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Kennedy Buggy Co.

THE MAN WHO COULD WORK MIRACLES.

BY H. G. WELLS.

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IT IS doubtful whether the gift was innate. For my own part, I think it came to him suddenly. Indeed, until he was 30 he was a skeptic and did not believe in miraculous powers. And here, since it is the most convenient place, I must mention that he was a little man and had eyes of a hot brown, very erect red hair, a mustache like the German emperor's and freckles. His name was George McWhirter Fotheringay—not the sort of name by any means to lead to any expectation of miracles—and he was clerk at Gomshott's. He was greatly addicted to assertive argument. It was while he was asserting the impossibility of miracles that he had his first intimation of his extraordinary powers. This particular argument was being held in the bar of the Long Dragon, and Toddy Beamish was conducting the opposition by a monotonous but effective "so you say" that drove Mr. Fotheringay to the very limit of his patience.

There were present, besides these two, a very dusty cyclist, Landlord Cox and Miss Maybridge, the perfectly respectable and rather portly barmaid of the Dragon. Miss Maybridge was standing with her back to Mr. Fotheringay, washing glasses. The others were watching him, more or less amused by the present ineffectiveness of the assertive method. Goaded by the Torres Vedras tactics of Mr. Beamish, Mr. Fotheringay determined to make an unusual rhetorical effort. "Looky here, Mr. Beamish," said Mr. Fotheringay, "let us clearly understand what a miracle is. It's something contrariwise to the course of nature, done by power of will. I can't make things happen without being specially willed."

"So you say," said Mr. Beamish, repulsing him.

Mr. Fotheringay appealed to the cyclist, who had hitherto been a silent auditor, and received his assent—given with a hesitating cough and a glance at Mr. Beamish. The landlord would express no opinion, and Mr. Fotheringay, returning to Mr. Beamish, received the unexpected concession of a qualified assent to his definition of a miracle.

"For instance," said Mr. Fotheringay, greatly encouraged, "here would be a miracle. That lamp, in the natural course of nature, couldn't burn like that upsy down, could it, Beamish?"

"You say it couldn't," said Beamish.

"And you?" said Fotheringay. "You don't mean to say—eh?"

"No," said Beamish reluctantly. "No, it couldn't."

"Very well," said Mr. Fotheringay. "Then here comes some one, as it might be, along here and stands, as it might be, here and says to that lamp, as I do, collecting all my will: Turn upsy down without breaking and go on burning steady and— Hello!"

It was enough to make any one say "Hello!" The impossible, the incredible, was visible to them all. The lamp hung inverted in the air, burning quietly, with its flame pointing down. It was as solid, as indisputable as ever a lamp was, the prosaic, common lamp of the Long Dragon bar.

Mr. Fotheringay stood with an extended forefinger and the knitted brows of one anticipating a catastrophic smash. The cyclist, who was sitting next the lamp, ducked and jumped across the bar. Everybody jumped more or less. Miss Maybridge turned and screamed. For nearly three seconds the lamp remained still. A faint cry of mental distress came from Mr. Fotheringay. "I can't keep it up," he said, "any longer." He staggered back, and the inverted lamp suddenly flared, fell against the corner of the bar, bounced aside, smashed upon the floor and went out.

It was lucky it had a metal receiver, or the whole place would have been in a blaze. Mr. Cox was the first to speak, and his remark, shorn of needless excrescences, was to the effect that Fotheringay was a fool. Fotheringay was beyond disputing even so fundamental a proposition as that. He was astonished beyond measure at the thing that had occurred. The subsequent conversation threw absolutely no light on the matter so far as Fotheringay was concerned; the general opinion not only followed Mr. Cox very closely, but very vehemently. Every one accused Fotheringay of a silly trick and presented him to himself as a foolish destroyer of comfort and security. His mind was in a tornado of perplexity. He was himself inclined to agree with them, and he made a remarkably ineffectual opposition to the proposal of his departure.

He went home flushed and heated, coat collar crumpled, eyes smarting and ears red. He watched each of the ten street lamps nervously as he passed it. It was only when he found himself alone in his little bedroom in Church row that he was able to grapple seriously with his memories of the occurrence and ask, "What on earth happened?"

He had removed his coat and boots and was sitting on the bed with his hands in his pockets repeating the text of his defense for the seventeenth time, "I didn't want the confounded thing to upset," when it occurred to him that at the precise moment he had said the commanding words he had inadvertently willed the thing he said and that when he had seen the lamp in the air he had felt that it depended on him to maintain it there without being clear how this was to be done. He had not a particularly complex mind, or he might have stuck for a time at that "inadvertently willed," embracing, as it does, the abstrusest problems of voluntary action, but as it was the idea came to him with a quite acceptable haziness. And from that, following, as I must admit, no clear logical path, he came to the test of experiment.

