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The Daily Short Story

POTIFER'S INTERFERENCE

It Found a Job For Him

(By Clarissa Mackie)

"No luck to-day," reported Henry Potifer smilingly as he entered his home after another day's unsuccessful search for a position.

Ellen Potifer was putting supper on the table. She was a tall, thin, sorrow woman, who faced the world with an expression of perpetual melancholy.

"I don't know what we will do!" she groaned, sitting down and pouring out a cup of strong tea for herself. "There is just \$100 left in the bank, and when that is gone where will we be?"

"Right here, as usual," responded Henry Potifer cheerfully as he helped his wife to a spoonful of corned beef hash. "That \$100 will keep the wolf at bay for six months if your economical hand is at the helm, my dear," he went on, mixing his metaphors while he consumed hot biscuits and hash with an excellent appetite, "but happily it will not be required to last that long. I feel sure that I shall find a job to-morrow."

"You've felt that way ever since Mison & Co. discharged you three weeks ago," retorted Mrs. Potifer, refusing to have her gloom pierced by a ray of hope. "That makes four perfectly good positions you've lost simply because you can't attend to your own business and let other people's affairs alone."

"Miranda," he said chokingly, "please understand that when I go out to look for a job to-morrow morning I shall not return until I get one. No, ma'am, not if I'm gone 500 years!"

"Henry!" "Yes, you can 'Henry' me, and you can henpeck me, too!" went on the angry Potifer. "You women get together and ask, 'Why do girls leave home?' I don't know, but I can tell you why half the men leave home it's because they're nagged there!"

Whereupon Mr. Potifer left his supper unfinished and slapped on his hat and slammed the front door and went downtown and enjoyed a moving picture show.

Mrs. Potifer washed the dishes and dripped tears into the dishpan and then sat down and wrote a long, complaining letter to her married daughter by her first husband.

The next morning when Mr. Potifer awoke it was with a vague sense of some impending calamity. Presently he recollected his rash threat of the night before. He jumped out of bed and dressed carefully.

So when Henry Potifer appeared, well brushed and shining from his morning toilet, he carried a suit case and an umbrella.

Mrs. Potifer, who had been making waffles for breakfast as a sort of peace offering to her husband, poked her head into the dining room, saw the suit case and fell to weeping noisily.

"I never thought I'd be deserted by my husband," she moaned. "Now, Augustus Hakle, my first husband, was devoted to me and"—

Mr. Potifer put up his hand with a new, commanding gesture. He was enjoying the scene. He felt like an actor on the stage. He believed he would have made an excellent actor.

"Miranda," he said kindly, "your first did desert you when he died. I am not ready to die yet, but I'm not coming back until I get some kind of a job. If I find one to-day I'll be home to-night. If I don't come there's money enough to keep you until I return. I may—I have thought of going on the stage," he ended with a dramatic gesture.

"An actor, Henry?" gasped Mrs. Potifer. "Well, you needn't come back at all, then!"

"So be it, Miranda," returned Mr. Potifer sadly. "I will take my leave. I will breakfast at a dairy lunch downtown. Farewell, farewell, cruel Miranda!" He felt very tragic as he waved an adieu, cocked his hat rashly over one ear, picked up his bag and umbrella and left the house.

Going downtown in the car his spirits lifted wonderfully. He felt as if he were on the eve of some adventure.

Leaving his bag and umbrella in the check room of a hotel, Henry Potifer ate his breakfast and then set forth to look for a job. He had scanned the morning paper while he ate and there were several places where he might apply for a position as bookkeeper.

At 4 o'clock that afternoon Mr. Potifer acknowledged to himself that it was useless to look further that day. He had been too late or too old or too something for every job that he applied for that day, and late afternoon found him wondering whether he should brave Mrs. Poti-



fer's ridicule and go home in spite of his threats of the morning, or whether he should really remain downtown and stay at the hotel until another day promised better luck. He decided to take a trolley ride, and while he cooled off from the heat of the day's exertions he could decide what to do.

