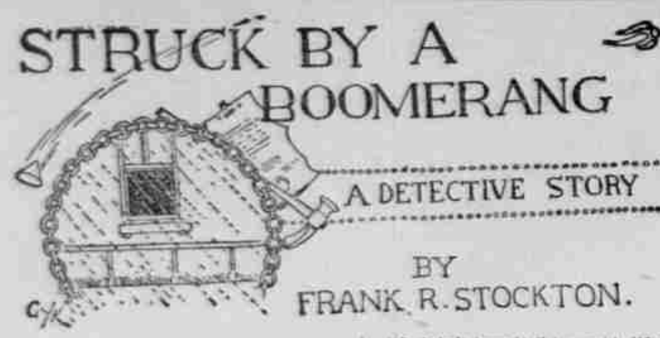


# STRUCK BY A BOOMERANG

## A DETECTIVE STORY

BY FRANK R. STOCKTON.

PART II.

When Mr. Shallcross had spoken to me of what he had done, and of what he felt bound to suspect, I became exceedingly angry. It seemed to me that people—even the kindest and most honorable—were racking their brains to make bottles out of trifles. I concealed my feelings as well as I could, for I did not wish to quarrel, but with the intent to prove to Mr. Shallcross that the blow he had summoned out of the regions of his imagination could not have been made with an adze, I went to a hardware store. There I found that the adze heads were sold separately from the handles, and while I was looking at some of the former, I noticed that their hammer ends had square surfaces. I looked at others and others; the hammer ends were all square. Then I asked the dealer if he had any with round hammer ends, to which he replied that they were not made in that way.

At another place where they sold hardware, I examined adze-heads; their hammer ends were square. I went into a carpenter's shop and talked to the man about putting up some shelves in my office. While we were speaking my eyes rambled about in search of adzes. I saw one; its hammer end was square.

I did not return to Mr. Shallcross' office. Depressed instead of encouraged, I went to my own. From what I had seen of adzes and from what I knew of the length of their handles, I could not but believe that a strong man could reach out of the window and strike a falling blow with one. It was certain that Mr. Archibald Kefford owned an adze, the hammer end of which had a round surface about two inches in diameter, and which was unlike any other in the town. For an hour at least I sat and thought. To suspect the father of Natalie of a murderous assault was impossible for me, but it was as plain as daylight that other people were doing that thing. The consequences of their suspicions would be terrible, would be awful beyond comprehension if Reuben Farris should die.

In the case of this assault it was not probable that I would be asked to take part in any way, but in it I determined to take part. I would devote myself entirely and wholly, by night and by day, with mind and body—with even money, if necessary—to the discovery of Reuben Farris' assassin, and to the removal of every suspicion from the father of Natalie. I knew as well as I knew anything that these two objects were the same.

The business of a detective is fascinating to a great many people, and it has always been so to me, but now it possessed an interest which overshadowed every other earthly purpose. Apart from my desire to further the ends of justice, I was going to enter the field in defense of the future of Natalie, in defense of my own future. If unjust fate crushed her father, it would, through her, crush me. She might never know it, but I should be crushed. I rose to my feet and swore that I would find the man who had committed the dastardly crime.

In planning my search for the assassin my mind naturally inclined in the direction of Dr. Latimer, but reason soon told me this was foolish. The man had been at home in Salbury during the whole of the night of the assault; but he might have employed some one to do the deed. This, to my mind, was the most natural aspect of the case.

As a probable instrument of Latimer's villainy I thought of the man Hatch. It would have been a good scheme for Hatch to station himself in the back office of Mr. Kefford, into which he could easily have climbed from outside, and it would have very prudent for him to supply himself with a peculiar adze belonging to Mr. Kefford. Of course he would have returned it after he had used it, so that if an immediate search were made it would have been found in Mr. Kefford's possession. But I also considered that a little later Latimer may have thought it wise to prevent Mr. Kefford from concealing this adze and to have it removed to Hatch's house, where it would be kept ready to produce in case Mr. Kefford should be brought to trial for the assault upon Farris.

That afternoon I walked out to Hatch's house. He was not at home, but in the back yard there was a log, one side partly hewn, and by it stood the adze which he had borrowed. I went to it, I examined it; I measured the diameter of its hammer head. Mr. Shallcross had been correct, that diameter was about two inches.

I stood and looked at the adze. The thought came into my mind that perhaps it would be a good thing to take it and hurl it into a creek which ran nearby, to do anything; to hide it and get rid of it. But a moment's reflection told me that this would be foolish, and in the next moment, an incident made me understand that it would be impossible. A man, dressed in ordinary clothes, but whose face was familiar to me as a policeman, approached me and carelessly remarked that he supposed I had come out to look at that adze. The lawyers had been talking a good deal about it, he said, and that he had been sent out there to keep an eye on it.

