

THE ALAMANCE GLEANER.

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GRAHAM, N. C., THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1909.

NO. 34

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STORIES FOR IDLE HOURS

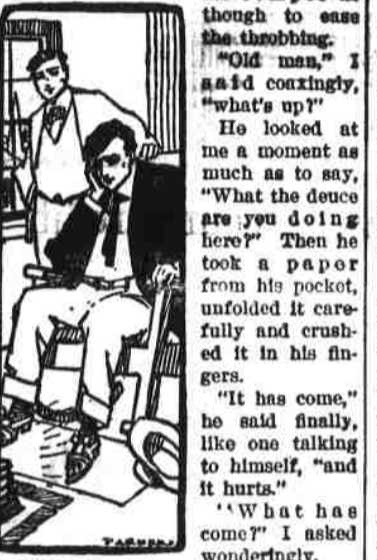


When the Earth Yawned

By EDGAR WELTON COOLEY

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It was late when Jack came in—nearly midnight. I heard his key in the lock. I heard the door open and close softly and saw his face in the dim light of the turned down gas. It was pale, haggard, careworn. He threw himself into a mission rocker and sat gazing into the flickering fire in the grate.



"What's up?"

very slowly, not raising his eyes from the fire. "She wants a divorce, of course. I don't blame her. I can't. I've been a dog, Tom."

"I didn't say anything. The silence made me uncomfortable. Presently he spoke again.

"I thought I had got used to living without her and that I wouldn't mind. But a man can't always tell. After all, it's pretty hard when it comes to the showdown. But I wish she had the papers served yesterday or had waited until tomorrow." He leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees. "This is our wedding anniversary, Tom."

I understood. Jack's Mary had been the room's best friend. He had loved her. He didn't want pity. He wanted some one to listen while he cursed himself for a strong-headed, stubborn brute. He was partly right, but I didn't believe he was altogether at fault. I didn't tell him so; he would have knocked me down.

So I listened, and we lit our pipes, and I listened while he talked of her. No lover ever spoke more reverently of a woman than he did of Amy. I listened. It was his heart I heard—his big, honest, throbbing, bruised heart. As he spoke I saw where the little thread of discord that had grown to a cable and pulled them apart. Jack was proud, and so was Amy, poor girl—too proud to see and to understand that, after all, it was only a rope of sand.

When at last he ceased I gazed out the window at the moonlight falling upon the spruce and the roofs of San Francisco. Here in the air, and there lights flickered in the windows. Beyond in the street occasionally footsteps passed, a touring car swept by, or a hack from which came voices and laughter.

Presently there drifted to us from an all night restaurant a confusion of sounds, which gradually blended, bearing to us the melody of "Home, Sweet Home." For a moment Jack listened; then he closed the window and resumed his seat with a sigh. From under the seat still air, came the hour-dope tone of a bell striking the hour—three, four, five. I started and looked at Jack. It was morning, and it had not seemed an hour! He walked to a window and stood with his hands behind him, the waning moonlight fringing his hair with pale silver.

I do not know how long he stood there. My pipe had gone out. The ashes in the grate were dull and lifeless. A wicked silence seemed to lay on everything.

Suddenly I heard a sound as of rushing wind and listened, then got to my feet, only to reel and cling to my chair. The walls trembled and creaked; the floor rose and fell, a surging sea. The building shivered and groaned like a wounded animal. Old man Fear knocked at the door. Something caught me up and tossed me in the air, and I fell—down, down, whirling around, once, twice, then dashed against the wall. I was dazed. My head ached; my veins seemed bursting. I grabbed my breath with both hands and held it.

The earth was roaring. It rattled the bones in my body. The sky sung to it. I could feel the humming in my feet. Every hair of my head, every nerve, every fiber of me, was vibrating, a million times a second. I was numb, tortured, delirious with fever, shaking with a chill.

I saw Jack at intervals. In that awful first instant he had extinguished the gas, but in the second and the dawn the gas, but in which his face had shown dimly, here and there the shadows shifted, rose and fell—wave shadows. From above, from below, from every

side came a grinding, shattering, roaring, like a hundred trains crossing a hundred bridges. Then followed the silvery rattle of breaking glass, the thunderous crash of walls, wild screams that grew feeble, ceased, then silence.

I ran to a window, but could see nothing but dust, dust. It shut out the day and the moon. I groped back into the room. Jack was standing in the open door, twisting and untwisting his soft hat.

