



SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I—Sheridan's attempt to make a business man of his son Bibbs by starting him in the machine shop ends in Bibbs going to a sanitarium, a nervous wreck. CHAPTER II—On his return Bibbs is met at the station by his sister Edith. CHAPTER III—He finds himself an inconsiderable and unconsidered figure in the 'New House' of the Sheridans. He sees Mary Vertrees looking at him from a summer house next door. CHAPTER IV—The Vertreeses, old town family and impoverished, call on the Sheridans, newly-rich, and afterward discuss them. Mary puts into words her parents' unspoken wish that she marry one of the Sheridan boys. CHAPTER V—At the Sheridan house-warming banquet Sheridan spreads himself. Mary frankly encourages Jim Sheridan's attention, and Bibbs hears he is to be sent back to the machine shop. CHAPTER VI—Mary tells her mother about the banquet and shocks her mother by talking of Jim as a matrimonial possibility. CHAPTER VII—Jim tells Mary Bibbs is not a lunatic—"just queer." He proposes to Mary, who half accepts him. CHAPTER VIII—Sheridan tells Bibbs he must go back to the machine shop as soon as he is strong enough, in spite of Bibbs' plea to be allowed to write. CHAPTER IX—Edith and Sibyl, Roscoe Sheridan's wife, quarrel over Bobby Lamhorn; Sibyl goes to Mary for help to keep Lamhorn from marrying Edith, and Mary leaves her in the room alone. CHAPTER X—Bibbs has to break to his father the news of Jim's sudden death. CHAPTER XI—All the rest of the family helpless in their grief, Bibbs becomes temporary master of the house. At the funeral he meets Mary and rides home with her. CHAPTER XII—Mrs. Sheridan pleads with Bibbs to return to the machine shop for his father's sake, and he consents. CHAPTER XIII—Bibbs purposely interrupts a tête-à-tête between Edith and Lamhorn. He tells Edith that he overheard Lamhorn making love to Roscoe's wife. CHAPTER XIV—Mutual love of music arouses an intimate friendship between Bibbs and Mary. CHAPTER XV—Mary sells her piano to help out the finances of the Vertrees family. CHAPTER XVI—Roscoe and his wife quarrel over Lamhorn. CHAPTER XVII—Sheridan finds Roscoe in an intoxicated condition during office hours and takes him home. CHAPTER XVIII—Friendship between Bibbs and Mary ripens into a more intimate relation, and under Mary's influence Bibbs decides to return to the machine shop. CHAPTER XIX—Sheridan finds his son Roscoe's affairs in a muddled condition, owing to his intemperate habits. CHAPTER XX—Bibbs, under the inspiration of Mary's friendship, makes good in the machine shop. Sheridan is injured while attempting to show the boy how to do his work. CHAPTER XXI—Sibyl, insanely jealous over Lamhorn's attentions to Edith, makes a scene in the Sheridan home, and Lamhorn is ordered out of the house by Sheridan. "I can't stand any more" Sheridan burst out. "If it's come to Bibbs advising me how to run this house I better resign. Mamma, where's that nigger George? Maybe he's got some plan how I better manage my family. Bibbs, for God's sake go and lay down 'Let her see all she wants'. Oh, Lord! Here his wisdom; here—"

