

A PERSON OF SOME IMPORTANCE

By LLOYD OSBOURNE

Here was certainly a chance for a nonunion man, or a shadowy chance, anyhow, and Matt, with shoe factory possibilities dancing in his head, absorbed himself in the conquest of Mr. Bates. After supper, over a pipe and a cigar, he continued the good work, even broaching the subject tentatively, and receiving encouragement.

With a feeling that he already had a bulldog grip on the shoe business, Matt said good night and went up to his room, more than satisfied with his evening's work. As he lit a match, however, and touched it to the gas, he was confronted by a sight that drove all these reflections from his head. The mattress was tumbled and bare; the bureau drawers were open; the room had been searched in his absence, and the moment he recovered from his astonishment he knew by whom. There had been there, seeking a clew, a scrag of paper, anything that might put them on John Mort's track. Impelled by an unaccountable instinct he ran to the window and looked out. There below him under the street lamp were two men in close conversation. All at once they turned and gazed upward, revealing the faces of Mr. Bates and Mr. Kay, and then they passed on and were lost in the dim street.

There below him under the Street Lamp Were Two Men.

The next morning Matt was scarcely surprised to hear that Bates had departed. The representative of the shoe company was no more in gay border town—and all that remained of him was a two-dollar bill on his dresser, and Miss Gibbs' recollection of sundry creases and tipplings in the middle of the night. Yes, he had vanished, that quiet, deferential gray haired person with the gold tooth, and with him also vanished Matt's job in the mythical shoe factory. The marketing boards would have unraveled more could they have known of Matt's devastated room, but this he kept to himself, and preferred to be as much in the dark about Mr. Bates as any one else.

Afterward he sallied forth in his best clothes, and as spruce and well groomed as he could make himself, to seek work. The first place he tried was Mr. Beckley's bank, a small brick structure with plate glass windows and a red headed cashier in a cage. Mr. Beckley received Matt effusively in an inner office, proffered a chair, and seemed ready to talk about the south sea mounds, and the respective ailments of Maribiki and Gahine. The stout old dreamer was frankly and unpleasantly gross. Matt, though far from squeamish, was disagreeably affected. The atrocious hypocrisy of the old fellow jarred on him. He would have been wiser in his own interest had he pretended to a greater enthusiasm. Instead, he switched off to the subject of his job with a suddenness that made the great Turk crinkle to the ears and assume an expression of detected guilt.

He also had a shattered condition. As Matt left, flushed, with anger and indignation, eyes a conflict of light and shadow, he had a better chance with strangers than with those he deemed his friends. The telephone superintendent, to whom applied next, had no acquaintance with him, and in consequence was quite civil. Courtesy was about all he had to offer, for the company was "full up" and had "men to burn." With this forceful colloquialism Matt was speeded on his way again to try for a spot where the fires of commerce burned less brightly.

Of course he could have gone to Daggancourt, but at that his pride drew the line. The old mulatto, considering himself deeply ill used, had shrunk into a shell and adopted a menial frozen approach. He had even ceased to greet Matt any longer, preferring to look the other way when they met or assuming an abstracted expression in which there was not the slightest glint of recognition.

He sought out Mr. Doty instead—little, flattered, easy Mr. Doty, who certainly must have concealed angry wings under his broad bare coat. Mr. Doty understood. In Matt's case nothing could be simpler; the sea for the sailor, of course, and they would go right off to his good friend, Captain Jim Bain, who owned half the coasting craft out of— Oh, but Matt wished to stay in Manaswan! Oh, the old story—I see, I see—a young lady, and all the rest of it! Well, well, well! Let Mr. Doty think, let Mr. Doty think.

Half an hour afterward Matt was formally engaged as physical instructor to the Young Men's Christian association at a salary of \$60 a month. Unlike his sisters elsewhere, the Manaswan Y. M. C. A. was poorly supported, either by the moneyed people of the town or the better off, illiterate foreigners whom it was intended to uplift.

Mr. Cummins, the superintendent, a very low, roiled young man with eyes slanted, had less stress on Matt's capabilities as a physical instructor than whether he would be prepared to "help out." That had been the trouble with the previous instructors—they wouldn't "help out." Would Matt help out cheerfully? Matt promptly replied that he would, and smiling broadly to prove it, inquired for a more precise definition of helping out.

