

THE MANAGING EDITOR'S VACATION.

"Tales of Ten Travelers" Series.

By EDGAR L. WAKEMAN.

(Copyright, 1894, by Edgar L. Wakeman. All Rights Reserved.)

The board of directors of the Daily Public Motor Printing and Publishing Company, five in number, met annually on the first day of July.

Their duties usually comprised the declaration of a very large dividend, ordering certain handsome improvements, electing a president, secretary and treasurer for the ensuing year, and adjournment to Vinley's for luncheon.

This was paraded in comfortable gait; when they went their several ways, as befitting their various social and commercial dignities, complacently carrying fresh copies of the Daily Motor in their hands, with acceptable Motor dividend checks in their pockets and with the sunshine of the Motor's great prosperity radiating from their bland and pleasant faces.

But this year the directors, as Mr. Elijah Whittaker truthfully remarked, had "struck a powerful snag."

Mr. Whittaker was in the towing line and this was naturally a favorite form of expression. He had "boarded" the Motor company when it needed a few thousand more, and his journalistic associations had made him quick in simile and comparison.

Indeed similar conditions were true of the entire directory.

Gregg Lomster, wholesale leather, Lucius Shotwell, banker, Addison Schooley, importer and Rufus Backus, retired capitalist, were all, like Mr. Whittaker, sudden acquisitions on various occasions when the Motor's affairs were in perilous condition.

These frightened gentlemen had become associated in this commercial way so long before, that the founders of this powerful engine of civilization, following the invariable and inexplicable fate of originators, had, with one exception, passed from sight into wonted beggary and oblivion.

The directory, as now formed, had existed for years, placid in its equable and ample returns, serene in its unctuous honors, undisturbed by its almost rippleless harrassments, in the genial and mellow atmosphere of proprietary journalism.

The one exception was Kirtley Broom, the Daily Motor's managing editor.

He was a thin, dark little man, with bushy brows and sunken eyes and cheeks. His clothing hung loosely upon him. He came and went as softly and silently as the night. From nine in the morning until nine at night, and often much later, during every day of the year for more than twenty years, he had sat at the same desk in his shirt sleeves, with an old straw hat shading his eyes and a cob pipe in his mouth; and he had never uttered an unnecessary word in all that time.

You could not find his address in the city directory. The general public knew nothing of him. His name never appeared in panels of prominent citizens, drawn for great public platform occasions.

Not a soul connected with the Daily Motor knew where he lived, or how; or whether he was a bachelor or was human enough to have divers little Brooms dangling and romping about him, in the morning hour or the hour of lamplight he might know the sacred record which wise men have in homes.

He was inexplicable, as inextricable, ineradicable. Entirely aside from his powerful though frictionless away, his unobtrusive personality had become an inseparable part of a presence, or fixture, in the Daily Motor system as its engine fires, its press thunderings, its copy, its types, its super-odor of printer's ink, its hundreds of ragged newspapers or its lotteries for nickels and notices.

Social systems had changed; this department editor and that had come and gone; newspaper management had been revolutionized; monarchies had become republics; geographies had become had been readjusted; but Kirtley Broom, who had come in with the founders of the Daily Motor, still sat there cool as at his desk under an old straw hat, smoking a short cob pipe and doing his work as noiselessly as though he were the ghost of the human who had begun his silent though mighty toil at the self-same desk more than twenty years before.

"What's the trouble about Broom, anyhow, Editor Whittaker?" asked the other Motor director editors concernedly.

Years before they had begun calling each other "editor," partly serious and partly in jest, and the title was of such pleasant sound and significance that it would have been something of a hardship to have it overlooked in the city directories, by their contemporaries or by each other now.

"Well," replied Editor Whittaker stoutly, "it's just a case of giving Kirtley Broom out of commission long enough for repairs, or we kin look round for some other craft in his place."

"Falling powers?" asked Editor Backus, casually.