"Earthquake! My God!" he cried in a hoarse whisper.

I tried to speak, but my tongue was frozen. I reached out my hand and touched his coat. I felt the warmth of his body and laughed like a child that feels the pressure of its mother's kiss in the dark.

He clutched my arm. "Come!" he cried. "Come!" It was a savage cry, yet trembling with agony.

"Where?" I asked. I was frightened at my own voice.

"Amy!" he cried. "Merciful God, Amy!"

We went down the stairs—staggering, falling, struggling, we went down the stairs. He was the first in the street, I after him. He led the way, and I followed. Over piles of brick and iron, through dust that choked and blinded, we ran. The streets were full of people, running like we were. But there was no word spoken, save only the cry of some one under a wall or the crooning of a mother to a child in her arms.

I was beginning to breathe once more and to get a new grip on life when again came the rumble and roar, and the earth trembled in its agony. Tall buildings leaned till they all but touched. I could see but a narrow line of sky between. I thought they would fall and crush me, but I didn't care. I didn't care for anything. I wanted to laugh. I thought if I didn't laugh I'd die. But I didn't—I ran. I could hardly keep on my feet. I seemed to be stumbling over ridges of earth that sank out of sight when I stepped on them.

Jack kept right ahead of me, but presently he stopped so suddenly that I ran into him.

"Oh," he said, "I can't leave them there!" His face was pale as death. Anxiety burned in his eyes, but a great pity trembled in his voice.

"Can't leave whom?" I gasped, but already he had turned back.

I followed, and we came to a frail woman sitting on the curbstone. In her arms was a baby. At her knee was a little girl. The girl was crying. On the woman's face was the paleness of utter exhaustion, on her lips was a prayer, and in her eyes, resting on her children, the deep pain with which love embitters despair.

"Madam!" he said, "you will let us help you?"

She looked at him, in her eyes a blessing-world could not purchase. He clasped the baby in his arms and motioned for me to take the girl. Then, with his strong hand grasping the woman's arm, we hurried away.

Three blocks distant a man bolted into us—a large, broad-shouldered man with grime on his hands and grease and dirt on his face that shone pale beneath. The woman threw her arms about the man's neck and sobbed, and the man took Jack's hand and held it for an instant, then reached forth his arms for the babe. Jack kissed the child and landed it to him and stood looking at it wistfully until they were swallowed by the church.

We passed a church. The door was open. A few candles burned dimly. Without on the stone steps a black-robed priest stood, credit to air, chanting. About him a few of the faithful knelt. His black locks were blowing in the rising breeze. His eyes were upturned. Upon his calm face was written, "Peace, be still."

So we came to a corner, where Jack paused and caught my arm. His face was without color, ghastly in the weird light of the new day. His voice was scarcely more than a whisper. His eyes shone like those of one who has staked his last cent upon the turn of a wheel and knows the issue is life or death.

"Tom," he cried, "look! I cannot! I cannot!" He covered his face with his hands. He was trembling. A child ran past crying for its mother.

"Look where?" I asked.

He glanced at me dumbly and raised his hand to his head, then lowered it. A red blotch gleamed dimly on his forehead at the edge of his hair. His fingers were red.

"Tom"—he was on his knees, gripping my hand in both of his—"I'm a dog!"

"Yes, yes," I said impatiently, "but what do you want me to do?"

"I'm a dog!" he repeated. "She had none to protect her." He sprang up. "God! Do you understand?" His face was savage; there was a wild look in his eyes. "If one hair of her head—"

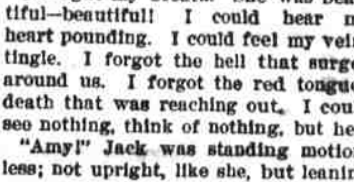
The strong odor of smoke came to me. I could hear the crackling of flames. The song of a fire siren wailed in the distance, drawing near, sounded in the air, and there he was, or nearer. Above us, between the tall buildings, the sky was a ribbon of pink.

"In heaven's name," I cried, "what is she, Jack?"

"He pointed toward the cross street, in the middle of the block," he whispered, "on the left, a large, red hotel. Look, Tom, is it there?"

the stairs we dashed, Jack in the lead. On the third landing we met. How utterly God forsaken she looked! But when she saw Jack who passed and stood like a stag at bay, her head poised proudly, her lips trembling, but voiceless, the color coming and going on her cheeks, her bosom heaving. Through a window the red reflection of the fire streamed. It fell upon the wall behind her—a scarlet background for her raven hair.

