The World

Published by the Press Publishing Company, No. 53 to 63 Park Row, New York. Entered at the Post-Office at New York as Second-Class Mail Matter.

VOLUME 46.....NO. 16,346.

THE EXCESS GAS CHARGE.

The collection by the gas companies of the 20-cent excess charge, to be held in trust pending the court's decision whether it belongs to the consumer or the corporation, necessitates the creation of a novel financial bureau.

In effect a people's savings bank is established, with several hundred thousand unwilling depositors. For the first two weeks of May their enforced deposits amounted to $241,000. If the litigation lasts four years, as it may, the total amount of these excess payments will approximate $20,000,000.

For the trust to collect this money and pay it over to the court officers by check is a simple matter of company finance. The machinery for it already exists. But when the time comes for its repayment an immense increase of clerical labor will be required. Multitudes of small individual accounts must be proved, interest at two per cent. computed and vouchers examined. Who is to pay the extra clerk hire, the company or the consumer? If the bank in which the funds are deposited should offer more than 2 per cent. for them, to whom will the additional interest belong in the event that the case goes against the trust?

Some very interesting and complicated questions will grow out of the novel conditions created. One concerns the eventual disposition of the excess payments for which no claimants present themselves. Consumers will die, remove to other cities, lose their receipts. Must receipted bills be kept for years as vouchers? The books of every savings bank show hundreds of accounts which have lapsed through the disappearance of depositors. When this happens in the case of gas consumers entitled to a rebate is the trust to enjoy an additional "unearned increment" of the kind it now derives from lost or forgotten consumers' deposits?

The fact that the Consolidated Company alone has the use year after year of deposits of this character aggregating $835,000 and profits whenever they lapse indicates the possibilities of surplus income.

A SUGGESTION FROM PITTSBURG!

They are cleaning the Pittsburg Tenderloin in a radical way. The authorities are proceeding against the wealthy owners of property rented for immoral purposes and are making raids and arresting inmates only as an incidental to securing evidence against landlords who receive large rentals from the premises. Many property-owners of high social standing have been prosecuted.

This is the most effective and the only lasting method of purifying a vice district. It is now being tried in a desultory manner here, where proceedings have been instituted against owners and agents letting property for pool-rooms. If with every arraignment of a keeper of a disorderly house the owner also could be made to appear in court property for rental for such uses would become scarce.

Naturally.

By J. Campbell Cory.

Why the United States Is What It Is To-Day.

FOOTSTEPS OF OUR ANCESTORS IN A SERIES OF THUMBNAIL SKETCHES.

What They Did;
Why They Did It.
What Came Of It.

By Albert Payson Terhune.

No. 28—AARON BURR; the Man Who Wanted to Be an Emperor.

"HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY AARON I., Emperor of Texas!"

To-day that reads like a comic-opera sovereign's title. But less than a century ago it was whispered in anything but ridicule. Whispered, not spoken aloud. For open speech on such a theme was deemed high treason against the United States.

The man who but for accident might have borne the title was, in his way, the most remarkable character America has produced. Undersized, but of unusual physical beauty and grace; attractive, with an almost hypnotic fascination, brave and resourceful, with a brain second to none; he was one of those phenomenal products of a phenomenal age. He was not, as has been claimed, a man of bad morals. He was simply a man of no morals at all.

Such in brief was Aaron Burr, scion of a long line of clergymen and grandson of the holy Jonathan Edwards. He was born in Newark, N. J., in 1756, was prepared for college by the time he was eleven, entered on a brilliant but wild career at Princeton, and at eighteen was an avowed atheist and man of the world; taking as his model in the latter respect the somewhat doubtful maxims of Lord Chesterfield. At nineteen, on news of Lexington and Concord, he hastened to join the Revolution; took active part in Benedict Arnold's Canadian campaign and returned from the expedition with the rank of Major.

Quarrels with Washington and Hamilton.