"There is nobody at home now," said he, "but I shall stay around here keepin' out of sight, and watch for anybody who comes to talk about it. I guess there will be somebody or other who will take enough interest in that adze to come soon and see Hatch about it; at least, that is the opinion in town."

I made some casual remarks about the advisability of keeping an eye upon everything that might possibly be connected with the case, but I said nothing which might help anyone who had suspicions of Hatch. If he had anything to do with the assault, I wanted to be the man to find it out and fix the crime upon him. I spoke as if I thought the adze of little importance, and soon left the place.

I continued to walk for a little distance, and then crossed the creek by a bridge, in order that I might return to town through the woods. On the bridge was a boy fishing. From my early youth I had been fond of fishing, and I stopped to watch him. The stream was quite deep here, and he was fishing for cat fish, which swim near the bottom.

Presently he felt a bite and gave a jerk. Then he began to haul up his line.

"I guess I have got one," said he.

"From the way you pull up," I remarked, "it must be a pretty big fish."

"Don't know about that," said the boy. "I have got to pull this line hard whether anything is on it or not," and as he said this the end of his line came up above the water and he swung it on the bridge. Fast to the hook was a little cat fish seven or eight inches long.

"You see," said the boy, "why it is a pretty heavy line to pull up."

The boy took off his fish and I stooped and examined the fishing tackle which lay on the floor of the bridge.

"Where did you buy this?" I asked the boy who was putting his fish upon a string with a few others.

"I didn't buy it," he said, "I found it."

"Where?" I asked.

"In a gutter," said he.

I asked a few more questions, and then I said I'd like to fish. Will you sell me your line? I'll give you 50 cents for it." The boy looked at me astonished. If I had said 10 cents he would probably have thought it a good offer.

"All right," said he, "you can have it for that."

I handed him the half dollar, and then, apparently afraid that I might reconsider the bargain, he said that he guessed he had better hurry home if he wanted to get his fish cooked that day, and he forthwith departed.

I stood upon the bridge seeing nothing that was about me, but with my brain filled with a tumultuous crowd of ideas which seemed intent upon driving out my reason and my senses. These ideas soon formed themselves into a regular sequence with a horrible and awful conclusion which chilled me as if I had been suddenly turned into ice.

I now knew that my work as a detective had suddenly come to an end. I had succeeded in my search for the man who had stricken Reuben Farris to the earth, who, perhaps, had murdered him.

That man was no other than myself!

Motionless, I stood upon the bridge, still holding in my hand the fishing tackle I had purchased from the boy, still that awful procession passing through my brain always ending with the figure of Reuben Farris stretched on his bed in the hospital. My mind was stunned. I seemed to have lost the power of thinking. I was merely the prey of thoughts which came to me unbidden and relentless.

Suddenly I heard a rustling sound; I started frightened, it was but a bird flying out of a bush, but it startled me into my senses. I knew I was frightened. Quickly I cut the leaden sinker from the fishing line and threw the latter with its hooks into the water. Then with the sinker in my hand, and my hand in my pocket, I walked toward the town.

No chain of events could be clearer or better defined than those which led from me to the man in the hospital. I had always been fond of fishing, and before I came to Camborough I used to fish a good deal for perch in the Delaware River, using a very peculiar tackle called a bow line, or dipsy line. This apparatus, which was intended to catch several fish at once, was lowered to the sandy bars frequented by perch, by means of a leaden sinker, generally called a dipsy lead, very heavy and of conical form—its broad base enabling it to rest upright on the bottom. I did not now use a bow line, but among my effects I had found a dipsy lead which for some time had done service in my office as a paper weight.

On the evening of August 21 I had been sitting in my office, which was on the third floor of the building in which the rooms of Mr. Kefford were situated. I was not in a pleasant humor; my mind was irritated, and it annoyed me to think that it was so. I had been more deeply touched by the manner in which I had been ignored in the matter of Nicolas Kefford's will than I had supposed. With the Kefford family, and with everyone else, I had endeavored to treat the matter as if it were quite natural that I should not be retained or consulted regarding the affair; but when I found myself alone in my office I could not treat it in that way. I was very much vexed and piqued.

Suddenly my cogitations were broken in upon by the lugubrious wail of a cat in the street below me. This sound was a disagreeable one to me at all times, but in my present state of mind it enraged me. I seized the first heavy object which came to hand, which happened to be the dipsy lead, and, rushing to the open window, I looked out. There I saw in the darkness a light-colored object moving on the sidewalk. Instantly I hurled my dipsy lead at it with all my strength. I heard a thud, but whether my missile had hit its object or had merely struck the sidewalk, which in this back street was not paved, but covered with gravel, I did not know, nor did I care. I could not see into the darkness, and if I had driven the cat away I was satisfied. I returned to my table and my thoughts, and soon afterward went out.

