POOR DOCUMENT

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THE MESHES OF MISCHANCE

BY GILBERT WINTLE

A Great Human Interest Serial Filled With Action--Now Published for the First Time

CHAPTER I.

Introduces Horace Wyndham.

Horace Wyndham was a clerk in a London bank. The name of the bank was the Anglo-Rurttanian.

He had now been in his present situation three months. He had obtained it through the good offices of an old family friend, a country lawyer, to whom he had gone for advice, when, on his father's death, he had found himself heir to a bankruptcy petition, in which the estate could never realise enough to pay five shillings in the pound, and nothing but a very little money of his own, and an Eton, and two years of an Oxford, education, with which to start the world.

One memento he did have of his father. Some of General Wyndham's property had been in houses, and on his son's coming of age, at which date there had been no indications of the impending catastrophe, he had made him a present of a pied-a-terre, suitable for a bachelor, in the shape of a ten years' lease of three rooms, constituting a half first-floor flat, in Victoria street. Under his altered circumstances, Horace had thought of letting them, and, certainly, the rent would have been very acceptable; but in the end he decided to live in them. It seemed to him that, by so doing, he still preserved one link with the past. And then he had his father's swords; it was more fitting that they should be arranged in a trophy there, in a room that he had given him, than in a bed-sitting room in Bloomsbury.

It is half-past nine on a Saturday night; Horace is sitting in his easy chair, a relic of Oxford; two opened letters and his pipe, which he has let go out, are on the table; he is reading the following letter from one of the senior clerks at the bank, received that evening:

"The Myrtles, Ealing,
"18-6-190—.

"Dear Wyndham,—You were gone so sharp this afternoon, that I didn't have time to speak to you. Mrs. S. gives a little party here on Monday at nine, and we hope you'll come. I should have waited till Monday and asked you at the bank, but Mrs. S. says I ought to give a longer time for you to decide, and I suppose she knows, so write now.

"Yours very truly,
"JNO. SMITH.

"P. S.—We hope to have a little of the light fantastic toe, so perhaps you won't mind dressing."

This invitation he had at once accepted. To have done otherwise, it seemed to him, would have been to have shown discourtesy to Mr. Smith, a sterling, honest, kind-hearted man, for whom he had a genuine liking and respect. So much then was decided. On Monday he would go down to the Myrtles, Ealing, make himself agreeable to Mrs. Smith and her guests, stay as long as other people stayed, and come away. Then, the first chance he got, probably the following Sunday, he would call.

He took up the second letter and re-read it:

"16 Le Roy Place,
"St. James' St., W.
"Saturday.

"You Dear, Damnable Old Heathen,—Excuse the ultra-affectionate warmth of the above greeting, or rather take it as it is meant, in its Pickwickian sense; but all the same you really deserve it. Firstly, allow me to inform you that you are answerable (in addition to all your other sins) for two days' wear and tear of my thoughts, brains, legs, boots, and all that sort of thing. Don't laugh. Since I saw you last I have become quite a seriously-minded person—and very nearly time, but we that I will talk to you when I see you—and here have you been making me cuss like a fish-porter. It came about in this way, that is the wearing and tearing and cussing came about, not the serious-mindedness. You may, or may not, remember writing to ten me that you had got a berth in a bank. Well, for the life of me, I couldn't remember what bank it was that was being honored by your valuable services, so I have been running about everywhere, trying to find someone who would put me on your track, but, up to this morning, without getting any forrader.

"This morning, however, I had better luck. I was walking along Victoria street and, just as I was wondering whether you had not utterly vanished into thin air, I happened to look across the road, and, behold, no less a person than yourself came out of a house and boarded a 'bus. I couldn't catch the 'bus, so I went into the house, saw the porter, and found out that you lived there.

"So now, old man, I have only to add that I shall look you up this evening. So mind to be at home and sober, to receive

"Yours to a cinder,
"EDWARD GASCOIGNE."

Horace put down the letter with a smile. What was Master Ned doing in London, had he got himself rusticated? And again Horace smiled, as he remembered various traits in his friend's character, that rendered such a supposition far from improbable. And, being in London, why was he not at the Langham, as was his custom? As to the part of the letter that hinted at Gascoigne's having something important to say to him, Horace scarcely noticed it; it certainly never crossed his mind that it heralded anything more than a good-natured pretext for a visit. At this point his musings were suddenly cut short by the tr-r-r-rr of the electric door-bell. He went to answer it. Standing in the lobby, in evening dress and overcoat, was Ned Gascoigne himself.

