentice stopped instantly, and struggled to compose himself. It was but for a moment, however, for, at the



THE NAME RANG OUT SHARPLY FROM BRAD'S LIPS, CAUSING THE OTHERS TO TURN QUICKLY.

sight of Mr. Parker he hurried forward, and, grasping him by the arm, pointed down the lane.

"He is there! He is there!" he cried, his voice trembling with excitement.

Mr. Parker's face grew alarmed, and, with a quick gesture, he drew back a step. Evidently grave doubts as to Mr. Prentice's sanity were beginning to trouble him.

"He is there," echoed Mr. Parker. "He is—why, Mr. Prentice, whom do you mean?"

"Darenne—I have told you of him. He is there now."

*Begun in No 436 of THE ARGOSY.

Mr. Parker shook his head.

"Pray compose yourself, Mr. Prentice," he said in a soothing tone. "I do not understand you at all, sir. I do not know who you mean? Who is Darenne?"

Mr. Parker had led Mr. Prentice to the rustic seat, beside which Brad already stood. Under the influence of the lawyer's calm, firm tones, Mr. Prentice's manner grew somewhat quieter.

"Pardon me, sir—pardon my manner. I must seem mad to you—I seem so to myself. It is all so strange, so unreal. I feel as if I were walking in a dream—"

"But who is this Darenne? You speak as if I knew him."

"I thought you would know him. I spoke of him quite fully. It was long ago—when I first came to you in New York, but I thought you would remember him."

Mr. Parker reflected a moment. Then he spoke.

"Mr. Prentice, it was on an afternoon several weeks ago that you came to my office with letters of introduction from some French acquaintances of mine. I remember that meeting very well. You were looking for some occupation, and in the course of our conversation you said you had not been very long in this country, and that you were a native of France. You also spoke of your studies in Paris—"

"And I told you of a friend—a dear comrade of mine who had been more than a brother to me for years. Whose kindness had time and again saved me from trouble—who had helped me through innumerable difficulties, who, when all chance for me at home was gone, had urged me to come to this country, and, as a last act of generosity, supplied me the means to come."

Mr. Parker inclined his head.

"I do recall that, Mr. Prentice. I did not remember the name of your friend, but I do remember how deeply moved you were when speaking of him; how heartfelt your gratitude was—but you told me he was dead."

"So I thought. I have mourned him as dead for years. He is not dead. He is *there*."

Mr. Parker started involuntarily.

"Where?"

Mr. Prentice again pointed with a trembling hand down the lane. The only object in view in that direction was the Turners' cottage.

"Mr. Parker!" cried Brad, to whom the matter was becoming clearer. "It is the man I met last night on the road—the man we were going to see."

"Yes," answered Prentice, turning for the first time to Brad; "you saw him first on the road—but for you he would have perished miserably. Think!" he continued in tones of anguish, "they say he has been wandering abroad sick, famishing, friendless, and homeless, and I, who would have given my life for him, who would gladly have traveled miles to help him, so near by—"

"Mr. Prentice," exclaimed Mr. Parker, "do you mean to say that the man whom Bradley here has been telling me of, the man he met on the road last night, is Darenne, your friend whom you belihved to be dead?"

"Yes, yes."

Mr. Parker looked incredulous.

"But can you be sure? Is there not some mistake?"

"No. It is impossible. I recognized him. Changed as he is, I knew him."

"But think, Mr. Prentice, years have passed since you saw him. You were sure of his death. Granted he might have lived, could he have sunk to this?"

Mr. Prentice's voice was low and husky.

"Yes. Had he lived he could have—I have felt that all along—poor Darenne!"

"It might be some confusion—perhaps a mere resemblance."

"No. The resemblance was nothing. That would not have attracted my attention. Listen: last night I stayed by this man for several hours, out of compassion alone. The good woman there did all she could to restore him, but without avail. He grew rapidly worse. Late in the night I sent the boy for Dr. Leonard. Before he arrived the man grew delirious. He talked wildly, now in English, now in French. I would have left him in the care of the woman, but as I turned away, I heard my name—and from *him*! In an instant I was at his side again. Then he talked on and on of people, places, and things long familiar to me, but for years locked in the innermost recesses of my memory. Think, Mr. Parker! this strange man spoke of things that only Darenne and I knew, calling repeatedly on my name, while I stood there by his side as in a dream. His words sounded in my ears like echoes from the grave, rousing the sleeping memories, and crowding my brain with thoughts that had long been strangers there. It was a strange revulsion of feeling. In a flash the past came back to me. The present seemed forgotten. I knew only that I lived in error—that Darenne was not dead—that he was there calling me and could not hear me answer—could not feel the pressure of my hand. Oh, it was maddening to look on his face and see the marks of terrible suffering it bore—to think of all he must have passed through since I saw him last, years ago—hunger, deprivation of every kind, while I was living easily and comfortably on means that could never have been mine but for his generosity in the past! To think I could have helped him—could have paid the heavy debt I owe him had I only known—!"

Mr. Prentice's voice here failed him.

Mr. Parker and Brad were as greatly moved as amazed at this strange recital, and Mr. Parker's voice was low and gentle when he spoke.

"And why did you leave him? Why are you here? He is not—"

"No, no, not that!" exclaimed Mr. Prentice. "When Dr. Leonard came, he said it would be better for him and me that I should not remain in the room. He was right. I could not have stood it. Last night I spent in an adjoining chamber. This morning I spent here—waiting for the doctor's report. He has promised to send for me should any change occur."

"Some one is coming from the cottage now," exclaimed Brad, "and it looks very much like the doctor himself."

Mr. Prentice sprang nervously to his feet as all three looked towards the cottage. Sure enough, it was the genial doctor, whose comfortable, round figure now came rolling up the lane towards the post where his horse was tied. A moment more and he was in his carriage and rapidly approaching the group.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

AN OLD LETTER.

WHEN Dr. Leonard came within fifty yards of them, Mr. Prentice hailed him.

"What news, doctor; what news?"

"Good news—very good," he answered, looking a little surprised as he recognized Brad and Mr. Parker. "Couldn't be better—gave him a little nourishment early this morning—been improving ever since—very weak, but fever almost all gone—gave him more nourishment little while ago—that's what he needs most—he is sleeping now, a good, healthy, natural sleep—couldn't be better. Oh, he'll pull through all right, don't fear, but he needs rest and nourishment. More

than half starved, that's the trouble—don't disturb him now. Let him have his sleep out—I've left him with Mrs. Turner—I'll run in again this evening."

"Then there's no real danger?" exclaimed Mr. Parker.

"Not if we're careful—glad to see you, sir—pleasant surprise, your visit here—going back tonight, as usual, or will you make a stay with us?"

"I may be here for several days," answered Mr. Parker.

"Good! Hope to see you again. Well, gentlemen, I must be off. Good day," and the doctor's little bay horse trotted off down the lane.

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Mr. Prentice fervently, as he sank back upon the seat.

The faces of Mr. Parker and Brad also bore an expression of genuine relief.

"I was about to propose going to the cottage when the doctor came out," said Mr. Prentice. "But it seems best now to remain away for fear of disturbing him—"

"Especially when he is doing so well," added Brad.

"Mr. Prentice," said Mr. Parker, whose interest had been thoroughly aroused by what he had heard, "tell me more of this friend of yours. Have you known him all your life?"

"No. I knew him only five years, but it was a friendship of a lifetime. We were together all that time—lived together, worked together, and suffered together."

"Suffered?"

"Yes, it is fellowship in misery that binds the firmest friendships, and our life in those days had plenty of hardship and trouble. It was a hard, reckless, desperate life—a life we were both ashamed of. Occasionally we paused to reflect. Oh, the anguish of those moments! But it was only occasional, and it availed nothing. We were on a steep, downward grade— but I cannot speak of that life. It is much better forgotten—if such things can be forgotten."

"I respect your feelings, Mr. Prentice," said Mr. Parker. "I remember you told me something of this when you called upon me. I was compelled to ask questions then."

"You were very kind to me then. Knowing very little of me, you took me on faith and secured me a position here. I hope I have deserved your confidence."

"You have. I am glad to have given you the opportunity you sought. From what you told me at that time I inferred that your life had been an adventurous one, and that a desire to escape from its influence had led you to this country."

"It was so, and yet even today, though several years have elapsed, and I have tried to live down the recollection of the past, it will rise at times to haunt me with its hideous shadow. There was but one bright ray in all that dark, unhappy time—Darenne's friendship. It was he alone that kept my spirits from sinking when discouraging failures began to weigh me down—he alone that saved me from self destruction in the later days when death would have been a welcome relief. His last act was one of noble unselfishness—his last words full of friendship for me. See, here is his letter. It was his last message. On my return one night to our wretched lodgings, I found the room empty, and this note upon the table. It tells the whole story."

Mr. Prentice took from his pocket a faded letter, which he carefully unfolded, and handed to Mr. Parker. The latter glanced at it.

"It is in French. Will you read it, Brad?"

Brad took the letter, and, holding it close to his face that the faint handwriting might be legible, he read as follows:

DEAR ERNEST,

Do not expect me. I shall not return. This is my last word to you. I could not stay to say good by. I could not have stood it. Forgive me for this. I feel that I must do it. You know that I have

long been sick. Monday last Dr. Bourget told me I had scarcely a month to live. I am incurable. Since then I have been thinking of the best thing to do. I have decided to go away—to go away and put an end to myself now. It is not despair that drives me to this step. It is because I have decided that it is best for both of us. Ernest, we have dragged out a wretched existence here, sinking lower and lower. But there is good stuff yet in you—I have often told you that. For me there is nothing but death. We have but little money left. Why should I stay to waste this in one poor month's existence—a drag upon our limited purse, and a burden upon you. There is still enough to take you away from this cursed place. I will not use it up. It could do me no good, while it could be the means of saving you from the evil habits and associations that have dragged us both down. In the enclosed envelope you will find all that is left of our money. Take it, Ernest, and leave Paris at once. Do not delay. Go to America, where you have a few friends. There you can shake off these terrible influences, and make a fresh start. Ernest, you have still a chance—perhaps your last chance in life. Go then—go as you value my friendship, go. Do not try to find me; it will be too late. Good by, Ernest, and God bless you.

EDWARD.

Almost before Brad had finished, Mr. Prentice began speaking.

"Think! The money was his. He forced me to share it with him. When I first met him he was in business, and fairly fortunate. When luck turned, and our wild, reckless habits led us down—as our misfortunes set in, and poverty began to pinch us, still he insisted on sharing his rapidly diminishing purse with me, receiving reluctantly his share of the few contributions I could occasionally make to our mutual support. But this last act was too much. Thrusting the note in my pocket, I dashed down stairs.

"How long since Darenne left the house?" I asked the man in charge of the building. "A good hour," he answered. Rushing past him, I hurried down the street, making inquiries right and left of the shop people. Some had seen him, some thought they had. A clew here, a clew there, led me on toward the Seine. My heart sank. In despair I inquired, begged, implored for information of those about the river, but none had seen a man of the description I gave. At length I found one who had noticed such a man walking up the river a half hour before. "Up there," he said, "into that dark lane where the river bank curves."

"I was distracted. I wandered on all night, and for days after I searched for him, watching the papers for news that I dreaded to see, and inquiring at all our favorite haunts. I went to Bourget. He was alarmed when I told him what had happened. Bourget was a brute.

"I only meant to warn him," he said. "I meant that he could not live another month if he did not stop drinking. I only tried to frighten him. He has taken it too seriously." "You have killed him," said I, and turned on my heel.

"My search proving fruitless, I was compelled to give up in despair, and to conclude that he had perished and never been found. Nothing remained for me to do. I left Paris for this country. Two months after, I received word from acquaintances there that convinced me of Darenne's death."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE GOLD LOCKET.

MR. PRENTICE paused, as if exhausted by the intensity of his feelings.

Neither Mr. Parker nor Brad could speak. After a moment's silence, Mr. Prentice continued:

"Knowing how we lived, and how we parted, you may imagine, then, my feelings, Mr. Parker, when last night I heard his voice again, as if from the land of the dead—when I saw his face once more, sadly defaced by years of suffering, but still the face of Darenne. He seems but a shadow,

for he was handsome in those days, especially when I first met him, while his wife was still living."

