

THE BROAD STREET TURN.

By NYM CRINKLE.



URT Cliny Halstead, broker, Broad Street, turned over a new leaf on a New Year. I met him at Dr. Hall's church in the morning. He had a reformed look in the corner of his eyes. "I am through," he said, in a calm, business-like manner.

Everything that Cline did was done in a business-like manner, whether it was purchasing bouquets to send to Belle Urquhart or having his bald head sham-

pooned. I've known him to get off a car and chase a newsboy two blocks to get a cent change, because it was business, and he would not be swindled; and I have known him to write a note to Ned Harrigan to get a free box, and then spend two hundred dollars on flowers and supper before the night was over. With a Broad-street peculiarity he insisted that he was business too.

I believe that anywhere Cline would be called a good fellow. He held strictly to the business principle of skinning his fellow-man alive on Broad street and blowing in a pile when the boys were not on that financial warpath.

One day, Cline, as I said, turned a leaf. He did it methodically, calculatingly and firmly. He was polishing his dome before the glass, and as he laid the brush down he said, "I must get married."

Everything in that bachelor room was astonished. The alabaster bather who had stood bent over in the corner for a year prepared to take a header into the turquoise cuspidor, gave a little start as if her mission were done. The bronze Venus actually turned her bronze head a little, as if looking for a sea to go back to, and a whole row of dead *boutonnieres* fell off the mantle with a perfumed gasp.

All this was with what Cline himself would have called a "dead calculation." He proposed to sail the sea of matrimony. He had been living for fifteen or twenty years what Matthew Arnold would have called a *not* wife life. The other sort of thing would be cheaper.

Besides, when a bachelor can't comb his top hair over any more he begins to think about getting tone. It was business.

Very punctilious and discreet was Cline. He proposed to get married just as he proposed to buy Nashville and Tennessee. It was a good investment.

Then he set about it in the most extraordinary, Broad-street manner.

"I don't want," he said, "any giddy beauties around. They've been around till I'm tired. I want a mature, sensible, sober, economical, tidy, level-headed, modest, healthy, good-tempered, prudent, affectionate, sagacious, lovable, motherly, genteel, sterling woman. Girls be blown! Girls make me weary, and I'm going to organize the business of getting what I want. I can give an hour a day for the next year to the finding of what I want, and I'm too old a business hand to have what I don't want."

When you get one of these financial Broad-street intellects squarely down to business, he knows what he is about, and he doesn't make any mistakes.

If he is going to get a wife or get a cemetery plot, he is going to get the worth of his money.

So Cline at forty-four organized himself. He set up a matrimonial bureau in that private office with cathedral windows; put his number eleven gaiter on sentiment; chucked the forget-me-nots out of his soul and came down to hard-pan.

He would advertise. Yes, he would. No nonsensical rot about cultured gent desiring to meet cultured lady, but straight business proposition. It would involve immense clerical system—very well, would get typewriter, dictate answers for an hour every morning.

"First thing to do—get typewriter; must be business girl—girl bad—but have to put up with it—no women typewriters in the market, all girls, d——n shame."

II.

One morning there came to Cline's general office in Broad street a girl in a baby waist, with a pearl gray pelisse over her shoulders and a cornelian ring on her finger. One of Cline's young men noticed her first standing by the door. He told me afterward that what he noticed was the absurd chip sailor hat with a blue ribbon and an anchor on it, and he wondered if she hadn't borrowed it from her little brother to come down town in; it set up so perky and saucily on top of her ridiculous wad of brown hair, as if she might be a lieutenant in the Salvation Army.

It's astonishing what things these young idiots notice.

He went round and said, "What can we do for you, madam?"

"Madam" is a kind of official squelcher kept for girls who venture away from their proper salerooms to where young men can get back at them and pay them off in their own coin.

"I am a typewriter," said chip hat, very meekly. "I came to answer an advertisement."

Then they directed her into the little office with cathedral windows, using a sign language of their own and telegraphing to each other by winks, one of them even whistling a few bars, pianissimo, of "When the Robins Nest Again." Then they saw the chip hat go through the fatal glass door, on the other side of which Cline kept his grim official severity.

III.

He was signing checks. It was one of the most serious moments of his life. He looked up and saw the chip hat cocked on top of the brown hair. It aggravated him just a little, as if a deacon should see one of the New York ballet girls in his country church and she should bow to him sweetly. He leaned back in his cathedral chair, stuck his legs out straight and fastened his commercial eye on his check book.

"Well, young woman," (chip hats that are "darlings" in front of the Bijou are always "young women" in Broad street), I want a discreet confidential secretary to answer correspondents. She's got to be here at ten o'clock every morning, attend to business strictly, and she can't get away till two or three. The salary is twelve dollars a week. Do you think you can get down to that kind of drudgery for that pittance and keep the business in this room?"

All that Cline ever heard was a demure little "Yes, sir," that had the same suggestion of tremolo in it that one gets from a fresh raspberry jelly.

"All right. I can't bother with you to-day; come to-morrow." And Cline fell to signing checks, and chip hat went away, and the young man outside poked his nose through the crystal portal of his barrier, puckered his lips and flipped two or three bars of "The Maid with the Milking Pail" after her.