

# A Group of Short Stories for Blue Monday's Idle Hours

## EXPERIENCES OF A MAN WHO BOUGHT A WOMAN'S HAT

Helen and I had a bet of a hat the other day, and she won. At that time I thought from looking at them that the price of ladies' hats could not run to more than 5 shillings, but this is a complete mistake. The cost of ladies' hats varies according to what is not on them—that is to say, half a sovereign extra is charged for taking out the feather and a guinea extra for taking out what a man would call a hat and leaving only one bow and ribbon. As almost nothing is the fashion now, hats are unusually dear this season.

To pay for a lady's hat, however, is, after all, a small matter. The difficulty is to go into a shop in cold blood and buy one. That is what I had to do, according to the conditions of the bet, and I was allowed to take no one with me. Helen said that if I could not pick out a hat that would suit her it was plain the hat was not really love her, and she coldly stared when I asked permission to take another man with me, not to help to purchase, but to stand by while I said sternly to the salesman, "I want a lady's hat."

There is a milliner's store next to my tobaccoist's, and I thought I could slip into it as if by mistake. Just as I was about to do so, however, the tobaccoist came to his door, and so I had to buy a box of cigars instead. I was very angry with the man and have given him up ever since then.

My original intention had been to go into a milliner's shop and bribe them to tell me which was their best hat for a pretty girl with brown hair, dancing eyes, 20 inches around the waist, but Ravenscroft, who pretended to know about hats—though it is quite clear that he thinks the bigger they are the dearer—said that would not be safe. His advice was that I should do a round of milliner's windows on wet days, so that my umbrella might hide me. Woodhouse, however, who has two sisters and hearkens to them, said this would be foolish, as they only exhibited a variety of hats in the second rate shops. He urged me to walk boldly into a shop and insist on their giving me a hat. Another friend, Hooper, said: "The hat itself is of but little consequence. The great point is that it should be dear. She will do a round of milliner's windows on wet days, but never for buying a cheap one."

Then Trotter, who thinks himself clever, said, "How can you buy her a hat when you don't know her size?" This philosopher is 30 years old and has not discovered yet that ladies' hats are worked with pins. Several days passed and I had all but bought the hat many times. It was strange and interesting to me to reflect, at say 5 o'clock, that I had not yet bought a hat at 4:30 the whole thing would be over now. Once I did go into a milliner's shop in Regent street, but I left it without having bought the hat. This was because my courage failed me, and instead of asking for a hat I requested the boy who opened the door to direct me to Piccadilly circus. If he had been a boy of average smartness, he would have read between the lines and insisted on my taking a chair. I hurried into a side street after this escape and presently came to.

The place to buy ladies' hats, warranted dear, is Bond street, but in no thoroughfare in London are there so many inquisitive people. Bond street can never expect to do a great trade so long as the jewelers and fish sellers, and even the sandwich board men, stare impudently at wayfarers. I was simply driven from a milliner's door by a fish seller, who kept looking after me as if he thought I was afraid to face him. Then there is a dressmaker's window, in which a woman in black stood all day looking for me. I soon discovered that she knew I was honestly desirous of buying a lady's hat, but she would not let me. It was impossible to go into a hat shop with that woman ready to triumph over me. A grocer's boy, too, passed me twice within ten minutes, lingering about in a most impudently suspicious manner, which so incensed me that I followed him to his shop and complained to his master. There was a curious look in the latter's eye, and I could not help feeling that he knew I wanted to buy a lady's hat. With another person, dressed like a gentleman, I had quite a scene. I was just going into a shop to buy the hat when he looked fixedly at me. This confused me and turned me from my purpose, but half an hour afterward I was back at the shop door. Again he passed, with a look that told me plainly that I was discovered. I lost my temper, and gripping my umbrella demanded to know why he meant. He replied with affected surprise, but I saw through him, and said that I would stand there until a policeman came to my aid. He answered that as he wished to consult my convenience entirely he would not go away. So he put his back to one window and I put mine to another, and there we stood glaring at each other until 4 o'clock, when a mist came on, in which I walked softly away.

