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RAE YAFFE, Sales Manager., 736 Central Union Bldg., Chicago

# Keeping Tabs on Piddie

Continued from page 9

gum was moist. Not that I'd made up my mind to rubber; but just so's I could if I took the notion. And, sure enough, I got the notion, or it got me.

Chee! I near slid off the rattan seat when I reads that note. Guess I must have sat there, starin' bug eyed and lookin' batty, from 14th to Wall. Do you know what that mush-head of a Piddie was at? He was givin' an order to bolster up Blitzen by buyin' up to a hundred thousand shares, and in the package was a bunch of gilt edged securities to cover the margins.

Now wouldn't that jiggle the grapes on sister's new lid? Piddie, a narrow gage, dime pinchin' ink slinger, doin' the bull act like he was a sooty plute from Pittsburgh! That's what comes of swallowin' the get-rich-fast bug.

WELL, when I gets out at the Street I didn't have any program planned. First I strolls down to the number on the letter and takes a look at the buildin'. That was enough. There was some good names on the hall directory; but most of 'em was little, two-room, fly by night firms, with a party 'phone for a private wire and a mail order list bought off'm patent medicine concerns. The people Piddie was doin' business with was that kind.

Next I takes a walk around into Broad-st., where the mounted cops keep the big wind bunch roped in so's they can't break loose and pinch the doorknobs off the subtreasury. The ear muff brigade was lettin' themselves out in fine style, tradin' in Ground Hog bonds, Hoboken gas, Moonshine preferred, and a whole lot of other ten-cent shares, as earnest as if they was under cover and biddin' on Standard Oil firsts.

While I was lookin' 'em over, wonderin' what to do next, I spots Abey Winowski on the fringe of the push. And, say, it wa'n't so long ago that Abey was wearin' sky blue pants and a Postal shield, trottin' out with messages from District Ten. But here he is, with a checked ulster and a five-dollar hat, writin' figures on a pad.

"Hello, Motzie!" says I. "How long since they lets the likes of you inside the ropes?"

"Hello, Torchy!" says he. "Got any orders?"

"I'm lined with 'em," says I. "What's good?"

"Blitzen," says he. "It's on the seesaw; but'll fetch fifty."

"Ain't it a wildcat?" says I.

"Just from the menagerie," says he. "Goin' to take a dollar flyer?"

"Guess I'll see what my brokers has to say first," says I.

With that I goes around to a little joint I knows of, where they has a board for unlisted stocks, and I sets back and watches the curves Blitzen was makin'. First she'd jump four or five points, and then she'd settle back heavy. The Curb was playin' tag with it; that was all, so far as I could see. Nice lot of Hungry Jakes to feed with int'rest bearin' securities!

About fifteen minutes before the market closed I quit and moseyed along up town, just killin' time and tryin' to figure out what ought to be done. Course, I didn't have any idea of playin' private detective and showin' Piddie up to Mr. Robert,—that's out of my line,—but I didn't like the scheme of just chuckin' the bonds back at him and let him get away with any bluff about my interferin' with something I didn't understand at all. Besides, if the returns showed that he'd have won on the deal, what was to hinder his tryin' the same trick again next time he got the chance? That wouldn't been a fair shake for the firm.

Say, I worked my thinker overtime that trip; but I couldn't dig up a thing that was worth savin' from the scrap basket, and when I strolled into the office just about closin' time I wa'n't any nearer to knowin' what to do than when I started.

MOST everyone had left when I pushes through the gate and takes a peek into Piddie's office. He was there. And, say, for a speakin' likeness of a dropped egg that's hit the floor instead of the toast, he was it! He's slumped all over the desk, with his head in his hands, and his hair all mussed up, and his shoulders lopped. I always suspicioned he was built out with pneumatic pads, and blew himself up in the mornin' before he buttoned on the four-inch collar that kept his chin up; but I didn't guess he had a rubber backbone. It was a case of fush with Piddie. He was all in. What I could see of his face had about as much color to it as a sheet of blottin' paper.

Layin' on the floor was a map of the whole disaster. It was a Wall Street extra, with a scarehead story of how Blitzen had kept 'em guessin' all day and then, in the last quarter of an hour of tradin', had gone bumpin' the bumps from twenty-eight down to almost nothin' at all. I didn't stop to read the whole thing; but I read enough to find out that Blitzen had gone soarin' on a false alarm, and that when the facts was give out right the balloon had took fire. And there was Piddie, still fallin'!

"Hello," says I. "You look like a boned ham that's in need of the acid bath and sawdust stuffin'. What's queered you so sudden?"

He jumps and tries to pull himself together when he first hears me, but after he finds who it is he goes to pieces again and flops back in the chair groanin'.

