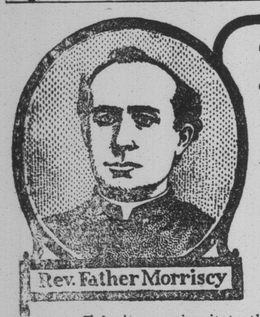
MC2465 POOR DOCUMENT



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A MENDER OF MEN

"Father John,"said Dandy Halson, sinking deep into the comfortable saddlebag chair which the Vicar of Brigsbury seemed to keep for his guests use, not his own, "you're the same run card you were at school, I can't size you up anyhow."

"Oh," said the vicar, with a cheery laugh, "don't look on it in that light, old man. It's a very great pleasure to me to have you. You've got to believe that, Tom."

"I've got to believe a lot that I won't believe, then. Nice little thing our nurse Fanny! She rather takes my eye. No objection, I hope?"

"She is a very good girl," said the vicar. He moved from the hearth, before which he had been standing. "So good a girl, Tom, that I hope"—(he fingered a concordance on his sermon table)—"I hope you will forgive me if I say I had scruples in asking her to come. Tom, you must respect my scruples and—her."

Dandy Halson's teeth met with a snap.

"That's good," he muttered after a brief silence. "Upon my word, you righteous gentlemen are keen and discerning the motes in the eyes of the rest of us. I'm not to make love to her, then?"

"Tom, old man," said the vicar, turning upon the friend of his boyhood, "do be just to yourself. It isn't too late. It's never too late thank God, while it lasts."

"Oh, bunkum, Jack! I'm not here to be preached to"

The vicar of Brigsbury suddenly believed that calm, passionate demeanor of his, which for a whole week had astonished and often irritated his erring friend.

"Tom, old man," he said tensely, with a hand on the other's shoulder, "don't mock me. I can't bear it. I'm a man, like yourself, with plenty to fight against, and I need to be prayed for quite as much as any one else. For old-time's sake and for your own, don't sneer at me, and let me tell you this. I love Miss Downing."

Dandy Halson said no word to stop him. He moved his head and smiled as he watched his friend and host from the room. Alone he whistled softly.

"There's still balm in Gilead," he remarked. "I call this sublime. It saves the situation and makes me feel better. Tom Halson, your not the broken-down hulk you reckoned yourself a good while back, and you've been closed quite enough with Good Samaritan intentions and moralities. Another week or two and he'd have had me on my beam ends like Master Southey, with no strength in me for anything but maudlin benisons. What [illegible] for a fellow to lead—patching [illegible] this wretched fellow-creatures [illegible] ey'll stand it, or killing t[illegible] th the consciousness of th[illegible] like Master Southey. But no, [illegible] come, you sha'nt find me so easy a subject."

He rang the bell. The vicar's placid middle-aged housekeeper promptly answered it.

"Oh, come in, Mrs. Green," said Dandy Halson genially. "Don't be frightened. Nerves in good form now, and I'm not thirsty. I want a little talk with you."

Mrs. Green's calm, "Very good, sir," was not encouraging. She understands the circumstances of her master's guest. He was believed to be at the vicarage to be reformed out of his old baleful drinking habit. There was not a drop of anything alcoholic in the house. Mr. Southey the latest but one of John Graeme's philanthropic and Christian ventures, had not been taken in hand in time. Mr. Halson, though he had occasional paroxysms of nerve trouble, was a strong man compared to Southey

"I'm going to be very candid with you, Mrs. Green," said Dandy Halson. "I suppose you are pretty comfortable here as boss of the show and all that?"

"Sir!" said Mrs. Green.

"Oh, you needn't jump. You've got your head screwed on right enough I'll warrant. It's about the nurse, is she in?"

"No, sir. She always takes a little walk in the afternoon.

"Just—so! She'll come home with the vicar. Do you know that he's fond of her?"

Again Mrs. Green started.

"Yes," said Dandy Halson, raising his eyebrows, it's a serious matter, I'm afraid. For you, I mean. That is, it might be, if you don't join your forces with mine. See what I mean.

Mrs. Green slowly confessed that she was puzzled rather than enlightened. But there was a bloom in her mature cheeks and an expression in her eyes which convinced Dandy that he had summed her up accurately.

"Why, of course, he said with a laugh, "it will be the end of your reign if they marry. You must see that anyway. But, look here; I tell you what I'll do for you. You shall have £100 the day Miss Downing marries me. Just make the best of me in your gossiping with her, and whatever you do, don't pass a hint to her that the vicar feels like that about her. See?"

"I think you must be mistaken, sir," she said

And then Dandy Halson rose and finished his bargaining with the woman face to face.

"How can I be mistaken," he said impatiently, "when the vicar has just told me that he loves her? Well, I love her, too, and I don't mean to be shy about it Come Mrs. Green, you and I know the world better than your master, good man though he is. Will you back me?

She was not fully satisfied, but Dandy Halson took pains to convince her. And, little by little, the barriers fell away from her reserve and she betrayed herself as a woman with quite ordinary and (as Halson reminded her) perfectly natural notions of self-interest.

"Why shouldn't I love her?" he asked, cheerfully. "And why shouldn't you bank a hundred pounds for making two folks happy, to say nothing about the good you'll do in removing undesirable temptation from the vicar's path?"

These questions were too profound for Mrs. Green, but she stroked her chin and seemed to appeal for more persuasion. Finally she gave way.

"Very well, sir, she said, "I will do my best. My master has so often said he is not likely to marry that I—

"Think, interposed Dandy Halson, laughing, "it will be doing him a real good turn to keep him from breaking his promise? First rate, Mrs. Green. Then it's agreed. A hundred pounds down for you when I marry Miss Downing.

