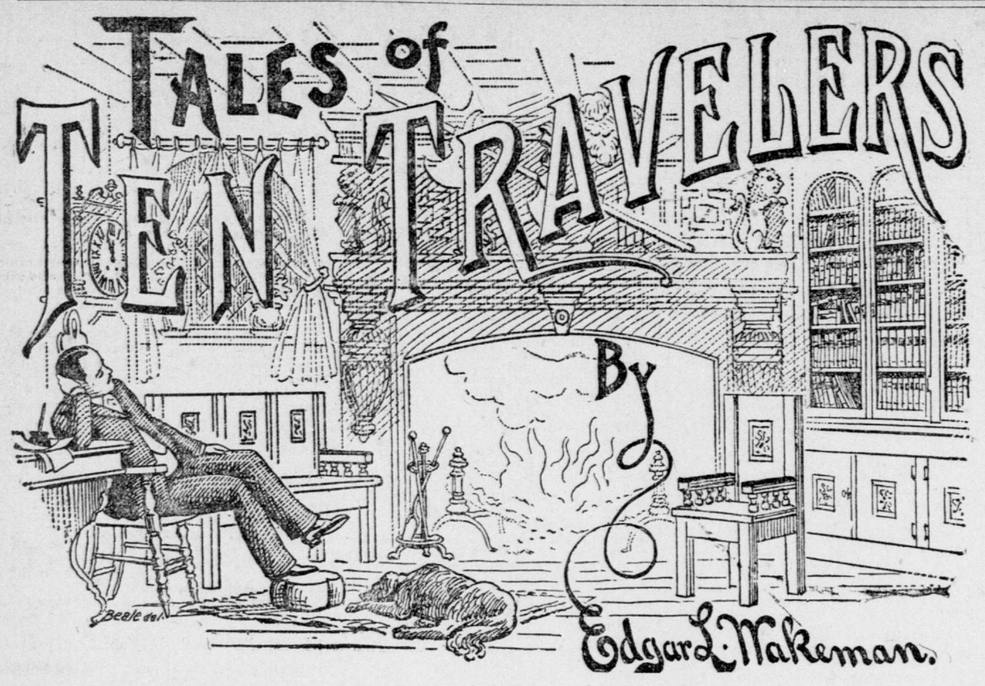


MANAGING EDITOR'S VACATION.

[Copyright, 1894, by Edgar L. Wakeman. All rights reserved.]

I.

The Board of Directors of the "Daily Public Motor Printing and Publishing Company," five in number, met annually on the first day of July.

Their duties usually comprised the declaring of a very large dividend, ordering certain handsome improvements, electing a President, Secretary and Treasurer for the ensuing year, and adjournment to Vinley's for luncheon.

This was partaken of in comfortable gusto, when they went their several ways, as befitted their various social and commercial dignities, complacently carrying fresh copies of the "Daily Motor" in their hands, with acceptable "Motor" dividend checks in their pockets and with the sunshine of the "Motor's" great prosperity radiating from their bland and pleasant faces.

But this year the Directors, as Mr. Elijah Whittaker truthfully remarked, had "struck a powerful snag."

Mr. Whittaker was in the towing line, and this was natural a favorite form of expression. He had "boarded" the "Motor Company" when it had needed a few thousands sorely, and his journalistic associations had made him quick in simile and comparison.

Indeed similar conditions were true of the entire directory.

Gregg Lomster, wholesale leather; Lucius Shotwell, banker; Addison Schooley, importer, and Rufus Backus, retired capitalist, were all, like Mr. Whittaker, sudden acquisitions on various occasions when the "Motor's" affairs were in perilous condition.

These farsighted gentlemen had become associated in this commercial way so long before, that the founders of this powerful engine of civilization, following the invariable and inexplicable fate of originators, had, with one exception, passed from sight into wonted beggary and oblivion.

The directory, as now formed, had existed for years, placid in its equable and ample returns, serene in its unctuous honors, undisturbed by its almost ripple-less harassments, in the genial and mellow atmosphere of proprietary journalism.

The one exception was Kirtley Breem, the "Daily Motor's" managing editor.

He was a thin, dark little man, with bushy brows and sunken eyes and cheeks. His clothing hung loosely upon him. He came and went as softly and silently as the night. From 9 in the morning until 9 at night, and often much later, during every day of the year for more than twenty years, he had sat at the same desk in his shirt sleeves, with an old straw hat shading his eyes and a cob pipe in his mouth, and he had never uttered an unnecessary word in all that time.

You could not find his address in the city directory. The general public knew nothing of him. His name never appeared in panels of prominent citizens, drawn for great public platform occasions.

Not a soul connected with the "Daily Motor" knew where he lived, or how; or whether he was a bachelor or was human enough to have divers little Breems dangling and romping about him in the morning hour, or hour of lamplight he might know the sacred retreat which wise men have in homes.

He was inexplicable, inextricable, ineradicable. Entirely aside from his powerful though frictionless sway, his unobtrusive personality had become as inseparable a presence, or fixture, in the "Daily Motor" system as its engine fires, its press thunderings, its copy, its types, its supernal odor of printer's ink, its hundreds of ragged newsboys or its loiterers for nickels or notices.

