

THE BILLIKEN CLOCK

By George Munson.

"A clock, Harry! For an engagement present," inquired Margaret Lisle, looking with astonished eyes at the gilt timepiece which her sweet-



Looking Out Into the Streets.

heart, Harry Vernon, removed from its wrappings.

"Well, you see, dear, it was an idea of my own," Harry explained. "It is called a Billiken clock, and it is supposed to make lovers true to each other for a whole year. All you have to do is to set it upon your table, wind it every day, and let it run. You see, it tells the months as well as the hours. Well, that's all. Let's trust it, shall we?"

"I'd rather trust myself to our love, dearest," whispered Margaret. "Besides, you know we shall be quite an old married nouple before the year is ended."

Harry kissed her, and with that the Billiken clock was forgotten for the time. The next morning it was ticking away merrily upon Margaret's mantel. And sometimes the thought of its pretendedly miraculous powers returned to her, but only for a time. The approaching marriage drove away all other ideas.

They were to have been married in three months, but the sweetest love may come to its undoing. There had been little quarrels, such as are not unknown among lovers; but it was a revelation to Margaret when Harry told her she never loved him.

"There, take back your ring!" she sobbed, flinging it upon the floor. "I am only glad of one thing—that I was warned in time."

"Warned?" questioned Harry, icily. "So you have been discussing me with other men, have you, Margaret?"

"Brute!" sobbed Margaret, stamping out of the room.

All the while the Billiken clock was ticking away upon the mantel. But neither was thinking of the watchful little gnome within, ready to intervene at the appointed moment.

Two months later Margaret sailed for Europe. She knew now that all the important changes in her life had come; thence forward it would flow evenly along in its present channels. She still loved Harry. That she knew. She would always love him. But they would never be anything more to each other than they were.

The man whom she had idealized had proved to be a very human being after all. And the angel that Harry Vernon had depicted in his imagination was no angel, but just a woman. He had given her his heart, and he knew that nobody could ever win his love again. So long as he lived he must love Margaret.