

JOSEPH SELLERS' BREAK INTO SOCIETY

By WILLIAM HENRY

It is simply marvellous, when you come to think of it, how many great politicians have been driven from public life by the weaker sex. After my political career had been terminated by that unfortunate incident with the Plummer woman on Van Dorn Street, I was at a loss to know what to do with myself. Talents such as mine cannot be stifled in the narrow confines of the four walls of an office. After having carefully considered all the avenues to fame, at last and not without some hesitation, I resolved to go in for Society.

Society has certain claims on some of us that cannot be ignored. My mother was a Pilkins, a full cousin to Henry Pilkins, who acquired millions as a sewer pipe contractor. He has a beautiful country home out on the Shore Road. I had never seen Uncle Henry; as a matter of fact, being of a rather retiring disposition, I had not made my presence in the city known to him. I now decided to introduce myself and use Uncle Henry as a stepping-stone to Society.

As good luck would have it, glancing over a trade paper one day, quite by accident, I noticed the date of his birthday. I went right out and bought a silver-plated butter dish. I got it at the wholesale and it was, to say the least, a work of art, fit to grace the table of Government House. I sent it with a letter calling myself and mother to Uncle Henry's attention, and congratulating him in a few well-chosen words on the eminence to which he had attained. This was what you would call diplomacy, but, believe me, it is the only way to get into Society. The end justifies the means, and a few days later I was the recipient of a courteous little note from Uncle Henry's wife acknowledging the gift and inviting me to spend a week-end at Pilkins Hall.

You may imagine the surprise and consternation, I may even say awe, of the chaps in the office when I showed them Uncle Henry's wife's note written on paper with the Pilkins coat of arms. Robbins was at first a bit sarcastic and said the coat of arms consisted of a pick and shovel. The figures did look something like those humble instruments of toil, but I hunted them up in a book and found they had Greek names.

However, I must say that all the fellows in the office, including Robbins, were more than decent to me. We talked of little else than my intended visit in our spare minutes.

"You ought to take a valet with you," said Robbins one day when the subject was under discussion.

"Do you think so?" I asked.

"Certainly. Did you ever read of a house party among nobility where the guests did not arrive with their men?"

"But, I haven't got a valet, and what's more, I can't get one," I answered, disposing of the question in a sensible, matter-of-fact way, although, I must confess, it worried me.

"It's the clothes I'm thinking about," I said. "How many changes should I have?"

"Well," answered Robbins, counting on his fingers, "you need a plain suit, a dinner coat, full dress, and frock for Sunday. That's four changes."

"I can't go, then," cried I in despair. Although I am of a saving disposition, one cannot lay by much on eight hundred dollars a year and Uncle Henry's present had eaten a big hole in last month's allowance for extras.

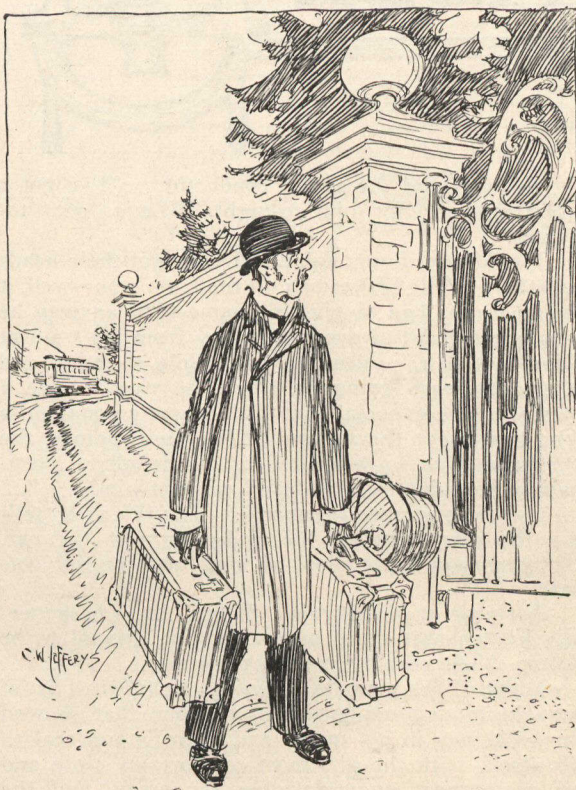
"Look here, boys," said Robbins, addressing the other men in the office who were standing around, "let's all help him out. I can lend Sellers a frock coat and a silk hat. I got them for my sister's wedding last summer."

Well, to make a long story short, through the kindness of the fellows I got a full outfit and most of the suits were almost perfect fits. There I was landed from the interurban car at Uncle Henry's gate with two big dress suit cases—also loaned for the occasion—and a hat box containing Robbins' tile.

I carried them down the broad avenue that leads to Pilkins Hall and thought for a moment that I would have done much better to have invested three or

