



"Oh, Wilbur!" Says She, "I'm Yours!"

change. It's different from wearin' an apron, and the gents what takes their food there steady treats her like a perfect lady. New York is a big place; but she's gettin' so she knows her way around quite well now, and it would seem funny to go back to a little one-horse burg like Colby.

And that's all. Nothin' about her bein' Wilbur's on demand, or anything of that kind. Course, it's an antique old yarn; but it was all fresh to Wilbur. Not bein' much of a letter writer, he keeps on feedin' the hogs punctual, and hoein' the corn, and waitin' for more news. But there's nothin' doin'.

"Then," says he, "I got to thinkin' and thinkin', and this fall, being as how I was coming as far east as Chicago on a shipper's pass, I reckons I'd better keep right on here, hunt Zylphina up, and take her back with me."

The way he tells it was real earnest, and at some points them whey colored eyes of his moistens up good an' dewy; but he finishes strong and smilin'. You wouldn't guess, though, that any corn fed romance like that would stir up such a blood as Pinckney? A few months back he wouldn't have listened farther'n the preamble; but now he couldn't have been more interested if this was a case of Romeo Astor and Juliet Dupeyster.

"Shorty," says he, "can't we do something to help Mr. Cobb find this young lady?"

"Do you mean it," says I, "or are you battin' up a josh?"

He means it, all right. He spels off a lot of gush about the joy of unitin' two lovin' hearts that has got strayed; so I asks Wilbur if he can furnish any description of Zylphina. Sure, he can. He digs up a leather wallet from his inside pocket and hands out a tintype of Miss Beck, one of these portraits framed in pale pink paper, taken by a wagon artist that had wandered out to the junction.

Judgin' by the picture, Zylphina must have been a sure enough prairie rose. She's wearin' her hair loose over her shoulders, and a genuine Shy Ann hat, one of those ten-inch brims with the front pinned back. The pug nose and the big mouth wasn't just after the Venus model; but it's likely she looked good to Wilbur. I takes one squint and hands it back.

"Nix, never!" says I. "I've seen lots of fairies on 42d-st., but none like that. Put it back over your heart, Wilbur, and try an ad. in the lost column."

But Pinckney ain't willin' to give up so easy. He says how Mr. Cobb has come more'n a thousand miles on this tender mission, and it's up to us to do our best towards helping him along. I couldn't see just where we was let into this affair of Wilbur's; but as Pinckney's so set on it, I begins battin' my head for a way of takin' up the trail.

And it's wonderful what sleuth work you can do just by usin' the 'phone liberal. First I calls up the agent of the buildin', and finds that the meal factory has moved over on Eighth-ave. Then I gets that number, and brings Zylphina's old boss to the wire. Sure, he remembers Miss Beck. No, she ain't with him now. He thinks she took a course in manicurin', and one of the girls says she heard of her doin' the hand holdin' act in an apartment hotel on West 35th-st. After three tries we has Zylphina herself on the 'phone.

"Guess who's here," says I.

"That you, Roland?" says she.

"Aw, pickles!" says I. "Set the calendar back

a year or so, and then come again. Ever hear of Wilbur, from Hoxie, Kan?"

Whether it was a squeal or a snicker, I couldn't make out; but she was on. As I couldn't drag Wilbur up to the receiver, I has to carry through the talk myself, and I makes a date for him to meet her in front of the hotel at six-thirty that evenin', when the day shift of nail polishers goes off duty.

"Does that suit, Wilbur?" says I.

Does it? You never saw so much pure joy spread over a single countenance as what he flashes up. He gives me a grip I can feel yet, and the grin that opens his face was one of these reg'lar ear connectors. Pinckney was tickled too, and it's all I cap do to get him off one side where I can whisper confidential.

"Maybe it ain't struck you yet," says I, "that Zylphina's likery to have changed some in her ideas as to what a honey boy looks like. Now Wilbur's all right in his way; but ain't he a little rugged to spring on a lady manicule that hasn't seen him for sometime?"

And when Pinckney comes to take a close view, he agrees that Mr. Cobb is a trifle fuzzy. "But we can spruce him up," says Pinckney. "There are four hours to do it in."

"Four weeks would be better," says I; "it's considerable of a contract."

That don't bother Pinckney any. He's got nothing else on hand for the afternoon, and he can't plan any better sport than improvin' Wilbur's looks so Zylphina's first impression'll be a good one.

He begins by makin' Wilbur peel the cinnamon brown costume, drapin' him in a couple of bath robes, while Swifty takes the suit out to one of these pants-pressed-while-you-wait places. When it comes back with creases in the legs, he hustles Wilbur into a cab and starts for a barber shop.

Say, I don't suppose Cobb'll ever know it; but if he'd been huntin' for expert help along that line, he couldn't have tumbled into better hands than he did when Pinckney gets interested in his case. When they floats in again, along about six o'clock, I hardly knows Wilbur for the same party. He's wearin' a long black ulster that covers up most of the plaid nightgare; he's shook the woolly lid for a fall block derby, he's had his face scraped and powdered, and his neck ringlets trimmed up; and he even sports a pair of yellow kids and a silver headed stick.

"Gosh!" says I. "Looks like you'd run him through a finishing machine. Why, he'll have Zylphina after him with a net."

"Yes," says Pinckney. "I fancy he'll do now."

As for Wilbur, he only looks good natured and happy. Course, Pinckney wants to go along with him, to see that it all turns out right; and he counts me in too, so off we starts. I was a little curious to get a glimpse of Zylphina myself, and watch how stunned she'd be. For we has it all framed up how she'll act. Havin' seen that tintype, I can't get it out of my head that she's still wearin' her hair loose and lookin' like M'liss in the first act.

"Hope she'll be on time," says I, as we turns the corner.