CHAPTER II.

Introduces Edward Gascoigne.

"At last! You dear old boy! Got my letter? Yes, I see you have. Haven't lost much time in following it up, have I? I took the Tivoli on my way, or rather it's out of my way; anyway I took it, there was a nine o'clock turn there I wanted to see. But what's up, old man, you look ten years older?"

"Oh! I'm all right, thanks," replied Horace, with a not too successful attempt at heartiness. "Make yourself comfortable in that chair, while I get out the whisky. Now, then," he continued, as he put the bottle and glasses on the table, and seated himself opposite his guest, "tell me how the world's been treating you, Ned. I thought you would have been at Oxford."

"Left."

"Left! What on earth for?"

"My dear fellow," and as he said this, Gascoigne's voice assumed a species of woful-comic tone that many an actor would have given much to be able to imitate, "you seem to imagine that the Wyndham family enjoy a monopoly for losing money in San Salvadors. Please disabuse your mind of any such presumptuous ideas. I had just as much right to lose mine, as you had to lose yours, and, what's more, I've done it."

"Good God! you don't say so!"

Then, like a flash came back to Horace's mind an evening, nearly a year ago, the evening of Gascoigne's coming of age birthday. It was at Penridden, General Wyndham's place in Cornwall, for Ned had no near relations of his own, with whom he cared to keep the day. After dinner, when the guest's health had been duly drunk and replied to, they had had a long discussion about property, and, more particularly, about investments. Begun more or less in a joke, the conversation had, towards the end, taken a more serious turn, Horace's father taking the opportunity to point out to both young men the folly of being led away by bubble prospectuses, saying, finally, that he knew of only one at all adventurous investment that, to use a paradox, was yet perfectly safe. And that was San Salvadore. Gascoigne must have taken the old general at his word, and Horace felt that his friend's misfortunes lay at his own door.

"D—— South America, and everything connected with it," he said bitterly. "Why in Heaven's name, can't the brutes cut each other's throats quietly, without coming to England for money to do it with? And all this is my fault, or at least my governor's; it was he who told you about them, and you went and bought them on his advice."

"Now just you shut up, old man, and don't make a fool of yourself. The advice your governor gave me was as good as anyone could have given me then. After the crash, of course, everyone was wise. But that's neither here nor there. In fact, if I had only followed your governor's advice, instead of half following it, or not even that, I should not, on the whole, been so badly off at the present moment. San Salvadors went down, and went down with a rush, it is true; but there's a good deal between that and ruin."

"They spelled ruin plainly enough for my governor," replied Horace, gloomily.

"Yes; but why? Because he counted on them to realize. He was concerned in a lot of enterprises, all over the world; things began to go wrong; and just then his San Salvadors, that he was counting on to save him, became a drug in the market. Wasn't it so?"

"Ye'es," replied Horace more and more surprised at the tone Gascoigne, who was the last person whom he would have expected to find showing an insight into commercial affairs, was taking; "I suppose it was; but the details I really don't know myself."

"I see you are surprised to hear me talk like this, but wait till I've finished. You know what my money was, don't you?"

"Somewhere about thirty thousand, wasn't it?"

"As a matter of fact it capitalized at nearly thirty-two thousand. However, I thought that thirty-thousand seemed a nice round sum to begin operations with, so, when I changed the cheque handed to me by my trustees—it was for thirty-one thousand, eight hundred and twenty-seven pounds, it's just as well to be exact while we're about it—I put thirty thousand into consols, where they could be handy to sell out as I came to make my investments, and kept the rest for pocket money. That's all gone and more besides. How? Oh! easy enough. Imprimis, I paid my debts. They were nothing very tremendous, it's true; still they were something. Then, you know, I kept a dogcart and tandem, perhaps kept one or two other things as well. Anyhow, that may be considered as gone, gone beyond recall, as surely as last Christmas."

"Then there remains the thirty thousand."

"Unfortunately, there does not remain the thirty thousand; but you shall hear.