When I was a mile from the shop, I saw that the mist was my opportunity for buying the hat, and at once hailed a hansom. I got out at the top of New Bond street, however, as it struck me that there was a look of enlightenment in the cabbie's face. To blind him I walked a little way down Oxford street and then turned back. Soon I was at the shop I now knew so well from the outside, and though my throat felt dry I determined to buy that hat. I waited until two ladies had left. Then I went through the window—and then entered, with my teeth set. "I want a lady's hat," I said, and I had a face on me that showed I was resolved to stand no laughing. The milliner had a twinkle in her eye, but my fierceness put it out, and I saw her hand shake as she brought some hats. I bought the dearest one, gave the address to which it was to be sent and then retreated, keeping my eyes on her to the last moment. That woman was afraid of me—nearly as much as I was of her.

Helen says it will do.—J. M. Barrie in Woman at Home.

**How to Stop a Hat.**  
"I was much impressed," says Mr. Goslington, "by something that I saw in the street this morning, the manner in which a man stopped his hat, which was blowing away. It is well known that under such circumstances a hat often develops great eccentricity movement. When you stoop down to put your hand on it, it runs, it is not there. But this man ran past and just to leeward of his hat and stopped it as it rolled toward him."—New York Sun.

**Disqualified.**  
"You say you are never sick?" inquired the impresario.  
"I never had a sick day in my life," replied the lady who was ambitious to go on the operatic stage.  
"Then, madam," replied the impresario, "I must discourage your hopes. You can never become a great prima donna."—Chicago Record.

## SHE REFUSED HIM AT THE CRITICAL MOMENT

"Your mother seems determined."  
"Yes. She will make me marry him if she can. What shall I do? I'll run away or do something. Oh, if Cousin Max were only here, he wouldn't let her do it. Oh, Max, Max, come home!"  
If Max Bennett had only heard that cry he would have flown to his little cousin, but he was far away across the sea. Dorothy tried to comfort her friend and at last succeeded in stopping the tears. Mabel bathed her face and eyes and went out doors with Dorothy.

Nehemiah Jenks was the name of the man who was so anxious to marry her against her will. He had been dropping in nearly every evening before he asked for Mabel. Mabel had never thought he came to see her, and was astonished when her mother told her he wanted to marry her.

Mrs. Brewster did not tell her that he had promised to destroy a mortgage he held upon their home the day Mabel became his wife. Mabel had taken his calls for her mother and never dreamed he was "courting" her, as he called it.

One night she thought she'd try Nehemiah. She was very pleasant, played cribbage with him, did all she could to please him, agreed with everything he said, and finally when her mother left the room for something went over and laid her hand on his shoulder and said, timidly, "Mr. Jenks."

"Yes, my dear," said Nehemiah. "Why do you want me to marry you when you know I don't love you? It will make us both so unhappy. I'm so young, too, Mr. Jenks."  
"Why dew I want to marry yer? Because I dew I want a nice, young housekeeper. Peggy's tow old."  
"Why don't you marry my mother if a housekeeper is all you want? She's a far better housekeeper than I am."  
"What dew I want with an old woman like that?" he said, with a sickly smile.  
"She's younger than you are, Mr. Jenks."

Dorothy Knowles talked it all over with her mother one day and finally said, "Mother, do go over and talk to Mrs. Brewster and see if she won't relent."  
"Yes, I will," said Mrs. Knowles, "but how shall I approach the subject? Although we have been neighbors for years I have never felt acquainted with her; but I'll try, Dorothy, dear."  
"Oh, mother, if you were Mabel's mother, she would not have to marry against her will, would she?"  
"No, my dear. Your mother will never hasten your marriage, and I hope it will be for years. Find a truly good man, my dear. Do not be in a hurry. The cares of life come soon enough."

"Indeed I shall not be, and Mabel is not. It is her terrible mother."  
Mrs. Knowles went over to see Mrs. Brewster that afternoon. Mrs. Brewster showed her Mabel's trousseau, Mrs. Knowles all the time trying to screw her courage up to the all important point. She began:  
"Does Mabel care for Mr. Jenks, Mrs. Brewster?"  
"Oh, well, perhaps not, but she soon will. I guess he'll be good to her."  
"How can you bear to give her to such an old man?"  
"Oh, yes. Where will she get a better man? That's all very pretty—love in a cottage—but I believe in a good, substantial home and a sensible man."

