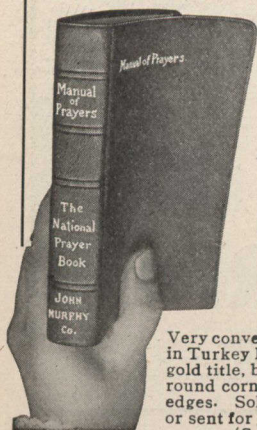


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## The Graft and the Craft

Continued from page 15)

pardoned for wondering what was the matter with Mr. Luther.

So Cannell and Dakin had gone home. They had written their stories of the bank failure for their respective papers, had turned in their copy, and were now bound for their homes, satisfied, and perhaps a little puffed, with the consciousness of good work done on a big story. Of course, they had a right to feel good; it was a big story, and they were good men. They had made good copy out of this story—what a story it was to make good copy out of! Everything that a big story should have it had in abundance: mystery, names, figures, all prominent enough to create consternation, and all involved and interwoven in exactly the manner to delight a good reporter. It was great—even the story that Dakin and Cannell had to write was great, and the real story! Luther stiffened up a little. He had a scoop on the real story!

He looked at his watch. What had happened to him? What was he doing in Noonan's at this time of the evening with a scoop like this in his pocket? He must have gone to sleep like a greenhorn who had not news instinct enough to see what the story meant! He was running for the door before the watch was back in his pocket.

There was a cab at the curb. Luther was in it when the driver saw him.

"To the *Chastiser* office in one grand hurry!"

He didn't pay the cabman. He left him bewildered and angry at the office door and ran in through the business office upstairs to his little room. He fell into the weak-backed chair as easily as an old cavalryman goes into the saddle. He pulled forth the creaky machine with a slam.

"Samuel Eckerson, president of the Third Trust Company, is the man responsible for the wrecking of the National Savings Bank which yesterday failed for \$500,000. Edward W. Golsen, chief stockholder of both of the involved institutions and brother-in-law of Eckerson, admitted this in an interview to a reporter for the *Chastiser* late last evening."

He looked over the paragraph carefully before going further. He decided that it was well and good. It told just what he wanted to tell and nothing more. It was as it should be.

Then the typewriter hummed and rattled and squeaked, and sheet after sheet of copy paper ran in and out, and the story of "Financial Treachery in High Circles" became a reality. The frenzy of the craft was upon Luther. There was nothing in the world but the story; nothing worthy of thought in the whole universe save its proper development and telling. He gloated as he wrote. What a story it was! And how he could handle it!

Men came into his room and went out again. Luther never saw them.

"Run it to the limit!" shrieked a maddened managing editor. "I know—I know!" grunted Luther; and he never ceased writing until the final period was in its place.

Minutes after he was done, after they had taken the last sheet of copy from his desk, after the linotype men upstairs were casting his words in molten metal, he sat alone and searched his pockets for matches and remembered something. It was something that he had heard long, long ago, so long ago it seemed that he remembered it but indistinctly. It did not arouse any feeling in him now; it did nothing more serious than to stir his curiosity. He wondered why it ever had affected him.

"There's that much . . . in the upper left-hand drawer . . . the half-

open one . . . Come in on the ground floor with us . . . I'll give it to you now . . . send it up to you, or any way you like."

Luther laughed audibly. He had done his work, and he knew that it was good, and how near, thought he, he had been to—He shrugged his shoulders.

"Hey, fellow!" cackled Curly, the office-boy, coming in to beg cigarettes, "another scoop, eh? How'd yeh have the heart to do it? Getting to be one of these hero-guys dat you write about, yerself, ain't yeh?"

"Get out of here," said the Genius severely.

## A Saturday in August

By W. A. STAEBLER

ALANK brown youth in a tattered and ink-stained office coat glared savagely at the back of the last tardy customer leaving the bank, but with the last bang of the heavy door, his mood changed wonderfully. As he cleaned up his work his tired eyes found time to gaze away into the distance, where waving tree tops showed beyond the hot stretches of brick and mortar, and patches of blue sky mocked him at his toil. But somehow the dreary routine of debits and credits, the nightmare of figures, the tiresome drone of the teller calling "deposit!" the endless succession of staring faces at his little wicket, passed into nothingness before the sweet inrush of thought born of a clear little creek, away off in the woodland, along which his mind travelled in fancy.

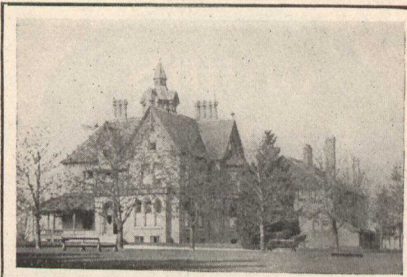
From over the hills and far away there rollicked a glad little breeze, a soft little tell-tale, a midsummer breeze. It stole through the cool dim paths of the woodland, picking up gossip at squirrel hole and nest, then over a clearing and into a meadow it danced, and took note of the figures and under one arm was smuggled a rifle, its tiny black eye peering over the fields.

A clear little creek, erratic and wilful, sulked through a dark swamp and splashed into a garden for wild folk that lay just beyond. Blue flags raised their delicate tops from a carpet of sword grass that bunched into causeways the spongy black mould, and Jack-in-the-pulpits looked down from a terrace with envious eyes at the colour below. Just beyond lay the woodland, a rustling green symphony sun-splashed and quiet, save for the soft, steady hum of numberless insects, or the pulsating throb of a grouse at his wooing.

As monarch of this and all just beyond it, far out where the grain fields rippled and waved, a grey-whiskered, burly old woodchuck reigned well and wisely. For he alone of the beasts of the forest, though boasting no strength nor fleetness nor cunning, still cropped the sweet clover at sunrise and sunset, while the bones of the proud ones lay scattered in dust.

The afternoon passed, and over the garden the shadows had lengthened until the flowered carpet grew deeper in hue. From out a cool burrow two beady brown eyes scanned the cover with care and patience. But nothing disturbed the green tossing prospect, sweet peace was the pass-word that breathed from the shadows, and the flags nodded the answer to flip-flapping leaves.

Then broke on the air the sharp spit of a rifle, and a cloud of pale smoke drifted up from the bushes. Soft of tread, keen of eye, well versed in woodcraft was the lad that stepped from the shade of the bushes. Ask the rollicking, tattle-tale midsummer breeze what it whispered as it passed by a burrow that lay in the garden, and ask why it laughs as it skips into the evening and tells the glad story to the wild things beyond.—Rod and Gun.



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