"We might increase his salary," suggested Editor Shotwell, crisply.

"Or reduce his wages and his hours," added Editor Lomster, cautiously. "I have found that to be quite an excellent spur to lagging help."

"What appear to be chop-marks on his invoice of trouble?" inquired Editor Schooley, with his huge importations uppermost in his own mind.

"Kinder general goodness, I'd call it," returned Editor Whittaker anxiously. "The other day I come up here to the board room, to figure up a little; an' Broom rode up in the elevator 'long with me. He jest nodded. Nothin' cordial or hearty about it. I thought to myself: 'You're stoopin' more'n common, Kirtley Broom!' but didn't mention it; he's so cussed touchy."

"Cussed touchy!" echoed the other director editors sympathetically.

"Well, when he got off at his floor he kinder whirled 'round dazed like, as though he'd forgot where his room was. 'What's the matter with Broom?' I said, thinkin' out loud. 'Terbucky!' piped up that jackanapes on an elevator-boy. 'Bash!' says I; 'an' no more remarks like that about your betters, or ye'll git your envelope at the office; that's what you'll git, sonny,' says I. I went to figurin', but kep' thinkin' of Kirtley Broom."

"It does you honor," remarked one of the director editors encouragingly.

"It don't do us honor that we hain't been thinkin' of him long ago!" retorted Editor Whittaker feelingly.

"We've got more'n a thousand per cent on our money already. Who's made it for us? Kirtley Broom! Who's been tuggin' an' puffin' an' strainin' while we sot 'round takin' toll? Kirtley Broom!"

"Kirtley Broom!" two or three of the director editors murmured placidly.

"He's put the Daily Public Motor ahead of any other newspaper in the whole country; he's got more'n two hundred thousand daily circulation; and made it pay us thirty forty, sometimes fifty, per cent on our shares?"

"Kirtley Broom!" they answered thoughtfully and in unison.

"I should say so," asserted Editor

Whittaker, rapping the desk loudly with his bronzed knuckles. "An' that's what I thought on, when I set there figurin'. That's what I kep' thinkin' on, when I begun askin' questions 'round th' office, an' found Kirtley Broom had been copped up there like a slave, more'n twenty years! 'That's what makes him stagger,' says I, startin' for his room."

"Startin' for his room?" several of the director editors exclaimed incredulously.

"Yes, startin' an' gettin' there, too. 'Broom,' says I, 'I want to see you down t' th' docks a minnute. 'Not now?' said he, lookin' up savage. 'Right now,' says I. He looked up agin' capin' like at his work, then at his watch, an' says: 'Do you realize what there is to be done here, at this time o' th' day, Mr. Whittaker?' 'Probly not,' says I. 'An' it don't make no difference if I don't. The Motor'll run itself fur half a hour or so.'"

"And Kirtley Broom went with you?" they asked with increasing interest.

"Well, sorter went; mostly towed through. I got him onto my fast tug, 'Greased Lightnin'—steam's always up on her—tipped the Cap'n a wink, an' we sot out into th' harbor in a jiffy, before Kirtley Broom knew what was up."

"Whew!" exclaimed the interested director editors. "How did he take it?"

"He didn't take it. He jest got white an' says: 'Put me ashore at once, sir!' 'Not much,' says I, 'I'll you've had a breakfast on sea air.' 'I'll hold you responsible to the directory, sir,' says he. 'Put it,' says I, 'noddin' to th' Cap'n t' go on more steam. 'This is an outrage, er, sir,' says he. 'It's what you need, 'n' got t' have, paper or no paper,' says I."

"Good!" said several of the director editors heartily.