"Is it new mown hay of the lungs, or too many griddle cakes on the stomach?" says I.

But he only gasps and groans some more. Maybe I should of felt sorry for him; but, knowin' the sort of sprung kneed near crook he was, I didn't. He was scared mostly, and he

was doin' all the sympathizin' for himself that was needed. All of a sudden he braces up and looks at his watch.

"Perhaps you didn't get there in time?" says he.

"With the letter and package?" says I. "Watcher take me for? Think I got mucilage on my shoes? I was there on time, all right."

"Oh, mercy!" says he. "Torchy, I'm a ruined man."

"You look it," says I; "but cheer up. You never was much account anyway; so there's no great harm done."

Then he begins to blubber, and leak brine, and take on like a woman with a sick headache. "It wasn't my fault," says he. "I was led into it. Torchy, tell them I was led into it! You'll believe that, won't you?"

"Cert," says I. "I'll make affidavit I seen 'em snap the ring in your nose. But what's it all about?"

"Oh, it's something awful that's happened to me," he wails. "It's too terrible to talk about. You'll know to-morrow. I sha'n't be alive then, Torchy."

"Ain't swallowed a buttonhook, have you?" says I.

Next he begins throwin a fit about what's goin' to become of the missus and the kid. Say, I've been in at two or three acts like this before, and I gen'rally notice that at about such a stage they play that card, the wife and kid. Your real tough citizen don't, nor your real gent,—they shuts their mouths and takes what's comin' to 'em,—but Mr. Weakback has a sudden rush of mem'ry about the folks at home, and squeals like a pup with his tail shut in the door.

"Ah, say," says I, "cut it out! You ought to move up to Harlem and learn to pound the pipes. You're a healthy plunger, you are, sneakin' bonds out of the safe to stack up against a crooked game, and then playin' the baby act when you lose out! Come now, ain't that the awful thing that's happened to you?"

HE couldn't have opened up freer if he'd been put through the third degree. I gets the story of his life then, with a handkerchief accompaniment,—all about the house he's tryin' to buy through the buildin' loan, and the second hand bubble he wants to splurge on 'cause the neighbors have got 'em, and how he was tipped off to this sure thing in Blitzen by a party that had always been a friend of his but couldn't get hold of the stuff to turn the trick himself. He put in all the fine points, even to the way he came to have a chance at the safe.

"If I could only put them back!" says he, sighin'.

"What then?" says I. "Next time I s'pose you'd swipe the whole series, wouldn't you?"

If you could have heard him tell how good he'd be you'd think practisin' a little crooked work now and then was the only sure way to learn how to keep straight.

"Piddie," says I, "I don't want to hurt your feelin's; but you act to me like a weak sister. If I was to do what the case calls for, this thing ought to go to the boss."

"Please don't, Torchy! Please don't!" says he, scabblin' down on his hands and knees.

"Nix on that!" says I. "This is no carpet lavin' bee. I'm no squealer, anyway; besides, I had a little interview with Mrs. Piddie and the kid this noon, and after seein' them I can't rub it in like you deserve. What I've seen and heard I'm goin' to forget. Now sit up straight while I break the news to you gentle. I went down there to-day, just as you told me."

"Yes, I know," he groans, squirmin'.

"But I didn't like the looks of the joint; so I didn't dump the bonds. There they are. Now see they get back where you found 'em!"

TALK about your halleluiah praise meetin's! Piddie was havin' one, all by himself—when the inside door opens and Mr. Robert steps out of his office.

"I'll take care of those bonds, Mr. Piddie," says he.

Chee! what a stunner! Mr. Robert had been in there all the time, writin' private letters, and had took in the whole business.

Did he give Piddie the fire on the spot? Nah! Mr. Robert carries around a frigid portico; but he's got a warm spot inside. He says he's mighty sorry to hear how near Piddie'd come to goin' wrong; but he's glad it turned out the way it did, and if Piddie'll say how much they rung him in for on Blitzen he'll be happy to make good right there.

And how much do you guess? A pair of double X's! He'd worried himself near sick, worked himself up desp'rate, and had finished by doin' something that stood to get him put away for ten or fifteen years—all for forty bucks!

"Piddie," says I, "for a tinhorn, you're a wonder! But, say, when you get home to-night tell that kid of yours I want to see them new shoes of his before he gets the toes all stubbed out."

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AMONG the things that furnish occupation for the eyes and minds of transatlantic voyagers are the house flies that accompany the great steamships from one side of the ocean to the other. In fine sunny weather the flies buzz cheerfully about sheltered places on the decks, and when the wind blows high they take refuge in cabins and saloons. Flies often remain with the ship while in port and return with her on her next trip, thus crossing the ocean several times in succession, and perhaps spending the entire season at sea.

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