The trolley car whirled him into the green country and through pretty villages. At the end of the line he got off and went for a walk along a babbling brook that reminded him of his boyhood days on the farm.

And on the banks of the brook Mr. Potifer found adventure waiting for him and a steady job lurking in the background, although he didn't know that until afterward.

A pretty girl in a pink sunbonnet was struggling with a tall, dark, villainous looking man, who held her slender hands in his big ones.

"Unhand me, villain!" shrieked the girl just as Mr. Potifer came running upon the scene, his heavy gold headed cane poised for action.

"Never!" cried the man angrily as he dragged her toward the path that led across an open field, beyond which appeared the red roof of a farmhouse.

"What are you doing here, old But-tinsky?" he roared at Henry Potifer. "Get out of the way. You're spoiling this."

"I intend to spoil it," roared Henry Potifer valiantly. "Let the lady go, you rascal."

The lady laughed hysterically, the villain swore lustily as Mr. Potifer's cane circled around the man's head and finally fell on his shoulders. Suddenly the man grasped the girl's hand and shouted:

"Beat it and leave the old meddler behind. We'll get the sack for this." Whereupon the couple flew along

the path into the field and across the field, with Mr. Henry Potifer in hot pursuit, his gray coat tails flying, his fat face dripping with perspiration and his mouth wide open like a gasping fish's.

And there fell into the pursuit from behind trees and an ancient barn several policemen, who waved their sticks and fired revolvers into the air.

Mr. Potifer stopped at the first pistol shot just as a bee winging homeward grazed his bald head. Mr. Potifer thought that he had stopped a bullet with his cranium, and he fell to earth and groaned.

Immediately there was a circle of oddly dressed people around him, most of them laughing, some of them scolding, but all of them most concerned in the appearance of a dapper little man who almost danced up and down as he surveyed the recumbent form of Henry Potifer, professional meddler.

"I'd like to kill him!" roared the little man, brandishing his fist before Mr. Potifer's startled eyes. "Man, you've spoiled fifty feet of film!"

"Film?" echoed Mr. Potifer blankly.

"Yes, film!" mimicked the little man, and then he proceeded to explain to Mr. Potifer that he had interfered in the making of a moving picture film—that it would cost hundreds of dollars to make good the damage he had done that afternoon.

Mr. Potifer listened and stared and looked aghast, and with each change of expression the actresses giggled and the men smiled until the manager of the company smiled too. The star whispered for awhile in the manager's ear, and the manager slapped his knee and cried:

"I believe you're right, Barton; I'll talk to the old duffer."

So he smiled upon the perturbed Mr. Potifer and took him aside and made him a proposition.

The proposition almost took Henry Potifer's breath away.

He was to enact the part of the fat uncle in the play. Just be himself, a professional meddler, and it would be all right. And there was a job of keeping the books of the stock company, at which Mr. Potifer could just be himself and get away with the part.

Sr. Mr. Potifer accepted the position with becoming gravity, made an appointment to come the next morning and repeat his involuntary entrance into the scene by the brook side and go cavorting over the turf after the lady and the villain while the police brought up the rear.

He arrived at home at 10 o'clock that evening. Mrs. Potifer hardly

knew him. He wore trousers and coat of a large check pattern, a pale gray derby hat and white spats.

But she was so glad to see him that she threw her arms around his neck and hugged him tenderly. "No matter about the job, Henry," she assured him when he would have spoken; "I'm so glad to see you again!"

"What if I tell you that I have a position as an actor?" asked Mr. Potifer, thrusting a hand in his breast and striking a dramatic attitude.

"I don't care what it is," cried Miranda warmly, "so long as it brings you back to me!"