"Bad!" ejaculated Editor Whittaker warmly. "He jest turned away from me, straighter 'n' I've ever seen him; run his holler eyes up an' down th' bay; caught sight of an opposition tug headin' toward th' city, about a thousand feet for'ard; waited a bit, studyin' like; an', finally with a polite 'Good mornin', Mr. Whittaker!' took a header into the water; come up five hundred feet aft o' th' 'Greased Lightnin', an' made for that other tug like a salt; now an' agin' raisin' his hand, an' motionin' 'em to slow up. They did, too; hove him a line; pulled him aboard; an' th' last I seed of him, he was a-settin' on th' cap'n, dryin' off an' writin' out assignments with pencil an' paper he'd borrowed from somebody on that pesky opposition tug."

Mingled expressions of surprise, merriment and concern followed Editor Whittaker's recital. When these had quieted, the doughty tug owner said solemnly:

"That night he quit two hours later than usual, more holler-eyed, humped an' gone-lookin' than ever. Kirtley Broom's got to have a vacation, if the Motor stops while he's takin' it!"

"Well, well, well!" "Bless me, bless me!" "To be sure!" "Without doubt," and "Certainly, certainly," followed this determined sentiment; and the Motor directors at once set about discussing ways and means to effect the desired result.

It was the only distracting conference the Motor directors had ever known.

Who should convey their decision to this strange man who was breaking down at his post and who regarded it as the most deadly of all affronts to be interrupted, in his own interest, in his life-consuming toil? What recourse could be resorted to, if he refused to go? How could they cajole, wheedle or bully a man of his indomitable purpose into leaving for a day, a week or a month, the labor which was destroying him and yet in which the very elixir of his waning life was found?

It was a strange experience to these proprietary journalists to encounter such a character. The more they discussed Kirtley Broom, the farther he seemed from them; the more necessary to them and their great property.

The entire matter, they all agreed, was portentous, must receive immediate attention, and could only be handled in the most delicate diplomatic manner.

No one of them could be prevailed upon to singly undertake the mission. It should be effected, they at last decided, through the full board, acting as one man. No one should shirk responsibility. And their managing editor should be made to feel that there was no temporizing with the real power behind the Daily Public Motor; no, indeed!

He was therefore immediately summoned before them. It was the first time this had ever occurred, and when Kirtley Broom entered the board room he was at loss to understand the significance of the Motor's chief owners all sitting confusedly together as if busied in inexplicable problems beyond call and nudging each other as though their tongues were lost.

He stood there in the attitude of one impatient to return to his work. One hand held the knob of the hall open door, while the other slowly removed his old straw office hat. He gave them all a searching glance, as some inventor mechanic, called from his masterful toil to parley with investing novices, might unconsciously permit a gleam of contempt to flash through his long-habit look of subserviency.

Then he turned as if to depart, but the board recovered itself suddenly and just in time to arrest his attention.

"Oh—ah—Mr. Broom?" Editor Lomster managed to articulate.

"Oh—ah—Mr. Broom?" came jerkily from the other members of the board.

"Sit down a moment, Mr. Broom, please," urged Editor Schooley, looking around helplessly for somebody else to begin.

"Yes, yes, do sit down," "Little matter, you know," "Want to get better acquainted," "Quite a pleasure, I declare," and "A little rest'll do you good, Mr. Broom;" followed from members of the board in quick succession.

The last remark, by Editor Shotwell, was a happy one. It somewhat relieved the general embarrassment. The managing editor seated himself wearily, fixing his attention upon the open door with the wariness of a picket who the enemy's lines crowd closely.

"We wish to congratulate you, Mr. Broom, on the success, the extraordinary success, of the Motor," began Editor Shotwell uneasily.

"Success of the Motor," the other four blandly echoed.

"And express our satisfaction as to the general—the general—"

"State of the market," ventured Editor Lomster in a burst of helpful enthusiasm, suddenly recalling the recent happy advance in hides.

"And emphasize our approval of your editorial management in every particular, save on one point," bravely insisted Editor Backus.

"One point," the others heartily reiterated.

Here Kirtley Broom's thin fingers

crushed his old straw hat like a bunch of "killed copy."

