

**A** YOUNG woman entered the offices of the Allington Shoe Company. She was a pretty young woman, and she had the air of one who was accustomed to deferential treatment. She received it in this instance. The office boy made all haste to open the gate and admit her behind the railing; the clerk at the nearest desk rose to place himself at her service; the chief clerk hurried toward her; the other clerks glanced at her covertly; the stenographers eyed her with critical approval—in brief, the sensation created was all that the most exacting could ask.

The young woman smiled pleasantly upon all alike, and moved toward a door marked "Private." The chief clerk, however, intercepted her.

"There's a directors' meeting to-day, Miss Bascom," he explained.

"Of course," she returned. "That's why I came."

"I'm afraid Mr. Hamilton can't see you," he persisted.

"Oh, I don't care about him particularly," she rejoined; "I want to see the directors."

"But they're having a business meeting—a most important business meeting," he urged.

"Well," she replied with her sweetest smile, "I have a most important business matter to discuss with them. I am a stockholder, you know."

There was humor in even a mental association of Miss Agatha Bascom with business, but the chief clerk did not smile.

"Really, Miss Bascom," he began, "it is quite impossible to—"

She gave him a nod and a smile, then opened the door and entered the room where the directors were discussing a most important deal of business policy.

The effect was similar to the effect of her appearance in the outer office. The directors were gallant gentlemen—some of them young enough to be decidedly impressionable—and there was the further fact that Miss Agatha Bascom was, by inheritance, a large stockholder in the company. They all rose and bowed and smiled, although it may be confessed that some of the smiles had more of bewildered annoyance than of cordial greeting in them. President Hamilton advanced to meet her; so did Austin Keene. Keene's movement was the impulsive act of a young man who finds a pretty girl of his acquaintance alone in a strange place, but Hamilton's official position gave him precedence, and Keene reluctantly returned to his place.

The girl was not in the least disconcerted by the unfamiliar surroundings; it seemed the most natural thing in the world that the men should put aside the business in hand to give attention to her wishes.

"Good-morning," she said, beaming upon them impartially.

"Good-morning," they replied, some cordially and some not so cordially.

"My dear Miss Bascom," interposed Hamilton in polite expostulation, "may I ask you to wait for me just a moment in the outside office? The directors are in session—"

"That's why I came," she interrupted, looking at him in surprise. "I want to speak to the directors, and I certainly own enough stock—"

"Certainly, certainly," Hamilton agreed hastily, "but it is not exactly customary—"

"We can easily ignore custom," put in Keene quickly.

"Thank you," she said with a smile. "It's a small matter, but I'm sure you'll all agree with me that it deserves attention."

Keene noticed that the others had neglected to offer her a chair, so he hastened to get one. Again he received the reward of a smile, but she declined the chair.

"My business will take but a moment," she explained; "it's merely a suggestion that is sure to have your instant approval—a little thing that probably would have had your attention long ago if it ever had occurred to you. I think we ought to have a pretty and well-equipped rest room for our girls and women, and a nice little clubhouse for all our employees."

There was an uneasy movement on the part of several of the directors, but she failed to notice it, and seemed to consider the matter settled, except as to details.

## The Intractable Stockbroker

By Elliott Flower

"The rest room," she went on, "should be large and light and nicely furnished. There should be an attendant—I think a trained nurse would be advisable—on duty there all the time, and there should be all the facilities for taking care of the girl who may become suddenly ill. There is no place for her to go now."

"She might go home," suggested Caleb Gray dryly. Gray was old and severely practical.

Miss Bascom was astonished; she replied to him with a look under which he should have withered, but somehow he did not.

"What is the idea of the clubhouse?" asked Hamilton.

"There ought to be a place," she said, "where all our employees and their families could have a little innocent diversion evenings and holidays, and my idea is to erect a pretty little building for that purpose. We might arrange for a few uplifting lectures, but relaxation and pleasure should be the main object. They have so little in their own homes and their own lives that we ought to give them a house of contentment."

"The girls have a lunch room now," said Hamilton.

"But such a shabby place!" exclaimed the girl. "No pretty pictures, no comfortable chairs, nor anything to make it attractive! I've just come from that room, and it isn't at all what I mean. We should give them a real rest room—something cheerful and dainty as well as useful. I've been thinking deeply on the subject."

"For how long?" inquired Caleb Gray with a directness that even she found rather disconcerting.

"Why—why, since last evening," she replied. "I laid awake nearly all night thinking," she added in explanation. "I heard the subject of making workers happy discussed at a social-settlement meeting."

"I am afraid, Miss Bascom," said Gray with a trace of sarcasm in his tone, "that you've overlooked the primary purpose of this company, which is making shoes."

"I think," put in Hamilton quickly, with the intention of softening this a little, "that Miss Bascom's ideas are most creditable to her heart, but hardly practical now."

The girl was amazed; she instinctively turned to Keene for support, but even he was silent.

"Do you mean to say," she cried, "that none of you see the importance of this?"

"It is inexpedient at the present time," Hamilton explained conciliatorily. "A little later, perhaps, we might provide the rest room, but the clubhouse—"

"I insist, Mr. Hamilton," she interrupted haughtily. "I certainly ought to have something to say about this company, and this is the first suggestion I have made."

"Let me explain the circumstances, Miss Bascom," remarked Hamilton saucily. "At the present moment the company has not sufficient money to carry out our plans for enlarging the plant and opening a vigorous campaign for new business, and we are now arranging for a new issue of stock to give us the necessary capital. You will readily understand, therefore, that we have no money to waste at this time. A little later, possibly—"

"Waste!" she exclaimed indignantly.

