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MEN'S AND BOYS' WEAR.

here she struggled with a few tears, "cruel—and I must warn you—"

"What on earth are you talking about!" said the Stenographer, in a tone which acted like a tonic on the Ex-Schoolma'am.

"Why, I'll tell you," said she, sitting up very straight. "You needn't think, because all the men pay you so much attention, it means anything. That Theological Student flirts with every new girl that comes to Crunchem's. Why, when I first came, he tried to get up a flirtation with me. Think of his impertinence—with me! But he soon found out what I thought of him. He pretends to be so religious, but I've often noticed, my dear, that those men who are so awfully pious—"

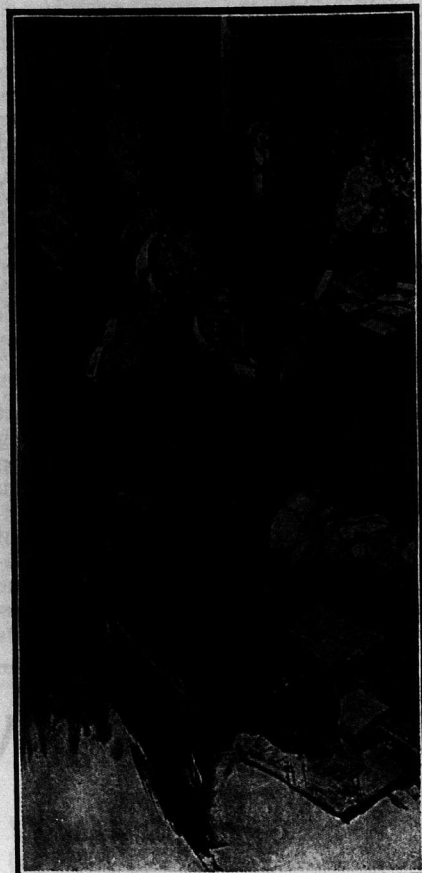
"Oh," gasped the Stenographer, and I thought he was so charming!"

"Ah, my dear, it is my mission to undeceive you, to open your eyes. And then there is that big man with the gray eyes—"

"Oh," said the Stenographer, faintly. "Rest assured there is something wrong there. When nobody at Crunchem's can find out about a person—"

"Of course, you know the world so much better than I," murmured the Stenographer. "You are so much older—"

The Ex-Schoolma'am flushed darkly.



When Tommy flung open the door, and out of the back room, red, disheveled, fighting-mad, with three of the men trying to hang on to his arms. . . . Such a scrimmage as followed I hope never to see again. . . . Desks, chairs, books, papers, ink, maps, men, all in one grand, indiscriminate wallow on the floor."

This was not what she had expected. "Older in experience—not years," she said.

Just then the Landlady tapped at the door. "Telephone," said she to the Ex-Schoolma'am.

After the Ex-Schoolma'am had gone, the stenographer danced up to the mirror and twirled on her toes. "Jealous!" she laughed; "jealous!" Then she looked at the floor reflectively. "How he did bang that door," she murmured.

III

At the Office

"Ought to have heard the J. P. spout last night," said Tommy the next morning before the other came.

"Bah!" said I, tipping back in my chair.

"Say, wonder why he's so thick with that electrician?"

"Electrician?" said I.

"The one that comes here to fix the lights—don't you know—tall feller—"

"Oh," said I, enlightened, "you mean the Theological Student."

"Him!" said Tommy, incredulous.

"Sure," said I. "That's the way he's known 'round at the Boarding-House."

Don't look it. Thought he was a sport. Him and the J. P. go off every

Wednesday night together after the class. Chums is no name."

"Oh, do you go down every Wednesday night to hear the J. P. do his little stunt?" said I, jeeringly.

"Yes, I do," said Tommy, stoutly. "Don't have to listen to him if I don't want to, and some of the others are bully. But I notice every night right after the class off goes the J. P. and that feller."

"Some graft," says I.

"Always want to holler 'Oh, come off your perch,' at the J. P.," says Tommy. "Blooming hypocrite," he added, disgustedly.

"Queer—queer," mumbled I, chewing my penholder.

The Old Man came over to my desk that morning, and asked me to look after the vault while Tommy was in the back room.

"Wonder what's up," thought I, as Tommy trailed after the Old Man and the J. P., winking nervously, but gamely, at me as he passed. Tommy was in perpetual fear of losing his job. He helped to support his family, who'd be in a bad way if anything happened to him.

The First Vice-President, the Cashier and two of the Directors came in later and were swallowed up in the back room.

The Stenographer tiptoed over to the vault door, and whispered, "What are they doing to poor Tommy?"

"Heaven knows!" said I. "Oh, nothing," I added.

Old Blankensop appeared while she stood there, and I let him in, and turned the lock with the master key, stepping back while he thrust his own key in and took out his box, glancing suspiciously at me after he did so.

"Where's that young rascal that tends to things 'round here?" says he.

"If you mean Thomas Muggins," said I, stiffly, "he's out of the office for a few minutes."

Blankensop mumbled something, stuffed a paper he took out of his box into his pocket, pushed the box back, and locked it in. After taking out the key, he pushed the lock several times. "Want to be sure it's locked," he says. Old beggar! But of course I had to take it.

As I let him out of the cage door, a great uproar was heard in the back of the office. Louder and louder it grew. Voices in angry recrimination—a resounding blow—something falling—then Tommy flinging open the door, and out of the back room, red, disheveled, fighting-mad, with three of the men trying to hang on to his arms. Tommy, as I have before mentioned, was of athletic build, and such a scrimmage as followed I hope never to see again. The Old Man, whom he had knocked down in the back room, was now on his feet, dancing like an infuriated bear, while the First Vice-President, the Cashier and the two Directors entered into combat with Tommy, one after another being laid out only to scramble up to renew the attack. Desks, chairs, books, papers, ink, maps, men, all in one grand, indiscriminate wallow on the floor. The First Vice-President finally got Tommy down, choking him into compliance. Others tied his hands with cord, but it took the six of them to pick him up and put him in a chair. The other clerks huddled near the doors of the outer offices, with white faces. Not one of us dared interfere, because we knew it meant the loss of our jobs.

"Great heavens," said I to the Junior Partner, who, coolly aloof, had watched the fracas, "what does this mean?"

"Tend to your own business," said he insolently.

"If you want the thief," yelled Tommy, "you'd better get him while you can!" making a lunge in the direction of the Junior Partner.

"Keep cool, my lad," said he, rocking back and forth on his toes and heels; "keep cool."

Just then the sound of a gong floated up from the street, closely followed by the dash of two policemen into the office. Seeing Tommy with his arms pinioned, they made for him without delay or explanations.

It seems that old Blankensop had been telephoning during the melee. Nobody had noticed him. The Old Man, the Junior Partner, the Directors, the Cashier and the First Vice-President looked at one another in consternation. Clearly