Not until I had stood on the bridge by the side of the boy, gazing with astonishment at the heavy lead which was attached to his little line, and which I knew to be my own as soon as my eyes fell upon it—for I had molded it myself, after a fashion which suited me—had I remembered what had occurred in my office on that fatal evening; but when the boy had told me he had found this dipsy lead in a gutter, and when, upon further questioning, he said that it was in a gutter of Decatur street, just back of the office buildings, and that he had found it on the day after what he called "the Farris murder," I had remembered everything.

Reuben Farris had worn a light-colored felt hat, and when I had looked out into the darkness below my window, I had seen nothing but this hat moving beneath me. At this hat I had hurled my dipsy lead and it had struck Farris fair on the top of the head, the broad flat botom of the leaden cone coming horizontally downward because it was the heaviest part of the sinker. It had broken through the skull of the unfortunate man, forcing downward not only a circular piece of the skull, but that part of the hat with which it came in contact. As I had noticed when examining the hat the impression of the heavy object with which Farris had been stricken down was well marked. The lead had rolled off into the gutter where the boy had found it the next day.

I reached the town and hurried to my office, fortunately meeting no one. I went into the building by a back way, and as I passed the place where Farris had fallen I shuddered as if I had seen the oozing blood from the wound of a corpse.

The first thing I did when I reached my room was to measure the lower surface of the dipsy lead. It was exactly one inch and seven-eighths in diameter. This, allowing for a thickness of felt all around the bottom edge of the lead, would probably make a fracture two inches wide. With Mr. Kefford's adze the circular fracture would have been somewhat larger. Every link in my chain of events was perfect.

The dipsy lead safe in my hand, I sat in my room and asked myself what I was to do now. My first impulse after measuring the lead had been to hurry to the courthouse and tell the sheriff exactly what had happened; to free the father of Natalie from all suspicion and to show that the blood of Reuben Farris was on my hands—innocent hands as I had always supposed them to be.

But the remembrance of the words used by the boy made me hesitate. If this should be murder, if Reuben Farris should now be dead, or should die, what then?

What I had done was a piece of criminal and unpardonable carelessness, followed by the most terrible injury to a fellow-man. If the case should be regarded in that light by the authorities, I ought to be willing to suffer any punishment which the law might inflict, and if this punishment should be in the shape of damages to Farris should he recover, I would most cheerfully accept the penalty and sacrifice, if necessary, all the property from which I derived my income.

But, if Reuben Farris should not recover, the case would be very different. Then it would be a matter of life and death to me to prove that when I hurled from my window that heavy leaden missile, I thought I was throwing it at a cat and not at the head of a man. It was generally believed that the assailant of Farris had been waiting for him at an open window, knowing that he would probably come along Decatur street. Why should I not have been waiting for him at an open window far above him and safe from observation?

Everybody knew that I had a great interest in the Kefford will case, and consequently in the appearance or the nonappearance of the man who had been sent for to testify in that case. I had frequently discussed the matter with my acquaintances in the law and out of it, and I did so the more zealously because by avoiding the subject I might have led persons to suppose that my feelings were hurt. It was known, too, that I was paying attentions to Miss Kefford, and that I was a warm friend of the family, and in fact the more I thought of it the more plainly it seemed to me that it might reasonably be suspected that I might have been actuated by a very strong desire that Farris should not testify regarding the Kefford will. If he should swear that he had witnessed the will, the fortune of the dead Kefford was lost to his relatives. There were chances that he might so swear, and I was known to be a young man of quick temper.

Why should not the story of the cat appear absurd and ridiculous? What man of average sense would stand at a third-story window on a rainy night, when footsteps could scarcely be heard and when it was so dark that people on the sidewalk could not be plainly discerned, and hurl more than a pound of lead at something which possibly might be a cat? What reason had I to expect that I should be able to convince a court that I was a silly fool and not an intending murderer?

When my thoughts had gone thus far, I put the dipsy lead in a drawer, which I locked, and then I hurried to the hospital. I had been there before and had shown, I hoped, a creditable interest in the unfortunate man, and now I tried hard to calm myself down into the appearance of one influenced by such creditable interest and nothing more. It might have been better for me to have stayed away from the hospital, for when I was told that although the operation had been considered successful, the patient was still in an insensible condition, with vitality so low that at any moment he might cease to breathe, I fear that I showed an agitation scarcely less than that which would have been produced by the news of the dangerous condition of a loved relative. It might well be asked why, under ordinary circumstances, I should be so affected by the danger of a person with whom I was not acquainted.

All that night I considered from every possible point of view my terrifying situation. New reasons for suspicions of me continually cropped up. If I had accidentally struck a man senseless, why should I have waited five days before I announced the fact? Why should I have allowed one of the best men in the town, a man whose son-in-law I hoped to be, to rest so long under the suspicion of a foul crime? Why should I wait until I should see whether Mr. Kefford was likely to get into serious trouble before I came forward with this trumped-up story of a cat?