"He was married, then," said Mr. Parker.

"Yes, though I knew his wife but a short time. She was ill when I met him—a weak, fragile woman. She died during the first year of our acquaintance, and her death was a terrible blow to him. She was a lovely woman—as beautiful in character as in face. See, here are both their faces as they looked then."

And Mr. Prentice held out to Mr. Parker a small, heart shaped gold locket.

"I saw this on his breast last night. The cord that held it had almost parted. I knew it well. He had often shown it to me. He always wore it."

Mr. Parker pressed the small spring with his thumb. The locket opened. Then a loud gasp of astonishment escaped his lips, and he sprang to his feet.

"Mr. Prentice!" he cried, pointing at the locket, "is this—'s this the portrait of your friend Darenne?"

"Yes."

"And this is the man that lies in that cottage?"

"Yes."

"Oh, you must be mad. It is impossible."

Mr. Prentice was also upon his feet.

"It is true, Mr. Parker. Why do you doubt it? Think of what I have told you. He called on me—I can still recognize his face—then this locket taken from his breast."

Experienced lawyer as he was, and accustomed to strange human experiences, Mr. Parker could scarcely control himself.

"Mr. Prentice," he exclaimed eagerly, "Where did you first meet this man?"

"In Paris."

"When?"

"Over fifteen years ago."

"Was he a native Frenchman?"

"No. He told me he came from this country."

"Yes, and his parents—what of them?"

"He would never speak of them. He left his home under very unfortunate circumstances."

"I know! I know!" cried Mr. Parker excitedly, "And his wife—her name?"

"Estelle."

"Yes—Estelle Leclair."

"What! you knew her—"

"*Estelle Leclair!*" The name rang out sharply from Brad's lips, interrupting Mr. Prentice's reply, and causing both him and Mr. Parker to turn in alarm.

"Mr. Parker! Mr. Parker!" cried Brad in a half dazed manner, leaning heavily against the tree with one hand. "What does it all mean—this strange story—that name—whose picture have you there? Can that man—the man I found on the road last night be—be my—oh, Mr. Parker, tell me quickly—don't keep me in doubt."

Mr. Parker had approached him.

"Heaven knows I would if I could, my boy, but I am in a whirl myself. It is all so strange, I scarcely dare believe—Mr. Prentice, I must see this man at once."

"But the doctor's directions, Mr. Parker. Remember, he is sleeping."

"I will not disturb him. I will be careful, but I *must* see him. Come, we will go at once."

As they turned away hastily toward the cottage, an idea suddenly occurred to Mr. Parker.

"Brad," he said gently, "this man is ill. We must not disturb him. Can you trust yourself? Had you better come just yet? Perhaps it is best to stay here until I return.

Then I will *know*, and, when it is safe—when you can feel sure of yourself, and he wakes, we can go to him."

Brad did not seem to hear what was said, but he made no motion to follow the others. He simply sank down on the seat, and covered his face with his hands. He could not think connectedly. He was too much dazed by what he had heard. One vision alone filled his mind—the vision of a pale face with dark, sunken eyes, and framed by long, unkempt locks—a strange, sad face that stared at him, as it had on the moonlit road the night before. But now about this face there clustered a host of mingled impressions and fancies suggested by Mr. Prentice's extraordinary revelation—all manner of wild probabilities concerning events in the past, and their bearing upon his own future.

The minutes sped, and still Brad sat there almost without moving; and there Mr. Parker found him a quarter of an hour later, on his return from the cottage.

Brad," said Mr. Parker, touching him gently on the shoulder.

Brad sprang up in feverish haste. Mr. Parker was alone. A quick glance showed Brad that his friend's eyes were moist.

"Mr. Parker, is it he?"

"Yes, Brad. There could be no doubt. Mr. Prentice's story, and what he has told me since—the face in the locket. It was proven then, but I could not realize it at once. It is strange, very strange."

"And that man is—is my father?"

"He is."

"But, Mr. Parker how did he come to this?"

"It will all be clear when you have heard what I have to tell. I know it is hard for you to believe—it is all so new and seems so unreal to you."

Brad slowly shook his head.

"If it is true, I must believe it," he said. "And yet—and yet I do not know what to think."

"I understand you, but Brad, do not think of him as the man you saw on the road last night—poor, starving and friendless. Think of him as Mr. Prentice has described him—noble, generous, unselfish. Think of him as you see him here."

Mr. Parker held out the gold locket.

Brad seized it eagerly, and fastened his eyes upon the portraits.

"Oh, how beautiful! he exclaimed, as if fascinated. "How beautiful they are! Mr. Prentice, clear the doubts from my mind. Tell me who is my father—what was he?"

"As you must have guessed, Brad, his real name was not Darenne. That name he assumed when he left his home, and began life in Paris."

"Yes, and what was his real name?"

"*Edward Hosmer, and this estate was his home.*"

"Well, and what about Edward Hosmer?" asked a harsh, disagreeable voice almost immediately behind them.

Mr. Parker started and turned.

In the lane, close beside him, with one hand resting on the fence rail, stood Mr. Gordon Ivers, surveying him with a cold and surly look of displeasure.

(To be continued.)

THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE.

"PAPA," inquired the editor's only son, "what do you call your office?"

"Well," was the reply, "the world calls an editor's office the sanctum sanctorum, but I don't."

"Then, I guess," and the boy was thoughtful for a moment, "that mamma's office is a spantum spantorum, isn't it?"—*Washington Star.*

TRAIN AND STATION ;

OR,

THE RAMBLES OF A YOUNG RAILROADER.*

BY EDGAR R. HOADLEY, JR.

CHAPTER XLV.

A NOBLE DEED.

IN the absence of any more positive evidence, or any information to the contrary, Dash was forced to conclude that Missouri Pete, the outlaw, who had been killed in the cabin, was both his own father and Dorothy's uncle. He realized, when it was too late, that there was probably one thing that could have made the man's identity more certain, and that was a scar on the head, which conductor Orloff no doubt possessed, as the result of the injury he had received in the collision at Lonewood years before ; but when he thought of this the outlaw was in his grave.

The conviction that Missouri Pete was his father was both stunning and astonishing to him, and it took several days before the shame and humiliation of the discovery came upon him in full force. He had seen Missouri Pete buried, near the little cabin where he had fallen, but had not hinted to the pursuing party what had passed between him and the outlaw. The attackers on the cabin had noticed his intense agitation and pallor when he threw open the door to admit them, but they attributed this to fright. They readily believed that Dash had no hand in the defense, and permitted him to continue on his journey after the outlaw had been interred.

Dash retained possession of the deed Pete had handed him, for he now felt that the paper and the property it represented, was not only his by deed of gift, but by inheritance. The two deeds were now together, and it was a source of wonder to him that this was the case after a separation of over eighteen years, and that they had been the instruments of revealing such an amazing mystery.

Then it occurred to him that he could never take possession of the property as a gift if the deed was not regularly assigned to him in writing and to do so as the son and heir to the outlaw he would have to reveal his relationship to the man, prove his disgraceful death, and establish his own identity as the son and his right to the name of Orloff. Dash felt that he could never do these things for all the wealth the paper might represent, and the latter seemed as worthless to him as the original deed, transferring the land to Mrs. Orloff, was to Dorothy. He would rather the shameful secret should never be revealed and go with him to the grave.

He decided he would send the original deed back to Dorothy and tell her it was made void by the record of the latter one transferring the land back to her uncle, and

*Begun in No. 434 of THE ARGOSY.

that the valid paper was doubtless then in the possession of the latter's heirs, which was true ; but he would make no mention that the uncle had been alive recently, that he was his own father, and that she was his own cousin. To do these things he would have to reveal the whole disgraceful business, and he determined he would not darken the happy and innocent young girl's life with such a shadow.

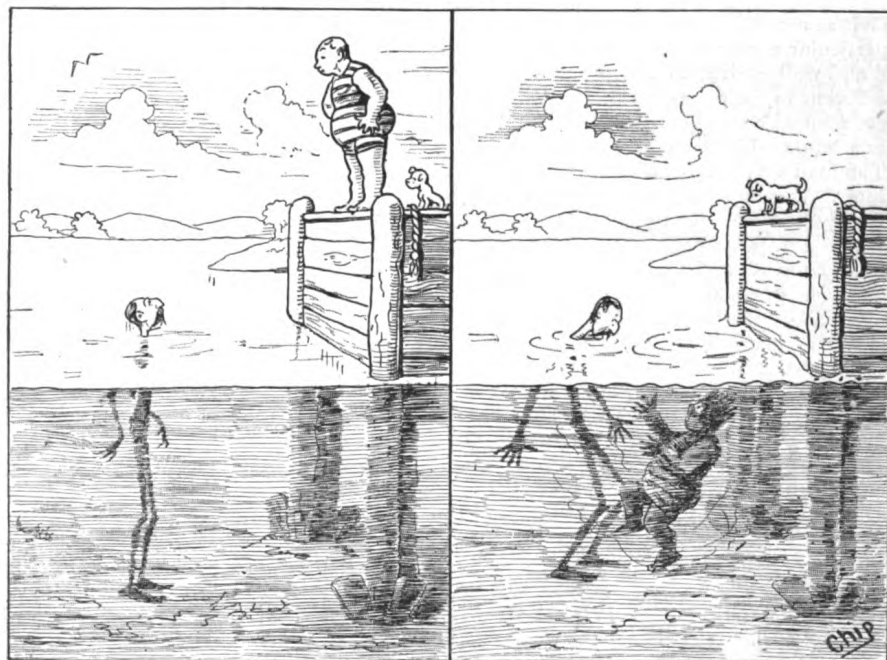
Then he considered Dorothy's new relationship to him, and it troubled him second only to the discovery that Missouri Pete was his father. Though he had no idea of marrying Dorothy in the near future, and had not seriously considered such a thing, the new found tie seemed a barrier to the possibility of such a marriage. He had known cousins to marry, and that it was not an unusual union, but he was inherently opposed to such a marriage, though he could not have told why.

This prejudice he tried to fight down and argue himself out of, but all to no purpose, and his despondency seemed to be added to, if that were possible, as the hope that the young orphan girl could ever be anything nearer and dearer to him was relinquished.

From the day of his ride over to Grand Ledge, Dash became silent, gloomy and despondent, and even his health began to fail. Mr. Layard and others noticed it, but no amount of questioning could get anything from him. They tried to rouse him out of his lethargy, joked him about being in love, and suggested numerous medical remedies, but all to no purpose.

Dash plodded along for weeks and months, doing his work well, but showing no improvement in his spirits. He seemed to have merged into a sedate manhood, with a tinge of settled melancholy.

He received letters occasionally from Dorothy, but he did not read them with the old eagerness and increased heart



THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT.

I.
JACK LONGMAN—"Come on, Fred, jump in ;
the water's only up to one's neck !

II
"GREAT SCOTT ! I quite forgot that Fred is
about three feet shorter than I am !"

beats, though they were as full of girlish trust and artlessness as ever, and he enjoyed them. They seemed to only add to a fire he wished to quench, and for the same reasons his answers were delayed much longer than they would otherwise have been. He would have ceased writing entirely, but he was reluctant to make the orphan girl unhappy, and doubted his own ability to endure the utter cessation of the intercourse.

Time passed till it was the fall of the year. Dash had gone to Colorado, and the Continental and the Great Divide Railroad had pushed its way around lofty mountains, and across dizzy canyons for twenty miles. One day a sick man, coming to the end of the track to go prospecting for gold, as many had come before him, was taken from the train. When it was discovered that he had unmistakable symptoms of smallpox, there was a semi panic in the railroad camp and signs of a stampede.

But he was hurried off to a shanty-like structure on the other side of the valley, which was thereafter designated as the "pest house." For a day and a night no one went near the afflicted man, and no one could be induced to do so. It soon became evident that if the man would not die of the disease itself he would certainly succumb to hunger, thirst and neglect.

Finally the facts of the case came to Dash, and he instantly decided that if no one else would go to minister to the sick man's needs he would do so himself. Mr. Layard tried to dissuade him, but it was no use, and the chief engineer agreed to take care of his work while he was gone, because if Dash once went to the pest house he would have to remain there till the patient died or recovered. And if he himself took the disease, there was no telling what the result would be.

