POOR DOCUMENT

MC 2033

THE MESHES OF MISCHANCE

BY GILBERT WINTLE

A Great Human Interest Serial Filled With Action Now Published for the First Time

CHAPTER XV—(Continued)

"You boys got ter git up! that is, if you want any breakfast. Come, you ladies, don't you want to give the children some grub? Only got an hour to do it in. Kitchen car don't come on till after Ottawa! Come along, please" yelled the breakman, a sort of first lieutenant to the conductor, as he walked through the train.

Horace and Ned were up and getting a wash in less than no time, and, with a young Scotchman, called McAllister, sallied out to find where breakfast was to be obtained.

"Eh! mon," said the latter, as he gazed round in admiration, "but did ever ye see the like o' this for a railway station. 'Tis liker to a sessions hoose!"

Young Sandy McAllister's astonishment was natural enough, for the Windsor Station at Montreal is one of the sights of Canada, and many of its features might be copied with advantage by English railways. However, it was not the spacious waiting-rooms, with their comfortably cushioned seats, well chosen literature, and courteous attendants, nor the refreshment department, nor the smoking-room, that caused his outburst of admiration; for these are all for first-class passengers, and he did not see them. It was the station itself, one great enclosed public waiting-room, spacious, lofty, beautifully decorated, and always kept scrupulously clean. In winter it is heated to a comfortable temperature by means of hot-water pipes. Through this they passed, and then, descending a great central stair, came to a place where a comfortable hot breakfast was ready for those who chose to partake thereof on payment, as at Quebec, of twenty-five cents. This was proclaimed by a peculiarly tersely worded notice:—

"FULL MEAL 25 CTS."

"Eh! sirs," said young McAllister, gravely, having read the notice, and elicited by question that it really meant just what it said, namely that, for a payment of one shilling, each passenger might eat all the beef, ham and eggs, bread-and-butter, and marmalade, and drink all the tea and coffee he could stow away before the train left. "Eh! sirs, ah'm thinkin' that this same is a grrand opportuneety. In an 'oor ah can——"

"Eat enough to last till supper time. Bravo, Sandy!" laughed Ned, cutting him short. "Wydnham, I bet two to one on Sandy as the first of us three in the millionaire stakes. What do you say?"

"I say he'll beat you, if you waste your time talking when you might be eating," replied Horace. "Coffee? yes, please."

Certain it is that the railway made no large fortune out of contracting to "grub" any one of the three that morning. But, as for not needing a mid-day meal, that was absurd! They had reckoned without the Canadian air.

Passing back through the big station, Horace noticed a bookstall in one corner, and ran over and invested a penny in a copy of the Montreal Gazette. Then, as there was still ten minutes before the train would start, they went to the big main entrance and looked out across Dominion Square at the great city of Montreal, the seaport of Canada, and perhaps to be one day the greatest commercial centre of the whole British Empire.

"By Jove! this is a fine city," said Ned, enthusiastically. "If we weren't in such a hurry, I should like to stay and see it."

"We'll do that in a year or two, never fear!" replied Horace. "But you are right, it is a fine city. Look at that cathedral!"

"And that big building at the corner," said Ned.

"And the way the electric cars are crowded," rejoined Horace. "Montreal may be big, but she's not big and sleepy, that's evident. Come on, Ned; come on, Sandy; if we stay here any longer we shall miss the train, and that would never do."

The three companions were back in their train in good time and as soon as the last of the emigrants had been shepherded in by the conductor and a big station policeman the engine bell sounded, and she pulled out.

Horace had the newspaper he had bought on his knees, but it was some time before he looked at it. The scenery was too interesting. At last, after passing over the Vaudreuil Bridge, nearly an hour after leaving Montreal, came a long wait on a siding, and Horace turned from the window, and bethought him of his Gazette.

He glanced first at the general foreign news, arranged much like an English paper, saw nothing fresh of much interest in the political world, then turned to the leaders. After reading the first, he read the second, then the third, and, as it chanced, they were all on matters connected with Imperial politics, foreign relations, and the like.

"Why, Ned!" he exclaimed, as he laid the paper down for a few minutes, "this is home, these leaders are British leaders; Canada is as much a part of England as Scotland is."

"A part of the Empire," corrected Ned. "I expect in a year or two you and I will be as keen as anything to insist that it is England that belongs to Canada, not Canada to England, and so on. But what did you expect to find, the Canadians Yankees?"

"No—of course, if I had thought, I knew really that they were just as British as ourselves; but it was coming all at once like that, that took me aback. I think, Ned, that we Britishers don't travel half enough in our own Empire."

"Oh! well, that will right itself all right with time," replied Ned, as he took up the paper. "It is righting itself now, according to this, listen—

"Trans-continental Traffic on the C. P. R.

