

"But he's given you all the money, straight enough," said Duggan, drawing close to her.

"Yes; and he's given you the job," she responded.

From the corner of a fire-escape diagonally opposite shone the fitful glow of a pipe, and Toomey knew that Irene Baumann and her lover were there, that corner of that fire-escape having been adopted as their own, and yielded by the other tenement dwellers through courtesy, as they all knew that Irene's mother objected to the girl's going with the young man to the parks or recreation piers. Against the fronts of the buildings huge shadows, cast by the street-lights, grotesquely flung themselves. The notes of a twangy guitar floated in from a rear tenement.

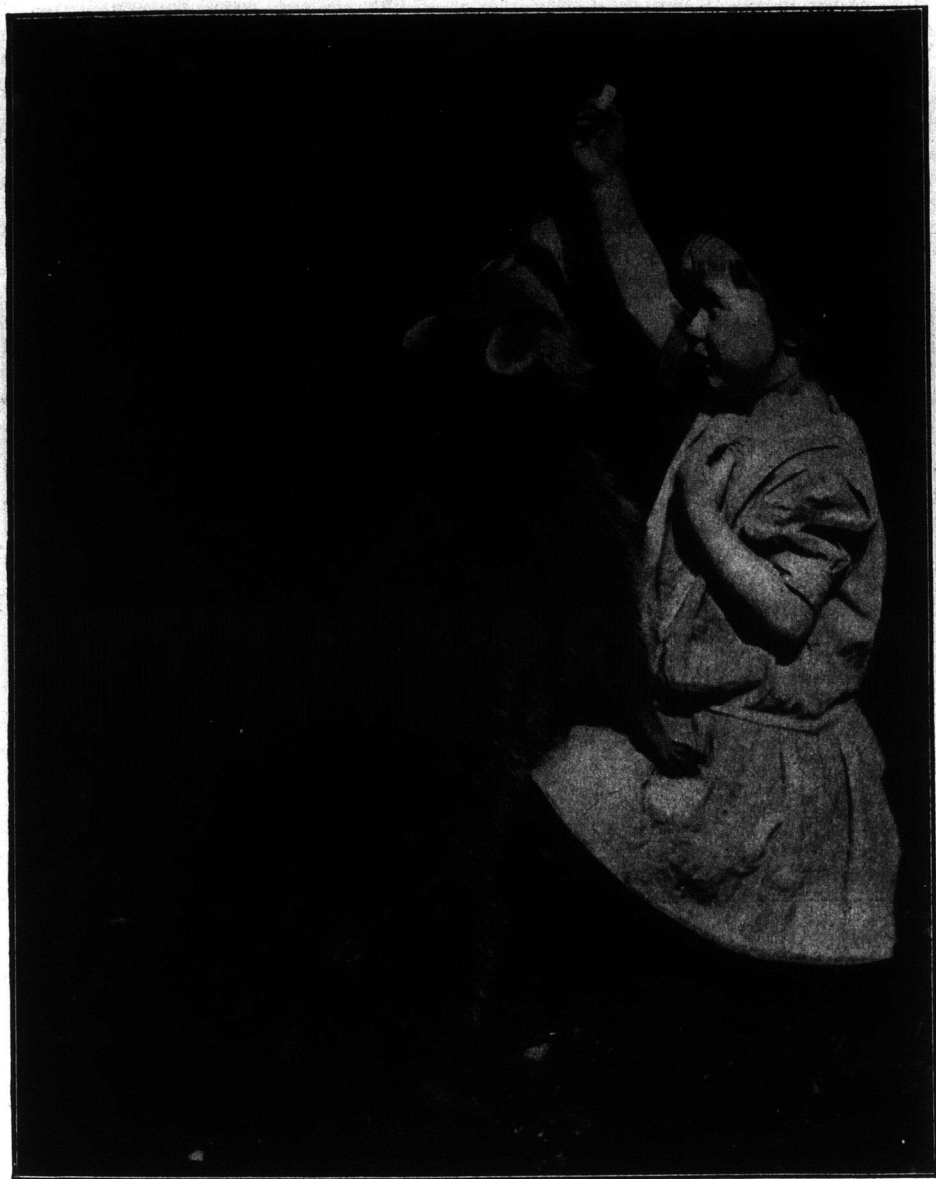
Old Toomey's eyes wearily closed. "It's all so good. I hate to leave it. And what will they—do without me?" He was not, however, thinking of his wife as he said this, but of many of the needy to whom he was in the habit of doing little kindnesses; but even in his whispered self-communion he did not

in the presence of soon-coming death. "Who's the Collector of Customs in New York now?" he asked; but Toomey answered, with a touch of impatience: "I—don't—just remember; I—don't—know—as—I ever knew."

"No, of course not," replied Duggan, soothingly. "Of course not. You never had any reason to. I'll ask McShea, if I ever need to know. He's been district leader for a great many years, hasn't he, Toomey? And it's many years that you've held your job under him."

"A long time, and always gave McShea the fullest satisfaction," sobbed Mrs. Toomey. "But McShea'll get another good man when Duggan takes your place," she added, as she dried her eyes on the hem of her skirt. Toomey, although dying, looked a trifle annoyed, and frowned ever so little, but the other two, looking at each other in mutual commiseration, did not notice it.

"And who was President of the United States when you first got the job?" Duggan continued, still under the impression that the circumstances of such



Feeding the Pet Coon

mention any names, for he was always reticent about the good that he did.

Toomey had for twenty-three years held a position in the Custom-house. It was not a position of great consequence. It was only that of a packer and weigher, and it had only yielded the sum of \$725 a year. But in his own estimation and in that of his friends there was a certain dignity attaching to the position, more than to that of street-sweeper or assistant janitor of a public building, for example, and so he had been the object of considerable good-natured envy, which had, of course, been enhanced by the length of time that he had been able to hold the place. There were many who would prize the job, now that he was giving it up.

"Duggan, I've willed you a good thing," he whispered, faintly, turning his head from the window.

Duggan bent over him in deep concern. "Will there be any trouble about my getting it?" he asked. Toomey tried to shake his head.

"How could there be?" he answered. "McShea's never had anything against me."

Duggan tried to make conversation, clumsily feeling this much to be incumbent upon him, after such a gift, even

a gift demanded appreciative conversation from him.

"I—don't—know; but McShea was—" Toomey stopped, and could not complete the sentence.

"Yes, yes, poor fellow. You've served under a good many presidents and a good many collectors. Do you remember who was the Collector of Customs, in this city, when you first got your place?"

"No. I never—paid—any—attention—to presidents or collectors," the dying man whispered. "My district leader was the only man I ever thought of."

"And that's just so," put in Mrs. Toomey. "Such things as collectors or presidents never makes no difference. You must always remember that, Dennis. It's the district leader that's the one to look out for. Whatever he says, always goes. Keep solid with McShea. Dennis, and you'll hold the job as long as—"

But here she again had recourse to the hem of her skirt. Toomey noticed this, and hurriedly strove to create a diversion. "If I was you, Duggan, I'd get after McShea right off. It'll be all right if he knows I want you to have the job, and have put it in my will, but he may hear of my being sick, and—"

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