Consideration of these things did not deter Dash from his purpose in the least, and after arranging that food, water, medicines, and such other things as he should need, should be left at a certain point in the valley, where he could go by a particular route to get them, he bade good by to Mr. Layard and walked over to the pest house. He felt perfectly indifferent to the danger of taking the contagion, and indeed there seemed a sort of fascination about courting it so boldly that stimulated his drooping spirits.

The man was in a burning fever and was muttering in delirium. As soon as he had made the patient comfortable, Dash applied effective remedies.

He then inspected the man's features and general appearance. His head and face were large, the former covered with iron gray hair, and the latter with a dark beard only streaked with white. He possessed a tall, bony frame, and was evidently a man of fine physique when in health. There appeared to be something familiar to Dash about the face or the form, he did not know which. But there was nothing on his person to indicate who or what he was.

That day and the next night were passed in lonely vigil by the young railroader. The second morning Dash was sitting in the doorway listening to the unintelligible mumbling of the sick man, when the latter began to talk in a disconnected way. Dash listened attentively and then sprang to the side of the cot, his face flushed and his heart beating tumultuously. The sick man was slowly and laboriously referring to the incidents that had happened on the express train on the Chicago & St. Louis Railroad, just prior to the wreck at Lonewood nearly seven years before, with which Dash was so familiar.

Dash stepped quickly to the man's head, and eagerly began searching for a scar hidden by the gray hair.

He found it!

"Father!" he sobbed, with joy and pity in his tones, as he sank on his knees and clasped the burning hand.

He felt assured that this man was his father indeed, in spite of the fact that Missouri Pete had said his name was Basil Orloff. The outlaw might still be Dorothy's uncle, but he certainly was not his father.

If Dash was not perfectly convinced that he had found his long lost relative, all doubt was removed when he heard the agony and remorse expressed by the delirious one, as he again went through the experience of ringing down the engineer of the express, after the break in two, and realized too late that his act would produce a collision, in which the lady he had just recognized as his wife would probably be killed. These ravings removed any possible suspicion that the conductor had intentionally caused the fatal wreck at Lonewood. How terrible had been his punishment, Dash thought with tears in his eyes!

Then how eagerly the young railroader treasured every word of the wandering mind as they gave hints of disaster at sea, gloomy prison walls, shackles, slavery, privations and perils! And how happy he was the day his patient finally opened his eyes to consciousness, after a long and deep sleep, and asked:

"Who are you? Where am I?"

And he had replied:

"Your son, and in good hands."

The sick man had not been startled by the announcement, but went off to sleep again almost immediately.

CHAPTER XLVI.

CONCLUSION.

WHEN the patient awoke he was considerably stronger, and after admitting that his name was Basil Orloff, he evinced much curiosity to hear how Dash had arrived at the conclusion that he was his father.

As Dash told of the revelation, by which he learned that the elder Dykeman, whom he had regarded as his grandfather, was not so in fact, and that he did not know his (Dash's) real name, because his son had married a widow with one child, whose name he had never learned, the sick man's face lighted up.

And then when the young railroader told of the letter that had led him to St. Louis, to discover his own identity if possible, related the discoveries he had made at Mrs. Fedmore's, and exhibited the locket and the old letter his mother had written so many years before, tears came into the convalescent's eyes, and he silently pressed Dash's hand.

"Thank God, Dash! How mysterious are the ways of Providence! If I had known you were my boy at the time of the wreck at Lonewood, I should have claimed you, no matter what was to be the result. Why didn't I get that letter, or learn that I had a son when I went to Mrs. Fedmore's? It was indeed strange I didn't think it was odd she should ask about my son. But I was not myself, and no doubt supposed she was asking about you, whom she called her son, and answered as I did, without dreaming you really were my boy."

"These trials and separations, and our final reuniting in this way, must be for some good purpose, father," commented Dash tenderly.

"No doubt of it, my boy," said the father solemnly, and it was a grand thing for him to say, after all he had been through.

Dash continued briefly with his railroad experiences, told of both of his encounters with the train robber, who had been called Orloff, the tragic death of the outlaw, and finally the part the two deeds had played in establishing Miss

souri Pete's indentity as Dorothy's uncle and possibly as his father.

"And he was neither," said his father, with considerable energy; "he was a lying impostor, whose right name it is not hard for me to guess. I had a lawyer, Peter Crimes, by name, to attend to my business in St. Louis while I was gone abroad and I have no doubt he assumed my name to get possession of the land covered by that deed, which he could do with safety, as I was no doubt supposed to have been lost at sea, and I really didn't know the land had been re-deeded back to me. I knew he was a cool, shrewd fellow, inclined to sharp practice, but I never dreamed he would develop into such a desperado. I am your father and Dorothy Orloff's uncle, if her father's name was Oswald."

"It was," replied Dash, who had been told it, "and she remains my cousin after all."

"And I suppose you are not sorry, if she's a pretty girl," smiled the father.

"No," replied Dash slowly. He was not yet ready to reveal, even to his father, the state of his feelings for the young girl, or that he considered the relationship a barrier to a closer one.

"Do you think that there was anything in the outlaw's statement that there was a gold mine on your land?" he continued.

"There must be," replied the father. "He had no object in deceiving you, and that was no doubt what induced him to assume my name. Besides, you know, there's quite a gold fever in this region now."

Then followed Mr. Orloff's wonderful story, which you may be sure Dash listened to with breathless interest, and which was briefly this:

Basil Orloff and his brother Oswald were the only sons of a well to do Russian residing in St. Petersburg. Their father had invested quite extensively in American securities and lands. When the sons had passed their majority, all of the father's Russian property was confiscated for some political offense, though he was not exiled, and the two young men came to America to look after their possessions there.

Soon after their arrival they both fell in love, as it happened, with two sisters, and eventually married them. Their father turned over all his American property to Basil, to be equally divided with his brother, but when Basil came to deed half of the lands in Colorado to Oswald, the transfer was made to the latter's wife, on account of some business complications the brother was in. Why this land had been deeded back to him, Basil did not know, as it was done after he had sailed for Russia. Soon after the division of the property, word was received from the father that he was very ill, and wanted one of his sons to come to him at once, but that he must make the journey very secretly, as the country was in a turmoil, and he was under the serious suspicion of the Russian police.

Basil started at once, arranging with Portereff, Steffen & Co., of New York, to forward his mail, and leaving a sum of money with them for his wife. The latter understood that after her husband reached St. Petersburg she would hear from him rarely, if at all, as it would be exceedingly dangerous for him if his identity was discovered.

The steamship on which Basil sailed was wrecked in a storm, and all on board were supposed to have been lost, but he and one or two others had been picked up by a vessel bound for one of the Baltic ports. He eventually reached his destination, only to find his aged father dead. He had expired when the police came to him and announced he was under arrest, to be exiled, by special *ukase* of the

Czar. Basil was arrested at the side of his father's dead body, and hurried off to Siberia, without the shadow of a hearing or a trial. What he passed through in the next eight years would fill a volume and make a stone weep.

Meanwhile the wife had heard of the loss of the steamship on which her husband sailed, with all on board; and nearly two years later, feeling that her husband was indeed dead, was married to Mr. Dykeman.

Finally, after untold hardships and miraculous escape, Basil Orloff escaped from his living tomb, and reached America again. He had some means, which he had carried from the mines with him, and immediately made inquiries about his wife. He lost trace of her at Mrs. Fedmore's, but, if he had received the letter his wife had written him, which had been in the dead letter office so long, and fallen behind Mrs. Fedmore's mantel, he would have known he had a son. He then went to railroading, thinking that there he would have a possible chance of meeting his wife some day, and finally became a conductor on the Chicago & St. Louis R. R.

Dash's conclusion that the conductor had recognized his wife in Mrs. Dykeman, and that the latter had known him at the same instant and fainted, was the correct one. And the wreck that followed was the result of Orloff being unnerved by the unexpected meeting, and a conflict of emotions as to what further action he should take in the matter. After the wreck, when he was hurt in the head, the conductor's memory was dim and confused, and he could not say how he had existed during the last six or seven years.

Now that we have finally brought father and son together, it only remains to add a few more words, and bid them and our readers farewell.

Mr. Orloff recovered rapidly from his loathsome disease, and Dash did not contract it. The relation between the two was announced, and the railroad men listened in astonishment to the wonderful story, Dash at once assumed his rightful name of Orloff.

The father immediately took a position with the new railroad, and continued with it for some time. Investigation of the land, so strangely returned to the father, revealed a gold deposit of unusual richness. A mining plant on a small scale was put on it, and it became known as the Orloff Mine.

When the Continental and Great Divide Railroad was completed, Dash Orloff was made a division superintendent, and two years later he was superintendent of the entire road. But the Orloff mine increased so greatly in value that he finally resigned, and he and his father devoted their entire attention to mining, and the investment of their fast increasing wealth.

As, not long after Dash had found his father, the latter had told him that Oswald Orloff was only his brother by marriage, and hence Dorothy was not Dash's own cousin, the obstacle to the possible claiming of her as a bride by the young railroader was removed, and it is reasonable to suppose that the marriage did take place, though we have no information upon the subject.

Of this we are sure, however, that if Dash is married to Dorothy, he is one of the most loving and devoted of husbands, and counts as the most lucky and valuable experiences of his life those he had during a railroad career of nearly four years, in connection with TRAIN AND STATION.

THE END.

SIDEWALK HUMOR.

"FROM pillar to post," as the man said as he went from the druggist's to the letter box.—*Binghamton Republican*.

THE ARGOSY

HIS SUBJECT.



I.
 HE editor sat in his easy chair
 With a corrugated brow,
 For his brain was wrought with a burning thought
 Which had troubled him anyhow.

II.
 A ponderous leader he had to write,
 A leader to suit the times,
 That would stir the blood of the multitude
 And echo in many climes.

III.
 He mused and mused, till at last there came
 Like an inspiration grand,
 An idea new, and bigger it grew
 As he grasped his pen in hand.

IV.
 His face was flushed with a joy divine
 And he feared no reader's jibe,
 As the words he wrote, which I herewith quote—
 "Now is the time to subscribe!"



TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE.

Miss Amy—"SHALL I PLAY BEETHOVEN'S 'ADIEU TO THE PIANO'?"
Young Dolley (eagerly)—"DO YOU REALLY MEAN IT?"

PRESENT DAY HISTORY PAPERS.

V.

ITALY.

THE history of no country in Europe has so many and so widely varied chapters as that of Italy. First after prehistoric times came the era of the Greek colonies in Sicily, and the Southern portions of the Peninsula; then the gradual rise of Rome to a world wide Empire; her fall before the advancing Goths, and the struggle between her conquerors and the power of Byzantium; the short lived revival of the Western Empire under Charlemagne; the middle ages, when Italy, divided into a score of petty states, was the theater of the contests of Guelph and Ghibelline and the hostile influence of the German, the Austrian and the Frenchman; then the days of Napoleon, when the oft-changed map of Italy was revised again and again, and parts of her territory annexed to France and to Austria.

After Napoleon's fall, the conquerors of Vienna attempted to perpetrate the dismemberment of Italy. Lombardy and Venice were ceded to Austria, and the rest of the peninsula divided into half a dozen principalities, of which the chief were the Kingdom of Sardinia, which included Sardinia, Genoa, and Piedmont; the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, of which Naples was the capital; the Papal States, and Tuscany.

This arrangement was not destined to last. The whole Italian people were becoming more and more inspired with a longing for national unity and liberty. Austria's dominion over the northern provinces became intolerable. In 1849 an insurrection in Venice was suppressed after a desperate resistance. Ten years later, with the aid of Napoleon III, the hated Austrians were defeated at Magenta and Solferino, and forced to surrender Lombardy. In 1860 a popular movement, headed by the famous Garibaldi, drove the King of the Two Sicilies from Naples, and gave his kingdom to Victor Emanuel, the King of Sardinia, who in 1862 was crowned King of Italy, Tuscany having meanwhile volunteered her allegiance, and the Pope's soldiers having been driven from his subject territory.

