

Do you find yourself

unable to sleep well? Are you irritated by trifles? Do small troubles look big to you? Do you start at sudden noises? Are you unable to concentrate long on any one thing?

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Business Is Business

By FREDERICK HART

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"I can't figure what's happening in R. & X.," said Philip Gibney, senior partner of Gibney & Hadman, brokers. "We can't seem to get a majority of stock; some one's holding out on us. Have you had our tracers on the job?"

"I should say I have!" Roger Hadman's voice was weary. "For the past three months Jevons and Harrod have been on the road. They've combed the country, nearly; but they can't account for the three thousand shares we need. That block—"

"But surely there's a record of its original sale!" snapped Gibney.

"Of course! We traced it to a little town in Pennsylvania—a funny old chap with a chin-whisker—farmer—held the whole block. Jevons got wind of it and flew down to get it at any price, but he was too late. Somebody beat him to it by less than three hours. The old duffer didn't know who it was—"

—simply said a man came along and offered him twice what the stock was worth, and he sold for spot cash. Jevons even went so far as to put detectives on the job; but they couldn't get any trace except that the fellow was slim and good-looking, wore a light suit, and bought a ticket for Philadelphia at the local station. The train went right up in air then, and there's absolutely no further trace."

"Well—" Gibney's voice was thoughtful. "I wonder if whoever bought it is holding out for a big price? He must know what we're planning, and what control of R. & X. will mean to us. I suppose he thinks he can get whatever price he asks."

"The worst of it is that he's pretty nearly right, at that," rejoined Hadman. "When our deal comes off it's absolutely necessary to have the control, and we can't have it without those three thousand shares, and this fellow knows it—and that's all there is to it. We pay."

"We do, I suppose—and yet—" "And yet—what?"

"It strikes me as being rather queer that this chap, whoever he is, hasn't tried to make a dicker. We are going to pull our stunt at the end of the week, and he must know that we want the stock as soon as we can get it. He has inside information, that's sure."

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When the result would naturally be that he would come around here and point his block of stock at our heads and say 'Stand and deliver!' But he hasn't made a move—and today's Wednesday. I don't understand it."

Gibney was a sadly worried man when he went home that night, and his pretty wife, who was waiting for him with her usual smile, received a scanty greeting. During the evening meal she tried to make conversation, but failed dismally. Once she asked what was worrying him.

"Nothing you'd understand," replied Gibney shortly. Alice opened her mouth as though to reply, but thought better of it and confined her attentions to the salad. The evening passed stately for both.

Next morning, the day before Gibney & Hadman's big coup was slated to come off, Gibney was informed by the girl at the door that a young man wanted to see him. On inquiring his business, he was informed that the visitor would make no statement, merely saying that he wanted to see the head of the firm at once. Gibney told the girl to show him in, and called Hadman from his office.

"Dollars to collar-buttons it's the chap with the R. & X. stock, Jim," he said. "I want you here—we'll meet him together. Maybe the two of us can get reasonable figures out of him. But oh, how he has us."

The man who entered the office seemed hardly more than a boy. He was dressed in a light-colored suit, and wore a derby hat which he did not remove. A white bandage covered most of his right cheek and curved well under the chin.

"Good morning, gentlemen," he said in a voice that betrayed a cold in the head. "I'm sorry to come around looking such a wreck, but the fact is I've met with an accident—automobile—and I'm a little smashed as to the face." A one-sided grin accompanied this information. "The doctor tells me to keep my hat on, too. And now, if you've quite done staring at the bandage and things, we might as well get down to business. I have here—"

he tapped his breast-pocket—"a block of three thousand shares of R. & X. stock, which represents the balance of power—the amount needed for control of the road. You want it—I have it. What do you say?"

"You young scoundrel!" roared Hadman. "This is blackmail!"

"Hardly, Mr. Hadman. This is business. You were too slow to get what you wanted—I succeeded by my superior initiative and energy. You must expect to pay for your lack of acumen. I have my price."

"How—how did you find out about this?" sputtered Hadman.

