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CLOCK-WORK.

"My! no!" said Mrs. Poysett, laughing at the very idea; "we ain't afraid to stay in the house one night 'thout men folks. Be we, Lindy?"

"I guess not," said black-eyed Linda, cheerily, washing her hands as a preliminary to putting the bread in the pans.

"Frank says, when John wrote him to come and stay over a day in Boston, 'You'll be afraid, mother, with all Lindy's presents in the house.' And he was real put out at first because I wouldn't have some of the neighbors come in to sleep."

"Well, I don't blame you, ef you feels ef you could sleep—on'y two women folks," said the caller, sharp-featured Miss Haines, with prominent elbows and emphatically clean calico. "It 'ud on'y amount to makin' up a bed for nuthin'."

"Yes," Mrs. Poysett went on, accompanying the slicing of apples for pies with the regular swing of her rocking-chair, while she now and then placed a particularly thin and inviting piece of the fruit in her mouth, "that's what I thought. Ten—leven—Lindy, when you go into the other Lindy, I wish you'd strike that clock round. It strikes one too many."

"Yes'm," said brisk Linda, and then, trying to extricate the recipe for composition cake from inevitable dreams about her wedding day, she forgot the clock and made an incident for this story.

"Your presents are handsome, Lindy, there's no mistake about that," said the visitor, turning the conversation skillfully to the quarter toward which the town interest was just then tending.

"Yes," answered Linda, blushing a little. She had grown used to blushing of late. "People have been very kind to me."

"No more'n you deserve," said Miss Haines, oracularly, and with an emphasis that left no room for denial. "Folks say to me, 'John Willey's been pretty stiddy to goot West and make a home, 'n then come back 'n marry the girl he's been with ever since they was child'n.' But I say to 'em, 'No credit to him. No more'n he'd orter done. Lindy's pure gold, and he's got the sense to see it.' And she finished her eulogy on the doorstep, perhaps to avoid having the matter disputed, while Linda went back to her cooking table laughing, and still gratefully rosy over the sense that everybody in general was far too good to her. It was a case of the smooth running of deep waters. She and John Willey had been prospectively faithful to each other for years before he asked her promise to marry him. Eighteen months ago he had gone West to set up in business as a carriage-builder, and now, having prospered, was coming East for his wife. Within two days' journey of home he had written to ask Frank, Linda's brother, to meet him in Boston for a day's sight-seeing and an evening at the theatre.

"I don't know what I shall do with-out you, Lindy," said the mother, putting down the knife to wipe away a furtive tear with her apron. "I'm sure I don't know."

Linda was at her side in an instant, with a tear of her own, and the two women kissed, laughed and went on with their work, as they had done a hundred times within the last fortnight. For Mrs. Poysett had the equable temperament that sometimes accompanies rotundity of form and a double chin, and Linda, besides being sensible, could not keep miserable very long at a time.

Meanwhile, everybody in the township was not rotund and possessed of double chins, not all the houses were keepers of new and shining wedding gifts, and, strange to say, not everybody was happy. Pete Haydon, who lived down in Tan Lane, was poor and savagely discouraged. He made shoes ordinarily, but that winter there were no shoes to be had. His was a fine and practiced hand; he could do all sorts of jobs, from cleaning a watch to building a chimney, but nobody saw fit to have making or mending done. There had been only four or five pieces of work since fall for Tinker Pete, for none of which could he, in conscience, ask more than fifteen cents. His wife fell sick, the children's clothes were too shabby for school, and just then some one tapped him on the arm and tempted him.

One morning a stranger strolled into town and stopped at Pete's little shop to ask his way. He was traveling to Southfield, so he said.

"Where had he been?"

"Oh, anywhere," airily and jauntily;

"traveling about the country. Might take up with work somewhere, if I found any worth doing."

"Hard times," said Pete, looking moodily at the little red stove. "What's your trade?"

"I've been a sailor," said the man, filling his pipe—a process Pete watched greedily, for his own tobacco box was empty. "Twenty years before the mast. I should have been a captain before this time—but there's jealousias. So I got sick of it. I call myself a landsman now."

"You don't have the look of a sailor," said Pete, his eyes traveling from the shabby fur cap and the dark face with rather narrow, bold, black eyes down over the shabby suit of brown.

The man gave a slight start and glanced at him keenly: "You don't think so? Well, I've been on land some time now. Salt water's easy to shake off. What might your name be?"

"Haydon—Pete Haydon."