Victor Emanuel's election by the first parliament of the reunited country, was confirmed by an overwhelming majority on a popular vote. With it the latest chapter of Italian history may be said to be begun. It is undoubtedly a chapter of great promise. After being for centuries a mere geographical expression, Italy has become once more a country and a nation. With this new impetus to her national life she may once more rival the glories of the two most splendid periods of her past history—once when her Cæsars held imperial sway over the world, and again when the merchant princes of Venice and the art masters of Florence made her in medieval times the intellectual center of civilization.

Victor Emanuel's capitol city, up to 1865, was Turin. In that year he moved the seat of government to Florence, and in 1871 finally settled it at Rome, which has in the subsequent twenty years grown in extent and population with an almost Chicagoan rapidity. The Pope, shorn of his temporal dominions, is restricted to his palace, the Vatican, and its surroundings, where he still maintains an attitude of more or less hostile independence toward the government of a nation which, devoutly Catholic though it is, has forcibly deprived him of his earthly sovereignty.

In 1866 Victor Emanuel joined Wilhelm of Prussia to attack Austria. The Italian army was beaten at Custoza, and the navy at Lissa, but the crushing defeat of the Austrians by the Prussians at Sadowa terminated the war,

and enabled Italy to secure the emancipation of Venice from Austrian rule. There now remains under the Austrian sway no territory whose language is Italian, except the towns of Trieste and Trent, and a small surrounding district. The acquisition of these last remnants is the object of a faction whose watchword is *Italia irredenta* (unredeemed Italy), but which is not strong enough to disturb the present friendly relations of Italy and Austria.

Victor Emmanuel died in 1878, and was succeeded by his eldest son Umberto, or Humbert, who was at that time thirty four years old. Umberto was married, ten years before, to his cousin Margherita, daughter of Ferdinand, Duke of Genoa; their only child is Victor Emmanuel, who bears the titles of Prince of Naples, and is now a young man of twenty two.

Italy's area is 114,000 square miles—a little larger than Illinois and Iowa together. She is thickly populated, having nearly thirty millions of inhabitants. The national resources are considerable, but in the modern race of commerce and industry she has dropped behind. The government's expenditures are disproportionately heavy. She maintains an immense army and a very powerful navy, and her railroad system, controlled and owned by the state, is both extensive and expensive.

Still, her future is far from unpromising. Her government is far more popular, and more deservedly popular than any she has had before. Its institutions are liberal, and have every prospect of stability.

It is not fair to judge of the Italian nation by such exceptional specimens as the members of the New Orleans Mafia, or the "toughs" of Mulberry Street in New York. The mass of the people are industrious and orderly. In wealth and education they stand behind the United States, England, France and Germany, but compare favorably with Austria or Spain.

One of the curiosities of Italy is the little republic of San Marino, a tract of twenty two square miles, near Rimini, which has retained its independence for fifteen centuries of the troubled history of Italy, and is indeed the oldest independent state of Europe.

IN OCEAN'S DEPTHS.

DURING these hot summer months deep sea facts ought to form refreshing reading. Here are some of all sorts, culled from the columns of the *St Louis Republic*. They are good items to store up in one's memory against the time when small nieces or nephews ask bothersome questions while digging holes in the sand.

The oceans and seas are the great reservoirs into which run all the rivers of the world. It is the cistern which finally catches all the rain that falls not only upon its own surface, but upon the surface of the land as well. All this water is removed again by evaporation as fast as it is supplied, it being estimated that every year a layer of the entire water surface of the globe over fourteen feet thick is taken up into the clouds to fall again as rain.

The vapor is fresh, of course, and if all the water of the oceans could be removed in the same way and none of it returned, it is calculated that there would be a layer of pure salt, 230 feet thick, left in the bottom of these great reservoirs. This is upon the supposition that each three feet of ocean water contains one inch of salt, and that the average depth of all oceans is three miles.

At a depth of 3,500 feet the temperature is uniform, varying but a trifle between the poles and the equator. In many of the deep bays on the coast of Norway and other Arctic countries the water often begins to freeze at the bottom before it does at the surface. At the same depth—3,500 feet—waves are not felt. Waves do not travel—that is, the water does not move forward, although it seems to do so; it remains stationary. It is the rising and falling that moves on.

The pressure of the water increases rapidly with the depth. At a distance of one mile the pressure is reckoned as about one ton to the square inch, or more than 138 times the pressure of the atmosphere.

If the surface of the Atlantic was lowered 6,564 feet it would be reduced to exactly half its present width. If the Mediterranean were lowered 600 feet, Italy would be joined to Africa, and three separate seas would remain.



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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.

THE STORY OF A NAVAL CADET.

In next week's number of THE ARGOSY we shall begin the publication of

A CHINESE CONSPIRACY.

BY ENRIQUE H. LEWIS,

Author of "The Adventures of Two Naval Apprentices," etc.

This new serial will delight all our boy readers. Not only will they become thoroughly interested in Lawrence Coleman because he belongs to the Navy, but the series of exciting adventures through which he passes in the endeavor to execute the commission with which he is charged, will keep their attention on the alert to the very end.

The scene of the story, as the title indicates, is laid in China, which gives it the advantage of a novel background, and as the author has personally visited the country, the descriptions can be depended on as being reliable. "The Chinese Conspiracy" is an exceedingly picturesque tale, teeming with the spirit of adventure and containing many dramatic situations.

* * * *

INDICATIONS of the high esteem in which THE ARGOSY is held by its readers are being received by us with gratifying frequency. Various are the forms of expression these terms of admiration take. One boy apologized for using the phrase "out of sight" in reference to our paper when compared to its contemporaries, but added that nothing else would adequately express his enthusiasm. Now we have a correspondent who intimates that the delights of THE ARGOSY are with him in dreamland.

DENVER, COL., June 5, 1891.

I dreamed last night that I met "Brad Mattoon," and that we were "On Steeds of Steel." After riding a short distance we met "The Young Flagman," who was "Digging for Gold," and he told us that "Walter Sherwood's Probation" was due to "Richard Dare's Venture." On our way to the "Train and Station" we met "The Donkey Cavalcade," and they told us of "The Penrose Plot." They said they had just passed "A Shop on Wheels," and they also said that "Arthur Blaisdell's Choice" was "The Treasure of Southlake Farm," and that he had "A Heart of Gold." I awoke then to find I had been dreaming of THE ARGOSY.

S. E. G.

EDGAR R. HOADLEY, JR.

THE INTERESTING CAREER OF A RAILROAD MAN.

AS an example of what an American boy can do, and has done, we take pleasure in presenting to THE ARGOSY readers this week a photograph and sketch of Mr. Edgar R. Hoadley, Jr., whose very entertaining serial of railroad life is brought to a conclusion in this number.

Mr. Hoadley was born in St. Louis, Missouri, February 2, 1859. When he was only a few months old, his parents moved to Memphis, Tennessee, where he spent his early boyhood days, during and after the war, and where his father became a man of wealth and prominence.



EDGAR R. HOADLEY, JR.

From a photograph by Dana, New York.

Mr. Hoadley, the elder, however, was one of the many victims of "the fortunes of war," and lost everything during the struggle. He took his family back to St. Louis, where they resided for a number of years.

At the age of eleven, the subject of our sketch was sent to Philadelphia. He had never attended any school, public or private, having received instruction at home; but, with an unusual desire to learn, he quickly mastered the studies in the successive grades of a public school, and in six years passed through a grammar school and the high school, graduating from the latter in July, 1876.

After his graduation, he at once returned to the West, to face the world alone, and without means. Mastering the art of telegraphy, entirely unaided, he began a railroad career in 1877. During the following thirteen years he was successively a telegraph operator, station agent, freight agent, ticket agent, yard master, train dispatcher, secretary to a superintendent, chief clerk in the auditing department, assistant general freight and passenger agent, secretary to a receiver, and is now the secretary of a railroad company of over six hundred miles in length, and assistant to the president of the same corporation.

Mr. Hoadley has always been a voracious reader of all sorts of literature, and in his youth was a prominent figure among the amateur authors and journalists of his day. He ran an amateur paper for several months, wrote numerous short stories and serials, for both professional and amateur publications, and was the correspondent of several papers during the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia in 1876. From the age of seventeen, however, Mr. Hoadley did nothing in the literary line until two years ago, when his first serial for THE ARGOSY appeared.

Most of the incidents in his stories are facts gleaned from personal experience and actual happenings recorded in the daily newspapers. Sometimes a single incident suggests to him a whole serial.

ARTHUR BLAISDELL'S CHOICE.*

BY W. BEKT FOSTER.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HAL TAKES ANOTHER STEP DOWNWARD.

IN the meantime Hal Blaisdell was getting on exceedingly well on the *Journal*. Since his success at the High Rock fire he showed an increased interest in his work, although he did not at all discontinue his visits at the Happy-Go-Lucky Club, nor his familiarity with Mont and Chess Gardner.

In fact, he found the company of both of those gentlemen much more to his taste than before. He played billiards with Mont, and even with Chess occasionally, although he had not as yet fallen into the despicable vice of playing for money. Poor little Micky Moriarty, with his eyes wide open, and heart ever ready to give "Masther Hal" a push in the right direction, found few opportunities, and was forced to see his friend continue down that path which he was wise enough to know would ultimately bring Hal into disgrace.

Hal's salary had been advanced until he now drew fourteen dollars a week, and he and Little Mum got along very comfortably. But with more money to spare, he had more to spend, and blossomed out into a regular exquisite, with glossy hat, Prince Albert coat, low cut vest, light trousers, and patent leather shoes. But Hal looked well in his nice clothes, and Little Mum's pride in her boy's fine appearance rather blinded her eyes to his extravagance.

For a week or two after the excitement over the High Rock fire had quieted down, Mont Raymond did what he called "some tall practicing," and then his series of games with Chess Gardner came off. Mont was pretty confident of victory—so confident, in fact, that he promised a spread to a group of his particular chums if he didn't win. Besides this wager, he had pledged fifty dollars against fifty of Gardner's on the result of the game.

Hal had rather forgotten his objections to gambling (his "squeamishness," Mont called it), and, although he did not play for money himself, he did not try to prevail upon his gay young friend to desist. The game came off, and Chess, deciding that nothing could be gained by holding in, played in earnest, and Mr. Montague Raymond found himself beaten as he had never expected to be even in his wildest dreams. In fact, he began to suspect that he had been just a *little* sold.

But Mont took his defeat good naturedly, and at once made up his supper party for the following evening. Chess excused himself on the plea that he was going to Newport with the major the next afternoon. Mont's party was quickly formed—about twenty in all—and Hal noticed with some trepidation that among them were the wildest young fellows in the club. But he had already given his word to

attend, and did not think he could excuse himself. The supper was to be at a caterer's instead of at the club rooms, and Hal inquired why this was the case, as he and Mont left the club together.

"Oh, well, you see the stuffy old Happy-Go-Lucky couldn't stand the sort of a lark we want to have. Some of the old members are so confoundedly slow that they bind us fellows down awfully. If we want to have a real jolly time, we have to go outside. You won't fail to come, Hal, will you?" and Hal repeated his promise in a slightly uncomfortable frame of mind.



MR. JENNINGS TURNED ON HAL WITH A LOOK THAT WAS MEANT TO WITHER HIM.

Blanks, the caterer, winked prodigiously to his assistant that evening, as the party of young men gathered in his magnificently appointed and brilliantly lighted saloon. Blanks was a short, fat, jolly man, well known and well patronized by the young bloods of the city, and he knew the party gathered around his board well, too. But as long as he was paid for all that the party consumed, both solid and fluid, and was assured against damage to glassware or chandeliers, he cared little how "high" a time the fellows had.

"I know these fellows," whispered Blanks, who always spoke with an asthmatic wheeze, "I know 'em, an' liquor'll flow like water tonight."

And his assistant, who was supposed to be French, but who aspirated his "h's" like a veritable Cockney, replied:

"Hi know hit, sir. They'll 'ave a jolly ol' time, so they will."

Mr. Coffin's permission for Hal to be absent was given with some hesitation.

"At it again, are you?" said the city editor gruffly.

*Begun in No. 439 of THE ARGOSY.

"Well, you'll get your foot in it first you know, mark my word."