I caught my breath. She was beautiful—beautiful! I could hear my veins thumping. I could feel my veins tingling. I forgot the red tongue of death that was reaching out. I could see nothing, think of nothing, but her! "Amy!" Jack was standing motionless; not upright, like she, but leaning



The floor rose and fell.

toward her. His hat was in his hand. The red mark showed on his forehead, and his eyes—yes, could see his soul through his eyes.

"Well!" she said laughingly. "I saw Jack stagger, but he caught himself, raised himself up, up, until he stood six feet and more, magnificent in his manhood.

"Amy"—his voice was calm—"in this hour I belong here with you. It may be the last time, but you'll let me."

She was crying. The street—the anxiety, the heartache, were telling on him. We were all silent—I clinging to the joy of living, Amy with dewy eyes, Jack drinking in the sweetness

"Jack," she cried, "I don't want to die!" She was sobbing.

He placed a hand under her chin and, raising her face to his, gazed courage into her eyes.

"Come," he said. He spoke firmly, and she followed us, her hand in Jack's.

From a window we could see in a dozen places where the bell had broken through the roof and reached upward, grasping the sky. Above there was no blue, only a low hanging canopy of smoke, blood red, rolling toward the sea. Through the corridors and up the stairs there seemed to drift a voice that yet was not the voice of man, for no one could have told whose voice it was. Shrieking with terror, trembling with hopelessness, it came: "Fire! Fire! And there is no water!"

"Set faces met us in the street—a flood of humanity, a dumb, sweeping tide that bore us on and on. For hours we walked; it seemed a thousand miles. And always Amy and Jack were silent, and always her hand was in his. Once I saw him look at her, a deep wistfulness in his eyes, but he did not speak. So we trudged on.

Suddenly I heard a commanding voice. "Back!" it cried. "Clear the way! An automobile just past—a red flash, like a meteor. The wind caught my light hat and sent it spinning. My arm I grasped Jack by the arm and cast a frightened glance over her shoulder.

"Jack," she whispered, "did you see that—that in the auto?"

"Yes," he said. "It was dynamite." She shivered.

Dynamite, and the streets choked with humanity! We knew what it meant. Another bell went tolling. A loose—a loose—a bell! I thought fast, but I did not speak. I could not. We came to a small park that overlooked the bay. The waves were lashing themselves into red foam, leaping high in air and falling in red rain. The sun was a copper ball.

We found a clear spot between two trees and set down to rest. Amy was quite exhausted. Jack opened her, but I lay with my hat on the grass and thanked God for the old guardian angel that I was still aboard this pretty good old earth.

Then I heard a crash like a thousand claps of thunder. The earth seemed to reel before the blast like a ship in a storm. Between us and that red glare something was spreading—something big, black and spreading—a building being and steel and steel and planning and laboring to build. Another followed, and another and another, like hundreds of men thrown in the air by children. Whole squares seemed rising and falling. It was he-rem, he-rem, he-rem—boom—boom—boom. There was no waiting, no pause. The world seemed leaping into atoms, while the flames reached up long arms to grasp the fragments before they reached the ground. It was the wrath of God hitting against the sanctity of Satan. It was awful—awful!

Amy covered her eyes with her hands and sobbed softly.

"Don't!" begged Jack. "Please don't! I can't stand it!"

She raised her eyes to his suddenly. "Oh," she said, "you cry?"

"Yes!" he cried passionately and held out his hands. "I was standing above her. I never saw greater tenderness on a man's face.

For an instant she looked at him, then lowered her eyes again. A pearl glittered on the end of a lash.

"You aren't fair," she said, rather rebelliously. "You are taking an advantage."

"I am unfair," he replied tremulously. "Forgive me." He turned about and hit his mouth. It was pale, yet purple in the center. He was dead. Presently he faced her again.

"I am sorry," he said. "We might have saved some of your effects. You have lost everything. I am afraid, for

see, the flames must already have reached your hotel." His voice was hollow, almost tender. Yet there was no trace of passion in it.

"No," she said, "I did not lose all. The rest does not matter." She spoke softly, avoiding his eyes.

"You saved something?" he asked. He was looking away to where the dynamite and the fire were leaping at each other's throat.

