

PANIC.

No one knew exactly how it came about that Fred Cusack was always esteemed a man of more than average courage, and yet that was certainly the opinion held by the majority of his friends, including some not likely to be imposed on by bounce or bragadocio. He was not a man given to that general and indiscriminate rowdiness which possesses many whose natural ardor is repressed by polite conventions; though he occasionally got into trouble in the street, he was never, in consequence, escorted to a police station; and if he did acknowledge a certain liking for boxing, no one had ever seen him with the gloves on. Nor had he ever shown any signs of an adventurous spirit. He had entered his father's engineering business and stayed there without complaint; he never had the gold or diamond or colonial fever; instead of going berserk, he evidently preferred a frock coat and patent leathers. But in spite of this he was credited with a courage out of the common. It arose and invested him like a myth.

Cusack was certainly a handsome man, and at twenty-nine looked a very fine specimen of the best of the upper middle classes. He was bright and strong; his shoulders were broad; he walked well. His walk might have accounted for this reputation; there was a solidity about it that made most get out of his way. And in spite of it all Fred Cusack had very serious doubts if he had any courage at all. It had never been tested.

For some reason not easy to discover he was more popular with young men than young women. Perhaps his bearing gave the more cautious marriage candidates an uneasy notion of his fickleness; he might love and ride away. His one fairly intimate friend of the other sex was a Mrs. Emerson, whose husband was a sleeping partner in the firm of Cusack & Co., and spent most of his time in his club, the Junior Carlton; having been a hard worker up to forty, he proposed to take his ease when he married at that age. He was fifty two and his wife was twenty-eight or twenty-nine.

There was oddly enough, very little scandal about the obvious intimacy between Fred Cusack and Mrs. Emerson; the very people whose ardor in taking away others' reputations robbed them of their own left her untouched in the social mid-ling which gives half society its sole virtuous and intellectual amusement. For she was a sweet-tempered, calm and dignified woman, whom everyone liked not too well to assail. It is only our most intimate friends who really know us sufficiently to do us much harm.

Yet Fred Cusack and Mrs. Emerson were always together in society. If she and Emerson turned up at any of the social Turkish baths known as "at homes" Cusack was sure to be there as well. Not infrequently he brought her some flowers, though of course rarely, he took her away. But he was her invariable companion at the theatre of which she was almost passionately fond. Emerson never went. The only actors he could endure were play; the modern developments both of play and performance sickened his judgment, which was that of last century. There is always one part of a man's intellectual equipment obviously inferior to the rest; one domain, at least, in which he permits prejudice to reign supreme.

But Mrs. Emerson who was catholic in her enjoyment of all London could afford her of theatrical display, her liking for farical comedy, curious in so grave a woman, did not prevent her going thence to some tragedy. Her taste in Shakespeare made no impossible bar to her reveling in the absurdities of melo-drama. Everything was possible to her want of true criticism; and whether Cusack enjoyed this or not, he went with her. It might have been that what the theatre was to her she was to him.

Fred's elder brother, Tom, a barrister of some reputation and the author of a book on conveyancing, was not wholly assured of the wisdom of this permitted friendship, and on more than one occasion remonstrated with Fred, but with no other result than a temporary estrangement. Once or twice he hinted the same thing to Emerson himself, and was, of course, laughed at. Yet Emerson showed a little temper.

"If I told Fred what you've been hinting at, Cusack, he would knock you down, and if you do it again—perhaps I shall." Though Emerson said this with a smile, Tom Cusack swore softly to himself that all his brothers might provoke business for all the lawyers in the divorce court before he would say anything more, and he kept to his word.

One day late in February, Mrs. Emerson sent a note to Cusack: "I have two dress circle tickets for the Independent theatre. You had better come and dine here. Harry is dining at his club with your brother and your young Gower. My two aunts will be here.—Yours, E. E."

Cusack received this letter just as he was dressing to dine with an old college chum, and he promptly wrote to put him off. When that was done he drove down to Chelsea and made himself very agreeable to Mrs. Emerson aunts, who were not much older than herself. At 8.15 they left the house and went to the theatre in the brougham. They drove through Pall Mall. Cusack looked at his watch as they passed the club.

"They are just sitting down now," he said.

"How was it you didn't go?" asked Mrs. Emerson.

"I told Emerson I was dining with Hinton, and so I was."

Mrs. Emerson frowned and bit her lip.

"Yet you are going to the theatre with me. It was very foolish of you not to say you could not come."