"I began operations by dividing my capital into three equal parts; and one of these parts I forthwith put into San Salvadors. That was to satisfy my conscience. It was a case of spirit willing and flesh weak, you see. I wanted to try all sorts of fly-away schemes; but something told me that I hadn't enough experience, and ought to wait. Hang it all! don't laugh. Had I listened to that something, I should have put my whole pile into San Salvadors, and, after all, should not, as I have said, be so badly off at present. On the other hand, if I had gone in for some regular out-and-out gamble, as likely as not I should have struck oil somewhere, and be now a millionaire. But I tried the fatal plan of compounding between the two, and of course—well, of course, they er—what d'y'call it—both fell into the bally mire, y' know."

"Rather mixed metaphor, isn't it?" said Horace, laughing. "But go on; how much is your ten thousand pounds in San Salvadore worth now?"

"I haven't tried to sell them yet; but I shall in a day or two; and they ought to fetch, according to my calculations, a little under six thousand."

"Then—"

"Now, my dear fellow, don't interrupt. You wouldn't if you knew. I've been prosaic so far; I'm just going to become interesting. The second ten thousand pounds we may, for present purposes, at once write off."

"Write off?"

"Don't interrupt. Yes, clean, bang off. It went in a mine, a quicksilver mine in the North-West Provinces of China. If ever I live to travel in China, I shall make a point of visiting that mine, that is to say, if it has any existence other than on prospectuses. I feel quite a paternal interest in it. I was that mine. I believed I owned quite five-sixths of the shares. I am sure they would never have got so far as allotment without me. What a goddend I must have been to the promoters. There are men walking about the City today in white waistcoats that I've paid for; and I haven't the slightest doubt that there are young ladies at Brighton boarding schools whose education is coming out of my pocket. As a vehicle for broad, generous, whole-souled philanthrophy, give me a mine. Pass the whisky."

As soon as they had done laughing:

"There was a little left out of that, of course; but I preferred to sell my shares to waiting for the pickings. They sold for more than their value as waste-paper, certainly; but not for very much more. What I did get I went to Paris and blew, out of spite. So once more I say, write it off.

"And now, concerning the third ten thousand; I don't like to seem monotonous, yet I am afraid I must say of that too, write it off. If one can talk of degrees of idiotcy, I made an even bigger fool of myself over the third ten than over the second. On the other hand, the gentleman who relieved me of it is no longer walking about the City in a white waistcoat, nor, for the matter of that, in a black one, either. Far from it. I entrusted this portion of my patrimony to the care of no less a person than the notorious Mr. Sells, late of London, Paris, Monte Carlo, etc., at present of Portland, or, it may be, Wormwood Scrubs."

"What! That swindler, who pretended to have a valuable trade secret, and went about getting money from all the—silly idiots he could find to give it him?"

"Exactly."

"But I didn't see your name among the witnesses for the prosecution."

"No, I'm thankful to say you didn't. I don't mind telling you that I've made an A1, copper-bottomed, doubled-distilled ass of myself; but I was by no means anxious to tell the same to the world at large. I was subpoenaed, but I knew one of the junior counsel for the Treasury, and he managed that I should not be called. I was one of the 'numerous other cases.'"

"So all you have now are the San Salvadors?"

"All I have now are the San Salvadors, which, as I think I told you, ought to sell for about six thousand."

"Well, then—"

"No, it's not well then, at all. Do you remember Carey?"

"Poor devil! I should think I did. Where is he now? Out and ran, or something, didn't he? By the way, now you mention him, I seem to remember that he took a portmanteau, and conveniently forgot to return it."

"You got off lightly then. He took four thousand pounds of mine. At least I mean that I had lent him my name on a bill for that amount."

"Go on, Ned," said Horace, leaning back and laughing heartily. "There's still a paltry thousand or so to account for, but I don't think you can surprise me now."

"You have heard the worst. I promised some time ago to buy my old nurse an annuity of a pound a week. That, and one or two other things, are about all. Then, when everything is settled up, there remain about five hundred pounds that I shall be able to call my own; possibly five hundred and fifty; but I've gone over my affairs till I'm sick of them, and I'm certain it won't be more."

"Setting aside the annuity for your old nurse; since you promised, of course you will give that, altered circumstances or no altered circumstances; don't you think it possible that you and I and a steady work-a-day solicitor, that is, provided we are fortunate enough to get hold of one"—for, short as was Horace's City experience, it had sufficed to teach him that in no other calling is there such a promiscuous mixture of sheep and goats—"may be able to pull a little more out of the fire?"

"Not a chance. I'll bring you the papers and so on to look at if you like, to satisfy you; but in a week or ten days everything will be settled up, and I shall know for certain. Oh-ho! I wonder if I shall surprise you still more, Wyndham, when I say I'm glad?"

