

ON A HARD ERRAND.

The directors of the First National Bank of Sarepta had sent for me to come to their room. I could think of only three reasons for this unusual summons—I was to be discharged, or to have my salary raised, or to have it cut down.

When I entered the room President Packard and his colleagues scrutinized me as if I were a promissory note with only one endorser. I began to feel nervous enough to speculate whether I might not have robbed the safe in a fit of temporary insanity. However, the president soon put me at ease on this point by throwing me into a state of great uncertainty on another.

Mr. Saunders began by, with his usual air of addressing a mass meeting, 'Mr. Saunders, are you a person of prudence, sagacity and good judgment?'

I thought I had decided these questions in the negative by accepting the position I held for the day I received, but of course it wouldn't do to say so, and I simply replied that I couldn't say.

'Or,' continued the president, 'should the contingency arise, of physical courage in danger?'

I had played left half-back on a light football team against a bad-tempered, heavy eleven who couldn't score; nevertheless I again answered that I couldn't say.

These non-committal replies seemed satisfactory, and I now saw that the object of this catechism was not to find out if I possessed the good qualities mentioned, but to inform me indirectly that I should stand in need of them whether I possessed them or not.

President Packard went on to tell me what was wanted. The bank had to transmit ten thousand dollars in cash to Shovel Brothers, contractors employed upon a new railway in the northern part of the state, that the firm might pay its laborers. The region was desolate, and the express company refused to make delivery beyond its nearest office, many miles distant. Consequently it would be as well to send the amount all the way by special messenger.

I was to be that messenger—and to go alone, for no unemployed men of the necessary trustworthiness could be found to make up a guard. The Boston bankers, Reichsmarks, Guilders & Co. were to send a like amount in a few days, but probably by another route, so that I should not be able to take advantage of the protection their agent would undoubtedly have.

I instantly accepted the commission, moved by desire for a change from the monotonous routine of the bank, by a certain spice of adventure about the expedition, and above all by the manifest resolve of the directors to send me away.

'I'll start to-morrow morning,' I said. 'Very good,' Mr. Saunders returned. 'Your zeal is most gratifying. I have only to suggest your making any changes in your dress and appearance that will prevent those whom you meet from supposing you to be provided with any considerable sum of money.'

Next morning I was off on an early train. The president's closing hint had been heeded, and I flattered myself that no one could ever imagine me a tank clerk, or a clerk in any other reputable business.

I wore a remarkably ancient suit of clothes, a hat that would inspire distrust in the most guileless heart, boots which needed blacking, linen which needed whitening—the effect of the whole perfected by a two days beard.

I carried a hollow-chested valise, which appeared to have seen so many of its worst days that it might have remained unscathed if dropped in the middle of the most poverty-stricken street in Christendom. This receptacle I treated with the respect of a man who, knowing its padding and pretension, despises it for containing nothing but paper wads and paper collars. Yet in that forlorn valise, under a deceptive stratum of toilet things, lay the sealed packages of currency amounting to ten thousand dollars.

The train was a through one, and I met not a single acquaintance. So I feared no embarrassing recognitions, and found myself taken for just what I was not. The conductor punched my ticket with an air of not expecting me to have any, while the way in which the train boy passed me over in his distributions of figs and fiction, filled me with self-complacency. My disguise was, beyond doubt, a complete success.

The day went on—an uneventful and hungry day, for I thought it due to my assumed character to buy no refreshments but doughnuts and sausages, two things I cannot eat. Toward night I changed to a branch road. There were few passengers, but among them I described for the first time an object of suspicion—a young man whom I had noticed covertly eyeing me at the junction, and who now sat across the aisle.

He was very well dressed, had the unmistakable bearing of the city, and would have been the last person in the world to cause any anxiety but for his watching me whenever I wasn't looking, and his pretending to read a small-time newspaper in a light too dim for the correct deciphering of a circus poster whenever he caught my eye.