"General Manager MacNicoll, in an interview accorded to one of our reporters yesterday, states that the British tourist traffic across Canada, both to and from the Far East, is larger again than last year, when, it will be remembered, it reached a figure at the time considered phenomenally high."

Ned read on for a bit, giving half the paper to McAllister. The latter read, as he did everything else, with great deliberation, folding the paper carefully; then, having formed his mouth into an expression of appropriate grimness, began the task of mastering its contents, in regular order, namely, from the top of the first column to the bottom of the last, then over the page, and the same again; he missed nothing, but took it all, gravely, as it came, advertisements and all.

This was perhaps the one and only time in his life that Alexander McAllister (or so far let himself forget the dignity and seriousness of this occupation of reading the paper as to interrupt it with an exclamation.

Both Horace and Ned had chaffed the young Scotchman on the passage out on the preternatural earnestness with which he always treated the written word, from a page of the Bible to a paragraph in Tit-Bits; and Ned, seeing him drop the paper, and hearing his ejaculation of "Weel! weel!" was going to chaff him now, but the joke died on his lips, for looking up, he saw, to his intense astonishment, that young Sandy's serious, honest eyes were filled with tears.

"Why, Sandy, man, whatever is the trouble?" he asked.

"It's here in the paper, ma puir Uncle Sandy's deed. Eh! mon, but he was all the kin I had, and the best of men. Eh! but 'tis sair bad news to greet me in a strange land!"

"I din't know you had an uncle in Canada, Sandy?" said Horace.

"He wasna in Canada," said Sandy. "He was in London. In London, foully murdered, while we were setting sail from Liverpool."

He handed Horace the paper, showing him the paragraph. This is what the latter read; and, as he read, his face expressed, if possible, even more surprise and indignation than had Sandy's.—

"Mail advices now to hand give several extra details concerning the great Anglo-Ruritanian Bank robbery, the sensational crime which is now the talk of all London. As usual in these cases, the burglars' plans seemed to have been carefully laid, and, unfortunately in this instance, only too successful. The opinion of the police is that the watchman, Alexander McAllister, found dead in the passage, was poisoned by some preparation of chloral, probably administered in a glass of liquor. The case, however, still presents many unexplained, mysterious points. For instance, the theory, at first current, that the clerk Green, who sleeps over the bank, and was found stabbed to death in his bedroom, had been awakened by the noise made by the desperadoes, and then despatched while trying to summon assistance, falls to the ground; Green was fully dressed and his bed, though ruffled, had evidently not been slept in. As usual, the police are said to have a clue; but whether this means anything more than the customary official optimism time only can show. It is understood that suspicion points to a certain clerk, who left the bank on the evening of the night of the robbery."

"Good heavens!" said Horace to himself, "surely they cannot think that I have anything to do with it? If they do, I must go right back to England at once and settle the matter. An alibi will not be hard to prove, thanks to old Pawlet's idea of coming to see us off."

Horace let the paper drop, folded on his knee, and stared blankly at his companions. Sandy put his evident consternation down to horror at the crime. Ned Gascoigne, who had not seen the article, wondered what had happened. He reached over for the paper, and asked Sandy to point out the place, but the latter, while feverishly handling it, suddenly stopped, crying eagerly—

"They've got him! See here."

"Where?" cried Horace. "Ah! I see, a telegram dated eight days later." He read:—

"ANGLO-RURITANIAN ROBBERY.
"London, June 30th.

"The clerk Hocking was arrested today. In trying to escape he was run over by a heavy van, receiving mortal injuries, and dying within an hour of his capture. He made a full confession, implicating his accomplice, whose early capture is now confidently expected."

This telegram from a news agency, was, of course, only one of the many versions and amplifications into which Hocking's few muttered words, more seen than heard by the Evening Trumpet reporter, had quickly developed. This is what passes for "news" manufactured in the twentieth century!

Horace gave a sigh of relief. So it was Hocking; he remembered now that Hocking had been leaving that day. And Hocking had robbed the bank, robbed it to a big amount, apparently, judging from the fact that the news was considered important enough to be telegraphed over the world. Yet how? Hocking was a mere junior, and had no access to the strong room. He must try to get some back papers at Ottawa and find out. He was nearly forgetting poor Sandy and his trouble, till a glance at the latter's tear-stained face recalled them.

"Sandy," he said, "I knew your uncle, knew him well; I was clerk in that bank myself, and saw him every day, and a splendid old fellow he was. It is terrible for you; but he died at his post like a soldier, and that is just what he would have wished."

"And did you know this skunk that killed him?" asked Ned, who had now read the account.

"Yes; but not well. I did not like him; I don't think anyone did."