CHAPTER III.

Horace and Ned Come to a Decision—an Unexpected Recontre.

"You mean that you are glad you have five hundred left, I suppose," said Horace.

"Glad of the whole thing. I suppose it's something like writing off a bad debt, a turning one's thoughts from the past to the future; and I suppose that, the more one has become sick of the former, the more, by contrast, one is inclined to take a bright view of the latter."

Horace felt like rubbing his eyes. It was not so much the words, as the tone in which they were spoken, that surprised him. There was an underlying suggestion of quiet purpose that was quite foreign to the nature of the harum-scarum, happy-go-lucky Ned Gascoigne he had known hitherto; or, if in old days it had been there, it had never come to the surface. Stranger yet, he, Horace, whose personality was really much the stronger, felt the spell extending to himself.

"Well, old man? You look dumbfounded."

"I feel so."

"I think I can understand. We've each had a good smack in the face, and you can't make out how it is that, while yours has knocked you all of a heap, hurt you so badly, in fact, that you aren't sure whether it's even worth while to make an effort to get up again—I saw that when I first came in and said that you looked ten years older—mine has only served to wake me up? But it's really quite simple. You had formed your ambitions, I hadn't. You were walking, steadily and respectably along life's high road when the earthquake came. I was dozing on the shady side of the hedgerow, and the earthquake has only served to make me pull myself together and think about making a start. You would have pulled yourself together in the end, I'm sure, because I know the stuff that's in you. If I've helped to decide you, you shall repay that by helping me to stick it out. Then, hang it! we'll go in together and beat the world off our own bats!"

"We will, Ned; and there's my hand on it."

"Right! old man," replied Gascoigne, returning the grasp with interest. "Now, seeing that the night is young, and it's pretty hot, and tomorrow is Sunday, what do you say to us taking a walk?"

"Good idea, just let me get my hat; now, you go first, and I'll stay and turn out the light." When they stood together in the hall, Gascoigne, who through the open sitting-room door had been shrewdly watching his host, as, with a firm, springly step, the latter moved about the room, said—

"Do you know, Wyndham, you've lost those ten years."

Both laughed. A few minutes later they were walking down Victoria street towards Westminster Abbey.

"Then it's decided," said Gascoigne; "we sail for Canada, steerage"—he emphasized the word in quite a Spartan way—"as soon as I have realized what's left of the wreck, and you have sold your things and given your old bank time to get reconciled to the idea of having to do without you. I can't help thinking, though, that we'd make our pile quicker in South America. There's a sort of poetic justice, too, about the idea that appeals to me."

"Hang it all, man, haven't you had enough of those wretched Dagoes?" replied Horace, laughing. "After all, it's something more than a mere pile we're after"—how he talked, this bank clerk on a pound or so a week!—"Canada is part of the British Empire, and, what's more, it's the coming part. It's a sane, wholesome, white man's country. The race improves there. Only yesterday, while I was at lunch in the city, an actuary of one of the big insurance companies was lunching at the same table; and he told me that, in their life business, they could afford to issue much cheaper policies in their Canadian work than in Europe, and then make the same profit.* No, Ned, Canada is British, with whatever of good there is in the French and Yankees thrown in. And you and I are going to help King Teddy (God Bless him!) to build up his dominions beyond the seas."

They had had a long stroll, lasting nearly two hours, ere they finally bid each other good-night and separated in Trafalgar Square, whence Ned made his way westward towards Le Roy Place. Horace turning down Whitehall to go back to his flat; but somehow Horace did not go straight back to bed when Gascoigne left him. On the contrary, he continued to walk the streets—Whitehall, the Strand, and the Embankment—till Big Ben striking midnight gave pause to his meditations, and he turned his steps homewards.

But he had not done with surprises yet. Just about Strutton Ground, that curious part, where twenty steps will carry you from half-fashionable, half-commercial, and altogether opulent Victoria street into all the squalor of the Westminster slums, he paused an instant to allow a passenger, who had just stepped off a 'bus, to pass in front of him. As he paused he glanced up.

"Well, I'm——"

For the man in front of him, now hurrying away down a side street, was no other than the James Carey, to say of whom that he had quitted the University under a cloud, was quite to sugar the pill, and who incidentally had left Ned Gascoigne to meet a dishonored bill of four thousand pounds; also, though this was such a bagatelle that Horace did not then even think of it, had appropriated a well-packed portmanteau, with the initials "H. W." painted on the ends.