Mary, and laughed again. aren't any stars." "Oh, yes, there were—when you laughed." "She took his arm, and they went on. "I've come to walk home with you, Bibbs," I wanted to. "But were you here in the—" "In the dark? Yes! Waiting? Yes!" Bibbs was radiant; he felt suffocated with happiness. He began to scold her. "But it's not safe, and I'm not worth it. You shouldn't have— You ought to know better. What did—" "I was in this part of town already," she said. "At least, I was only seven or eight blocks away, and it was dark when I came out, and I'd have had to go home alone—and I preferred going home with you." "It's pretty beautiful for me," said Bibbs, with a deep breath. "You'll never know what it was to hear you laugh in the darkness—and then to see you standing there! Oh, it was like—like— How can I tell you what it was like?" They had passed beyond the crowd now, and a crossing lamp shone upon them, which revealed the fact that she was without her furs. Here was a puzzle. However, allowing it to stand, his solitude for her took another turn. "I think you ought to have a car," he said, "especially when you want to be out after dark. You need one in winter, anyhow. Have you ever asked your father for one?" "No," said Mary. "I don't think I'd care for one particularly." "But my mother tried to insist on sending one over here every afternoon for me. I wouldn't let her, because I like to walk, but a girl—" "A girl likes to walk, too," said Mary. "Let me tell you where I've been this afternoon and how I've taken to be near enough to make you hank me home. I've been to see a little old man who makes pictures of the smoke. He has a sort of warehouse for a studio, and he lives there with his mother and his wife and their seven children, and he's gloriously happy. I'd seen one of his pictures at an exhibition, and I wanted to see more of them, so he showed them to me. He has almost everything he ever painted; I don't suppose he's sold more than four or five pictures in his life. He gives drawing lessons to keep alive." "How do you mean he paints the smoke?" Bibbs asked. "Literally. He paints from his studio window and from the street—anywhere. He just paints what's around him—and it's beautiful." "The smoke?" "Wonderful! He sees the sky through it, somehow. He does the ugly roofs of cheap houses through a haze of smoke, and he does smoky sunsets and smoky sunrises, and he has other things with the heavy, solid, slow coils of smoke going far out and growing more ethereal and mixing with the hazy light in the distance; and he has outdoors, with the broken skyline of downtown, all misted with the smoke and with puffs and jets of vapor that

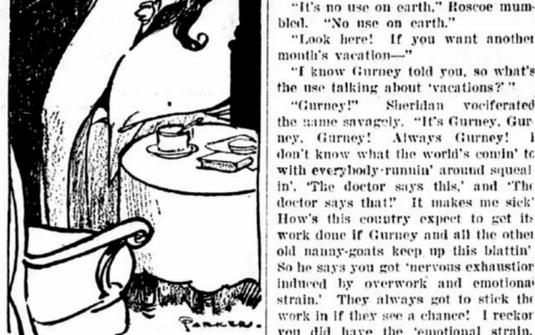
you called me your friend. The city is only a rumble on the horizon for me. It can't come any closer than the horizon so long as you let me see you standing by my old zinc eater all day long, helping me, Mary—" He stopped with a gasp. "That's the first time I've called you 'Mary!'" "Yes," she laughed, a little tremulously. "Though I wanted you to—" "I said it without thinking. It must be because you came there to walk home with me. That must be it." "Women like to have things said," Mary informed him, her tremulous laughter continuing. "Were you glad I came for you?" "No—not glad. I felt as if I were being carried straight up and up and up—over the clouds. I feel like that still. I think I'm that way most of the time. I wonder what I was like before I knew you. The person I was then seems to have been somebody else, not Bibbs Sheridan at all. It seems long ago. I was gloomy and sickly—somebody else—somebody I don't understand now—a coward afraid of shadows—afraid of things that didn't exist—afraid of my old zinc eater! And now I'm only afraid of what might change anything." "She was silent a moment, and then, "You're happy, Bibbs?" she asked. "Ah, don't you see?" he cried. "I want it to last for a thousand, thousand years, just as it is! You've made me so rich, I'm a miser. I wouldn't have one thing different—nothing, nothing!" "Dear Bibbs!" she said, and laughed happily.