"Mabel is very young, Mrs. Brewster, only the age of my Dorothy, and I hope she will not be married for many years."  
"Well, Mrs. Knowles, is Mabel my daughter or yours? Don't you suppose I know what is best for my own child? Good afternoon!"  
She said this so decidedly that Mrs. Knowles left hastily.  
"Well, Dorothy, dear," she said, when she reached her gate, where Dorothy was watching anxiously for her, "I failed to make any impression upon that stone image."  
One evening Mabel ran over to Mrs. Knowles to escape the dreadful Mr. Jenks. She told Dorothy if she married him she should have enough of him, and she thought she could dispense with his society for one evening. Dorothy said: "If you marry him? Why, aren't you going to?"  
"Oh, Dorothy, dear, how do I know? Do you think God will let me be sacrificed? Oh, if my father had only lived, or if Max were only here!"  
"Always that refrain. If Max were only here!" Max Bennett's father and Mabel's had been cousins. Max had more influence over Mrs. Brewster than any one simply because he did not stand in awe of her. He had saved Mabel many a scolding and had given the poor girl many a pleasure in the past. No wonder she longed for Max.

The dreaded day came. Mabel allowed her mother to dress her in her bridal robes and went with her to the church. As she walked up the aisle her friends noticed an unusual brilliance in her eyes and an unwonted color in her cheeks and a little defiant look also.

They stood before the minister. Mr. Jenks answered the questions put to him. The minister turned to Mabel and said: "Mabel, do you take this man to be your lawful wedded husband?"  
"No, sir, I do not," said Mabel.  
The guests started as if they had received an electric shock. Mabel continued: "My mother compelled me to come, but I will not marry him."  
"Very well," said the minister. "I will marry no one against his or her will."  
Mrs. Brewster was so astonished she could not speak. Hurrying up the aisle came a young man. He took the minister aside and spoke to him. He waited while Max, for it was he, went to Mabel.

"Mabel, dear, I am just in time. Will you marry me here, now?"  
"Yes, Max," she whispered.  
He led her up before the minister. Mr. Jenks turned and fairly flew from the church, Mrs. Brewster following.  
Max took Mabel to all places she had longed to see. They were gone for months, and when they came back Mr. Jenks had married Mrs. Brewster.

Mabel's old home was for sale, and Max bought it. Mabel's mother did not forgive her for a long while, but Mabel was too happy to mind it much. She can't bear Nehemiah, so I am afraid the two families will not visit often.—Boston Herald.

**Says the Earth Has Shifted Her Ballast.**  
A Rockland man has a unique theory to account for the winter's growing warmer in this vicinity. He says that so much granite has been moved south from the quarries of the north that the world has been tipped thereby toward the sun.—Portland Press.

**Overheard Conversations.**  
One of the greatest offenses of Americans is the overheating of their houses. It produces all sorts of ills, and the skill of the best doctors is not enough to counteract its evils.—Baltimore American.

## HOW THE PRANKS OF CHILDREN MADE A SCANDAL

"I'll tell you what—let's play funeral."  
"How?"  
"Well, we can play that my Josephine Maud Angelina died, and that we buried her."  
"That will be splendid. Let's have her do at once."  
Immediately after the death of Josephine Maud Angelina her grief-stricken mother said:

"Now, Katie, we must put craps on the doorknob to let folks know about it. You run over to our house and get the long black veil mamma wore when she was in mourning for grandpa."  
Katie went away and soon returned with a long black mourning veil. It was quickly tied to Mrs. Stoner's front doorbell. Then the bereft Dorothy's grief broke out afresh, and she wailed and wept so vigorously that Mrs. Stoner put her head out of an upper window and said:

"You little girls are making too much noise down there. Mr. Stoner's ill, and you disturb him. I think you'd better run home and play now. My husband wants to go to sleep."  
"How unfeeling!" said Dorothy, snatching up the "dead" doll and her other playthings, while Katie gathered together her possessions. They departed, awfully thin-skirted petulantly. They quite forgot to take the veil off the doorknob.

