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has referred me to you as the owner. Would you part with it?—or is that impossible?"

"No doubt he has told you, has he not, that it is a family possession?" It was for many years my grandfather's," said she, pushing back her hood and showing a most attractive face, "and I should be very sorry if compelled to let it go."

"But—if you might be tempted," the fancier insisted, in distress at finding the treasure unattainable, "I should offer a large price. I would pay you twelve—fifteen hundred dollars."

She looked startled, then grave, but slowly shook her head.

"Your price seems most generous," she said. "I wish I might say 'yes,' for we are not rich; but really I ought not, even for so much. I do not think I could sell the old violin even for so great a sum."

"I would give more. I will give eighteen hundred dollars," the fancier said, eagerly. "I know it is more than the worth of the violin, but I have a whim to possess it for my collection."

So earnest was the fancier that it was not easy to refuse him. He was handsome and in the prime of life, and one instinctively wished to consent; but Mlle. Amelie only smiled, shook her head gently, and seemed to consider the interview at an end.

"At least, do not decide at once," the fancier asked, as he raised his hat. "May I not see you again? You may change your mind."

"That I will not refuse," she replied, kindly. "And you may try the violin, if you choose. You play, of course? Mind, I do not say positively that I will not part with it. There may be reasons—but I hardly think I can sell it now." She gave her address and the three parted.

Within a few days the collector of violins presented himself. He was introduced to the Durand family—to the mother, an aristocratic little French dame with a manner that charmed; to the brother, who was a bank clerk, and to a younger sister, very demure and watchful.

The *del Gesu* was brought out, and he played upon it with fingers that trembled a little and did him little credit. Altogether he was hospitably received, and found no reason to regret his visit save that his offers for the violin were calmly refused.

After a decent time he came again, and even repeated the call at a less interval. He was received with increasing cordiality, and was evidently a welcome friend. Yet, despite offers far exceeding any fair market value, he made no progress in his enterprise of adding the *del Gesu* to his collection.

One day he omitted to mention the violin. "Ah," remarked the younger sister, "he has lost hope of the *del Gesu*; we shall soon see no more of our new friend!"

But her prophecy was falsified. He came oftener than before. Soon it was evident to all but himself that, if he cared less for the violin, he cared much more for the violin's mistress.

At length even he had discovered the true attraction, and called formally upon Madame Durand with a demand for the hand of Amelie. Admitting that the fancy for the *del Gesu* had first brought him to their home, he now declared that he had no thought of anything whatever but for his sincere affection for Amelie herself.

And she, when appealed to, declared that her heart had been won.

The day for the bridal was set, and on a bright, sunshiny day the little wedding party drove from the church to the Durand home, and there, the first violinist being an honored guest, was held a modest fete.

When, after a brief honeymoon trip, the fancier brought home his bride, she gazed about her with delight at the cozy apartment. Then, springing up, she exclaimed: "Oh, I almost forgot! You have not shown me your collection of violins."

"But," said the fancier, "I have none my dearest."

"You have none?"

"I had put all my money into them, and— and I sold the violins that I might make the little home for you."

Amelie came close beside him, put her arm around his neck, and said in a mischievous tone: "Then you did not marry me for the *del Gesu*?"

"I had forgotten it," he said simply. "But we can begin our new collection with it."

Amelie looked at him soberly, and then began to laugh.