He pointed resolutely to his candle and collected his mind, though he felt he did a foolish thing. "Be raised up," he said. But in a second that feeling vanished. The candle was raised, hung in the air one giddy moment and, as Mr. Fotheringay gasped, fell with a smash on his toilet table, leaving him in darkness save for the expiring glow of its wick.

For a time Mr. Fotheringay sat in the darkness, perfectly still. "It did happen, after all," he said. "And how I'm to explain it I don't know." He sighed heavily and began feeling in his pockets for a match. He could find none, and he rose and groped about the toilet table. "I wish I had a match," he said. He resorted to his coat, and there was none there, and then it dawned upon him that miracles were possible even with matches. He extended a hand and scowled at it in the dark. "Let there be a match in that hand," he said. He felt some light object fall across his palm, and his fingers closed upon a match.

After several ineffectual attempts to light this he discovered it was a safety match. He threw it down, and then it occurred to him that he might have willed it lit. He did and perceived it burning in the midst of his toilet table mat. He caught it up hastily, and it went out. His perception of possibilities enlarged, and he felt for and replaced the candle in the candlestick. "Here, you be lit!" said Mr. Fotheringay, and forthwith the candle was flaring, and he saw a little black hole in the toilet cover, with a wisp of smoke rising from it. For a time he stared from this to the little flame and back and then looked up and met his own gaze in the looking glass. By this help fie communed with himself in silence for a time.

"How about miracles now?" said Mr. Fotheringay at last, addressing his reflection.

The subsequent meditations of Mr. Fotheringay were of a severe but confused description. So far he could see it was a case of pure willing with him. The capture of his experiences so far disinclined him for any further experiments, at least until he had reconsidered them. But he lifted a sheet of paper and turned a glass of water pink and then green, and he created a snail, which he miraculously annihilated, and got himself a miraculous new tooth-

The lamp hung inverted in the air, burning quietly.

brush. Later in the small hours he had reached the fact that his will power must be of a particularly rare and pungent quality, a fact of which he had certainly little inkling before, but no certain assurance. The scare and perplexity of his first discovery were now qualified by pride in this evidence of singularity and by vague intimations of advantage. He became aware that the church clock was striking 1, and as it did not occur to him that his daily duties at Gomshott's might be miraculously dispensed with he resumed undressing in order to get to bed without further delay. As he struggled to get his shirt over his head he was struck with a brilliant idea. "Let me be in bed," he said and found himself so. "Undressed," he stipulated and, finding the sheets cold, added hastily, "and in my nightshirt—no, in a nice, soft woolen nightshirt. Ah," he said, with immense enjoyment, "and now let me be comfortably asleep!"

He awoke at his usual hour and was pensive till through breakfast time, wondering whether his overnight experience might not be a particularly vivid dream. At length his mind turned again to cautious experiments. For instance, he had three eggs for breakfast, two his landlady had supplied, good, but sloppy, and one was a delicious fresh goose egg, laid, cooked and served by his extraordinary will. He hurried off to Gomshott's in a state of profound but carefully concealed excitement, but only remembered the shell of the third egg when his landlady spoke of it that night. All day he could do no work because of this astonishingly new self knowledge, but this caused him no inconvenience, because he made up for it miraculously in his last ten minutes.

As the day wore on his state of mind passed from wonder to elation, albeit the circumstances of his dismissal from the Long Dragon were still disagreeable to recall, and a garbled account of the matter that had reached his colleagues led to some badinage. It was evident he must be careful how he lifted frangible articles, but in other ways his gift promised more and more as he turned it over in his mind. He intended among other things to increase his personal property by unostentatious acts of creation. He called into existence a pair of very splendid diamond studs and hastily annihilated them again as young Gomshott came across the counting house to his desk. He was afraid young Gomshott might wonder how he had come by them. He saw quite clearly the gift required caution and watchfulness in its exercise, but so far as he could judge the difficulties attending its mastery would be no greater than those he had already faced in the study of cycling. It was that analogy, perhaps, quite as much as the feeling that he would be unwelcome in the Long Dragon, that drove him out after supper into the lane beyond the gas works to rehearse a few miracles in private.