Half an hour after Maria Simmons came down the street and suddenly stopped in front of the Stoners' house.  
"Good heavens!" she said. "If there ain't craps on the Stoners' doorknob! Poor Sam Stoner! I knew he was ill, but I'd no idea he was at all dangerous. I must stop on my way home and find out about it."  
She could have stopped then if it had not been for her eagerness to carry the news to those who might not have heard it. A little farther on she met an acquaintance.

"Ain't heard 'bout the trouble up at the Stoners, have you?" she asked.  
"What trouble?"  
"Sam Stoner is dead. There's craps on the doorknob. I was in there yesterday, and Sam was up and round the house, but he or his wife had any idea of, and I ain't much surprised."  
"My goodness me! I must find time to call there before night."  
Mrs. Simmons stopped at the village postoffice, ostensibly to ask for a letter, but really to impart her information to Dan Wales, the talkative old postmaster.

"Heard 'bout Sam Stoner?" she asked.  
"No, I did hear he was grunting round a little, but I grunt no more," said Mrs. Simmons solemnly. "He's dead."  
"How you talk!"  
"It's right. There's craps on the door."  
"Must have been dreadful sudden! Mr. Stoner was here last evening, an she reckoned he'd be out in a day or two well as ever."  
"I know. But he ain't been well for a long time. I could see it if others couldn't."  
"He ain't well! I'll go round to the house soon as my Mattie comes home from school to mind the office."

The news was spreading new from another source, and in a way that caused those who heard it to declare that it was "perfectly scandalous" for Mrs. Stoner to "carry on so."  
Job Higley, the grocer's assistant, returned from leaving some things at the house full of indignation.  
"That Mrs. Stoner ain't no more feeling than a lamp-post," he said indignantly to his employer. "There's craps on the doorknob for poor Sam Stoner, an when I left the groceries Mrs. Stoner was cooking a joint cool as a cucumber an singin' 'Ridin on a Load of Hay' loud as she could screech, an when I said I was sorry 'bout Sam she just laughed an said she thought Sam was all right, an then if she didn't go to jokin me 'bout Tildy Hopkins!"

Old Mrs. Peery came home with an equally scandalous tale.  
"I went over to the Stoners soon as I heard 'bout poor Sam," she said, "an if you'll b'lieve me there was Mrs. Stoner hangin out clothes in the back yard. I went round to where she was, an she says, just as flippant as ever: 'Mercy! Mrs. Peery, where'd you drop down from?'"  
"I felt so surprised an disgusted that I says, 'Mrs. Stoner, this is a mighty solemn thing, an if she didn't just look at me an laugh, with the craps for poor Sam danglin from the front door bell knob an she says: 'I don't see nothin very solemn 'bout washin an hangin out some o' Sam's old shirts an underwear that he'll never wear agin. I'm goin to fork 'em up into carpet rags if they ain't too far gone for even that.'"

"Mrs. Stoner," says I, "the neighbors will talk dreadfully if you ain't more careful," an she got real angry an said if the neighbors would attend to their business she'd attend to hers. I turned an left without even goin into the house."  
The Carbury Weekly Star, the only paper in the village, came out two hours later with this announcement:  
"We stop our press to announce the unexpected demise of our highly respected fellow citizen, Mr. Samuel Stoner, this afternoon. A more extended notice will appear next week."

"Unexpected! I should say so," said Mr. Samuel Stoner in growing wrath and amazement as he read this announcement in the paper. "A more extended notice next week!" I'll write that notice myself. I'll extend it far enough to let that editor know what I think of him."  
"But how did this craps get on the front door?" interrupted Mrs. Stoner. "I found it there when I went out to get the paper. It is the strangest thing, and I—there's the minister coming in at the gate. Do calm down, Sam. He's coming to make arrangements for the funeral, I suppose. How ridiculous!"