"I'll no miscall him now," Sandy, gravely; "he's deed an' gone to meet a higher Judge. But if I ever get ma hons on th' lug o' th' bauguard wha helped him——!" and he paused, but his silence was impressive.

"Never fear, Sandy," said Ned. "It says here that they are on his track; they'll get him sure enough."

But the young Scotchman remained very quiet and serious all that day.

CHAPTER XVI.

Ned and Horace do a Little "Light Work."

It is a week after the events recorded in the last chapter. The C. P. R. has whirled our friends through the well settled parts of the Province of Ontario to Manitoba, in old days considered the end of the world by people in England, and even by some in Montreal—now known to be only the centre of Canada. Still Canada is vast enough for even Manitoba to have lots of room left, and already Horace can laugh at the ideas of people who talk of Manitoba being full up. Full up, indeed! he puts down his axe for a moment and looks over the prairie, and sees before him—nothing but vast green expanse. No, England may send her sons to Manitoba, Assinoboia, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, for a good many tens of years yet. They will take a good deal of filling up, and ask for nothing better.

On arrival of the train at Winnipeg there had been a general rush to the Government Employment Agency. Horace had got a note from the immigration agent at Quebec, which he had presented. After one night at Winnipeg, the three companions had been forwarded a little further west by rail and deposited at a local "flag" station, just a few yards of platform and a box, with one door and one window, where the lamps were kept, and, in winter, a stove was lit. There was an "agent" in charge, but he only attended twice a day, and nothing was to be seen of him now. As the rear car of the train which had brought them gradually disappeared in the distance and left them there in the middle of the prairie, Horace, Ned, and Sandy felt about as lonely as they had ever done in their lives.

"He ought to have sent to meet us," said Ned, indignantly.

"Yes, he certainly ought to have sent the brougham," said Horace, grimly. "I tell you, Ned, we are laborers, and you and I are probably going to be pretty poor laborers at that—at first, I mean and we've got to remember it, or we shall be getting ourselves disliked. Sandy, what do you advise?"

"That we take what we can carry, and leave the rest of the gear in this little station-hoose. Maybe Mister Root 'll give us a wagon."

"Sandy's right. Come on, Ned, hoick something up on your shoulder, and then, quick march! I don't know about you fellows, but by the time I have done the ten miles I shall be just about ready for dinner."

The Mr. Root, of whom Sandy had spoken, was their boss. They had not seen him, but understood from the immigration agent at Winnipeg that he was one of the most substantial farmers and prominent men in the district. He was a personal friend of the agent's, and the latter had power to arrange the hiring on his behalf. Sandy, who was a hardy young Scotchman, from a country district in the Highlands, was engaged at the regular rate of pay in the district, a dollar a day, with extra during harvest. Wyndham and Gascoigne were to come and agree to do their best in any work which they might be set to, in return for board and lodging. This arrangement to last till the beginning of winter.

So to Mr. Root, at Church Farm, which they knew from the agent to be about ten miles along a prairie road, straight north from the track, our friends trudged.

If the welcome which greeted them was pretty rough, it was at all events hearty. In the afternoon they took a haycart and a superannuated old horse, and fetched their luggage. The next day Sunday was put to regular farm work, and Ned and Horace to fencing, which, as Mr. Root put it, was "light work, that any fool could do!"

"If that was light work," said Horace, as he and Ned were turning in after the first day's real hard manual labor that either of them had ever done in his life, "I wonder what hard work is like? Well, we've just got to stick it out, and we shall find it easier each day, I expect. Hi! wake up!"

Ned had dropped asleep while taking off his second boot.

Getting up at six next morning, they felt as if they had been beaten with sticks.

To dress and wash was the work of a few minutes; then it was out into the yard to load a waggon with cedar posts, ready to start fencing directly after breakfast, which was at seven.

"I hope you chaps will finish that paddock today," said Mr. Root, as they sat down to that meal; "because I want to put the bull in tomorrow."

Horace looked rather blank at this, and so did Ned, for the paddock in question would have been considered a pretty big field in England, and all they had done so far towards fencing it was to cut posts and fillers, and mark out the places where the holes were to be dug. However, a cheerful "Father don't mean it, he's just stringing," from Miss Sally Root, served to reassure them.

"Now, Ned," said Horace, as they went out, "we'll just show that old boy what we are made of. He mustn't be allowed to make game of us for nothing. Half my stiffness is worked off already."

"So is mine," replied Ned. "I feel just like digging."

So, their flannel shirts rolled up to their elbows and big straw hats on their heads, they tackled the job like men. First, they took the waggon all round the line of the fence, and dropped a cedar post at each peg. Then, having turned the horse and wagon over to Sandy, who wanted it for some other purpose, they set to work to dig three-foot fence holes.