He was evidently in a hurry, and was already some steps away, otherwise Horace's exclamation, though muttered, must have attracted his attention.

"Whew!" said Horace to himself, "so he didn't cut and run, after all. Now, what in the world can he be doing here, going into this cut-throat place in the middle of the night? Mr. James Carey, I'm afraid that you are what I am learning from my commercial friends to call a bad egg!"

Meanwhile, all unconscious of this recognition, the person in question was walking sharply away towards Horseferry Road, Horace after him. Saturday night is shopping night in the very poor parts of London, and, even at midnight, the crowds are still thick round the costermonger's barrows. This circumstance favored the pursuit, and, all unnoticed, Horace continued to follow this man through two or three small streets, till in one, a trifle less slummy, perhaps, than some others in that neighborhood, but still an unmistakable slum, the latter stopped, opposite a dingy little house, the door of which he opened with a latch-key and disappeared within. Horace stopped also, and wondered what he had better do. He did not believe for an instant that there was any likelihood of Gascoigne's recovering his four thousand pounds, nor any part of it. But that did not alter the fact that it was his business, as a friend, to have a try for it. Should he make the attempt at once, or wait for a better opportunity? He decided that the present was as good an opportunity as any other he was likely to get. Better, in fact, because as he put it to himself in his own mind, "If I go now, he'll probably come to the door himself, and I shall, at any rate, be certain of seeing him; whereas, if I put it off till tomorrow someone else will come to the door, and I shall have to ask for him; then, as he will have been squinting at me through a window, or over the bannisters or something, he will promptly lock his door and pretend to be out, and I shall be sold. Then, again, perhaps he doesn't live here at all. No, no! middle of the night, or not middle of the night, a slippery customer like Master Carey has to be tackled when one gets the chance; so here goes."

He rang the bell. All the same, had he been less excited than he was by recent events, he would have thought twice, probably a good many times, before adventuring himself in an unknown house, at midnight, in such a district.

Though he listened for steps, he heard none; but presently was aware that the door was opening slowly. Hardly thinking what he did, he stepped inside, and it promptly closed behind him. Then a voice, which he recognised at once as Carey's, whispered:

"What on earth did you want to ring for; couldn't you have knocked, instead of making all that d—d noise. Come on, don't be afraid, there's nothing to tumble against.

There was no light, save what filtered down from the open door of a room on the first floor. However, that was enough to enable Horace to make out a shirt-sleeved figure in front of him, which he followed, along a pasage, then up a flight of stairs, and so into the lighted room. As he entered, Carey said—

"Well! have you got it? Have you lost your tongue, man? Have you—Wyndham!"

Which of the two was the more surprised it would be difficult to say; Carey, at seeing whom he had let in, or Horace, at the sight which met his eyes on a big table in the middle of the room. Several dozens of articles of valuable jewellery, bracelets, rings, and the like; some queer-looking tools, which, even to Horace's ignorance, were unmistakably the implements of a professional burglar; and some smaller tools, which looked like those of a working jeweller.

"You seem to have taken me for someone else," said Horace, politely, "may I ask if you were expecting anyone?"

At that moment, as if in answer to his question, a discreet knock, a knuckle knock, not a knocker knocky, was heard at the front door.

CHAPTER IV.

Jack Sheppard, Up to Date.

For a moment Carey seemed to hesitate, but when the knocking was repeated, this time a sharp staccato double knock, followed by a pause, and then by a single rap, he evidently recognised a signal of urgency, and without a word left the room and went downstairs. Horace, left by himself, began to understand that his position might be rather serious. He went to the window, found it unbolted, and quietly raised it as high as it would go. Then, having satisfied himself that the pavement was within easy dropping distance, he partly lowered it again and re-adjusted the blind. Then, as quietly as possible, he stole out to the head of the staire, to try and hear what was going on.

Carey and whoever he had let in were conversing in a low tone, but the house was so still that Horace could catch a good deal of what they said. Greatly to his surprise, the second voice seemed quite familiar to him, he could not locate it, as the Yankees say, but he felt quite sure that the speaker was someone he knew.

"It's the beastliest nuisance," Carey was saying; "but what could I do? He came up, just as I was coming in, and I couldn't well cut him, as we had known each other so well, so I—" what followed was indistinct.

