

There are Women and Women

By E. G. Bayne

IF there is one place in the world more than another which is popularly supposed to bear over its entrance-way the imaginary sign "Abandon sentiment all ye who enter here," that place is a bank. It is generally believed to be the least human of all human habitations. The beings in the cages are not men, but expert machines who, when they do give voice, utter only such platitudes as "Sign here please," or "Kindly endorse this, madam."

There were four of us in the cages of the Metropolitan. First there was Hemmingway, accountant, rather elderly with a bald patch and two wives (one dead). Then there was Charlie Bateson (aged about twenty-two), paying teller and lady's man. The latter part of Charlie's dual role, needless to say, was assumed principally out of business hours, as the chief was known to frown upon wicket flirtations. Next came yours truly, a married but otherwise nondescript individual labelled "Receiving teller," and then there was John Janes, ledger keeper. John wasn't fond of the janes at all. Sentiment had no place in his nature. He had no sympathy whatever with Charlie Bateson's numerous affairs des coeurs, and when love was mentioned, as it sometimes is even in a bank, Janes simply wasn't interested in the topic. We all had our opinion of love, all but Janes that is, and we

warmly human—something you are not."

"It's a mess of mush!" he retorted. "The style is rather punk," I admitted, "but the writer is in earnest. He has loved himself and he knows how to impart heart throbs to his readers. It would do you good to read that book. It might heat up your frozen blood a bit."

"Did you read that—that conglomerate of silly emotion?" he demanded, looking at me as though any lingering respect he may have entertained for me had died a sudden death.

"Sure thing!" I returned. "And it was as good as a spring tonic. It set my blood to racing."

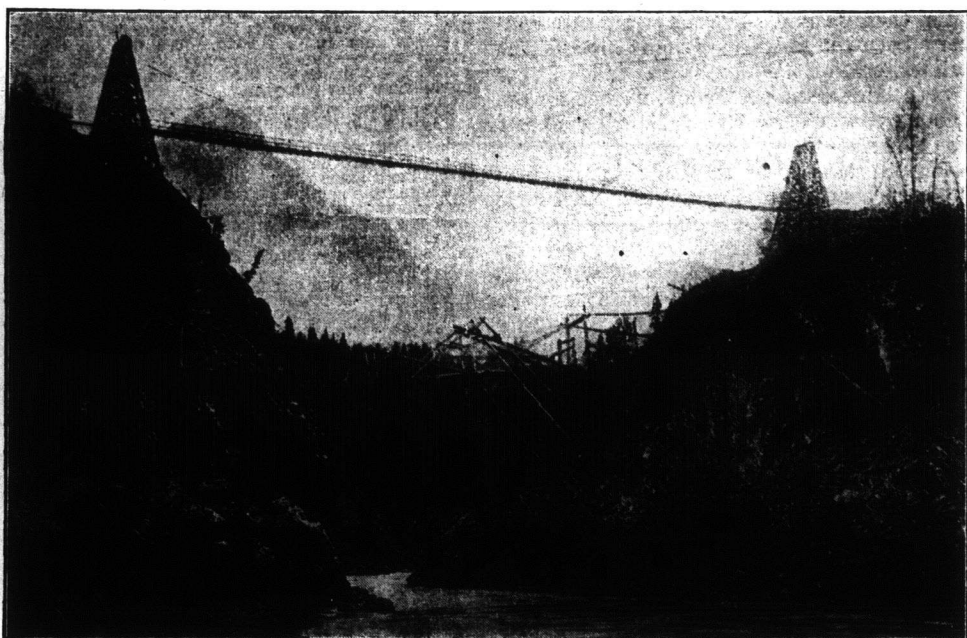
"And you a benedict!"

"Well, what of it? I've been one for several years, but the wife and I haven't started throwing crockery at each other yet. I don't know whether you're married or not, but —"

"I'm not," he interposed succinctly.

"Well, instead of going home to a cheerless boarding house, wouldn't you like to have a little nest of your own, Janes, to return to each night? Wouldn't you like to have a loving wife meet you at the door with a kiss?"

"Yeah!" he interjected. "A wife to meet me at the door and turn my pockets out and grouse about the maid and talk me tired and then insist on hawking me off to a bridge party!"



Historic Hagwilget Indian built suspension bridge collapses after twenty years. (See previous page)

referred to it at various times in a jocular or melancholy way, according to our different natures, but always with an underlying tone of respect.

Charlie, being a youth with engaging manners, blue eyes and a rosy, cherubic countenance, was very popular with the girls. But his was a fluctuating and mercurial disposition. With Charlie 'twas always a case of "How happy I could be with either, were t'other dear charmer away!"

John Janes was a comparative newcomer. In the last bank shakeup he had been wished on us from a distant branch in the West and for quite a while we did not feel like taking any liberties with him, for his face was a rather stern and gloomy one. He was about thirty, dark, fairly well set up and almost handsome. He could talk about Aristotle, Plato and Epictetus; in fact, he fairly revelled in Greek poetry and philosophy, but he shied away from grand opera and the modern best seller. Once Bateson had left a novel lying about among the ledgers. It was one of those red hot love stories of the kind that depicts the tender passion so microscopically that very little is left to the reader's imagination. Janes glimpsed the title only, and with a scornful lip he picked the book up and dropped it into the waste paper basket.

Charlie was simply amused at this and recovered his property with the very best good nature. But I felt indignant. A warm thrill of resentment tingled through my veins.

"Janes, you're one of the greatest fools on this merry old earth," I said. "That book may not be a classic but it's

"There are women and women," I replied. "Look at old Hemmingway over there for instance. He's had two of them and he still looks as though life were worth living, doesn't he?"

"Women," asserted Janes, with a bored air, "are all alike. They haven't a thought above dress. They'd put their immortal souls in hock for a pretty bauble. Aristotle says —"

"Oh hire a hall!"

"Don't waste breath on the old stick, Bert," called out Charlie Bateson, with a laugh. "He's a confirmed woman-hater."

"Well, we're halfway through leap-year," I observed, "but there are still six months of it to run. Be careful, Janes, that's all! Even you are not proof against the more subtle shafts of little cupid, and when lovely woman up and proposes, what is mere man to do but accept?"

Now when I said this I confess I had no particular or immediate meaning in mind. It was merely a sort of general warning. Janes resumed his work and turned an unsympathetic back upon us.

But as I glanced up at Charlie I caught a fixed and speculative and withal mischievous look in his eye. He looked as though an idea of some kind had hit him, and even as I gazed at him he slapped his knee, chuckled quietly and sent me a wink.

The chief came out of his office just then and passed out to his waiting automobile and, as though this had been the cue for the next actors (or actresses) to appear, scarcely three minutes now elapsed before our tessellated floor rang to the clicking of daintily-shod feet and I looked up to see three well-dressed

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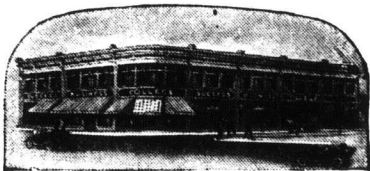
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