"On that point," blurted out Editor Whittaker firmly, "we can't by no means agree. That point is—"

"Never mind, sir," came quickly and quite as decidedly from the managing editor. "You shall have my resignation in your hands in five minutes' time!"

As Kirtley Broom said this, there was an awful look in his strange, cadaverous face; a look such as might come over the face of one who, whipped on by a steadfast love or heroic duty or sacrifice in endless and rewardless toil, reaches suddenly the ultimate of effort—in terror for its swift ruin to others, transfixed in momentary realization of a pitiless scourge at end.

Some instinctive consciousness of this seemed to fit through the minds of the men before him, and for a moment it stilled them. But in an instant more they were all upon their feet, restraining him from his purpose and filling the room with the clamor of their protests.

"Lord!—we didn't mean that!" gasped Editor Whittaker, in a very perspiration of mild desperation. "Can't we no way sit inside your machinery, long pullin', do a little friendly packin', an' oullin', Kirtley Broom?"

The managing editor arose to go. Editor Whittaker, with a quick move of his fat little body, reached the door before him; snapped it shut with a loud click; turned the key in the lock; and with his dumpy brown hands behind him and his dumpy broad back against the door, he exclaimed triumphantly:

"Kirtley Broom, it's no use! You've got t' listen t' th' voice o' reason. You're killin' yourself here. This ere board's unanimously decided that you've got t' take a vacation. All work an' no play—hang the rest of it!—kinder go into dry dock 'n' git th' barnacles off yer copper 'n' yer general apparatuses brightened up. Now, make it four, six or eight weeks, just as ye like; but out ya go, t' morrow mornin'!"

"Good, good!" "Go it!" enthusiastically cried the rest of the board.

"We ain't no all around editors, like you be, Kirtley Broom; but we're goin' t' take turns here at th' wheel, while you be below. If she (the Motor) was undoubtedly referred to goes smooth, then smooth she goes! If she goes jinky an' cranky, we won't mind a few cogs a-slippin'! Git yer dunnage t'gether 'n'ight, Broom. Now, no hemmin' an' hawin'! It's passed th' board 'thout any nay!"

The managing editor was helpless in their hands and he looked it. He seemed to be panting like a caged animal. More than once he endeavored to rise, and then to speak. His eyes flamed and paled and appeared to penetrate, out above their heads, to the remotest outreaching of the great establishment. If these men could have known, they could not but have followed them on, on, far beyond all that!

"I've been here very, very long," he faltered.

"Don't matter," retorted Editor Whittaker doggedly. "All th' wuss!"

"You are all very kind, gentlemen. But—but I simply cannot afford it."

As he said this, his self-consciousness was of meanness and insignificance. To them, he seemed infinitely beyond and above them. Five fat hands, instantly made five swift dives into five plethoric pockets.

"Oh, it isn't that! It isn't that!" came so like a cry from the lips of Kirtley Broom, as the old straw hat swished through the air, that the five fat hands relaxed and slid silently from their receptacles.

"Anybody weightin' you down, keepin' you back, chokin' you off, smotherin' you under, Broom?" Editor Lomster, who had for a time been silent, blurted suddenly at the bowed man upon the rack.

"Who said there was? Who dare say that?" he answered back hoarsely and fiercely, shaking his clenched fist and crushed hat defiantly at the speaker.

"My God! Let me out of here at once!—at once, gentlemen!"

Trembling and pale, Kirtley Broom sprang toward the door. But Editor Whittaker anticipated him. He had one arm about him in a twinkling, holding him gently yet firmly as a vice. He raised the other and let it flutter back and forth toward his astounded companions for a long time, before he seemed able to gather fitting words from his turbid and onrushing thoughts and conjectures.