And Hal began to think that he *had* got his foot in it before the evening was half over. Mont sat at the head of the table, with Hal at his right, and young Cochran, or "Spider," on his left. The others were ranged down the long, flower decked table, upon which sparkled silver and cut glass in profusion, and the feast began.

Very little wine was imbibed by any of the company during the meal, although champagne was placed at each one's elbow. Hal did not taste his. He felt uncomfortable and ill at ease among these wild, reckless fellows, but now he had got into it he hardly knew how to get out.

"What's the matter with the 'cham,' Blaisdell?" asked the man who sat beside him, a small, weazen featured, dyspeptic looking fellow by the name of Goddard, noticing Hal's untouched glass. "Ain't it just to your taste?"

Goddard was one of the party whom Hal most disliked, and he did his best to appear unconscious of the question. But the fellow was not to be put off.

"I say, Blaisdell, what's the matter?" he persisted, loud enough for a good part of the company to hear. "Have you promised your best girl not to drink?"

Hal flushed and then turned white with anger. With one blow he knew he could crush the despicable wretch beside him, and perhaps it would have been as well for him to do so, although do not think I am advocating rowdyism. A true gentleman will *never* strike any one unless in self defense, or to mete out punishment to a bully.

Years before he had promised Little Mum never to touch, taste, or handle intoxicating liquors, and at Goddard's rude jest the pure, loving face of her who had been his guardian angel through life, rose before him. But before he could reply Mont came to the rescue.

"What are you giving us, Goddard?" he cried. "Do you think I would introduce a teetotaler among us, and, above all things, let him sit beside *you*?"

A loud laugh was raised at Goddard's expense, who was noted as being the greatest guzzler among them.

Goddard subsided, but Spider spoke from the opposite side of the table.

"You'll have to drink that down, Blaisdell, to prove you ain't a cad," he said, with a rapid sort of a laugh which showed that what little wine he had imbibed had already gone to his brain.

"Yes; drink us a bumper, Hal," cried Mont, waving his own glass on high, and the rest took up the cry.

"A toast! a toast!" exclaimed some one.

Mont rose to the occasion, and as toastmaster commanded order, rapping on the table with his fist, not too lightly.

"They're commencing their fun pretty early, ain't they?" suggested caterer Blanks, hearing the hubub in the dining room.

"That they are, sir," returned the "French" waiter. "Hi never see the beat."

"Gentlemen!" cried Mont, still waving his wine glass on high; "gentlemen, I command your attention. We will drink to our young friend, Hal Blaisdell's future prospects. We expect to see him nothing less than a Senator in years to come—a member of Congress from our little State. May he long continue in the path of virtue and—journalism!"

With a howl that would have done credit to a tribe of Comanche Indians or a party of college boys, the company rose to its feet as one man and drank the toast—all but Hal Blaisdell.

He sat speechless, his face white, his hands twitching nervously, while every eye was turned upon him.

"Come, old man," cried Mont, "where's your manners? Up, and drink health to your friends and confusion to your enemies!"

Hardly realizing his action, Hal stood up, raised the glass of wine to his lips and drank it to the last drop!

The empty glass was returned to the table with a crash that sent the splintered fragments of the crystal flying in every direction, and before one of the party could make a movement or say a word to detain him, Hal had grasped his hat and dashed from the room.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A DISGRACEFUL AFFAIR.

HAL BLAISDELL quickly made his way to the entrance of the café and reached the sidewalk without molestation. The chill night air cooled his fevered forehead and as he quickly walked up Westminster Street the blood began to course mildly through his veins.

"I've been a fool, I've been a fool!" he muttered over and over to himself, as the occurrences of the past few weeks passed through his mind. "I have broken my promise to my mother and behaved like a fool and a cad generally. But thank God, it isn't too late. I'll cut clear from it all and ask Little Mum's forgiveness into the bargain."

He did not attempt to go to the *Journal* office again that night, but went directly home. It was still early, and Little Mum had not retired when he reached the modest little cottage they occupied. Softly tiptoeing up to the window, he peered in beneath the half drawn curtain.

A carefully shaded student lamp shed its light upon the little work table and the figure of his mother sitting beside it. Her brown, wavy hair, just showing here and there a glint of silvery gray, was brushed smoothly back from her brow, and the white, fragile hands were busy with some work in her lap.

A smile hovered about her lips as though her thoughts were pleasant ones, and the boy outside leaned his head against the window sill and shed a few bitter tears over the errors he had committed and the time wasted during the past few weeks.

"She's too good for me," he murmured brokenly, and then dashing the tears from his eyes, he entered the house.

Little Mum was not expecting him, and dropping her work, she sprang up, exclaiming:

"Oh, Hal, are you ill? How came you back from the office so early?"

"Yes, I am ill, Little Mum," he replied with a quiet smile, "but it's nothing very dangerous."

And then he sat down on the little sofa beside her, and, laying his head on her shoulder, as he used to do when he was a little boy and in trouble, he made a clean breast of it. It was hard to admit that he had been foolish, and, above all, had broken his promise to her, but he felt better when she knew all.

"I'm not half the man I thought I was," he said ruefully.

"Art gets along a great deal better than I do, and doesn't cause you a bit of worry. I wish I hadn't taken the place on the *Journal*. If Art had kept it, he wouldn't have got into any such muss. He never seems to have any trouble."

But even while he was speaking, Arthur Blaisdell, miles away in the cheerless farmhouse at the Hart place, was bearing trials of which his brother never dreamed.

"I'm going to give Charlie Coffin a surprise," said Hal, the next morning, "and get down to the office early. I feel just like work today."

So it was hardly nine o'clock when he reached the *Journal* office. As he was passing through the main room, Mr.

Doliver called to him. The sub editor was sitting at his desk, and, as Hal approached, he noticed that he looked perplexed and worried.

"What can I do for you, sir?" inquired Hal, who liked the nervous little man, and was always ready to oblige him.

"Well—er—see here, Hal," stammered Doliver, as he nervously fingered his pencils, "have you seen this morning's *Telegraph*?"

"No," replied Hal, a trifle surprised. "I seldom pay much attention to that miserable sheet. What's the matter? Have they got ahead of us again?"

"I rather think they have," replied Doliver dryly.

At that instant the door of the managing editor's office opened, and Jennings's voice bawled out in anything but a pleasant tone:

"Has that Blaisdell come yet?"

"Yes, sir—yes, sir," replied Mr. Doliver nervously.

"Well, send him along here. I want him," exclaimed Mr. Jennings, and, in a greatly surprised state of mind, Hal obeyed the summons.

Mr. Jennings was pacing the little room furiously, and hardly had Hal entered and closed the door behind him, when he turned on the young reporter, and, with a look that was meant to wither Hal, asked:

"Have you seen this morning's *Telegraph*?"

"No, sir."

"Well, read that;" and, slamming a paper down on the desk, he pointed to an article on the local page, and then recommenced his tramping up and down the room.

With considerable trepidation, Hal took the paper. The *Telegraph* was the only other morning paper in the city, and its management feared and hated the *Journal* more than anything else in the world. All the venom of its editorial pens and reportorial pencils was spent in sullyng the good name of its rival; but it was seldom that it could bring anything with a grain of truth in it of detriment to the *Journal* before the public.

But he was horrified as he cast his eye hastily over the following article:

AN AWFULLY JOLLY TIME.

JOURNAL REPORTERS AND YOUNG BLOODS MANAGE TO PAINT THE TOWN RED.

About midnight, Westminster Street, in the vicinity of caterer Blanks's establishment, was the scene of "wildest revelry." A TELEGRAPH reporter, who, as usual, was on hand, was attracted by the noise, and gleaned the following facts from one of Mr. Blanks's assistants. A party of creatures calling themselves gentlemen, who are connected reportorially with our aged and rusty contemporary, the *Journal*, with a few young bloods from the East Side, arranged for a supper in Blanks's private room last night. The spread was given by, or in honor of, one of the reporters named Hal Blaisdell, and to all appearances the entire party had "looked on the wine when it was red" considerably more than was good for them. When our reporter arrived on the scene, the carousal had broken up in a free fight, and caterer Blanks, with his assistants, had been forced to bounce the whole party. After the drunken crowd had made night hideous in the vicinity, broken a few windows, and otherwise misbehaved themselves for a few minutes, they marched away, vowing vengeance on the caterer, and went whooping and yelling down the public thoroughfare before the police arrived. Such scenes as these are simply disgusting, and should be strenuously suppressed. We feel it our duty to congratulate our honored contemporary on its brilliant staff of young reporters.

It was a venomous and badly written article at the best, but every word seemed printed in letters of fire as Hal gazed with wide open, terrified eyes upon it. Disgrace and humiliation stared him in the face, while with angry eyes and glowering countenance Mr. Jennings watched him keenly.

"Well, sir," he said, at length, in a hard, rasping voice. "What have you got to say for yourself?"

"I—I," began Hal, as with pale face he continued to stare at the printed sheet.

"Come, speak up! Were you up at Blanks's with the crowd last night?"

Hal made no reply.

"Were you?" thundered the managing editor, bringing his fist down on the desk before him.

"Yes, sir, but—"

"No 'buts'—I don't want to hear 'em" roared Jennings. "There's your salary to the end of the week," pushing an envelope towards him, "and now you can go, and don't you show your face here again!"

Hal took the envelope mechanically, and without a word turned towards the door. Passing out he closed it behind him, and crossing the main office went swiftly out into the street. Everything seemed swimming around him, and the sounds of street traffic came faintly to his ears as though from a distance.

He saw no one, not even the figure of little Micky Moriarty, over which he almost stumbled as he passed out of the office, and heard nothing but Jennings's parting words ringing in his ears.

He was dismissed!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN WHICH MR. CHESS GARDNER MAILS TWO LETTERS.

MAJOR VAN SLYCK'S residence, situated on Waterman Street, one of the most aristocratic avenues in the city, was a large, imposing granite building with a turret or overhanging window here and there, and wide marble entrance. The dwelling was peculiar in many respects, but it was hardly more peculiar than its occupant. The major had been a poor boy, but an energetic one, and lacking dollars and cents, made up the deficiency in wit and business tact. Yet so thoroughly a business man, and of so wide reputation, the major was eccentric to the extreme.

Years before almost his entire fortune had been swept away in the financial crash of a bank, and he was left to start at the bottom of the ladder again, this time hampered with three daughters to take care of. His wife had died when the youngest was born, and these daughters were like the "apple of his eye." But what a man has done once it is frequently easy for him to do again, and before long the major had amassed a fortune considerably larger than the first one. After the war he went into the insurance business, and was now reputed as being worth at least a million and a half in stocks, bonds and various other forms of investment.

At one end of the library a massive brick vault was built into the wall, barred by a heavy iron door, the lock of which was a combination made from a pattern of the major's own modeling.

"It will take more than one burglar or a dozen to get into that," remarked the old gentleman with a smile, when his friend Chess Gardner suggested that a bank vault would be much the safer place for the deposit of his valuables. "They've tried once or twice and that's all the good it's done 'em. They can't find a crack to pry it open by, and it'll take more than forty eight hours to bore into chilled steel and that's what that door is made of. Why," added the major, waxing eloquent on a subject he dearly loved to discuss, "I'd be willing to give a good round sum to the man who could open that in forty eight hours—that's what I warrant it for—but I don't believe it can be opened in a week."

"But aren't you afraid you'll lose the combination some time, and it will be found?" asked Chess carelessly, throwing his coat and hat on a chair, and sitting down on the edge of the center table.

"I always carry it in my head," said the major laughing, "and then I change it every week or so. You couldn't guess the one I've got now in a week of Sundays. Now, you see, the 'open sesame' of the door is made by turning the pointer to twelve letters in succession, which are arranged so that the last one will open the door. Now, a man must be might smart, endowed with a superabundance of patience, and have a lot of time, to work out such a problem as that. You see it is absolutely impossible."

"Yes, so it is," said Chess. "Well, major with your permission, I'll write a few letters while you're getting ready. We must both hurry if we intend taking that noon boat for Newport."

"Ah, my boy, you should get around earlier in the morning," said the major, sitting down at a dainty little writing desk near the vault door, seemingly more fit for a lady than for a business man.

"Last night I played young Raymond a rubber at billiards and that kept me up later than usual, you know," returned Chess with a laugh.