CHAPTER XXII. Bibbs continued to live in the shelter of his dream. These were turbulent days in the new house, but Bibbs had no part whatever in the turbulence— he seemed an absent-minded stranger, present by accident and not wholly aware that he was present. He would sit, faintly smiling over pleasant imaginations and dark reminiscences of his own, while battle raged between Edith and her father, or while Sheridan unleashed jeremiads upon the sullen Roscoe, who drank heavily to endure them. He was sorry for his father and for Roscoe, and for Edith and for Sibyl, but their sufferings and outcries seemed far away. Sibyl was under Gurney's care. Roscoe had sent for him on Sunday night, not long after Bibbs returned the abandoned wraps; and during the first days of Sibyl's illness the doctor found it necessary to be with her frequently, and to install a muscular nurse. And whether he would or no, Gurney received from his hysterical patient a variety of pungent information which would have staggered anybody but a family physician. Among other things he was given to comprehend the change in Bibbs, and why the zinc eater was not putting a lump in its operator's gizzard as of yore. Sibyl was not delirious—she was a thin little ego writhing and shrieking in pain. Life had hurt her, and had driven her into hurting herself; her condition was only the adult's terrible exaggeration of that of a child after a bad bruise—there must be screaming and telling mother all about the hurt and how it happened. Sibyl babbled herself hoarse when Gurney withheld morphine. She went from the beginning to the end in a breath. No protest stopped her; nothing stopped her. "You ought to let me die!" she wailed. "What harm have I ever done to anybody that you want to keep me alive? Just look at my life! I only married Roscoe to get away from home, and look what it got me into— I wanted to have a good time—and how could I? Where's any good time among these Sheridans? They never even had wine on the table! I thought I was marrying into a rich family, where I'd meet attractive people I'd read about, and travel, and go to dances—and, oh, my Lord! I got these Sheridans! I did the best I could; I just tried to live. . . Things were just beginning to look brighter, and then I saw how Edith was getting him away from me. And what could I do? What could any woman do in my fix? I couldn't stand it! I went to that icicle—that Vertrees girl—and she could have helped me a little, and it wouldn't have hurt her. Let her wait!" Sibyl's voice, hoarse from babbling, became no more than a husky whisper, though she strove to make it louder. She struggled half upright, and the nurse restrained her. "I'd get up out of this bed to show her she can't do such things to me! I was absolutely ladylike, and she walked out and left me there alone! She'll see! She started after Bibbs before Jim's casket was fairly underground and she thinks she's landed that poor loon—but she'll see! She'll see! An' Edith needn't have told what she told Roscoe—it wouldn't have hurt her to let me alone. And he told her I bore him—telephoning him I wanted to see him. He needn't have done it. He needn't—needn't—" Her voice grew fainter, for that while, with exhaustion, though she would go over it all again as soon as her strength returned. She lay panting. Then, seeing her husband standing disheveled in the doorway, "Don't come in, Roscoe," she murmured. "I don't want to see you." And as he turned away she added, "I'm kind of sorry for you, Roscoe."

Her antagonist, Edith, was not more coherent in her own walling, and she had the advantage of a mother for listener. She had also the disadvantage of a mother for duenna, and Mrs. Sheridan, under her husband's sharp tutelage, proved an effective one. Edith was reduced to telephoning Lamhorn from shops whenever she could juggle her mother into a momentary distraction over a counter. Edith was incomparably more in love than before Lamhorn's expulsion. Her whole being was nothing but the determination to hurdle everything that separated her from him. She was in a state that could be altered by only the lightest and most delicate diplomacy of suggestion, but Sheridan, like legions of other parents, intensified her passion and fed it hourly fuel by opposing to it an intolerable force. He swore she should cool, and thus set her on fire. Edith planned neatly. She fought hard, every other evening, with her father, and kept her bed between times to let him see what his violence had done to her. Then, when the mere sight of her set him to breathing fast, she said pitifully that she might bear her trouble if she went away; it was impossible to be in the same town with Lamhorn and not think always of him. Perhaps in New York she might forget a little. She had written to a school friend, established quietly with an aunt in apartments—and a month or so of theaters and restaurants might bring peace. Sheridan shouted with relief; he gave her a copious check, and she left upon a Monday morning, wearing violets with her mourning, and having kissed everybody goodby except Sibyl and Bibbs. She might have kissed Bibbs, but he failed to realize that the day of her departure had arrived, and was surprised, on returning from his zinc eater that evening, to find her gone. "I suppose they'll be married there," he said, casually. Sheridan, warming his stockings feet at the fire, jumped up, fuming. "Either you go out of here, or I will, Bibbs!" he snorted. "I don't want to be in the same room with the particular kind of idiot you are! She's through with that riffraff; all she needed was to be kept away from him a few weeks, and I kept her away, and it did the business. For heaven's sake, go on out of here!" Bibbs obeyed the gesture of a hand still bandaged. And the black silk sling was still round Sheridan's neck, but no word of Gurney's and no exorcising twinge of pain could keep Sheridan's hand in the sling. The wounds, slight enough originally, had become infected the first time he had dislodged the bandages, and healing was long delayed. Sheridan had the habit of gesture; he could not "take time to remember," he said, that he must be careful, and he had also a curious indignation with his hurt; he refused to