This, it seemed, included washing the gymnasium floors, scrubbing the bathing suits, cleaning the swimming tank, checking the towels, doing what was required in the building, oiling and cleaning a dozen typewriter machines, and volunteering cheerfully for any further services that might be needed. Matt's answers were so satisfactory that he soon found himself on the roof, in a suit of borrowed overalls, assisting a deaf and dumb Swede in re-shingling it. In this work and others he passed the day, and in the evening he taught in the gymnasium. By 10 the gymnasium was clear, and he was free to return home, the tired man in Manaswan, and the happy man who had got a job, he had already won praise; he foresaw promotion and Chris! He sat down and scratched off a glad little note; the good news was too big to keep; Chris should learn by the morning's mail that he had been unexpectedly—gloriously—successful.

lover surely included Mr. Cummins. Besides, a helping out, cheerful instructor would soon be worth that extra \$15.

The days that followed in the Y. M. C. A. were like the first, and by degrees the world contracted till it consisted of nothing but the Y. M. C. A. at one end and Mrs. Sittouse's at the other, with a mile of streets between. Yet Matt was not unhappy. You need leisure to be unhappy, and he was sustained, moreover, by a determination to succeed. That he was doing so was indubitable, and Mr. Cummins was friendly as usual.

Altogether, the new instructor had good reason to be satisfied and might look forward to a raise in salary as something he had well earned. He would not overreach himself, however, by asking for it prematurely. He was too wary for that and was playing for too big a stake. With only three weeks gone from the three months he felt he had no time to spare.

One morning Mr. Cummins called him into the office and, adorning with some papers in his hand, regarded Matt with considerable embarrassment.

"I'm afraid I have bad news for you," he said in his very low voice. "I have been told to let you go."

"Discharge me!" exclaimed Matt, unable to believe his ears. "You don't mean that, do you?" "You don't mean that, do you?" Mr. Cummins nodded, with an expression almost as wistful as Matt's. "It's none of my doing, Broughton," he explained. "You are the best man I have ever had in that department, and it came like a thunderbolt to me. It's worse than that, just, and I said so far out. But orders are orders, and I am only the superintendent under the board."

"I don't mind of a business," he said, indicating the camera. "If you pay like mine—but if you care to come in as a partner, you can have half of what there is."

"But I haven't a cent, Victor. I didn't mean anything like that. I want a job—\$2 a day, perhaps."

With the \$75 assured, an interesting occupation before him and a partnership whenever he chose to take it, he felt that all his troubles were over and that his foot at last was on the ladder of independence. He was in a glow of contentment and good will.

"It came like a bombshell," he quavered. "You know, I started the business on nothing four years ago and borrowed \$2,500 of Farley, the money lender. Now today he comes up to me and says, 'oh, Farley, look out of a clear sky and without the least warning, just as he was writing the receipt in my office with a fountain pen, I have to call in that \$2,500, Victor, and will ask you to make an immediate settlement.' I said, 'Marse Farley, that isn't fair, as God sees us, that isn't fair, and I could no more do it than I could fly.' Then he dabbles with his fountain pen and sticks it back most careful in his vest pocket and says, 'Then you'll have to get out.'"

Matt left the building with a check for \$47 and within his breast a heavy and anxious heart. The world was before him again and that \$75 was farther away than ever.

"I believe I can get you out of this," said Matt. "It may be crazy, but let's try it. Here, I'll write it on the back of an envelope."

"The next morning Matt treated himself to the luxury of getting up late—into bed, indeed, but Daggancourt had already gone, leaving in message, but he returned soon with the things that the letter had been miraculously successful. Yes, old Farley, after a pretense of examining the books, had confessed himself entirely satisfied; the notes were not to be called in; everything was to go on as before; the garage was saved.

After losing two more positions through the machinations of his mysterious foe Matt succeeded in getting a job on the water front. But what he had not reckoned on was the overmastering, crushing fatigue that made it impossible to keep it. A man unaccustomed to severe and prolonged manual labor has little chance on the docks.