"Oh, I am so sorry! But I no longer own the *del Gesu*. I thought you cared

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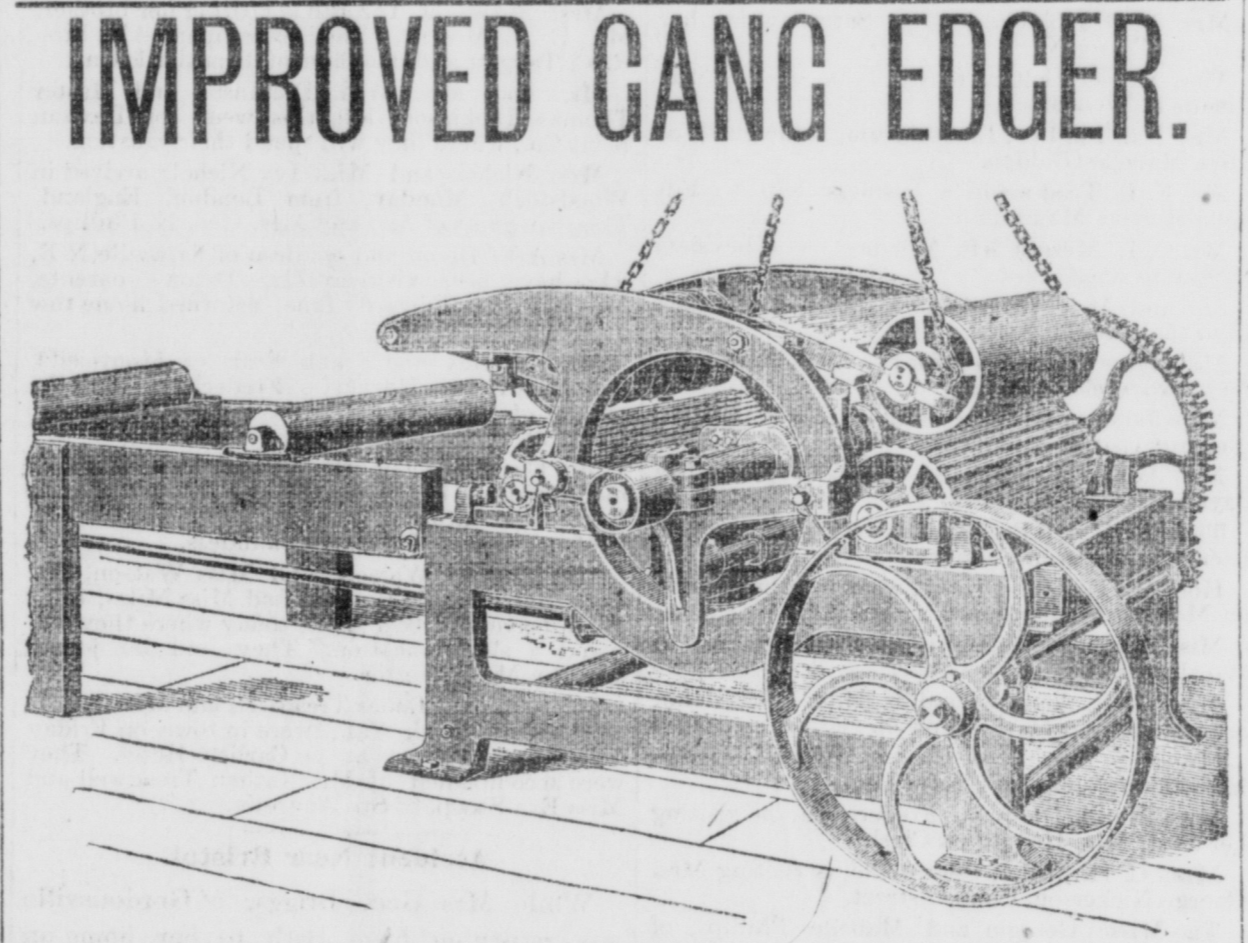
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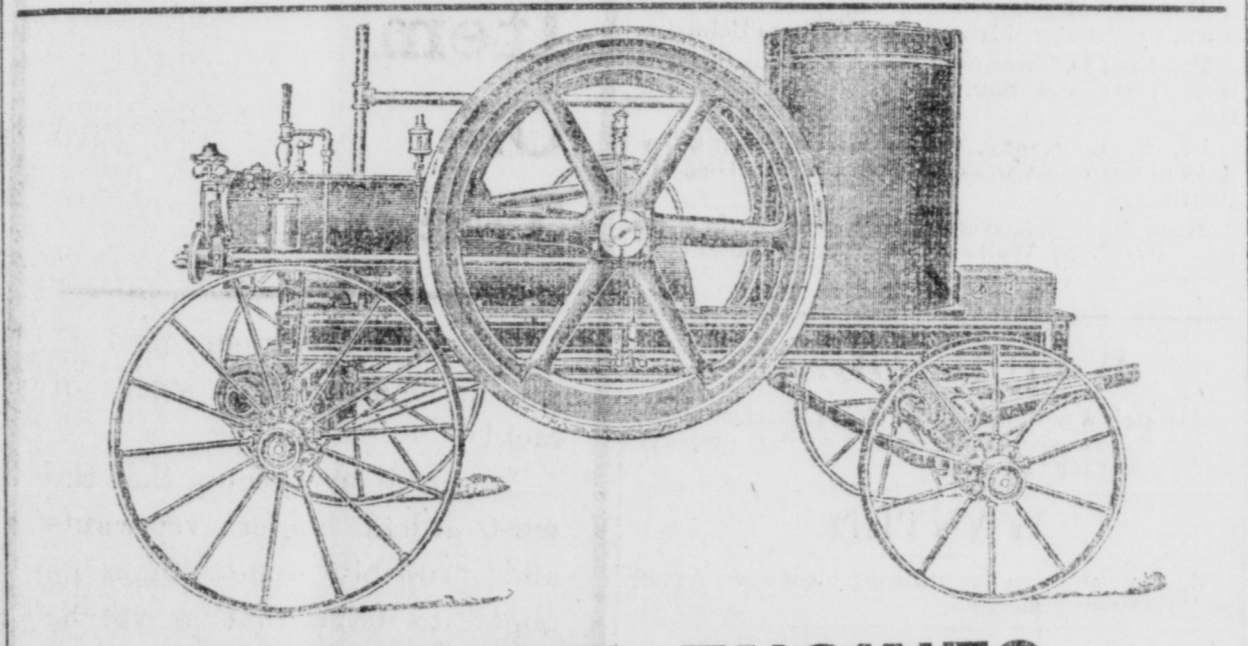
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THE MASTER PASSION.