Washington took the lad on his own personal staff, but the sober rectitude of the Commander-in-Chief bored the gay young Major and in six weeks he resigned the post, having acquired a lifelong hatred for Washington, which the latter cordially returned. He also met, on the staff, young Alexander Hamilton, and the mutual dislike which was to culminate in the latter's death then had its beginning. Burr served with distinction in the ensuing New Jersey campaigns, and at twenty-four left the army, with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

He studied law, and by the time he was twenty-six Alexander Hamilton was the only man of the New York bar whose success and fame equalled his. In 1791, after serving as Attorney-General, he was elected United States Senator (defeating Hamilton's father-in-law, Gen. Schuyler, and thus adding new fuel to the old quarrel) and became Republican leader in the Senate. In 1800 he ran for President against Thomas Jefferson. The Electoral vote resulted in a tie. Congress took up the matter and, largely by Hamilton's efforts, awarded the Presidency to Jefferson, Burr becoming Vice-President.

Burr was openly accused of seeking favor with the Federal party and of seeking to betray the Republicans. Hamilton was loudest in uttering these charges, and he publicly denounced Burr. The latter bore the insults for years, but at length, in July, 1804, challenged Hamilton to a duel. The latter willingly accepted. The two inveterate enemies met on the field of honor and Hamilton was killed.

Although the duel (according to the brutal ethics of that day) had been a perfectly fair fight and caused by a succession of unbearable insults from the hot-tempered Hamilton, Burr was indicted for murder and forced to flee for his life before the uproar of popular indignation. For Hamilton had been the people's idol.

Embittered by what he considered unjust treatment, under a cloud of public distrust that obscured all his brilliant earlier achievements, Burr felt that he must play a "lone hand" against the world at large. Just how he played it will always be more or less shrouded in mystery. But, according to the general belief of his contemporaries and of later historians, his amazing plan of action was this:

To acquire, by one means or another, an army of adventurers, capture Texas and Mexico, make New Orleans his capital and induce the Western States to leave the Union and join his standard. Then, with a territory stretching from the Gulf to Canada and from the Mississippi to the Pacific, proclaim the Empire of Texas with himself, Aaron Burr, as its first Emperor.

An Amazing Dream of Empire.

Mad, impracticable and egregious as the scheme appears to modern eyes, it was at that time far more feasible than now. In the first place, the mighty West was mainly an unsettled region; the belief of a monarchy was still strong in thousands of American minds; the country was full of ex-soldiers and other adventurers, and a horde of needy Europeans might well be expected to flock to the founding of a new Empire. Moreover, Burr's personality, his fascination and magnetism drew hundreds to his cause. The Government at Washington was by no means as stable as at present, nor prepared in any way to crush a strong land power near at home.

Burr bought thousands of acres of land on the Washita River to serve as a nucleus for the wonderful Empire of the West that he was planning, single-handed, to create out of nothingness. But secret and crafty as he was, the plot was prematurely betrayed. Before he could mass men for defense of the project Burr was arrested in January, 1807, and tried for high treason. Through his own superhuman cleverness and legal genius he barely escaped with a sort of "not proven" verdict, and found it wise to leave America at once.

He wandered aimlessly through Europe for years; then, though forbidden to do so, returned in disguise to America and opened a law office on Nassau street, New York City. Here for a time his legal fame won him wealth. He married the famous Mme. Jumel, squandered all her money, he could get hold of, and at last, in September, 1836, died penniless and deserted in the Port Richmond (S. I.) cottage of an old Scotchwoman he had known in better days.

Thus perished in obscure poverty the greatest "Might-Have-Been" in the annals of the nation.

The Masquerader by Katherine Cecil Thurston

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

John Chilcote, member of Parliament, has wrecked his constitution and endangered a promising political career by secret use of morphia. He believes no one guesses his addiction to the habit. He has grown careless in matters of statesmanship, irritable and absent-minded, and even neglects his beautiful young wife, Eve, who is a favorite ward of Fraide, his party leader in Parliament. One night, returning late from the House, Chilcote is lost in a fog and collides with another man. The two fall into conversation, and it develops that the stranger is John Loder, an unsuccessful, but ambitious writer. A match is struck to light a cigarette, and the two men, to their mutual amazement, discover that each is, in appearance, the exact double of the other. Each feels as if he were looking into a mirror. Next day Chilcote calls on Lady Astrington, a witty, beautiful woman, who has a faculty of amusing people. She tells him the plot of a novel she has just read, which deals with the adventures of two women who take advantage of a strong physical resemblance to change places in the world. In his nerve-wracked condition Chilcote is strangely impressed with the idea. He visits Loder and makes the following remarkable proposition: Chilcote, at times finds public life unbearable and longs for privacy and seclusion wherein he may revel undetected in morphia. He asks that at such times Loder will impersonate him in Parliament and elsewhere, and allow Chilcote to remain a recluse in Loder's rooms. When the fit of solitude is over Chilcote will summon Loder and they will change places once more, Chilcote returning home and Loder remaining in his shabby lodgings. Loder at first refuses, but, urged by political longings, at length accepts. Chilcote explains that as his wife and he only meet as strangers and on rare occasions, Eve cannot discover the deception.