If he had been the kind of fellow I seemed, I should have feared nothing worse than his scraping an acquaintance with a view to our future cooperation in petty larcenies; but a man like him to take such an interest in such a seedy figure of insolvency as I presented was most suspicious. I suddenly recollected the money coming from Boston, and then, with a flash of insight, I understood the stranger.

He was plainly one of those thieves who, always spying about, collect a surprising fund of information relating to bank affairs. The First National's participation in the Shovel Brothers' payment was of course well known to its Boston correspondent, and might easily have leaked out when Reichsmarks, Guilders & Co. despatched their well-guarded messenger. Powerless against him, the rascal had turned his attention to me!

Then, too, the five directors and the cashier knew of my errand, and one or two of the half-dozen might have clattered too freely. If this man had been on the lookout, he could very well have picked up all he needed to know at Sarepta on the evening before. The more I reflected, the more I perceived I must be right.

Just then we reached the terminus where I must spend the night before starting on a forty-mile drive to the construction camp. As I left the car the young man opposite lingered in his seat, feigning to be occupied with a shawl-strap he carried, so that

might go first. Looking back, I saw him spring up to follow.

During the dark walk to the hotel he kept close behind me, until I began to grow uneasy. I gripped the precious valise with one hand, and kept the other ready for action in case an attempt was made to snatch away my burden. But other passengers were before and behind, and the chance seemed too desperate for him. He finally passed me and went on.

I found the little hotel, which would have been the worst in the place had it not been the only one, enjoying an unwelcome rush of business caused by some kind of gathering then in session. My company did not appear ardently desired, and advance payment alone secured a shelter. Even then I was told I must be 'doubled up' with another guest.

This sleeping in the bed with a total stranger by no means suited me, but it could not be helped. After supper I was shown to '36' or rather directed there by a boy who saw in me so little prospect of a fee that he neither took the journey nor apologized for ordering me 'G' up two flights and turn to the left.

I entered the room. Before the bureau, half-dressed, stood my late fellow-traveler! I gave an involuntary start.

'Halloo, you fellow!' exclaimed he.

'What do you want in this room?'

'It's 36, isn't it?' asked I, bound to stand my ground. 'Well, I'm going to sleep here. Didn't they say you'd be doubled up?'

'Yes,' he rejoined angrily, 'but I didn't know—' He stopped abruptly and turned his back.

'Didn't know it would be with you,' he meant to say, I thought; 'then it was precisely what he did know and wanted!' I rapidly reviewed the situation. If I refused to stay he would at once be convinced of my identity—a point on which I had inferred from his constant staring, he was not yet perfectly sure. Besides, should I abandon the sole obtainable bed I should have to spend the night on the veranda or in the haymow—a much more dangerous arrangement than to remain where I could keep my eye on him.

Nevertheless, two things I was firm upon—I would not go to bed before he did, and I would not go to sleep at all. I sat down in one of the two chairs near the bed with the valise on my knees. My robber as I called him, after flitting around the room for a few minutes, sat down in the second chair on the other side of the bed.

Having noticed that he had no visible baggage except shawl-strap I fancied I might deceive his expectations by treating my valise as an ordinary one. Opening it carefully I took out whatever happened to come to my hand, whistling unconcernedly the while. But the scheme had exactly the contrary effect to what I intended. The young man observed my every motion—his whole body stiffened with strained attention. Then I saw what a silly blunder I was making.

The idea of a valise like that containing a neat hair brush, tooth brush and manicure set! The tooth brush itself was enough to betray me, but the manicure set was utter condemnation. I crowded the things back into the valise, and set it down again.

My room-mate had not lost any movement of mine—I could see that in his eyes—and those eyes followed the valise to the floor and its key to my pocket. I now looked him over and found him seriously muscular. 'I wish I had a revolver,' I fretted. 'No, I don't—he might take it away from me, and shoot me with it!'

'Come,' said the robber, 'aren't you going to bed?'

'Ah, he was beginning, was he?'

'Not yet,' returned I. 'Are you?'

'Oh, I never go to bed early,' said he, casting another glance at my valise.