"And mine's Job Whettles. Queer name, ain't it? Don't believe there's another like it in the country. Good-day, mate. If I'm round this way again I'll look in on you."

And he did.

One day, as Pete was soldering a milk-pail for Mrs. Burge, this time whistling a little, having work to whistle over, the man came in without warning of rap or voice.

"Thought you'd twenty-five mile away afore this," said Pete, plying his iron. "Take a seat."

"Things don't please me much over that way," said the fellow, pompously, again beginning to cut his tobacco, perhaps as a cover to his furtive glances. "I may stay round here a spell. Perhaps I'll do a bit of work on somebody's farm."

"Can't get it," said Pete, briefly, viewing his completed job with approval. "Ain't no farm-work to be had just now."

"Well, doing chores, I mean—light work. I'm not particular how little I do for my board," with a coarse laugh.

"Folks do their own work round here," said Pete. "Some of 'em have got money enough to pay, but they're able-bodied, as it happens, and don't want a hired man round in the winter. 'Seems a pity—don't it?—that things can't be equally divided, so that you and I could have our share," said the stranger, pulling industriously at his pipe, but not forgetting to watch the tinker. "I should like to help myself to somebody's pile; now, shouldn't you? Honestly enough, of course, man. You needn't jump. I mean, suppose the young fellow that owns the big farm over there—Poysett?—should say, 'Whettles, take half my bank stock. I don't need it all?' do you think I should say 'no'?"

Of course the tinker laughed at the fanciful notion. He was a sunny-tempered fellow; it hardly needed a very bright thing to provoke his mirth.

Where Whettles stayed at night was a mystery. Sometimes Pete suspected he might have slept in a barn, he turned up so tousled in the morning; often he guessed that Toppan, the saloonkeeper, had given him a lodging, from the fumes that lingered about his shabby person. He had money at times, for again and again he treated Pete to a glass of whisky. Pete was not used to frequenting the saloon; he did not in the least approve of it; but it happened that about this time this evil bird of prey sought his company more persistently than did any more respectable person. And Whettles was a sociable fellow; he could tell more stories in half an hour than any six of the honest people Pete knew taken together. He was, so Pete concluded, nobody's enemy but his own. It would take more time than you are willing to give, and a deeper knowledge of mental intricacies than I possess, to detail the process through which Pete was brought to the point of promising to creep into the Poysett farmhouse and rifle the old desk that stood between the sitting-room windows. The grocer's bill was growing longer, his wife was paler, and she worried him by entreaties to let Whettles alone and forsake Toppan's; the aggregate of such straws is not small.

The opportunity came, fitting the mood as exactly as if the mood had made it. Frank Poysett was going to Boston to meet John Willey; the "women folks" would be alone.

"You take Poysett's," said Whettles. "You know the lay of the land there, and the same night I'll try Turner's, over on the hill. We'll meet somewhere about 1, down there under the big elm, and divide. After that I'll make tracks across lots and take a

train somewhere; nobody'll think of you."

"But s'pose my courage gives out," Tinker Pete said, uncertainly. "I don't know's I can do it after all. It's easy enough to get in, but what if somebody should see me? It might end in what's worse."

"Man alive!" said Whettles, impatiently. "Afraid at your time of life? Well, here's what I'll do. They go to bed early; you can have it over by midnight. Now, I'll come back that way, and if you're there and afraid to stir, I'll go in and do it myself. But mind, I don't expect you to back out. And if I ain't there by 12 you'll know somethin's happened and I can't come; but be sure you're at the big tree by 1."

Whettles, like many another skillful tactician, did not tell his catspaw all his plans. He had no intention of doing what might be done for him. It was only polite to assure Pete of helping him out should his courage fail, for fear, under too great dread, that he might break away from the plan altogether.

When Pete crept up to the house at 10, the women had been soundly asleep for two hours. He tried the kitchen window; it had no fastenings, and went up noiselessly. He stepped in and stood trembling. The clock in the next room tickled with appalling loudness. His knees smote together, but it required as much courage now to flee as to remain. Perhaps for ten minutes—perhaps hours, judging by his own exaggerated reckoning—he stood in fear; and then, as the clock ticked steadily as if it had no reference to him, his heart-beats grew fainter and his courage crawled back.

