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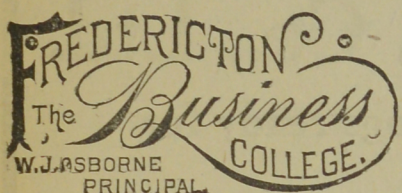
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CY WHITTAKER'S PLACE

The captain began to ask questions
as soon as the soup was served, but
Everdeen refused to answer.
"No, no," he said, "pleasure first and
business afterward; that's a congress-
sional motto. I can't talk Atkins with
my dinner and enjoy it."

CHAPTER XIX.

"CAN'T, hey?" queried Cyrus
of the congressman. "You
wouldn't be popular at our
perfect boarding house back
home. There they serve Heman hot
for breakfast and dinner and warm
him over for supper. All right; I can
wait."

The conversation wandered from
Buenos Aires to Frisco and back again
until the cigars and coffee were reach-
ed. Then the congressman blew a
fragrant ring into the air and from
behind it looked quizzically at his
companion.

"Well," he observed, "so far as that
appropriation of yours is concerned"—
He paused and blew a second ring.
Captain Cy stroked his beard.

"Um—yes!" he drawled. "Now that
you mention it seems to me there was
some talk of an appropriation."

Mr. Everdeen laughed.
"I've been making inquiries," he
said. "I saw the chairman of the com-
mittee on the pork bill. I know him
well. He's a good fellow, but—"

"Yes, I know. I've seen lots of poli-
ticians like that. They're all good fel-
lows, but— If I was in politics I'd
make a law to cut 'but' out of the dic-
tionary."

"Well, this chap really is a good fel-
low. I asked about the \$30,000 for
your town. He asked me why I didn't
go to the congressman from that dis-
trict and not bother him about it. I
said perhaps I would go to the con-
gressman later, but I came to him
first."

"Sartin. Same as the feller with a
sick mother-in-law stopped in at the
undertaker's on his way to call the
doctor. All right; heave ahead."

"Well, we had a rather long con-
versation. I discovered that the Bay-
port item was originally included in
the bill, but recently had been stricken
out."

"Yes, I see. Uncle Sam had to econ-
omize, hey—save somethin' for a rainy
day?"

"Well, possibly. Still, the bill is just
as heavy. Now, Captain Whittaker, I
don't know anything about this affair,
and it's not my business, but I've been
about today, and I asked questions,
and—I'm going to tell you a fairy tale.
It isn't as interesting as your sea
yarns, but— Do you like fairy stories?"

"Land, yes! Tell a few myself when
it's necessary. Sometimes I almost be-
lieve 'em. Well?"

"Of course you must remember this
is a fairy story. Let's suppose that
once on a time—that's the way they
always begin—once on a time there
was a great man, great in his own
country, who was sent abroad by his
people to represent them among the
rulers of the land, so in order to typi-
cally represent them he dressed in
glad and expensive raiment, went
about in dignity and—"

"And whiskers. Don't leave out the
whiskers."

"All right—and whiskers. And it
came to pass that the people whom he
represented wished to—er—bring about
a certain needed improvement in their
—their beautiful and enterprising com-
munity."

"Sho, sho! How natural that sounds!
You must be a mind reader."

"No, but I have to make speeches in
my own community occasionally. Well,
the people asked their great man to
get the money needed for this improve-
ment from the rulers of the land afore-
mentioned. And he was at first all
enthusiasm, and upon the—the parch-
ment scroll where such matters are in-
scribed were written the name of the
beautiful and enterprising community
and the sum of money it asked for,
and the deal was as good as made.
Excuse the modern phraseology. My
fairy lingo got mixed there."

"Never mind. I can get the drift
just as well—maybe better."

"And the deal was as good as made.
But before the vote was taken another
chap came to the great man and said:
'Look here! I want to get an appropria-
tion of, say, \$50,000 to deepen and
improve a river down in my state—a
southern state we'll say—I've been to
the chairman of the pork bill commit-
tee, and he says it's impossible. The
bill simply can't be loaded any further.
But I find that you have an item in
there for deepening and improving a
harbor back in your own district.
Why don't you cut that item out—
above it over until next year? You
can easily find a satisfactory explana-
tion for your constituents. And you
want to remember this: The improve-
ment of this river means that the—the
—well, a certain sugar growing com-
pany can get their stuff to market at a
figure which will send its stock up and
up. And you are said to own a consid-
erable amount of that stock. So why
not drop the harbor item and substi-
tute my river slice? Then—' Well, I
guess that's the end of the tale."

He paused and relit his cigar. Cap-
tain Cy thoughtfully marked with his
fork on the tablecloth.

"Hum!" he grunted. "That's a very
interestin' yarn. Yes, yes; don't know's
I ever heard a more interestin' one. I
presume likely there ain't a mite of
proof that it's true?"

