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the I. C. R., which is admittedly a very high standard, the rails on such portion being 70 pounds to the yard, as against 60 and 60 on the Intercolonial. Mr. Walworth gave evidence that the rails on the Intercolonial are of a better quality than those of the Drummond County railway, which are of a lower figure, the Drummond County railway would cost for the construction of its 132.2 miles \$2,522,500, a little more than it has been sworn the road actually cost.

The report goes on to recite the terms of the contract with the Drummond County Railway company, made in May, 1897, for a lease at an annual rental of \$64,000, being 4 per cent. on \$1,600,000, at the expiration of ninety-nine years the railway to be the absolute property of Canada. The report proceeds as follows: "In consequence of the first agreement not being ratified by parliament a further agreement in the nature of a temporary lease from year to year was entered into on February 25, 1898, between the government and the company, containing a stipulation that the government should have the right or option to purchase the whole property for the sum of \$1,600,000 cash. The result of the investigation clearly shows that in the event of the purchase of the Drummond County railway line being completed the road will cost the country only about \$12,000 per mile, a good deal less than its actual cost to the company, even if you add to the price to be paid under the existing option the amount of subsidy received from the federal government, because the cost of the construction, as sworn to, is over \$2,500,000. The estimate by the government's chief engineer, Mr. Schreiber, under the late government, and verified by his estimate to the present government, of the probable cost of the road completed from St. Rosealie to Chaudiere, of the character and description of that portion of the line then constructed, was \$1,535,500. The price, therefore, to be paid under the option only exceeds the cost estimated by Mr. Schreiber by \$4,500, and this sum, in all probability, would be more than absorbed, if we are to judge by the experience in the construction of government works in the past, had the government, instead of acquiring this road, and especially favored market, another of the same character. The road as now finished by the Drummond County company, under the contract with the present government, is for its last forty-three miles a very much better road than the other part of the line, and improved standard—end must have more than enough to make up the difference between the estimated and the option price. The earnings of the new road for the month of March are encouraging, and it is fair to assume that as the I. C. R. extension to Montreal becomes established, and business arrangements completed, there will be a material and satisfactory increase in the earnings attributable to such extension. It appears to your committee that the arrangement between the government and the company is so manifestly in the public interests that such legislation as may be necessary to sanction the same should be passed at an early date. I recommend the foregoing as the report of the committee. (Signed) J. F. Lister, Chairman."

BRITISH LUMBER MARKET.
(Timber Trades Journal, May 25.)
At the London sales on May 25th, birch from Hopedale sold at 74; from St. John, 84; birch planks from St. John, 9 to 12; as to dimensional lumber, spruce 24 to 26 1/2 in. and some 24 x 7 at 27 1/2 in. ex Halifax City, 25 1/2 to 28 1/2 in. from Hopedale sold at 74.

In regard to waterfront an impression seems to prevail in some quarters that owing to the high freight rates spruce portership in the Baltic will be able to maintain prices. These people, however, lose sight of the fact that the large proportion of the lower port spruce comes here on contract, and is thrust into the public as such as it arrives. If the market is well stocked the most face to the buying cost more to bring it here will not influence buyers. Good class wood is already shown a stronger tendency on the account, but the elevation has been confined as yet mostly to the spot market, and in a lower degree on contract goods. We are of opinion, much of it is serviceable. A cargo of well-sorted spruce flooring would be the precursor of hundreds to follow, and it only requires the ball to be once set rolling for a large trade to develop itself. In our last impression we drew attention to the possibility of the high freights checking the supply, and there were certain grounds for hoping that the market would follow. It is not overtake the demand, as probably the spruce people will hesitate to consign with doubtful prices here to an increased freight to lessen the chances of profit.

At Liverpool—We are glad to record the continuance of activity which, without being in any way large or exciting in its nature, is still of an importance that is appreciable to winches. The carrying companies, such as the railways and canal, are having a better time of it than they had last year, and are consequently more satisfied with their timber trade returns. We may take it that these furnish a sound barometer sign that the trade is doing fairly well.

At the state of trade in Glasgow there is little change to note. Prices of wood goods generally are firm, the stiffness of freights contributing to this. A steady consumption continues largely in connection with house and ship building, and saw mills continue active.

