

"Yes," assented the Boarder. "You are."

"Well," she went on, "Aloysius, he was hit harder than a horse when the S. P. C. A. ain't around. He figgered he'd been bunked—swindled, I mean—and I helped it along by sayin' as how she was so fond of him."

"The poor old dear," I says, 'nailed on all that fur, Aloysius, just to please her itty tweeheart."

"Gwan!" he says, mad as he could be. "I'm goin' to tie a tin can on her." He kinda shivered, thinkin' of what he'd escaped. "I suppose," he says, "that as soon as I married her she'd come to me and want forty dollars for another

trunkload of that stuff. Say, Belle Sweeny—he put out his hand—you've been my fr'en, and I ain't goin to forget it. I'll tell ma you snatched me out of that there haymow's mitts. Good-by."

"And what do you think, mister! Aloysius' ma was so thankful that she come around to call, and carried a hundred shares of Union Pacific for me—and, if it wouldn't of went back, I'd have my three pints of hair again, I would."

"You look all right, as it is," consoled the Boarder. "Much more hair would give you an artificial appearance."

"Well," admitted Mrs. Sweeny, pushing up her pompadour with both hands, "perhaps you're right. When ladies is concerned, things is apt to be overdid."

The Peddler's Lift

By J. W. Fuller

HENRY GIBSON was humming some sort of tune as his old mare jogged along at a slow, steady gait—not a joyous note, but a dull, monotonous drone, audible expression of the low ebb to which his spirits had fallen. Why he hummed at all he could scarcely have told; it had become a habit during the many years of his lonely journeyings up and down the concession lines of a half-dozen townships.

In rhythm his measures showed but scant variation, but the pitch of his voice was an infallible register of his frame of mind, and of late this dull monotone had become, alas, all too much in evidence.

"Afternoon, Hank!" called a passing pedestrian, cheerily.

"Why, how do, Mr. Jacques?" returned Henry, pulling up with a start. "I declare I didn't see you coming along. How's all the folk?"

"Nicely, thank you. Goin' to stop at the house?"

"Well, yes. Got a nice bit o' print here, I think the Missus'll like."

"Don't think it's much use. She and the girls was up to town on Tuesday and fetched home a pile of stuff."

"Oh, I'll stop anyhow. Maybe there's something they forgot," and the old man's spirits sank a notch lower as he gathered up the reins and called to the mare to "get up."

Throughout that whole section of country there was no more familiar figure than Henry Gibson, peddler, and, with the majority of the people, none more welcome, though of late years there had been a waning in his popularity—a change which poor Henry had too much cause not to fail to note.

Twenty years ago his advent at a farmhouse was quite an exciting event. The women folk suspended their tasks to give attention to his wares, and the children stood as close as they dared, in an ecstasy of open-eyed wonder and delight at the beauty and variety of the goods and trinkets he displayed, while even the men, if they noticed his arrival, thought nothing of quitting their work in the fields and joining the circle to appraise his stock and listen to the latest news from town and the world at large.

But now there was a decided difference. His reception, though friendly as of yore, was marked more by careless good nature than the eager cordiality of days ago; and open criticism or disparagement of his goods took the place of the respectful hearing formerly accorded him.

"I saw better and cheaper than that in town the other day," or kindred remark, was what he was now forced to listen to almost daily, and he dared not challenge the accuracy of the statements. An hour later, he was driving away from the Jacques farmhouse, his purse just fifteen cents richer, and his stock lighter by but a yard of ribbon.

"That print's last season's style; and the girls wouldn't hear to my making any use of it," had been the verdict.

True, he had had a good dinner, for the hospitality of his customers had not waned, but for all that Gibson's spirits were considerably lower than when Jacques had accosted him upon the road.

A trolley car whisked by the foot of the hill he was about to descend.

"A plague upon the pesky things! I wish the man that made 'em had never been born!" he exclaimed; for he shrewdly laid the responsibility for his ever-declining fortunes at the door of the radial roads now intersecting the country.

"Never mind, Henry," his faithful life partner had counselled, again and again, "the folk will soon get over the newness of it, and won't spend so much time travelling to town; then you'll be able to sell as much as ever."

But she had not proven a true prophetess, and matters were drifting from bad to worse.

A mental vision now rose before him of the good old soul, as he had last seen her—the rays of the early morning sun glancing upon her whitening hair and seeming to shed a radiance about the reposeful, trusting face, as she bade him a cheery farewell.

"Never fear, Henry! The Lord will provide. I keep praying about it, and I'm hoping this week'll see the turn. He'll never forsake us; remember that!"

Henry tried to remember, but he found it hard to equal her faith. That, or some kindred sentiment had been her Monday morning farewell for a long time now, but the lane seemed to have no turning.

That morning, however, he had felt more hopeful than usual, and had set out determined to neglect no effort to do a brisk week's trade. It was a glorious October day, with just a hint of freshness in the air to brace one; and as he journeyed along the road skirting the river and drank in the gorgeous beauty of the wooded hills, aflame with the varied hues of the turning leaves, bathed in the flood of gladdening sunlight, he felt his pulses quicken while the blood coursed more rapidly through his veins, and his voice grew lusty and strong as he shouted forth, over and over again, several bars of an ancient ditty.

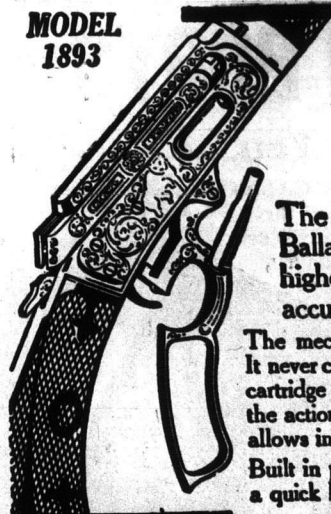
But it proved a poor day for business, and was followed by other days equally disheartening until this—Friday—morning had broken dull and cold with a raw, gusty wind blowing—a wind which went through and through his thin garments and quickened into active life the rheumatism which had lain dormant during the summer months. The sun shone but dimly through the mist of cloud, and a grey half-twilight brooded over the hills and valleys, as though in sympathy with the peddler's discouragement—the entire week's business had not equalled a respectable half-day's traffic.

"The cottage'll have to go," he muttered to himself by way of diversion from his cheerless humming.

"Either that, or we call on Freddie," he continued. "I'd rather go on the county though!—for myself, certain—but then there's mother!" and again the vision of that sweet, patient face, with its fringe of grey locks rose before him.

Their son Fred was a rising physician in the West. It had been a long, hard struggle for the worthy couple to keep the boy at school and send him to college; but when they had journeyed to Toronto—their first visit to the provincial capital—and saw their boy re-

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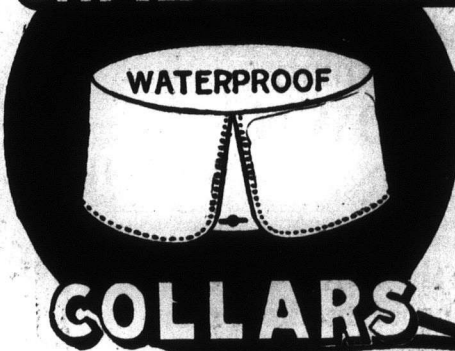
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