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NO. 1.

MIGHT HAVE BEEN.

With kindly eyes you smile, and say
In your low, dulcet vibrant way,
"Why speak of blame?"
But life to me was gay, serene,
No pang or thought of might have been,
Until you came.

My placid life in ordered round
Passed without passions, stir, or sound;
But now, my eyes in yours have seen
The blazing joys of might have been.

Long years ago love smiled, and I
With kiss-tipped finger passed him by;
I dreamt of fame,
Now with love's glowing, bitter hands
Yet murmur "Blame."

All mine the blame; you could not know
That in dear dreams of long ago
I touched your hair's soft auburn sheen,
And heard your voice—the might have
been.
—Frank Hird, in Country Life.



About a Burglar, an Inventor and a Patent Time Lock

By GEORGE E. WALSH.

"YES," said the gentlemanly burglar, "there is one class of men that I occasionally stumble upon in my midnight work which I prefer to avoid. An inventor is always an unknown quantity, and it is an unpleasant business ransacking his house. He might be as harmless as a child, or he might prove more disaboli-cally cruel and cranky than an escaped lunatic. Only twice in my experience have I met such characters in their own homes. One was in a suburban house, where everything seemed so easy that I took my time about entering the open windows; but after I had stepped inside I knew that there was something wrong. I found the floor strewn with all sorts of strings and pipes and coils of wire, which, when I stepped upon them, jangled and made all sorts of noises.

"I tried to get out of the window as soon as possible, but I was so tied up in the wires and strings that I tumbled twice. Then the owner of the house appeared, aroused by the jangling noises made by his infernal things. There was a scene that nearly cost me my life. I escaped, however, by tearing around among the pipes and wires until the man went down on his knees and begged me to desist. He offered me everything in his house if I would spare his invention. I had entered his workshop on the ground floor, and every footstep of mine smashed some of his precious things. What did I do? Why, I accepted his apologies for interfering with my work, took his gold watch and spare cash, and departed. The last I saw of the inventor he was seated on the floor wringing his hands in agony over his broken toys. I never knew what invention he was trying to make, but it was such a queer sort of infernal machine that I never want to stumble upon it again.

"The other instance where I paid an unexpected visit to an inventor's home was in New York. The fellow was somewhat of a crank, I imagine, and he invented things for the pleasure of it. I knew nothing about his occupation until I aroused him in the middle of the night by stumbling over his shoes in the middle of the floor. He was the most composed man I ever met under similar conditions.

"Why do you frighten a man in that way?" he asked, crossly. "Is it not bad enough to rob the house without waking me up by such noises?"

"Any man who throws his shoes in the middle of the floor deserves to be rudely awakened," I answered, turning up the gas to study the man better. "I owe you no apology."

"You are wrong," he answered. "You do owe me an apology. If you had shut the door of my room behind you, I might have accepted the situation. But any man who will leave such a draught blowing on a sleeping man deserves to be—"

"I accept the correction," I replied, bowing and stepping toward the door. "I will apologize and at the same time close the door."

"The perfect composite of the man had aroused my suspicions, and I discreetly kept my face toward him while I backed toward the door and closed it. There was a click of the lock, and the door banged sharply against the jam.

"You have closed it with a very bad grace and with little thought of the consequences," the man added. "If you had given me time to explain you might have saved yourself a good deal of inconvenience. As it is now, I think you have made the situation unpleasant for both of us."

"I do not understand," I muttered, more nonplussed than ever by the man's words and attitude.

"I suppose not, but your ignorance does not alter the fact. I shall, however, seek to enlighten you. To do so I must go back somewhat in my story. 'I'm an inventor by profession'—these words made me shudder—and I am just now at work upon a very great thing. In fact, it will prove a revolution in some lines of trade. I mean to invent a time lock which will prove superior to any on the market to-day. This lock will be of value in an infinite variety of ways, but chiefly for use on safes and bank vaults. All that you have to do is to set it for a certain length of time, and no earthly power can unlock it. You may blow up the safe or vault, but the steel bolts will not move from their position. It will remain locked until the time expires, and then the steel spring will open it automatically.