Social systems had changed; this department editor and that, had come and gone; newspaper management had been revolutionized; monarchies had become republics; geographies of continents had been readjusted, but Kirtley Breem, who had come in with the founders of the "Daily Motor," still sat there coatless at his desk under an old straw hat, smoking a short cob pipe and doing his work as noiselessly as though he were the ghost of the human who had begun his silent though mighty toil at the self-same desk, more than twenty years before.

"What's the trouble about Breem, anyhow, Editor Whittaker?" asked the other "Motor" director editors concernedly.

Years before they had begun calling each each other 'editor,' partly seriously, partly in jest, and the title was of such pleasant sound and significance that it would have been something of a hardship to have it overlooked in the city directories by their contemporaries or by each other now.

"Well," replied Editor Whittaker stoutly, "it's jest a case of git Kirtley Breem out o' commission, long enough for repairs, or we kin look 'round for some other craft in his place."

"Failing powers?" asked Editor Backus casually.

"We might increase his salary," suggested Editor Shotwell crisply.

"Or reduce his wages and his hours," added Editor Lomster cautiously. "I have found that to be quite an excellent spur to lagging help."

"What appear to be the chop marks on his invoice of trouble?" inquired Editor Schooley, with his huge importations uppermost in his own mind.

"Kinder general goneness I'd call it," returned Editor Whittaker anxiously. "The other day I come up here to the board room to figure up a little, an' Breem rode up in the elevator 'long with me. He jest nodded. Nothin' cordial or hearty about it. I thought to myself: 'You're stoopin' more'n common, Kirtley Breem!' but didn't mention it; he's so cussed touchy."

"Cussed touchy!" echoed the other director editors sympathetically.

"Well, when he got off at his floor he kinder whirled 'round dazed like as though he'd forgot where his room was. 'What's the matter with Breem?' I said, thinkin' out loud. 'Terbacky!' piped up that jackanapes o' an elevator boy. 'Bosh!' says i; 'an' no more remarks like that about your betters, or ye'll git your envelope at the office, that's what you'll git, sonny,' says I. I went to figurin', but kep' thinkin' o' Kirtley Breem."

"It does you honor," remarked one of the director editors encouragingly.

"It don't do us honor that we hain't been thinkin' o' him long ago!" retorted Editor Whittaker feelingly. "We've got more'n a thousand per cent. on our money already. Who's made it fur us? Kirtley Breem! Who's been tuggin' an' puffin' an' strainin' an' haulin' an' bulletin' an' plungin' while we got 'round takin' toll? Kirtley Breem!"

"Kirtley Breem!" two or three of the director editors murmured placidly.

"Who's put the 'Daily Public Motor' ahead o' any other newspaper in the whole kentry; got it nigh onto two hundred thousand daily circulation, and made it pay us 30, 40, sometimes 50 per cent. on our shares?"

"Kirtley Breem!" they answered thoughtfully and in unison.

"I should say so," snorted Editor Whittaker, rapping the desk loudly with his bronzed knuckles. "An' that's what I thought on when I set there figurin'. That's what I kep' thinkin' on when I begun askin' questions 'round th' office, an' found Kirtley Breem had been cooped up there like a slave mor'n twenty year! 'That's what makes him stagger,' says i, startin' fur his room."

"Starting for his room?" several of the director editors exclaimed incredulously.

"Yes, startin' an' gittin' there, too. 'Breem,' says i, 'I want to see you down t' th' docks a minute.' 'Not now,' said he, lookin' up savage. 'Right now,' says I. He looked up agin gaspin' like at his work, then at his watch an' says: 'Do you realize what there is to be done here at this time o' th' day, Mr. Whittaker?' 'Prob'ly not,' says I. 'An' it don't make no difference if I don't. The 'Motor'll' run itself fur half a hour or so.'"

"And Kirtley Breem went with you?" they asked with increasing interest.

"Well, sorter went; mostly towed though. I got him onto my fast tug, 'Greased Lightnin'"—steam's always up on her—tipped the Cap'n a wink, an' we shot out into th' harbor in a jiffy before Kirtley Breem knew what was up!"

"Whew!" exclaimed the interested director editors. "How did he take it?"

"He didn't take it. He jest got white an' says: 'Put me ashore at once, sir!' 'Not much,' says I, 'till you've had a breakfast on sea air.' 'I'll hold you responsible to the directory, sir!' says he. 'Go it,' says I, noddin' to th' Cap'n t' put on more steam. 'This is an outrage, sir!' says he. 'It's what you need, 'n' got t' have, paper or no paper,' says I.

"Good!" said several of the director editors heartily.

"Bad!" ejaculated Whittaker warmly. "He jest turned away from me, straighter 'n' I've ever seen him; run his holler eyes up an' down th' bay; caught sight o' an opposition tug headin' toward th' city, about a thousand feet for'ard; waited a bit, studyin' like; an', finally, with a polite, 'Good mornin', Mr. Whitter!' took a header into the water, come up five hundred feet aft o' th' 'Greased Lightnin',' an' made for that other tug like an ol' salt, now an' agin raisin' his hand an' motionin' 'em to slow up. They did, too; hove him a line, pulled him aboard, an' th' last I seed of him he was a settin' on th' capst'n dryin' off an' writin' out assignments with pencil an' paper he'd borrered from somebody on that pesky opposition tug!"