"Wy-n-d-h-a-m!" came Miss Sally's voice, just as they were beginning to break turf, "here's a pail of water, you can chip yourself off a lump of ice at the icehouse. To drink, you know," she said, as she disappeared into the kitchen.

Horace would never have thought of this; but, by the time they had finished digging a three-foot hole apiece, the perspiration was fairly pouring out, and before knock-off time, the pail was empty, yet they were both thirsty.

"You chaps don't want to go an' kill yerselves first go off," said Mr. Root at supper that evening. "Remember you're only getting your grub, an' I don't expect any wonders from you in return for that. Keep at it slow an' steady, that's all I ask."

The party that assembled round the big table was constituted as follows: Mr. Root, who, as I have already said, was a well-to-do farmer, in fact quite a rich man for those parts, being also churchwarden, magistrate, and local magnate generally. He was to look at more like a Scotch gentleman farmer than any other type which an English reader would know. There was no Scotch blood, however, in Mr. Root, who spoke like a man of Essex—except that he had all his h's. By the way, it is a curious fact that in Canada almost every English country dialect is to be met with, distinct and recognisable, yet different, somehow, from the English form.

Mrs. Root was a middle-aged lady, who did not talk much; but, as Ned said, was a "oner" to cook. Her daughter, Miss Sally, a pretty girl of about seventeen, great at choir practice and regular, though gigglesome, at the parish sewing circle, used to complain that mother never gave her half a show in the kitchen.

"The fellow that gets me 'll have to take it out in beauty," she would declare, coquettishly; "I shan't be any good to keep house for him, that's a fact."

There were two sons, but neither was then at home; the elder, John, having left that spring to commence a farm of his own in the Territories, and his brother Lawrence, being bitten with the gold fever, had gone to the Klondyke. Before the arrival of our three adventurers there had been two Gallician laborers at the farm, but these had now gone to take up land on their own account; and, for a week previously, Mr. Root had been getting on as best he could, with the aid of a Barnardo boy, Tom Peters by name, and any help that he could hire casually in the neighborhood. So that our three friends, notwithstanding that two of them were but the greenest of green hands, were a very welcome addition to the working force at Church Farm.

Besides the Barnardo boy, there was an Irish girl, from some similar institution, who was always called Biddy. Her real name was Mary Rourke.

There was a good deal of chaff to be encountered that evening by our tired-out friends. Miss Sally asked if they felt like a dance that night; and Mr. Root, when Ned nearly dropped asleep over his first pipe, asked him if he wouldn't care for a wrestling match? Horace did actually drop asleep over his pipe, but woke up to cuff Tom Peters, who was having great fun dropping cockroaches down the back of his neck. By nine o'clock they were both in bed, sleeping as they had not slept since they were children.

However, a week of fencing made a good showing on the farm, and made new men of our friends. How should it have been otherwise? Being of good constitution to start with, the hard, open air life, in the best climate in the world, could no more fail of bringing health, strength, and hardiness, than town life, with bad air and bad food, can fail of bringing weakness and disease. For there is one thing about a Canadian's life which merits to be better known than it is at present, he lives hard, but he always lives well. Meat three times a day, homemade bread, butter and cheese, and homegrown fruit, good tea and coffee and milk, and all you want of it. And talking of this naturally brings up an incident which occurred the first Sunday after our friends' arrival; the hero of it, Tom Peters.

The latter was a most curious character. Originally a London street arab, one of Dr. Barnardo's men had found him dossing under the Adelphi arches. This was when he was about eight. Two years in one of the Doctor's English homes had taught him reading and writing, his former education on the streets had taught him sharpness; now, with his wits widened by travel, there was not very much, as the Roots observed, that anyone could teach Tom Peters. However, to come to the incident.

The parson, who served four churches, in a parish some twenty miles square, had given Matins at that of which Mr. Root was warden, and had come to Church Farm to dinner. When the cloth had been cleared away, Master Tom was despatched to Sunday school, where the Rev. Mr. Hare would soon have to follow, but stopped first to smoke a pipe with the family.

"Do you—puff—puff—know, Mr. Root," he said as he held the match, "I've got—puff—a complaint against you to—puff—puff—investigate?"

At this Mr. Root turned round in his chair, and said, with some heat—

"Is it them darned candlesticks again? Because, if it is, I——"

This was a reference to an old parish feud. And the reader is assured that "high" and "low," "ritualism," and similar questions, can be, and often are, just as burning in a little Canadian country parish as in the Diocese of London. In this case there was a terrible story of scandalous hints, and worse insinuations, and tempers waxing hot, at a certain vestry meeting over the mysterious disappearance of a pair of silver candlesticks, presented by a devout lady, and which for the space of one week—and one week only—had adorned the Communion Table. A rival parish magnate had so far forgotten himself as to mutter quite audibly, when Mr. Root got up to move the adoption of the last report—

"Who stole the candlesticks?"