"I have met such locks in my work before," I said, impatiently; "but what has that to do with the present case?"

"Very much, indeed. If you were of a discerning nature you would have noticed the connection before now. I have put the time lock on that door to test it. Every night I retire and lock the door, and no power can open it until 7 in the morning."

"A mighty good protection from your wife," I answered with a grin. "But why was the door open when I entered?"

"That also will I explain. The night was so hot that I thought I would leave the door open. Besides, my wife is away, visiting her mother."

"Now I understand. Then I am to believe that I am locked in here with you until 7 in the morning?"

"Exactly, and that is the time the private watchman raps on the outside door to see if all is well."

"I see," I replied, smiling less pleasantly. "But you would not dare signal to the watchman that you had a burglar in your room. I would shoot you the instant you did so."

"I'm afraid you are too hasty, and do not understand the life work of an inventor. I would not have to signal. There is an automatic device on the outer door which would warn him. That cannot be disconnected so long as the door is closed."

"For the first time I began to feel a little creepy, but I answered with what suavity I could command. "But what if I break down the door? It is only made of wood."

"That would be impossible. It is four inches thick and made of stout oak and is braced with steel ribs. Nothing short of dynamite could blow it open."

"But the windows?" I continued. "I have slid down the sides of houses before now with nothing but bed quilts to support me."

"The man sighed—there was no mistaking that. He looked almost pathetically at me, and then said:

"I'm sorry to shatter another delusion of yours, but that avenue of escape is totally closed. It would mean instant death to you. If you will notice the iron grating at the windows you may gather my meaning. Those small steel bars are charged with electricity enough to kill a dozen men. If you attempted to cut them or pry them apart you would never live to tell the tale. Nor even I, with all my skill at mechanics and invention, could escape through the windows or touch one of the steel bars of the grating. Your only hope is to reach the basin of the house and turn off the switch, but that seems impossible until after 7 in the morning."

"I felt now the perspiration breaking out on my forehead, for I was undoubtedly in a trap, locked up in a room with the owner of the house, with no possible means of escape until day-

light. For some time I lost my nerve and stared helplessly at the inventor before me. He looked so pathetically sorry for me that I almost laughed in his face.

"Do not make light of it," he broke out, reproachfully. "For no man should look death or prison in the face without sorrow and remorse. I should think that your past deeds would—"

"See here, old man," I interrupted. "I may be shut up in a room with you all night, but I'm not going to be lectured. I'd rather do the talking if there's any to be done."

"But, sir, I'm thinking only of your welfare—of your soul's safety in the hereafter. I should like to reform you and turn you away from your path of crime. We have six hours together before us, and if in that time I could convince you—"

"You cannot," I interrupted rudely. "I wish to rest and sleep. It will do me more good than if—"

"You must be very far gone, indeed, if you can sleep at such a time as this. In all my experience with criminals I have never yet found one who would not—"

"I yawned and stretched myself on the sofa opposite him and closed my eyes. "If you do not wish me to kill you, pray be quiet. I have no need for your sermon."

"Ah, you will speak differently some—but be careful how you stretch yourself on that sofa. It has a patent spring invented by me which will make it close up with a click and suffocate you in a moment if you should accidentally touch the knob."

"What a confounded hole this room is!" I exclaimed, jumping from the sofa and standing in the middle of the room. "Is there anything else of your invention in this room?"

"Nothing of importance; that is, nothing except the chairs, which have collapsible backs and legs. If you should happen to seat yourself on one and tip over to the right it might—"

"I moved away from the nearest chair and took a seat on the foot of the bed near my midnight acquaintance. "The bed at least is all right, I suppose," said I.

"Not if two get on it. It will stand just 150 pounds and no more."

"What will happen then?" I demanded fiercely, standing up once more.

"It will spring—"

"The man could not finish his sentence. His face suddenly blanched, and I felt my nerves shaking. Had I accidentally touched some secret button or knob which would bring death and destruction down upon both of our heads? I heard footfalls outside in the hall, but they had little meaning for me. I was wondering what would happen next.