Nurse Downing was at the vicarage solely for his service. She had soothed him through three bad turns and played ministering angel to perfection. No wonder he was stirred by her gentle brown eyes and devotion to high ideals of self sacrifice. But it put him in a fix. All immediate restoration to his old powers of will and manly self-restraint would remove all reasons for her sojourn at the vicarage. On the other hand it was absurd to think of wooing and winning such a girl (she was of good family and very refined) with the taints of his degradation still about him.

"What should I do without you, nursey? he whispered as if in gratitude for the mere toilet vinegar of her attentions.

Nor was she impressed by his words.

"I think you could do very well without me, Mr. Halson," she said. I am sure you have only to make the necessary effort and—you will be all right."

"Ah! said he to that. "Little you know. But I mean to try."

"Nursey," he said one evening when she had been reading to him (the vicar was at a parish meeting) "it's awfully nice to listen to you, but take a rest and listen to me for a bit, will you?"

He had attractive manners when he chose to exercise them, and he looked his best this evening. He had taken pains with his toilet of late. Both the vicar and Nurse Downing had accounted it a good sign. To-day, in his game-feather shooting suit and crimson necktie, he was a man whom most women would have listened to when he spoke of love.

He broke it to her cautiously enough.

"Why shouldn't we make a match of it?" he said, with sudden impetuousness, after the preliminaries.

Nurse Downing's eyes were not upon him at first. She seemed a little agitated; pale now, after a quick blush, while she gazed at the fire. But at the plain question she looked up at him.

"Mr. Halson," she said, "you don't mean what you are saying."

"Do I not?" he cried. "Try me, and you'll soon find that I do, every syllable. I've done nothing but think of you—Fanny. Why shouldn't I call you Fanny? It's a jolly name, and you're the one girl in this little island for me. Two thousand a year, my dear, ought to be good enough for us; and, with you to look after me, I'd run as straight as a good 'un for ever and ever. Your people are hard up, the vicar tells me. Well, my dear, you'll be doing them a good turn as well as me!"

That touched her.

"Please, Mr. Halson," she entreated, "don't say anything more about it."

She put the book aside and rose, looking thoughtfully at the door.

"I won't then, my dear," said he, especially as there's nothing more to say. It's for you to think it over. Come, take pattern by our most excellent vicar himself—and—even if you can't love me just yet, sacrifice your sweet self for the good of others

She glanced at him again and glided from the room.

"By Jingo!" mused Dandy triumphantly when he was alone.

TIME TABLE

New Brunswick Southern Railway.

TIME TABLE No. 32.

In effect January 3rd, 1909

Atlantic Time

Trains West Read Down Train No. 1 Leave A.M.	Stations	Trains East Read Up Train No. 2 Arr. P.M.
7.30	St. John East Ferry	
7.45	St. John West	5.40
7.53	Duck Cove	5.30
8.08	Spruce Lake	5.15
8.10	Allan Cot	5.13
8.25	Prince of Wales	4.58
8.35	Musquash	4.48
9.00	Lepreaux	4.25
9.15	New River	4.10
9.23	Pocologan	4.01
9.41	Pennfield	8.44
10.15	St. George	3.14
10.32	Bonny River	2.56
10.58	Dyer's	2.30
11.11	Cassell's	2.19
11.17	C.P.R. Junction	2.13
11.42	Oak Bay	1.48
12.00	St. Stephen	1.30
Arr. Noon		Leave P.M.

Trains run daily, Sunday excepted.

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East with Canadian Pacific, Intercolonial & Dominion Atlantic Rys.

HUGH H. McLEAN, President

St. John, N. B., Dec. 1908

INTERCOLONIAL RAILWAY

On and after SUNDAY, Jan. 10th, 1909, trains will run daily (Sunday excepted,) as follows:

TRAINS LEAVE ST. JOHN.

No. 6.—Mixed for Moncton, (leaves Island Yard) - -	6 30
No. 2, Express for Halifax, Campbellton, Point duChene and Pictou - - - -	7 00
No. 26, Express for Point duChene, Halifax and Pictou, - -	12 40
No. 4 Mixed for Moncton - -	13 15
No. 8, Express for Sussex, -	17 15
No. 138, Suburban for Hampton, -	18 15
No. 134, Express for Quebec and Montreal, via Moncton	19 00
No. 10, Express for Moncton, the Sydneys, Halifax and Pictou	23 25

TRAINS ARRIVE AT ST. JOHN.

No. 9, Express from Halifax, and Moncton - - -	6 30
No. 135, Suburban Express from Hampton - -	7 50
No. 7, Express from Sussex, -	9 00
No. 133, Express from Montreal, Quebec, and Pt. du Chene	13 45
No. 5, Mixed from Moncton, (arrives at Island Yard- -	16 00
No. 3, Mixed from Moncton -	19 30
No. 25, Express from Halifax, Pictou Point duChene, and Campbellton, - -	17 35
No. 1, Express from Moncton and Truro, - -	21 20
No. 11, Mixed from Moncton (arrives at Island Yard daily) - -	4 00

All trains run by Atlantic Standard Time (twenty-four hour notation) 24 00 o'clock is midnight.

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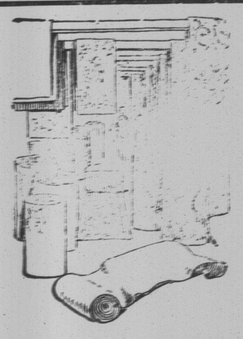

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