"A trifle," she said wearily, raising her eyes and dropping them again. "I had gone back after it and was returning when—you came."

I saw him glance at her quickly, then avert his eyes. "If I might guess"—he began, but she interrupted. "You forget. You are not to be unfair."

He bit his lip, but smiled wanly. "Come, then," he said, "it were best we go. I will take you to Sister Grace in Oakland. Would you mind?"

She hesitated. "I will promise not to see you," he resumed quickly, "unless"—

"Unless you wish," she said. Again we were in the throng, pushing, shoving. With Amy between us, Jack and I fought our way inch by inch till we reached the ferry building and were aboard the boat. Slowly we crossed the bay with the pace of a snail. The red flames seemed leaping toward us as though seeking to clasp us to their scorching breasts. We could see the streets leading down to the wharves—black with creatures, dumb and swaying with the intensity of awful despair. The water front was a surging mass, the docks crowded with cringing humanity, their faces deathly in the reddish, flickering light.

When I felt my feet again on solid ground I took a full breath. I don't think I ever put my lungs to any better use. Amy was laughing—the unnatural merriment of one whose nerves are frayed at the edges. Jack guided her out of the crowd. His face was tense with the words that trembled in his eyes, but were not to be spoken. He was crying fast. The street, the anxiety, the heartache, were telling on him. We were all silent—I clinging to the joy of living, Amy with dewy eyes, Jack drinking in the sweetness



We rushed into the office.

quaf her presence as a man in mid-desert quaf his last drop of water.

Grace saw us coming and met us in the yard. Jack opened the gate, and Amy passed through. I saw the women throw their arms around each other's neck; I heard them sobbing and turned my back, a smothering inside of me. Presently I heard Grace speak.

"But are you not coming in?" she said.

"No," said Jack firmly. Amy was looking at him, a light in her eyes I had not seen there during the hours we had been together. Her hands were clasped in front of her.

Jack saw her, too, and hesitated, then turned about suddenly.

"Goodby. God protect you both," he said.

"Oh!" It was Amy's voice—more a sob than a cry.

Again he turned, and in the clear light she saw the red blotch in his hair. She caught his arm impulsively.

"Jack," she cried, "you have been hurt and you did not tell me."

"It is nothing," he answered, smiling wanly—"a piece of broken glass."

He was looking at her, and she avoided his glance, letting her eyes drop.

"And you think it best to go?" she said.

"I gripped himself. 'Amy, think.' He glanced across the bay toward the burning city.

"There are fallen walls and broken houses. I am strong, Amy. They need me there."

Her hand swept to her bosom, and she caught her breath quickly. For a second she smiled and said: "I belong here!"

dreamed. I saw something in her eyes that made me want to throw up my hat and yell. Then the blood swept back into her face and left it glowing. Even now she was beautiful.

"That is so," she said calmly. "Go, Jack."

The First Saw. Talus, the Greek, is said to have invented the saw from having once found the jawbone of a snake, which he employed to cut through a small piece of wood. In early periods the trunks of trees were split into boards with wedges, and, although these were not always straight, they were regarded as much better suited to construction than awed boards because they followed the grain and lasted longer and were stronger. Water mills for the purpose of sawing came into use in the fourth century.

Socrates. The execution of Socrates is and will probably always remain one of the most astounding enigmas of history. About the greatness and goodness of the man there is no room for dispute; that he really corrupted or attempted to corrupt the Athenian youth, as was charged against him by the prosecution, no one for a moment believes, and that he in no way deserved the death that came to him is universally conceded. And yet the foremost people on earth in intellectual accomplishments decreed that he should die. It might have been politics, it might have been personal spite or jealousy, it might have been weariness at his endless questioning or it might have been the conviction that by his philosophy he was really destroying the influence of religion upon the minds of the young that lay at the bottom of his trial and execution.—New York American.

His Father's Way. Mr. Jefferson had not been altogether an exemplary husband and father, but he possessed certain engaging qualities which secured him many friends and made his death the cause of sincere mourning to his widow.

"Mr. Jefferson, she's done broke up over Ebenezer's being took off 'r'm de poverty," said one of the neighbors.

"She's naturally in," said another. "Mournin' round de house all de time she goes. Why, day befo' yist'day I was her halpin' her, an' she only stop cryin' once an' dat was to spank little Eben for takin' m'lasses out'n de jug right into his moof when her back was turned."