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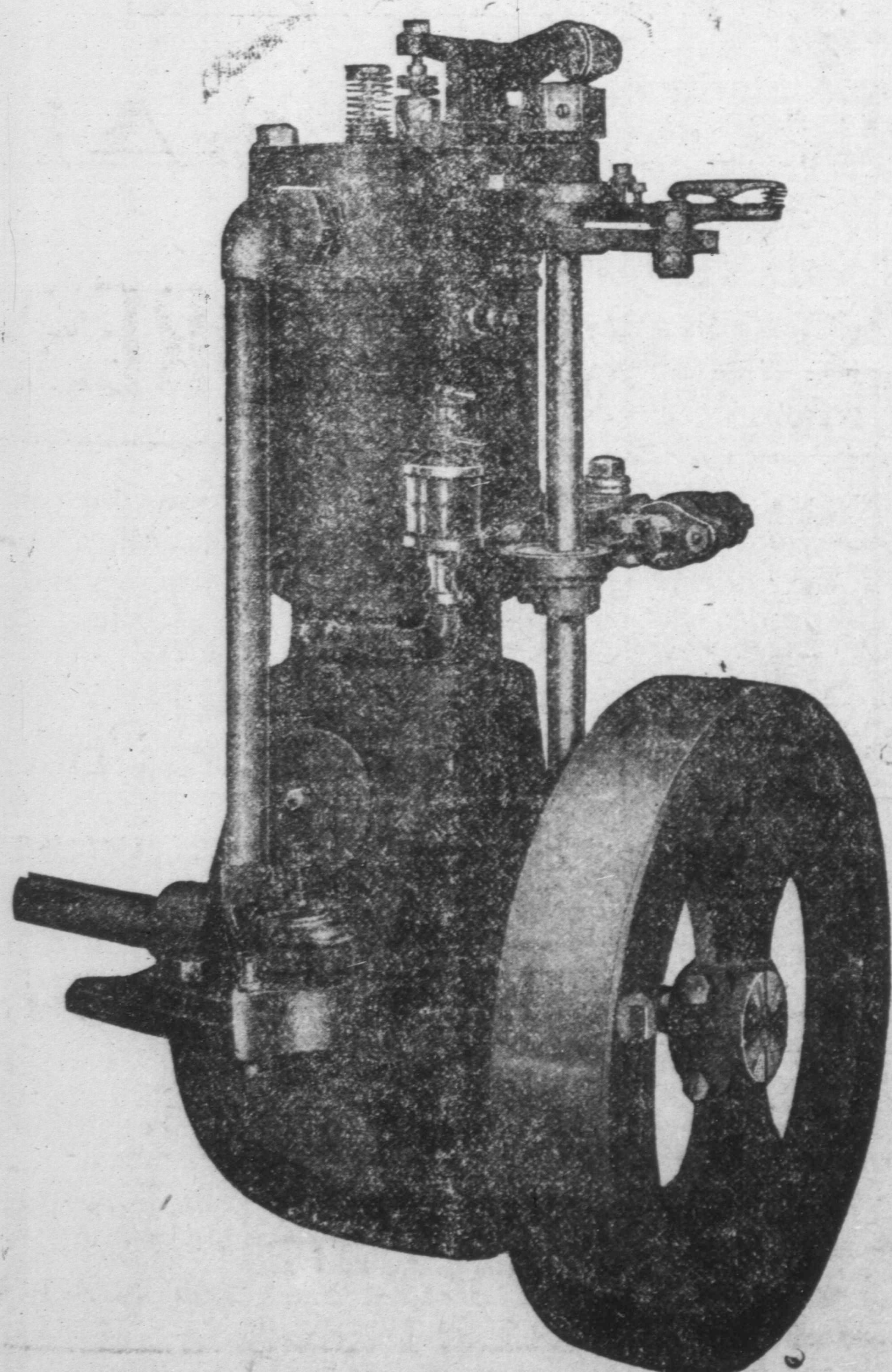