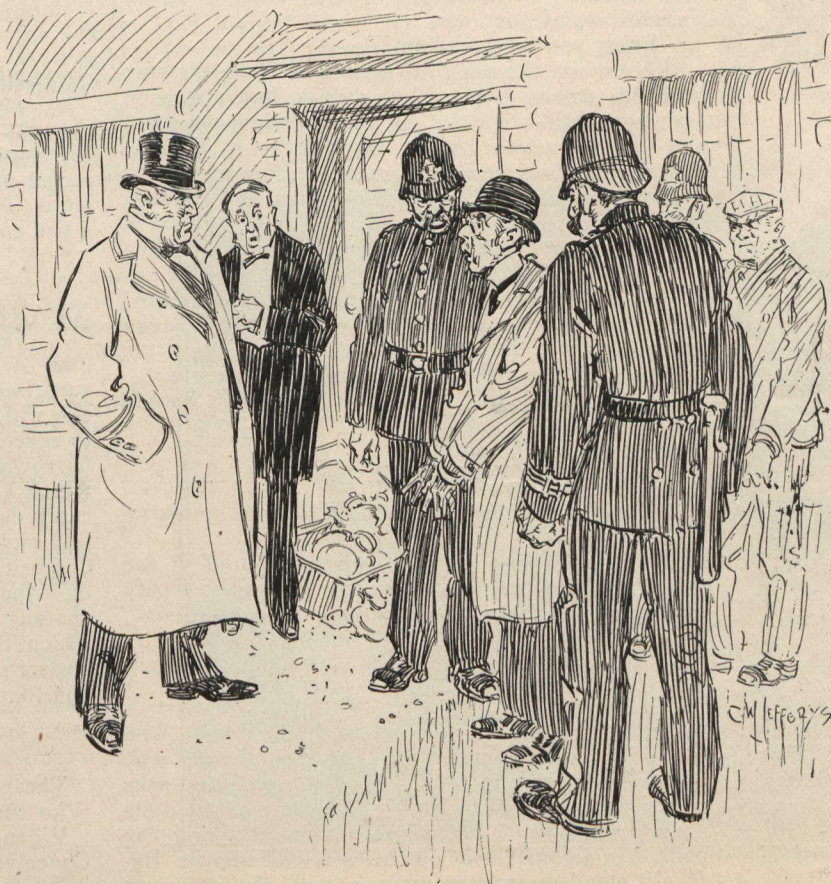
four dollars in a cab, but I somehow felt that Uncle Henry would respect me the more for having come without ostentatious display.

As I neared the house, I began to get nervous.



"I was landed from the interurban car at Uncle Henry's gate."

I had often seen Pilkins Hall from Shore Road, but had never fully realised its magnificence. I put the dress suit cases and hat box down under a tree and stood gazing at the massiveness of the home of Uncle Henry. I am somewhat of a dreamer and was wondering whether Uncle Henry had any daughters when I noticed an aristocratic-looking man with a pale face, in evening dress, gazing out of the glass window in the door. Good heavens! said I to myself; now I have put my foot in it. There's a party in my honour and I'm coming in my plain clothes. Uncle Henry and Aunt ———, —I didn't know her name—will never forgive my lack of breeding. I made up my mind to slip around to the back door and betray my plight to the family



"I am your—sort of nephew," I continued.

and the servants, rather than expose myself to the guests. I walked around as quietly as I could and found the back door open. After rapping for a while and finding that no one came to the door, I walked into a big room that looked like the kitchen and bumped into one of the servants who was working intently over a drawer.

"What are you doing here?" he asked gruffly, with an oath.

"Sh! Sh!" I whispered, "don't make a noise. I'm a nephew of Mr. Pilkins and have come on an invitation to spend the week end. I didn't know that there was a party on, and hadn't dressed for the occasion."

"Why! w-what—"

"Now, now, my good man," I interrupted him, "just put me into a quiet room where I can change my clothes. I'm sure Uncle Henry will be grateful to you for taking care of me. You see I haven't gone out in society much, as yet."

The man looked at me and smiled in a supercilious sort of way. I suppose the upper servants will take privileges.

"Sit down here," said he, "and hand me your grips. I'll find out where they go." He carried my suit cases into another room. I sat down to wait his return. The house was very quiet. However, I must say I was not impressed with the order and economy; things were strewn all over the place. I have heard it said that one rich household wastes enough to feed ten ordinary families. I made up my mind if I hadn't gone in for society, I would have taken up social problems. I sat there for probably five minutes when I was startled by a coarse voice calling:

"Put up your hands!"

I stared in amazement. There were two big policemen standing just inside the door.

"We've got you this time, Bow-legs! If you move, we'll fire!"

I was speechless. Here in Uncle Henry's house — policemen! — hands up! — arrested! Bow-legs! What had I done?

I sat in amazement. I must have had my mouth open, for one of the men coming near, told me I might close it.

"What do you mean?" I cried, as he was putting handcuffs on me.

"Means you're pinched, my boy. The jig's sure up this time. Your pal's out there at the door." Saying this, he brutally locked the handcuffs on my wrists and pulled me towards the door. There stood the man whom I had taken for the butler, handcuffed between two policemen, and—horrors!—my two dress suit cases open on the ground and filled with silver. The man with the pasty face and the dress clothes, whom I had seen at the hall door window, was counting the things over.

"H'officers," he said, rising up and turning to the policemen, "I'm sure the master will reward you. I think we are h'all to be congratulated that this thing h'ended without bloodshed, specially when we had to deal with two such bloodthirsty looking rascals."

Usually I can hold my own in conversation, but my tongue seemed to be glued to the top of my mouth. Not so the man with the dress clothes. "When I frees myself from the rope the big villain ties me with," he continued, pointing to my supposed accomplice, "I starts for the door, and sees the little villain with the bags. A look-out, says I, dodging back and getting to cover. He sneaks around the back way and as soon as he gets out of sight, I h'opens the door and makes a break towards the road to meet you."

"What's all this disturbance about?" called a loud voice coming towards us from the stables. It was Uncle Henry. I recognised him from a photograph I had once seen in *The Monthly Contract Record*.

"H'its robbers, Mr. Pilkins, as has been trying to take our plate," eagerly cried the man with the dress clothes. "they had me tied up with ropes and locked—"

"Shut up, Briggs!" said Uncle Henry shortly, and turning to one of the policemen, he asked, "What's the matter,

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