"I shall see Emerson at the club tonight and explain it."

Mrs. Emerson looked worried.

"Why, I wrote to him this afternoon, saying I was probably going with you to the Independent."

"I don't see that it matters very much," was Cusack's answer, and a moment later they drove up to the theatre door.

At 10 o'clock Emerson, Tom Cusack and Gower (who was an architect) were in the club billiard room. Cusack didn't Fred come this evening, Cusack asked the younger man, suddenly.

Emerson answered him. "He is at the theatre with my wife."

"Which theatre?" asked Tom, in surprise.

"I thought he was dining with Hinton."

"Fell through, I suppose?" said Emerson, carelessly. "At the Independent, I believe."

"Heavily hole!" said Gower.

"Good acting, though," put in Tom.

"What nonsense you talk!" said Emerson. "Good acting, indeed! There isn't any nowadays. You should have seen—"

"Yes, I know," broke in Cusack, "a dozen men and women you never saw yourself, or if you did, it was when you were a boy, and the romance of youth is over their dear dead perfections."

Emerson laughed, but turned to Gower.

"Why is the Independent a beastly hole, Gower?"

"Architecturally it is a disgrace, structurally it is dangerous. Bad as it was to begin with, it is now old, and has all the vices that come with age. If it ever catches on fire—"

"As it will, of course," said Emerson.

"Women lose their beauty, men die, theatres are burned."

"Don't women die then?" cried Tom.

Emerson turned on him with a twinkling in his eye.

"They are immortal when they get ugly. Nothing will persuade them to go."

"If it ever catches on fire, why, may I be outside!" finished Gower, and then, as the last red light suddenly disappeared from the table, Cusack pocketed the coins and put his cue in its case. They sat down to drink whiskey.

Presently there came a roar down the street which they could hear where they sat, and which every Londoner knows.

"A fire!" said Gower, and the others nodded.

"What are the odds that it isn't the Independent?" asked Gower.

"Ten thousand to one, at least," said Emerson.

"No, more, as we have been talking about it." And they sat still.

Presently a man they knew put his head into the room.

"Bully fire," said he, "but a bad job. It's at the Independent."

The three men sprang to their feet, and two glasses fell on the floor with a crash.

"My wife's there!" said Emerson, with a face the color of half-blinded grass.

And he ran out of the room. The others followed him. Gower was the only one who took his hat, and he nearly lost sight of his friends in consequence. For they were running, and already getting into a hansom when he came out. As the cab went on he sprang upon the step and held on like a cabman's "buck."

"All right, cabman; friends of mine!" he shouted, and the man whipped his horse furiously. He went into the Haymarket like a madman, and nearly ran over a policeman who roared to him to stop. The order was not obeyed. At the corner the crowd was already so dense that the cabman had to pull up, and he was instantly pounced on by the policeman, who had jumped into a cab and followed.

"Never mind," said Emerson, furiously, "come to the club to-morrow, and I'll pay the fine."

And he and Cusack were lost in a moment.

"Let us through, for God's sake!" he said, in a strained voice; "my wife's in the theatre."

"You couldn't get through if you were ten men, gentlemen," said a policeman close to them, and Cusack suddenly caught Emerson by the collar and drew him back out of the crowd.

"In another minute we should have been stuck there all night," he said. "Come let's go round and get where most of the police are; by a sovereign, perhaps, we can get there."

"And what good?" said Emerson.

As they came round to the other street, the crowd was just as thick. But a fire engine came through, parting it, and Emerson sprang at it behind and held on. Cusack followed him.

"Five pounds if you'll get us through to the front," said Emerson, desperately. And the two firemen behind caught them up.

Even as they got to the theatre front, the fiercest flames seemed to have been beaten off and only a heavier smoke poured out of the upper windows. The engines were playing through them, and three throbbing lines of hose ran into the main entrance, for the men had got in. The road was flooded so that the pavement seemed almost clean; into the running water came flying embers that hissed as they fell. Outside the cordon of police were many who had escaped from the fire. Some were torn and bleeding; some women were half clothed; men stood and sobbed; and behind, again, the thick crowd moaned like a sea; the white uplifted faces were as spindrift as beaten foam. When a fireman showed at the upper windows they cheered. When they saw him against a spurt of re-ascending flame they whispered curiously.

As the two men stood there thrust against a wall, obvious in evening dress that was soiled and torn, Cusack turned and looked at Emerson. His face was working at one moment and rigid at another; the blood from his bitten front like a man in a thin band down his shirt front like a decorative ribbon; it blackened on his chin like an imperial.