Loder goes to Chilcote's house, where both Eve and the secretary mistake him for Chilcote. On the following morning he sings for his valet and prepares for his first full day as "John Chilcote."

(Copyright, 1903, 1904, by Harper & Brothers.)

CHAPTER IX.

(Continued.)

"PULL those curtains, Renwick!" he said. "What's the time?" He had passed the ordeal of Renwick's eyes the night before.

The man was slow, even a little stupid. He drew back the curtains carefully, then looked at the small clock on the dressing-table. "Eight o'clock, sir. I didn't expect the bell so early, sir."

Loder felt reproved, and a pause followed.

"May I bring your cup of tea, sir?"

"No. Not just yet. I'll have a bath first."

Renwick showed ponderous uncertainty. "Warm, sir?" he hazarded.

"No. Cold."

Still perplexed, the man left the room.

Loder smiled to himself. The chances of discovery in that quarter were not large. He was inclined to think that Chilcote had even overstepped necessity in the matter of his valet's dulness.

He breakfasted alone, following Chilcote's habit, and after breakfast found his way to the study.

As he entered, Greening rose with the same conciliatory haste that he had shown the night before.

Loder nodded to him. "Early at work?" he said pleasantly.

The little man showed instant, almost ridiculous relief. "Good morning, sir," he said; "you too are early. I rather feared your nerves troubled you after I left last night, for I found your letters still unopened this morning. But I am glad to see you look so well."

Loder promptly turned his back to the light. "Oh, last night's letters!" he said. "To tell you the truth, Greening, my wife"—his hesitation was very slight—"my wife looked me up after you left, and we gossiped. I clean forgot the post." He smiled in an explanatory way as he moved to the desk and picked up the letters.

With Greening's eyes upon him, there was no time for scruples. With very creditable coolness he began opening the envelopes one by one. The letters were unimportant, and he passed them one after another to the secretary, experiencing a slight thrill of authority as each left his hand. Again the fact that power is visible in little things came to his mind.

"Give me my engagement book, Greening," he said, when the letters had been disposed of.

The book that Greening handed him was neat in shape and bound, like Chilcote's cigarette-case, in lizard skin.

As Loder took it, the gold monogram "J. C." winked at him in the bright morning light. The incident moved his sense of humor. He and the book were co-operators in the fraud, it seemed. He felt an inclination to wink back. Nevertheless, he opened it with proper gravity and skimmed the pages.

The page devoted to the day was almost full. On every other line were jottings in Chilcote's irregular hand, and twice among the entries appeared a prominent cross in blue penciling. Loder's interest quickened as his eye caught the mark. It had been agreed between them that only engagements essential to Chilcote's public life need be carried through during his absence, and these, to save confusion, were to be crossed in blue pencil. The rest, for the most part social claims, were to be left to circumstance and Loder's inclination, Chilcote's erratic memory always accounting for the breaking of trivial promises.

But Loder in his new energy was anxious for obligations; the desire for fresh and greater tests grew with indulgence. He scanned the two lines with eagerness. The first was an interview with Cresham, one of Chilcote's supporters in Wark; the other an engagement to lunch with Fraide. At the idea of the former his interest quickened, but at thought of the latter it quailed momentarily. Had the entry been a royal command it would have affected him infinitely less. For a space his assurance faltered; then, by coincidence, the recollection of Eve and Eve's words of last night came back to him, and his mind was filled with a new sensation.