So Carey was apparently going to play a straight game after all. Horace certainly felt redieved.

Some muttered scraps of sentences were all he could hear of what immediately followed, such as:—

"Why not?—do no good for him to see you—much better not—" then some more indistinguishable whisperings, and, finally, the strange voice, which yet was not altogether strange, said:—

"Oh! all right. I'll wait down in the kitchen. Don't be long"—then added, as if by an afterthought—"He hasn't seen anything, I suppose?"

"Oh! dry up! Do you take me for a fool? Smoke your pipe downstairs for ten minutes, a quarter of an hour, and I'll have him gone. I can't well kick him out under that."

Then there were steps in the hall, and Horace thought it time to go back to his chair. As he sat Carey came in.

"And now," said Horace to himself, "how the deuce am I going to open the conversation?"

But Carey saved him the trouble. Indicating, with a careless wave of the hand, the litter on the table, he said:—

"Well, Wyndham, no doubt you have gathered the meaning of all this, without any explanation from me. It's an adventurous life, and suits me admirably—here! you're not smoking, have a cigar?"

"Thanks," replied Horace, who was wondering what was coming next, though he had almost got beyond astonishment. "I have some cigarettes here, and I think, if you don't mind, I'll take one of them. Perhaps you—?"

"Really, now you ask me, I do think that I feel more like a light smoke."

When both had chosen cigarettes, Horace politely leaving the case open on the table, Carey crossed his legs, leaned back in his chair, and took up his parable as follows:—

"In Hogarth and Fielding's days, a broken beau invested in a mask and pistol, and took to the road, as a matter of course. Came the nineteenth century, with its softer manners, and that sort of thing went out of fashion. From about 1820 to about 1890, if a fellow went wrong at all, he confined himself to racecourse work, or cheating at cards and billiards. Now ideas are beginning to coursen, or, as I prefer to put it, to stiffen again, and—well, I've got some remarkably fine jewellry to sell. Want to buy any? Now don't look so thunderstruck; I'm not dangerous, I don't bite; and, on the other hand, of course I'm not in the least afraid of you."

Horace frowned, a trifle superciliously.

"Oh, I don't mean that! I'm not a vulgar bully, suggesting a plugging match. No, what I mean, when I say I'm not afraid of you, is that I know very well that you won't peach. Why, hang it! man, you couldn't. Horace Wyndham's tongue would refuse to form the words. Come! take yourself back a hundred years, to the hair powder and beauty patches time, and then you'll get the proper perspective of the thing. You and I are young bloods about town; you are rich and prosperous, succeed in everything, and from strength to strength go on; in fact, your path is strewn with roses. Mine isn't; on the contrary, I come a cropper and disappear. Time passes, and one fine day you chance on me at an inn, and notice the strings of the mask, or the butt of the pistol, poking out of the corner of my pocket, and you draw your own conclusions. Well, what of it? If you happen to be very extra straight-laced in your ideas, you possibly make an excuse to withdraw from my society as soon as good breeding will permit. If you wish to now, libre a vous, mon cher; but play Jonathan Wild, pose as a thief taker, turn informer! Good gracious! they'd have hounded you out of White's. Que diable! soyez debonnaire! However, my dear fellow, I know you well enough not to waste time on insisting on such a point. It was really bad manners on my part to bring it up at all. Now, to change the conversation, perhaps you'll tell me how you come here, and what you want? I confess I am not a little curious to know how it comes about that a rich Johnnie like you is roaming the Westminster slums in the small hours of Sunday morning."

According to the ethics of good citizenship, Horace ought to have replied to this harangue, full of airy sophistry, in a few stern, well-chosen words of trenchant, merciless morality; then, if indeed he chose to take the view that he was not paid to do police work, to stride magnificently from the room. But, what with the suddenness, and, above all, the bizarreie of the whole situation, he felt much more like laughing. Though he felt it quite wrong to do so, for the life of him he couldn't help liking this Carey a great deal better than the one he had known at Oxford. However, Carey was waiting for his reply.

"To begin with, Carey, I'm not rich at all; I'm a poor clerk, with nothing to bless myself with. My governor failed, and then died, and I left Oxford soon after your—soon after you did."

Carey half winced; then, suddenly, as if he saw a light, broke in with—

"Why, it can't be that you've heard anything, and you've tracked me down to propose a partnership. The ultra-respectable Wyndham! Oh! hold me someone! this is too delightful!"

(To be continued.)