"Whose she spanked him good an' set hom down she say to me, 'Eh make me tink ob his pa so much I can't bear it' and bust' right out cryin' again!"—Youth's Companion.

The Exclusive Messenger. "Of all hot weather charities there is none better than that which gives slum children a free week in the country," said an official of New York's charity department.

"If you could see some of the poor little ragamuffins that avail themselves of this charity, I once witnessed the assembling of a couple of hundred of July country weekers. They were so ragged, so very, very ragged, that a tiny messenger boy who had secured a ticket gave a start on beholding them.

"All this gang going? I heard him say to a matron.

"Yes," she answered.

"The messenger boy uttered a moment with knit brows.

"Well, scratch me," he said and turned on his heel."

The Tides and the Earth. It has long been known theoretically that the tides act as a brake on the rotating earth and tend to lengthen the day. The effect, however, is so slight that it cannot be measured in any length of time at man's disposal. It may be estimated with the aid of certain assumption, and, using the data available, W. D. MacMillan has recently made the necessary computation by the formulae used by engineers. He finds for the increase of the length of the day one second in 400,000 years.

Hot Water on a Fire. "Queer things happen at fires," said a Cleveland man. "The other day the lace curtains caught on fire in an east side home, and there was some panic while the fire lasted, you bet. Everybody called for the imported cook out in the kitchen to hustle in with a dishpan or two of water. But she didn't arrive on the scene until somebody had pulled down the curtains and trampled out the flames.

"Why didn't you hurry?" they asked her reproachfully.

"Hurry," she repeated. "Wasn't I hurrying as fast as I could. I had hot water in the dishpan when you hollered at me, and I had to throw out that and get some cold water. You didn't want me to come in and throw hot water on the fire and make it worse, did you?"—Washington Herald.

When Gambling is Not Vice. Wife (handing husband morning paper)—I see that several gambling dens were raided yesterday and a large quantity of gambling appliances seized.

Husband—I am glad of it. The police should wipe out those places at once. Those gamblers are a bad lot. Hal! I'm in luck. Those mining stocks have gone up and I come out something like three hundred ahead by yesterday's transactions. Good spec that. My dear, you shall have the new dress you want.

Joy in the household.—London Telegraph.

Like the Bee. "I, sir," said Mr. Dustin Gray, "am like the busy bee. I have industriously stored the good things of life."

"Yes, and anybody who tried to stop you was very lucky to get stung!"—Washington Star.

Force of Habit. Captain of Steamship—G—G, what the force does the fellow mean? There's no word with three O's running. Corporal—Dog pardon, sir, but Signaler Higgins be stutterin'—London Punch.

Do You Want to be Well Dressed?



If you do, now is the time to buy your clothes. I am receiving New Fall Clothing every day, and if you come first you will get the choice of new and up-to-date goods. If I can't suit you in stock I have a large line of samples and will take your order and measure, and in a few days give you a suit specially made for you.

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Peary found the North Pole because he carried a supply of Melrose, Dan Valley and Champion Flour.

Cook failed because he carried something said to be just as good. All housekeepers will fail to have good bread unless they do as Peary did.

Land Sale!

By virtue of an order of the Superior Court of Alamance county, made at the September term of said court, the undersigned as commissioners of said court, will sell to the highest bidder, for cash at the court house door in Graham, N. C.

October 30, 1909.

The tract of land known as the John Honey tract, and situate in Albright Township, in Alamance county, N. C., adjoining the lands of G. F. Thompson, the late Capt. D. S. Thompson, Isaac Crabtree and others.

This tract contains about thirty-five acres and is situated within one hundred yards of the new Macdonald Highway now being built leading toward Greensboro, N. C., and is about six miles south of Graham, N. C. It is just about one hundred yards west of the main road highway. It has upon it a dwelling-house which needs repair. A good spring of water and a nice branch of water runs through the land. It has upon it a large quantity of wood, both oak and pine, and some fine timber, both oak and pine. It is well adapted for all kinds of crops growing in this section, and it is comparatively well rolling enough to cultivate well and not so steep as to wash. The tract originally contained some thirty acres, but the balance of the acres was sold off on the western side of the place and there are about 30 acres left in this tract. The title is in good standing. No ten percent bids which allowed on this sale, and the successful bidder will get the tract upon complying with his bid.

This is a rare opportunity to buy a nice farm near market, good schools, churches and in a good community.

W. ELMER LONG, J. M. CARROLL, Commissioners.

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