'You don't, don't you? I reflected, in what might be called a sarcastic tone of thought. I continued aloud, 'Aren't you sleepy?'

'Not a bit,' Then, between two tremendous yawns, he added, 'I'm a victim of insomnia!'

'Victim of insomnia, indeed!' I internally commented. 'But you want to make me the victim of a robbery, though, will you see who goes to bed first?'

There was a pause; then he said, 'Why don't you unpack your—ah—trunk articles?'

'You might unpack that shawl-strap,' I retorted.

This plainly disturbed him, and not answering, he pulled the shawl-strap nearer to his side. From that moment I never lost sight of it, for his conduct explained everything, especially as I was convinced that the something sticking out of one end of the strap was the handle of a sword-cane.

Some time passed. He sat looking from my valise to my face, then to the floor, while I divided my attention between his countenance, his shawl-strap and the ceiling. Then he spoke again.

'I really think it must be bedtime—'

'I do, too,' I broke in, eagerly.

'For you,' he proceeded. 'You can't be in the habit of sitting up late nights.'

'Always sit up late nights!' I grumbled, vexed at having interrupted so clumsily.

'This isn't late—for me.'

'Just the edge of the evening for me,' said the impudent thief.

Well, not to be tedious, there we sat, that robber and I, with the unoccupied bed between us, the whole of that blessed night—a night which, judging its length from my feelings, would have been excessively long at the North Pole when daylight is most out of fashion. Sometimes the young man yawned, sometimes I yawned, sometimes we both yawned together, all the while protesting that we weren't a bit sleepy, but too exasperated at each other to hold any further conversation.

Once or twice I almost dropped off, but convulsively recovered my senses when I remembered where I was and in whose company. Oh, the stupidest, dullest, dreariest, stupidest, loneliest, most wearisome, monotonous and heart-breaking night I ever went through in my life!

When the sounds below proclaimed an awakened house, the robber took his shawl-strap and left the room, closing the door behind him with a slam that expressed his sentiments better than if he had abused me steadily for an hour. I looked yearningly at the bed, but it was too late—I must start for the construction camp before the villain could form a new plan for mischief.

In the office I found him talking to the clerk in an excited manner, but he broke

off as soon as he saw me, and both he and the clerk looked me over with great ferocity. He had evidently been making a complaint against his room-mate, as I intended to do against mine, and the superiority of his clothes had drawn the superficially-observing clerk to his side.

I meant to have something to say myself, however.

'Send for a constable,' said I, authoritatively, walking up to the desk.

'He's been sent for, young fellow,' drawled the clerk.

'Ah, that's right—that's right,' rejoined I, surprised. 'When he comes I want him to make an arrest—do you understand?'

The clerk burst out laughing.

'Why,' roared he, 'the constable's going to make an arrest—going to arrest you—'

'You brassy scoundrel, you! and he seized me by the collar, while the thief grasped my arms.'

'Who—what do you think I am?' sputtered I, full of wrath.

'Don't know who you are—nothing that's good, though, I'll be bound,' said the clerk.

'I never saw more rascally-looking creature in all my born days. Trying to rob a man, were you?'

'Rob a man! It was this fellow who was trying to rob me?' I exclaimed. 'Look here!'

Forgetting all caution in my rage I broke loose, tore open the old valise and threw the money packages upon the floor.

'Look! Here's ten thousand dollars I'm taking to Shovel Brothers from the First National Bank of Sarepta. If you don't let me go I'll have you locked up!'

My room-mate tore open his shawl-strap as I had the valise, and threw a paper-covered roll upon the packages.

'There's ten thousand dollars I'm taking to Shovel Brothers from Reichsmarks, Guilders & Co., of Boston. Lock up both of us for a couple of wandering idiots!'

He began to laugh; so did I, so did the clerk, so did the constable, who now came in, and we kept it up until we were completely exhausted. Explanations ensued.

'So you didn't have a sword-cane in your shawl-strap?' I began.

'And you didn't have a pistol in your valise—I'm sure I thought you did,' said Reichsmarks, Guilders & Co.