Mingled expressions of surprise, merriment and concern followed Editor Whittaker's recital. When these had quieted the doughty tug owner said solemnly:

"That night he quit two hours later than usual, more holler-eyed, humped an' gone-lookin' than ever. Kirtley Breem's got to have a vacation if the "Motor" stops while he's takin' it!"

"Well, well, well!" "Bless me, bless me!" "To be sure!" "Without doubt," and "Certainly, certainly!" followed this determined sentiment, and the "Motor" directors at once set about discussing ways and means to effect the desired result.

It was the only distracting conference the "Motor" directors had ever known.

Who should convey their decision to this strange man who was breaking down at his post and who regarded it as the most of all deadly affronts to be interrupted, in his own interest, in his life-consuming toil? What recourse could be resorted to if he refused to go? How could they cajole, wheedle or bully a man of his indomitable purpose into leaving for a day, a week or a month, the labor which was destroying him, and yet in which the very elixir of his waning life was found?

It was a strange experience to these proprietary journalists to encounter such a character. The more they discussed Kirtley Breem the farther he seemed from them; the more necessary to them and their great property.

The entire matter, they all agreed, was portentous, must receive immediate attention, and could only be handled in the most delicate diplomatic manner.

No one of them could be prevailed upon to singly undertake the mission. It should be effected, they at last decided, through the full board, acting as one man. No one should shirk responsibility. And their managing editor should be made to feel that there was no temporizing with the real power behind the "Daily Public Motor;" no, indeed!

He was therefore immediately summoned before them. It was the first time this had ever occurred, and when Kirtley Breem entered the board-room he was at a loss to understand the significance of the "Motor's" chief owners all sitting confusedly together as if busied in inexplicable problems beyond recall and nudging each other as though their tongues were lost.

He stood there in the attitude of one impatient to return to his work. One hand held the knob of the half open door while the other slowly removed his old straw office hat. He gave them all a searching glance, as some inventor mechanic, called from his masterful toil to parley with investing novices, might unconsciously permit a gleam of contempt to flash through his long-habit look of subserviency.

Then he turned as if to depart, but the board recovered itself suddenly and just in time to arrest his attention.

"Oh—ah—Mr. Breem?" Editor Lomster managed to articulate.

"Oh—ah—Mr. Breem?" came jerkily from the other members of the board.

"Sit down a moment, Mr. Breem, please," urged Editor Schooley, looking around helplessly for somebody else to begin.

"Yes, yes, do sit down;" "Little matter, you know;" "Want to get better acquainted;" "Quite a pleasure, I declare;" and "A little rest'll do you good, Mr. Breem," followed from members of the board in quick succession.

The last remark by Editor Shotwell was a happy one. It somewhat relieved the general embarrassment. The managing editor seated himself wearily, fixing his attention upon the open door with the weariness of a picket when the enemy's lines crowd closely.

"We wish to congratulate you, Mr. Breem, on the success, the extraordinary success, of the 'Motor,'" began Editor Shotwell uneasily.

"Success of the 'Motor,'" the other four blandly echoed.

"And express our satisfaction as to the general—general—"

"State of the market," ventured Editor Lomster in a burst of helpful enthusiasm, suddenly recalling the recent happy advance in hides.

"And emphasize our approval of your editorial management in every particular save on one point," bravely insisted Editor Backus.

"One point," the others heartily reiterated.

Here Kirtley Breem's thin fingers crushed his old straw hat like a bunch of "killed copy."

"On that p'int," blurted out Editor Whittaker firmly, "we can't by no means agree. That p'int is—"

"Never mind, sir!" came quickly and quite as decidedly from the managing editor. "You shall have my resignation in your hands in five minutes' time!"

As Kirtley Breem said this there was an awful look in his strange, cadaverous face; a look such as might come over the face of one who, whipped on by a steadfast love or heroic duty or sacrifice in endless and rewardless toil, reaches suddenly the ultimate of effort—in terror for its swift ruin to others, transfigured in momentary realization of a pitiless scourge at end.

Some instinctive consciousness of this seemed to flit through the mines of the men before him, and for a miment it stilled them. But in an instant more they were all upon their feet, restraining him from his purpose and filling the room with the clamor of their protests.

"Lord!—we didn't mean that!" gasped Editor Whittaker, in a very perspiration of mild desperation. "Can't we no ways git inside your machinery long 'nuff t' do a leetle friendly packin' an' oilin', Kirtley Breem?"

The managing editor arose to go. Editor Whittaker, with a quick move of his fat little body, reached the door before him, snapped it shut with a loud click, turned the key in the lock, and with his dumpy brown hands behind him and his dumpy broad back against the door he exclaimed triumphantly:

"Kirtley Breem, it's no use! You've got t' listen t' th' voice o' reason. You're killin' yourself here. This 'ere board's unanimously decided that you've got t' take a vacation. All work and no play—hang the rest of it!—t' kinder go into dry dock 'n' git th' barnacles off yer copper 'n' yer gineral apparatuses brightened up. Now, make it four, six or eight weeks, jest as ye like; but out ye go tomorrer mornin'!"

"Good, good!" "Go it!" enthusiastically cried the rest of the board.