BY TUDOR JENKS.

Three rows back from the orchestra sat the violin-fancier. The action of the drama had no interest for him; but whenever the musicians played he listened intently, his eyes unchangingly fixed upon the instrument in the hands of the first violinist. He knew every curve of the violin as he knew his own signature. He gazed upon its beauties as a lover upon the perfections of his mistress.

How many miles had he traveled in seeking that object upon which he now was gazing! How many dusty Italian shops he had ransacked, how many old violins he had handled in vain!—and now before him was the veritable treasure he had sought. It was the *del Gesu*—the Guarnerius he had so longed to possess.

Hardly had the curtain rung its fall upon the stage, when he made his way through the fast-ebbing current of spectators, unconscious of all their rude jostling, and of his own, and addressed the musician, who was placing the violin in its box and tucking it daintily in a silken bed.

"Pardon me," he said, "but I have been so delighted by the tone of the violin you play so charmingly. Perhaps you will not object if I ask the privilege of examining the instrument."

"With all pleasure," replied the violinist, courteously unwrapping the violin and holding it up. "Yet I must beg that you have a care that it is not injured. It has much value, and unfortunately, I have not the pleasure to own it. I hold it but as a loan from my friend."

But the violinist was reassured when he saw how carefully the instrument was handled. Beneath the electric bulb upon the music-stand the fancier examined in turn the label, the neck, the back, the scroll. There could be no mistake. It was a genuine *del Gesu*, and in most excellent condition, as if it had been always the pet of some musician. The fancier gazed in silence over his find.

"You yourself play, without doubt?" asked the violinist, rather with polite interest than curiosity.

"Oh, yes, a little, at times. And I buy good violins if I can have them at a reasonable price. Do you know what would be asked for this?"

"But I cannot tell. I have it only by my friend's favor, as a loan."

"To whom does it belong?"

"To my friend—that is, to a young girl whom I have known a year or more."

"Can you tell me where she found it?"

"You will excuse me," was the violinist's reply, as he made an attempt to reclaim the instrument, "but I should beg to know why you make the inquiry. I have no reason to— to answer questions."

"I would be glad to make an offer for the violin. You see, I am—a dealer, in a way. I buy such as please me."

