

Local and Express

This is a Humorous Story which could only be Illustrated by a Cubist Picture

By ALAN SULLIVAN

I HAD invented a machine. It was a labour-saving device. I was in doubt where to sell it. My wife said, "Take it to New York."

I said, "Why?" My wife said, "Because I heard an Englishman remark the other day that the Americans were the laziest people on earth. Sooner than do a job themselves they'd invent a machine to do it for them."

Ultimately I got into correspondence with the General Labour Extinguishing Company, of New York, Room 2827, Zenith Building.

I described my machine. The president wrote and said, "Please call on me with the machine at 4.30 on the 29th ult. I have a friend who knows a man who might be interested. There is undoubtedly a fortune waiting for you."

He was perfectly right. It was that kind of fortune. I reached the Zenith Building with difficulty and my machine. Entering the porte cochere I found fourteen elevators.

On the wall was a black and white bill of lading. It told you all about who was in the building. I began at the top and just before I reached G I met a man I knew. He also was a Canadian and had lived in New York for some years. But we understood each other perfectly.

"Where are you going?" he said. His voice had a certain wistful appeal in it that touched me. This man, although he only faintly suggested it, was interested in my movements. I liked this delicate preliminary—subtle and impersonal.

"I'm just going to run up to the General Labour Extinguishing Company. There is a fortune waiting for me there."

His face changed. "Are you sure you can find it? Shall I show you where it is?"

This renewed interest affected me deeply. Here we were, two Canadians, alone in New York, and at once this man was stirred by fellow feeling.

"You are really too kind," I stammered. Then I was moved by some high, self-sacrificing instinct. "But, no, I cannot accept this offer of your time. It's too valuable to waste on me."

He put his hand heartily on my shoulder. "Not at all. It would be anything but a waste of time."

I thought rapidly. I did not want to wound what

I saw was a susceptible spirit. "I'll drop in afterwards and tell you about it, and show you the cheque."

He was grieved. I could see that, but mastered himself quickly. "Do. My office is in this building, on the fourth floor. Number 471. Now promise me you won't forget. Better write it down."

I promised, approached an elevator, and got in. The churchwarden, who stands in front of the billboard, looked at me contemptuously and crooked his little finger.

I felt a rush of cold air and got out. Opposite me was an office door. The number was 4531. I put my head in. "Excuse me," I said, "can you tell me where the office of the General Labour Extinguishing Company is?"

A tall, young man looked at me, then out of the window at New York Harbour. He was dressed like they are in the back of the magazines—just like that. A young lady with oxidized ringlets and medicated epidermis was polishing her finger nails. No one answered me.

"Excuse me," I began, again. I am a Canadian and naturally polite.

"Ask the starter," said the stenographer.

"And where—" "Ground floor. Where you started from." She was one of those girls that look as if they had not seen mother for years.

"Thank you," I said, and flagged an elevator.

I felt a rush of cold air and got out. I was facing the churchwarden.

But I am an honourable man. I would keep that appointment. I evaded the churchwarden and entered another elevator. It shot up eight miles and I got out. Opposite was an office door. Its number was 3716.

I was going to ask a question but was overcome by one of those shy retrousse sensations that so often affect Canadians in New York. Backing out, I descended again to the churchwarden.

He looked just the same. He had not changed a bit. He was oblivious to all that was happening to me. He did not even seem to recognize me.

I went right up and spoke to him. I put myself

completely in his hands. I told him I was a long way from home.

He said he reckoned that was so.

Then I disclosed my ambitions. I did want to get to the office of the General Labour Extinguishing Company. What could he do for me? I put the matter broadly—on what amounted to international lines. I told him—well, anyhow, he said, in that quick, incisive American way that one notices so much when one is in New York with a machine that is guaranteed to save fifty per cent. of the degrading toil that is now crushing the life out of the manhood and womanhood of this fair—"You darn fool," he said, in that quick, incisive way I spoke of, "what you want is a local, not an express."

"Is it?" I said, humbly, "and why do I want a local?"

He looked at me just like a patent lawyer when he tells you he has influence at Washington.

"Because the express elevators don't stop short of the thirty-fifth floor—you get me?"

I had had an idea that those elevators didn't stop short of anything. "I what you," I said.

"You get me," he replied, impatiently. He pointed to an elevator near the end of the row—"take that one."

I got it—or one that was just like it—anyway. This time I came out on the roof. I could see Bowling Green and Hetty Green, and the Fusion Ticket and Jersey City, and a lot more things—just like that. Then I heard a voice. It was the master mechanic in the elevator.

"Say, Pilgrim. This is our last sight-seeing trip for the day. If you want to wait, walk down to the forty-sixth floor."

I didn't wait. What were these Greens and the Fusion Ticket to me. I was glad to reach the porte cochere again.

I approached the churchwarden once more. "Wonderful city—New York"—I said.

He looked at me coldly. "Well," he said, in that nasty way some Americans use ever since 1812. "Get there?"