"They are getting it under—getting it under," said he at last piteously. "Cusack! Cusack! do you think—oh, God! what do you think?"

"He waited for no answer, for the theatre was getting blacker and blacker. From one point of view the building was saved. It could, doubtless, be restored without being pulled down. And in a month the people and the authorities would forget what it had done."

They began to bring out the bodies, and now neither Emerson, nor, nor Cusack, could be restrained. Fortunately for them, as they tried to break through the line, the inspector who hurried there knew Emerson well.

"Willis," said Emerson, "let me and my friend through on some excuse, my wife's in this devilish hole, and his brother. If you do, come to my club to-morrow and ask for you like."

"Come," said the inspector suddenly, and they ran across the road. Others tried to follow and were repulsed. Angry cries arose.

"Who are those that you have let in there?" screamed a man without a coat.

"They own the theatre," said the policeman, lying with all due promptness.

"If I'd known that, I'd have killed one of them," said the man as he was thrust back.

There were two dozen bodies laid out already in the hideous vestibule, and Emerson ran to them one by one.

There were fifteen women and the rest

men all in evening dress that was blackened, torn, and water sodden. But neither among the men nor women did they find Cusack and Mrs. Emerson. Emerson seized Tom by the arm.

"Perhaps they didn't go! Perhaps they escaped! Perhaps they are alive!"

He peered into each dead face again, and then into others that were laid in the dreadful rows.

"Where did they sit? Do you know?" asked Cusack.

"I don't," said Emerson; "but she liked the dress circle best."

And he tried to go upstairs. He tottered as he went; the remaining smoke made him cough.

"We shall find them up here," he said again. "Together—or they have escaped!"

They went up into the dress circle, which was dimly lighted with three fire lanterns. Emerson caught one of the men by the arm.

"Are there any more bodies here?" he asked hoarsely. "Not many, sir," said the man, who was as black as his boots with filth, and at the answer Emerson groaned again. They stumbled over a man's body in the second row. Cusack pulled him out by the shoulders and dropped him again when he saw a beard.

"Here's a lady, sir," said the fireman, and Emerson knelt down by her. It was a girl of seventeen who seemed asleep.

"There is one more in the front row," said Cusack, and they went to the front row on the prompt side. This woman had not fallen down; she was leaning with her arms on the cushioned rail above the stalls; her face was on her hands; she seemed as though she were alive or asleep or, perhaps, in the utter abandonment of grief. And as they went toward her Emerson sobbed and stopped sobbing, and then his face became hard and set.

"It is not this one—," he said aloud. But he did not speak again in that voice. For it was that one. And she was alone. Cusack snatched the lantern from the fireman's hand and looked upon the floor, but his brother was not there.

"You have taken some from here," he said furiously.

"No, sir," said the fireman, starting; "not one, I'll swear. I was the first in here, and this lady was by herself."

Emerson straightened himself up in the seat next his dead wife.

"The cur!" he said, and Cusack looked as a man does when he is struck and knows he cannot return the blow, for it was his disgrace as well. He looked at the dead woman and the hot tears of bitter shame ran down his blackened cheeks, making him look ludicrous. Was it fancy or not that he saw through them? Was not that look upon the beautiful face one of more than fear? Why was it, and why calmly as that young girl's or writhed into fixed rigid anguish as some he had seen down below? The dead woman was herself ashamed—but not of herself; and her face told with what horror and despair that did not regard death she had laid her head upon her traveling hands, feeling that all her life had been for nothing and that it was well to die. And Emerson rose up, with his wife in his arms. Though he was not a strong man—though he had gone through enough to have made a strong man weak—he carried her as he had once carried her dead child and he went down stairs steadily.

"What are you going to do?" said Cusack when they reached the bottom. As he was about to answer Emerson stumbled and Tom caught him. Then he laid the dead child on the ground and the face with his handkerchief. He roared.

"She can stay here till I return. Cusack, I am going to see your brother."

"What are you going to do?" asked Cusack, in a monotonous voice.

"Nothing, but I should like to look at him. And they went through the crowd which was as thick as the sea. They took a cab and drove fast to Fred's rooms in Duke Street. Emerson leaped from the cab and knocked lightly at the door. It was even then but a little after 11, and the servant answered quickly.

"Is Mrs. Cusack at home?" asked Emerson, in a constrained voice.

"I think he came in just now, sir."