Amongst the arrivals at Hull is the Glenside (s), from St. John, with 1,000 standard H. Newsum, Sons & Co., Ltd., and 57 standard H. Newsum, Sons & Co., Ltd. This cargo is in very nice condition, and a good marketable stock, so that which is not already sold will soon find buyers. This vessel on the voyage lost part of her deck cargo.

Ask your grocer for
Windsor Salt
For Table and Dairy, Purest and Best

The spirit of Anglo-Saxon unity has not yet penetrated to the region of the Dakotas. At Pembina, N. D., a few days ago, the British flag was pulled down from the wagon on which it was carried by Canadian voyageurs from Emerson, Manitoba, and torn to shreds.

Subscribe for THE WEEKLY SUN

THE COMEDY OF DEATH.

By JOHN M. BUCKLEY.

Two men sat in a shabby little den of a room, one on the bed, the other on a dingy upholstered rocker, out of the seat of which the stuffing seemed perfectly oozing. Both were comely, but as they sat staring gloomily at the ugly threadbare carpet, their limbs sprawling in utter dejection, their appearance was decidedly unhand-some.

The lock on the mantel had just snapped out twelve jerky, unmusical tones, denoting the end of another day. This realization caused one of the men, the one on the chair, to glance up at his companion to see if he, too, had noticed it.

"It's no use!" he finally exclaimed in a tone of unmitigated weariness. "We can't go on this way any longer. The thing's got to be decided some way before that villainous clock strikes again."

This man's name was Lowndes—Homer A.—and there had been a time long ago when he was proud to call attention to the fact.

"Do you hear?" he queried still more sharply. "We're stranded with out a glimmering of hope. Now what do you propose? Oh! say something for God's sake," he added impatiently, after a moment of silence.

The mass of inert humanity on the bed slowly raised his head until on a level with the younger one facing him.

"Are we once more to indulge in our detailed tirade against existence?" he asked quietly. "Why not sit here till we die of disease?"

"Just what I expected," Lowndes burst out contemptuously. "And it's precisely the mood I want you in. I've thought the whole thing out when you've sat there like a log of wood. Listen now! Do you still care anything for Alice?"

"I thought I'd get your attention by that," he went on, as his companion looked up with a start. "Well, so do I. And instead of going off somewhere and cutting our throats as decently unworthy people would do, we hang around in threadbare trousers and a dearth of them, even in the hope of inducing a woman to accept a miserable existence with us. You're my cousin, but I've reached a stage where blood runs evenly with water, and one of us has got to leave. When I say that I don't mean to go around the corner looking after matches, but pack up and leave the earth. Commit suicide! I can see the whole world lying crumpled on its poles for us." He finished with a nasty laugh.

During the whole of this the lethargy of the bed occupant had continued, and he neither moved nor signalled in any way that he had heard. After a minute's silence Lowndes began again:

"I've got a plan that I think is unusual enough to attract even a mummy like you. At any rate, I've spent more mental effort in evolving it than you have on anything for five years. It means death for one of us and a condensed prosperity for the other."

A slight nod of the man's head encouraged him to go on.

"I've just got a dollar and a half to my name," he continued, and I doubt if you have half of that. When we are gone we'll sit here and starve. And side by side, with bread as a desirable and necessary quality, we place Alice. Oh, it's time to drop sentiment!"

He exclaimed, noticing another start of his cousin's shoulders. "I love that girl as much as you, perhaps more; but we've got to face facts, not ideals. You're thirty and I'm twenty-eight. He went on, "and we're both failures. You know perfectly well that neither of us will ever amount to anything, or be in a position to marry Alice unless we have money."

"Do you see those papers?" he asked suddenly, pointing to a little heap of magazines and newspapers he had thrown on the table on coming in that night. "I've been a week getting those things."

He arose and took one of them from the table. "They're all different," he explained, "and each one contains a coupon which reads similarly to this: 'The insurance company will pay to that person who shall be determined by the editors of the Magazine to be the nearest living relative of any person found dead as a result of accident with this coupon about his person, properly filed out, the sum of \$10,000. There is some of it!' said Lowndes, "but that's enough."

There was dead silence for a moment. The man on the bed had looked up at the beginning of the reading, with a little more interest in his eyes, and now the two were grimly regarding each other.