And a personal combat had nearly ensued!

Mr. Root was low church.

"No, no, no, no!" said Mr. Hare. "I am glad to say that I have heard nothing more about the candlesticks, and I hope to goodness we are done with them. This is quite a different matter. Young Tom has been writing to the Barnardo people, and his letter has been forwarded to me, with a request that I reprove him, or get you to. Here it is:—

"Honnured Sir,—Wiv respec to mi treetment hiham tretted verry 'ard 'ave to werk hurli an' laite an' get beesli turki to heat hevery meer.

Yours respecli,
"TOM PETERS."

"Well, I'm jiggered, the young varmint!" said Mr. Root, laughing, as he laid down his spectacles. "Mother, we must give this to Sally to paste in her scrap-book."

"There is something else, now we are on the subject of Tom," said Mr. Hare. "You will be glad to know that, although he likes to make himself important by lodging complaints at head-quarters, he gives you a very good character in the neighborhood.

"That's a comfort, anyway."

"Yes, it is very nice of him, no doubt; I am only afraid that it may come expensive."

"Expensive?"

"Yes," said Mr. Hare. "Does Tom ever wash up the crockery, for instance?"

"We—ll, I dunno—does he, mother?"

"Oh, lor! yes," said Mrs. Root, "he does a little of everything, specially when he ain't wanted to."

"I thought so. Now listen to what I heard him confiding to my youngster when you sent him over on a message the other day. I was in the study writing you a note, and the boys were just under the window. My Willie was showing off his new pup, and, as Tom had nothing with him to show off in return, he had to take it out in bragging. He said that he was a "oner" to smash things, only the day before, he said, he had broken a big dish worth fifty cents, and another, still bigger, worth a whole dollar."

"It ain't quite as bad as that," put in Mrs. Root, "but he do break a lot."

"And you don't do anything to him, to impress on him that he must be more careful?"

"No, no," said Mr. Root; "he's a good lad at heart, and he don't need any of that. Not but what he sometimes gets a clout o' th' side o' th' head," he added, on second thought, "when he just asks for it, you know."

"H'm," said Mr. Hare, meditatively; "my boy, knowing what would happen if he went in for breakages on that scale, asked Tom what Mr. Root had to say about it?"

"'Him!' Tom replied, grandly; 'he don't say nothing at all, he's too much of a gentleman!'"

"Well, I'm jiggered!"

CHAPTER XVII.

The World is Small.

To say that Horace and Ned found everything plain sailing in their new life would be far from true. Not only were there many unpleasant things to put up with, but the mere continued physical strain of hard work day after day, with never a let up but on Sunday, was pretty hard in itself. But they stuck to it doggedly, and, when the great strain of harvest came, they were ready to face the work with the best.

Then, indeed, it was "up early and late to bed," with no rest for anyone, and no room for drones in the hive. After harvest came the threshing; and this was almost as big an affair as the harvest. When threshing was at an end, Mr. Root presented each of our friends with a twenty dollar note.

"After the way you boys have worked," he said, "I'd be the meanest man in Manitoba if I didn't give you something besides your board. And I tell you what," he added, "as much of the winter as you like to spend at Church Farm, we'll board you for two dollars a week."

But a better offer came even than that; for, when the extra harvest hands, of whom Mr. Root had had two from the province of Quebec, were dismissed, and profits for the year had been calculated, Mr. and Mrs. Root determined to utilise what was left of an unusually fine fall to run up a new barn and cattle stable. To get this roofed over before winter closed in would take them all they could do. And for the time it would be building, he offered Horace and Gascoigne their board and a dollar a day. This was promotion, indeed, they were getting as much now as Sandy! Not only that, but it was the very experience that they needed; for, when they took up land in the spring, they would have to build their houses.

And so Ned and Gascoigne knew the joy of putting up a frame building with their own hands—and it is a joy, as anyone who has ever done it can testify. What was not quite so joyful was their experience shingling the roof. In summer, shingling is the nicest, neatest, cleanest work that there is. But autumn was now getting on fast, and shingling in the cold is terrible work. Snow flurries were coming occasionally before the roof was finished, and all the shinglers, Mr. Root included, were wearing fur caps and gloves. However, the ridgepiece once on, the outside work was over. A big stove was put in the centre, and the work of fitting up the inside could now go on leisurely, if necessary all winter.

