

### A Middleman.

William Hallett was a poor, commonplace, newly married young man. He had been living now for several months on a one hundred and fifty acre farm with a decent set of buildings and a small mortgage. It was late in November. The crops had been an awfully house and by a little straining and pinching the annual interest had been met. No payment had been made on the main debt, but that was hardly to be expected the first year, which included the exceptional expenditures of paying the parson and buying a load of kitchen utensils.

Quite unexpectedly William's wife received a bequest from an uncle who died in the West. It was only one hundred and twenty-five dollars, but it seemed to her a marvellously munificent inheritance, and she and William disposed of the money in a hundred different ways before they finally decided it should go to the furnishing of the front room which was now used as a storage-place for miscellaneous rubbish.

However, after the check had been cashed and the bills laid away in the large Bible that used to be William's grandfather's, and was always kept on the top of the little sitting-room cupboard William spoke out in the dry voice common to men of his lean, nervous type:

"I've been thinking, Mattie, we might do better than put all that money into furnishing the front room."

"Now William!"

"This room's as good as you or I have been brought up to. It's as good as our neighbors have. What do we want to go and make a spread for, away ahead of other folks, when we can't afford it—and have everybody saying that Bill Hallett sits on stuffed chairs when he can't pay his bills?"

"Why, William!" cried Mattie, flushing, "how unreasonable you're. That money is mine, and it I chose to put it into a pretty parlor set I should like to know whose business it is? If our neighbors prefer to go shabby when they can't afford to live better, why, let 'em. It's no concern of yours or mine."

"It must do a woman lots of good to have a room full of fine things which she doesn't go into from January to December, unless it's to show it off to some neighbor that hasn't got anything of her own," said William.

Mattie's lip twitched expressively. "I know. You want to put the money into an old cart, or an old cow, or something."

"Well," answered William dryly and unsympathetically, "I might do worse. But that isn't just what I have in mind."

After a little silence Mattie asked stiffly: "Just what have you in mind? I should be pleased to know."

William clasped his hands behind his trig black head and looked at his wife thoughtfully.

"I'll tell you, Matt. I'd like fine things just as well as you—or most as well—it we could afford 'em. But I want to get ahead a good deal more 'n I want to make a spread."

"Of course you want to get ahead," said Mattie; "we both want to get ahead. But I can't see why you need to feel pulled back or any way poor or just because you can have your hour furnished for nothing."

But you see there's precious little chance of getting ahead on a farm anyway," reasoned William. "Acres of farm raise up to their chins in debt. Whoever gets rich on a farm? It's dig, dig, dig, in ours and out."

"Why! do you want to give up the farm, William?"

"No, I don't want to give it up—not that. There's a good deal about a farm that I like,—it dependence and room to turn round in. I never thought I should like being messed in with a lot of neighbors. No; I don't want to leave the farm if I can get any money out of it. But I've been thinking,—what if I should put a stock of good into that front room and carry on a little store along with my farming?"

"If that isn't a scheme!"

"Well, now, ain't it a good one?" went on William, earnestly. "I've always thought I should like a store. I had my head examined once and the phrenologist said I'd be a first-rate hand at trafficking. Of course I should carry on the farm and when I was out in field you could slip in and wait on customers, couldn't you?"

"Oh, yes," laughed his wife. "I think that would be rather fine."

"And we don't need that front room a bit."

"No-o," admitted Mattie, "we don't really need it."

"Of course I should need more than one hundred and twenty-five dollars, but I know well enough that Deacon Lincoln will let me have what I want and take security on the goods. I should begin small."

"What would you keep?" asked Mattie.

"O, molasses and coffee and calicoes and such. Then I should take eggs 'n' potatoes 'n' wool 'n' the like in exchange, and send 'em off, and double my money."

"All the neighbors would buy their groceries of us," said Mattie, cheerfully.

"Of course. It's a natural center here at four corners."

"But after we've made money enough," said Mattie, "we'll have the furniture."

"Well, I guess! We'll own the farm and build a store across the road and—"

"Oh I shouldn't want a store across the road. It would cut off the view of the pond."

"We'll anyway, we'll have a new store built somewhere, and a bay-window put on to the house, and velvet chairs all the way from the cellar to the attic," said William, gaily.

So it was amicably decided that the one hundred and twenty-five dollars should go into coffee and molasses. By December the front room was fitted up with shelves and a home-made counter upon which were displayed half a dozen webs of print and a box of assorted jack-knives. Mattie went in every morning and re-arranged the calicoes, and William sat on a nail keg in the sun and whistled for customers.

