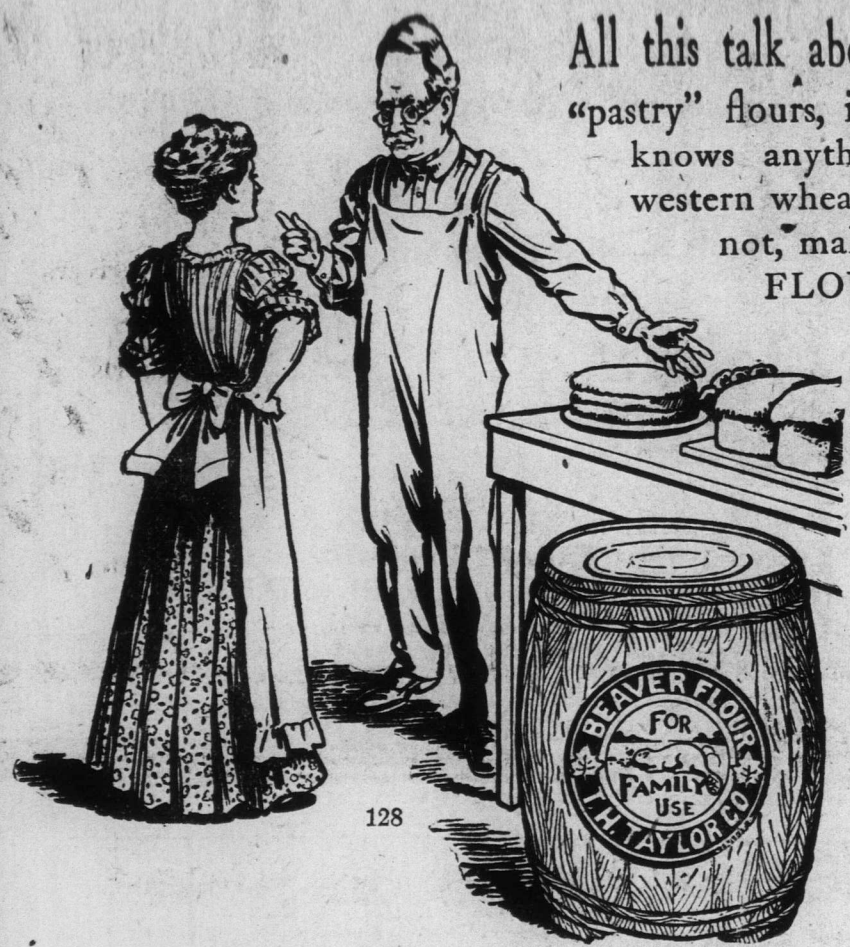


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A Millionaire; or, Countess Westerleigh.

CHAPTER XXI.
(To be continued.)
"Sorry. It was really good. The great man was extremely pleased and gratified. His gratitude took a more tangible form than usual."
"As now?" inquired Vane.
Senley Tyers smiled.
"He insisted upon presenting me with a hundred guineas over and above the stipulated price; and, more, by then, was good enough to give me a piece of advice that should prove advantageous. I should think it has already shown a profit."
"What is it?" asked Vane, still watching Nora absent.
"She had seated herself on a low divan, with Tiger, the cat, on her lap and was leaning back, playing with the animal.
"Did you ever hear of the great Bendoza Mine?" asked Senley Tyers, in reply.
"Nary word."
"Nor I, until the equally great financier mentioned it," said Senley Tyers. "But there is such a thing"

and a very big thing—Excuse my talking in the slang of the Stock Exchange."
Vane laughed.
"I'm rather amused. I'll admit," he said. "What the deuce do you know about mines and stocks and shares, Sen?"
"Nothing—almost as little as Tiger there. But Narke does, and is recommending me to buy Behdoza shares he has done me a good turn. He holds an enormous lot of them, and believes that he shall clear a fortune. I have put all my savings into it, and heartily wish that I had more to invest in the same way."
"Really?" said Vane, still absent-minded.
"Yes," said Senley Tyers. "By the way, have you spent all your money yet, my dear prodigal?"
Vane woke up at this direct question, and colored slightly.
"It was a painful question enough. What with paying his debts, his losses—and they had been heavy—at the supper-party on the night of Nora's jsteful arrival, and his expenses since, the five thousand pounds which Neuben Vale had given him had diminished pretty considerably."
"Not all," he said, rather gravely. "I must have a couple of thousand or thereabout left; I don't know exactly."
"I suppose not," remarked Tyers, dryly. "I'm surprised you have as much. That won't last very long."