"Oh, this is not to be sold, I am sure," said the violinist, restoring the *del Gesu* to its case. "Indeed, sir, though a poor man, I have for myself made offer of five, seven—yes, even eight hundred dollars. But Amelie says ever, 'No, no; I shall not sell.' So, you see—"

"I understand. It may be an heirloom, and the lady naturally— Still, I should be glad to make the attempt to buy. Unless the owner has some very good reason, is a violinist herself—"

"Truly, no. It is not that she performs, but it is an inheritance, a legacy. Her grandfather was long a player, and by his will he conveyed the violin in souvenir to Amelie. You comprehend? My English is too slight to tell all.

A row at a time, the lights were going out, and two walked up the aisle together.

"But come," the violinist resumed, "you are in earnest, I see. Perhaps, then, you would care to ask the lady for yourself. She is of the company."

They waited a few moment at the stage door.

Soon a woman appeared, draped in a long cloak, and approached the violinist. In a few words spoken in French he explained the presence of the other, and presented him.

"This is Mlle. Amelie Durand, who owns the violin, M'sieu, and most kindly permits to me its use. Will you ask herself of the price?"

"You are very kind," said the fancier. "I admired the violin, and he was good enough to let me examine it. I have told him that I sometimes buy good instruments, and he

about it no longer, and so— In short, I sold it for my dot."

"You did wisely," said her husband. "Collecting may become a mere mania, and leads to lunacy!"

"It led you to me," said Amelie, pouting.

"Nonsense! Marriages like ours are made in heaven. But how could you sell your grandfather's violin?"

"A maid must have her dot! How could you sell your collection?"

"A man must yield to the ruling passion," said he, "and, after all, love rules all the rest!"

The Epigrammist.

Economy may be the road to wealth, but no one ever became wealthy by economy alone.

A suit for divorce is simply an autopsy on poor little Cupid's remains.

Wealth is no more an evidence of refinement than costly churches are of their congregations' piety.

The worst tyrants are those who have been emancipated from tyranny.

The man who joins a church to secure the patronage of its members is grand marshal in the parade of hypocrites.

Beauty when unadorned is all right in art museums, but no woman was ever made ugly by a handsome gown.

A woman to be perfectly happy must feel that she has had something to do with reforming the man she loves.—Smith's Magazine.

The New Naval Power.

The influence of the sea power in the history now making—this is the real writing on the wall. If Japan secures a war indemnity from Russia, a large portion of this will undoubtedly be expended on increasing her fleet. In any case, these victorious islanders who are cradled on the sea and who have shown such a splendid capacity for naval warfare, are certain to better secure themselves against any further Russian aggression by a very powerful navy.—John Hays Hammond in World's Work.

Economy.
(Harper's Weekly.)

The following letter was received from his sister by a New Yorker who was away from home on a visit:

"I am sending by mail a parcel containing the golf coat you wanted. As the brass buttons are heavy I have cut them off to save postage. Your loving sister, J."

"P.S.—You will find the buttons in the right-hand pocket of the coat."

Appreciation.

I
Sir: Your wife is held by us for ransom. She will be detained until you deposit ten thousand dollars under the oak tree at the top of the hill.
THE BLACK HAND.

II

Dear Sirs: Your favor of recent date received. I have deposited under the oak tree a trunk containing the rest of my wife's wardrobe. Yours truly, J. B. HENPECKE.

Curious Marriage Custom.

In Russia every woman of the peasant class marries, or pretends to marry. If a girl comes to the decision that no one intends to ask her to marry she leaves home, goes to some distant district, and returns after a time to announce that she is a widow, that she went away to be married, and that her husband has since died. No embarrassing questions are put to her, for among the peasants it is considered bad form to mention a dead man to his widow.

WORSE THAN AN UNBELIEVER.

There are impossible things which it is a duty to do; and there are impossible things which it is a sin to do. One of the latter sort is agreeing to pay for more than we have money to pay for—in other words, living beyond our income. The head of a household that is in chronic debt is like the engineer of a train running toward a bridge with a broken trestle. There can be only one end—a smash up. Many a family bases its expenditures on its apparent needs, instead of basing its expenditures on its known income. The latter basis is the only safe one; the former is a basis of quicksand. Every family can live on the means God has provided; to fail to do so is sin of the most glaring sort. The household are the responsible ones. To fail to keep the expenses within the income is to fail to provide. And "if any provideth not for his own, and especially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.—Sunday-school Times.