"Well, when the girls get back," said the old gentleman, "they'll make you and me both stay at home more—especially, Eunice," and he gave Gardner a sly look.

"Yes, we'll have to humor the ladies," returned Chess with an echoing laugh.

All the while his pen was moving rapidly over the paper before him, yet Mr. Gardner made little progress in his letter writing. Rather, he was watching the major closely. Finally the latter rose from his desk and went toward the vault.

Gliding noiselessly from his chair, Chess approached his unconscious companion. The major grasped the knob of the combination lock, and gave it a few careful turns, Chess closely watching the dial plate over his shoulder. Letter after letter was checked off—"c-h-e-s-s-g-a-r-d-n-e-r."

With a puzzled expression on his face, Gardner stole back to his seat as the great door swung open and the all unconscious major stepped inside the vault. Suddenly a flash of intelligence crossed his countenance.

"By Jove!" he whispered, under his breath, "I have it. The old fool has used my name for his combination. He was right—I never should have guessed it in a week of Sundays," and, hastily writing down the letters, he found that his supposition had been correct.

"Burglars would make a pretty good haul here just now," said the major, stepping out of the vault and closing the door behind him. "There's about three hundred thousand dollars in money and negotiable papers in there."

A smile of satisfaction lit up the younger man's face as he bent his head over his writing.

"That is a great deal to risk," he said.

"There isn't any risk," declared the major hotly, for any imputation against the safety of his vault touched him in a sore spot. "These confounded banks are what are not safe. Somebody there is always playing at pitch and toss with your money, and most generally it's *toss*, and you never see your funds again.

"But there's the interest."

"Interest!" snorted the old gentleman; then, in a less arrogant tone, he continued: "I can afford to lose that for the sake of perfect safety. And then, only a small part of the sum is in money. But come, my boy, are you ready? Just tell Peter that we are off, so that he can lock up."

"I should think it would be rather risky leaving the house in Peter's care," said Chess, rising and sealing two letters which he had written.

"Oh, he's perfectly trustworthy. His only failing is drink, and that he hasn't touched for some time now. We always leave Peter alone in the house summers."

But Mr. Chess Gardner's smile was more satisfied than ever as he sought Peter in the regions below.

"Peter," he said to the good natured looking, middle aged man of evident Irish extraction who was clearing out one of the laundries. "Peter, we're off now, and your master wants you to come up and lock the door after us. And here is something for you from me," and he pressed a gold piece into the man's toil worn hand.

"Thank yez, sur!" cried Peter, with true Irish warmth. "May yer bed be aisy in heaven! Is there anythin' I c'd be doin' fr yez?"

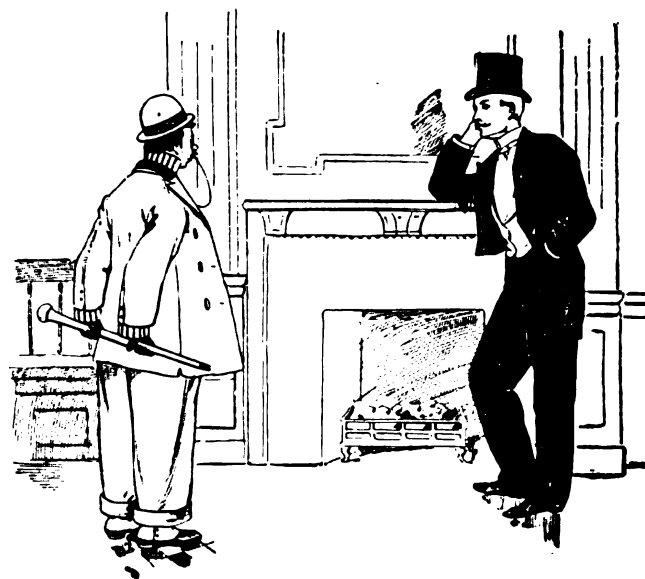
"Nothing, Peter, nothing," replied Chess, laughing. "Just drink my health in whatever you like, with part of that," and he turned away.

"Thank yez, sur," repeated Peter, following him up stairs.

"That's a thrue gintleman fr yez," muttered the old servant, closing the door on his employer and his friend, and, after a few moments' hesitancy, in which his better angel was defeated, Peter slipped out of the rear entrance and sought the nearest groggery on a back street, where he expended a goodly portion of his recently acquired five dollars for something to drink the "gintleman's health in."

In the meantime Chess and the major had hastened down town, the former mailing in the first letter box they passed, two epistles. One was addressed to "John Moriarty, General Post Office, City. To be called for." The other was for "Benjamin Norton, Center, Bristol Co., Mass."

(To be continued.)



A HEAVY BURDEN.

CHARLEY—"Hold your back up, Algie; you're getting quite round shouldered."

ALGIE—"Can't help it, dear boy; my mustache is getting so heavy, don't you know."

ON STEEDS OF STEEL:

OR,

THE TOUR OF THE CHALLENGE CLUB.*

BY MATTHEW WHITE, JR.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE COTTAGE ON THE HILL.

"THIS can't be real. It must be part of a story some one of us is telling."

This was the thought that came to me while I waited out there in the storm by poor Hugh. It seemed as if it had been but a moment before that the sun was shining and we were shying cherry pits into the brook, laughing over our breakfast at Smith's, and bubbling over with the good spirits that youth and vacation time always create.

Now there was a shadow over the earth; one of our number had been stricken in a trice—mortally, for all we knew—and the tour that had been undertaken simply with pleasure as its end, was confronted with the possibility of having a terrible and untimely termination put to it. And still the rain came down, adding keen bodily discomfort to the agony of mind I was already suffering.

Would Steve never come back? It appeared to my half distracted mind as if he had been gone for hours.

Mac and I said nothing to one another. Only every now and then we made an effort to push the tree out of the way, but always a vain one.

It was still held in place by a kind of hinge that bound it to the stump, and this is what we wanted the axe to cut through.

I had unstrapped the roll from my wheel and spread a coat over Hugh, to try and keep off some of the storm, and once or twice I put my face down close to his and called his name. But he lay there with his eyes closed, and again a terrible fear fastened itself on my heart.

And now a faint cry broke on our ears. I looked up and saw Steve coming on a dead run across the grass, waving the axe over his head. But he was alone. I had hoped that he would bring some human help with him. We were only boys, and I was sure none of us had ever had any experience in such emergencies as now confronted us.

"Couldn't you get anybody to help us?" I called out, running to meet him.

"No; there doesn't seem to be anybody home but a girl," he answered. "She told me I would find an axe in the stable somewhere, and that we could bring Hugh up there."

"Here, let me have it, and you two go up and be ready to pull the trunk back quickly as soon as it is free."

I held out my hand for the axe, and two strokes severed the outer strip of the tree that bound it to the portion still in the ground. Then I rushed forward to place my arms about Hugh, while Mac and Steve drew the weight off his limbs.

It was all over in three seconds. I had him on his back, his head pillowed on Mac's roll, and my hand over his heart. It was still beating, and a spirit of deep thankfulness possessed me.

"We must get him to some dry place, and have a doctor at once," I said. "Here, Steve, you take him gently under the other shoulder, and you, Mac, support his feet. Then we'll go through that break in the hedge straight up to the house. Some of us can come back for the axe and the machines."

All this time no team had passed, and I scarcely wondered at it in that storm. The latter was beginning to slacken

now, however, and just as we reached the top of the hill with our burden, a streak of blue flung itself across the clouds in the west.

I now took the opportunity to snatch a hasty glance at the house on whose mercies we were to throw ourselves for the time being. It was not a very large one, was of the Queen Anne style, handsome in finish, and gave evidence of belonging to people of wealth. It stood by itself in ample grounds, and was, indeed, the only dwelling to be seen close at hand. I had only time for these observations, when we reached the broad piazza, and the young girl of whom Steve had spoken threw open the door for us.

Milly Tucker was nowhere in looks beside this maiden of fifteen. Even in that moment of supreme anxiety and trouble, I could not help making this mental comparison.

"You are very kind to permit us to come in, the way we are," I said, as we entered the great hallway, which was used for a sitting room. "But our friend is badly hurt, I am afraid, and this was the only house at hand."

"Oh, please do anything that ought to be done; here, bring him up stairs. I'll show you a room."

She broke off abruptly and turned away. I thought she was going to cry. Her voice was inexpressibly sad. Could it be possible that she was a girl of such deep sympathies that her feelings could have already been worked upon to such an extent by an accident to an utter stranger?

But there was no time to analyze motives now. As carefully as possible we bore Hugh up the stairs, and placed him on the bed in the pretty room to which the young girl showed us.

"And now about a doctor?" I said at once, turning to her when we had placed Dinsmore down. "Is there any close at hand?"

"About a mile from here," she answered. "On the outskirts of Bolton—Dr. Bemis. It's the first brick house."

"I'll go for him at once," I said. "You remain here, with Hugh, Steve, and do what you can for him. You come with me, Mac, and bring the things up."

I took one more look at my poor chum, who was now breathing heavily, and then hastened off. At the turn of the stairway I paused, and, looking up at our fair young hostess, asked: "The doctor may be out, and I shall have to leave word. Where shall I tell him to come?"

She turned her head away for an instant before answering, and I certainly thought I detected a shudder passing over her. Then, without moving her head, she answered: "To Mr. Darling's," and stepped quickly into one of the rooms that opened on the upper hall.

"I wonder what all this means?" I thought, but quickly lost sight of the matter in the cares that lay heavy on my heart.

Should I telegraph at once to Mr. and Mrs. Dinsmore? Ought I not to make arrangements about having Hugh moved immediately to his home?

I spoke of the matter to Mac as we hurried over the lawn and

"Hadn't you better wait till you hear what the doctor says?" he answered.

And this I determined to do. Leaving him to clear the road of our traps, I mounted my machine and started off through the mud in the direction we had been going when the storm overtook us.

And again came the realization of the difference the lapse of a few minutes can make in one's feelings. The last time I had driven the pedals my heart had been light, with naught to cast even a shadow over it but the possibility of a wetting. Now—the wetting had come, and something

*Begun in No 443 of THE ARGOSY.

with it, of which the thought sometimes made my knees so weak that I could scarcely push ahead over the heavy roads.

By this time the sun had come out again, but the storm had cooled the air, and all nature was beautiful. Rain drops sparkled like diamonds on twig and leaf, and on all sides the birds fairly split their throats with song, as if rejoicing at the cessation of the tempest.

I passed two or three carriages, and was sensible of the fact that the occupants stared at me rather hard. I puzzled over this fact till I recollected the drenching I had received, and, glancing down at my rig, noticed that my shirt was spattered with mud, and then, putting my hand to my face, discovered that I had a large cake of it under my right eye.

I rubbed this off as well as I could, and, feeling that I must have come a mile, began to look out sharply for a brick house.

I caught sight of it finally, standing close to the road, and when I got up to it saw the sign "Dr. Alfred Bemis" under one of the windows. Dismounting, I pulled the bell twice, and when the girl appeared, asked if I could see the doctor at once.

"Sure he do be out makin' his calls," she answered, dropping her eyes from my face to the spot of dust on my shirt front.

"When will he be back, do you think?" I demanded.

"Mebbe in tin minutes, mebbe not for an hour," was the unsatisfactory answer. "Here, I'll get you the slate and you can lave the missage."

She stepped into the back hall for an instant, and then reappeared with the slate, which she handed to me, and on which I wrote:

"Call at Mr. Darling's house at once. Surgical case demanding immediate attention."

I turned to hand this to the servant, and to caution her to bring it to the doctor's immediate notice, and found her with her mouth agape, murmuring: "At Mr. Darling's! The saints presarve us!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE MYSTERY OF THE COTTAGE.

"WHAT'S the matter?" I exclaimed, utterly astounded by the woman's singular actions.

"Oh, nothin', sir, nothin'; I was only took sudden by surprise, sir," was her evasive answer. "An' who do be sick at the Darlins'?"

"A friend of mine," I replied briefly. "Now make sure that you send the doctor on the instant he comes," and turning away, I mounted my wheel and started back again.

But my thoughts were as busy as my feet. What could the girl have meant by becoming so agitated at the mention of the name Darling?