He crept toward the sitting-room door on his hands and knees. There stood the old desk, with its high spindle-legs, half of it exaggerated shadow and half thrown into light by a shaft from the moon. Probably the key was in the lock. He had seen it there himself a dozen times—had seen Frank bring in a fat roll of bills after selling his oxen, toss them in there and put down the cover without turning the key. There had been no robberies in Belmont, and so people trusted more in human nature and less in steel and wood. But the sitting-room was so light! He should never dare go in there; the very thought of having his shadow thrown on the wall, distorted like those of the tables and chairs, gave him another sickening spasm of fear. What if there were only women in the house? Suppose one appeared? where should he hide himself? He was not a thief by nature or training. He would crouch down in a corner and wait for Whettles. He had been there ages, when the clock gave warning; ages longer, and with an alarming preliminary whir it struck twelve. He started up with an after-impulse of gratitude that he had not shrieked.

When had the hour before struck? It seemed incredible that he could have slept, but it must have been so, or, what was more probable, he had been too absorbed to hear it. It was time for Whettles. He crept back to the kitchen window and waited in the cold draught of air. Minutes passed, each seeming ten. He began to grow angry. Did the fellow mean to play him false and not come at all? As anger rose his courage to do the deed ebbed. I do not believe conscience asserted itself very strongly. Life was harder than it had been even one day before, and there was no flour in the house now. He was still bitterly at odds with life, but the after-effects of the whisky Whettles had given him were nervousness and irresolution. The clock gave warning for another hour. False, friendly old clock, if he could have seen your face he would have known it lacked ten minutes of midnight then; instead, he believed it would strike one. Too late for Whettles. Perhaps he was now at the old elm; he would hurry there and bring him back to do his share of the work. He closed the window behind him and hurried off to the rendezvous. There was no one there. At that moment the relief of having been prevented from sin overbalanced every other feeling. Something must have happened to Whettles; perhaps he had been caught; perhaps he would say that his accomplice was waiting for him under the elm! He started on a swift run for home, to find his wife watching for him in the moonlight.

She was too thankful at finding him sober to worry at the lateness of his coming. Being a woman of tact she did not question, but went to sleep, while Pete lay till daybreak in a cold

bath of fear, expecting a rap and summons to jail at every tapping of bough or snapping of frost-bitten nail.

Whettles had lingered about Turner's, a great house over the hill, in the hope that the guests—for there was a party that night—would take their leave. But no; the house was lighted from chambers to parlor, and sleighs came instead of going away. He walked up and down the orchard, cursing himself to keep warm. Later and later, and the singing and dancing shadows on the curtains did not cease. He would hurry over to the Poysett's and see if the catspaw had done his work there. He stole up to the designated window, as Pete had done. No one was there. He listened and whistled softly. The clock struck one. He had no idea it was so late. Pete must be waiting for him at the elm. And so he, too, hurried away.

But there was only a mammoth lace-work of shadow under the elm. Where was Pete? The master-villain, him self puzzled, reflected a moment. Perhaps the fellow had the money and was hiding it at home. Lucky thought! He would go to the house and call him up, in spite of disturbing wife and children. Then see if he would refuse to share! He took the road, and, passing Toppan's saloon, noticed a dim light in the barroom. It was rather unusual that it should be there so late, but he had known it to happen before. He had just about money enough for a dram. He tapped, and then tried the door; it was unfastened, and he went in lightly. A man in a great-coat rose from his seat by the stove and swiftly, dexterously plied him. Toppan himself, always on the winning side, was there to help, and Whettles was arrested for his last crime.

Mrs. Poysett and Linda were afoot early the next morning, putting the house in holiday trim.

"I declare if 'tain't an hour earlier 'n I thought," said Mrs. Poysett as she came down into the sitting room, where the little air-tight was already doing ardent best. "Lindy, you didn't strike that clock round yesterday, after all."

"No, mother; I forgot it," laughed Lindy. "I should forget my head, nowadays, if 'twasn't fastened on."

"I'll tell you what it is," said the mother, beginning to spread the breakfast table "I'm just out o' patience with that clock, strikin' the hours away afore they get here. It seems real malicious, tryin' to hurry you off. Now, perhaps it's only half a day's job or so; let's send for Tinker Pete and have him come up and fix it."

So the chore boy was dispatched for Pete. He came like a culprit, uncertain whether the message was feigned to cover suspicion of him or not. But no one could look into Mrs. Poysett's clear eyes for a moment or hear Linda's clear laugh, with even a lingering fear that either had anything to conceal. When they described the clock's malady, I am inclined to think Pete was as near being faint with surprise as ever man was in his life, and I think he touched the worn old clock-case reverently, thanking it for keeping his deeds honest, however he had sinned in thought. He stayed to dinner, and Mrs. Poysett put up a pail of goodies for the children. On his way home he heard the news: Whettles had been arrested and taken away on an early train. Again he walked in fear and trembling; his hair grew used to standing on end in those days. He expected an interview with Nemesis concerning his intended crime, but, whether justly or unjustly, Nemesis stayed away.