With winter in Canada comes gaiety, long drives to neighboring farms, to "bees" and dances, church socials, and, sometimes, lectures, which latter, perhaps, hardly come under the head of gaiety. One moonlight night, Horace and Ned were jogging home in a box-sleigh from a big husking bee and dance at a house about ten miles from Church Farm. Ned said—

"To think that it is only about four months since we were walking Piccadilly together; and here we are, a couple of sun-tanned, fur-capped ruffians. We have forgotten all about aristocracy, we have forgotten all about Society, we——"

"Society, if you like, Ned," interrupted Horace; "but as for aristocracy, I differ; we are doing our duty as aristocrats today more than we ever did in our lives before."

"Don't follow."

"Don't you? Well, what is an aristocrat? An aristocrat is either a leader—or nothing. Now what is the great movement today? Colonial expansion. An aristocracy that stays out of that or of any other great movement of the race, is a played-out aristocracy, it has outlived its use. I tell you, Ned, that either the British aristocracy must chuck its lackadaisical ways and decide to be the leader, not just the encourager, but the real leader of this movement, or it must go under. Why even on the humble scale things are at present, which better represents the old feudal traditions, the Duke of Ditchwater, who keeps a house full of servants, and considers them a different race from himself, or Mr. Root, who sits at the head of his table, and whom we all look up to and respect?"

Ned was silent. After some minutes, Horace said—

"What are you so quiet about? Was my social tirade too much for you? You needn't be afraid, I've finished."

"No, I agree with you, though it didn't strike me that way at first, I admit. Talking about Piccadilly, and thinking about the dance this evening, made me think of that dance we went to at Ealing. What nice people those were."

"Not cured yet?" said Horace, laughing. "Why, Ned, I believe you were really and truly hard hit that night. But, if they were nice folk at Ealing, there are just as nice in Manitoba, Miss Root, for instance."

"Miss Sally isn't people."

"And was it people you were thinking of—or Miss Maude?"

"Oh! go to the devil!—at least, that is, in a Pickwickian sense. But I would like to see Miss Maude Smith again for all that."

"Hi! you in the sleigh, sir! Do you want all the road? Because if you do, say so, and I'll turn out into the prairie."

The above remonstrance, coming on them suddenly, uttered as it was in a bluff, hearty, hail-the-main-topmast sort of voice, caused Horace, who was supposed to be driving, to pay attention to the horse, who was nearly nose to nose with another, coming, also with a sleigh, from the opposite direction. Neither sleigh had bells, hence what might very easily have been a collision.

Keep to the right is the rule of the road in Canada, so as the two sleighs passed each other Ned was brought almost elbow to elbow with a lady passenger in the other. Just at the same moment she held up a lantern, presumably to see that the runners were clear, but incidentally it had the effect of showing her own features as plainly as daylight. To all appearances it had the further effect of sending Ned suddenly distraught. At least, to judge by his behaviour.

"Talk of the devil—no I don't mean that! Stop, Wyndham!"

And, as Horace did not stop quickly enough, he seized the reins and nearly brought about the collision after all. At the same time jumping to the ground, and crying, or rather gasping, "Miss Smith!"

Marvellous, incredible, preposterous, passing belief, as it seemed, it was Miss Smith! Maude Smith, and her brother Arthur! The latter's first instinct was, not unnaturally, to shorten his hold on the whip. However, explanations and recognition soon put his fears to rest. Horace and Ned learned that the Smiths had been some time in Winnipeg, and had just bought a farm some miles to the north of Mr. Root's. Further details, in the interest of their respective horses, to say nothing of their own night's rest, had to be postponed. So, with a promise that Ned and Horace should go over that afternoon—for it was well on in the small hours of the morning—they separated. Ned Gascoigne, for the rest of the way home to Church Farm, felt that he was floating on air.

Mr. Root willingly let them take the box-sleigh again, and another horse, and, directly after dinner, they started. Unknown to himself, Ned was the object of much speculation on the part of Tom Peters.

"Hit's has true has hi stand 'ere, Miss Sally," said the latter as the sleigh drove off. "'Ee took out three diff'rent neckties, hand put 'em hon one hawfter t'other, before 'ee could settle on which 'ee liked best. Sick'ning! that' wots hi calls it. That's it; box my ears, becos I tries to hintr'est yer! That's just the sort o' hencouragement I get's 'ere. Hi shall write to the 'ome, you see hif I don't"

Theberton Farm, where the Smiths were installed, had been originally the property of a young gentleman, who came from England, with a good deal of money, an idea that he would like farming, and a roving disposition. Points one and two had resulted in his building what, for the Canadian north-west, was a really very substantial and comfortable homestead. Point three, however, had soon sent him off, further west, to take up a mine in British Columbia. The mine had proved a success, the farm was for sale, and the Smiths had bought it. Of course old Mr. Smith would no more ever learn farming at his time of life than Mrs. Smith would learn dairying; but they would play at doing so, and their children would do so in reality. Ferdinand, the doctor, was already "taking hold" with all a scientific man's thoroughness. Arthur, having seen the family safely started on its new career, would shortly go back to the sea; but Manitoba was now his home.