pay it the compliment of admitting its existence. The Saturday following Edith's departure Gurney came to the Sheridan building to dress the wounds and to have a talk with Sheridan which the doctor felt had become necessary. But he was a little before the appointed time and was obliged to wait a few minutes in an anteroom—there was a directors' meeting of some sort in Sheridan's office. The door was slightly ajar, leaking clear smoke and ordinary, the latter all Sheridan's, and Gurney listened. "No, sir; no, sir; no, sir!" he heard the big voice rumbling, and then, breaking into thunder, "I tell you NO! Some of you men make me sick! You'd lose your confidence in Almighty God if you saw me flip his hind leg over the country. Well, what if it is? There's no reason for it to be tight, and it's not yours to keep our money tight! You're always running to the woods to hide your nickels in a crack because some fool newspaper says the market's a little skeery! You listen to every street-corner croaker and then come and set here and try to scare me out of a big thing. We're in on this—understand? I tell you there never was better times. These are good times and big times, and I won't stand for any other kind of talk. This country's on its feet as it never was before, and this city's on its feet and going to stay there!" And Gurney heard a series of whacks and thumps upon the desk. "Bad times!" Sheridan vociferated, with accompanying thumps. "Rabbit talk! These times are glorious, I tell you! We're in the promised land, and we're going to stay there! That's all, gentlemen. The loan goes!" The directors came

and murmurous, and Gurney listened. In his guess was correct: Sheridan had been thumping the desk with his right hand. The physician scolded wearily, making good the fresh damage as best he might; and then he said what he had to say on the subject of Roscoe and Sibyl, his opinion meeting, as he expected, a warmly hostile reception. But the result of this conversation was that by telephonic command Roscoe awaited his father, an hour later, in the library at the new house. "Gurney says your wife's able to travel," Sheridan said brusquely, as he came in. "Yes," Roscoe occupied a deep chair and sat in the dejected attitude which had become his habit. "Yes, she is." "Edith had to leave town, and so Sibyl thinks she'll have to, too?" "Oh, I wouldn't put it that way," Roscoe protested, dreadingly. "No, I hear you wouldn't!" There was a bitter gibe in the father's voice, and he added: "It's a good thing she's going abroad—if she'll stay there. I shouldn't think any of us want her here any more—you least of all!" "It's no use your talking that way," said Roscoe. "You won't do any good." "Well, when you comin' back to your office?" Sheridan used a brisker, kinder tone. "Three weeks since you showed up there at all. When you goin' to be ready to cut out whisky and all the rest of the foolishness and start in again? You ought to be able to make up for a lot of lost time and a lot of spilt milk when that woman takes herself out of the way and lets you and all the rest of us alone." "It's no use, father. I tell you. I know what Gurney was going to say to you. I'm not going back to the office. I'm done!" "Wait a minute before you talk that way!" Sheridan began his sentry-go up and down the room. "I suppose you know it's taken two pretty good men about sixteen hours a day to set things straight and get 'em running right again, down in your office?" "They must be good men," Roscoe nodded indifferently. "I thought I was being about eight men's work. I'm glad you found two that could handle it." "Look here! If I worked you it was for your own good. There are plenty of men drive harder'n I do, and—" "Yes. There are some that break down all the other men that work with 'em. They either die, or go crazy, or have to quit, and are no use the rest of their lives. The last's my case, I guess—complicated by domestic difficulties." "You set there and tell me you give up?" Sheridan's voice shook, and so did the gesticulating hand which he extended appealingly toward the dejected figure. "Don't do it, Roscoe! Don't say it! Say you'll come down there again and be a man! This woman ain't going to trouble you any more. The work ain't going to hurt you if you haven't got her to worry you, and you can get shut of this nasty whisky-guzzlin'; it ain't fastened on you yet. Don't say—" "It's no use on earth," Roscoe mumbled. "No use on earth." "Look here! If you want another month's vacation—" "I know Gurney told you, so what's the use talking about 'vacations'?" "Gurney?" Sheridan vociferated the name savagely. "It's Gurney, Gurney, Gurney! Always Gurney! I don't know what the world's comin' to with everybody running around squealing. The doctor says this, and the doctor says that! It makes me sick! How's this country expect to get its work done if Gurney and all the other old nanny-goats keep up this blattin'! So he says you got nervous exhaustion induced by overwork and emotional strain! They always got to stick the work in if they see a chance! I reckon you did have the 'emotional strain, and that's all's the matter with you! You'll be over it soon's this woman's gone, and work's the very thing to make you quit frottin' about her." "Did Gurney tell you I was fit to work?" "Shut up!" Sheridan bellowed. "I'm so sick of that man's name I feel like shooting anybody that says it to me! He fumed and chafed, swearing indistinctly, then came and stood before his son. "Look here; do you think you're doing the square thing by me? Do you? How much you worth?" "I've got between seven and eight thousand a year clear of my own, out side the salary. That much is mine whether I work or not." "It is? It could 'a' pulled it out without me, I suppose you think, a year ago?" "No. But it's mine, and it's enough." "My Lord! It's about what a con gressman gets, and you want to quit! There! I suppose you think you'll get the rest when I kick the bucket, and all you have to do is lay back an' wait! You let me tell you right here you'll never see one cent of it. You go out of business now, and what would you know about landin' it six or ten or twenty years from now? Because I intend to stay here a little while yet, my boy! They'd either get it away from you or you'd split up and—"