*A fact.

BOMB EXPLOSION NEAR HIGH ALTAR AT ST. PETER'S, ROME, YESTERDAY, CAUSED A PANIC AMONG THE CONGREGATION

Rome, Nov. 18—A bomb was exploded in St. Peter's today. The edifice was crowded and an indescribable scene of confusion followed. There were no fatalities. As soon as the echoes of the tremendous roar had ceased, a canon sought by reassuring words to quiet the people, but in vain. They fled in all directions and a number of women fainted. Women and children screamed and men tried to protect their families in the crush. The church is so large, however, that there was ample room for the crowd to scatter and not one was injured. No trace of the perpetrator of the deed has been found.

Since St. Anacletus, who was ordained by Peter himself, erected an oratory in 90 A. D., on the site of the present Basilica to mark the spot where the remains of St. Peter are buried, no such dastardly occurrence is noted in the annals of the church.

Today was the anniversary of the dedication of the Basilica to St. Peter, and it was beautifully decorated for the occasion. Holy relics were exposed and a large number of the faithful attended the services. Cardinal Rampolla, formerly Papal Secretary of State, was among those present. He took part in the service in the choir chapel. The last mass had just been concluded when the explosion occurred, and only one canon, who had not quite finished, remained at the altar of St. Petronilla. This altar is at the end of the right aisle, and it was near here that the bomb had been placed.

As the canon turned to bless the communicants there was a tremendous roar, which echoed through the lofty arches of the immense dome, like a thunder clap. At the same time a dense smoke spread through this portion of the Basilica and a strong odor of gunpowder filled the air. Confusion and panic at once seized the people

The canon at the altar tried to stem the tide of fear. He shouted out: "Do not be afraid; it is nothing, merely a noonday gun." His words, however, had little effect. They were refuted by the smoke and the pungent smell of powder, and the people continued their headlong flight. Chairs were overthrown, making the confusion more serious. Men and women fled, stumbling in all directions, and the screams of children and cries of anguish were heard on all sides, and for a few moments it seemed as if nothing could obviate a grave disaster. The vast size of the church, however, gave room for the crowd to scatter, and at the end of a few moments the people were surging towards the door, excited and nervous, but orderly.

As soon as the smoke cleared away a hasty examination showed that nobody had been hurt in the crush, and furthermore that no one had been wounded by the explosion. Calm was gradually restored and people returned to view the extent of the damage.

It was discovered that the bomb had been placed under a scaffolding which had been erected to facilitate repairs to the roof exactly over the celebrated tomb of Clement XIII., by Canova, which consists of a figure of the Pope and two lions and which is the most remarkable piece of sculpture in the Basilica. This tomb ranks among the finest efforts of modern sculpture, and by its execution Canova established his reputation. When the first gendarmes reached the spot the scaffolding was found to be smouldering, but this fire was easily extinguished. The tomb was found to be absolutely uninjured, and even the pavement shows scarcely any signs of the explosion. An examination of the remains of the bomb leads to the suposition, unless it was crudely prepared on purpose to mislead, that it was manufactured in the country and brought into Rome. It is believed that the bomb had a very long fuse in order to enable the criminal to gain the piazza before the explosion. It has been impossible to trace him, and no one has any recollection of seeing a man who, by his movements, might have aroused suspicion.

The Pope was engaged in his regular noon hour devotion when the bomb exploded. He heard a muffled sound which surprised but did not alarm him. Monsignor Misciatelli, sub-prefect of the Apostolic Palace, and Monsignor Bisleti, major domo of the Vatican, at once hurriedly entered the pontiff's chamber. They were so pale that the Pope immediately asked: "What has happened?"

"Do not be alarmed, Holy Father," was the answer. "A bomb has exploded in the Basilica, but fortunately there are no deaths to deplore and no one has been wounded."

The pontiff asked anxiously if the church had been injured. Upon being reassured, he fell on his knees saying he must implore mercy for the misguided perpetrator of the deed.

Soon after this announcement was made to him the Pope went to the throne room where he held a private audience, and then proceeded to the hall of the consistory where he received about 300 other persons including 25 students of a South American college to whom he delivered a short address. None of these persons knew anything of the explosion.

The explosion produced no alarm outside the Basilica, the sound being taken by everybody for the noonday gun, but by afternoon the news was known all over the city and a stream of people went through the church to view the result of the explosion.