prodigal!"
Vane shook his head still more gravely.
"I'm afraid not," he said. "I wish to Heaven—"
He stopped.
"Well, what?" asked Tyers, bending closely over his work.
Vane flung the end of the cigarette away and took up another.
"I was going to say that I wish I could get out of the London swindle—and, settle down somewhere quietly for a time; or, better still, that I could leave England."
"The old plant," murmured Tyers with a cynical smile. He was silent for a moment. "Do you want any advice?" he asked, presently. "Bah! you wouldn't take it if it were the best that even a Solomon could give would you? You know you wouldn't. Who does?"
"Try me," he retorted, ironically.
Tyers looked round at him with a friendly smile.
"On my word, I've a great mind to," he said. "Well, look here, do you know what I should do if I were in your place? I should give up that idea of leaving England—for the present, at any rate. I should invest the remainder of that money—barring a hundred or so, in the Bendoza."
Vane smiled ruefully.
"A hundred or so wouldn't last me long in London, Sen," he remarked.
"Then leave London," said Senley Tyers.
He paused a moment; then, as if struck by a sudden idea, said, with a laugh:
"See here. Why not go down to this cottage of mine at Laib?"
Vane looked thoughtful.
"Yes," said Senley Tyers, as if he had the idea the more he thought of it; "that's not at all a bad notion. Go down there, and at once. I've got some one in charge there—a decent woman, who would make you comfortable enough in a roughish way. You can get any amount of shooting; and—my dear fellow,

there's my advice."
Vane tugged at his mustache and glanced involuntarily toward Nora.
"It sounds very tempting, Sen," he said. "But I couldn't leave Ernest."
Senley Tyers looked at him with a bland surprise.
"My dear fellow, of course you would take him with you. I have not been thinking of him in the proposal; but now you mention him, I must say I think he wants a change. He looks rather fagged and pale, and he has been going the pace since he came up, haven't you? Dinners and suppers at the Cavaliers' and other sponges have pulled that young gentleman down."
He looked across at Nora, who was coated, and her luxuriant ottoman, quite unconscious that she was the subject of conversation. Vane again noticed that she looked pale and rather weary.
"It would do Ernest good," he admitted.
And as he spoke, the desire to shake her out of the mad whirlpool of London life, which had always threatened to engulf him, took possession of him. It would be nice to
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have Ernest—shark, that he thought of her as a boy, not as a girl—with him up there in Scotland, fishing and shooting. He would teach him to throw a fly—
"Of course it would do him good," said Tyers, emphatically. "Late hours and dissipation of the wildest kind play the mischief with a youngster; and, between you and me, I rather fancy our young friend is not overstrong; he looks delicate."
A sharp spasm of fear ran through Vane, and he looked keenly at Nora; then he remembered her as she had sailed the boat and leaped from rock to rock, and reassured himself.
"Not he," he said, with a laugh. "He only wants a change—a rest. Yes," he added, with a sudden determination. "I'll take your advice, Sen. I'll run up to Scotland with Ernest for a week or so. The weather may be rough up there."
"And it may not. I've known it delightful at this time of the year. Anyhow, you'll get plenty of sport. You'll go at once?"
Vane nodded.
"I suppose so."
"Certainly, I should. Let me see. You might go to-morrow."
Vane laughed.
"You seem mighty anxious to get rid of me," he said.
"Exactly. I am. I want to save something out of that coin. Oh, by the way, are you going to take my advice respecting the great Bendoza?"
He went on with his work as he spoke, and asked the question in the most casual way.
"Yes, I think so, said Vane. "It's all safe, I suppose? Don't know anything about that kind of thing, you know."
"Nor I. Oh, yes, it's safe enough, or the great financier wouldn't invest in it. Put all you've got, bar a hundred or two. Got a check? I suppose not. No matter. Just write a line or two on this sheet of paper to the stock-brokers. Here!"
He put his hand on Vane's shoulder, and gently pushed him into a chair at the antique writing-table.
"There you are. Make it out for two thousand. Then you'll leave a margin."
Vane wrote the order at his dictation, and Senley Tyers folded it and put it in an envelope, and addressed it.

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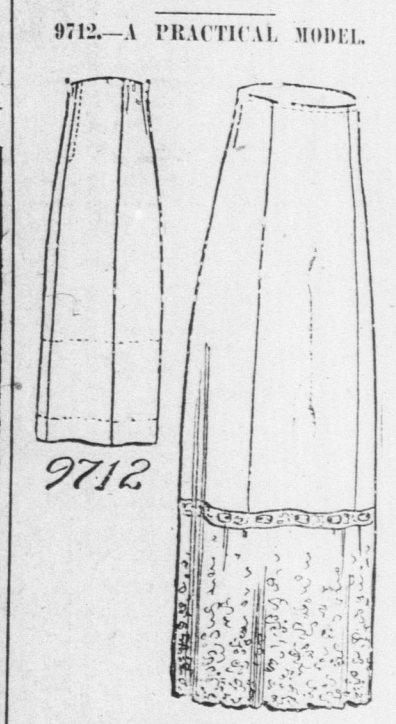
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