Because of Chilcote, he was despised by Chilcote's wife! There was no denying that in all the pleasant excitement of the adventure that knowledge had rankled. It came to him now linked with remembrance of the slight, reluctant touch of her fingers, the faintly evasive dislike underlying her glance. It was a trivial thing, but it touched his pride as a man. That was how he put it to himself. It wasn't that he valued this woman's opinion—any woman's opinion; it was merely that it touched his pride. He turned again to the window and gazed out, the engagement book still between his hands. What if he compelled her respect? What if by his own personality cloaked under Chilcote's identity he forced her to admit his capability? It was a matter of pride, after all—scarcely even of pride; self-respect was a better word.

Satisfied by his own reasoning, he turned back into the room.

"See to those letters, Greening," he said. "And for the rest of the morning's work you might go on with your Khorasan notes. I believe we'll all want every inch of knowledge we can get in that quarter before we're much older. I'll see you again later." With a reassuring nod he crossed the room and passed through the door.

He lunched with Fraide at his club, and afterward walked with him to Westminster. The walk and lunch were both memorable. In that hour he learned many things that had been sealed to him before. He tasted his first draught of real elation, his first drop of real discomfiture. He saw for the first time how a great man may condescend—how unostentatiously, how fully, how delightfully. He felt what tact and kindness perfectly combined may accomplish, and he burned inwardly with a sense of duplicity that crushed and elated him alternately. He was John Loder, friendless, penniless, with no present and no future, yet he walked down Whitehall in the full light of day with one of the greatest statesmen England has known.

"Will you always disbelieve in me?" he asked.

Some strangers were being shown over the Terrace when he and Fraide reached the House, and, noticing the open door, the old man paused.

"I never refuse fresh air," he said. "Shall we take another breath of it before settling down?" He took Loder's arm and drew him forward. As they passed through the doorway the pressure of his fingers tightened. "I shall reckon to-day among my pleasantest memories, Chilcote," he said, gravely. "I can't explain the feeling, but I seem to have touched Eve's husband—the real you—more closely this morning than I ever did before. It has been a genuine happiness." He looked up with the eyes that, through all his years of action and responsibility, had remained so bright.

But Loder paled suddenly, and his glance turned to the river—wide, mysterious, secret. Unconsciously Fraide had stripped the illusion. It was not John Loder who walked here; it was Chilcote—Chilcote with his position, his constituency—his wife. He half extricated his arm, but Fraide held it.

"No," he said. "Don't draw away from me. You have always been too ready to do that. It is not often I have a pleasant truth to tell. I won't be deprived of the enjoyment."

"Can the truth ever be pleasant, sir?" Involuntarily Loder echoed Chilcote.

Fraide looked up. He was half a head shorter than his companion, though his dignity concealed the fact. "Chilcote," he said, seriously, "give up cynicism! It is the trade-mark of failure, and I do not like it in my—friends."

"Don't count too much on me, sir," he said, slowly. "I might disappoint you again." His voice broke off on the last word, for the sound of other voices and of laughter came to them across the Terrace as a group of two women and three men passed through the open door. At a glance he realized that the slighter of the two women was Eve.

Seeing them, she disengaged herself from her party and came quickly forward. He saw her cheeks flush and her eyes brighten pleasantly as they rested on his companion; but he noticed also that after her first cursory glance she avoided his own direction.

As she came toward them, Fraide drew away his hand in readiness to greet her.

"Here comes my godchild!" he said. "I often wish, Chilcote, that I could day away with the prefix." He added the last words in an undertone as he reached them; then he responded warmly to her smile.

"What!" he said. "Turning the Terrace into the Garden of Eden in January! We cannot allow this."

Eve laughed. "Blame Lady Sarah!" she said. "We met at lunch, and she carried me off. Needless to say I hadn't to ask where."

They both laughed, and Loder joined, a little uncertainly. He had yet to learn that the devotion of Fraide and his wife was a long-standing jest in their particular set.

At the sound of his tardy laugh Eve turned to him. "I hope I didn't rob you of all sleep last night," she said. "I caught him in his den," she explained, turning to Fraide, "and invaded it most courageously. I believe we talked till two."

Again Loder noticed how quickly she looked from him to Fraide. The knowledge roused his self-assertion.

"I had an excellent night," he said. "Do I look as if I hadn't slept?"