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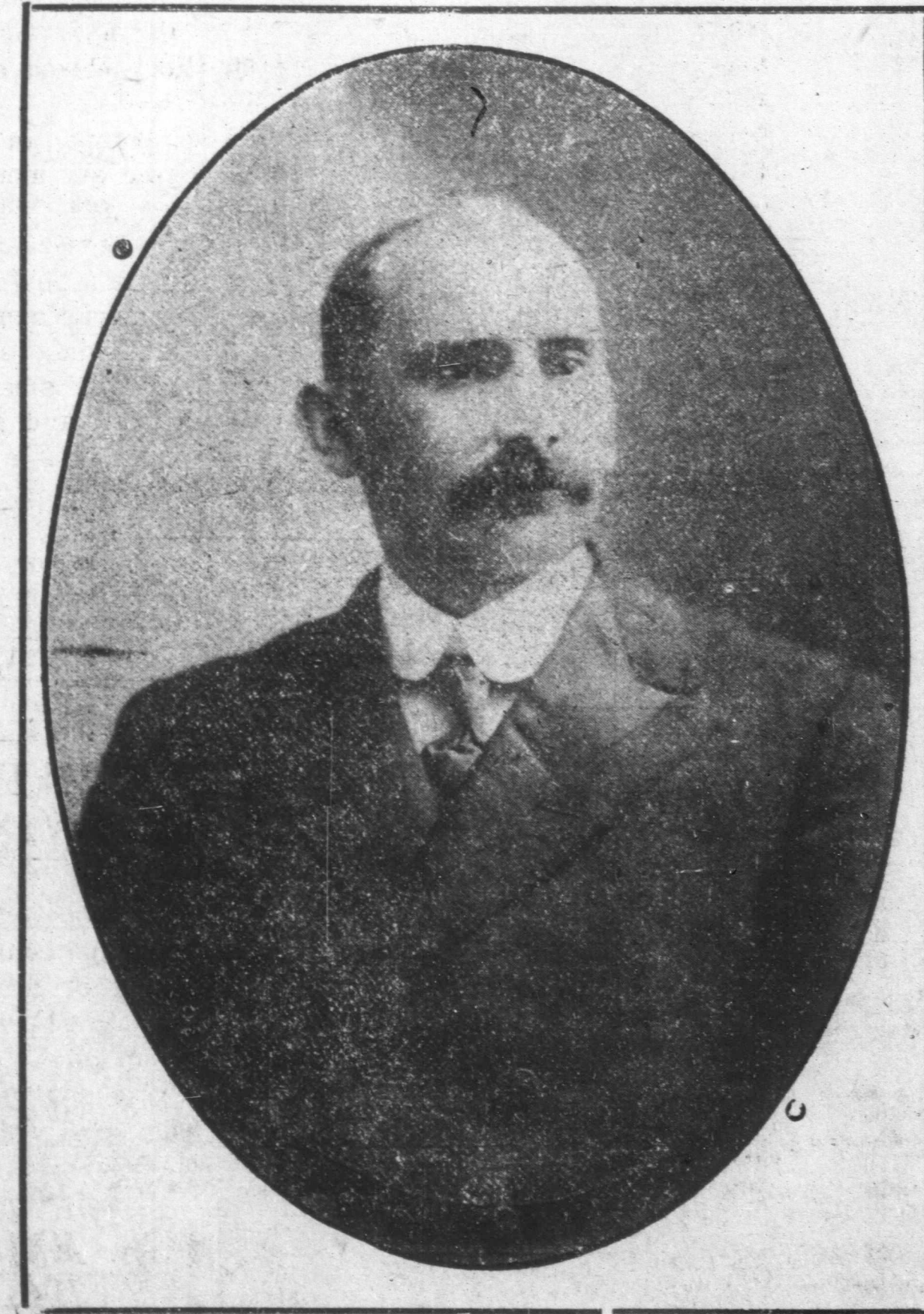
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