I was feeling better for the fresh air on the roof. My mind was working rapidly. I looked over his

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The Spirit of the Doctor

This is a Simple Serious Story so Graphic in Delineation that it Needs no Picture

By WILLIAM HUGO PABKE

THE past month had been a failure. Chet Vining realized the fact fully as he gazed down the snow-covered road leading to the village. He had filled the country house, where he had been born, with a fast set of college acquaintances; he had drunk too much, played too hard, and exercised too little. Sallying forth, he felt unworthy of the perfect winter day. The sun, throwing purple shadows on the snow behind each fence rail, picking out in lacelike tracery the bare branches of the maples, shamed him in its clean brilliance.

The thought that the dissipated crowd had left, bag and baggage, that morning, was the only bright spot in his musings. There was work to be done at home, a story begun, and unfinished; but the sunlight, even though it mocked, called him out of doors.

He turned up his fur collar snugly about his ears, and started for the village. Work would have been impossible; the fumes of the liquor that he had drunk while parting with his guests still held sway over his mind. As he walked, the keen air cleared his brain, cleared it only to make the poignancy of his mood the more painful.

Presently, he essayed to probe his anguish, to analyze its causes, without success. He recapitulated his blessings: health, youth, talent, and money were his. Surely, these gifts should have made life worth while. Thrown into the other side of the balance was an utter blackness of soul that dragged the scales down, down, making the blessings so much dust and ashes.

A thought of Anne came into his mind; the thought grew into a longing. She could explain, dear little Anne, the clear-eyed friend of his boyhood, the confidante of his college days, the inspiration of his recent work. As the endearing adjectives had dropped away with the years, the name itself had grown in potency until unqualified, alone, it had become a thing to be revered.

In spite of his longing, he dared not seek her at the little, old-fashioned house on the farther side of the village. He felt as unworthy of her, in his present mood, as of the sunshine, throwing its red splendour about him. Her perceptions were as clear as this same sunlight, as hard to deceive. Suppose he told her that his dejection was the result of no

wrong? It was true, in a way. He had done no actual wrong; and yet—and yet, he dreaded the level glance of her eyes.

He had wasted a month; that was wrong in itself. His talent had suffered by disuse. He had accomplished nothing. He had committed the sin of idleness. He was beginning to fathom the mystery without help. He bent his head still lower, a black frown knitting his brows.

In his absorption, he let Doctor Mayberry drive past in his old, weather-beaten sleigh, without a word of greeting. The old man turned in his seat and regarded the dejected figure. Its appeal reached his heart; it was a very slight appeal that failed.

"Chet!" he called. The youth turned.

"Chet, your eyes are on the place where the shadows are falling; raise them to where the brightness comes from."

The Doctor chirruped to his companion in harness, and drove on, a bit richer for the passing of one more kindly word.

Mechanically, Chet obeyed him. The beauty of the old man's face lingered in his memory. It was a face that reflected the tenderness earned by years of faithful ministrations. A momentary envy gripped the young man's heart. He felt the worth of a look like that; he wanted that expression of peace and spiritual happiness to shine in his own young features. His sense of justice rebuked him, however; he knew that he had not earned it as yet.

With the thought came a sudden determination, a stiffening of his moral fibre. He hurried down the road, and turned in at one of the first houses on the outskirts of the village.

"Has the Doctor been here?" he asked, eagerly, of the woman who opened the door at his knock.

"Yes," she answered. "Why, Chet, you must have just met him. Does any one need him?"

"I thought so," he exclaimed, ignoring her question. "Perhaps I can catch some of his spirit," he murmured, under his breath, then aloud: "How is Jamie?"

The mother's face clouded. "It's one of his bad

days," she whispered. "It's not the pain so much as nervousness and depression. And I must leave him alone; I have to give Jennie Richards her music lesson."

"You needn't leave him alone; I'll stay until you come back," offered Chet.

He entered the small sitting-room, where Jamie Morrison was reclining in his wheel-chair. The level rays of the afternoon sun, shining through the many-paned window, threw an aureole about the boy's beautiful head. Such a sweet-faced, patient little fellow he was that no one except his mother knew what suffering his poor, twisted body could cause him when it took the notion to misbehave.

"O Chet!" he cried, a glad light of welcome in his eyes. "It's so good to see you really near to. I've seen you several times lately, driving by; but that was unsatisfactory."

Chet flushed. "I've had friends visiting me," he explained. "They're gone now, and I will be more neighbourly."

Mrs. Morrison came into the room, tying her bonnet-strings. She bent to kiss Jamie; then, giving Chet a grateful glance, she hurried out.

"Shall I read to you, Jamie?" asked Chet.

"No, please. I have read and read and read to-day. Some of your stories, too, and they depressed me dreadfully."

The fun-wrinkles gathered about the young author's eyes, slowly at first; then, they came tumbling over each other in crinkly eagerness to share in the mirth. Chet threw his head back and laughed a long, wholesome laugh. It swept away heaps and heaps of cobwebs in a twinkling.

"O you precocious youngster! O you born critic!" he chuckled. "That's right; sail into me if you don't like my stuff."

"You're not offended?" asked the boy, all open-eyed sincerity.

"Do I look it?"

"Then, perhaps, you will do what I have so longed to ask you?"

"Of course I will. I am here to do anything you want, Jamie."

"Would you talk out your next story to me? Chet,

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