"Ah, there was the young lady herself," I suddenly recollected. "She seemed not to want to tell me where the doctor was to come at first. There is some mystery here."

But what it was I could not imagine, and presently I forgot all about it in my anxiety over Hugh. I felt much depressed at finding the doctor out; every instant might count in Dinsmore's case. I wondered if I should not have inquired for some other physician. Still I could not very well have done this at the doctor's very house, after I had left orders for him to come.

"But I'm not going to leave a single stone unturned," I resolved, and thereupon I turned my wheel and pedaled back in the direction of Bolton. I kept on till I reached the region of stores, and dismounting in front of a butcher shop, I left my wheel against a hitching post and stepped up to a man with a cleaver in his hand.

"Will you be kind enough to tell me," I began, "where I can find a doctor?"

"Right down the road yonder, brick house on the left, Dr. Bemis," he answered promptly.

This was a possibility I had overlooked, and I grew consciously red as I returned: "Oh, but some other one, near here."

The man looked puzzled for an instant, then said: "Well, there's Dr. Clark, at the white house with the cupalø a little way on in the opposite direction, and Dr. Munter, the second house on the left down the first street to the right; and——"

"Thank you; that's enough," I broke in and hurried off, leaving the butcher standing in the doorway, looking after me with his mouth open, as if another address had lodged between his teeth and prevented him from shutting it.

I made up my mind to stop first at Dr. Clark's, the white house with the cupalø. By the way, I wonder why people will persist in saying cupalø when the word ends with an "a" as plain as day has one in the middle of it.

I soon found it and the doctor, too, who had just got in after making his calls, and who opened the door for me himself.

"I would like to have you come down to the Darlings' at once," I said, when he had told me I was addressing the right person.

"The Darlings!" he exclaimed. "Mr. Brandon Darlings'?"

"Yes, I suppose so—at least I am not sure about the first name, but you seemed so sort of shocked when I mentioned the last one that I think it must be the——" then I stopped, feeling as if in some way I must have put my foot in it.

"Are you—a—a relation of the family!" he inquired, looking at me over his glasses in a queer sort of way.

"Oh, no," I answered promptly. "I never saw any of them before today. A friend of mine was hurt in front of the house and we carried him in there."

I then gave a brief account of the accident and begged him to come as quickly as he could.

"I'll go as soon as I can have my horse hooked up again," he answered, and feeling that I had done all that lay in my power so far as doctors were concerned, I once again turned my wheel towards the Darlings'.

I had some thoughts of stopping at Dr. Bemis's as I passed the house, and leaving word that he need not come now, but reflecting that possibly Hugh's case might be so bad that a consultation would be necessary, I decided to leave things as they were and pressed on.

The roads had by this time dried up pretty well, and I passed many carriages with parties out pleasure driving in the coolness succeeding the storm.

"And we Challengers are out pleasuring, too," I told myself with a grim sort of smile.

I was nearly "done over," as the saying is; a queer one, too, I think, for I felt that I would be very much improved by being done over just then. I was dead tired out, for one thing; then the drying on me of my wet clothes had not tended to counteract the effect of the excitement and hard work that had within the past two hours fallen to my lot.

"Well, I'll have a chance to rest now, I hope, if Hugh's case isn't too serious or the mystery about the Darlings doesn't put us out of the house," and once more I fell to wondering what could be the meaning of it all.

When I reached my destination I was too exhausted to pedal up the hill, so got off and pushed my machine up. Mac was out on the piazza, evidently watching for me, and at once came out to meet me.

"How's Hugh?" I called out.

"Conscious now," he answered, "but in a good deal of pain. Did you find a doctor?"

"Yes, two of them," I replied, and then turning my head as I heard the sound of carriage wheels, added: "Here's one of them now."

It was Dr. Clark, and Mac took his horse out to the stable—to which the coachman had not yet returned—while I went up stairs with him to the room where I had left Hugh.

Steve was there, leaning over the bed, and turned with a great look of relief on his face when he saw the doctor. The examination was quickly made, although I was in such suspense that the lapse of time seemed like hours to me.

"It's nothing so very serious," the doctor then answered, turning to us. "A severe strain on the muscles where the weight of the tree rested, but no break. Let him lie quiet for a day or two and he'll be all right."

I felt as if a great tree trunk that had been resting on my heart had rolled off. The doctor bathed the injuries and gave Hugh something that would send him to sleep while the severity of the pain lasted, and then said he would call again in the morning.

"Couldn't we have Hugh moved to a hotel if we got a carriage?" I asked. "These people are utter strangers to us and I feel—"

"I understand perfectly," he interrupted me to say, "but the jolting that would be unavoidable to some degree in a carriage ride would cause your friend extreme pain in his present condition. Otherwise I should most certainly advise you not to stay here." He gave me a peculiar look, took up his hat from the hall stand, dropped it quickly on his head, added "Good afternoon," and then dived out of the door and across to the barn so fast that I had all I could do to keep up with him.

When he got in his carriage and was just going to drive off, I summoned up courage to ask him if he would mind telling Dr. Bemis if he met him that we would not need him now.

"I understand; I'll fix it for you," he said, and drove away.

Mac was of course anxious to know the report of Hugh's condition, and when I told him that the hurt wasn't a serious one, but would necessitate his lying still for a day or two at least, he pursed up his lips to a whistle.

"Then we'll have to stay here, I suppose," he said. "That's too bad."

"Tell me, Mac," I returned, linking my arm in his as we walked back to the house together, "what's the matter here? Have you found out yet? Wherever I mentioned the name Darling, people exclaimed or stared, or did something queer. Have you noticed anything wrong about the place?"

"Oh, nothing wrong," he answered. "Only there doesn't seem to be anybody about but that young girl, and I'm sure I heard her crying while you were away."

"Didn't you see any servants?" I asked.

"No, not one, and you saw for yourself that there was nobody about the stable. Even the horses are gone, though everything was open."

"We'll ask Steve if he can explain," I rejoined as we entered the house. "Besides we must have a consultation of the Club to decide whether we all stay here."

CHAPTER XXI.

MARIAN DARLING.

STEVE met us at the door of our wounded comrade's room with raised forefinger.

"Hugh's asleep," he whispered. "We'd better go down stairs so as not to run any risk of disturbing him."

"Come on out on the piazza," I suggested. "There's a lot of things we've got to talk over."

When we had established ourselves in a small circle in a corner of the porch facing the west, which was now all aglow with the coming sunset, I began: "Steve, can you tell us what is the matter at the house here?"

"Matter here?" he exclaimed, looking puzzled. "Why I don't see that anything is the matter, except what we've brought here ourselves."

"Great Scott, my boy!" broke in Mac, "haven't you noticed?"

"Noticed what?" demanded Steve. "I haven't had time to do much else but worry about poor Dinsmore."

"Well then, tell me," I interposed, "have you seen or heard anybody about the house, and belonging to it except that young girl who let us in?"

"No, come to think of it, I haven't," and to our satisfaction there was a tinge of awakened curiosity in Steve's tones.

"Didn't you hear that girl crying somewhere while Will was away?" put in Mac. "You know I spoke to you about it."

"Oh, yes. I do remember something of it now," he rejoined; "but of course I supposed it was out of sympathy for Hugh. Wasn't it?"

"Tell him what you heard in Bolton, Will," was all Mac's response.

I did so, and was rewarded by having him become as thoroughly mystified over the matter as Mac and I ourselves were.

"Why didn't you ask some of them to tell out plainly what was up?" he wanted to know. "Maybe its small pox?" he added, with a little start from his chair.

"Fiddlesticks!" I retorted. "You don't suppose that girl would have let us in if there had been any contagious disease in the place, do you?"

"No—no," he responded hesitatingly. "Still, she's evidently let us in for something, according to your own story, Will."

"Perhaps it's murder," suggested Mac in an awesome whisper. Then pulling me by the coat sleeve, he went on: "Look off in the road yonder. Do you see those two carriages driving slowly past, with the people pointing up here?"

There was no denying that this was the case, and positively I could feel my blood oozing through my veins with a creeping sensation for a minute. Then I threw back my shoulders resolutely.

"This is all child's talk," I exclaimed. "Don't you suppose if there was anything like that in the wind, the house would be overrun with sheriffs, coroners and reporters, to say nothing of people doing something more than merely drive slow when they passed the place?"

"Well then, *you* tell us what's up," demanded Mac, and in spite of the fact that his theory had been demolished, there was an expression of relief on his face.

"If I knew exactly," was my reply, "there would be no need of our holding this consultation. In that case we'd probably have sense enough to understand what to do without one. But here's what I think: the Darlings are in trouble of some sort; the rest of the family are away trying to settle it, leaving this young girl home alone."

"But the servants, the coachman?" persisted Mac. "Account for their absence too."

"That's easy," I rejoined. "The girls may all have left—your mothers will tell you that that's nothing astonishing—and the rest of the family are evidently using the horses."

"We could easily find out all about it I suppose by asking that girl," remarked Steve reflectively.

"But of course we could never think of doing such a thing," interjected Mac.

"We must think of doing something though, and pretty quick, too." I added, holding up my watch to show them that it was already past six.

"I don't see that we can do anything but stay just where we are," returned Steve, "as long as the doctor says Hugh ought not to be removed."

"But it isn't necessary that all four stay, is it?" I answered him. "Just put yourself in that poor girl's place; having four strange fellows swoop down upon the house when she is in such trouble."

"Then we'll have to break through the club's motto of 'stick together,'" observed Steve.

"I don't see any help for it if we want to do the gentlemanly thing," I replied.

And so it was settled that the Challengers divide themselves, and as Dinsmore and I were always called 'the chums' there was no discussion as to which one of us should stay with him.

"We'd better see the young lady before we go, hadn't we?" suggested Mac. "There might be something we could do for her in the town."

"Where shall we find her?" said Steve. "I haven't seen or heard her for over an hour."

"Hark! What's that?" I exclaimed. "Didn't you hear something fall just then?"

Both the fellows evidently did, for they sprang to their feet with me, and together we hurried into the house.

"It was up stairs I, think," said Mac, when we had reached the hall, and he started up two steps at a time, Steve and I following at equal speed.

I had a fearful presentiment that Hugh had woke up, wanted us, tried to get to the door to call, and fallen. But the facts of the case were altogether different. When we reached the upper hall we found Mac kneeling on the floor beside our fair young hostess, who lay there in a dead faint, her face as white as the handkerchief she held tightly clutched in one hand.

"Quick, dash into one of the rooms, Will, and see if you can find any smelling salts," cried Mac, "and you, Steve, help me chafe her hands."

The door of the apartment into which she had gone when I had parted with her on the stairs was open, and I rushed in. One wild glance around I gave, then saw one of those small bottles ladies carry on their chatelaines, standing on the dressing table. I snatched it up, and in a second was back in the hall.

Mac seemed somehow to know just what to do—I confess I didn't—and in a minute or two, after we had carried her into that same room, and placed her on the sofa, she opened her eyes and looked up at us three fellows wonderingly.

"Is there anything we can get for you?" I asked quickly "Do you feel better?"

"Oh yes," she answered faintly, pressing one hand to her head. "I remember. It must have come over me in the hall. I wanted to ask you what—what the doctor said about your friend."

"It is nothing serious," I told her. "He should be kept quiet for a day. It is too bad we should have brought him here."

"Why?" she put the question suddenly, turning slightly on the sofa to look at me with those large dark eyes in a way that seemed to pierce me through.

"Because—because," I answered in some confusion, "it can't be pleasant for any one to have perfect strangers suddenly bring a sick man into the house in this way."

"But it would have been heartless to turn you away, wouldn't it?" she answered; then in quite a different tone she went on, "I'm afraid you have found but a poor refuge though. I am all alone, and I'm afraid I'm not able to do as much as I would like to."

"Can't we do something?" Mac interposed. "You can't think how glad we would be to do anything to show how we appreciated your hospitality."

"Yes, you can do something," the girl replied, lifting one hand as a signal for silence. "Isn't that a horse coming up our drive?"

I stepped to the window and looked out.

"Yes," I replied. "A man on horseback."

"It's the telegram," she exclaimed, raising herself suddenly, and then falling back. "Won't one of you get it for me, quick, please?"