Poor old Hephzibah Pyncheon was not a whit more agitated than Mrs. Hallett, when it first devolved upon her to measure off two and one-half yards of print for a neighbor.

"It was for old Mrs. Wing," she explained afterwards to William. "You know she was so good when we set up housekeeping—brought us up doughnuts and pies and ever so many good things. I couldn't help giving it to her."

"All right," said William.

"Mrs. Tobey was in this afternoon," said Mattie a few days later. "She bought quarter of a pound of tea and some nutmegs."

"Which tea?"

"The sixty-cent tea, only I left her have it at cost."

"But, that's no way to do, Mattie."

"But, William! Mrs. Tobey has such a hard time—so much sickness. I think it would be real mean to try to make anything out of her."

William laughed.

"You're a pretty hand to keep store, now, ain't you? Don't you see if you sell tea to Mrs. Tobey for half price, you've got to sell it to Mrs. Harper and Mrs. Jackson and Mrs. Perkins and all the other women in town for half price too? They'd be mad as hornets if they thought you'd sell tea to Mrs. Tobey cheaper'n you would sell it to them."

"But I asked Mrs. Tobey not to mention it."

William laughed again significantly.

"I know what you mean. You think women can't keep anything to themselves," said Mattie, with a flash of tears. "And you think it is all right for you to wring money out of anybody you can get your clutches on."

"Whew!" said William.

"I know I'm not a bit business like," went on Mattie, brokenly, "and I suppose I mustn't do any more as I have done. But I do wish people like Mrs. Tobey wouldn't come here to buy things, William."

"Somebody's got to have her money, and it might as well be us as anybody else."

One evening about the middle of February they went over the accounts together, and William made an offhand estimate of what he had in stock.

"This is the meanest neighborhood in Maine," he burst out angrily. "I'd like to move out of it."

"So would I," assented Mattie, vehemently.

"All the neighbors would rather go by us clear over to Cooper's Mills and pay double for all they get," grumbled William.

"I know it," said Mattie. "John Perkins went by with his kerosene can in his punga his afternoon, and John has pretended to think the world of you."

William tossed his nose into the air with inexpressible disgust.

"Talk's cheap. Catch me going to the grange so long as he's chief cook and bottle washer."

"And I declare," said Mattie, "I don't feel a bit like going to Sunday school and sitting in Mrs. Perkins's Bible class, and seeing her smile on me as if she could eat me up, and then go right by week in and week out and never buy so much as a row of pins of us. And she's had any amount of new things this winter."

"We won't go to meeting for a few Sundays," said William. "I guess they'll miss us."

"I don't believe there's much real friendship in the world, anyway," sighed Mattie with profound pessimism.

"Friendship! mere froth and lather. It's everybody for himself—deacons and all."

"But I don't see why everyone need to owe us such a spite."

"Oo, they're afraid we'll make something. They'd rather go farther and get cheated than buy anything less we should make a cent. But they needn't be so sore if they only knew it."

"I wish you'd been contented to farm it like other people and never taken it into

your head that you were smart enough to make money trading."

"Smart enough! how in creation did I know everybody'd turn against us so? Besides, I should have made more if you hadn't been possessed to give everything away."

Mattie colored and did not answer at once.

"If you only knew how mean and stingy I've felt ever since I asked that ragged little Hackett boy thirty cents for that speckled pair of mittens, William, when his fingers were blue as whetstones and he'd had to earn his money before and after school, you'd—" she caught her breath with a sob.

"Come, now, Mattie, I don't blame you a bit. I love you for it, little wife. But I don't believe you were made for a store-keeper, and I dunno's I was. It's kind of a mean business, anyhow."

"I was reading the other day," said Mattie, "that the old Romans ranked the farmer above the trader, because the trader gets all his living out of other people while the farmer does get at least a part of his out of the earth, and in a way that harm no one and makes the world fairer and richer and better. I thought then that I wished you'd close out the store—only we should feel cheap to begin a business and flunk out."

William studied the fire in silence.

"If you closed out the store, you could still exchange produce when anyone brought it along, William."

Still William mused.

"Even if it paid us to keep on," said his wife, earnestly, "it's dreadful to find we have no friends, dreadful to grow hard toward all our neighbors, as we are doing; to stay away from church and feel as if all the town was in arms against us, William. If we can only sell out—even if we do lose a little—if you can get the grocer at Cooper's Mills to take the goods off your hands—and not have to put our heads about or vex our souls over it I do think it would be best."