"We ain't no all around editors like you be, Kirtley Breem; but we're goin' t' take turns here at th' wheel while you go below. If she (the "Motor" was undoubtedly referred to) goes smooth, then smooth she goes! If she goes jinkey an' crinkey we won't mind a few cogs a-slippin'! Git yer dunnage t'gether t'night, Breem. Now, no hemmin' an' hawin'! It's passed the board 'thout ary nay!"

The managing editor was helpless in their hands and he looked it. He seemed to be panting like a caged animal. More than once he endeavored to rise, and then to speak. His eyes flamed and paled and appeared to penetrate, out above their heads, to the remotest outreachings of the great establishment. If these men could have known they could not but have followed them on, on, far beyond all that.

"I've been here very, very long," he faltered.

"Don't matter," retorted Editor Whittaker doggedly. "All th' wuss!"

"You are all very kind, gentlemen. But—but I simply cannot afford it."

As he said this, his self-consciousness was of meanness and insignificance. To them he seemed infinitely beyond and above them. Five fat hands instantly made five swift dives into five plethoric pockets.

"Oh, it isn't that! It isn't that!" came so like a cry from the lips of Kirtley Breem, as the old straw hat swished through the air, that the five fat hands relaxed and slid silently from their receptacles.

"Anybody weighting you down, keeping you back, choking you off, smothering you under, Breem?" Editor Lomster, who had for a time been silent, blurted suddenly at the bowed man upon the rack.

"Who said there was? Who dare say that!" he answered back hoarsely and fiercely, shaking his clenched fist and crushed hat defiantly at the speaker. "My God! Let me out of here at once!—at once, gentlemen!"

Trembling and palid, Kirtley Breem sprang toward the door. But Editor Whittaker anticipated him. He had one arm about him in a twinkling, holding him gently yet firmly as in a vise. He raised the other hand and let it flutter back and forth toward his astounded companions for a long time before he seemed able to gather fitting words from his turbid and onrushing thoughts and conjectures.

"There's some things," he finally stammered, "a leetle too close t' th' vest t' bear onto even atween friends—as well as here. Kirtley Breem takes a vacation. That's passed the board. Kirtley Breem can afford it. That's passed the board. It's none o' th' board's business t'prod an' poke. That's passed the board. Whatever bothers anybody'll be 'tended to Kirtley Breem's own way. That's passed the board. I'll see Kirtley Breem privately. That's passed the board. Th' board now stands adjourned till t'morrer mornin' 9 o'clock sharp, ready fur editerial business. And that's passed the board 'thout ary nay!"

And, with this, Editor Elijah Whittaker, with their managing editor still captive in gentle bonds, withdrew from the most memorable board meeting the directory of the "Daily Public Motor Printing and Publishing Company" had ever known.

II.

Though it does not so often happen in this world of ours, supreme contempt can as swiftly be flashed into measureless esteem as passive admiration be transformed into revolting pity.

In a moment's time Kirtley Breem's isolate, desolate, self-prisoned life had been magically touched and softened—and here the only vacation the managing editor had ever known had really begun—by rough old Elizah Whittaker's cunning and protecting perception, for it carried along with it those firm, fine human qualities of consideration and compassion which can alone reach, reassure and rescue the sore and harried human heart.

They had passed the managing editor's desk and moved together without apparent purpose to a window overlooking the roofs and checkered channels of the great city. The dusk was already purpling the dusty ways and so swiftly marshaling the city lights that it soon seemed like a great firmament of upleaping stars beneath them.

Editor Whittaker saw that his companion's eyes were fixed on a little pockety hollow of shadow—a miserable quarter of the city which he also well knew—between high and crowding walls, perhaps half a mile to the north of Printing House Square, but he let him look and think undisturbed with his hand upon his shoulder, so long as the mood remained upon him.

Standing thus, his features were by turns set and hard, filled with alarm and apprehension, stern with sudden resolve, quivering in apparent hopeless pity, or drawn in pain and discouragement. At last hot tears tumbled from his face almost bounding, Editor Whittaker imagined, toward the dark hollow between the northern walls.

"This is inexcusable!" he faltered with a start, seeming to suddenly recollect that a board member stood beside him.

"Bosh! This is dead right!" retorted Editor Whittaker with a burst of feeling, in which objects grew hazy before his own pudgy face. "Ye don't have t' give it a name neither, Kirtley Breem!"

"Twenty-two years!" said the managing editor deliberately, as if thinking wonderingly aloud with an inclination of his head in the direction of the bit of light-surrounded shadow between the walls.

Editor Whittaker's rough hand stroked his shoulder softly and reassuringly.

"And always darkening, darkening just as you see it now!" This, still as if thinking aloud and with his thin finger trembling toward the spot which was fast merging from shadow into blackness.

"Lot's o' change in that time!" said Editor Whittaker comfortingly.

"In some things there is no change!" It came almost as a groan from Kirtley Breem's lips. Then, determinedly, "When must I leave the city?"

"Morning!—morning!" was the stout and almost aggressive reply.

"If I do not go—my place will be filled by another?"

"You go. That's passed the board!"

"Well, I will go on one condition."

"Needn't name it. It's yours before namin'."

"That you—no other human being, Mr. Whittaker—divide my salary each day into three equal shares, place the money in separate envelopes and have them delivered, by some person entirely disconnected with the employes of the office, and still so that there will be no doubt about their absolute delivery to the three persons whose names and addresses I will leave with you."