"To think of us meeting you here, Wyndham!" said old Mr. Smith, as he sat in his shirt-sleeves, smoking his pipe, in the kitchen after supper, Horace opposite, Mrs. Smith and the other Smiths scattered about the room promiscuously, all but Maude, who had disappeared with Ned to inspect the dairy. There was not the slightest reason for the shirt-sleeves, for old Mr. Smith never did more than potter about the place, nor for the kitchen, for the house contained a nice big library; but Mr. Smith thought it looked more Colonial so.

"So that was what you were up to, when you gave us the slip so suddenly at the old bank. Of course I knew it was impossible; but, really, there were people who thought, that is——" and Mr. Smith, who had become first very grave, then visibly embarrassed, stopped short.

Horace wondered what could be the matter. Suddenly he remembered the telegram, and the mail report, which he had seen in the Montreal Gazette. Then he understood.

"Tell me, Mr. Smith," he said, "about this robbery. I saw something about it at Montreal; but, somehow, things have seemed to move so quickly since, that I have hardly given it another thought. It seems that it was Hocking?"

"Hocking and an accomplice," said Mr. Smith. "It was quite clear that Hocking did not do it alone."

"Mr. Hocking?" said Maude, who came in at this moment. "One oughtn't to say anything bad about people who are dead, so I won't. But don't you remember how I always thought he was horried, and you told me I was silly. See what comes of not trusting a woman's intuition, dad!"

"But really, my dear," replied Mr. Smith, "if everyone you said was horrid was therefore necessarily a criminal——"

"What then?"

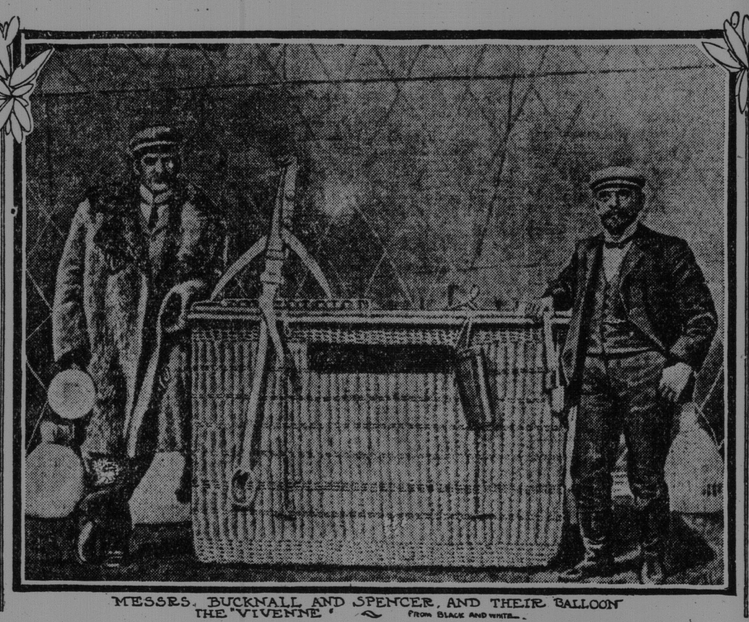
"We should have to enlarge the jails."

"Yes, I know I call lots of people horrid. You're horrid now, dad. But Mr. Hocking was really horrid. That's different."

"He had a friend whom you didn't find so very horrid, Maudie," here put in her sailor brother; "that chap—what was his name? Canning, wasn't it, I mean. But, wait a minute, didn't he sprain his ankle or something? If he did, he couldn't dance any more, so I suppose he was horrid too. By—Jove!"

(To be continued.)

Daring Aeronauts Who Sailed from London to Switzerland



MESSRS. BUCKNALL AND SPENCER, AND THEIR BALLOON "THE VIVIENNE." FROM BLACK AND WHITE.

London, Dec. 2—Two aeronauts, Mr. Percival Spencer and Mr. Leslie Bucknall, who started from Wandsworth, a suburb of London, Tuesday afternoon in a balloon, the Vivienne IV., landed at daybreak Wednesday at Vevey, on the Lake of Geneva, Switzerland, accomplishing the notable journey of 420 miles in sixteen hours. The balloon has a capacity of 75,000 feet of gas.

Mr. Percival Spencer has been long identified with experimental aeronautics and is a member of a family whose name frequently occurs in the annals of the sport. His father, Charles Green Spencer, was an enthusiastic aeronaut and did much to promote the development of the balloon.

