

"Tuxadora," Mr. Paxter corrected him mildly.

"—Is a big swindle."

"Look here, Mr. Romford, I don't like this bad feelin' with a client. I've got my reputation, 's much as anyone, and I don't sit here to be—to be—to be abused. So please don't let there be any more misunderstandin'. Your land may look to you, who are not familiar with our great and constantly expandin' West, a long way out. But when the John A. Zachary Transporter Company, of Joyceville, Nebraska, locate their Canadian factory two hundred yards from your Lot 9, yours and all the others are out for a rise."

"Why didn't you hold it yourself, then?"

"Hold it myself? Do you think I am a rich man, Mr. Romford?" The pathos in Mr. Paxter's voice was intense. "You look at my office, and think I am made of money, perhaps. It's part of the trade. A real estate man has to keep up appearances, though he ain't got a cent in real business—just like a lawyer or a doctor. Why, the very date pad is being bought on instalments," concluded Mr. Paxter dolefully.

"You are not going to return my fifteen hundred?" said Romford, rising.

"I don't think, Mr. Romford, that on more mature consideration you would want me to."

"I shall go round to a solicitor, then—and right now!" No effect. "I'll expose you, you old humbug!" The door banged. Mr. Paxter, in some relief, pressed the button for his stenographer; then the outer door reopened, and Mr. Romford's head suddenly re-appeared round it. "A solicitor, you thief!" snapper Romford, and as suddenly withdrew his head.

"Take a letter to—" began Mr. Paxter, in great mildness of spirit, to his stenographer.

"Swindler!" said Mr. Romford, looking round the door again.

"Dear Sir: We are in receipt of

your esteemed favour—" dictated Mr. Paxter.

"Solicitor!" shrieked Romford.

"Of sixth instant"—aw, get there, you!"

But the Ontarian had finally departed, and Mr. Paxter was left in peace. By the late mail he received a letter from his wife that she would be home Friday. This was Tuesday. When the office closed, he dropped in to his favourite bar, as was his amiable custom, for a cocktail.

Kendrick Evans was there. Paxter disliked Kendrick Evans, who was his only serious rival for the "the" rank. Kendrick Evans was telling a story.

"He was clingin' to it—positively clingin'. Quite pathetic, Hallo, Pax. Have one on me."

Their business rivalry did not extend this far. "Thanks, Ken., make it a bronze."

"Two bronzes, chum," said Kendrick Evans to the knight of the white apron. Then, resuming his story, he went on: "Yes, clingin' to it."

"Who was clinging to what?" inquired Mr. Paxter.

"Gee, must I go over the spell again?"

"If it's worth hearing."

"It is."

"If you don't mind, then."

"Well, there was some sort of a dago down in the East End—forget his name—put in a lot of effects to raise money—just junk, of course. Except one thing. And that—pardon, do you know Mr. Romford?"

"Mr. Romford is a business acquaintance," said Paxter, beaming on the man from Ontario, who was glowering into a G. and W. and ginger-ale.

"As I was sayin', it was all junk except one thing. That was a picture."

"That all?"

"All? Listen here. He took it to the junk store man, an' just as the junker had his hands on it, he drew back. 'Hallo,' says the junker, 'changed your mind?' 'Me no sell,'