"You kin be jest as sure of it as that 'Lijah Whittaker lives."

"At about 9 o'clock every evening."

"Nine, t' th' stroke o' th' hour. Pull out your watch t' th' minute wherever ye be, an' know it's done!"

Kirtley Breem looked into the honest old eyes an instant, when he stepped to his desk with an almost youthful tread and wrote three names and addresses which Editor Whittaker placed laboriously in his wallet. Then the managing editor hastily set his books and papers aright, called his assistant and gave him a few general directions, and, with his still vigilant guard close beside him, with many timorous fits and starts and attempts to return, which were promptly checked by his companion, he at last found himself upon the crowded street.

"Don't it feel like out o' prison now, honest, Breem?"

"Honestly, it feels like the sensation of being hanged, but God bless you, Mr. Whittaker! is in the very tingle and choking of it all!"

"Tut, tut! Bother! Bosh! Why, he's a blessin' of you this very minute!"

They grasped hands and stood there silently for a moment. When Kirtley Breem's hand was withdrawn, there were bills of large denomination within it. The crowd had pushed between him and his companion, but he could see his fat hands waving him away and hear his kindly voice roaring above the din of the street:

"Jest a word, when you're anchored, t' know where ye be, if ye don't mind. Forgit th' "Motor." Forgit yourself. Forgit trouble. Go back twenty year—t' where ye was raised, mebby—an' begin over agin! Good-by!"

Whereupon Kirtley Breem set his again darkening face hurriedly toward the black spot between the towering city walls, and for the last time.

"That's a human bein' that's been murdered by inches half his lifetime," mused Editor Whittaker, watching him closely as he pushed through the dense early evening throngs of Park Row. "An' he's stood an' took it like steel, or one o' them air gods they tell about. I thought I had stuff in me. I ain't in th' same hundred year with that fellow."

He at once examined the slip of paper which Kirtley Breem had given him, and began muttering:

"Twelve Forsyth street? Forsyth street? That's no fit place for th' managin' editor o' th' "Motor" t' live in! That's a tough deestrict, that is. Mebby Breem don't live there? Mebby. Whew! Here, here, here, 'Lijah Whittaker, that won't do!"

He held the addresses out at arms' length under a shop window, scanning them eagerly and spelling them out carefully.

"'Mrs. Betsy Hopper, Housekeeper, Fourth Flat, 12 Forsyth street, City!'"

Editor Whittaker mopped his forehead, plumped on his spectacles and reflected for a moment dubiously.

"That looks bad; mighty bad. But it's only number one," he added hopefully.

"'Mistress Rachel Breem, Widow, Fourth Flat, 12 Forsyth street! Umph! That's better. 'Paul Breem' — what's this? 'G-a-m,' Gam. Gam?—Gam!—Gam? Shoved his pen through that three times. Bothered, an' some slip prob'ly. Same number, though; 12 Forsyth street!"

Editor Whittaker replaced the paper in his wallet, carefully put his spectacles in their case, shut his lips closely together, nodded his head several times jerkily, buttoned his coat across his chest as though setting out in stormy weather, boarded an up-town car and, a few minutes later, found himself plunging through the writhing masses, the loathesome scum of all nations that swarm like human maggots in the festering city trench known as Forsyth street.

He had scarcely found its Number 12 before he caught a glimpse of Kirtley Breem behind him. It was impossible for him to retreat, and he plunged into the shadowy entrance, groping to the right and left as he scrambled up the creaking stairs for some momentary retreat from observation.

This impulse spurred him into quickly clambering up, up, up. The footsteps of Kirtley Breem were close behind. "More by hit than wit," as he afterward related, his arm suddenly lunged forward into darkened space. He pushed after it and found himself in an open closet, safe from detection, at the very moment that Kirtley Breem, opening another door beside his own, stepped with the assured tread of familiarity into a dimly-lighted room beyond.

Editor Whittaker's breath and equanimity were soon regained. He saw that one side of the closet where he stood was fitted with a half door, waist high, and this was open. The miserable vista thus presented comprised three tiny rooms. One was a kitchen and a bedroom, another was a bedroom and a dining-room, while the third was a bedroom and something which stood for living-room and parlor. In the first was Betsy Hopper, housekeeper, grumblingly preparing a scant repast. In the second stood a little table spread with a scrimped cloth and a handful of dishes, and Kirtley Breem beside it, white and hesitant, a storm-whipped human slab of marble among the ruins and graves of hopes and loves and home.

In the third room was a white-haired old woman, propped in a rickety chair, bedecked as with the remnants of ancient finery. A look of fierce famine, wholly removed from physical hunger, was in her skinny face and flaming eyes, while her chattering lips uttered little gibbering shrieks of surprise or complaint or gleefulness at the varying fortunes of cards, shuffled, dealt or played above her lap from her own half-palsied hands, or from the fluttering, talon-like fingers of a man whose face reflected unmistakably lineaments of relationship with all her pitiful cunning and wolfish greed.

Then followed a little scene which opened to Editor Whittaker's astounded eyes such pages of the life-book in great towns as that hardened, softened, world-wise man had never even dreamed before.

Kirtley Breem stepped into the kitchen and placed some money in Betsy Hopper's hand.