"We will go up," said Tom. "I am his brother."

When they entered the lighted hall the girl sat in stupefaction at their appearance. But she said no word of her. Cusack stepped in first.

Fred's rooms were on the first floor; his bedroom opened from the sitting room. Both rooms were lighted and the first room door was ajar. Tom entered it quickly and Fred followed him. They looked right into the bedroom at once and saw Fred standing in front of the big looking glass. His face, much more awful than any dead face they had seen that night, paralyzed them, and they stayed there staring.

"In his hand," muttered Emerson.

"What's that?" said Tom, "nothing."

And Fred saw them. Emerson made a spring forward and Tom caught him round the waist and held him. There was a gurgling cry and Fred Cusack fell upon the floor heavily.

"I would have stopped him," said Emerson.

"But I was his brother," said Tom.

An Oregon man claims to be the first person to go deer hunting on a bicycle. The firm initiated him on his wheel allowed of his traveling swiftly and noiselessly over the ground strewn with pine needles and before he peddled many miles he came upon an unsuspecting deer quietly browsing just ahead of him. He killed the animal and returned to the hotel with it slung over his shoulders.

BORN.

Seckville, Nov. 11, to the wife of Frank Pinney, a son.

Seckville, Nov. 9, to the wife of Charles Pickard, a son.

Gaspereaux, Nov. 12, to the wife of Enos Norman, a son.

Bala Verre, Nov. 16, to the wife of R. D. Wood, a daughter.

Amherst, Nov. 8, to the wife of James Corby, a daughter.

Milton, Nov. 8, to the wife of Harvey Kempton, a daughter.

Halifax, Nov. 9, to the wife of S. S. Shaford, a daughter.

St. John, Nov. 17, to the wife of Samuel W. Kins, a daughter.

Halifax, Nov. 1, to the wife of George J. Scarle, a daughter.

Central Argyle, Nov. 13, to the wife of Enos Spizmy, a daughter.

Gaspereaux, Oct. 25, to the wife of G. W. Miner, a daughter.

Chatham, Nov. 16, to the wife of Thomas Flanagan, a daughter.

Avondale, Nov. 3, to the wife of Samuel G. Barter, a daughter.

Truro, N. S., Nov. 10, to the wife of Joseph West, a daughter.

Central Argyle, Nov. 11, to the wife of Herbert Hines, a son.

New Glasgow, Nov. 8, to the wife of Barclay Fraser, a son.

Lunenburg, N. S., Nov. 10, to the wife of Rev. Geo. Haslam, a son.

McDonald's Point, Nov. 14, to the wife of Alford M. Day, a son.

Waterville, Oct. 28, to the wife of William Culbert, a daughter.

Gaspereaux, N. S., Oct. 29, to the wife of Otis Coldwell, a daughter.

Farrboro, N. S., Oct. 31, to the wife of William Summerville, a daughter.

Summerside, P. E. I., Nov. 10, to the wife of S. M. Bent, a daughter.

Halifax, Nov. 12, to the wife of Captain James Pide, a daughter.

Pictou, N. S., Nov. 15, to the wife of Rev. Andrew Arnott, a daughter.

East, Leinster, Nov. 8, to the wife of Matthew Krans, a daughter.

Lower Argyle, N. S., Nov. 1, to the wife of J. F. Hagg, a daughter.

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West Head, Cape Sable Id., Nov. 15, to the wife of Edmund Atkinson, a son.

Lower Keweenaw, N. S., Nov. 12, to the wife of James Allison Fulton, a son.

MARRIED.

Milton, N. S., Nov. 4, Barney Whynt to May Whynt.

Truro, Nov. 10, by Rev. John Wood, J. E. Hammon to Clara Turpie.

Dartmouth, Nov. 16, by Rev. T. C. Mellor, Nelson Conrad to Carrie Bell.

Digby, Nov. 9, by Rev. A. T. Dykeman, Frank Alcorn to Lillian Morgan.

Sackville, Nov. 15, by Rev. Cecil Wiggins, Conductor Smith to Janie Beers.

Kingston, Nov. 1, by Rev. David Long, James H. Earle to Carrie M. Earle.

Douglas, N. B., Nov. 8, by Rev. P. O. Rees, Angus McDonald to Janie Jones.

Gibson, Nov. 9, by Rev. G. B. Payson, George E. Logan to Rebecca Bishop.

Salisbury, N. B., Nov. 12, by Rev. Abram Perry, Ezra Taylor to Ida Lewis.