There was possibly a certain want of originality in his attempts, for apart from his will power Mr. Fotheringay was not a very exceptional man. The miracle of Moses' rod came to his mind, but the night was dark and unfavorable to the proper control of large miraculous snakes. Then he recollected the story of "Tannhauser" that he had read on the back of the Philharmonic programme. That seemed to him singularly attractive and harmless. He stuck his walking stick—a very nice Poona-Penang lawyer—into the turf that edged the footpath, and commanded the dry wood to blossom. The air was immediately full of the scent of roses, and by means of a match he saw for himself that this beautiful miracle was indeed accomplished. His satisfaction was ended by advancing footsteps. Afraid of a premature discovery of his powers, he addressed the blossoming stick hastily: "Go back." What he meant was "change back;" but of course he was confused. The stick receded at a considerable velocity, and incontinently came a cry of anger and a bad word from the approaching person. "Who are you throwing brambles at, you fool?" cried a voice. "That got me on the shin."

"I'm sorry, old chap," said Mr. Fotheringay, and then, realizing the awkward nature of the explanation, caught nervously at his mustache. He saw Winch, one of the three Immering constables, advancing.

"What d'yer mean by it?" asked the constable. "Hello! It's you, is it? The gent that broke the lamp at the Long Dragon!"

"I don't mean anything by it," said Mr. Fotheringay. "Nothing at all."

"What d'yer do it for then?"

"Oh, bother!" said Mr. Fotheringay.

"Bother indeed! D'yer know that stick hurt? What d'yer do it for, eh?"

For the moment Mr. Fotheringay could not think what he had done it for. His silence seemed to irritate Mr. Winch. "You've been assaulting the police, young man, this time. That's what you done."

"Look here, Mr. Winch," said Mr. Fotheringay, annoyed and confused, "I'm very sorry. The fact is"—

"Well?"

He could think of no way but the truth. "I was working a miracle." He tried to speak in an offhand way, but try as he would he couldn't.

"Working a— 'Ere, don't talk rot. Working a miracle, indeed! Miracle! Well that's downright funny! Why, you's the chap that don't believe in miracles. Fact is, this is another of your silly conjuring tricks; that's what this is. Now, I tell you"—

But Mr. Fotheringay never heard what Mr. Winch was going to tell him. He realized he had given himself away, flung his valuable secret to the fair winds of heaven. A violent gust of irritation swept him to action. He turned on the constable swiftly and fiercely. "Here," he said, "I've had enough of this, I have! I'll show you a silly conjuring trick, I will! Go to hades! Go, now!"

He was alone!

Mr. Fotheringay performed no more miracles that night, nor did he trouble to see what had become of his flowering stick. He returned to the town forthwith, scared and very quiet, and went to his bedroom. "Lord," he said, "it's a powerful gift, an extremely powerful gift. I didn't hardly mean as much as that. Not really. I wonder what hades is like!"

He sat on the bed taking off his boots. Struck by a happy thought, he transferred the constable to San Francisco and without any more interference with normal conditions went soberly to bed. He might he dream of anger or Winch.

The next day Mr. Fotheringay heard two interesting items of news. Some one had planted a most beautiful climbing rose against the elder Mr. Gomshott's private house in the Lullaborough road, and the river as far as Rawling's mill was to be dragged for Constable Winch.

Mr. Fotheringay was abstracted and thoughtful all that day and performed no miracles either on that day or the next, except certain provisions for Winch and the miracle of completing his day's work with punctual perfection in spite of all the bee swarm of thoughts that hummed through his mind. And the extraordinary abstraction and meekness of his manner were remarked by several people and made a matter for jesting. For the most part he was thinking of Winch.

On Sunday evening he went to chapel, and, oddly enough, Mr. Maydig, who took a certain interest in occult matters, preached about "things that are not lawful." Mr. Fotheringay was not a regular chapel goer, but the system of assertive skepticism, to which I have already alluded, was now very much shaken. The tenor of the sermon threw an entirely new light on these novel gifts, and he suddenly decided to consult Mr. Maydig immediately after the service. So soon as that was determined he found himself wondering why he had not done so before.

Mr. Maydig, a lean, excitable man with quite remarkably long wrists and neck, was gratified at the request for a private conversation from a young man whose carelessness in religious matters was a matter for general remark in the town. After a few necessary delays, he conducted him to the study of the Manse, which was contiguous to the chapel, seated him comfortably, and, standing in front of a cheerful fire—his legs threw a Rhodian arch of shadow on the opposite wall—requested Mr. Fotheringay to state his business.

At first Mr. Fotheringay was a little abashed, and found some difficulty in opening the matter. "You will scarcely believe me, Mr. Maydig, I am afraid," and so forth for some time. He tried a question at last and asked Mr. Maydig his opinion of miracles.

Mr. Maydig was still saying "Well" in an extremely judicial tone, when Mr. Fotheringay interrupted again. "You don't believe, I suppose, that some common sort of person—like myself, for instance—as it might be sitting here now, might have some sort of twist inside him that made him able to do things by his will."

"It's possible," said Mr. Maydig. "Something of the sort, perhaps, is possible."