"I suppose you are beginning to be distressed with intelligence concerning my plan," as last observed Lowndes. "You are my cousin, though not relative; in fact, my only one, save for some dodgy uncle in the west, whom I have never even seen. The rule works both ways. The one dies, inherits peace, you see. The other, a few thousands, enough to buy visiting cards, anyhow—and happiness with Alice. By the way, you haven't spoken to her yet?" he asked excitedly, leaning forward in his chair toward the bed.

"Remember our agreement," he added more quietly, as his cousin shook his head. "Well, what do you think of the idea?"

"You seem, as you intimated, to have devoted quite a little of your valuable mentality to the arranging of our respective futures," began the other man, with a slight sneer in his tone. "But why bother the poor girl? Suppose both of us leave in the way you suggest without having anything to do with your vulgar coupons. It would be quite simple and settle everything."

He looked across at his cousin with an extremely unpleasant smile on his pale face.

Lowndes looked back at him a moment. "I don't know whether you're in earnest or not," he said. "If you are, you're a bigger fool than I am. But come on. Get yourself together and we'll settle the thing right here and now."

He went to a drawer in the bureau and got out a well handled pack of

cards. "I thought I'd give you your favorite occupation," he said suggestively, "to usher you either out of the world or into prosperity. There was a time when to agree to abide by the result of such a game would have been foreign to us. Shall we play?"

"I suppose so," was the answer, with a palpable attempt at carelessness. "How melodramatic we get!" was added nervously. "What do you play?"

"We can play poker hands if you like, or simply cut. High man out, or any luck gave you say."

"Oh, well! out for the best two in the pack. That'll give us both a fair show and shorten the agony. Go ahead and shuffle."

Lowndes slowly took the cards. His hands trembled slightly and he quickened his movements to disguise it.

"Wait!" he exclaimed suddenly, throwing them down again. "We would better arrange the details before the decision is made. My blood wouldn't be cold enough to do it afterward, no matter how it turned out. Help me with some of these papers."

When the coupons were clipped and laid out on the table, the aggregate sum of their insurance was found to amount to about \$5,000.

"It is scarcely enough to make much of a lifelong splurge on," commented Lowndes, "but one of us will have enough to visit a decent tailor. If Alice decides to favor the one whom she picks, she'll have a six months' vacation, this money ought to provide one more start. Now, let's decide it. You understand, of course, that the one who loses this game is likewise to lose his life in some accidental manner. There is to be no hedging after the die is cast."

A nod was the answer.

Both men were becoming rather nervous and excited, and their shifting eyes rather nervously avoided each other's gaze. Once more Lowndes took up the cards. This time the twirling of his hands was quite visible and caused a grim smile to appear at the corners of his cousin's mouth.

"Shall we cut for shuffle?" asked Lowndes.

"Go on."

He commenced to slip them through his hands in a jerky, unnatural fashion. Once or twice he dropped some of them.

"I didn't know I had so much feeling left," said he, as he finally laid the pack down on the middle of the table.

Both men stared straight at each other for the first time since the start. At last Montgomery stretched out his hand and made a cut. The card on the top as he turned them up was the eight of hearts. Lowndes quickly followed suit.

He looked at the card, and then at his cousin's. "That's a six, making the cards even," he said, "and the cards are equal. Lowndes gathered up the cards, and with a perfectly firm hand quickly shuffled them. His nerve had returned, while his companion was growing more and more excited. He seemed to realize for the first time what was at stake and he was quite vacant for some time as they lay in front of him for the third time. He reached out but drew back his hand just before touching the pack. He looked across the table at Lowndes, while both men stared straight at each other for the first time since the start.

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self on the bed and stared at the ceiling. He could not realize the significance of what had happened, and found himself wondering whether Lowndes would be in to breakfast. Towards daylight he fell into a restless sleep, full of unpleasant dreams. He thought he was again playing cards for life or death. When he awoke, Alice suddenly appeared and Lowndes held him while she cut his throat.

When he finally awoke it was broad daylight, and his nerves were in a pitiable state of collapse. He stayed in his room all day, cursing the moment he was born. When night came once more with all its horrible memories he went out after an opiate and took it with a sigh of relief. This time his sleep was heavy and dreamless.