Public Harbor, Nov. 8, by Rev. J. L. Smith, John Jeffery to Mrs. Sarah Frost.

Bay de Vin, Nov. 4, by Rev. J. Robertson, John A. Grogan to Olive A. Taylor.

Sonoma, N. S., Nov. 2, by Rev. J. E. Tiner, Eben Dickson to Sarah A. Tyle.

Salem, N. B., Nov. 8, by Rev. W. Camp, Murdoch Steeves to Winnie Molins.

Truro, Nov. 15, by Rev. Dr. Hearty, Joseph K. Berry to Ellen E. Stevens.

Upper Wicklow, Nov. 8, by Rev. G. A. Giberson, Dow Price to Ada Munson.

Pubnico, Nov. 7, by Rev. J. J. Sullivan, George Amos to Theresa LeBlond.

Scotcharn, Nov. 9, by Rev. W. Fraser, Thomas McNeil to Margaret Gratto.

Antigonish, Nov. 16, by Rev. J. R. Munro, John Blanchard to Laura Gordon.

Carleton, Nov. 16, by Rev. James Burgess, James Anderson to Laura Godfrey.

Halifax, Nov. 16, by Rev. Father Kinella, Dr. A. F. Whitford to Maud Inglis.

Yarmouth, Nov. 16, by Rev. E. Moore, Edith Stacey to Agnes S. Jones.

Halifax, Nov. 14, by Rev. Father Murphy, George Sullivan to Florence Morton.

Woodstock, Nov. 16, by Rev. C. T. Phillips, Nelson Amos to Bertha A. Hays.

Shinley, N. S., Nov. 2, by Rev. J. H. Parker, Sherman Porter to Jennie McKay.

St. John, Nov. 15, by Rev. James Gordon, Arthur Wiggins to Bertha A. Hays.

Dartmouth, Nov. 15, by Rev. F. H. Almoh, Samuel Hatcher to Amelia Shepherd.

Halifax, Nov. 14, by Rev. Father Desborough, James R. Parker to Lillie J. Taylor.

Carleton, Nov. 15, by Rev. Dr. McRae, David McWhirter to Helen C. McWhirter.

Letete, N. B., Nov. 4, by Rev. E. G. Vane, Ashby McNeil to Lillian M. Helms.

Bear River, N. S., Nov. 4, by Rev. B. N. Nobles, John Wier to Agnes M. Bridges.

Douglas, N. B., Nov. 8, by Rev. P. O. Rees, William A. Whitaker to Susy A. Hydes.

Shinley, N. S., Nov. 2, by Rev. George Howard, Samuel Fawcett to Anne M. Bridges.

Windsor Plains, Nov. 2, by Rev. James W. Johnson, James Turner to Maggie Bowen.

New Ireland, N. B., Oct. 30, by Rev. Father Carson, George Doherty to Julia Doherty.

Bear Island, N. B., Nov. 13, by Rev. D. E. Brooks, Robert Brown to Maggie S. Lint.

Mount Denison, Nov. 16, by Rev. William Phillips, David Shaw to Mrs. Abbie Shaw.

Kingston, Nov. 13, by Rev. William Hamilton, Robert Brown to Susan S. Lint.

Liverpool, N. S., Nov. 13, by Rev. J. E. Bill, Thomas Nickerson to Eliza Wharton.

Sable River, Nov. 12, by Rev. T. W. Carpenter, Clifford Dexter to F. M. H. H. H. H.

Lawrenceville, Nov. 14, by Rev. Thomas Fisher, Horatio Carroll to Belle E. Conrad.

Brooklyn, N. S., Nov. 8, by Rev. H. R. Goucher, Albert D. Gault to Adeline Morrill.

Kingston, N. S., Nov. 1, by Rev. J. W. Cox, Edw. S. H. Harvey to Gertrude Tupper.

N. E. Margaree, Nov. 7, by Rev. William Wetmore, Donald T. McLeod to Abigail Davis.

Upper Economy, N. S., Nov. 2, by Rev. C. P. Wilton, Arthur Harnett to Dorcas Welsh.

Tusket Wedge, Nov. 13, by Rev. Father Gray, Moses D'Entremont to Nellie Porter.

Lunenburg, N. S., Nov. 8, by Rev. L. J. Batty, Joseph Anderson to Bertha E. Keanan.

Bridgetown, N. S., Oct. 28, by Rev. F. P. Groaters, Joseph H. Young to Florence Giesner.