'If you hadn't watched me so—I protested.

'If you hadn't been such a hard-looking customer—' interrupted he.

'If you had had a guard—I continued.

'If you had had a shave,' insisted he.

'Why, they told me to look out for the Sarepta messenger, but they said he was likely to be a respectable young man, and you weren't anything of the sort!'

'That is all. We joined forces, engaged the constable to accompany us, and delivered our money. My room-mate turned out a delightful fellow, and I didn't return to the First National, though my resignation did, for he secured me a situation with Reichsmarks, Guilders & Co., which made my former salary seem like a financial bad dream.—Manley H. Pike, in 'Youth's Companion.'

BRADSHAW'S RUSE.

Bradshaw was jealous. There was no denying it. But what can you expect of a man who is very much in love, or at least thinks he is?

The mother of his chimer approved of him and had promised a friendly alliance, but the charmer herself remained neutral, which, you must admit, looked doubtful for the alliance, and especially for Bradshaw.

He was a well meaning, well conducted industrious young man, who by strict attention to business had become the confidential clerk of Mr. Joseph W. Burphy, wholesale dealer in tea, coffee, spices etc., a liberal discount to the trade, etc.

'But I tell you I don't care for him,' Miss Vera White spoke decidedly and looked straight into her mother's eyes.

'He's a young man of such nice, steady habits,' remonstrated the mother.

'So am I,' retorted the daughter.

'Seems to me it's a thing to be in earnest about. I should say he ought to be.'

'But, my dear, you let him come here.'

'It's his who let him.'

'But you talk with him and go out with him. I don't think you dislike Mr. Bradshaw.'

'No, I don't.'

'You'll throw over a man who'll make you a good husband and take up with some dashing show spender?'

'But, my dearest mother, the spend-thrift hasn't even appeared to ask to be taken up. So what's the use of borrowing trouble? I don't want to get married any way. I should have to fall in love first, you know. And, as I've got all that to go through with, there's plenty of time.'

'But, you know, dear, since the reduction in the rate of interest our income has grown so small I can scarcely make both ends meet. You need more than when you were little—and—and I don't know what to do. I hate to put a mortgage on the house.'

'Oh, you mustn't do that! I will get some work to do.'

It was true there was very little to live upon. Mrs. White had been a widow over ten years. Vera was her only child, and at nineteen was as unsophisticated in the ways of the world as many girls are at twelve.

It was settled she should learn to write. After she had mastered it, the next thing was to find something to do.

Here Mr. Bradshaw came to the rescue and got her a place in Mr. Burphy's private office. Of course he didn't want them to lose the home—he had had his eye on it for some time. His desk was in Mr. Burphy's office and it was an admirable arrangement.

'You know,' he said to the widow, 'they call Mr. Burphy a crank. To be sure, he is an old bachelor and has stuck so closely to business all his life that it has made him a little gruff and peculiar. But if any one could be with him as I have been and could see the real tenderness underneath, the good he does in a quiet way and the strict, fine integrity of the man, they'd know, as I do, that he's one in a thousand. Oh, I'll look after Miss Vera; she'll be all right, I assure you.'

So Vera went to work. The next day after she began she made some mistake in a dictation, and Mr. Burphy spoke sharply. The tears rushed to her eyes, but she choked them back and said quietly, 'I'll shall try faithfully to do what you wish. If I make too many mistakes and don't suit you, you have only to send me away.'

There was something in the independ-

ence of the answer that caused him to think twice about her. He studied her furtively and found the study interesting. She attended strictly to business and he saw that she was intelligent and reliable.

After a time Mr. Bradshaw made an unpleasant discovery. He believed Miss Vera was in love with her employer. The signs were to him unmistakable. It was here that he became jealous.

Besides his own feelings in the matter he felt that he must save a young, innocent girl from wrecking her happiness on a man whom he believed, cared no more for her than the ledger on his desk.