Somewhat slowly and reluctantly Eve looked back. "No," she said, truthfully, and with a faint surprise that to Loder seemed the first genuine emotion she had shown regarding him. "No, I don't think I ever saw you look so well." She was quite unconscious and very charming as she made the admission. It struck Loder that her coloring of hair and eyes gained by daylight—were brightened and vivified by their setting of sombre river and sombre stone.

Fraide smiled at her affectionately; then looked at Loder. "Chilcote has got a new lease of nerves, Eve," he said, quietly. "And I—believe—I have got a new henchman. But I see my wife beckoning to me. I must have a word with her before she flits away. May I be excused?" He made a courteous gesture of apology; then smiled at Eve.

She looked after him as he moved away. "I sometimes wonder what I should do if anything were to happen to the Fraides," she said, a little wistfully. Then almost at once she laughed, as if regretting her impulsiveness. "You heard what he said," she went on, in a different voice. "Am I really to congratulate you?"

The change of tone stung Loder unaccountably. "Will you always disbelieve in me?" he asked.

Without answering, she walked slowly across the deserted Terrace and, pausing by the parapet, laid her hand on the stone-work. Still in silence she looked out across the river.

Loder had followed closely. Again her aloofness seemed a challenge. "Will you always disbelieve in me?" he repeated.

At last she looked up at him, slowly.

"Have you ever given me cause to believe?" she asked, in a quiet voice.

To this truth he found no answer, though the subdued incredulity nettled him afresh.

Prompted to a further effort, he spoke again. "Patience is necessary with every person and every circumstance," he said. "We've all got to wait and see."

She did not lower her gaze as he spoke; and there seemed to him something disconcerting in the clear, candid blue of her eyes. With a sudden dread of her next words, he moved forward and laid his hand beside hers on the parapet.

"Patience is needed for every one," he repeated, quickly. "Sometimes a man is like a bit of wreckage; he drifts till some force stronger than himself gets in his way and stops him." He looked again at her face. He scarcely knew what he was saying; he only felt that he was a man in an egregiously false position, trying stupidly to justify himself. "Don't you believe that flotsam can sometimes be washed ashore?" he asked.

High above them Big Ben chimed the hour.

Eve raised her head. It almost seemed to him that he could see her answer trembling on her lips; then the voice of Lady Sarah Fraide came cheerfully from behind them.

"Eve!" she called. "Eve! We must fly. It's absolutely three o'clock!"

CHAPTER X.

IN the days that followed Fraide's marked adoption of him Loder behaved with a discretion that spoke well for his qualities. Many a man placed in the same responsible, and yet strangely irresponsible, position might have been excused if, for the time at least, he gave himself a loose rein. But Loder kept free of the temptation.

Like all other experiments, his showed unlooked-for features when put to a working test. Its expected difficulties smoothed themselves away, while others, scarcely anticipated, came into prominence. Most notable of all, the physical likeness between himself and Chilcote, the bedrock of the whole scheme, which had been counted upon to offer most danger, worked without a hitch. He stood literally amazed before the sweeping credulity that met him on every hand. Men who had known Chilcote from his youth, servants who had been in his employment for years, joined issue in the unquestioning acceptance. At times the ease of the deception bewildered him; there were moments when he realized that, should circumstances force him to a declaration of the truth, he would not be believed. Human nature prefers its own eyesight to the testimony of any man.

But in face of this astonishing success he steered a steady course. In the first exhilaration of Fraide's favor, in the first egotistical wish to break down Eve's scepticism, he might possibly have plunged into the vortex of action, let it be in what direction it might; but fortunately for himself, for Chilcote, and for their scheme, he was liable to strenuous second thoughts—those wise and necessary curbs that go further to the steadying of the universe than the universe guesses. Sitting in the quiet of the House, on the same day that he had spoken with Eve on the Terrace, he had weighed possibilities slowly and cautiously. Impressed to the full by the atmosphere of the place that in his eyes could never lack character, however dull its momentary business, however prosy the voice that filled it, he had sifted impulse from expedience, as only a man who has lived within himself can sift and distinguish. And at the close of that first day his programme had been formed. There must be no rush, no headlong plunge, he had decided; things must work round. It was his first expedition into the new country, and it lay with fate to say whether it would be his last.

(To Be Continued.)