Mr. Havens, the minister, was surprised when Mr. Stoner himself opened the door and said:  
"Come right in, pastor; come right in," said Sam. "My wife's busy, but I'll give you the main points myself if you want to go ahead with the funeral."  
While they talked over the mystery of the craps on the door the bell rang again, and a moment later they heard Dorothy Dean's childish voice saying to Mrs. Stoner:

"Please, Miss Stoner, Kate and I left mamma's old black veil tied to your doorknob when we were playing over here, and I'd like to have it again."—Spare Moments.

**A Saint.**  
"Is it true, George," sighed the beautiful girl as she gazed at the man who had just proposed, "is it true that you can put the buttons into your link cuffs without losing your temper?"  
"It is," said George fondly.  
"Well, then," said the proud girl adoringly, "take me. I am yours."—Chicago Record.

**Origin of Two States' Names.**  
Rhode Island and Colorado are both names descriptive of color—the latter named from its brightly hued cliffs and the former from its "roody" or red cranberries.

## SHE FOLLOWS THE CRUSTY OLD BACHELOR'S ADVICE

The king of day was preparing to bow himself out of the approaching presence of the evening's queen one afternoon early in the winter. Like an ancient maiden who compensates for youth and beauty by donning brilliant colors, so the retiring ruler of the day determines if his presence cannot be felt it shall be seen, and the last thing before his bow is to send up fireworks that surpass and defy the manufacturer's art.

"Without money and without price" Dean Stanton enjoyed these fireworks from the French windows of his father's spacious library. He was lazily contemplating the marvelous beauty and wondering in a weary way if any one could calculate the number of tints in the glorious display as his sister Dora's voice, just outside the library door, broke the reverie by saying: "You are right, Flora, all of you, won't you? Dean's been sick so long and now only gets out a little each day. He finds the house so stupid. Please come."

A minute later Dean found himself surrounded by half a dozen fresh buds, all near his sister's age, 15.  
He was inwardly bemoaning his fate and scratching the dusty gray of his brain left to find something to please dainty appetites. After discarding nine thoughts he served up a delicate morsel that seemed to him might keep them busy for awhile at least, until he could do some more scratching.

"Well, girls," said he, "I suppose you have spent the afternoon talking about the boys."  
"No, indeed," was the quick answer of Flora Glenday, a leader among them.  
"And does that settle the matter?" asked he, and his air of ennui was blown away by the fresh breeziness of the fair Flora by the fresh breeziness of the fair Flora.  
"Of course it does. We are not going to give the boys any more time than they do us, which is none at all."  
Flora's curls shook like polished coils of copper wire as they glowed and reflected in the dazzling sunbeams that lighted the room.

Flora's little imperious way made Dean, old crusty bachelor though he was, want to make his superiority felt.  
"I don't know," said he, "I don't know," and, girls, let me give you an old fellow's advice. Men are a queer set. You may never meet the kind I will tell you about, and again some of you may. There are many true, good fellows in society, and then there are some that think it great sport to sit beside a girl and let an arm drop around her waist or take a stolen kiss and then go and brag about it to the other fellows. But let me tell you, girls, the boys never really respect that girl. They think more of the one who either slaps them or treats them to a sound lecture. Just give it to a fellow who is mean enough to do it to any of you girls. Take an old man's advice."

One evening a month later the queen of night sent some of her little pages to the windows of the Stanton home to brighten it by their presence. Little rays were their names.  
But they met such a brilliant reception, the house all aglow with electric light, that they shyly crept back into the big open court of their queen. Here they were joined later by some of the guests of the home.

Dora Stanton was having a birthday party of all her young friends.  
She wondered that her brother Dean took such an interest in her guests. He and Flora Glenday were the first on the floor to open the waltz.  
He had been very attentive to Flora for some time. It was only natural that Flora felt highly complimented, for there were older girls among Dora's friends. A girl with good sense always appreciates a man somewhat her senior, who approaches her as an intelligent being, listens to her attentively and does not wear the air of a spoiled child playing with a toy.