"I shall go away for a little time, in the morning," he said quietly. "But it will all come every night at 9—don't let them doubt it for a moment, Betsy!—just as it has come every night for years."

Then he turned and walked steadily to the two at cards.

He came to his mother's side, put his hand into hers and let it rest there a moment, when he bent over her puffed and powdered locks and kissed her tenderly.

He took his brother's hand and it rested there a moment, too. In both, that which stood for his life blood remained.

Mother and brother clutched what they received just as fiercely, just as remorselessly, just as flippantly and ungratefully as the sateless maws of Chance would in turn clutch it from them; just as this trinity of harpies had done ten thousand times before!—and Kirtley Breem, in the infinite heroism of a devotion more hopeless than the grave, turned from his rapacious fatuity without a tremor in the pallid lines of his ghostly face.

III.

A fat and pudgy form dodged along through the street throngs behind Kirtley Breem on his way to a great uptown railway station the next morning, and a certain fat and pudgy face peered eagerly over Kirtley Breem's shoulder upon the ticket he had purchased with that halting yet eager and fluttering diffidence of a school boy on half-holiday quest for undetermined field of exploration.

This once scanned the fat and pudgy form wriggled quickly out of line into the impatient waiting crowds; its owner nervously watched Kirtley Breem until he had passed the ticket inspectors and his form, his shoulders and finally his hat, were lost in the waving bobbing of heads along the noisy platforms beside the trains, with an exclamation of undisguised satisfaction and relief at last turned to a railway map upon the wall, and, slowly repeating "Brice's Cove? Brice's Cove? Brice's Cove?" ran his fat and pudgy finger back and forth along the heavy dotted line.

"Umph! Never heerd o' that. Must be on salt water, though. Yes, yes; here 'tis. Flag Station. If it ain't jest like him t' bury hisself where there ain't nobody t' even plant a headstun over him!"

He now pushed his fat and pudgy head into the ticket window as there was a moment's lull in purchases and inquired anxiously about Brice's Cove.

"Twenty-eight miles out. First flag station. All rocks and trees and water. Half a dozen retired sea captains ramp round there. Nobody can live near 'em. One woman there; that's all we know of. She's telegraph operator and station agent. We call her 'General Manager Mary,' because she runs th' town and th' captains to boot!" glibly replied the voice in the window.

"Thankee, thankee, sir," answered the questioner heartily, replacing his spectacles in their case and turning abruptly away, muttering to himself:

"If General Manager Mary'll only run afoul o' Kirtley Breem an' send him t' drydock, till he king it remodeled fore an' aft, deck an' keel, 'Lijah Whittaker'll have the cussedest load offen his mind that ever got onto it yet! But, Lord!—all them other editors'll be waitin' down there t' th' "Motor" office t' begin!"

He thus set out from one completed task to another, cheerily comforting himself from time to time with the half audible reflections:

"One managin' editor's vacationin', anyhow; an' 'Lijah Whittaker's gained one o' his p'ints. If this editor business ain't too allfired weakenin' I'll tackle them gamblin' blood suckers t'-morrer an' t'-morrer ain't any too soon!"

When Kirtley Breem stepped from the scarcely halting train at Brice's Cove Station, the only passenger to alight among its jumble of gnarled coastwise trees and its huge, fantastically piled rocks, he felt a strange sense of insupportable weight in his limbs, a whirring and confusion in his ears, a dull beating and throbbing in his head, and, though it was still balmy and radiant morning, it seemed that a portentous hush and twilight were settling down upon him and closing him in as if by the fluttering pinions of night and rest, all alone there in the silent old hamlet where he was born.

Just a glance or two through this soothing twilight which was swiftly coming on revealed everything as he had left it more than twenty years before with mother and brother, and waiting sweetheart behind; his spirit big with resistless purpose, his soul swelling with lofty motive, his heart thrilling from what remained and what surely must be waiting for Mary Brice and Kirtley Breem, the other side of effort and its noble gains; the brown roadway winding among the fir-covered crags to the droning country nests among the sweet New England hills; the tumbling stream that sang itself asleep across the shallows within the shadowy cove; the "Point" where, like frowning frigates dragged to land, the huge old habitations raised great gables and ponderous chimneys above the dark masses of fir, where for centuries the storming sea captains—the Brices and the Breems—had dwelt, and where his father had never returned from the one voyage of wreck and death which had transformed the lad, Kirtley Breem, into the brave admiral of the helpless home fleet, and beyond, with ten thousand memory whispers now, the everlasting witchery of the smiling boundless sea.

To what measureless shores awakened recollection may instantly voyage amid the thunderings of reality or the silences of dreams, no adequate human revelation has been made. What illimitable geographies of dream-life hope and effort and dolor and loss, perhaps of half-hinted rediscovery, Kirtley Breem saw unrolled before him in but a single moment of time, can never be told or known.

But the clicking of the telegraph broke the spell upon him for a little. In this interval of material consciousness he somehow entered the tiny, vine-covered station and wrote this brief dispatch:

Elijah Whittaker, Esq.,
"Motor" Editorial Rooms,
New York City.

At Brice's Cove Station. No plans; and subject to recall at your convenience.

KIRTLEY BREEM.