"There's some things," he finally stammered, "a leetle too close t' th' vest, t' bear onto, even atention friends—as we all be here. Kirtley Broom takes a vacation. That's passed th' board. Kirtley Broom can afford it. That's passed the board. It's none o' th' board's business 't' prod an' poke. That's passed th' board. Whatever bothers anybody'll be tended to, Kirtley Broom's own way. That's passed the board. I'll see Kirtley Broom privately. That's passed the board. Th' board now stands adjourned till 't' morrow mornin', nine o'clock, sharp, ready for editorial business. And that's passed the board 'thout any nay!"

And with this, Editor Elijah Whittaker with their managing editor still captive in gentle bonds, withdrew from the most memorable board meeting of the directory of the Daily Public Motor Printing and Publishing Company had ever known.

II.

Though it does not so often happen in this world of ours, supreme contempt can as swiftly be flashed into measureless esteem as passive admiration be transformed into revolting pity.

In a moment's time Kirtley Broom's isolate, desolate, self-prisoned life had been magically touched and softened—and here the only vacation the managing editor had ever known had really begun—by rough old Elijah Whittaker's cunning and protecting perception, for it carried along with it those firm, fine human qualities of consideration and compassion which can alone reach, reassure and rescue the sore and harried human heart.

They had passed the managing editor's desk and moved together without apparent purpose to the window overlooking the roofs and checkered channels of the great city. The dusk was already purpling the dusty ways, and so swiftly marshaling the city lights that it seemed like a great firmament of up-leaping stars beneath them.

Editor Whittaker saw that his companion's eyes were fixed on a little peckey hollow of shadow—a miserable quarter of the city which he also well knew—between high and crowding walls, perhaps half a mile to the north of Printing House Square; but he let his hand upon his shoulder, so long as the mood remained upon him.

Standing thus, his features were by turns set and sad, flitted with alarm and apprehension; stern with sudden resolve, quivering in apparent hopeless pity, or drawn in pain and discouragement.

At last hot tears tumbled from his face almost bounding, Editor Whittaker imagined, toward the dark hollow between the northern walls.

"This is inexcusable!" he faltered with a start, seeming to suddenly recollect that a board member stood beside him.

"Rosh! This is dead right!" retorted Editor Whittaker with a burst of feeling, in which objects grew hazy before

his own pudgy face. "Ye don't have t' give it a name, neither, Kirtley Broom."

"Twenty-two years," said the managing editor deliberately, as if thinking wondrously and aloud and with an inclination of his head in the direction of the bit of light-surrounded shadow between the walls.

Editor Whittaker's rough hand stroked his shoulder softly and reassuringly.

"And always darkin', darkenin', just as you see it now!" This, still as if he thinking aloud and with his thin finger trembling toward the spot which was fast merging from shadow into blackness.

"Lots o' change in that time," said Editor Whittaker comfortingly.

"In some things there is no change." It came almost as a groan from Kirtley Broom's lips. Then, deliberately: "When must I leave the city?"

"Morning—mornin'" was the stout and almost aggressive reply.

"If I do not go—my place will be filled by another?"

"You go. That's passed the board!" "Well, I will go; on one condition."

"Needn't name it. Its yours afore namin'."

"That you—no other human being. Mr. Whittaker—divide my salary, each day, into three equal shares, place the money in separate envelopes and have them delivered, by some person entirely disconnected with the employes of the office, and still so that there will be no doubt about their absolute delivery, to the three persons whose names and addresses I will leave with you."

"You kin be just as sure of it, as that 'Lijah Whittaker lives."

"At about nine o'clock, every evening?"

"Nine, t' th' stroke o' th' hour. Pull out your watch, t' th' minute, wherever ye be, an' know it's done!"

Kirtley Broom looked into the honest old eyes an instant, when he stepped to his desk with an almost youthful tread and wrote three names and addresses which Editor Whittaker placed laboriously in his wallet. Then the managing editor hastily set his books and papers aright; called his assistant and gave him a few general directions; and, with his still vigilant guard close beside him, with many timorous fits and starts and attempts to return, which were promptly checked by his companion, he at last found himself upon the crowded street.

