

got some thrift in ye before I gie ye the runnin' of a shippin' trade worth thirty thousand poun'."

That Benson had not succeeded in meeting this simple condition we have already seen.

III.

Before starting on his doubtful mission—"to beard the lion in his den"—as he ruefully expressed it, Benson took out the precious roll of bills and proceeded to count them for the twentieth time—five hundreds, five twenties and ten tens.

"Don't lose it, dear, whatever you do," said Jennie, kissing him goodbye.

"I'll try not to, little wife," Fred replied with a laugh; then he stepped out into the night.

"I may as well walk," he muttered, as he faced the bracing wind. "I may think up some scheme in case the old man is obstinate. But I'm afraid my chance is ended. What a pleasant reflection to think that I can't raise three hundred dollars in a city full of friends! It might be easy enough if I could return it, but the old fox has seen to that. I suppose he'll make Falconer the next offer. George! I wish I knew what to do."

For fifteen minutes the young man strode ahead, lost in thought. Then, finding himself facing the gray mansions of Beaver Hall Hill, he turned to the right and descended to the old business quarter of the city—a section alive with bustle and activity by day, but at night deserted, badly lighted, and but poorly guarded by police. Presently he came to the ruins of the Board of Trade Building, whose high skeleton walls cast grim shadows across the dim thoroughfares and far up on the walls of the warehouses opposite. Mr. Fraser's offices lay but two blocks beyond this, and as the old gentleman was invariably to be found in his counting-room till the clocks tolled nine, thither Benson was hastening.

IV.

"Hands up!"

The words were hissed rather than spoken. Brought partially to his senses, but not sure that he was the person addressed, Benson peered through the gloom. In front of him loomed a huge, dark figure, and under his eyes gleamed something strangely suggestive of force.

"What in the deu—"

"Throw up your hands or I'll bore a hole through you—d'ye hear?"

Reluctantly Benson did as he was bid. Though no coward, neither was he a fool.

"Now I'm goin' through your pockets. If you yell or try to get away I'll fix you worse than a target; d'ye understand?"

"That seems tolerably plain."

"And no back talk, my boy; remember that."

"Just as you say," replied Benson grimly.

With an additional threat the robber began his search. First he tried his victim's right vest pocket—nothing; then his left vest pocket—a watch and chain that Jennie had given him; next he dived into the right trouser pocket—

"Good heavens!" groaned Benson. "There it goes!"

A moment later he stood hatless and breathless with pockets inside out, gazing helplessly at the retreating figure. Whereupon, as he tells the story to his friends, his senses and the robber returned simultaneously.

What brought the rascal back Benson never knew—probably he had been seen by a policeman. "Anyway he tore around the corner like mad," runs his graphic narrative, "so I thought I'd better try a hold-up myself."

Nerving himself for a second encounter, Benson crept forward in the shadow. Fortunately he recalled a trick of his boyhood, which, though never considered very manly, and certainly requiring no display of skill, was decidedly effective, as he had proved in sundry youthful escapades.

Waiting till the robber had almost reached him, Benson suddenly dropped before him on the pavement. To his satisfaction the huge mass shot forward into space; then descended with a thud, and an explosion of profanity, upon the rough pavement. Fred sprang at the sprawling mass and clutched it firmly.

"Now," he panted, "Let me see you move and I'll knife you. Sorry to have given you such a tumble, but I want that money back. Don't budge—d'ye hear?—or I'll cut a hole through you."

The robber heard, but was too dazed to offer any objection; and Benson leisurely regained his watch and money, which he quietly transferred to their respective pockets. Then, seeing a pedestrian in the distance, and realising his weakness, for the knife was a myth, he

called for assistance. The shout, however, aroused his opponent who, with a quick wrench, succeeded in freeing himself. In another moment he had regained his feet and to Benson's dismay disappeared before he could give chase.

After relating his story to a policeman and the usual sympathetic crowd that had gathered, Benson limped to the nearest street lamp to count his money. Apparently satisfied, he called a cab and drove directly to his home.

V.

"Well, dear, what does he say?" asked an eager voice, as Fred mounted the steps.

"I didn't see him, Jennie."

"You didn't see him?"

"No, dear; there was no need."

"What do you mean?" gasped Jennie.

"Count that!" was the reply, as he emptied his pocket upon the table.

Jennie did so with eager fingers.

"Oh, Fred, there's eleven hundred dollars! Did you get a loan of four hundred?"

"Yes, dear, a kind of—er—accidental loan."

"From whom?"

"Frankly, dear, I don't know."

"You don't know! Why, Fred, how funny. When has it to be paid back?"

"I don't even know that dear. I'm not sure that I want to pay it back—not to the man I got it from. We may have to give it to charity."

"Why, how strange!" said Jenny.

"Yes, dear, and—er—how convenient!"

The United States Postal Question

"THE hour for reform has struck," declares the Philadelphia "Inquirer," in concluding an editorial on the defects of the postal system. Almost everybody agrees, in the face of an annual deficit of nearly \$15,000,000, that this amount must be saved somewhere. But at whose expense! "How about the \$20,000,000 annually stolen from the post-offices by the 'railroads' by 'vast swindles involved in the weighing game,' and 'robber rates' for the use of postal cars," asks "Ridgway's"; while other papers remark that if the Government would pay the \$20,000,000 it costs to transport the matter now carried free on government service, it would more than make good the deficit, or that if we only had a parcel-post system, like other civilized countries, the huge profits now enjoyed by the express companies would fill the postal treasury to overflowing. That the ax will fall on the railroads or express companies, however, does not seem to be seriously expected. Third Assistant Postmaster General Madden would like to solve the difficulty by raising the postal rate on periodicals from one cent a pound to four, a "solution" that would, in the opinion of many, wipe a number of popular magazines out of existence and increase the subscription price of the rest. Readers of this magazine may be interested to know that the postage on our last week's issue alone was over \$900. Mr. Madden's plan would increase this to \$3,600." In Canada the postal rate on periodicals is half a cent a pound, and, on some routes, a quarter of a cent. In this connection it is interesting to notice that Canada finds its postal system choked with American periodicals and proposes to use an ax of its own. To quote the New York "Evening Post":

"Canada has given notice that after May 7 next the postal convention concerning second-class matter will be abrogated. This action affects the newspaper and magazine rate of one cent a pound, and will seriously restrict the circulation of all sorts of periodicals beyond the Canadian border. It appears that the reason for the discrimination is two-fold: First, the Canadian mails are forced to carry enormous quantities of alleged second-class matter at a loss; next, Canadian trade suffers by the advertising in such magazines. We assume that the former reason only need be taken into account, and it is easy to see that there are great inconvenience and expense to Canada in this service, with very little reciprocal advantage. Evidently, her newspapers and magazines profit very slightly by the convention, ours enormously. In short, the bargain was always so bad a one for her that we doubt if an adjustment can be made by simply overhauling the registry list of journals classified as second-class matter. What is important to note is that the Canadian position is not that of declaring a boycott, but simply that of withdrawing from a one-sided agreement."