And there was Natalie! If she had by this time found out that suspicion was gathering around her father, what would she say when I told her that I had waited five days before avowing myself to be the culprit? If she believed I had entirely forgotten what I had done, then it would almost be as bad as if she did not believe. A lawyer, whose business it is to discover criminating facts, but whose judgment and memory are so frail as to make him overlook the all-important facts in such a case, must be almost as despicable as a man who commits a crime and lies about it.

I became indignant at fate. Why should I lose everything worth having in this world? Why should I give up my love, my prospects, my life, because I had committed a careless fault? Why should I suffer the terrible punishment which might follow the avowal of my part in this tragedy, of which tragedy, at the time it was committed, I was absolutely ignorant?

In the town of Camborough, in fact in the whole world, there was no one who could help me answer these questions. If I told my secret to anyone I would have no right to ask him to keep it a secret, and he would have no right to do so. How I cursed myself for the egregious vanity which had urged me to push myself into this affair. Of course, it was a good motive which prompted me to give all possible assistance in the search for a criminal and to clear a good man from suspicion, but that had not been all my motive. I had wanted to show Camborough what I could do by myself. I had wanted to produce the criminal, and now that I had found him I was afraid to produce him. If I had kept in my proper place no one would have ever known that I had done the deed, for I should not have suspected it myself. It was as if a native Australian had proudly hurled a boomerang at an enemy and the murderous missile had returned, striking him fair in the forehead.

I had reached the point now, when I considered only myself. The thought that my avowal would relieve Mr. Kefford of suspicion grew of less and less importance. I said to myself that there was really nothing to positively connect him with the crime. He might suffer, but not as I should suffer. I could not make up my mind to shatter my life.

I rose in the morning without having decided whether I would continue to live among the citizens of Camborough as a free and respectable man, or whether I should deliver myself into the hands of the law, for a crime of which I knew I was not truly guilty. I was sitting in my office that morning about 9 o'clock when my friend, Craig Wilson, came in. He was a young lawyer about my age, but he had been longer in the profession, and had had some experience. Wilson had scarcely seated himself when he exclaimed:

"Old boy, you are not looking well! Have you been reading all night, studying up wills and assassinations? I think you are putting too much of your nerve power into this business. Everybody knows you are interested, and that is all right, but there is such a thing as going too far, even in a good cause. You want a rest. What do you say to going out fishing this afternoon?"

"Fishing!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," said Wilson. "I had an idea you were going into that line again. I know you used to be a great fisherman, and Billy Saunders, the son of our gardener, told me that yesterday you bought a fishing line of him and paid him some fabulous price—a dollar or two, I think he said—for one of his old lines. That looked to me like a bad attack of fishing fever, and my opinion is that it is the sort of disease that would do you good. Shall we start out after luncheon?"

"No," said I, "I cannot possibly do it; it will be utterly out of the question."

I think I said something about an engagement, but I do not remember. My mind was entirely occupied with a new fear—a fear that this crime might be fixed upon me without my confessing it. The boy would be a witness to prove an extraordinary desire on my part to possess myself of the missile with which Farris had been struck. I did not want to talk, but I must say something.

"Is there any news," said I, "about the man in the hospital?"

"No good news," replied Wilson. "In fact, there doesn't seem to be anything good about this unfortunate affair, and I must admit it has an effect on me as well as on yourself, although you have much more reason to take it roughly than I have. I stopped at the hospital late last night and heard that Farris had had a very bad turn. At one time he picked up a little, as if his life were doing its best to stick to him. It would be very bad if he should die, for between us things are looking very shady regarding Kefford. Of course the evidence against him is very slight, but it is all the evidence there is against anybody. I am very much afraid, very much, indeed, that if the man dies, it will be absolutely necessary to take Mr. Kefford into custody."

"Never!" I exclaimed, springing to my feet. "He is as innocent as a babe; and the thing was not done with an adze."

I was on the point of saying more, but I restrained myself. This was not the place to tell my story.

"Cool yourself down, my boy," said Wilson, also rising; "it is all right for you to think that way, and I give you credit for it. I know you have been making experiments with hammers and things, and I know how you feel toward that family, but don't get yourself excited. That will do nobody any good."

When Wilson left me my mind was made up. Every suspicion must instantly be cleared from Natalie's father. I took the dipsy lead from the drawer and put it into my pocket. Then I arranged some of the papers in my desk, which I closed and locked; I put in order the things on my table; I closed the window and went out of the office, locking the door behind me. I might never see that room again!

(To Be Concluded.)

## LOCKED UP WITH A MANIAC.

It was on the fifth day of our voyage, as we were amusing ourselves on deck, that a message was brought to me to say that Mr. A—— would like to see me in his cabin.

I had no difficulty in finding his room, and was met at the door by Mr. A—— himself. He shook hands very cordially and invited me to enter and take a chair. No sooner had I done so than he carefully locked the door. Thinking this rather strange, I inquired as to his illness. He did not reply for some time and then said:

"I am not ill. I sent for you," laying his hand on a large knife, "to cut your throat."