"Don't it feel like out o' prison, now, honest, Broom?"

"Honestly, it feels like the sensation of being hanged; but God bless you, Mr. Whittaker! is in the very tingle and chokin' of it all!"

"Tut, tut! Bother! Bosh! Why, He's a blessin' of you this very minute!"

They grasped hands and stood there silently for a moment. When Kirtley Broom's hand was withdrawn there were bills of large denomination within it. The crowd had pushed between him and his companion; but he could see his fat hands waving him away and hear his kindly voice roaring above the din of the street:

"Just a word, when you're anchored, t' know where ye be, if ye don't mind. Forgit th' Motor. Forgit yourself. Forgit trouble. Go back twenty year—t' where ye was raised, mebbly—an' begin over agin! Good-bye!"

Whereupon Kirtley Broom set his again darkening face hurriedly toward the black spot between the towering city walls, for the last time.

"That's a human bein' that's been murdered by inches, half his lifetime," mused Editor Whittaker, watching him closely as he pushed through the dense early evening throngs of Park Row.

"An' he's stood an' took it like steel, or one o' them air gods they tell about. I thought I had stuff in me. I ain't in th' same hundred year with that fellow!"

He at once examined the slip of paper which Kirtley Broom had given him, and began muttering:

"Twelve Forsyth street? Forsyth street? That's no fit place for th' managin' editor o' th' Motor t' live in! That's a tough desecrict, that is. Mebbly Broom don't live there? Mebbly—Whew! Here, here, here, 'Lijah Whittaker, that won't do!"

He held the addresses out at arm's length under a shop window, scanning them eagerly and spelling them out carefully.

"Mrs. Betsy Hopper, Housekeeper, Fourth Flat, 12 Forsyth Street, City!"

Editor Whittaker mopped his forehead, plumped on his spectacles and reflected a moment dubiously.

"That looks bad; mighty bad. But it's only number one," he added hopefully.

"Mrs. Rachel Broom, Widow, Fourth Flat, Forsyth Street." Umph! That's better. 'Paul Broom—' what's this? 'G-a-m, Gam. Gam?—Gam?—Gam? Showed his pen through that three times. Bothered, an' some slip, probably. Same number, though, 12 Forsyth Street."

Editor Whittaker replaced the paper in his wallet, carefully put his spectacles in their case, shut his lips closely together, nodded his head several times jerkily, buttoned his coat across his chest as though setting out in stormy weather, boarded an up-town car and, a few minutes later, found himself plunging through the writhing masses, the loathsome scum of all nations, that swarm like human maggots in the festering city trench known as Forsyth street.

He had scarcely found its Number 12, before he caught a glimpse of Kirtley Broom behind him. It was impossible for him to retreat and he plunged into the shadowy entrance, groping to the right and left as he scrambled up the creaking stairs, for some momentary retreat from observation.

This impulse spurred him into quickly elaborating up, up, up. The footsteps of Kirtley Broom were close behind.

"More by hit than wit," as he afterward related, his arm suddenly lunged forward into darkened space. He pushed after it, and found himself in an open closet, safe from detection, at the very moment that Kirtley Broom opening another door besides his own, stopped with the assured trend of familiarity into a dimly-lighted room beyond.

Editor Whittaker's breath and equanimity were soon regained. He saw that one side of the closet where he stood was fitted with a half door, waist high, and this was open. The miserable vista thus presented comprised three tiny rooms. One was a kitchen and a bed room; another was a bed room and a dining room; while the third was a bed room and something which stood for living room and parlor.

In the first was Betsy Hopper, housekeeper, grumblingly preparing a scant repast. In the second stood a little table spread with a scribbled cloth and a handful of dishes, and Kirtley Broom beside it, white and hesitant; a storm whipped human slab of marble among the ruins and graves of hopes and loves and home.

