

## THE IMPERIALIST

"Oh, the *butter* bill! Say, father, aren't you going to?"

"What?" asked John Murchison, and again took out his pipe, as if this were the first he had heard of the matter.

"Give us our fifteen cents each to celebrate with. You can't do it under that," Oliver added firmly. "Crackers are eight cents a packet this year, the small size."

"Nonsense," said Mr. Murchison. The reply was definite and final, and its ambiguity was merely due to the fact that their father disliked giving a plump refusal. "Nonsense" was easier to say, if not to hear, than "No." Oliver considered for a moment, drew Abby to colloquy by the pump, and sought his brother behind the wood-pile. Then he returned to the charge.

"Look here, father," he said, "*cash down*, we'll take ten."

John Murchison was a man of few words, but they were usually impregnated with meaning, especially in anger. "No more of this," he said. "Celebrate fiddlesticks! Go and make yourselves of some use. You'll get nothing from me, for I haven't got it." So saying, he went through the kitchen with a step that forbade him to be followed. His eldest son, arriving over the back yard fence in a state of heat, was just in time to hear him. Lorne's apprehension of the situation was instant, and his face fell, but the depres-