He was a man I had not before particularly noticed, but now, as I looked up, I fully made up my mind that he was a maniac.

I am not a coward, yet even now the thought of that moment makes me shudder. There I was in a remote part of the ship, alone with a madman of twice my strength, without a chance to escape or means to give an alarm, and being unarmed, quite at his mercy.

I had heard of other somewhat similar cases, and, though a tyro in the profession, had had some experience among the insane. I knew, therefore, that resistance would be of the least service to me, and that apparent acquiescence would be best. All this quickly flashed through my mind, and, accordingly, feigning the utmost indifference I could, I said:

"Ah, yes, Mr. A——, to be sure. It won't take long, will it?"

"Oh, no," said he, calmly surveying the knife he now held in his hand. "Oh, no, the job is quite a light one."

Here he poured out a glass of wine and begged me to drink it. As I did so an idea struck me, and I said:

"By the by, Mr. A——, your knife doesn't look very sharp, the trachea is tough, you know, and will want some cutting."

He looked hard at me, as if to read my thoughts, but after a time, convinced that my suggestion was a good one, and examining his knife more closely, he said:

"Yes, doctor, I think you are right. A little grinding will do no harm; so, if you don't mind waiting, I will just run to the carpenter's shop."

This was exactly what I wanted, as, feeling sure that he would not lock the door after him, I thought my escape would be easy. What was my dismay, then, on his departure, at finding that it was locked as securely as before.

I passed up and down in despair; tore at the door; flung open the porthole window and shouted with all my might; but all without avail.

Time went on, minute by minute, and he could not be long now. In the frenzy of despair I groped about, from corner to corner, in search of some weapon of defense; but no, not even the merest stick, not the smallest thing upon which to lay hands. And then I heard footsteps approaching in the distance.

I felt my pulse quicken; my brow grow hot. Impulsively I threw off my coat, got to the farthest end of the room, and, standing as defensively as possible, resolved to fight to the last.

I remember, then, the door bursting open, and the entry of A——, not alone, as I thought, but securely pinioned and attended by two of the ship's crew, in charge of the second officer.

The relief of the moment was so great that it completely prostrated me, and my nervous system was much shaken for some time, while the intensity and reality of my situation often now makes me feel something akin to what the condemned, about to be hanged, must experience.

I learned afterward that the peculiar and excited manner of the maniac, the large knife in his possession, and his anxiety to sharpen it drew suspicion on him, which, with the fact that I had been called to see him, induced the officer to secure him and come to his cabin.

For the remainder of the voyage he was kept securely confined, and watched day and night, and, on arriving at New York, was handed over to the proper authorities, who, on investigating the case, found that the man had escaped from a private lunatic asylum near Liverpool, and had by strategy and cunning eluded the vigilance of his keepers and taken passage in our vessel. He was, I believe, transferred to England again, though, happily, not under my care.—London News.

### In Late September.

Among the hardy marigolds
The spicy gilly-flower unfolds,
And in the elm the cat-bird scolds,
With saucy outspread wings;
To mellow sweets the pippins speed,
The sunflower disks are brown with seed,
And round about them finches feed
In clinging yellow rings.

The latest poppy fires are dead,
But bright as blossoms overhead
In shining sheaves of bronze and red
The frost-tipped pear leaves show;
While from their branches blackbirds sing,
Or break to noisy chattering,
And slender silken cobwebs string
The tall grass down below.

Along the uplands, faintly seen
Across the fallow fields between,
The winter wheat grows bravely green
Despite the coming cold;
And studding all the stubbled ground,
In tasseled shocks the corn is bound,
The ripened ears heaped close around
In piles of purest gold.

To smoky wreaths along the ways
The newly-kindled brush-heaps blaze,
And filmy veils of purple haze
Mesh all the amber air;
Among the fleeces of the sheep
The yellow sunbeams softly creep,
And sweet contentment, wide and deep,
Broods gently everywhere.

—Evaleen Stein.

## THE ABSENT-MINDED JONES.

Jones couldn't help it. He was born that way. As a baby he couldn't remember his nursing bottle or rattle box five minutes after they were out of his hand. Sometimes he remembered that his mother was a woman he had seen around the house before, and sometimes he looked upon her as an utter stranger. On rare occasions he recognized his father, and there were times when he seemed to feel at home in the house.

As a baby Jones was a side show. He was named Henry, but if you called him George or Jake or Hanna it was all the same to him. He was as bright as the average boy, but he simply couldn't remember. Every page of his lesson in school was new to him, and it wasn't half the time he could remember the name of the teacher. His mother fretted and worried, and his father scolded and thrashed, but the boy did not improve. They finally got a phrenologist to examine his bumps, and the verdict was:

"He was born that way, and you can't do anything with him. Just let him make the best of it."

