

The Inglenook.

Caleb Billings' Quarter.

Caleb Billings is a tailor with a shop in a little basement on Dearborn street. Caleb is a "mark," an easy mark, his wife says, and many of Caleb's customers if they knew of the wife's remark would say that she told the truth. Caleb is the friend of the stray cat, the homeless dog and the down trodden and despised generally, whether they be man or beast. The number of men in Chicago who owe Caleb for trouser cleaning and trouser pressing is beyond computation. Not one of these men, however, will hesitate to morrow to go into the Dearborn street basement to order a general clothes cleaning and ask Caleb to chalk it up. He'll do it without a word, and such is the make-up of this little tailor that he will act as though the man who is to stand him off for six months and probably will never pay at all is actually doing him a favor.

Mrs. Billings, it may be said in all sorrow, is a bit of a shrew. If Caleb gives a dinner to a hungry tramp, which he does every time a tramp applies, unless his wife be looking, Mrs. Billings upon discovery of the fact will berate Caleb for hours at a stretch.

"You've no right to do these things, Caleb Billings. Here you are giving pork chops and potatoes to the thieving tramp when we need new chintz curtains in the bedroom and a new rug for the parlor. We never have a dollar at a time in the house just because you are so soft-hearted and softer headed that everyone with a tale of woe can get your last cent. It's got to quit, I tell you; it's got to quit. You're working all the time for a lot of lazy loafers who never pay you. You ought to be ashamed of yourself." Caleb took every tirade meekly. He knew that in some ways his wife was a good deal more than half right, but he could no more change his nature than at his age, sixty, he could change his trade.

One morning just before Caleb started to work his wife said: "There isn't a cent in the house. Be sure and bring some home this evening. We need it for lots of things, and besides I promised Cousin Mary that I'd go to the theater with her to-night, and each of us is going to buy her own ticket. Now, don't give away everything you collect before you get back from the house."

Caleb promised obediently to be good and started out. He slipped his hand in his pocket and found that he had just 30 cents, a quarter and a nickel. The fact that this was all he had in the world except a lot of outstanding accounts did not worry Caleb much, for he wasn't built that way. He boarded a street car—he lived three miles from his shop—and paid the nickel to the conductor after dropping into a corner seat. About five minutes after entering the car Caleb discovered that there was some sort of a discussion going on near the forward end. Caleb looked and saw a faultlessly dressed man going through his pockets as though vainly searching for something. Then the searching passenger said to the conductor: "It's no use; I haven't a cent with me. I'll pay you when I go down town to-morrow. I'll make it a point to take this car."

The conductor shrugged his shoulders. "That doesn't go," he said.

By this time all the passengers were interested. Every one of them, bar one perhaps, looked as though he were saying to himself, "It's the same old gag. Here's a man, well dressed at that, trying to beat his fare. The nerve of some people is monumental."

"I left my pocketbook with the bills in it at home," said the passenger, "and by chance I have no change."

At this the passengers exchanged glances and said to themselves, "He's playing the game hard."

"That don't go," said the conductor, "you'll have to get off." As the man rose to comply Caleb, aroused to the sense of the situation, walked forward and slipped a quarter into the passenger's hand. The man thanked him profusely and said that he would not accept the car fare but that it was absolutely necessary for him to get down town as quickly as possible. The passenger paid his fare and slipped the twenty cents change into his pocket. Caleb rather expected the twenty cents back, but he wouldn't have spoken of it for twenty times the amount. Presently the passenger walked over and took a seat by Caleb. "I want your card," he said to the tailor.

"O, that's nothing," said Caleb; "got in a fix like that on a car myself once."

"I insist upon having your address," said the stranger, "and I won't feel comfortable unless you give it to me." Caleb pulled out a rather soiled card giving his name and the location of his dingy little shop. The passenger thanked him, put it in his pocket, but made no movement to return the twenty cents.

