CHARLES THE CHAUFFEUR

XV. Lookin' for a Job

By S. E. KISER

My old schoolmaster, Albert Springer, used to have a motto that never went wrong," said Charles the Chauffeur. "That was: 'Don't think because the bumble-bee has a velvety back that he's a soft thing.' Which only goes to show that although most things in life are different there's a good deal about them that's the same after all. The other day when Tomlinson, who is shaving for old man Waterbury, dropped in to see me, he says:

"'Who was that out ridin' with you and the missus yesterday mornin'?'

"'That was Lord Fourflush,' says I.

"'Is he the one the papers says it's rumored Mrs. Thurlow is engaged to?' he asked.

"'Yes,' I says; 'but there's nothin' in it. If the papers only knew what I know they could print a story that would make society get a good deal more excited than it is about Juliet and Lord Flossie.'

"I thought it was just as well to let him guess the truth, so he'd have the proper respects for me, and I give him a wink that made him let out a little whistle and ask how soon it was goin' to happen.

"'The day ain't set yet,' I told him, 'but it'll come off whenever I say the word, and if you want a job after I take charge here, don't feel at all backwards about lettin' me know. I'm not one of these people that lets their heads get swelled up by good fortune. I'll never be too high to forget my old friends because they haven't got the talents that make them my equal.'

"I seen that he was touched by the kind way I spoke; and I put my hand on his shoulder, lookin' him in the eyes as man to man; so after a bit he says:

"'It's none of my business, and as long as you and the lady have it all fixed up between you, I s'pose it don't make any difference, anyway; but that chap ain't no more a lord than you or me.'

"I come pretty near callin' him down for speakin' of me and himself as though we was in the same class; but what's the use lettin' pride stand in the way when you have a chance to find out things it might come in handy to know? One of my strong points is bein' diplomatical when it comes to drawin' people out; so I got him to tell me all he knew, and it was a plenty.

"'The minute I laid eyes on that boy,' says he, 'it struck me that I'd saw him somewhere before; but I couldn't think where it was. After awhile it come to me all of a sudden. You know I worked in Cincinnati before I come here, and it was there that the whole thing happened. He was callin' himself Lord Bimsted then, and married a rich girl that was a friend of the people I worked for. A week or so after the weddin' they found out that he wasn't even an Englishman, and that he'd been in jail somewhere down in Kentucky for stealin' a fiddle. The girl's father kicked him through a window on the second floor when they found it out, and they paid him a good big price for promisin' he'd never come back to bother the girl.'

"That afternoon Juliet told me to bring out the Hard Cash to take her and Lord Flossie up to the Pocahontas Club, and I couldn't help feelin' sorry for him as he was gettin' in the tonneau with her. He looked so innocent and harmless I almost hated to think of the bump that was comin' to him; but even if things had of been different between me and the lovely little lady I would of had a duty to perform, and duty never called to me yet without findin' me there.

"We took a spin through the park before startin' out for the club, and Juliet was so glad it would of made a man that just lost his job as postmaster cheer up to look at her.

"'Charles,' she said when a boy on a pony turned in the road ahead of us, 'be careful not to run over him. Remember that he may have a mother, and I would almost rather be humiliated by havin' you slow down for a few seconds right where people could see us than cripple him for life.'

"The boy turned down a side-path a little after that, so we didn't have to bump him over, and Juliet said we might as well go on out to the club, only she hoped something thrillin' would happen, because it seemed a shame to have such a munificent day go by without an adventure of some kind to make you think happy thoughts about it long, long afterwards.

"I told her I had a feelin' that it would be thrillin' enough, all right, and I give Fourflush a look that would of made him climb out and run for the nearest woods if he'd had my brains; but he only stared like a Jersey cow when she thinks poetic thoughts about her last year's calf.

"'Don't be afraid to run into things because they might be expensive,' the dear little woman says to me. 'That was one trouble with Alfred. He was always thinkin' of expenses, and couldn't half enjoy a smash-up unless he thought it would be cheap.'

"'How singular,' says Lord Flossie, comin' out of his trance. 'I have always been led to suppose that the more an American gentleman had to pay for his fun the better he liked it.'

"That give me a chance, and I opened on him.

"'I wonder,' I says, 'if that Cincinnati man would of enjoyed the bogus lord he got in the family if he'd of had to pay more for him?'

"Juliet pretended to be thinkin' about somethin' else, and Fourflush give me a glassy look through his goggles. 'What did you land on, anyway?' I asked, when you went out the second-story window?'

"Reachin' Over and Takin' Fourflush by the Shoulder"

"'Charles,' Juliet says, blushin' beautiful, and seemin' to be a good deal upset, 'what in the world do you mean?'

"'Don't be scared,' I says, slowin' down so I wouldn't have to watch in front while I was talkin', 'I wouldn't care to detect for a livin', because detectives hardly ever have much of a standin' in society; but I could of been one of the greatest in the business if I'd wanted to. Just ask the gent how much they paid him for promisin' never to go back.'