At 5 o'clock he awoke with a start and heard the down stairs front door close, followed by the sound of hushed voices in the hall. He heard a slight flash of light and a high, excited, and what it meant. The sensation left him utterly weak, and when he heard the woman's step coming up the stairs, his heart beat with a force and rapidity that made him think it would burst.

After an interminable age, while he lay gasping for breath, the steps reached the door and he heard the sound of knocking on it. By a tremendous effort he managed to emit a sound of struggle from his throat.

The door flew open, and his landlady's horrified countenance appeared in its frame.

"Oh, sir!" she burst out, "Mr. Lowndes has been found with his head all mashed to pieces and every bone in his body broken. Oh, it's so terrible. It can be true!"

Montgomery was conscious of a great sickening sensation that seemed to spread itself all over his body. He gazed at the figure of the woman in the door and it revolved round and round, getting further and further away.

Three weeks later Montgomery was permitted by the attending physician to sit up and read the afternoon papers, beginning with the first day of his sickness. The one he held in his hand contained the following article under a sensational head:

"A horrible affair occurred in West Park early this morning, which resulted in the death of Homer A. Lowndes, aged 28 years, of 181 Nineteenth street."

"Some time between dark last night and 4 o'clock this morning Lowndes started to walk across the railroad bridge which crosses the park at the upper end of the drive. Near the end he either lost his balance or threw himself off head first, falling to the ground 75 feet below. On one side of the drive there are massive rocks, and these the body struck, evidently squashing him to death."

"As the face and head were badly disfigured, identification was made by a number of visiting cards and letters in the pockets. There was also a number of accident coupons signed by Lowndes, which would seem to indicate an excessive had been brooding over forebodings of something to happen."

"The body was taken to the address mentioned, where he had boarded for a long time with his cousin, James V. Montgomery. The two men were close companions. The news of Lowndes' death was an awful shock to his cousin, who is now critically ill in consequence."

Montgomery dropped the paper with a weary sigh. He still felt wretchedly unwell, and unnerve, and shuddered whenever he thought of his cousin's ghastly fate. In moments he picked up another paper and read:

Sacramento, Cal., March 19.—The will of the late Homer A. Lowndes, a well known citizen of this city, was yesterday probated in the register of wills office. The document leaves all his possessions, money, stocks, and collateral and valued in the aggregate at about \$125,000, to his nephew and namesake in an eastern city. The former's lawyers are now investigating the report that the nephew met a violent death from a fall on Wednesday last."

For fully thirty minutes Montgomery lay back in his chair and gazed straight ahead of him, thinking as hard as his poor, bruised brain would allow. When he quietly dropped asleep.

Later, when his landlady came in a little later, he was smiling in his dreams in a way that almost frightened her.

During the next six months Montgomery had very little mental quietude. After the usual amount of red tape, he had found himself moderately well off as a result of his cousin's insurance, and the property from his uncle, which had naturally come to him. Early in the seventh month, after Lowndes' death, he was sitting at his desk in a handsomely furnished room. Two letters lay in front of him, both of them from his cousin's hands. One, he did not recognize, the other was Alice's, and he sat gazing apparently afraid to open it. Owing to the fact that she had seemed to avoid him for the last week or two, never mentioning him to be alone with her, Montgomery had decided to settle the matter finally. He wrote her a earnest letter with a touch of his old manliness in it, pleading his case and begging for a speedy answer. And now it lay in front of him. Finally he opened it and spread it out on the desk. It began in the old, old way:

"My dear Mr. Montgomery: I have just received your letter and I am as sorry about it. Believe me, I never imagined that you cared for me in that way at all. I know that you have been at my home a great deal since Mr. Lowndes' death, but I imagined it was only because you were lonely without him and needed my companionship. I did not realize what was coming. For your own sake I must be firm and tell you that there never can be any hope. I know it sounds cruel to you, but I never loved any one but Homer, and I want you to let me remain your best friend always. Very sincerely yours,

Alice Elsie Travers.