So he resolved on a bold step. He sent to Mr. Burphy and told him he had reason to believe little Miss White was in love with him, and for her sake something ought to be done to cure the infatuation.

Mr. Burphy looked positively stunned, but he agreed to do his best in any plan Mr. Bradshaw might suggest.

'Suppose you dictate a letter to a young lady showing your admiration, etc. How would that do?'

'Excellent—excellent!' cried Mr. Burphy.

Accordingly, the next day, after Miss White took her dictations, her employer in a rather embarrassed manner gave her this:

'My dear Miss (you can leave the name blank)—Will you ask your mother if I may have the privilege of calling at your home? I am anxiously awaiting your reply. Faithfully yours, JOSEPH W. BURPHY.'

Somehow there were so many mistakes in the letter she had to make a second draft, and that wily old bachelor actually saw her fingers tremble.

'I will address it to myself,' he said, taking it from her.

'Beautiful!' chuckled Bradshaw to himself seeing how finely his plan worked.

The next day there was another letter to be written to the same woman.

'I love you,' it said. 'I want to make you my wife. If you care for me, say that I may come to your house to-morrow evening.'

This time the typewriter made worse mistakes than before, and complained of feeling ill, and asked to go home a little before the time.

As she arose to put on her wraps Mr. Burphy sent Bradshaw out of the room for something.

'Will you please mail these letters for me?' he said, handing her two. 'And—and I wish you'd see if I've addressed them right.'

She looked at them, then at him in a dazed way.

'Why, they're addressed to me!'

'Yes,' said Burphy shortly. 'Number right? Please open and see, too, if the contents are correct?'

'Good heavens! Was it a dismissal?'

She opened the envelopes with trembling fingers and a faint heart.

'Why, Mr. Burphy,' she said, 'it's a mistake. These are the letters I wrote to that lady.'

'No mistake at all. Quite correct,' replied that businesslike individual very bravely. Will you have the kindness to give me my answer?'

'You may come to-morrow evening,' she said and ran out of the office.

'How did it work?' asked Mr. Bradshaw when he came back.

'I'm afraid not just as you expected,' replied the proprietor with his back to him.

Bradshaw thought so when he got the wedding cards.

FATHER AND SON CURED.

THE VILLAGE OF WHITECHURCH DEVELOPS A SENSATION.

The Father Attacked With Rheumatism and the Son With St. Vitus Dance—A Story That Can Be Vouched For By All the Neighbors.

(From the Wingham Advance.)

Mr. Joseph Nixon is the proprietor of the only hotel in the village of Whitechurch, and is known to the whole countryside as a man who thoroughly understands his business, and a jovial companion as well. It is well known in this part of Ontario that Mr. Nixon's hotel was destroyed by fire, but with that energy which is characteristic of him he quickly set to work to rebuild. His story, as told a reporter of the Wingham Advance, who recently had occasion to visit his hostelry, will prove of interest.

'I was helping to dig out the cellar,' he said, 'and in the damp and cold I contracted rheumatism which settled in my right hip. I got so bad that I couldn't sit in a chair without doubling my leg back at the side of the chair, and I couldn't ride in a buggy without letting the affected leg hang out. I suffered a great deal more from the trouble than anyone who has not been similarly affected can imagine. How

I was cured is even more interesting. One day I saw a neighbor whom I knew had rheumatism very bad, running down the road. I called him and asked what had cured his rheumatism. 'Dr. Williams' Pink Pills' he promptly replied, and that determined me to try the same remedy. Well, the result is Pink Pills cured me, and that is something other medicines failed to do. I don't know what is in them, but I do know that Pink Pills is a wonderful medicine. And it is not only in my own case,' continued Mr. Nixon, 'that I have reason to be grateful for what the medicine has done. My son, Fred, about twelve years of age, was taken with an attack of cold. Inflammation of the lungs set in and as he was recovering from this, other complications followed which developed into St. Vitus dance, which got so bad that he could not possibly stand still. We gave him Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, with the result that he is now thoroughly cured, and looks as though he had never had a day's sickness in his life, and if these facts, which are known to all the neighbors, will be of bene-

fit to anyone else, you are at liberty to publish them.'