He leaned against the counter after he had filed the message. Strangely, his fingers had clutched into the wire-guard as if for support. Faint and far distant were the form and face and voice of the matronly, bustling little woman who took the message and fee without looking up.

The clicking of the instrument begun to seem to him but as the echo back from some far continent. Its indistinct palpitation, rather than sound, was suddenly wholly stilled. The matronly little woman at the instrument swung around in her chair, sprang to her feet and thrust her face far forward across the counter to the white face at the window. Her hands gasped wildly at his clutching fingers in the wires.

"Kirtley!—Kirtley Breem! Is it you, or your ghost, at last?"

His lips scarcely moved, but there was a half articulate "Mary"—from between them. And that was all; for the man fell heavily and unconscious upon the station floor, and there, at the threshold of of his boyhood home and scenes, the blessed vacation of mental night and its rest had come, for a time, to Kirtley Breem at last.

It was upwards of a month later when the managing editor awoke. He was lying upon a broad bed in the huge parlor of the ancient Brice mansion. The room was high and long and wide and cool, and but for the outlandish relics of sailing in far off seas hanging grotesquely against its paneled walls it had the seeming to the one lying there of some pleasant cathedral nave. He knew the room. It was where, in the old days, his troth had been plighted with girlish Mary Brice.

His eyelids closed again, and he thought he heard the whisperings of the breeze through the rustling firs, the chattering and low songs of the birds within the shrubbery, even the measured throb of the sea against its walls. He had known and loved these sounds in his youthtide, long ago.

By and by it seemed as if he caught another old-time sound within the room, the steady click of a needle somewhere near his head.

He will look, he thinks, but his head will not move, and then his unsteady glance alights upon his own hand. It is so like a skeleton's that he imagines he smiles grimly. But the hand, if but a row of bones now, weighs incalculable tons and falls somewhere with a rattle? he wonders among the folds of the snowy counterpane. A quick ear has heard even so slight a movement as this. There are soft and hurried footsteps. Then a woman's figure is bending over him. He cannot see, but in her eyes are unutterable longing, infinite patience, unspeakable dread.

She gazes into his dull eyes an instant; rests one of her palms upon his forehead and hands with questioning touch, whispers to herself, "Thank God! He is out of danger now!" returns to her table and rereads for the thousandth time a telegram, more than a month old now, from Elijah Whittaker, which says: "Keep on forgetting her. Be as though she was nothing to you. She's bumping along like a raft in shallow water; but if you care for her, your own future or the future of them that's more than helpless, quit sending telegrams, and don't come back here till I give the word!"—when she stands and looks far out upon the sea, repeating pitifully to herself: "If it had not been for her. Oh, if it had not been for that!"

A gurgling sound as if the invalid would speak, brings her instantly to his side with cheerful, smiling face. She lifts him a little upon his pillow, feeds him tiny bits of broken ice, and finds that his emaciated hand is clinging fast to her own.

"Mary!—Mary Brice!" the almost motionless lips are whispering. "Can't—you—always—be—be—be to me like—like this?"

She merely soothingly answered:

"Kirtley, I will see!"

She leaves his bedside gently, taking the crumpled message with her. She straightway dons her hat and wrappings with determined little jerkings and stampings which jostle burning tears from her handsome, earnest eyes. And then, while another watcher sits beside Kirtley Breem through the livelong droning September day, "General Manager Mary Brice" and Acting Manager Editor Elijah Whittaker first know each other and all the sacrifice that was, and that very evening, when the invalid awakened from another vacation in the land of nothingness and rest and reached out his skeleton hand while his lips quiveringly formed the question of the morning, there was an exultant flutter beside him and he dreamed or he knew that a warm face pressed against his own while dreaming or knowing the first life-giving words of years:

"Kirtley, Elijah Whittaker says: 'Tell Kirtley Breem the board has unanimously so passed!'"

[For the RECORD-UNION.]

ROSE-FRUIT.

Seek not now those sweet, pale blooms
Whence came fair Junetime's sylvic grace
Of delicate colorings, sweet perfumes
Mid green leaves lace and interlace;
Where winding waters, clear and soft,
Went rippling under in glad tune,
For lo! no more on views aloft
The wild rose rings its bells for June!

But where the grapevine, rough and brown,
Alone its autumn garland weaves,
And where, by no kind winds blown down,
Tear-stained and sere, cling vagrant leaves,
Take now thy basket, lady fine,
And autumn's treasury go and loot,
For lo! full-flushed with summer's wine
A-tempting hangs the ripe rose-fruit!

—ELVYN IRVING HOFFMAN.

PERKINS WAS WANTED.

And He Turned Up Just in Time to Save Trouble.

Having rode all day in a stage over a rough trail, I went to bed tired out at an early hour. At 10 o'clock the landlord knocked on my door and called out:

"Stranger, did yer say yer name was Perkins?"

"No, of course not."

I had just got to sleep again when back he came to arouse me and ask:

"Stranger, did ye arrove yere on a spotted hoss or in a stage?"

"In a stage."

This time he was away a little longer, but it was not yet midnight, when he banged on the door and shouted:

"Stranger, excuse me, but are you a red-headed man?"

"No, sir; and why in Texas do you insist on disturbing me?"

"I don't insist. I'm doing it to obleege the crowd, and I hope ye won't take it amiss."