"Miss Glenday," said Dean after the waltz, "let us try dancing on the porch."  
The ice and snow had been swept off, but the boards were still very slippery. At one end of the porch the bushes were very thick, so the queen of night could not send her pages to guide their feet.  
Flora slipped and fell. It was only the work of a moment, and she was standing uninjured surrounded by the numerous pages. One danced on a curl as it strayed from under the fleecy nubia, one kissed her lightly, and another softly brushed her cheek with a check and downcast eyes.

Those eyes were at that moment glowing with a light kindled by the thought of the kind consideration of men in general and this man in particular, who she believed had lifted her up with as much unconcern as if she had been made of wood. But she was mistaken.  
He was trying to compromise with himself, wholly forgetting his advice to the girls a month before. He thought: "She's only a child. Why not?"  
Just as she said to herself, "Here's a man that doesn't belong to the queer set," she felt herself drawn toward him, his arms were around her, and her face was very near. She looked up.

The shy, modest light in her eyes retreated before the playful, insincere gleam in his, as the moon's rays did before the glare of artificial light.  
If an engine can feel when the lever is quickly reversed, it must be much the same sensation as Flora felt in that moment. She had mentally been burning the incense of kind thoughts before the shrine of man, and he, with a touch, with a look, tore down the shrine and turned the incense to ashes. There was no question in her mind as to her action. She followed under the dim light of the moon the advice he had given under the sun's broad, searching glare.

She put up her two hands and shoved him from her with a force that stunned him and then ran, ran into the house, up stairs and did not stop until she had locked the door and buried her head in the pillow.  
After a little while she raised up and thought aloud: "They are—men are a queer set, but he said they were good, true ones. I guess there must be. At all events," and she smoothed her tumbled hair, "I am sure I did the right thing."  
—Cincinnati Post.

**With a Qualification.**  
Spencer—Is Miss Leftover what you would call a fin de siecle girl?  
Ferguson—Why, yes. End of last century, not this.—New York Herald.

## THE INFERNAL MACHINE WAS ONLY A BICYCLE

Paul Berac had been under police surveillance for some time, though he was ignorant of the fact. Frouat, a clever detective, now and again ran against some title of incriminating, yet in itself insufficient evidence.  
One day he burst into the police depot in a rare state of excitement.  
"Look, M. le Commissaire!" he cried. "I have it—proof! See! Berac is caught at last!"  
He laid an opened letter upon this official's table.  
The latter scanned it before inquiring: "Where did you get it?"  
Frouat looked cunning.  
"I stopped it on its way through the post. See! It is addressed to Paul Berac. I opened it. A man's evidence is as good as his thoughts, and more damning evidence too. Monsieur, if you decide to forward the letter, it can easily be regummed. I have not injured the envelope. Meanwhile we know the contents. What do you say?"

"Good! I think you have done a smart piece of work. What does the letter say?"  
The commissary adjusted his pince nez and read:  
"This infernal machine you sent me last week threatens to do some member of our Cercle a mortal injury. It is all out of gear. Come down at once and examine it. In its present condition it is superlatively dangerous and eminently impossible for me to bring it to you."  
Frouat was beaming.  
"Read the signature, monsieur," he said impatiently.  
"The signature?"  
"Is the name not known to you?"  
"Henri Yvon? I don't call it to mind."  
"Nor Mlle. Yvon? Yvonne Yvon?"  
"Paul Berac's sweetheart?"  
"The same. Henri is her brother."  
"So! He supplies his fiancée's family with bombs, does he? A pretty warm nest of anarchists you've unearthed, M. Frouat. It should gain you promotion."  
The detective's oily looking eyes ran more liquid.

"And not without trouble and work," he replied. "I have watched Berac's residence off and on, for the past six months. He has no occupation. Oh, no! Comes and goes at will."  
"I shall arrest the whole bunch," said Frouat.  
"They will get word of you and escape."  
"Escape! I'll take them directly after the ceremony."

When Paul Berac received Henri Yvon's letter, he had no suspicion that Frouat and the police officer had already perused it, nor did he, when he journeyed to Meudon, where his fiancée dwelt, notice that the detective shadowed his movements.  
But the contents of the letter which Berac carried with him excited the detective's curiosity to such a pitch that it was only by dwelling constantly upon the elate to be obtained from a wholesale arrest of dynamiters that he prevailed upon his fingers to keep off the inviting object.