"Then there was a turn of the door-knob, and suddenly the door opened, and a vision of white nightclothes stood before us. A voice asked sharply: "John, what are you doing at this time of the night with the gas turned up so high? Are you up to your old—"

"Then there was a shriek, and the woman dropped in a heap on the floor, swooning before my eyes as she caught sight of me. I turned an inquiring eye toward the man in bed, but he avoided returning the gaze.

"Mandy, why did you come here and spoil it all?" he said. "I—"

"The truth was dawning upon my mind, and in a few moments I recovered sufficiently to say: "You deserve a horsewhipping, old man, but I'll let you off easy. Now that the door is open I think I shall bid you good night."

"I hurried somewhat nervously down the stairs, for, after all, I was not certain that the man was faking, but I believe to this day that he was no inventor at all. If he wasn't, he had a pretty fertile imagination."—New York Times.

A Strange Timekeeper.

A naturalist while visiting Great Sangir, one of those islands in the Indian Ocean known as the Celebes or Spice Islands, found a curious time recorder in the house of a rajah. Two bottles were firmly lashed together and fixed in a wooden frame. A quantity of black sand ran from one bottle into the other in just half an hour, and when the upper bottle was empty the frame was reversed. Twelve short sticks marked with notches from one to twelve were hung upon the string. A hook was placed between the sticks, bearing the number of notches corresponding to the hour last struck and the one to be struck next. The sertry announced the time by striking the hour on a large gong.

World's Most Expert Swordsman.

The most expert swordsman in the world is Lieutenant Barrett, R. N. One of his cleverest feats is to cut in halves with a sword a bar of lead, the ends of which rest on the bowls of clay pipes smoked by two bluejackets. With such care and precision is the feat performed that the pipes are left perfectly uninjured. A variation of the same trick is done by placing two open razors, about one and one-half feet apart, with a thin strip of paper laid between. Over the paper is placed a bar of lead which Lieutenant Barrett cuts through with one dexterous stroke, leaving the paper intact and the razors standing up edgewise. He also cleverly performs the same feat by placing the bar of lead on two glass tumblers filled with water.

Lieutenant Barrett is not only a good swordsman himself, but he has taught his wife to use the sharp-edged blade with almost equal dexterity as himself, and the two often give capital entertainments in public for deserving charities.

One of Mrs. Barrett's most daring feats is to cut in halves with a sharp sword a potato balanced on her husband's neck. This feat seems decidedly risky when one realizes that the slightest error of judgment in the stroke would probably prove fatal, but Mr. Barrett has such confidence in the skill of his wife that he has gone through the performance hundreds of times.—London Illustrated Mail.

A Homely Consumption Cure.

Mrs. Wolfe, the mother of the great general, kept a comprehensive cookery book, still preserved at Squerries Court, Kent. One of her recipes was for "A good water for consumption." "Take a peck of garden snails," says the prescription, "wash them in beer, put them in an oven, and let them stay there till they're done crying; then, with a knife and fork, prick the green from them, and beat the snails, shells and all, in a stone mortar. Then take a quart of green earth worms, slice them through the middle and straw them with salt, then wash them and beat them, the pot being first put into the still with two handfuls of angelica, a quart of rosemary flowers, then the snails and worms, then egrimony, bears' feet, red dock roots, barbery brake, biloney, wormwood, of each two handfuls, one handful of rue-tumoric, and one ounce of saffron, well dried and beaten. Then power in three gallons of milk. Wait till morning, then put in three ounces of cloves (well beaten), hartshorn graed. Keep the still covered all night. This done stir it not. Distill it with a moderate fire. The patient must take two spoonfuls at a time."—London Daily Chronicle.

Civilization of Africa.