There was more or less folks goin' and comin' from the ladies' entrance; but no girl like the one we was lookin' for. So we fetches up in a bunch

opposite the door and prepares to wait. We hadn't stood there a minute, before there comes a squeal from behind, and some one says:

"Why, Wilbur Cobb!—Is that you?"

And what do you guess shows up? There at the curb is a big, open tourin' car,—one of the opulent, shiny kind,—with a slick lookin' shuffer in front, and standin' up in the tonneau, a tart little lady wearin' Broadway clothes that was right up to the minute, hair done into breakfast rolls behind, and a long pink veil streamin' down her back. Only by the pug nose and the mouth could I guess that it might be Zylphina. And it was.

There wa'n't any gettin' away from the fact that she was a little jarred at seein' Wilbur lookin' so cute; but that was nothin' to the jolt she handed us. Mr. Cobb, he just opens his mouth and gazes at her like she was some sort of an exhibit. And Pinckney, who'd been expectin' something in a dollar-thirty-nine shirtwaist and a sagged skirt, is down and out. It didn't take me more'n a minute to see that if Zylphina has got to the stage where she wears pony jackets and rides in expensive bubbles, our little pie counter romance is headed for the ash can.

"Stung in both eyes!" says I under my breath, and falls back.

"Well, well!" says Zylphina, holdin' out three fingers. "When did you hit Broadway, Wilbur?"

It was all up to Cobb then. He drifts up to the tonneau and gathers in the fingers dazed like, as if he was walkin' in his sleep; but he gets out somethin' about bein' mighty glad to see her again.

Zylphina sizes him up kind of curious, and smiles. "You must let me introduce you to my friend," says she. "Roland, this is Mr. Cobb, from Kansas."

Mr. Shuffer grins too, as he swaps grins with Wilbur. It was a great joke.

"He's awfully nice to me, Roland is," says Zylphina, with a giggle. "And ain't this a swell car, though? Roland takes me to my boardin' house in it most every night. But how are the corn and hogs doin', Wilbur?"

Say, there was a topic Wilbur was up on. He throws her a grateful grin and proceeds to unlimber his conversation works. He tells Zylphina how many acres he put in to corn last spring, how much it shucked to the acre, and how many head of hogs he has just sent to the ham and lard laboratory. That brand of talk sounds kind of foolish there under the arc lights; but Zylphina pricks up her ears.

"Ten carloads of hogs!" says she. "Is that a kid, or are you just havin' a dream?"

"I callate it'll be twenty next fall," says he, fishin' for somethin' in his pocket. "Here's the packing house receipts for the ten, anyway."

"Let's see," says she, and by the way she skins her eye over them documents you could tell that Zylphina'd seen the like before. Also she was somethin' of a ready reckoner.

"Oh, Wilbur!" says she, makin' a flyin' leap and landin' with her arms around his neck. "I'm yours, Wilbur, I'm yours!"

And Wilbur, he gathers her in.

"Roland," says I, steppin' up to the shuffer. "you can crank up. Hoxie's won out in the tenth."

THE CARTESIAN CONVENTION

By HUBERT M. SKINNER

THE Cartesian Convention was not held, as one might suppose, in the city of Cartesia; partly because there never was any such place, and partly because the famous convention was never held anywhere. The convention was not a meeting of delegates with credentials, rapped to order by a temporary chairman. Nevertheless, there is not one whom the Cartesian convention has not reached with its influence.

What is the Cartesian convention? It is a habit of thought which our teachers of arithmetic inculcated in us when we were pupils at school. They derived it, consciously or unconsciously,—generally the latter,—from the great French philosopher who once said, "I think, therefore I am."

This Frenchman, Descartes, offered a simple scheme for illustrating the first, second, and third powers of numbers by drawing respectively a line, a square, and a cube. This became conventional the world round; but instead of regarding the scheme as a mere convenience of illustration, we have come to look upon it as a necessary thing, of universal application.

The reverse is true. If one employs five men for a day at five dollars each, the total sum of wages will be the second power of the number five; but there is no particular reason why the wages should be represented by the diagram of a square. If he employs the men for five days, their wages will represent the third power of the number five; but what connection would they have with a cube? A man may have five chains, of five links each. Strung together, their united length will represent the second power of the number five; but they would be represented logically by a continuous straight line, and not by a square.

Most practical mathematicians, however, and

most teachers, always speak of the second power of a number as a "square," and of the third power as a "cube," and are ready on the instant to draw a diagram to prove their correctness in this. But on the fourth power the Cartesian convention broke down completely. Like grandfather's clock, "It stopped short, never to go again."

Why do we not make diagrams of the fourth power, or of the fifth, or of any higher?

"Because," say the Cartesians, "it is utterly impossible; it is unthinkable. The Cartesian convention considers nothing beyond the third power. There is no graphic expression for any power beyond the third."

Absurdity of the Limitation

HOW absurd is all this! Let us agree that any simple number, for instance five, shall be represented by a line, say five inches long. Then, by the Cartesian convention, the second power of five shall be represented by a square, measuring five inches each way; and the third power by a cube, measuring five inches on each edge. Now, to reach the fourth power, simply multiply this cube by five. Its graphic illustration will be a line of cubes, or five cubes in a row. To reach the fifth power, multiply the cube of five by five times five. That is to say, form a square figure out of twenty-five of the cubes. Thus the fifth power is a square of the cubes. To form the sixth power, form a new and larger cube of the cubes which have been dealt with. The seventh power will be illustrated by a line of the larger cubes. And so *ad infinitum*.

There is in the Cartesian convention really nothing occult, esoteric, intangible. It is simply a convenient device, applicable in some cases and wholly inapplicable in others, as a means of visualizing quantity. There is no reason in the world why it should "see its finish" with the third power.