It's an ill passion that never renders a good service—unconsciously.  
So Frouat waited outside the little house where Berac, as the former knew very well, had repaired the devilish implement which had got out of working gear, and until Yvonne thought well to let her fiancée depart. The moon shone when Berac sought the station, detective at heels.  
A week later a merry party assembled at the office of the 4th arrondissement, where Berac and Yvonne signed away their hearts.

Frouat was there too, but single handed. His men for it was not to be supposed he would attack such an undertaking alone—were awaiting him as directed in the neighborhood of the Cafe Gironx in the Boulevard St. Denis.  
The sanity of that proceeding was palpable soon after when the whole wedding party drove off to the cafe for dejeuner.  
Frouat would have made an excellent inquisitor. He hovered around the cafe as a hawk over the prey he has disabled.  
The joy of anticipation shone in his clear liquid eyes. When he felt the absolute need of activity, he swooped down upon his unsuspecting victims and startled them with a sentence.  
"Mesdames and messieurs, it is my duty to arrest you, every one."  
His minions swarmed around, encircling the party.

Berac paused, his glass to his lips.  
"I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance, monsieur," he said, "but whether you are an officer of the law or not, you are laboring under a delusion. I will ask you to withdraw, under an apology."  
"M. Berac," returned Frouat, "I have the advantage of you."  
Berac jumped to his feet.  
"Plainly, who are you and what is your business?" he cried impatiently.  
"Frouat, the detective. My business, to arrest you and your confederates."  
"Of being anarchists of evil intent, dangerous to society, M. Berac, in addition, of being the manufacturer and distributor of explosive bombs."  
"Good heavens!" shouted Berac excitedly. "This man is mad. Where is the proprietor? Garçons! I hold you responsible."  
Frouat leisurely drew a letter from his pocket. The act was unofficial, out of place, but his love of torture prompted him to read it aloud.  
"Listen," he cried:  
"The infernal machine you sent me last week threatens to do some member of our Cercle a mortal injury. It is all out of gear. Come down at once and examine it. In its present condition it is superlatively dangerous, and it is eminently impossible for me to bring it to you."

"The letter is signed," added Frouat, "Henri Yvon. You, M. Berac, received a copy of it. Here is the original."  
Silence followed. Frouat glared.  
"Ah!" said he exultingly. "What say you to that, M. M. Yvon and Berac?"  
Berac burst into laughter.  
"Henri, mon ami," he cried, while his sides shook convulsively, "you should not use ambiguous adjectives. M. Frouat, just substitute for infernal the word tresome or harassing, and you have a moderate epithet, to the use of which my friend Henri is addicted."  
"But what about the machine?" persisted Frouat.  
"A bicycle."  
"And the Cercle?"  
"A cycling club. I have the honor of being the patentee of this year's bicycle. It would give me pleasure, monsieur, to supply you with any number—at 400 francs apiece!"—Good Company.

**With a Qualification.**  
Spencer—Is Miss Leftover what you would call a fin de siecle girl?  
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## THE AWFUL SECRET OF AN UNOFFICIAL DOCUMENT

"It's a clerk from the Mairie, and he wants a certificate M. Juifs brought home today by mistake," said Mme. Juifs' servant.  
Madame put down her novel and opened the drawer of her husband's writing table—that drawer devoted exclusively to the reception of public documents which M. Juifs possessed in his capacity of deputy mayor and councillor of 4th arrondissement of Paris.

She pulled out the first paper that her fingers touched, unfolded it and gave a little cry. It was not an official document. It was not the certificate required. Oh, no!  
"Tell the man I cannot find it," said Madame. "He must call tomorrow. Monsieur is out."  
The servant disappeared, and Madame sat down, paper in hand.