Every piece of the bomb that could be found was gathered up by the police and carefully examined. The bomb evidently consisted of a large tin box bound tightly together with wire of two sizes. It must have contained over two pounds of gunpowder and three pounds of nails. The nails were of three sizes, some seven inches long and so heavy that the force of the explosion threw them but a short distance. The nails were enveloped in newspapers dated November 16 and 17, providing that the bomb was prepared either yesterday or today.

The rumor having spread that the Pope intended to visit St. Peter's today before the tomb where the outrage was committed drew an exceptionally large crowd to the Basilica. This rumor was unfounded for only Cardinal Rampolla entered with the procession.

A three days service of prayer will be held in all the churches in expiation of this offense to religion.

Today's bomb explosion made the third Anarchist outrage in Italy in four days, the others having been the murder of Professor Rossi in Naples yesterday, and the explosion of a bomb in front of the cafe Aragno, in this city on Nov. 14. The attempt of today has caused deep seated and universal horror and indignation particularly because of the locality selected by the miscreants, and the resentment of the people is great.

St. Peter's is the greatest Basilica in Christendom. Three hundred and fifty years were occupied in constructing the edifice, which stands today a result of the efforts of forty three Popes, and the genius of Michael Angelo, Bramante and Rafael. The theory is held that this attempt was not directed against the papacy but rather a challenge to society in general by attacking religion, the most sacred institution of the people.

TORNADO SWEEPS SOUTHERN STATES

Memphis, Tenn., Nov. 18—Telegraph and telephone messages today from points in Mississippi, Arkansas and Tennessee, for a distance of several hundred miles, report that territory to have suffered last night and early today from a destructive rain and wind storm.

Only meagre details are as yet obtainable, but five lives are known to be lost and great damage done to property and crops. Railroad traffic from Memphis is demoralized by numerous washouts, and many trains have been annulled.

From the reports so far received, the greatest damage occurred in the central and Delta regions of Mississippi.

At Winona (Miss.), the Catholic, the Christian and the Negro Methodist churches, and the Hosty brickyard were demolished, and many buildings unroofed and damaged. Among the largest buildings damaged at this place are the post office, the Opera House, the oil mill, the compress, the warehouse of the Jackson Mercantile Company, and the residence of E. J. Dunkil.

Besides these twenty-five other smaller buildings were partly destroyed.

Telegraphic communication is prostrated.

Of the buildings not destroyed, the compress was probably the most severely damaged. The roof of the building was torn off by the wind, which at times reached almost tornadic velocity, falling on the home of E. J. Bunkston, 250 yards away.

The wind storm was preceded and followed by heavy rains, causing serious washouts along the route of the Illinois Central Railroad, and damaging crops.

At Mathison (Miss.), serious damage is reported to have occurred. A woman was killed by a falling building.

At Tohula, a falling tree striking a small frame building caused it to be set afire, burning a woman and child to death.

At Nenconnah Creek, a few miles from Memphis, a railway trestle fell under the weight of a switch engine, the engine plunging into the swollen stream, carrying with it Engineer C. V. Peterson and Fireman A. R. Ritchie, who were drowned.

Westpoint, Columbus and Mahin (Miss.), are reported to have suffered serious damage, but, as these points are cut off from communication, it is impossible to verify the report.

Wolf river, a small stream in the vicinity of Rossville, is out of its banks, the water flooding the surrounding territory for miles. The entire town of Rossville is inundated. The water in the public square reached a depth of four feet and great damage has been done to property at this place and eastward. A railroad employe, who arrived here this evening on a handcar from Rossville reported the people of that place almost in a state of panic. Quantities of cotton and many small buildings have been washed away and much live stock drowned. For eight miles between this place and Moscow (Tenn.), the water is from one to six feet deep on the tracks of the Southern railway.

CONDITIONS FOR LUMBERING VERY BAD AT PRESENT

Fredericton, N. B., Nov. 16—N. H. Murchie is in the city tonight on his way home from a trip to the scene of his lumbering operations on the Tobique. He says conditions for lumbering in the Tobique woods at present are the worst he ever saw at this season of the year. The weather has been very mild, and only a few inches of snow fell in that region last week. The roads are in a deplorable condition for hauling, and very little work of that kind is being done.

Mr. Murchie says there are quite a number of logs scattered along the river between Grand Falls and Bath, which are likely to be frozen in.

There were ten marriages and thirteen births in the city last week. Ten of the babies were boys.