

A LITTLE BILL.

BY S.

"She owes the money and she's got to pay."

The speaker was Mr. Scruff, of the firm of Scruff & Co.; one of the wholesale houses of the city. He was a man of about fifty years of age; one of those ignorant, avaricious species of humanity, with which the world unfortunately abounds.

It is a puzzle how such men ever rise at all in business life. They are the sort of men who delight to rule in their warehouses with that despotic sway which is begotten of ignorance and selfishness, and which is so noticeable by the way in which they order their employes about.

One would almost think that fortune, having become blind, was showering her favors indiscriminately, smiling often on the undeserving.

"Yes, I know, sir;" replied Mr. Freeman, who was Mr. Scruff's city traveller. "She owes the money all right enough, and would pay it too, if she could, but she really can't. She's had a very hard time of it, poor thing. She lost her husband about six months ago, and has had to struggle on alone ever since."

"Well, what if she did?" retorted Mr. Scruff, hastily. "What have I to do with her husband? She can pay if she likes, and she's got to. D'you suppose we're going to let the thing run on forever? why don't you make her pay? What's the good of your collecting like that? You'd better go back, and tell her, from me, that, if she doesn't pay inside of twenty-four hours, I'll sue her. See?"

The traveller started for the door, but Mr. Scruff called him back again.

"And say, look here. Mind you don't give her any discount on it. Don't forget, now."

"Very well, sir. Just as you say,"

replied Mr. Freeman, as he walked out of the private office into the warehouse.

"I wonder why such men live;" muttered to himself, as he packed his sample-case, preparatory to starting out on his daily round of calls.

"They say there's good in everything, but I'll be hanged if I can see any good in that man. If meanness and contemptibility were attributes of goodness, he would be an angel. I have to appear civil to him. If I told him what I thought of him, I should be—er—well, not here. And now he wants me to go and dun that poor woman again. I'd help her myself, if I could, but a salary of nine dollars a week, and nine to clothe and feed, doesn't leave much of a balance. Confound it all, how shall I tell her? Ah! I have it, write a note; one can put things into a letter, which he wouldn't like to say personally. I can give it to her and hurry away before she has time to read it."

Having written the note, and folded it up, he took his sample-case, and walked out. It was very cold, and very windy. Although only a little after four o'clock, the lights were beginning to bob up here and there in the shop windows, making them bright and cheerful-looking.

A busy throng of people were hurrying along, each engrossed in his own thoughts, each pursuing his own object.

Mr. Freeman hurried along, pursuing his object, and engrossed in his thoughts, which were anything but pleasant.

After swerving off down a side-street, from the main thoroughfare, and then down numerous other side streets, he came at length to a blind alley, dark and dreary-looking, on which was the shop of Mrs. Grant,