"'Bless my soul!' says Lord Flossie. 'The creature seems to be mad.'

"'Not a bit,' says I, 'the girl was no relation of mine.'

"Juliet looked suspicious, and asked him what girl it was we were talkin' about.

"I'm blessed if I know,' says he; and I must say he done the innocent-lamb trick beautiful.

"I 's'pose you don't know anything about the fiddle, either,' says I.

"Juliet ordered me to stop the auto then so she could smell my breath. We'd got pretty well out in the country, where there wasn't much goin' on, and I run up to the side of the road. Then, takin' off my goggles and gloves, I says:

"'Come, old man, you may as well own up. I know all about it. I don't blame you much for takin' the fiddle, for mebby you was too hungry to work; but you hadn't any right to make that sweet, trustin' girl think she was goin' to get a title when she didn't have any more chance for it than the Prohibition candidate has to get elected President. That was cruel. Nobody with a heart as big as a vest button would of done it.'

"'Stop!' says Juliet, gettin' excited. 'This is an outrage! Take us home immediately. I will not hear another word from you.'

"Knowin' that the worse she treated me the sorrier she'd be when she found out how noble I had came to the rescue in her hour of need, I didn't pay any attention to her; but reachin' over and takin' Fourflush by the shoulder, I says:

"I Know of One Who's Lookin' for a Job"

"'When I get through with you you'll think what that Cincinnati man done to you was amusin'. Did you break anything when he kicked you out, or was the window open?'

"He tried to get loose; but I give him a yank or two that made him set down and keep still. Then Juliet commenced to cry. Of course I couldn't stand that; so I let go of him and says:

"It's all right, dear little girl. Don't you worry. As long as you have me near, you can bet on yourself and give big odds that you'll have a look in at the finish.'

"Then I told her the whole story about him stealin' the fiddle and runnin' away from jail and marryin' the girl; him settin' there with his mouth open and never sayin' a word. After gettin' through, I says:

"'Now we'll go home, and I'll show you how I found it out.'

"I expected he'd try to run away, and I wouldn't of cared much if he had, because it would of been an easy way to get him off of our hands; but he didn't.

"Instead of goin' straight home, I took them around by the Waterbury's, and when I got there I called Tomlinson out.

"'Here,' says I, 'I want you to tell Mrs. Thurlow where you seen this man before, and what he done when you knew him in Cincinnati.'

"He looked at Lord Flossie for a minute, and then turned as pale as a ghost.

"'What's the matter,' says I. 'Don't be afraid to speak right up.'

"'I made a mistake,' he says. 'He ain't the person I thought he was.'

"I can't bear to talk about it any more, and if you hear of anybody that wants to hire a good shawfer I know of one who's lookin' for a job. But it only proves what I've always said: 'If God had never made woman there wouldn't be any fools in the world.'"

[THE END.]

A Guaranteed Success

"Been away any place this summer, Bighopes?" I asked, just to make talk.

"Nope," he replied, shaking his head mournfully. "You see my patent life-belt for washerwomen's babies didn't turn out successful, commercially. Fact is I've had to grind most of 'em up, and sell 'em for breakfast-food to get anything at all to eat myself."

"Too bad," I said automatically. I've sympathized with so many of his failures!

"But that's the field in which to clear an easy fortune. I don't mean the health food—that's worked to death—but something useful for children," he went on, dogmatically. "Get up something every child must have, and there you are, wintering on the Nile, springing on the Riviera, summering in Switzerland, and falling anywhere, except into debt."

"Yes, I believe that's so," I agreed.

"You bet it is!" he went on, beginning to glow. "A man won't go without his cigars and beer to get anything for himself, and a woman won't deny herself candy and soda-water to get anything but clothes for herself; but you put on the market something their children need, and especially if all the rest of the kids are getting it, they'll buy it no matter what they have to do without to do it.

"I tell you parental love and pride as a commercial asset is 'way above par, not to mention mar," and the wretch actually chuckled at his atrocity.

"And I've got it now, too," he went on, the flood-gates wide open. "It's called Bighope's Automatic Kid Restrainer, and just as soon as I can get enough of 'em manufactured you'll be an envious witness of yours truly buying up the Standard Oil before breakfast, chasing J. Pierpont into obscurity before luncheon, and knocking the Rothschilds on the head socially before dinner. It's not only the greatest thing out for the kids themselves, but the saving of wear and tear it accomplishes on mothers and nurses doubly insures its success. Oh, it's the greatest—"

"But what is it?" I interrupted.

"You mustn't say a word yet," he whispered confidentially; "but it's a little contrivance to fasten on a child. You can strap it on the back like a knapsack, and with it once on, the kid can't so much as wiggle a finger or toe without it's screaming shrilly: 'Stop! Don't! Stop this instant!' and keeping it up till he does stop. Oh, it's a winner, my boy.!"