And I tell you, you can shake this thing off. All you need is a little get-up and a little gumption. Men don't go away for years and then come back into moving businesses like ours—they lose the strings. And if you could, I won't let you—if you lay down on me now, I won't—and that's because if you lay down you prove you ain't the man I thought you were." He cleared his throat and finished quietly: "Roscoe, will you take a month's vacation and come back and go to it?" "No," said Roscoe, listlessly. "I'm through." "All right," said Sheridan. He picked up the evening paper from a table went to a chair by the fire and sat down, his back to his son. "Goodby." Roscoe rose, his head hanging, but there was a dull relief in his eyes. "Best I can do," he muttered, seeming about to depart, yet lingering. "I figure it out a good deal like this," he said. "I didn't know my job was any strain, and I managed all right, but from what Gur—from what I hear, I was just up to the limit of my nerves from overwork, and the—the trouble at home was the extra strain that I fixed me the way I am. I tried to brace, so I could stand the work and the trouble too, on whisky—and that put the finish to me! I—I'm not hitting it as hard as I was for a while, and I reckon pretty soon if I can get to feeling a little more energy, I better try to quit entirely—I don't know. I'm all in—and the doctor says so. I thought I was running along fine up to a few months ago, but all the time I was ready to bust, and didn't know it. Now, then, I don't want you to blame Sibyl, and if I were you I wouldn't speak of her as that woman," because she's your daughter-in-law and going to stay that way. She didn't do anything wicked. It was a shock to me, and I don't deny it, to find what she had done—encouraging that fellow to hang around her, and he began trying to flirt with her, and losing her head over him the way she did. I don't deny it was a shock and that it'll always be a hurt inside of me I'll never get over. But it was my nature; I didn't understand a woman's nature." Poor Roscoe spoke in the most profound and desolate earnest. "A woman craves society, and gaiety and meeting attractive people, and traveling. Well, I can't give her the other things, but I can give her the traveling—real traveling, not just going to Atlantic City or New Orleans the way she has, two, three times. A woman has to have something in her life besides a business man. And that's all I was. I never understood till I heard her talking when she was sick, and I believe if you'd heard her then you wouldn't speak so hard heartedly about her; I believe you might have forgiven her like I have that girl; I never cared anything for Sibyl but her in my life, but I was so busy with business I put it ahead of her. I never thought about her, I was so busy thinking business. Well, this is where it's brought us to—now when you talk about 'business to me I feel the way you do when anybody talks about Gurney to you. The word 'business' makes me dizzy—it makes me honestly sick at the stomach I believe if I had to go downtown and step inside that office door I'd fall down on the floor, deathly sick. You talk about a 'month's vacation'—and I get just as sick. I'm rattled—I can't explain—I haven't got any plans—can't make any, except to take my girl and get just as far away from that office as I can—and stay. We're going to Japan first, and if we—" (To be Continued)



"Good-by."

Statistics of Blindness. The 12 countries having the fewest blindness are as follows: Belgium (before the great war) had 43 blind persons to every 100,000 of the population; Canada, 44; Netherlands, 46; Saxony, 47; New Zealand, 47; western Australia, 50; Hongkong, 51; Prussia, 52; Denmark, 52; Germany, 60; New South Wales, 60, and the United States, 62. In Much the Same Class. The man who keeps kicking for the old times has about as much standing as the horse that refuses to quit shying at automobiles.