

The City of Numbered Days

"Bugs!" ranted Grislow, in good-natured ridicule, and Brouillard laughed.

"That is what I say to myself Murray, every time the fatal period rolls around. And yet——"

"There isn't any 'and yet,'" cut in the scoffer derisively. "This is merely your night for being batty. 'Fatal period'—suffering humanity!"

"No, hold on: let me tell you, Murray—I'd like to get it out of my system if I can. Up to my seventh birthday I was a sickly child, puny and only about half alive. I recollect, as if it were only yesterday, how the neighbor women used to come in and condole with my mother, ignoring me, of course, as if I hadn't any ears. I can remember old Aunt Hetty Parsons saying, time and again: 'No, Mis' Brouillard; you'll never raise that boy the longest day you live!'"

"I'm waiting for the 'and yet,'" put in Grislow, sitting up to relight his pipe with a blazing splinter from the fire.

"It came—the change, I mean—when I was seven years old. That was the year of our removal to Vincennes from the country village where I was born. Since that time I haven't known what it means to be sick or even ailing."

"Bully old change!" applauded Grislow. "Is that all?"