The "best" was to let him go his way and do as he pleased, and he grew up into a fairly good man. To the wonder of all he turned to business and displayed an aptitude for it. His real troubles began when he got old enough to escort the girls about. If introduced to a strange girl he would invariably lead off with:

"Very happy, indeed; but haven't we met before?"

"I think not."

"Perhaps not; but I was thinking I asked you to marry me."

"No, sir."

"I must be mistaken, of course. Didn't we ever court?"

"No, sir."

"I thought we had. Just excuse me, will you?"

And half an hour later he would be likely to stare at her for a moment with troubled countenance, and then say:

"Let's see! Didn't I ask you to marry me a little while ago?"

"No, sir."

"I thought I did. Excuse me, and I'll try to remember you better."

One day he came home with a very serious look on his face, and when asked what was troubling him he replied:

"Have we got a cook named Mary?"

"No; her name is Jane," replied his mother.

"Does she expect to marry me?"

"Of course, not. What put that idea into your head?"

"Why, I'm almost sure I asked somebody's cook, named Mary or Jane or something, to marry me. Please go and ask our cook if she is the one."

His grandmother came on a visit, and the day after her arrival young Jones called her into another room and confidentially observed:

"It comes a little hard for me to remember everything, you know. In talking with you yesterday did I ask you to marry me?"

"Why, mercy, no!" gasped the old lady.

"Are you sure?"

"Of course, I am! The idea of your asking your grandmother to marry you!"

"Well maybe I didn't," he sighed; "but I was talking with you and one or two other women, and it seems to me that I proposed to one, at least. If it wasn't you, then it was one of the others."

It was a nine-days' wonder when he got married, and later on it was ascertained that he had been engaged to twenty-two different girls. That is, he had popped the question to that many, and whether all had accepted or rejected him he could not remember. One day he overtook a girl on the village street, and after walking a block or so he suddenly asked:

"Miss Angell, I don't remember some things very clearly. For instance, did I ever tell you that I loved you?"

"You never did," she replied.

"Well, I wish to tell you so now. Perhaps, I never asked you to marry me?"

"Never."

"Then I ask you now."

"Yes, I will marry you," replied the girl, who knew Jones to be a very worthy young man, and who was in every way worthy herself.

"I thank you very much. When shall it come off—tomorrow?"

"No, the day after."

"Very well. We will have a quiet marriage at your house the day after tomorrow. I must try and remember that. Just excuse me, will you?"

And he left her to run across the street and into a grocery and say to the proprietor:

"Say, Billings, do me a favor, will you?"

"Of course. What is it?"

"I'm going to marry Sadie Angell Thursday evening. Please help me to remember it."

Billings agreed, and about every two hours he had a boy hunt up young Jones and jog his memory. The Jones family also helped him to remember, and although the bridegroom-elect did go off fishing on the marriage day they got him back in time for the marriage. Two hours after the ceremony, however, while he was circulating among the guests, he met the bride and smilingly asked:

"Miss Angell, did we or did we not get married this evening?"

"Why, of course we did."

"I thought so, but wasn't quite sure about it. All right; I'll remember that we did."

As a family man, Jones had a house in the center of the block. For every time he stopped at his own gate he passed it ten times. He was just as apt to walk into any other house as his own, and people used to gather to see him do it. When the baby appeared he said he would try and remember that it was a girl and his. His wife put a red-headed baby into the crib—she borrowed it—twins, and even triplets, and he never noticed the difference. One day he left a six months' infant in the crib and went to business. At noon time he found a baby two years old, kicking up its heels in the same place, and he made no remarks whatever.

Jones bought and shipped produce. He wasn't quite so absent-minded when doing business, but it was hard work to keep track of things. If he bought fifty dozen eggs of Brown he had to write it down in four or five different places, and even then he was likely to get the item mixed with ten barrels of apples bought of Green. He would try to collect a debt five or six times over, but as an offset would always pay over and over again, if demanded. He set out for the country one day with $500 in cash in his pocket to buy produce, but after one or two purchases he lost himself, and was not found for two weeks. It was an actual fact that he forgot his town and name, and he had about concluded the purchase of an old sawmill, when an acquaintance happened along and told him who he was and where he belonged.

"Then I am Jones?" queried the absent minded and astonished man.

"Of course you are!"

"And I live at Greenville?"

"Certainly. I have known you for years."

"Well, if I'm Jones, and live at Greenville, I guess I'd better be jogging along home!"

There were times when Jones forgot that he was married, and it was one of these lapses which brought his death. If he wasn't bothered with business he remembered that he had a wife and two children. If business matters vexed him he might say to any woman who entered his store:

"A dozen eggs, eh? Certainly. Madam I do not remember little details as well as I wish I did. Were we ever married?"

"No, sir."

"I didn't know, you know. Didn't I ever ask you to marry me?"

"No, sir."

"Didn't I ever sit up with you Sunday nights?"

"Never, sir!"