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills are a specific for all diseases arising from an impoverished condition of the blood or a shattered condition of the nervous forces, such as St. Vitus dance, locomotor ataxia, rheumatism, paralysis, sciatica, the after effects of la grippe, loss of appetite, headache, dizziness, chronic erysipelas, scrofula, etc. They are also a specific for the troubles peculiar to the female system, correcting irregularities, suppressions and all forms of female weakness, building anew the blood, and restoring the glow of health to pale and sorrow cheeks. In the case of men they effect a radical cure in all cases arising from mental worry, overwork, or excess of any nature. Dr. Williams' Pink Pills are sold only in boxes bearing the firm's trade mark and wrapper (printed in red ink), and may be had of all druggists, or direct by mail from Dr. Williams' Medicine Company, Brockville, Ont., or Schenectady, N. Y., at 50 cents a box, or six boxes for \$2.50.

BURGERS IN GREAT LUCK.

Work is Easily Prosecuted in the Tunnels of a Thunder Storm.

'Speaking of cinches,' said the retired burglar, 'the easiest, softest, smoothest snap I ever struck was in a house in a small town in Rhode Island. There was a thunder storm coming up as I went along toward this house, and just as I got there it began to sprinkle. By the time I'd got inside it was coming down pretty hard, and I was glad to be under shelter, for I hadn't brought any umbrella with me. I hadn't any supper either, and when I'd got into the dining room I thought I'd get something to eat. The sideboard was locked and the key carried up stairs, but a little jimmy opened the door as easy as a knife would open a pie. I set out a little snack on the table and sat down and ate it comfortably, with the rain pouring down outside. If there's anything I like it's to hear a storm a ragin' outside when you're settled down all snug and comfortable within.

'But here was something I hadn't counted on. The thunder was roaring and plunging like a dozen earthquakes busting down through the sky, and it kept the house in a tremble all the time. I knew nobody could sleep in that thunder. They'd be sure to be all awake, but here I was, and I hated to lose a night, and after I'd waited a little and the storm didn't show any signs of letting up, I thought I'd go ahead and see, anyhow. The very first room I looked into up stairs settled the whole business.

'Over in one corner of this room, beyond a bed, I saw a woman standing in front of an open closet door. Two children hopped out of the bed, and the mother pushed them into the closet and then crowded in herself and pulled the door shut tight. It was all very simple; husband away, no help; two children sleeping in another room, woke up by thunder, come into their mother's room, all scared; mother puts children in closet and gets in herself, as lots of folks do in thunder storms. And then I walk over and turn the key in the lock and there you are; no danger of their coming out till the storm is over, anyway, but just as well to be sure about it, and then I just quietly go through the house. It isn't big and it doesn't take long, and I come back before the storm is over and unlock the closet door again and skip; and that's all there is to it.'

BORN.

Moncton Aug. 8, to the wife of G. A. Dodge, a son.

Linden, July 25, to the wife of James Wood, a son.

Bathurst, Aug. 4, to the wife of E. T. Colpitt, a son.

Bathurst, Aug. 6, to the wife of F. A. Landry, a son.

Springfield, July 22, to the wife of C. L. Davis, a son.

Toronto, Aug. 3, to the wife of George Myers, a son.

Aylesford, July 17, to the wife of John Conner, a son.

St. John, Aug. 12, to the wife of William Walker, a son.

Bridgetown, July 20, to the wife of Abraham Cashman, a son.

Aylesford, July 30, to the wife of William Cashman, a son.

Amherst, Aug. 7, to the wife of John LeBlanc, a daughter.

Amherst, Aug. 6, to the wife of Thomas Brown, a daughter.

Hammond, Aug. 2, to the wife of James Brown, a son.

St. John, Aug. 11, to the wife of J. B. Brayley, a daughter.

Berwick, Aug. 4, to the wife of H. C. Masters, a daughter.

Bathurst, Aug. 8,