In the third room was a white-haired old woman, propped in a rickety invalid chair, bedecked as with the remnants of ancient finery. A look of fierce famine, wholly removed from physical hunger, was in her skinny face and flaming eyes; while her chattering lips uttered little gibbering shrieks of surprise or complaint of gloominess at the varying fortunes of cards, shuffled, dealt or played above her lap from her own half palsied hands, or from the fluttering, talon-like fingers of

a man whose face reflected unmistakably lineaments of relationship with all her pitiful cunning and wolfish greed.

Then followed a little scene which opened to Editor Whittaker's astounded eyes such pages of the life-book of world-wise man had never even dreamed before.

Kirtley Broom stepped into the kitchen and placed some money in Betsy Hopper's hand.

"I shall go away for a little time, in the morning," he said quietly. "But it will all come, every night at nine—don't let them doubt it for a moment, Betsy—just as it has come every night for years."

Then he turned and walked steadily to the two at cards.

He came to his mother's side, put his hand into hers and let it rest there a moment, when he bent over her puffed and powdered locks and kissed her tenderly.

He took his brother's hand, and it rested there a moment, too. In both, that which stood for his life blood remained.

Mother and brother clutched what they received just as fiercely, just as remorselessly, just as flippantly and ungratefully, just as the senseless maws of Chance would in turn clutch it from them; just as this trinity of harpies had done ten thousand times before—and Kirtley Broom, in the infinite heroism of a devotion more hopeless than the grave, turned from this rapacious faculty without a tremor in the pallid lines of his ghostly face.

III.

A fat and pudgy form dodged along through the street throngs behind Kirtley Broom on his way to a great uptown railway station, the next morning; and a certain fat and pudgy face peered eagerly over Kirtley Broom's shoulder upon the ticket he had purchased with that halting yet eager and fluttering diffidence of a school boy on half-holiday quest for undetermined field of exploration.

This one scanned, the fat and pudgy form wriggled quickly out of line into the impatient waiting crowds; its owner nervously watched Kirtley Broom until he had passed the ticket inspectors and his form, his shoulders and finally his hat, were lost in the waving bobbing of heads along the noisy platforms beside the trains; with an exclamation of undisguised satisfaction and relief, at last turned to a railway map upon the wall; and, slowly repeating "Brice's Cove?—Brice's Cove?—Brice's Cove?" ran his fat and pudgy finger back and forth along the heavy notched line.

"Umph! Never heard of that. Must be on salt water, though. Yes, yes; here 'tis. Flag station. If it ain't just like him t' bury himself where there ain't nobody t' even plant a headstun over him!"

He now pushed his fat and pudgy head into the ticket window, as there was a moment's lull in purchases, and inquired anxiously about Brice's Cove.

"Twenty-eight miles out. First flag station. All rocks and trees and water. Half a dozen old sea-captains ramp round there. Nobody can live near 'em. One woman there; that's all we know of. She's telegraph operator and station agent. We call her 'General Manager Mary,' because she runs th' town and th' captains to boot!" glibly replied the voice in the window.

"Thankee, thankee, sir," answered the questioner heartily, replacing his spectacles in their case and turning abruptly away, muttering to himself:

"If General Manager Mary'll only run afoul o' Kirtley Broom an' send him t' dry dock till he kin git remodelled, fore an' aft, deck an' keel, 'Lijah Whittaker'll have the cussedest load off his mind that ever got outo' it yet! But, Lord!—all them other editors'll be waitin' down there t' th' Motor office t' begin!"

He thus sot out from one completed task to another, cheerily comforting himself from time to time with the half audible reflections:

"One managin' editor's vacationin', anyhow; an' 'Lijah Whittaker's gained one o' his p'int. If this editor business ain't too all-fired weakenin', I'll tackle them gambin' blood suckers t' morrow, an' t' morrow ain't any too soon!"

When Kirtley Broom stepped from the scarcely halting train at Brice's Cove station, the only passenger to alight among its jumble of gnarled coastwise trees and its huge