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Matt pondered a moment and then inquired, "You are Flexner?" "Yes, sir." "Will you please give me your message?" "My young lady wishes to do a very foolish thing," said Flexner, with a disapproving purring of her mouth. "She wants you to run away with her tomorrow morning. You are to get a carriage, or better, an automobile and pick her up tomorrow morning at a quarter of eight at the Fair Oaks' entrance. Previously I shall have packed a small portmanteau and placed it outside the house, and all next day I will inform her father that she is ill and cannot be disturbed. By this means you will reach Middleborough without trouble and get married, and then take the train to New York. From New York you will travel to San Francisco, and there you stay, no matter how poor, how starving, till the opportunity arises to go to that place where you have a friend—a very rich, queer man—whom once you served and who will take you back in employment."

CHAPTER XII. A Mysterious Enemy. WITH the \$75 assured, an interesting occupation before him and a partnership whenever he chose to take it, he felt that all his troubles were over and that his foot at last was on the ladder of independence. He was in a glow of contentment and good will.

"No a bite of it! You write it just the way it is and then leave it at his house tonight."

"What else! It was when I said I'd have to find another boarding place," added Daggancourt, with a pucker grin; "said I was afraid to stop where you was, may the Lord forgive me. For God's sake, get away from here, Marse Broughton, or worse may come of it. Get away quick, and here's \$150 I drew at the bank."

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CHAPTER XIII. A Friend Drops From Heaven. CHRIS, who was sitting on the bed in a cheap rooming house in San Francisco, looked up and said with a strange earnestness: "Matt, I want to tell you something."

"Yes, a man followed me; I'm positive of it." She rose and going to the window, looked out.

"Oh, Matt, there he is now!" she cried. "Come quick."

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From The Anglo-saw the first breeders and History was met around numbers and problems.

During the past few years the dairy industry has been suffering from a depression.

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There Below Him under the Street Lamp Were Two Men.



"Can you make room for me?"



Suddenly There Was a Flash of a Whip.



She Opened Her Eyes and Nestled Closer.

Vertical text on the far right edge, including "THE PA...", "YOU...", "HOLS...", "ME...", "Sang...", "N...", "E...", "M...", "to...", "From...", "The Anglo...", "saw the first...", "breeders and...", "History was...", "met around...", "numbers and...", "problems.", "Messrs. G...", "and Alex. H...", "chairman and...", "distinguished...", "crowded, and...", "his able...", "some repair...", "and all...", "for the dis...", "then the M...", "District Hol...", "the Marie A...", "an insipid...", "Chapman...", "never had...", "the Kin...", "the company...", "On the...", "with the...", "country. E...", "have develop...", "are realizing...", "the S. E.", "agriculture.", "he was plan...", "Bellville we...", "development...", "service of...", "the dairy...", "During hi...", "partment, it...", "with all of...", "a man of...", "pure stock...", "knowing.", "During th...", "tion has in...", "sumption of...", "dairy cows...", "cent. In th...", "for dairym...", "milk per ce...", "reason that...", "ed, in that...", "of prosper...", "cents. The...", "pure bred...", "to 70,000...", "yet satisfied...", "he econom...", "the stock...", "The Holst...", "accomplish...", "encouraged...", "The assoc...", "some for...", "clubs. The...", "work as we...", "The appeal...", "a pure bred...", "the provin...", "is done as...", "as his d...", "able the de...", "station of...", "breeding, c...", "and make...", "The breed...", "not m...", "liking for...", "The Mar...", "is a...", "Britannia", "the chorus.", "OUR LI...", "In propo...", "said the i...", "common, t...", "the dairy...", "Prof. Bar...", "been privi...", "meetings a...", "very fitting...", "in that com...", "He thug...", "too tender...", "sion of opi...", "was such...", "significant...", "Why?", "The proble...", "sion is at...", "shires and...", "towards o...", "rivalry is...", "for both th...", "abilities y...", "Ayrshire", "Dairying...", "shame, yet...", "humiliated...", "ed on the...", "as many...", "today no...", "ten years...", "some what...", "remember...", "through th...", "are going...", "in the...", "about no...", "ty-five ye...