His brother, Stanley Spencer, who died in January of this year, made his first ascension from the Crystal Palace when only eight years old.

This adventurous young man, accompanied by Mr. Leslie Bucknall, won the balloon race held at Liege, in September, 1905.

His trip was one of the most extraordinary that had been made up to that time, he having attained the altitude of three miles, crossed Belgium and a part of Germany. The balloon used on that occasion was the Vivienne III. Mr. Stanley Spencer also made a number of successful flights in an air ship of his own devising.

During the years 1898 and 1899 Mr. Percival Spencer made a number of balloon trips across the English Channel, starting from the Crystal Palace. The most noteworthy of these was undertaken in December, 1898, in company with Mr. H. Laurence Swinburne, an English journalist. Mr. Spencer has designed and constructed a number of balloons and is interested in the solution of the airship problem.

"THE SELF-EXILED"

The poem The Self Exiled was written by Walter C. Smith. It may be found in vol. iv., of The World's Best Poetry.

There came a soul to the gate of Heaven,
Gliding slow—
A soul that was ransom'd and forgiven,
And white as snow;
And the angels all were silent.

A mystic light beamed from the face
Of the radiant maid,
But there also lay on its tender grace
A mystic shade:
And the angels all were silent.

As sunlit clouds by a zephyr borne
Seem not to stir,
So to the golden gates of morn
They carried her;
And the angels all were silent.

"Now open the gate and let her in,
And fling it wide,
For she has been cleansed from stain of sin,"
St. Peter cried;
And the angels all were silent.

"Though I am cleansed from stain of sin,"
She answered low,
"I came not hither to enter in,
Nor may I go;"
And the angels all were silent.

"I come," she said, "to the pearly door,
To see the throne
Where sits the Lamb on the sapphire floor,
With God alone;"
And the angels all were silent.

"I come to hear the new song they sing
To him that died,
And note where the healing waters spring
From his pierced side;"
And the angels all were silent.

"But I may not enter there," she said,
"For I must go
Across the gulf where the guilty dead
Lie in their woe;"
And the angels all were silent.

"If I enter Heaven I may not pass
To where they be,
Through the wall of their bitter pain, alas!
Tormenteth me;"
And the angels all were silent.

"If I enter Heaven I may not speak
My soul's desire,
For them that are lying distraught and
In flaming fire;"
And the angels all were silent.

"I had a brother, and also another
Whom I loved well;
What if, in anguish, they curse each other
In the depths of hell?"
And the angels all were silent.

"How could I touch the golden harps,
When all my praise
Would be so wrought with grief-full warps
Of their sad days?"
And the angels all were silent.

"How love the loved who are sorrowing
And yet be glad?
How sing the songs ye are fain to sing,
While I am sad?"
And the angels all were silent.

"Oh, clear as glass is the golden street
Of the city fair,
And the tree of life it maketh sweet
The lightsome air;"
And the angels all were silent.

"And the white-robed saints with their robes and palms
Are good to see,
And, oh, so grand are the sounding psalms!
But not for me;"
And the angels all were silent.

"I come where there is no night," she said,
"To go away,
And help, if I yet may help the dead
That have no day."
And the angels all were silent.

St. Peter he turned the keys about,
And answered grim:
"Can you love the Lord, and abide without,
Afar from him?"
And the angels all were silent.

"Can you love the Lord, who died for you,
And leave the place
Where his glory is all disclosed to view,
And tender grace?"
And the angels all were silent.

"They go not out who come in here;
It were not meet;
Nothing they lack, for he is here,
And bliss complete."
And the angels all were silent.

"Should I be nearer Christ," she said,
"By pitying less
The sinful living or woful dead
In their helplessness?"
And the angels all were silent.

"Should I be liker Christ were I
To love no more
The loved who in their anguish lie
Outside the door?"
And the angels all were silent.

"Did he not hang on the cursed tree,
And bear its shame,
And clasp to his heart, for love of me,
My guilt and blame?"
And the angels all were silent.

"Should I be liker, nearer him,
Forgetting this,
Singing all day with the seraphim,
In selfish bliss?"
And the angels all were silent.

The Lord himself stood by the gate,
And heard her speak
Those tender words compassionate—
Gentle and meek;
And the angels all were silent.

Now, pity is the touch of God
In human hearts,
And from that way he ever trod
He ne'er departs;
And the angels all were silent.

And he said, "Now will I go with you,
Dear child of love,
I am weary of all this glory, too,
In Heaven above;"
And the angels all were silent.

"We will go seek and save the lost,
If they will hear.
They who are worst, but need me most,
And all are dear;"
And the angels were not silent.