"Not an atom. I told you it was a
fairy tale. And I mustn't be quoted
in the matter. Honestly, the most of
it is guesswork at that. But perhaps a
'committee of one' dropping a hint at
home might at least arouse some un-
comfortable questioning of a certain
great man. That's about all, though.
Proof is quite another thing."

The captain pondered. He was fully
aware that the unpopularity of the
'committee' would nullify whatever
good its hinting might do.

"Humph!" he grunted again. "It's
one thing to smell a rat and another
to nail its tail to the floor. But I'm
mighty obliged to you, all the same.
And I'll think it over hard. Say, I
can see one thing—you don't take a
very big shine to Heman yourself!"

"Not too big, no. Do you?"

"Well, I don't wake up nights and
cry for him."

Everdeen laughed.

"That's characteristic," he said.

"You have your own way of putting
things, captain, and it's hard to be im-
proved on. Atkins has never done
anything to me. I just—I just don't
like him, that's all. Father never liked
him either in the old days, and yet,
and it's odd, too, he was the means of
the old gentleman's making the most
of his money."

"He? Who? Not Heman?"

"Yes, Heman Atkins. But so far as
that goes father started him toward
wealth, I suppose. At least he was
poor enough before the mine was sold."

"What are you talkin' about? He-
man got his start tradin' over in the
south seas, sellin' the Kanakas glass
beads and calico for pearls and copra—
two cupfuls of pearls for every bead.
Anyhow, that's the way the yarn
goes."

"I can't help that. He was just a
common sailor who had run away from
his ship and was gold mining in Cali-
fornia. And when he and his partner
struck it rich father borrowed money,
headed a company and bought them
out. That mine was the Excelsior, and
it's just as productive today as it ever
was. I rather think Atkins must be
very sorry he sold. I suppose, if
right, I should be very grateful to your
distinguished representative."

"Well, I do declare! Sho, sho! Ain't
that funny, now? He's never said a
word about it at home. I don't be-
lieve there's a soul in Bayport knows
that. We all thought 'twas south sea
tradin' that boosted Heman. And your
own dad! I declare, this is a small
world!"

"It's odd father never told you about
it. It's one of the old gentleman's pet
stories. He came west in 1850 and
was running a little shipping store in
Frisco. He met Atkins and the other
young sailor, his partner, before they
left their ship. They were in the
store, buying various things, and
father got to know them pretty well.
Then they ran away to the diggings—
you simply couldn't keep a crew in
those times—and he didn't see them
again for a good while. Then they
came in one day and showed him
specimens from a claim they had back
in the mountains. They were mighty
good specimens, and what they said
about the claim convinced father that
they had a valuable property. So he
went to see a few well to do friends
of his, and the outcome was that a
party was made up to go and inspect.
The young fellows were willing to sell
out, for it was a quartz working, and
they hadn't the money to carry it on.

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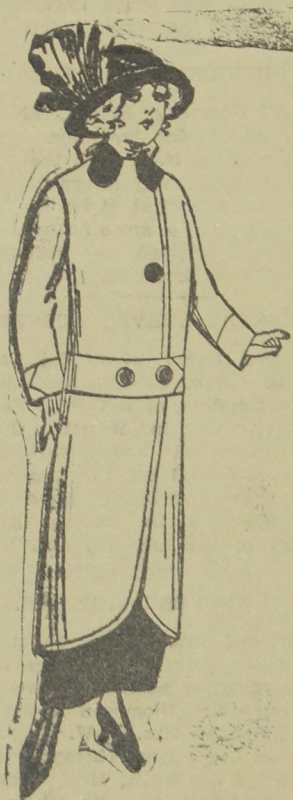
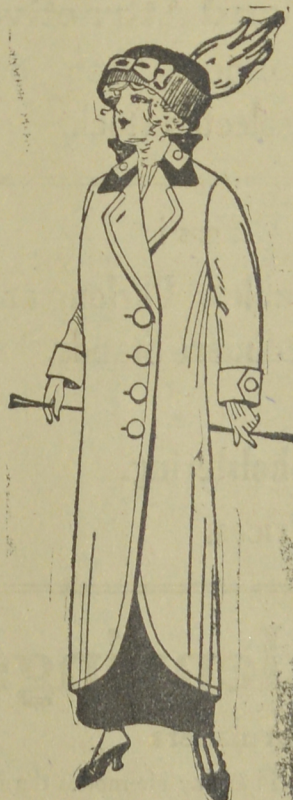
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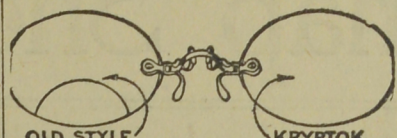
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