At 1:30 o'clock a banging at the door aroused me for the fourth time, and I got out of bed and opened it for the landlord to enter and say:

"'Scuse me, stranger, but hev ye got a hare-lip, and do yer ears stick out sideways?"

"Look here, man," I said as I noticed four or five other men in the hall outside, "what does all this business mean? You come banking around here to ask if I'm Perkins, and if I'm red-headed, and if I arrived here on a spotted horse and so on. Now, what do you want anyway?"

"Say, stranger, don't get riled," he soothingly replied: "Git right inter bed, and you won't be disturbed agin."

When I got up for breakfast and walked out into the street I saw a man hanging to a telegraph pole.

"Who did it?" I asked of the landlord.

"The boys," was his reply.

"What for?"

"Name was Perkins—red-headed—ears stuck out—harelip—stole the spotted hoss. That's why I disturbed ye last night. If ye wasn't Perkins, I wasn't going to say nuthin'; if ye was Perkins, I was goin' to offer ye a drink to brace yer nerves fur the emergency. Good thing he cum along about 2 o'clock, as the boys was thinkin' of hangin' ye on general principles if nuthin' better turned up."—New York Recorder.

TRIALS OF A TWIN.

In form and feature, face and limb,
I grew so like my brother,
That folks got taking me for him,
And each one for the other.
It puzzled all our kith and kin;
It reached a fearful pitch;
For one of us was born a twin,
And not a soul knew which.

One day, to make the matter worse,
Before our names were fixed,
As we were being washed by nurse,
We got completely mixed.
And thus, you see, by fate's decree,
Or rather nurse's whim,
My brother John got christened me,
And I got christened him.

This fatal likeness ever dogged
My footsteps when at school,
And I was always getting flogged
When John turned out the fool.
I put this question fruitlessly
To everyone I knew:
"What would you do if you were me,
To prove that you were you?"

Our close resemblance turned the tide
Of my domestic life;
For somehow my intended bride
Became my brother's wife.
In fact, year after year the same
Absurd mistakes went on,
And when I died the neighbors came
And buried brother John.

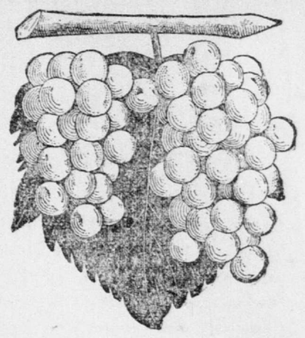
—Cleveland Leader.

IT WILL BE TO YOUR INTEREST

BEFORE BUYING A PIANO OR ORGAN to see the large stock of beautiful instruments for sale at

THE COOPER MUSIC COMPANY'S
(Neale, Ellers Co.).
No. 631 J Street.

We are sole agents for the Mathushek and Jacob Doll Pianos and Chicago Cottage Organs. Pianos sold for cash or installments; also, rented or exchanged. We keep a complete stock of everything in the musical line. Send for Catalogue.



Alaska Grape Wine.

An entirely new discovery which has only been in use in a limited way for the past ten years, still wherever it has been used it has awakened the keenest and most lively attention. It acts directly upon the sources and centers of life—the brain and spinal cord, and through these upon various organs of the body—the stomach, liver, kidneys and all of the organs of digestion. It aids digestion and assimilation of food, and assists in throwing off all poisonous substances from the blood. It thoroughly cleanses the system and then builds it up, leaving it in a renovated, healthy condition. A certain cure and preventive of all malarial and miasmatic diseases, chills, ague or intermittent fever, remittent or bilious fever, typho-malarial fever, liver and stomach troubles, jaundice, biliousness, sick headache, nausea, diarrhea, dysentery, indigestion, constipation, heartburn, loss of appetite, impurities of the blood, eruptions and pimples on the skin. Purifies the blood and invigorates the system. A valuable family medicine, containing no quinine, strychnine, opium, arsenic or mercury. Produces no unpleasant or injurious effects. Prepared only by

Dr. J. H. Neagle,
724½ K STREET,
SACRAMENTO, - - - CALIFORNIA

At the Neagle Medical Institute.

1000 K STREET, SACRAMENTO, February 23, 1894.

I have been receiving treatment for chronic grip and malaria at the Neagle Medical Institute for a month past, and I must say that Dr. Neagle's Alaska Grape Wine has benefited me more than any medicine I have ever taken in my life. T. A. LAUDER.

My son has been suffering from chronic malaria for two months or more. He was promptly cured by the use of Alaska Grape Wine. C. A. SAWTELLE.
719½ J street, Sacramento, Cal.

At a good restaurant

you often order those delicate dishes with delicious sauces, which you do not have at home. But did it ever occur to you that with

LIEBIG COMPANY'S
EXTRACT OF BEEF,

as a stock or basis, you could have those very dishes made in your own kitchen?

Miss Maria Parloa

tells you how.

100 of her recipes sent postpaid by Dauchy & Co., 27 Park Place, New York.

WEAK MAN,
CURE YOURSELF
FREE!

WHY WASTE TIME AND MONEY with doctors WHEN I WILL SEND FREE the prescription of a new and positive remedy for a prompt and lasting cure for LOST MANHOOD AND IMPOTENCY. I'm not a doctor, but a lawyer, and obtained this wonderful formula while in Paris, France, from the most celebrated spec