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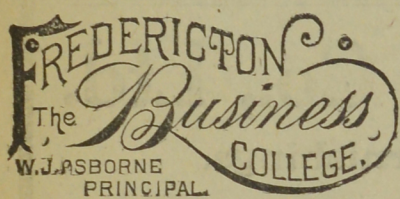
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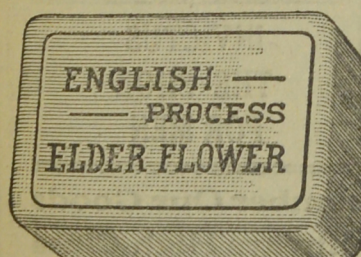
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# CY WHITTAKER'S PLACE

"You did? What in the world—  
"Well, for what I thought was good  
reasons; all on her account they was.  
And yet she did come back and kept  
comin' even after she blabbed the  
whole thing. However, I s'pose that  
was just to help Georgianna. Oh,  
hum! I am an old fool."

The lawyer inspected him seriously.  
"Well, captain," he said slowly, "if  
it is any comfort for you to know that  
your reason isn't the correct one for  
Miss Dawes' going away I can assure  
you on that point. I think she went  
because she was greatly disappointed  
and didn't wish to see you just now."

"Disappointed? What do you mean?"  
"Humph! I didn't mean to tell you  
yet, but I judge that I'd better. No  
one knows it here but Miss Dawes and  
I, and probably no one but us three  
need ever know it. You see, the fact  
is that the Arizona woman, Desire  
Higgins, isn't Mrs. Thomas at all. He  
isn't her missing husband."

"What?"  
"Yes, it's so. Really it was too  
much of a coincidence to be possible,  
and yet it certainly did seem that it  
would prove true. This Higgins woman  
was apparently so anxious to find her  
missing man that she was ready to  
recognize almost any description, and  
the slight lameness and the fact of his  
having been in Montana helped along.  
If we could have got a photograph  
sooner the question would have been  
settled. Only last week, while I was  
in Boston, I got word from the de-  
tective agency that a photo had been  
received. I went to see it immediately.  
There was some resemblance, but not  
enough. Henry Thomas was never  
Mr. Higgins."

"But—but—they say Thomas has  
skipped out."

### CHAPTER XXV.

"YES, he has," went on Lawyer  
Peabody, speaking about  
Thomas. "That's the queer  
part of it. At the place  
where he boarded we learned that he  
got a letter from Arizona—trust the  
average landlady to look at postmarks  
—that he seemed greatly agitated all  
that day and left that night. No one  
has seen him since. Why he went is  
a puzzle, where we don't care. So long  
as he keeps out of our way that's  
enough."

Captain Cy did not care either. He  
surmised that Mr. Atkins might prob-  
ably explain the disappearance. And  
yet, oddly enough, this explanation  
was not the true one. The Honorable  
Heman solemnly assured the captain  
that he had not communicated with  
Emily's father. He intended to do so  
as a part of the compact agreed upon  
at the hotel, but the man had fled.  
And the mystery is still unsolved. The  
supposition is that there really was a  
wife somewhere in the west. Who or  
where she was no Bayporter knows.  
Henry Thomas has never come back  
to explain.

"I told Miss Dawes of the photo-  
graph and what it proved," went on  
Peabody. "She was dreadfully disap-  
pointed. She could hardly speak when  
she left me. I urged her to come in  
and see you, but she wouldn't. Evi-  
dently she had set her heart on help-  
ing you and the child. It is too bad,  
because, practically speaking, we owe  
everything to her. There is little doubt  
that the inquiry set on foot by her  
scared the Thomas fellow into flight.  
And she has worked night and day to  
aid us. She is a very clever woman,  
Captain Whittaker, and a good one.  
You can't thank her enough. Here!  
What are you about?"

Captain Cy strode past him into the  
dining room. The hat rack hung on  
the wall by the side door. He snatch-  
ed his cap from the peg and was strug-  
gling into his overcoat.

"Where are you going?" demanded  
the lawyer. "You mustn't attempt to  
walk now. You need rest."

"Rest! I'll rest by and by. Just now  
I've got business to attend to. Let go  
of that pea jacket."

"But—"

"No buts about it. I'll see you later.  
So long!"

He threw open the door and hurried  
down the walk. The lawyer watched  
him in amazement. Then a slow smile  
overspread his face.

"Captain!" he called. "Captain Whit-  
taker!"

Captain Cy looked back over his  
shoulder. "What do you want?" he  
asked.

Mr. Peabody's face was now intense-  
ly solemn, but there was a twinkle in  
his eye.