"If I might make free with something here, I think I might show you by a sort of experiment," said Mr. Fotheringay. "Now, take that tobacco jar on the table, for instance. What I want to know is whether what I am going to do with it is a miracle or not. Just half a minute, Mr. Maydig, please."

He knitted his brows, pointed to the tobacco jar and said, "Be a bowl of violets."

The tobacco jar did as it was ordered.

Mr. Maydig started violently at the change and stood looking from the thaumaturgist to the bowl of flowers. He said nothing. Presently he ventured to lean over the table and smell the violets; they were fresh picked and very fine ones. Then he stared at Mr. Fotheringay again.

"How did you do that?" he asked.

Mr. Fotheringay pulled his mustache. "Just told it, and there you are. Is that a miracle, or is it black art, or what is it? And what do you think's the matter with me? That's what I want to ask."

"It's a most extraordinary occurrence."

"And this day last week I knew no more that I could do things like that than you did. It came quite sudden. It's something odd about my will, I suppose, and that's as far as I can see."

"Is that—the only thing? Could you do other things with that?"

"Lord, yes!" said Mr. Fotheringay. "Just anything." He thought and suddenly recalled a conjuring entertainment he had seen. "Here!" He pointed. "Change into a bowl of fish—no, not that—change into a glass bowl full of water with goldfish swimming in it. That's better! You see that, Mr. Maydig?"

"It's astonishing. It's incredible. You are either a most extraordinary—But no"—

"I could change it into anything," said Mr. Fotheringay, "just anything. Here! Be a pigeon, will you?"

In another moment a blue pigeon was fluttering round the room and making Mr. Maydig duck every time it came near him. "Stop there, will you?" said Mr. Fotheringay, and the pigeon hung motionless in the air. "I could change it back to a bowl of flowers," he said and after replacing the pigeon on the table worked that miracle. "I expect you will want your pipe presently," he said and restored the tobacco jar.

Mr. Maydig had followed all these later changes in a sort of ejaculatory silence. He stared at Mr. Fotheringay fearfully and in a very gingerly manner picked up the tobacco jar, examined it, replaced it on the table. "Well!" was the only expression of his feelings.

"Now, after that it's easier to explain what I came about," said Mr. Fotheringay and proceeded to a lengthy and involved narrative of his strange experiences, beginning with the affair of the lamp in the Long Dragon and complicated by persistent allusions to Winch. As he went on the transient pride Mr. Maydig's consternation had caused passed away. He became the very ordinary Mr. Fotheringay of everyday intercourse again. Mr. Maydig listened intently, the tobacco jar in his hand, and his bearing changed also with the course of the narrative. Presently, while Mr. Fotheringay was dealing with the miracle of the third egg, the minister interrupted with a fluttering extended hand.

"It is possible," he said. "It is credible. It is amazing, of course, but it reconciles a number of amazing difficulties. The power to work miracles is a gift, a peculiar quality, like genius or second sight. Hitherto it has come very rarely and to exceptional people. But in this case—I have always wondered at the miracles of Mahomet, and at Yogi's miracles, and the miracles of Mme. Blavatsky. But, of course—yes, it is a simple gift! It carries out so beautifully the arguments of that great thinker"—Mr. Maydig's voice sank—"his grace the Duke of Argyll. Here we plumb some profounder law deeper than the ordinary laws of nature. Yes. Yes. Go on! Go on."

To be continued.

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No 3* 6:23 a m	Thro Express..	No 4* 9:02 p m
No 21 †6:00 p m	....Clipper....	No 22 †9:35 a m
No 23† 9:20 a m	Local Express	No 24† 8:10 p m
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No 322 9:05 a.m	..†Passenger...	No 321 6:05 p.m
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9:30 a m	No. 4 Chi. & Burl'n Pass.....	9:35 p m
8:10 a m	No. 6 Chicago & St. Louis Ex.	3:30 a m
12:20 ngt	No. 8 Chicago Fast Express.	12:27 ngt
	No. 18 Burl. & Davnp't. Pass	4:00 p m

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12:10 p m	No. 3 Rockford Passenger...	3:30 p m
12:03 ngt	No. 5 Minneapolis Express..	12:20 ngt
8:45 a m	No. 13 Chicago Passenger.	
11:45 p m	No. 19 Chicago Passenger.	

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8:10 p m	.....Decorah Passenger.	8:30 a m
9:20 a m	.....West Union Passenger.	3:40 p m
4:05 p m	.....Decorah Freight.....	6:20 a m

IOWA FALLS DIVISION.

8:00 p m	....Iowa & Minnesota Pass.	8:15 a m
12:20 ngt	..Minnesota & Dakota Pass..	12:30 ngt

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