

Local and Express

(Concluded from page 10.)

shoulder and saw the billboard.

"Excuse me, one moment," I said.

It didn't take long. I returned to him on tiptoe, and whispered, "Tell me—in the strictest confidence."

"What," he hissed.

"How to get there."

"Where? in the name of the sacred Zerubbabel. Where?"

"General Fire—no, Labour Extinguisher Company," I connded.

His form straightened at once. He was evidently a Rector's Warden. Hooking his arm firmly into mine he pushed me into an elevator.

"Dump him at twenty-eight." He said it roughly. Just like that.

The elevator started. I leaned against the starboard rail. A slight sea was running, but the vessel rode easily over the long smooth swells.

"Good weather for the North Atlantic," I said to the Captain.

He looked at me haughtily. You know how Captains like to look.

"When do we sight land, Skipper," I continued affably. The sea is after all a friendly place. I always feel talkative at sea.

He did not answer. The vessel made port. We were there at last. He opened the door and pushed me out. Opposite was an office door. It was numbered 2827. Something told me my fortune was still waiting.

I knocked.

The door opened. A woman was there. She had just got up. Her arms and neck were bare. She had been washing the floor.

"Is this the office of the General Labour Extinguishing Company?" I said. In the back of the room was one table, one calendar, two chairs and three cuspidors.

"General What," she said suspiciously.

"Labour Extinguishing Company."

"It was," said she, "till last week."

"And where are they now?" I had a sudden sinking of the heart.

"Extinguished, I guess," she replied, and spilled some water on my boots.

I descended, a prey to mixed feelings. They suggested other mixtures. My friend was there, in a place they mix cordials. He had just put his foot on the taffrail.

He saw me and held out both hands. "Ah—tell me—No—wait a moment. George!" he said to a pugilist who wore a white naval suit with epergnes and admiral's buttons, "A quart of Pommery."

We touched glasses. "Now—tell me—" he said brightly. "You are only one of many Canadians who have come here and done well. One moment—let me fill your glass. We must make an evening of it. My wife is unfortunately out of town."

I told him.

His face changed.

Then your visit has been,—he hesitated—"fruitless?"

"Just that," I said. "But no—not fruitless. I have met you."

A crowd of men entered the room, talking loudly. One of them clapped my friend on the shoulder. "Hullo," he said.

My friend turned to speak. I caught his eye as he turned. It was full of dejection. He felt for me, and in that delicate way of his was glad to give me a moment to myself. I liked him for that.

The crowd moved on. I waited. My friend walked with them to the door. He, too, was just naturally polite. I kept on waiting.

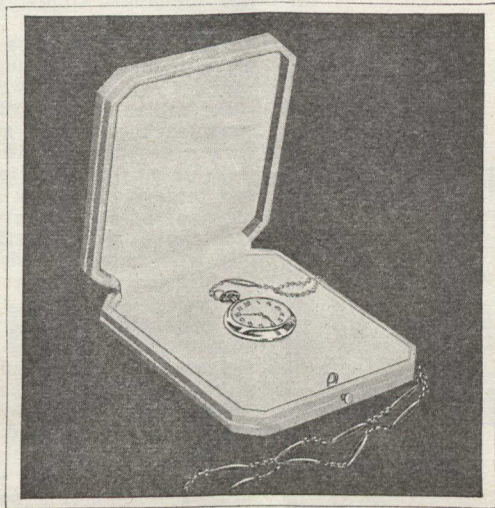
Presently the pugilist in the white picquet suit pushed a ticket at me. It read \$4.50.

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