

sending out clouds of smoke and leaning back against the ladder. "Previous to my marriage I had rented a little apartment something like this one in the West Fifties. You used to know this town pretty well, Billy. I guess you remember that section, where every house looks just like its neighbor and every street for blocks is exactly the same. Well, the place was decorated for us and our new furniture was moved in and we were both thoroughly pleased. We speculated how happy and cozy we were going to be, and all the way home in the train we talked about it and indulged in housekeeping rhapsodies.

"When we reached our apartment house the janitor met me at the door with a telegram in his hand. It was from the office, asking me to come down immediately I returned in order to explain something that had cropped up during my absence—a matter of which I alone was cognizant. It wouldn't take more than a couple of minutes to straighten out affairs and perhaps an hour's absence in all. I didn't like it, but there was nothing else to do. So, after escorting Mrs. Bryant to the door and opening it for her, and glancing to make sure that all the furniture was there, I kissed her and took the car down town.

"The matter proved more important than I had anticipated. I called up my wife, explained the matter and remained at the office until late in the evening, unravel-

ing the tangle. It was half past nine before I got home. I walked straight in, went up the three flights of stairs and unlocked the apartment door.

"It was absolutely bare, Billy, as bare as this one. The smell of fresh paint was about the only thing there was in it. Not a stick of furniture, not a rug, not a cup or a saucer or a dishrag in the kitchen. And Eleanor was gone.

"Well, sir, I nearly went crazy. Of course, you can guess what had happened. But the solution did not occur to me at all. There was the apartment, arranged just as before, with the kitchen leading out of the diningroom and the bathroom with its three-quarter length tub, and the gas bracket over the medicine chest, and my key which fitted the lock. I didn't know where to turn. Eleanor's folks lived in Syracuse, and even if she had got angry at my delay and gone home she couldn't have taken the furniture with her. And the janitor was out somewhere and I couldn't find a soul in the basement to ask about her.

"Well, I spent that night pacing through the apartment, and by morning I was as nearly crazy as a man could be. Somehow or other, though, I had sense enough to call up the office to say I couldn't get down, and when I got the answer I found I couldn't get down after all. In fact, I got down in record time. Eleanor had been telephoning all the evening before until they closed up at eleven (we were doing a rush business then), and that