Still William held his peace.

"I have seen so much this winter," went on Mattie, "how poor people are—how poor we may be—that I don't feel just as I did about the front room. If you close out the store, it doesn't seem to me to be the best thing to lay out the one hundred and twenty-five dollars, or what there is left of it, in pin and brussels while our nearest neighbor to the right has hardly clothes enough to keep her warm and her nearest neighbor to the left has three little babies to go half hungry from morning till night. Oh, no, William! I don't mean that we are to give money to them. We can't do that. But to spend it in fine things would look as if we weren't even sorry for them. Wouldn't it, William?"

"Maybe so," said William, not particularly touched.

"I think, on the whole, if you close out the store, I'd rather you'd pay all but fifteen or twenty dollars of what belongs to me, on the mortgage—"

"Well, do as, Matt!"

"And the rest—you know how often you've wished you knew as much about farming as John Perkins, and thought if you had his books you could do so much better? See him, William, and find out what his books are, and get you some with the rest of the money, with three or four little books that I should like to have, and take some of the pine shelves from the store and make a bookcase for that corner William. I can stain it to look like antique oak, and hang a picture over it, and you can read the long evenings through and learn so much before planting-time, and we can be so quiet and happy, and at peace, without any more thinking of who will buy and who won't buy, William."

"Matt," said William, "you're the brightest and best wife man ever had!"—Fannie B. Damon

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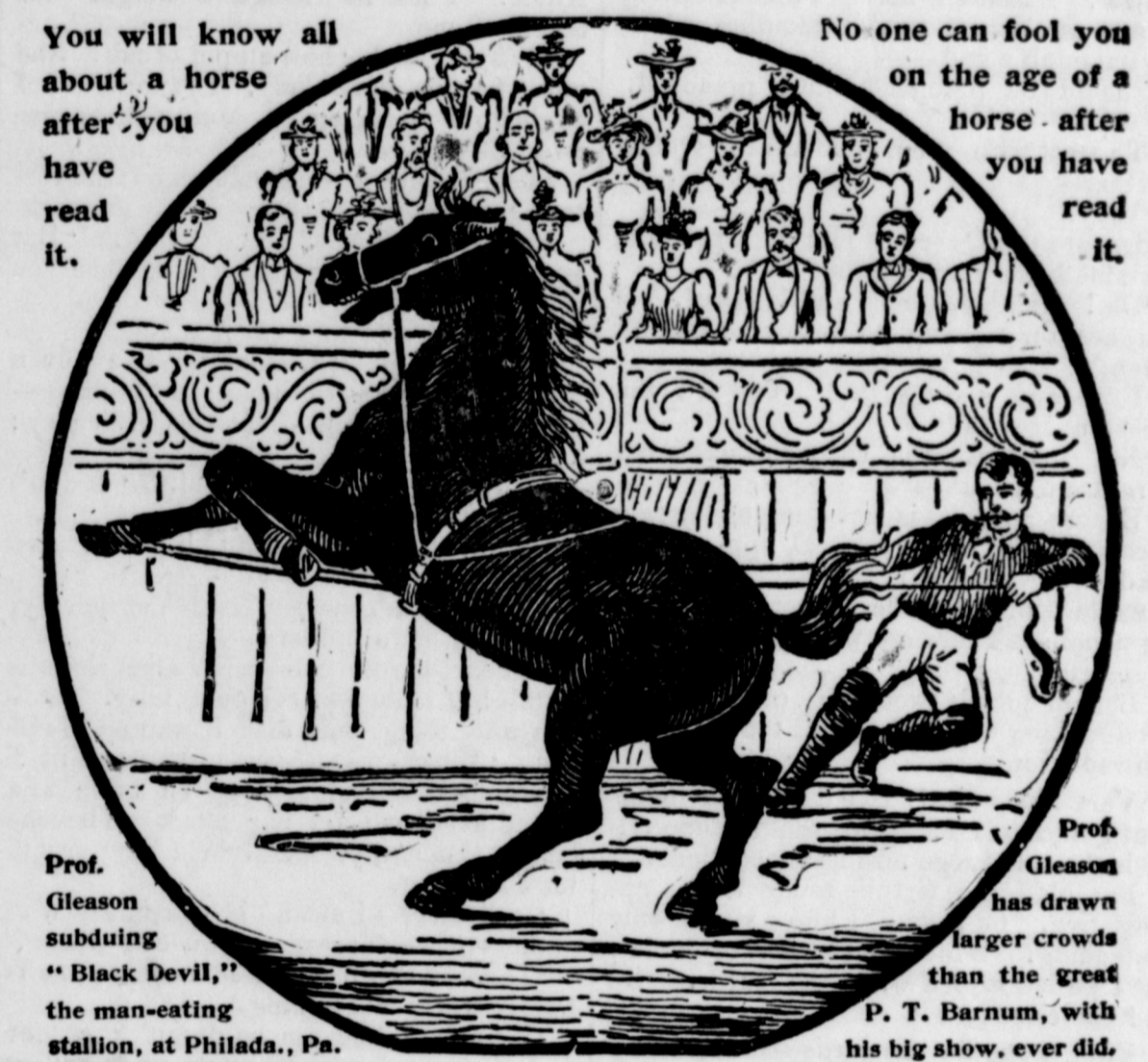
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**'A Cool 'Un.'**

