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"will wonder whether I really got on or not."

"Gilpin will go and get him and we'll have a comfortable chat in here." Gilpin started to obey. "Let me introduce my secretary, Mr. McAlpin, Miss Lynd," and, bowing, Gilpin passed out to the car ahead.

Miss Lynd sank into the soft, leather-upholstered chair with a murmur of delight.

"You railroad people do things so grandly," she remarked to Mr. Squares, hinting at nothing in particular, but meaning without doubt, everything that had come under her observation while a passenger.

"The railroad," observed Squares, "is composed of a lot of little perfections rolled into one, and it is the people who use the railroad that make it so."

Gilpin returned with the girl's brother, and for nearly an hour conversation serious and frivolous, passed the time. Then the visitors went to their car and the General Superintendent resumed business.

He took up the letter again and read it: "General operating expenses are three thousand dollars a month too big on your district. Cut!"

Simply that! Easy? His remark about cutting out half the stations conveyed more than anything how difficult it would be. He could not do that, but he meant to do something to save that three thousand a month.

What did it mean to a district that was reduced to the last notch of economy? Some bosses would have made a five or ten per cent reduction in salaries and turned the trick. Not Squares. He was not built that way. He knew that every last man on the Huron district worked to the bounds of honest effort and instead of cuts, raises were in order.

He had skinned the district to the bone in other ways. By a clever rearrangement he had put the coaling plants on a better producing basis at less cost for operation. He saved several hundreds of dollars on painting stations and other buildings by a system of placing the gangs where the least time was lost in travelling and by installing paint sprayers for much of the outside work. He had cut down track maintenance by getting his extra gangs on a month earlier than usual, thus getting men when they were plentiful and at the minimum rate. He paid attention to the elimination of wastes. He had scrap picked up systematically and assorted. Even waste paper brought in a good revenue. He had done everything, it seemed, to save the last cent and keep up a high efficiency at the same time.

At the end of an hour he was no farther ahead in the solution of this new problem. He admitted to himself that he was stumped. And McAlpin, who had studied every expression of his chief, understood. He saw him hesitate when he came to the reply to be signed—but he signed it.

"It's got to be done," he grunted, half-aloud.

"It's a hard nut to crack, but not impossible," remarked Gilpin, casually.

"Eh?" queried the boss.

"That letter—cutting down the payroll, I mean," explained the secretary.

"You've an idea?" asked the chief, quickly.

"Yes," nodded Gilpin, the fire of conquest in his amber eyes. "You can reduce the roll by increasing it."

"Impossible," grunted the chief. "I've done that before. There isn't a man that can be taken off so that half his salary can be saved and the rest split up among the survivors. That's been done to the limit."

"I don't mean just that," said Gilpin.

"I'd increase the payroll by five hundred dollars in prizes for agents and section-men who can produce the most attractive flower gardens on company's property."

"But we're giving prizes now," said the boss, disappointed. "True, they only aggregate one hundred and fifty dollars."

"That's the idea. Make it more worth while and then stop giving seeds and bulbs free," went on Gilpin.

"Preposterous!" blurted Squares. "Make the poor devils pay for their bulbs and seeds? Not that way. Not that way, my boy," he added, more kindly.

"You don't get me yet, Mr. Squares. Let me explain. You have an appropriation of six thousand a month for beautification of grounds. It is nearly all swallowed up in seeds, bulbs and plants. The work is done gratis by the parties interested in the prizes. Result is two star gardens on the whole district and a lot of measley ones. That is because some seeds do better than others, some places have water handier, and so on. Now, the pansy plant will grow anywhere and first planting is the last—they live summer and winter if properly looked after. Spend your first month's appropriation on the plants and save all the rest. They won't look much for a few months, but you won't have to plant bulbs in the fall."

"We'll do it," agreed the chief. "And if it succeeds you'll quit your job. There is a better one for a head with ideas." Gilpin thanked him, adding: "It can't fail."

There was opposition, of course. When the spring allotment of seeds failed to

"I surely do, Miss Lynd. And more than that; it is to be the standard for the whole Huron district."

"Oh, oh, oh! Whatever possessed them to make such a silly change?"

Now Gilpin was sensible of the hurt he was causing but was himself hurt that anyone could condemn the idea that his boss thought so brilliant.

"I'm afraid I'm responsible," he admitted. "We had to save money and it was the only feasible way."