"Ask me no questions, I'll tell you no lies," replied the visitor pleasantly. "We seem to be wasting time. Let us proceed."

Hadman seemed about to burst into a storm of wrath, but Gibney interrupted him.

"This youngster's perfectly right, Jim. We slipped up, and he has us where he wants us. If he feels like putting on the screws, why, I suppose

we'll have to stand for it. May I ask your price on this stock?"

The young man was suddenly afflicted with a violent fit of coughing. When he recovered he asked that Jevons, the buyer he had beaten out, be sent for. Neither Hadman nor Gibney could see the necessity for this, but they acceded to his request. Jevons entered.

"Good morning, Mr. Jevons," said the young man. "I'm glad to see you are looking so well. The last time I saw you you were feeling strained a bit, I think."

"I never saw you before!" said Jevons angrily, displeased at the badinage.

"That's quite true, Mr. Jevons; but I saw you. It was at the Biltmore, in the tea-room. You were talking to a lady—a very beautiful lady, Mr. Jevons."

"What on earth—" began Hadman, but a glance from his partner silenced him. Jevons had suddenly dropped his air of bluster, and was as pale as the white wall behind him. He made a move to go, but with a lightning-like movement the young man intercepted him. His air of pleasantness was gone.

"I was at the next table, behind the palm. I heard you when you planned to acquire the stock yourself with your employers' money, and bleed them for it. I heard you make your plans—and you were incautious enough to give the address of the man who held the stock. I should have exposed you then, but I thought it was better to beat you to it. I—"

but Jevons waited to hear no more. He fled through the door and the partners heard the outer door of the office slam.

"The most thorough scoundrel I have ever had the pleasure of knowing," said the young man calmly. "And now that we have disposed of that matter, let us take up the other. Mr. Hadman, I would like to ask you to step out for a moment, if you please. I want a word with Mr. Gibney alone."

Hadman left, though with no good grace. When Gibney was alone with the stranger he said: "I don't know how I can thank you for exposing that villain; but I will try. And now, your price—"

"By George!" broke in the stranger. "Look at that! He was pointing out the window. Involuntarily Gibney turned to look, and when he returned his gaze to the room the young man stood before him—transformed. Gone was the swathing bandage, gone the derby hat, and with its going a cascade of golden hair fell rippling to the young man's waist, and Gibney looked into the face of—

"Alice!" he cried. "What—how—why—"

"Oh, Phil, darling, I wanted to tell you at first, but you were so cross and grouchy that I thought I'd give you a little wee lesson. And oh, Phil, it was such fun! Here's your old stock—I bought it with my own money, and it's—guess what? My birthday present to you! And oh, Phil, darling, kiss me, won't you?"

Hadman, impatient at the delay, opened the door and started to enter. He got as far as the threshold, then paused with a look of utter amazement on his face. The look gradually faded to a grin of understanding, and he ptoed out, closing the door softly behind him.

ANT LION TRAPS HIS PREY

Remarkable Ingenuity Displayed by Small Creature in Securing Food Especially Favored.

One of the most crafty of insects is the ant lion larva. This tiny creature dotes on ants of all sizes and species, and as it is not swift of movement it must trap its victims. It does this by making a cone-shaped pit in the sand. These pits are about an inch deep and two inches across. When it is complete the ant lion buries itself in the very center, with only its head and strong-curved mandibles in sight. It then patiently awaits the curious ants. Ants are Paul Pry's, and have a tremendous curiosity. The little depression attracts their attention, and they come to its edge and peer down into it.

The larva at once starts into a fury of action. It begins a digging operation and at the same time hurls grains of sand in all directions. The sand thus tossed begins to roll down the depression and carries with it other grains of sand until a miniature landslide results. The curious ant is caught in the slide and goes tumbling down to the center where the hard, sharp mandibles of the larva seize it, and the poor victim is shaken back and forth until it is dazed, whereupon the lion proceeds to dine with relish, tossing the empty husk of body outside the hole, once the meal is over.

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