

COLLABORATEURS.

BY S. D. SCHULTZ.

CHAPTER V (Continued).

FAIRLIE was about to reply, when a telegram was handed him by a messenger-boy. He tore open the envelope, and tranquilly glanced over the contents, saying slowly between pauses: "Once—I just—dreaded—receiving despatches—but getting them frequently—takes away all terror."

"Yes! there is something 'scary' associated with 'wires.' One nervously fancies all manner of frightful happenings—accidents—deaths—and other alarming intelligence," Archer answered fretfully, annoyed at the interruption to Fairlie's promised confidences.

"However, this is simply a reminder," Fairlie responded, "from my paper to attend to something, that luckily I have seen to already. They will wonder how I carried out their instructions so quickly, and will no doubt consider me a very prompt, diligent and obedient worker. I hope it will bring a 'raise' in my stipend."

The House was nearly deserted, only a few members being present, some of them poring over piles of sessional papers, reports and bills, and others knotted into small scattered groups, and engaged in discussing sundry topics. Most of the conversation seemed to be of a frivolous turn; as, at odd moments, roars of laughter would ascend and fill the spacious chamber with a perfect tumult of sound, that ill consorted with the customary gravity and serenity of a precinct usually given over to solemn deliberation.

"Perhaps, Archer, you've got something on, and can't stay; and if that's the case, why, I can just as well tell you all about it on our way to the hotel?" Fairlie queried, reverting to the subject which had been momentarily swept aside by receipt of the telegram.

"We may as well stay here. We have the gallery all to ourselves, and no one will disturb our little chat," Archer answered, impatient of further delay in ascertaining what Fairlie had to communicate about Ethel.

"There's lots of time anyway," responded Fairlie, looking at his watch in a provokingly leisurely manner. "Well! Archer, old man, here's a go, at last. I know I have kept you on the tip-toe of expectation. You mustn't look for anything sensational, though. Without exacting any pledges of secrecy from you," Fairlie paused, and then added, simulating a dramatic delivery in emphasis and tragical intonation, "List to me speech, to me!"

"If you have anything to tell, give it without further ado. Like many other narrators, you spend entirely too much time in preface and preliminary," Archer interjected restlessly.

"Curb your curiosity, Archer. Here it is. You see, I've known Ethel Grant ever so long. Mr. Grant and I were interested in a number of business ventures, and both of us were touched quite heavily last spring. You must have heard of my losses on the turf. I plunged desperately on the Queen's Plate, and the cards turned up against me, though Osceola nearly performed the trick. However, I am digressing. Mr. Grant assigned the day after the races, and I hardly think he even excepted the statutory exemption.

It has been a great come-down for Ethel. Poor girl! brought up amid all the luxury and refinement that a practically unlimited purse in the hands of a doting father could supply, she is now brought down to our level—a humble reporter."

"When the university term began last fall, Ethel did not attend, on account of lack of funds. This was all the more regrettable, as she was obliged to throw up the spring exam. through illness."

"Like other girls, whose days have been a continual round of ease and pleasure, she soon found that it was altogether a different proposition, when she sought means of getting a livelihood. She had never given a thought to the earning powers of music, painting and the general accomplishments of a university training, and found to her sorrow that they weighed little as recommendations for employment in this practical, every-day world. She answered innumerable advertisements, and applied several times for a situation as governess, but all to no purpose. She almost despaired. None of the friends who knew her in days of plenty volunteered any assistance. However, a timely rift appeared among the clouds of adversity. She was offered a position as reporter for a city paper, and eagerly jumped at the chance. At first, she was assigned to edit the 'woman's column,' and gossip about fashions and social functions. Her work must have been very acceptable, for, a few days back, she was promoted to a place among us."