"Possibly that is not the word," he corrected hastily. "I merely wish to show why your suggestion cannot be considered at this time."

"But you don't understand," she returned impatiently. "My heart is set on this."

"I am sorry, but I am confident that I voice the sentiments of all the directors. Do I not gentlemen?" he asked, turning to them.

The directors nodded gravely. Even Austin Keene inclined his head in acquiescence. Her eyes had sought his the moment the question was asked. Whatever the others might say, she was sure she would have a champion in him. And her failed her. True, he seemed to be very unhappy about it, but he silently endorsed the adverse decision.

"I am ashamed to be a stockholder in such a heartless company," she declared. "I shall see what I can do about this."

The chief clerk was scorched as she passed through the outer office; the other clerks and the stenographers looked after her, and said "Whew!" and "Goodness!" The directors when they were alone laughed constrainedly and wondered what she would do. A man of business experience with the same amount of stock might find a way to make trouble, and even she might prove annoying at the next election of directors. But the business in hand soon claimed their attention again—that is, the attention of all save

Austin Keene, who had quietly slipped out after the girl.

Keene overtook her in the hall, but she turned on him before he could speak.

"I hate you!" she cried angrily.

"But, Agatha—"

"Don't you ever dare call me by that name again!" she interrupted fiercely.

"Won't you let me explain?" he pleaded.

"No, I will not," she replied. "You're as inhuman as the rest of them, and I hate you!"

It is a well-known fact that a girl seldom "hates" a young man unless she is considerably interested in him, but no young man ever yet derived much consolation from the fact. So Keene was most disconsolate when he returned to the directors' meeting.

"The situation could hardly be better," President Hamilton was saying. "The plan calls for increased and improved facilities to the value of three hundred thousand dollars and an addition of one hundred thousand dollars to our working capital, which always has been too small for our business. To cover this we increase our present capitalization of six hundred thousand dollars to one million dollars, and the new stock is practically all subscribed in advance. The old stockholders have agreed to take about a third of it, but most of it brings in outside capital. Every share goes at par, too. I think that is all to-day, gentlemen."

### II.

President Robert Hamilton leaned back in his swivel chair and beamed contentedly upon Caleb Gray.

"It is all running as smoothly as any one could ask," he announced. "The new stock is almost ready for delivery, and there is very little of it that is not already pledged. We have placed it at par without a line of advertising, without a single appeal to the general public; we have only had to mention our plans to a few conservative investors. It is most gratifying. Brent takes five hundred shares, Gibbs two hundred, Wilcox three hundred, Cargill one hundred and fifty—"

"Have you offered any to Miss Bascom?" interrupted Gray with a grim smile.

Hamilton's brow clouded. "I'm sorry about that affair," he remarked thoughtfully. "I always dislike to vex a woman, but she ought to be reasonable."

"A clubhouse!" laughed Gray; "a clubhouse and a trained nurse!"

"Miss Bascom is in about the same position as Keene," Hamilton went on reflectively, "except that we put him on the board. Both got their stock by inheritance, and neither knows anything about the business, but he's a man and has sense enough to grasp a business proposition. She has never even asked for representation on the board. Perhaps she looked upon Keene as her representative," Hamilton chuckled.

"How much stock does she hold?" asked Gray.

"Twelve hundred shares—enough to make a lot of trouble if there happened to be a strong minority interest."

"But there isn't," said Gray, "so I don't see what she can do."

"Nothing now, of course," returned Hamilton, "but you can't tell what may happen later. A rambunctious fifth interest—"

"The increased capitalization makes it only a little more than an eighth," interrupted Gray. "Anyhow, she'll have a new fad in a week, and won't even remember to demand representation on the new board. But she certainly was a fiery proposition when she walked out of that meeting."

They both laughed at the recollection, but the laughter died away when Daniel Brent burst into the room. It was evident that Brent was angry about something; he gave Gray a curt nod, and then addressed himself to Hamilton.

"Look here, Hamilton!" he cried. "What kind of a game are you putting up?"

"What's the matter?" asked Hamilton in astonishment.

"I don't know," replied Brent sharply. "That's what I'm trying to find out. But anyhow, you can cancel my stock subscription."

"What!" Hamilton and Gray both spoke at once.

"It looks bad," declared Brent with emphasis. "You are trying to hold me up for five hundred shares at par when the stock is offered in the open market at

## One More Ride

There is one more ride to be made to-day  
One more "Reveille" at break of day,  
Another parade—"get mounted"—away!  
There is one more ride.

'Tis the last grim shift in the frosty dawn  
Of a lonely picquet—with victory won;  
One more ride and the glory done;  
'Tis the last day's ride!

'Tis four long years since we first rode out,  
With "boots and saddles" and hearty shout—  
We are silent now, with the foe in rout—  
We have had grim rides.

There is one more day! a proud day, too;  
For to-day we've won, with the Rhine in view—  
And we cross to-day! 'tis a victor's due—  
A triumphant ride!

Why don't we smile? Why a hard set face?  
Have you ridden with Death in a hot, stern race,  
When sweat was cold on a dying face?  
Have you faced the guns?

But our hearts are strong on the last day's ride,  
For lives have paid with majestic pride;  
And the squadron riding side by side  
Will cross the Rhine, the German Rhine,  
In our last day's ride to-day!

—G. H. Hambley, "A" Squadron, C.L.H.  
Bruhl, Germany, December 12, 1918.