The wedding? It was a very quiet one, and the happy pair went away next morning, followed by blessings and old shoes. Frank had such an extravagantly good time in Boston that he felt that he could only counter-balance it by plunging into work deeper than ever. So he began cutting timber in the old wood-lot, and hired Tinker Pete to chop there every day till spring.—*Lippincott.*

Just About.

All the passengers in the street car on Austin avenue were very much annoyed by a crying child, and one old gentleman appeared to be particularly exasperated.

"I do wonder what little wootsy tootsy is crying about," said the mother, dancing the infant up and down.

"I know what he is crying about. He has been crying about six blocks; ever since you got into the car."—*Siftings.*

The jar of a railway train is not hermetically sealed.

FOR THE FAIR SEX

Two Romances.

The son of a leading lawyer in New York, some years ago, was attracted by the innocent face and quick wit of a Welsh chambermaid in his father's house, and declared that he preferred her to all the fashionable beauties who had courted his notice. His family protested, but to no purpose. The only concession he would make was to consent to go to Europe for three years before marrying the girl. In the meantime, having an independent fortune, the lover placed her at one of the best schools in New York. The girl was ambitious and devoted in her affection for the man, who had chosen her. He returned, found her more lovely than ever. They were married, and the lady is now one of the leaders of society in the city where they live—a noble, refined, charming woman.

An eminent jurist, well-known in Pennsylvania in the early part of this century, was "making the circuit" on horseback, and stopped for dinner at the house of a farmer. The daughter of the farmer waited on them, and the judge—who had been a cynic about women—observed the peculiar gentleness of her voice and a certain sweet candor in her face. After dinner the farmer said:

"Mary, bring the judge's horse." Mary started to the field, which was inclosed by a barred fence. Laying her hand on the topmost rail she vaulted lightly over.

"I saw," said the judge afterward, "for the first time, a woman with the mind and body I should require in my wife. I called again and again at Farmer C.'s. At last I sent Mary to school for a couple of years, and here she is," nodding to the stately matron who presided at his table.

The sons of the judge and this Maud Muller all attained distinction; one, like his father, at the bar; another was an eminent divine, and a third was a Southern candidate for the presidency. All were noted for their fiery eloquence, their high sense of honor and a certain appetite for fighting which was well sustained by strong physical health. The judge had not been mistaken in Mary's qualities of mind or body.—*Youth's Companion.*

Fashion Notes.

The leading bonnet is the gable-roof poke. Black dresses are again in high favor abroad.

Only out-door costumes are made of cachemire des Indes.

Visites with ends falling to the knees in front are more diminutive than formerly, so as not to hide the beauties of the toilet beneath.

Among the novelty trimmings we find cashmere intermingled with gold, mixtures of leather and gold lace, plain leather laces and plain leather pipings.

Three thicknesses of satin, shirred on cords and secured to the crown of the hat in double box plaits so as to produce the shell style, is new and effective.

The latest ribbons are the velvet centers with cashmere figures on either side, Ottomans with brocade figures in all shades, and velvets with cashmere borders.

A simple and graceful overskirt has a deep, round apron front that reaches to the foot of the underskirt. Several thick, full plaits are laid at each side of the apron, and the back has two full breadths of the material to be draped in soft folds.

Tailor-made dresses grow in popular favor. They will be worn for lawn tennis and croquet parties for the house, the seaside and mountain use, and in all colors, light and dark, white black and tinted, according to the occasion, time and place.

New styles in hats and bonnets are the Langtry, with the crown set low and the front raised; Patti, a medium poke with square crown; Bernadine, projecting front, sloped at the sides and raised in the back; Gem, a small bonnet with Normandy crown; Es-cort, with double-edged brim and bell-crown; Rival, a walking hat; Crescent, square bell crown, brim sloping front and back with inverted edge; Magnolia, oval crown and curved brim; Clifton, a dress hat, drooping over the face; Promenade, walking hat with round crown and Derby brim; Conquest, dress hat; Fedora, handsome dress hat with square crown, narrow and drooping on the right, a raised curve on the left and double-edge brim; Coquette, bonnet similar to last season's Langtry, and the Bon Ton, with its low, square crown sloping at the back, deep brim high in front, close at the sides and short in the back.