Montgomery sat staring at the signature with burning eyes. So Lowndes had robbed him after all. While he was trying to think the thing out calmly, his eye caught sight of the other letter. For the sake of

temporary mental distraction he opened it. As soon as he saw the first line his brain gave another throb: "My dear cousin," it began, "I am delighted to renew our acquaintance though grieved to make a letter of this character its object. You may be slightly surprised to hear from me, I having been buried over six months, but to be brief, I found an obliging proxy who consented to carry out our arrangements on my behalf."

"Between one and two o'clock the next morning, after a day's hard thinking, I was mooning around in the park when I came across a body on the rocks by the drive. In the moonlight I could see that the man evidently had fallen from the bridge. He was dressed like a common tramp, and as his features were pretty well masked up, a brilliant idea struck me. I changed clothes with him. It isn't necessary to go any further. I immediately got away and didn't hear of the windfall from my uncle for some weeks. While not starving at present, I am not in the most affluent circumstances in the world, and it annoys me to think of my fortune from which you are deriving all the benefit. I have kept quiet for a half year and I would not come to the front again unless absolutely necessary. Nevertheless, I want a share of my money again. I am aware that you have the whole amount in bank near you, and I have estimated that you will receive this in time to draw it out before closing time and bring it in person to 1—, on the 610 train."

Sometime ago I met a woman who thinks there is some good in me. I think the same about her, to the exclusion of Alice. Accordingly we trust each other. She addressed this letter, and she will be at the station at 1—, dressed in black with a white feather in her hat. I will give her a receipt for the money."

"I will need \$50,000, which leaves you more than half."

H. A. L.

Montgomery emitted a single great groan expressive of his inability to cope with the paradoxes of destiny. He turned the letter over and carefully read it again. Then burying his face in his hands he tried to still the fierce beating of his temples.

Finally looking at his watch, he slowly reached one hand out after his check book.

FRENCH AND ENGLISH NAVIES.

France's Weakness Shown Up by One of Her Admirals—Threatens England With Privateers.

(London Times.)

Rear Admiral Dupont, writing today in the *Gazette* on French and English navies, says:

In a speech of Mr. Chamberlain, the campaign was again, in the English press, the attacks of the British minister on Russia, the general ill-humor of the English merchants, menaced everywhere in their interests, constitute disquieting symptoms which may be due to puerile ignorance. The question naturally arises therefore in everybody's mind, is the French navy ready for an eventual struggle with the English navy. As regards the number of ships now available, as regards facility of concentration of force, the ludicrous choice and the preponderance of the British navy, our inferiority is notorious. Since the application of the Naval Defence Act, our neighbors have doubled their resources by constructing with a feverish haste. They have been able to launch within a single year as many as five battleships of from 12,000 to 15,000 tons, eight large cruisers, and twenty-two smaller vessels, so that the disproportion, already great, which existed between the two navies has been enormously increased. England can now put into the thirty-four battleships of her fleet, 15,000 to 15,000 tons, fifty-two large cruisers, and a very large number of smaller vessels, among which should be noted a numerous flotilla of very rapid torpedo boat destroyers. Besides these vessels, twenty older battleships, for the most part remodelled, may be reckoned as a solid reserve to this already formidable force.

"What have we to set against this array? Sixteen new battleships, eight good coast defence vessels, about ten old battleships of mediocre value, and twenty-three modern cruisers. Rocking on both sides the vessels that are of no use for service, and taking into account breakdowns and accidents, we may say, on the whole, that the strength of our navy is between a third and a half of that of the English navy. The quality of the similar vessels in both navies is about the same. The English vessels have in general a look of greater strength, they can go greater distances, and their tonnage is greater, which enables them to be better armed and equipped. Their guns are well placed, they are less powerful at an equal calibre. The speed is usually inferior to ours and can be less easily kept up in spite of the nominal figures to be found in the numerous lists published in both countries."

In a word, the value of similar types is approximately the same; but we remain in presence of a crushing numerical superiority. And our inferiority is increased by the inadequate reparation of stations outside Europe. While England is strongly posted at the outlets of all the great maritime basins of the world, we are reduced to utilizing a few indifferently placed positions."

"We shall patiently abide our time, and it will certainly come. Meanwhile we shall organize an implacable system of privateering against the trade of our enemies. I know not what diplomaticists think of the convention of 1856, but as for us sailors, let the English be assured beforehand that we shall carry on privateering against them, and let them take the ruin of their maritime trade into their forecasts."