Caleb went lunchless that day because no delinquent customer came in to pay up, and though Caleb was a lender he was no borrower. Not a cent came in all day. He walked home that evening, Grief, but his wife gave it to him. Caleb was always truthful. He told the tale of his twenty-five cents and how he didn't get his change back. His wife called him an addle pated fool, said that he'd been swindled by a sharper, and the meanest kind of a sharper at that, because he would stoop to stealing such a petty amount. Caleb was told that no good on earth could ever come out of what he was pleased to call generosity. Caleb fell asleep to his wife's scoldings, but she was at it again the next morning, and told him that generosity, like charity, should begin at home. "Never as long as you live," said she, "will you be able to show me a single return for your idiotic conduct."

A week passed. Caleb had not thought much about the quarter affair. He was dimly conscious, however, that he felt a little disappointment because the stranger whose fare he had paid had not returned the loaned money. It wasn't the quarter, but Caleb hated to have his judgment of human nature go astray. He would have given the quarter even if the man had had a villainous face, but this was one instance where Caleb was really hurt to think that he had made a mistake in the reading of human nature. Some such thought as this was running in his mind when the door opened. Caleb looked up from his goose. There stood the man whose car fare he had paid and who had forgotten to return the change.

"Good morning, Mr. Billings," he said. I was called out of town within an hour after I left the car the other morning, and this is the first chance I've had to see you. Here's your twenty cents change. I slipped it into my pocket from pure force of habit instead of giving it to you. Besides that, I am absent minded. I understand, Mr. Billings, that you were once cutter for Lamprey & Co., the great custom tailors. I am also told that you were the best cutter they had. They have always made my clothes and those of my children. I need a large wardrobe. Winter is coming on. You may measure me for two winter overcoats, a driving coat and two suits, one sack and one cutaway. I see also that double-breasted frocks are going out, so I'll need a new single-breasted one. And, by the way, I need a new Tuxedo and a new dress suit. I was going to order all these just round the corner, so no thanks, please. Of course, you'll need money to get the material. Here's \$200. I'll send my boys in to be measured to-morrow."

Three weeks later Caleb Billings handed his wife \$460, clean and legitimate profit on the clothes he had made for the family of the man whose car fare he had paid. Mrs. Billings grabbed the money a bit gluttonously. "Caleb," she said, "when this man came into the shop first what did he do?"

"He gave me the twenty cents change from the quarter I loaned him," said Caleb.

"Caleb," said Mrs. Billings, "will you never learn wisdom? That man still owes you a nickel."—Edward B. Clark in Chicago Record-Herald.

Doll-Making.

In the little town of Sonneberg, in Thuringia, 25,000,000 dozen dolls are made each year, each one of the 12,000 inhabitants of the place being in the business. The children on their way to school call for or deliver work; the shoemaker makes the tiny shoes; the barber works on the doll's wigs; the butcher sells suet to the doll's glue-maker; the tailor and seamstress sell "pieces" to the doll's dressmaker; and so on through the whole list of tradesmen. Five large firms control the business, and through these sales are annually made to the amount of £3,000,000. But this vast amount of business is far from pleasing or profitable to the poor mechanics who work at this trade. A girl who goes into the factory at the age of fourteen receives 3s. a week, and ten years later considers herself fortunate if she attains the maximum of 10s; and the man who receives 4s. a day for making doll's eyes is said to be an object of envy. A family can only live when all of its members work, and, as one might suppose, they are miserably clothed and insufficiently fed.—Christian Register.

Singing Birds.

Birds acquire the art of singing just as truly as do prima donnas. In the Hartz Mountains, at the village of Andreasberg, over 200,000 canaries are raised annually. The Germans are especially fond of these pretty songsters and very successful in their propagation and nurture. But their best singers are never sold. They are kept as choir-masters for the feathered vocalists, Handsome and promising fledglings are kept close to the acknowledged leaders of the aviary, and they pick up and practice the notes they hear. The way to have a child learn the "Songs of Zion" is to have the child familiar with them in the home-cage.—The Interior.