"Well, I'm probably mistaken, and you'll please excuse me."

The woman was likely to go home and tell her husband, and the latter would rush over to Jones to exclaim:

"See here, now, but you'll get your head knocked off if you talk to my wife that way again!"

"Your wife! But I don't even know your wife!" the astonished Jones would reply.

"But she was just in here after eggs!"

"Was that your wife? Well! Well! And all I said to her was to ask if she liked boiled eggs."

As a sort of public test of Jones' absent-mindedness, he was told one morning that five men had been killed at the railroad depot. He expressed his sympathies, and ten minutes later he was told the same thing over again. This was continued until he had been told fifteen times. Then a man dropped in and carelessly inquired:

"Well, Jones, any news today?"

"Not a bit," replied Jones.

"Wasn't there an accident somewhere around town this morning?"

"Haven't heard of any."

"What was Griggs telling you half an hour ago?"

"Griggs? Griggs? Oh, yes, I remember; Griggs, the carpenter. Let's see? Let's see! Why, he was saying something about an earthquake in Japan, I believe, but I didn't pay much attention!"

A few weeks after that Jones had to go to Indianapolis on business. He had his errand written down in four different note books, and there was hope that he would accomplish it. At the hotel in Indianapolis he met a widow who was traveling and had lost her money by theft. His sympathies went out at once, and in his mental excitement he forgot his past—particularly the fact that he was a married man.

He began to talk tenderly and kindly, and within five minutes had offered himself in marriage. The widow sized him up for a good man and accepted him, and the marriage ceremony took place in the the hotel parlor next morning. An hour later Jones was recognized by a fellow-townsman, and of course he was in hot water. They tried to make the widow understand that he was an absent-minded man and meant no wrong, but excuses didn't go down with her. He had committed bigamy, and she felt so wronged and insulted that she caused his arrest at once. When Jones was arraigned all he could say was:

"Dear, dear me, but I'd clean forgot that I ever married. I'm not sure if I really ever did, but if they say so I shall have to believe it."

The judge said that matrimony was too sacred to be trifled with in that way, and Jones was sent to jail until he could get bail. There was a delay of two or three weeks, and he caught a heavy cold in his damp cell and died of pneumonia before the case came to trial. When his wife came on to see him she upbraided him, as was natural, and he replied:

"How was I to remember, when I had forgotten all about it? You ought to have tied a string around my finger or put it down in the books."

If Jones had lived the bigamy case might have gone hard with him, but the widow couldn't get revenge on a dead man. An hour before he died, and when they told him that death was near, he quietly replied:

"So I'm going to die, eh? It sort o' seems as if I had died before, but mebbe not. I'll try and remember about it this time, however."

CHARLES B. LEWIS

## THE CAUSE OF REFORM.

"It's not that I've become convinced of the sinfulness of games of chance and reformed," said the thoughtful-looking man. "Nor is it that I have lost confidence in my luck, or that I'm afraid of arrest. None of these could have given my taste for faro the jar that it received last week.

"I dropped into a Clark-street place with a $50 bill that had been paid me—all that was due me until the end of the month. Twenty dollars' worth of chips that I bought to start with were gone before I fully realized what had happened. That was all I had intended to allow myself to lose, but after standing around and watching for awhile, I decided to give the game another run. So I bought $20 worth more.

"My luck turned at once. In a short time my pile had risen above fifty. 'When it reaches ninety,' I thought, 'I'll quit. Having paid out forty, ninety would leave me a velvet of an even fifty.' For quite a while I fluctuated around seventy-five; finally a couple of good bets brought me up to my even ninety."

"And you thought you'd try just one play more, and ended by losing all you'd won, I suppose?"

"No; different story this time. I tore myself away from the table and cashed in, receiving a $50 greenback and two twenties. I left the place promptly and went to the bank the next morning to deposit my fifty.

"'Hard luck,' was the teller's remark, as he clicked a little machine and tossed my bill back with the word 'counterfeit' stamped through it.

"'For heaven's sake!' I gasped, 'if that's counterfeit maybe these are, too!' And before I thought I pulled out the two twenties. As I shoved them under the grating I came back to my senses, and started to take them back. But it was too late. The teller grabbed them, ran his fingers over them, and returned them in the same condition as the fifty. I realized that I had $10 to live on during three weeks."

"Couldn't you get any satisfaction from the people you won from?"

"I thought of that. The large man who banks called another large man with big hands; the least of the forms of dishonesty of which he then accused me was blackmail. I accepted his invitation to leave before pressure was brought to bear."—Chicago Times-Herald.

### A Blank Verse Check Book.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" asked the young man in the bank as she drummed on the glass shelf with nervous shyness.

"Yes, there is; if you would be so kind."

"What is it?"

"Would you mind giving me a check book?"

"Have you a deposit here?"

"No. But my father has."

"Do you intend to keep an account here?"