"I think she's at the boarding house,"  
he said demurely. "I'm pretty certain  
you'll find her there."

All the regulars at the perfect board-  
ing house had, of course, attended the  
reception at the Cy Whittaker place.  
None of them, with the exception of  
the schoolmistress, had as yet return-  
ed. Dinner had been forgotten in the  
excitement of the great day, and Ket-  
urah and Angeline and Mrs. Tripp had  
stopped in at various dwellings along  
the main road to compare notes on the  
captain's appearance and the Atkins  
address. Asaph and Bailey and Al-  
phons Smalley were at Simmons'.

Captain Cy knew better than to at-  
tempt his hurried trip by way of the  
road. He had no desire to be held up  
and congratulated. He went across  
lots, in the rear of barns and orchards,  
wading through drifts and climbing  
fences as no sane convalescent should.  
But the captain at that moment was  
suffering from the form of insanity  
known as the fixed idea. She had done  
all this for him—for him. And his last  
message to her had been an insult.

He reached the bank's property  
by the stable lane. No one locks doors  
in our village, and those of the perfect  
boarding house were unfastened. He  
entered by way of the side porch, just  
as he had done when Gabe Lumley's  
depot wagon first deposited him in  
that yard. But now he entered on tip-  
toe. The dining room was empty. He  
peeped into the sitting room. There  
by the center table sat Phoebe Dawes,  
her elbow on the arm of her chair and  
her head resting on her hand.

"Ahem! Phoebe!" said Captain Cy.  
She started, turned and saw him  
standing there. Her eyes were wet,  
and there was a handkerchief in her  
lap.

"Phoebe," said the captain anxiously,  
"have you been cryin'?"

She rose on the instant. A great  
wave of red swept over her face. The  
handkerchief fell to the floor, and she  
stooped and picked it up.

"Crying!" she repeated confusedly.  
"Why, no, of course—of course not!  
I—how do you do, Captain Whittaker?  
I'm—we're all very glad to see you  
home again—and well."

She extended her hand. Captain Cy  
reached forward to take it. Then he  
hesitated.

"I don't think I'd ought to let you  
shake hands with me, Phoebe," he  
said—"not until I beg your pardon."

"Beg my pardon! Why?"

He absently took the hand and held  
it.

"For the word I sent to you when I  
went away. 'Twas an awful thing to  
say, but I meant it for your sake, you  
know. Honest, I did."

She laughed nervously.

"Oh, that!" she said. "Well, I did  
think you were rather particular as to  
your visitors. But Mr. Tidditt ex-  
plained, and then— You needn't beg  
my pardon. I appreciate your thought-  
fulness. I knew you meant to be kind  
to me."

"That's what I did. But you didn't  
obey orders. You kept comin'. Now,  
why?"

"Why? Did you suppose that I  
cared for the malicious gossip of—  
such people? I came because you  
were in trouble, and I hoped to help  
you. And—and I thought I had helped  
until a few minutes ago."

Her lip quivered. That quiver went  
to the captain's heart.

"Helped?" he faltered. "Helped?  
Why, you've done so much that I can't  
ever thank you. You've been the only  
real helper I've had in all this miser-  
able business. You've stood by me all  
through."

"But it was all wrong. He isn't the  
man at all. Didn't Mr. Peabody tell  
you?"

"Yes, yes, he told me. What differ-  
ence does that make? Peabody be-  
hanged! He ain't in this. It's you  
and me—don't you see? What made  
you do all this for me?"

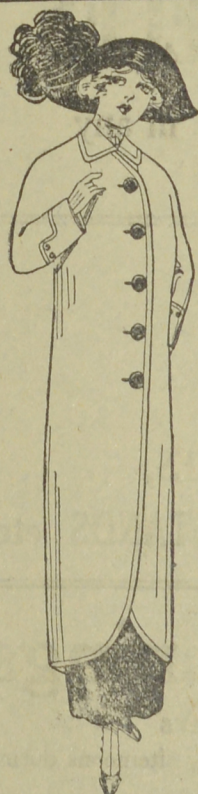
She looked at the floor and not at  
him as she answered.

"Why, because I wanted to help  
you," she said. "I've been alone in the

world ever since mother died, years  
ago. I've had few real friends. Your  
friendship had come to mean a great  
deal to me. The splendid fight you  
were making for that little girl proved  
what a man you were. And you fought  
so bravely when almost every one was  
against you I couldn't help wanting to  
do something for you. How could I?  
And now it has come to nothing—my  
part of it. I'm so sorry."

To be Continued

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