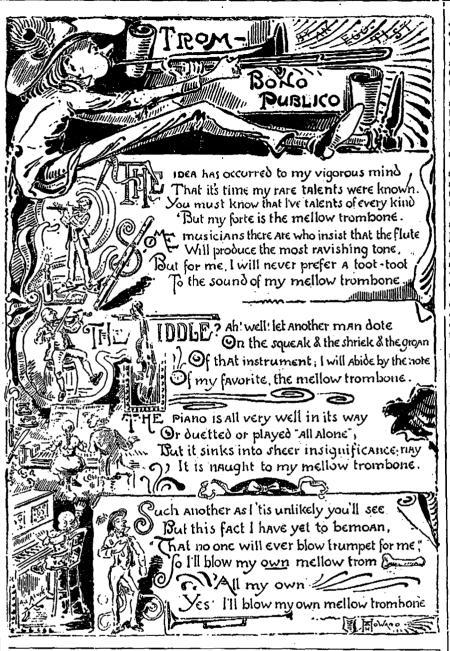
## **GRIP** ·



## IN THE LONESOME OCTOBER.

"Stovepipes cleaned, missus ?"

"Well, I do want ours cleaned, of course. How much do you charge?'

"Fifty cents a stove." Oh ! Well-no, I think not, not to-day, and Mrs. John shut the door on the retresting and Mrs. John shut the door on the retreeting form of the sooty applicant, and returned to her rocking-chair. "Fifty cents, indeed! I should think not!" she reflected, going on darning John's socks. "John can do it as well as anybody, if he only wouldn't swear so! We did have a pretty awful time last year, I know, and he vowed then he'd never touch a transmist coming the lived to he a thoumand stovepipe again if he lived to be a thousand years old. But fifty cents for carrying a few years old. Dut hey conta for carrying a little soot out of them ! Nonsense! it's outrageous. Wait, I'll get round John ! I'll watch my chance !

An opportunity seemed to present itself that very evening when John, having exhaust-ed the papers, and put his meerschaum care-

fully away in its case, thrust his hands into his trouser-pockets, looked about him, and shivered. "Going to light that hall stove this fall, Mary? I thought we left it up this sum-mer so it would be all rendy for the cold season."

"Oh, that reminds me, dear. I've been waiting till some evening you'd have time to examine the pipes and see if they needed cleaning-

"You don't mean to say you haven't had those stovepipes cleaned yet?"

"Well, I don't suppose they're really very dirty," said Mrs. John. "I thought we'd just at them some evening before we risked look lighting the stove. A fire would be pleasant to night, wouldn't it ? It's turned real chilly!" "Chilly ? It's as cold as blazes !" said John, getting up and sauntering into the hall. Mrs. John stepped lightly after. John took one hand out of his pocket and tapped care-lessly on the pipes within reach. He was humming a tune.

"We could make a fire at once," said Mrs. down. "What do you think, dear? They down the seem to need cleaning, do they?" was " "Let me see," said John, looking musingly along the line of pipe. I believe I swore last

things down again?" "Did you, John? Why, I believe you did,

and I'd hate to have you ! How cold you look, you poor dear ! You had better go back to the sitting room, and I'll just take this first length out myself, and then I'll be satisfied. Why, perhaps they don't need cleaning at all,

and we can have a lovely fire immediately !" "You! Here, keep away from here! I suppose you've made up your mind to look at the confounded inside of a stovepipe to-night or die! Get me a cloth or some-thing, can't you ?"

In a twinkling she had handed him a cloth and an old pair of gloves, spread an old car-pet at his feet, and placed a pail beside him. These preparations John seemed not to observe, as he gloomily began that tentative series of operations that connect themselves with the detaching of stovepipes from each

other. But his song was silent now. "Why, there's very little soot after all," exclaimed Mrs. John, briskly, as pipe number one yielded to his treatment. "Just shake it out into this pail, while I take a peep up the next one."

"I don't know what you call a 'little, '" said John, sulkily. "It's choke fall, by Jove ! that's what it is !" "Why, how extraordinary !" said Mrs.

John, in accents of deep surprise, and hopped up on a chair. "And, dear me! I believe the pipes are coming apart up here, four lengths up. Why, John, it's coming right down in my hand ! Oh. take it, take it, or I'll drop it ! There. How lovely it must be to be as strong as you are! Goodness, wouldn't it have been awful if I had droppsd it? But now that it is down, you had better carry it right out and empty it in the barrel

and john did so, and when he came back he found the step-ladder placed invit-ingly ready, more old carpets spread, and his

ingly ready, more on carpets spread, and his wife looking enthusiastically up. "I can show you *exactly* the next place where they'll come apart most easily," she said, with animation. "I declare, we're almost half-done already. I never knew anyone work so quickly as you do, dear! How good the fire will feel, won't it? I believe it will be zero before morning, dont you. Oh, dear-

"Get me a hammer, can't you ?"

"Here is one, dear, and the sorew-driver." "What the deuce do I want a screw-driver for ?"

"Of course not, only—" "Hand me that screw-driver, will you? Any time to night !"

At a quarter past nine John was carrying the last of these pipes in from the yard. His countenance was sad. His coat was off. Streaks of stove-polish were on his high, white brow, and various smuts upon his nose. At a quarter past ten he was still struggling to get the darned things back into position. He pushed and hammered and tugged and coaxed aud thundered and swore at them, as men will, and when he had got them all right at one end, they dropped apart again at the other, or in the middle, or at the elbow, or came bouncing down to the floor, rolling and

came bouncing down to the hoor, rolling and rebounding, as their frolicsome way is. Mrs. John's spirits never once flagged, and when towards midnight they had got the fire kindled, and she stood warming her hands, she smiled brightly and remarked :

"And we've saved fifty cents !" "Fifty—blazes !" shouted John. "Do you mean to tell me-? - !"