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GOSSIP

WANTED—AN EMPLOYER

There was a north-bound car tem-
porarily disabled on Broadway, near
Fourth Street, and in consequence, as far
south as the eye could reach, stood a
row of motionless cars. Also, in con-
sequence, along the curb was ranged a
fretting, impatient, helpless crowd,
among whom the most anxious was
probably Edward Billings Henry.

In stature, Edward Billings Henry
was briefer than his name would indi-
cate, but to a certain two-room dwelling
on Jackson Street he made up in im-
portance what he lacked in height, and
it was his overwhelming sense of this
importance which made every thin
muscle taut and strained every nerve
as he stood in the forefront of the crowd,
his bare feet planted on the cold asphalt,
one hand gripping his remaining stock
of papers, the other clutching a nickel.

"I never was in a tearing hurry in my
life but what this thing happened!"
exploded a man just behind the boy.

Edward Billings Henry turned and
looked up. The man was jingling a lot
of loose coins in his pocket. The boy
glanced down at his one nickel, and
said, with conviction, "You can't need
to have 'em go like I do."

The big man stared down at the little
man in surprise with a gruff "Huh!"
but Edward Billings Henry had no time
to repeat. His hope had revived. The
two men who lay on their backs under
the injured car began to crawl out, and
the boy rushed forward.

"Will it go now?" he inquired of one
of the numerous conductors clustered
round.

"Maybe so—in half an hour," replied
the conductor carelessly.

"Oh," cried the boy in dismay, "I
just can't wait that long."

"Walk, then!" said the conductor,
crossly.

"It's too far," replied the boy, "when
you've got a stone toe."

"A what?" ejaculated the conductor;
but his voice was lost in the honk!
honk! of a big white touring car which
pushed slowly through the crowd.

In front of the car Edward Billings
Henry raced limpingly on his "stone
toe" back to the curb and to the man
jingling the coins in his pocket. "Just
what time is it, please?" he asked.

The man pulled out a watch and
showed it to him.

Edward Billings Henry heaved a
great sigh. "Half-past ten! It'll likely
be filled up before I can get there."

"What will be?"

"The place I'm after."

Skilfully he raised the limping foot,
laid it across the other leg, and nursed
the stone-bruised big toe, his eyes on the
automobile, which had halted almost
in front of him.

"Hello, Junius!" a voice in the crowd
sang out. "Lucky dog, you, not to
have to depend on street cars!"

The driver of the car was a young
man. That is, Edward Billings Henry
judged him to be young by the only
feature visible, a flexible, wide mouth,
with clean-shaven lips. His eyes were
behind goggles, and a cap covered his
forehead and ears, meeting the tip of
a high collar, which effectually concealed
his chin.

But the mouth smiled as the goggles
turned toward the pavement, the owner
answering lightly, "Hello, yourself,
Dick! Jump in and try my luck."

"Where you going?"

"Up to Congress Square."

"Well, get along, then," returned the
other. "That's no good to me."

Congress Square! What luck! Ex-
actly where Edward Billings Henry
wished to go, and here was a rapid-
transit vehicle with room enough for
ten such diminutive persons as he.
Without loss of time he limped up on
his aching stone toe and jogged the arm
of the driver.

Junius paused and looked down.
Edward Billings Henry removed a man's
Derby from his head and looked up out
of eyes kindling with hope, as he asked
eagerly,

"Do you s'pose you could get me up
there inside of twenty-five minutes,
mister?"

"What!" Junius stared hard through
his goggles.

"To Congress Square," said Edward
Billings Henry, impatiently. "It's busi-
ness, and if I don't get there I'm out of
a job that's all." The boy mounted
the step and clung to the seat, proffering
his nickel. "I'll pay just what I'd pay
on the car," he argued, "so you'd be
making some money as well's giving me
a lift."

The goggled eyes looked at the nickel
in the dirty hand, and then travelled up
and down the small figure back of the
hand. The eyes noticed that while
those parts of the boy's anatomy which
had been exposed all the morning to the
city dirt had collected grime, the rims,
as it were, of the exposed parts revealed
hidden cleanliness.

"Congress Square is an awful way
up," urged Edward Billings Henry,
"and we mustn't waste much time, for
I would like to get that job."

The small hand extended the nickel
enticingly toward the glove. "You'll
be earning as much as the street-car by
giving me a lift," the boy repeated.

The driver's lips twisted a bit. "That's
so," he said.

"Huh," he chuckled, and gracefully
extended his hand for the nickel. "Get
in, my man, and I'll give you the 'lift'."

Edward Billings Henry drew a deep
sigh of relief, dropped the coin into the
other's palm, and engulfed himself in
the soft front seat.

"To whom have I the honor of giving a
lift?" asked Junius, formally, dropping
the nickel into a pocket, where it lay
alone. After it he sent a curious,
lingering smile.

"Edward Billings Henry, Junior,"
replied the boy, the lips beneath the gog-
gled smiled. "And where am I 'lifting',
you to, may I also ask, Edward Billings?"

"To Mr. Florin's office, where they're
going to select an office boy this morn-
ing 'tween ten and eleven."

The driver busied himself a moment
with the steering-gear as the car passed
the crowded mail-wagons behind the
post-office building. Then he turned
and shot a curious glance at his small
companion, asking abruptly,

"And you think you'll get the job,
do you?"

Edward Billings Henry leaned forward
as if he could push the machine into a
yet faster pace. "I can try for it," he
replied. "Father says you never know
what you can do unless you try. He's
always wanting me to try."

"Yes," muttered Junius, still more
interested. "Fathers seem much alike,
whether they live up-town or down-
town."

"Can't we go faster?" asked Edward
Billings Henry, sitting on the edge of
the seat.

Junius shook his head. "Too many
bluecoats around. But about that job,
now—you'll not be the only boy after
it. There will probably be dozens
older—"

"I'm eleven, if I am small," said the
boy.

"And stronger—"

The boy stretched out a thin arm
defiantly, and closed his fist.

"Just feel!" he cried. "I've got a
good muscle, and on my legs it's better
yet. Just now I've got a stone bruise
on my big toe, but I tell you I can get
around like lightning just the same.
Bet Mr. Florin wouldn't ever be sorry
he took me."

"Yes, I'm inclined to believe that
myself," mused the man. "But how
are you going to make him believe that
in the beginning?"

The boy raised his lame foot and
gently rubbed the swollen big toe.
"Well," he began, "I'm going to talk
up big. Father says you have to some-
times when nobody's round to do it for
you, and he says it's all right if you do
afterwards just as big as you talk."

The driver wagged his head wisely.
"That's sound business sense," he
agreed, gravely. "You intend to de-
liver the same goods as you sell. Let's
hear what you have to say."

"Well, if you get me there in time to
say anything, I'm going to tell Mr.
Florin that father went to school a lot
when he was young. He went through
high school and got all ready to go
through college."

Edward Billings Henry emphasized
(Continued on page 489)