I was forcibly struck the other day by the extent to which Darkest Africa is being opened up. Looking through the illustrated program of the Anglo-American Nile Steamer and Hotel Company, I see that you can not only travel in a luxurious style all the way to Khartoum, but you can go by steamer up the White Nile to Gondokoro, the most northerly post of the Uganda Protectorate—a journey of over a thousand miles through an absolutely uncivilized country, and one which Europeans have only penetrated within the last few years. This is really a wilder, though probably an easier, tour than the trip from Mombasa up the Uganda Railway. Boats are making the excursion in January, February and March. As for Egypt itself, the fine boats of the Anglo-American Company have made the trip as easy and comfortable as a run to Monte Carlo by the train de luxe—perhaps more so.—London Truth.

Consumption Not Dangerous.

Consumption is a preventable, curable, communicable, but by no means a dangerously contagious disease. Among those who were once afflicted with it and were ultimately lastingly cured we count the brightest minds, the most generous and truest hearts. The German poet Goethe, our own Peter Cooper, the French poet Coppee, were among them. The greatest German specialist, Herman Brehmer, who cured himself and thousands of others from this disease; his two greatest contemporaries and co-workers, still alive and active, Dettweller in Germany and Trudeau in this country, are all examples of the highest type of men.

Commerce between the United States and Russia during the last fiscal year greatly surpassed that of any previous year.

NOVELS TO ORDER.

How the Five and Ten Cent Thrillers Are Made.

The task of putting into readable shape stirring tales about Jesse James, Alkali Pete, Gentleman Jim, Wild Bill, the Gold King, the Boy Detective and other heroes whose exploits thrill small boys, is not done by writers of the same heroic and fire-eating type as the characters portrayed. Men who write such stories need principally a fertile imagination, a capacity for hard work and the ability to turn out thousands of words of readable stuff a day to make them successful.

They have never rescued imperiled maidens, tracked Indians and murderers over deserts and mountain trails, or recovered lost fortunes. Many of them have never seen a live Indian or cowboy, have a bare speaking acquaintance with the detectives at headquarters, and carry no six-shooters in their back pockets.

More than one dime novel publishing firm has made a fortune at the business of providing literature for Young America, and that in the days when they paid a writer from \$75 to \$250 for a story. Things are done differently now.

Each dime-novel publishing house employs a staff of writers, who receive a regular salary. Besides the staff of regular contributors, persons who can be depended upon to turn in a fixed amount of copy every week, each publishing house has a list of workers who can write a story to order and at short notice.

When a regular writer falls ill or takes a vacation, or when some special event happens which makes a foundation for a plot for a popular novel, one of these special writers is communicated with and is ordered to dash off a story on three or four days' notice. Inspiration forms a small part of the dime-novel writer's stock in trade, for nearly all his stories are written to order. In these cases the writer follows a plot suggested by the publisher, and does not even select the title.

It is said that regular writers of dime novels, men who do no other kind of work, are able to produce a story of from 40,000 to 50,000 words a week, and to keep it up for six months in the year. The writer cannot attempt to think out his plot and arrange the events in the hero's life before sitting down to write, as that would take too long.—Buffalo News.

FOOLED BY HIS OWN TRICK.

Joker Rushed to See Accident He Had Invented.

Strangers in New York always notice and comment on the childlike curiosity of the crowds on Broadway. New Yorkers will stop and look at anything, from the hoisting of a safe to the uplifting of a fallen horse, and they chase fire engines like boys.

An incident of this sort is related by one of the older bankers. When Rufus Hatch was in his prime there was a little restaurant down town where the men of finance took luncheon. Hatch was in a hurry. There seemed to be no chance. So he said to the man in charge, loud enough to be heard all over the small room: "Terrible accident down at the Battery."

"What?" asked the manager. "Full-rigged ship has just gone down in the channel, with a lot of people on board."

There was an immediate rush for the door. Tables were deserted, and the men who were eating ran pell-mell down Broadway. Hatch sat down and ate a quiet luncheon. Then he paid his check and went out. The street was full of people running toward the Battery.

"What's the matter?" asked Hatch. "Ship gone down with a lot of people on board?" gasped the runner. "Gracious!" shouted Hatch. "That so? I must see that." So, too, ran down the street, hoisting his own hoax.—Philadelphia Post.

Amusing Theatricals.

A curious theatrical is in the Stadt in the following: "In order to reduce the number of men."