It was the first time she had opened that drawer—occasion had never arisen until that evening—and she and dry, unromantic documents had naught in common. It was her first attempt at angling in her husband's official preserves, and she had caught a very compromising fish. She unfolded the prettily tinted, delicately perfumed billet doux. It was that, she knew without perusal, but she read it nevertheless. It ran:  
"Meet me tonight in the old rendezvous. You have not forgotten, my dear, though it is years since we lounged together under the trees at the back of the Palais de l'Industrie and listened to the music. Meet me there tonight at 8. Do not fail me. It is hard to plead and threaten in the same gasp, but I can do it. Do not fail me, I repeat. Come to me, or I will come to you, and, Madame—and how will you like that?"

It was signed "Marie"—no other name. It bore no address, but the postmark proved it to have come from Gentilly that day.  
"I, too, will look into this," she said.  
It was past 9 when Mme. Juifs discharged her fingers and walked round to the garden at the back of the Palais de l'Industrie, where a Concert Besselièvre was in full swing. It was a fine night, warm and stately. The little garden, with its breeze from the river, was a pretty and appropriate lounge. The salon, in the height of its season, had emptied its votaries from the galleries to the fresh air. Breeze and music were alike invigorating after the toil of picture gazing.

Madame wandered under the trees for an hour, until her feet grew weary and her temper "short." Then, when she thought of relinquishing her quest, she spied her miscreant husband—it was her own adjective—with that woman.  
His arm was laden with her so lightly that the outlines of their bodies mingled. They were talking—she with animation, he tranquilly. Madame noticed how restless and uneasy he was. His eyes roamed from right to left—before, behind. It took every available corner and all Madame's ingenuity to draw within range of their voices unrecognized, though she was muffled and veiled. "You will not send me away?" the woman was asking excitedly.  
"No, no!" he replied soothingly. "You will let me stay in Paris—beautiful Paris—and see you sometimes, perhaps daily! Ah, my dear, how delightful!"  
"Yes. Certainly," he replied.  
"Wretch!" muttered Madame.  
"I will keep my secret, Pierre—our secret. Oh, I promise you!"  
"Of course you will."  
"Will you? bessed Madame."  
"She—your wife—need never know."  
"Diablot!" exclaimed Madame.  
"You will not send me back?" she reiterated.  
"No. Don't be afraid."  
"I knew you would not if I could only see you, speak to you, tell you how cruel they are. And they said, Pierre, it was your doing, by your desire I was there. I told them they lied. I knew it."  
"Of course they did," replied Pierre calmly.

"And I tricked them so beautifully," she added, with a chuckle. "They were all at breakfast and my preparations were so carefully planned that I was there before they missed me."  
She laughed. The sound struck Madame's bones and made them ache.  
"Where are you going, Pierre?" she asked after a pause.  
"Going?"  
"Yes. Why do we walk, walk, walk and never stop? Where are you taking me? Pierre, it is getting late. Where will you take me tonight?"  
"To those who will look after you, little one."  
"Not—not back there?"  
"No. Won't you trust me?"  
"Yes, Pierre, I do trust you. You will take me somewhere to sleep and—"  
"You will be quite safe and comfortable."  
"And you?"  
"I must go home to my wife."  
"You must—go—home! You are going to leave me tonight?"  
"I must."  
"You shall not. You must not. Do you hear, Pierre? I will not let you. I have lost you for years and years, and now I have found you I will keep you. I will, I will!"  
"Hush. Don't get excited. I'll stay with you."

At that juncture Madame, standing a few yards distant, was about to reveal herself, but the sudden appearance of two men made her hesitate and watch wonderingly.  
Pierre saw the men also and acknowledged their presence with the slightest movement of the head. Then his face assumed a less anxious expression.  
"Come," he said to his companion.  
"Let us go away. It is late, and we must find a home for tonight."  
The two men walked toward the garden gate, the two men a few paces ahead. Madame drew farther into the shadow.

They passed her. The light of the lamps swinging from the trees fell plentifully upon the woman. Her dress was disarranged and torn, her hair disheveled and ragged. Upon her frail, wan face sat a smile of victory, an unnatural, unholy smile, expressed only in her mouth. Her eyes shone with the unrelenting luster of insanity.  
Madame shuddered.  
As they passed her the woman spoke.  
"Pierre, my brother, they call me mad."  
Then she laughed mercilessly. The sweat of pain stood on Pierre's brow.  
"Poor girl!" groaned