"He's a cool 'un," is the way the soldiers in a certain English Regiment describe one of their officers, a young man whose self possession in a time of danger saved his men from defeat, and probably from death. The circumstance which gave this officer his reputation is related by Rudyard Kipling in the Westminster Magazine. He writes: A very young officer, who had gone almost straight from school to the army and thence to India, was leading his company through a rocky pass, on returning from a scouting expedition. They were beset by the enemy, who fired at them from behind the rocks and the men were growing very uneasy. Those in the rear began to be impatient, and shouted to the man in front, "Hurry up! What are you waiting for there?"

The young officer answered quite coolly: "Hold on a minute! I'm lighting my pipe!" And he struck a match and lit it. There was a roar of laughter, and a soldier called out, "Well, since you're so pressin', I think I'll have a pipe myself." And he, too, struck a match and began to smoke. This bit of fun steadied the men and they came through in good order.

Lord Coleridge's Umbrella Decision.

The law as to umbrellas was settled once for all by Lord Coleridge in a leading English case. His lordship held: "Umbrellas, properly considered, are a part of the atmospheric or meteorological condition, and, as such, there can be no individual property right in them. In Samps v. Thompson defendant's front steps during a storm and thereby soaking up a large quantity of rain to which plaintiff was entitled. But the court held that the rain was any man's rain, no matter where it fell. It follows therefore, that the umbrella is any man's umbrella. In all ages rain and umbrellas have gone together, and there is no reason why they should be separated in law. An umbrella may, under certain circumstances—the chief of which is possession—take on the attributes of personal property, just as it a man set a tub and catch a quantity of rain water, the rain water will be considered as his personal belonging while it is in his tub. But if the sun evaporate the water and it is rained down again, or if the tub be upset and the water spilled, then the

attribute of a personal ownership instantly disappears. So if a man hold his umbrella in his hand it may be considered a personal belonging, but the moment it leaves his hand it returns to the great, general, indivisible, common stock of umbrellas, whether the law will not attempt to pursue it."

So far as we know there has never been a successful appeal from this decision.—Chicago News.

**THE CURES GROW NUMEROUS SICKNESS OVERCOME BY MORIN'S WINE CRESO-PHATES**

All the neighborhood of Mrs. Chas. F. Guy, living in Quebec, knows that she was sick for a long time, and in spite of all care and medicines taken, nothing would give her any relief. Sometimes she seemed to feel better, but immediately afterwards the pains in the stomach and sides came back and made her suffer again. A severe cough changed into acute bronchitis, gave her much uneasiness, and she was thinking that perhaps before long she would not be able to find any medicine to relieve or cure her, when she read accidentally an advertisement of Morin's Creso-Phates Wine. Although she had already spent much money buying medicines, she decided to take some more to save her life. She bought one bottle of this medicine and after using it for some days Mrs. Faguy found with pleasure that her cough was diminishing and that it was not so severe as before using Morin's Wine. She did not feel so many pains and her breathing was much easier, her appetite got better every day. She was very encouraged and decided to continue this medicine until complete recovery. She got another bottle and had the best results from it; the expectoration came freely and without fatigue, her strength came back rapidly and a few days afterwards she was able to work as formerly.

To day Mrs. Faguy is in perfect health and she has no doubt that without Morin's Creso-Phates Wine she would not be alive now.