"Last winter, Ethel and her father visited Ottawa, when the season was at its height, and her charming ways and talent for entertaining others ingratiated her in every one's liking. She was eagerly sought after at every levee. It must be nettling for her to come here—of all places—where she had so many friends and it will be cruel medicine, and induce distorted ungenerous thoughts, if a girl of Ethel's pride and sensitiveness should be snubbed by those who sounded her praises extravagantly a year back. I hope she won't be altogether set aside, and I'm in for shewing her every courtesy and attention. Of course if one house establishes a precedent and opens its portals, the rest will follow suit. The humbler fry, with insecure foot-holds on the social ladder, can't afford to be independent and take the initiative, for if a misstep is made, they lose caste, and are ostracised. Those on the topmost rung can be victimized by bogus lords and ticket-of-leave, remittance gentry with forged credentials, and be none the worse for misplaced confidence. The fore and aft, knickerbocker dude with an English accent, almost grotesque in its absurdity of affectation, needs no other passport—he passes for current coin of the realm, and is accepted slightly above par everywhere—more especially in the States, where flamboyant spread-eagleism indulges in periodical outbursts of anglo-phobia, and then bends its knees in profuse adulation at the feet of any titled representative of an 'effete civilization' that may chance along."

"The pork-packer, brewer, railway magnate and petroleum prince chuckle in glee over the prospect of having a penniless aristocratic *debauchee* for a son-in-law. Yankee gold will soon put in competitive bids for heirs to continental thrones. There would be nothing out of the way in such a proceeding, either; only one can't

help marvelling how American shrewdness can throw away its millions for the great honor of an alliance with impoverished nobility, which, in the matrimonial barter, unblushingly holds out empty, useless crests and showy insignia in exchange for hard-earned dollars. But excuse me, Archer, again I am getting off the track, and effervescing a little surplus spleen."

"To return to Ethel, I am told, she is coming here to-morrow. Ottawa society will discuss the pros and cons, respecting the proper attitude to adopt to a girl who has unexpectedly parted with her fortune. Oh! I had almost forgotten. There's Harry Seymour. His father raked in a load of lucre from some patent medicine, warranted to cure every physical ill under the sun—everything in the calendar, from chilblains and rheumatism to measles and diphtheria. Seymour had a great swing, and trotted in a swagger set. I wonder if his fondness for Ethel Grant will suffer any impairment, now that she is in reduced circumstances. Seymour used to be very devoted to her. He suffered an awful lapse from virtue, though, and his shameless dissipation became notorious."

"He and some other students took a trip over to Buffalo for a 'time,' and whilst there, one evening, dropped into a variety show. Seymour became smitten with the pirouetting of a skirt dancer, whom the posters announced under the title of 'The unrivalled chic Circita, in her dainty Andalusian dances.' Nothing less than an introduction to the foot-light sorceress would suffice Seymour. There was some difficulty in arranging this, though variety show celebrities are not usually over-fastidious in granting audiences to love-lorn beaux of the bald-headed row. Circita, in many ways, was unique. A tinge of Hibernian brogue proclaimed that she had never sauntered 'neath the sunny skies of vine-clad Spain, and had been reared far from the romance of dark-eyed swain with serenade floating up to latticed casement, far from dulcet-toned mandolin and stirring click of ebony castanet. She professed disdain—abhorrence for anything bearing the image of man—a profound misanthrope. Circita would talk graciously to all—provided a respectable distance were maintained, and nothing in the way of levity attempted. Seymour and his college chums, when apprised of the strange characteristics of this mysterious foot-light favorite, were all the more insistent on obtaining an introduction. By using a little finesse in the way of a tip to the manager, they were taken to the 'make-up' room of the terpsichorean siren. They found her just as described. Upon entering with the manager, Circita was seen beguiling her 'wait,' by indulging in a quiet perusal of the latest novel. She turned around snappishly at the intruders, and merely acknowledged their bows by a slight inclination of the head, and then with icy hauteur frowned on all attempts at conversation by taking up the book and pretending to be engrossed in its contents. The hapless collegiates were very much embarrassed at such a chilly reception, and were on the point of retiring, when, after a timid knock, the door opened, and a middle-aged man entered. Before he had closed the door after him, Circita had risen from her seat with the malignity