I fairly rushed out of the room, and down the stairs. I met the man just as he was about to dismount.

"For Miss Marian Darling," he said. "Will you sign for it?"

I did so, and after a long look at me, the man turned his horse and rode off.

I bounded up the stairs with the message, and placed it in the hands of the young girl eagerly stretched out to receive it. She started to tear it open, and then fell suddenly back in another swoon.

(To be continued.)

AN ARCTIC CIRCLE RAILWAY.

No spot on earth nowadays seems sacred from the tread of the iron horse. The Holy Land already has its railroad from Joppa to Jerusalem; one has been planned to intersect the Great Sahara Desert, and now we learn of a line to be established within the Arctic Circle. The *St. Louis Republic* prints some interesting facts in regard to the last named route.

In one respect, at least, the Swedish and Norwegian railroad between Lulea on the Gulf of Bothnia, and Luffoden on the shores of the North Sea, is the most remarkable engineering achievement of the present century. It has the unique distinction of being the only railroad in the world situated wholly or partially within the Arctic circle, it being some 1,200 miles further north than any railroad in Canada.

An interesting meteorological fact is stated in relation to this boreal railway, namely, that snow falls less often along its line and in far less quantities than at points on other roads 1,000 to 2,000 miles further south. The darkness of the long winter nights is partly compensated for by the light of the aurora. The object in view in constructing this "North Pole Through Line" is to tap the enormous deposits of iron ore in the Gellivaria Mountains, the exhaustion of the ore in the Bilboa field making it absolutely necessary that the ironworkers find a new locality even if the magnetic pole itself has to be undermined to get at the precious mineral.

CHARLES DICKENS AND HIS PENNY PHIZ.

WHEN you find yourself laughing at the caricatures of prominent men which appear in the comic papers, you have doubtless often wondered how the originals themselves feel when they see them. It seems as if they must be terribly cut up or fearfully angry, but for the most part, they are, as a matter of fact, neither. Indeed, in many cases they appear to enjoy the humor of the picture quite as much as the general public does. The daughter of Charles Dickens has recently told how a certain penny reproduction of her father affected the famous novelist.

There was a penny caricature printed, but by whom I can't say, which greatly delighted him. He writes about it, the letter being dated July 8, 1861: "I hope you have seen a large headed photo, with little legs, representing the undersigned, pen in hand, tapping his forehead to knock an idea out. It has just sprung up so abundantly in all the shops that I am ashamed to go about town looking in at the picture windows, which is my delight. It seems to me extraordinarily ludicrous, and much more like than the grave figure done in earnest. It made me laugh, when I first came down upon it, until I shook again in open, unlighted Piccadilly."

He returned to Gad's Hill, bringing this with him, telling us that he had been so amused with it, and so fascinated by it, thinking it "so irresistibly funny," that he stood looking at it, roaring with laughter, until he became conscious of a large and sympathetic audience, laughing so heartily that he had to beat a hasty retreat.

HERE'S MONEY BY THE BILLION.

READERS with a fad for coin collecting will be glad to get the following facts about the various mints of the world during 1889, and readers generally will be interested in the particulars given concerning the money supposed to be in the coffers of the different countries mentioned. We quote from an article in the *Fall Mail Budget*, of London.

The coins struck in the mints of the world last year were of less value by a considerable amount than in the year 1889. The English mint, to a small extent, shares in the decline, and also those of Australia, but the Indian mints have turned out a larger amount of silver, and so the coinage of the British Empire comes out about the same as in 1889. The United States has coined less gold, but rather more silver. The German mints coined \$50,000,000 worth of gold in 1889, but last year there was barely half of that amount turned out. France shows practically no change. Italy had a small gold coinage for home purposes, and a silver and bronze one for the colonies in Africa. For three years in succession the Belgian mint has not been called upon to meet any demands in connection with the home currency. Austria-Hungary presents no special feature.

Russia coined fully half a million's worth more gold than in 1889. Roumania has been substituting a gold for a silver standard, but it does not appear that there has been any new coinage. Considering the population of Sweden and Norway, there was a considerable coinage of gold during the year. Holland coined very little. It is hoped that before the middle of the current year the gold and silver pieces struck will bear the effigy of the young Queen of the Netherlands. Spain struck in 1889 gold and silver coins to the value of millions, and last year to the extent of 2 1-2 millions.

Portugal turned out more gold than usual, but less silver. Turkey had only a small gold coinage, and nothing was done by Egypt. Tunis is to have a new coinage on the decimal system. There was a slight decrease in the amount of gold bullion sent in to the mint of Japan, but the importation of silver showed an increase of 5,000,000 ounces. The Chinese mint has begun the issue of silver coins, but the amount is not stated. Mexico maintains a steady issue of silver coins.

THE DOOM OF THE PLAYHOUSE.

WE of this generation speak of the time of stage coaches and candles as old fashioned days. Judging from the rapidity with which science is now making onward strides, our grandchildren—perhaps even our children—will look back upon our way of doing things with equal compassion. Still our methods have their compensations, as is proven by a glimpse into the future given by Walter Besant, the English novelist, in a letter to the *Philadelphia Times*.

There is only one prophet, and Edison is his name. The announcement that he has invented a way of allowing us to have a performance of opera or play in our own houses, words and music, and action and scenery all complete, is so very interesting that it has caused a certain dreamer, who in his dreams can read the future, to fall into a deep sleep, and to see a vision. This is what he saw:

A house in the suburbs of London in the year 1940. An aged pair sitting in their drawing room after dinner. The old gentleman had the evening paper in his hand, which he was reading carelessly. The old lady by the fireside was nodding over a book. Suddenly he cried out, "My dear!" and then he read again—and then he cried out again. His wife looked up, startled into wakefulness.

"I knew it would come, sooner or later," he cried. "But I hoped that the old place might be spared."

"What is it, then?"

"Old Drury Lane Theater is sold. It will be pulled down to make room for an extension of the college there."

"Old Drury? No!"

"Yes. The last of the theaters, and that is to go at last. Well, it is many years since we have had any performances, or any actors to perform. I suppose it was inevitable. But to think of all the old associations that will vanish with Drury Lane. Not that the present generation cares for associations. They can turn on their own drama when they please, and it does very well for them. But it's not the old thing that we remember in our old days. They are wooden, the company that plays for the Electric Dramatic Supply Association. The plays may be good, but the players are wooden."

"Who wants to become an actor any longer? There is no longer the sympathy of the house—the applause. Oh! the art of acting is dead—dead Edison, the inventor, killed it."

HE KNEW THEM.

FARMER JAYSEED—"Whar's the city boarders, M'riar?"

MRS. JAYSEED—"They've all gone daown ter the pasture to practice bow 'n arrer shootin'."

FARMER JAYSEED—"Wal, you send James down to pick the arrers out of the caows when they come up to the bars."—*Boston News*.

CORRESPONDENCE.

O. G. D., Englewood, Ill. Yes, we can send you "Gilbert the Trapper" on receipt of the price, 25 cents.

A. KAHLAN, JR., Westmont, N. J., would be glad if some reader of THE ARGOSY could furnish him with No. 304 of the paper.

A READER, Brooklyn, N. Y. You will probably have to pay a small sum, ten or fifteen cents, to have your Haytian money changed into coin of the realm.

CARSMAN, New York City. The only way we know of in which to harden the palms of the hands is to keep persistently using them. You will soon find that they will become callous, and will not blister.

If any of THE ARGOSY's readers have Nos. 243-244-245-288-289-290-219—issues out of print at this office—which they are willing to sell, a purchaser will be found by corresponding with William Breite, 61 Watt St., New York City.

YOUNG EDITOR, Philadelphia, Pa. 1. J. H. Bates. 2. Pinkerton's, of New York, is the most famous detective bureau in the world. 3. There are fourteen cruisers, five armored vessels, and two torpedo boats in the new American Navy.

J. H. B., Normal, Ill. 1. The average height of a boy of 17 is 5 feet, 4 1-2 inches; weight, 116 1-2 pounds. 2. No premium on the half dollar of 1831. 3. The new American Navy consists of something like twenty vessels of all kinds now built.

LIGHTNING LEW, Troy, N. Y. Yes, both "Blanche Burton" and "Camping Among the Maples" were written by Frank A. Munsey. The former appeared in Vol. I, the latter in Vol. VII. We hope now to print a new serial by Mr. Munsey in the near future.

YOUNG AMERICA, Boston, Mass. No, the original Declaration of Independence has most certainly not been destroyed. On the contrary, it has been guarded with jealous care in Washington as one of the most precious treasures in the archives of our glorious country.

ARGOSY FRIEND, Fredonia, Kan. 1. The offer of a typewriter for obtaining one new subscriber to THE ARGOSY is still open. 2. No. a person will not receive the typewriter on sending in his own subscription. It is given as an inducement to introduce the paper to new readers.

W. E. W., Corry, Pa. All of Mr. Graydon's CONTINENT stories are out of print. We cannot furnish you with any of his serials other than those named by you, except "Captured in the Punjab," a three part tale, which appeared in Nos. 328-329-330 of THE ARGOSY, price 10 cents each.

W. A. F., Albany, N. Y. As we have already stated, the circulation of any periodical can be ascertained by consulting some one of the Newspaper Directories, which are published annually. 2. As THE ARGOSY has such a large news stand sale it would be a rather difficult matter to state how many papers we sell in any given city.

ROB ROY CANOEIST, West Chester, Pa. 1. To make heavy muslin or light canvas waterproof, soak it in oil and varnish. 2. No, it won't stretch. 3. Ash paddles are the best. 4. No, there is no kind of paint specially adapted to a canvas canoe. 5. As THE ARGOSY goes to press several weeks in advance of its date, questions cannot possibly be answered in this column until a month after their receipt.

INQUISITIVE, Detroit, Mich. As "process work" has of late years displaced wood engraving to a large extent, photo-engraving would be a good trade for a boy to learn if he is at all scientifically inclined. Your questions regarding the wages likely to be received we could not possibly answer, as it would depend on the department of the work taken up. It is not the custom for one man to do it all, as in wood engraving.

MILITARY MATTERS.

Boys of 16, and 5 feet and over in height, wishing to join companies in the 11th Brigade, 3d Division, National Cadets, may address H. A. Burbank, Warner, N. H.

Boys of 16, and 5 feet and over in height, wishing to form or join companies of National Cadets, 1st Army Corps, in States east of the Mississippi, should apply to chief recruiting officer, W. H. Warner, 75 Wilnot St., Portland, Me.

IT DOESN'T ALWAYS PAY TO DRESS WELL.



YOUNG MR. BLOTTS, who is going out to look for a situation, puts on his best suit of clothes.



OLD MR. SPARK (of Spark and Bilford)—
"Good morning, sir, what can we do for you?"
BLOTTS—"I want a position as clerk—"



OLD MR. SPARK—"Clerk!!! Why, confound you, I thought you were one of the Vanderbilts! Get out of this!"

AN UNNECESSARY REMINDER.

UNDERTAKER (to American youth who is lighting a cigarette)—
"That's right. You smoke the cigarettes; we do the rest."—*New York Press.*

finished speaking Miss Pruyn shouted down the stairs: "Mamma, mamma, he isn't the one!"—*New York Sun.*

AWKWARD ENOUGH.

BROBSON—"You look all broken up, old man. What's the matter?"
CRAIK—"I called on Miss Pruyn last night, and no sooner had I entered the parlor than her mother appeared, and demanded to know my intentions."
BROBSON—"That must have been rather embarrassing."
CRAIK—"Yes, but that was not the worst. Just as the old lady

VERY BAD POLICY.

THE INSPECTOR'S WIFE (to her friend)—"What do you suppose has happened? At the last ball my Elsa made the acquaintance of a young man, who was obviously interested. He was a good match, and I gave him frequent invitations to dinner, and, as I knew he was a gaet gourmand, I employed the best cook that was to be had."
HER FRIEND—"And your plan succeeded?"
"Not exactly. The villain married my cook."—*Fliegende Blaetter.*



He—"DO YOU LIKE FRENCH PICTURES?"
She—"NO. I CAN'T APPRECIATE THEM. BECAUSE I DO NOT UNDERSTAND FRENCH."