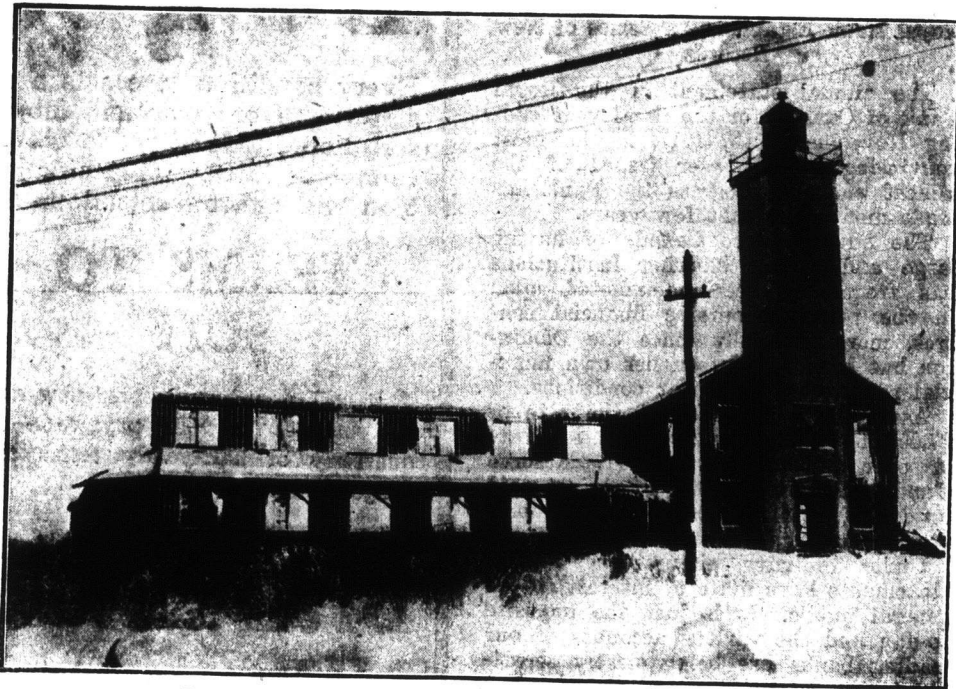
"Sacrificed beauty for a few dollars! Mr. McAlpin, I can hardly believe you guilty of a part in such a mercenary deal. I wouldn't work for a concern that ground out dollars that way."

"There are worse ways," he retorted. And she left him to dance with another.

So he had gained favor with the boss and lost the regard of the one girl in all creation he would have kept. She danced no more with him. He danced with no one else. He tried to stay the event out with cheerful composure but his heart was heavy. It was done. He could not change it. He knew only too well what a miserable display half-grown pansies would make, and right there in North Quay were that kind.

He went over next morning and looked at the station garden. It was not very promising. The plants were small and weedy, groggily drooping. They were of all colors with yellow predominating, like a mess of mustard pickles.

Gilpin turned away in disgust. He deserved all the opprobrium his idea had elicited. The General Superintendent was



Halifax disaster—Lighthouse and sheds badly shattered.

arrive, the employees became peeved, and it took more than crates of pansy plants to appease them. It required a personal call on each and every employee by the General Superintendent or his assistants before the idea was made to sink in. Even then it was necessary to enlist a platoon of expert gardeners to go over the district to give the necessary tuition in pansy culture.

Gilpin McAlpin was generally too busy to follow social life, but he was especially attracted to the Red Cross ball in North Quay. Rebecca Lynd was there. In her he found an ideal mentor for the successful accomplishment of light, fantastic stepping. In fact, they agreed that their dancing was wonderfully suited to each other. They even went further and admitted that they were a unit in most things.

"I'll never forget that lovely Peridot," she remarked, apropos of the general happiness which pervaded their new relationship.

"It's a beauty," he returned, looking upon the pendant at her throat.

"Silly! I don't mean that," she flushed.

"I mean that station with all the lovely flowers."

"You will not think so now," he told her.

"Oh, why?" she asked, a note of alarm in her voice.

"We've uprooted all the bulbs and perennials and planted pansies," he announced with that curt business-like manner which does not mix with sentiment.

"Oh, Mr. McAlpin, you don't mean that? The hideous things!"

likewise disappointed. "They don't take to the idea in the right spirit," he declared, "and they don't water 'em enough."

"We'll just have to talk up the prize feature," replied Gilpin. "They've all got an equal start. It's a question of who can do the best with a poor subject. We'll have to show them what a can of water a day means in dollars."

"Go to it—get out the stuff and give it to me to sign," ordered the General Superintendent.

At North Quay and other terminals the gardens were in charge of the section foremen—the small station plots were handled by the agents. Squares called Donovan, the North Quay section boss, into his office.

"You wouldn't have your section looking like that garden," he admonished.

"I don't seem to get along with it, Mr. Squares. I just can't make thin pansies grow right. And I don't get time-o' nights, wid the misses and me two b'ys sick."

"Oh, I didn't know there was any sickness, Tom. I'm glad you've been trying anyway."

"I have that, sor. It'd be a godsend to win the big prize, but try as I will I can't make them 'larlins show their pretty faces," commiserated Donovan.

"Let me try a hand, Mr. Squares," proffered Gilpin. "I know a little about flowers, and if Mr. Donovan will do the laying out of the beds I'll care for the flowers."

"Now, that w'd be foine," said Donovan.

"All right," said Squares, and that was settled.

There were two large grass plots with