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## THE SINGULAR CASE OF WILLIAM PLUMPTY

(Continued from page 42)

man, in my niece. But he was a nice fellow, though he did have such a foolish sounding job. I could not help wishing he was in the boot and shoe business or something I could set him up in in Harmony Centre. However, he seemed to "belong" and got real cosy with Len and me right away. He used to get new light on my case every day, and sometimes twice a day, and felt impelled to come right over from the hotel. Some days he had to come over for the third time and stay all evening, for he was in correspondence with other psychologists (it seems they are as thick as huckleberries) and wanted to read their opinions to Pinky. He used to laugh until he cried, when Pinky told him my latest, and I liked the honest sound of his laugh. Len beamed at him and I suspected Pinky liked him, and that was enough for me. He encouraged me greatly. He said my body growing stronger every day, would help to release my brain from the dominance of the three sentences. 'It was as though the idea that I could say nothing else had worn a groove. The thought needed to be swerved in another direction, but, so far, nothing of a greater impelling interest had occurred. Some day "a more overmastering thought" would take possession of the brain and when I spoke, the obsession, the compelling, fixed conviction that I was unable to utter anything else would be over.

Well, I hoped so, and the days passed pleasantly enough, Pink and Francis, as I had come to call him, at his own request, were reading Theosophy together. He told me he considered Miss Patterson a most gifted and widely-read young lady—a marvel to find such an advanced person in a country town. One day they were on the subject of Reincarnation, and by Crickyl it was interesting; T think I shall be literary myself. I was supposed to be asleep in my armchair, but, in my dreams, heard him say, "I am convinced, dearest, that we have met in centuries that are past." I thought it time to wake up, so scribbled on my slate, and handed it to Pinky. "I am convinced, dearest, that in our last in

As newspapers say, the meeting broke up in confusion. The young couple retreated to the garden. I asked my niece, when she came in, what they had been talking about out there, and she said "of course, of our dear uncle," and ran to get tea, a very rosy Pink.

The change of thought came. I knew Providence sometimes comes in strange guises, but never dreamed it would come brindled.

It was like this:

I had gradually got into the habit of going

I had gradually got into the habit of going to the office an hour or two every day. The Professor encouraged me to assume, as far as possible, my old habits of life. I had learned, to a great extent, to control the desire to speak. Much of my time, however, I spent in my garden. I draw the salary of a Registrar of Deeds, but on my heart is written the word garden.

I AM an authority on early lettuce, strawberry culture, and slugs. Simp Cutter claims to beat me on green peas, but he is untruthful and a Conservative. My garden goes before everything. Jane says I put it before my Creator, because one Sunday evening when my plants were drooping I stayed home from church to water them. I could as easily have gone off and left a child crying for a drink. I told Jane I could worship as I watered. She said this was irreverence, but Pink understood and backed me up by quoting a man named Brown or Browning—I forget which—who it seems was Authority; this bowled Jane over for a minute, but she recovered and quoted Stone, who was her Authority. Here I find it very hard not to digress. I almost feel it in me to write a lengthy paper on The Voice of Authority as a Guide for the Individual, but perhaps a pamphlet on the Extermination of Cutworms would be of more benefit to the race.

the Extermination of Cutworms would be of more benefit to the race.

Even Len has to wait for my garden. Had it been the day to transplant my lettuce, I could have found courage to refuse the fatal invitation. Yes, if even Gabriel came and found me sticking my peas, I should say, politely but firmly, "All right, Gabriel! I am pleased to go, but these peas must be left in order."

I did not know that Good was drawing near. We seldom do. We wait until it gives us a hit, before we are aware of its presence.

I was creeping home in the mizzling rain, from the office, feeling old and blue. Something unpleasant had happened and my three comrades were not with me to laugh it off and my sense of humour was missing. The last straw (although he looked more like a stalk) was an Italian umbrella mender. I had an umbrella—of a sort—he persisted in following me, pointing out that two of the ribs were unsewed. I knew it. I didn't care. I preferred it that way. out that two of the ribs were unsewed. I knew it. I didn't care. I preferred it that way. Nothing in the world looks so abjectly miserable as an umbrella with the ribs sticking out. I enjoyed looking dejected. I glowered at him. I shook my fist at him. He insisted, "Um-brell-a, um-brell-a" in maddeningly musical tones, as though I could not understand him. I went to snap out "I prefer it that way!" but called out lightly, almost banteringly: "Good-bye, Bill!"

Then, as the boys say, he went right off the handle. No, this is not a pun; I do not mean umbrella handle. I still cannot understand why this should have made him so mad, nor explain his aversion to the name of Bill. I recall him flinging off his coat, dancing with rage,

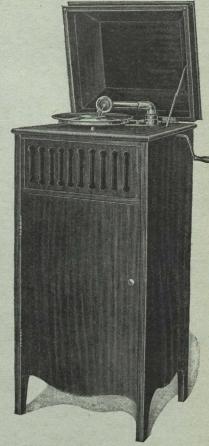
call him flinging off his coat, dancing with rage, threatening me with his fists, the gathering of a crowd, the arrival of the policeman and my

hasty retreat.

"Is it never to end?" I asked, as I slunk low-spiritedly home, and even then fate was

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