"You mean, am I going to give you any money to keep for me?"

"Yes; that is what it amounts to."

"Oh, yes," she replied, with cheerful alacrity. "Some day. Just as soon as I hear from my publishers."

"Very well. As soon as you are ready to make a deposit, we will be very happy to give you a check-book."

"I need it right away," the young woman protested.

"But you can't draw any money, you know, until you have put some in."

"I don't want to 'draw' out any money. I have written a poem. It's ever so nice and all I have to do is to copy it off. As soon as I saw father's check book, it occurred to me that it would be a splendid idea to get one. My writing is very small and I wouldn't object to the printing you put in it in the least, because manuscripts must be written only on one side of the paper, you know. I'll explain in a letter that they needn't pay any attention to your side of each leaf. I can number the pages straight through and write the title on the cover so that everything will be as simple and convenient as any editor could desire."—Detroit Free Press.

## OBSERVATIONS OF AN AVERAGE MAN.

Many wise things have been written upon reading and the proper way to read. It was Matthew Arnold who said: "Desultory reading, well chosen, is restoring and edifying." On the other hand, these safe counsellors deprecate the habit of reading too much. A wise man once bade his young friend remember that he was a man, not a book, and, therefore, must not bury himself in a library, but mingle with men in public marts. Pope defined a not uncommon character when he spoke of "the bookful blockhead ignorantly read—the man who has read everything, and knows nothing; the sterile pedant who can give chapter and verse, but never catches the true spirit of a book; who reads without a glimmer of imaginativeness or originality of thought.' Hamilton Wright Mabie speaks thus of the trained reader: "He begins with rules, times and habits; these are the mechanical side of his training, but, when he has learned his craft, he has long ago forgotten them."

To the professional reader, who reads always with an object, it is interesting to get the views of a man who has frankly been reading for pleasure all his life. One of these average readers unfolded to the sympathetic editor the history of his acquaintance with books: "I began to read by accident. I travel a good deal, and as I am not of a very sociable turn, I had to do something to while away the time. You see, in some families the children not only inherit a taste for books, but absorb it. They hear books talked about continually, and get to feel that they are important things; whereas there was nothing of the sort in the atmosphere of my home. There was plenty of money to spend, but none of it went for books—except school books—so it was only by accident I found out literature could add any pleasure to my life. Perhaps, though, I had something of the reader in me, anyhow, or I would never have thought of turning to books, even as a pastime.

"I don't care for poetry—except Kipling. His 'Barrack Room Ballads' and 'Departmental Ditties' are great books. There is such a jolly swing about his verses."

"If you care for 'swing,' you ought to like James Whitcomb Riley."

"Well, now, I don't. Riley is goody-goody. He goes in too much for the domestic affections, and all that. I don't mean to decry the domestic affections; but Riley gives a kind of mush-and-milk view of human nature. Lots of his poems remind me of those worsted mottoes they hang on walls in country places, 'Heaven, Home and Mother,' and that sort of thing. That's what I complain of many of the American writers—they're hypocritical. Kipling, now, never makes the people he writes about any better than they would have been under the given circumstances. Can you imagine Riley making a soldier say that he wants to go back to the tropics, 'Where there aren't any Ten Commandments and a man can raise a thirst.' Riley's soldier would muse piously upon Samantha and husking bees and crystal draughts from the old well.

"Stevenson has the same kind of manliness. I've read every novel he ever wrote, and only wish he'd lived to write more. Crockett is good, too, only sometimes he is rather mealy-mouthed, and doesn't seem to realize, as Stevenson and Kipling do, that times come when a man must do a desperate deed without looking either before or behind. What I like about Stevenson and Kipling is that if their characters have anything to do, they go ahead and do it, and don't fumble over it a year—like the people in that book of James', 'Embarrassments.' Lord, I should say it is well named. I stuck fast in the middle of it, like a man in a bog. What a lot of big words about nothing! That fellow James makes me think of a man I used to know—a little, spindle-shanked, hollow-chested chap, with a thread of a voice, but he had that large way of talking. You'd hear him squeaking out 'tremendous,' 'immense,' 'vast,' 'stupendous,' about the most trivial affairs.

"George Meredith? Well, he seems to have a story in his head, and isn't afraid to tell it; but he doesn't know how. I read one of his novels, and I kept thinking all the time that if he only knew the tale he was trying to tell, I could understand those hints he keeps all the time casting out. It is like listening to the conductor on a railroad train calling out the names of the stopping places; if you knew the names beforehand you might understand the gibberish he shouts out; but it doesn't let much light in on the mind of a stranger. Same way with Carlyle. Once I got hold of his 'French Revolution,' because I was advised to—and that reminds me that I never took anybody's advice that I didn't repent it. Rely on you own judgment; that's what it was given you for. As I was saying, I tackled the 'French Revolution,' but I soon found that, unless I had that historical epoch at my fingers' ends, I'd make nothing out of the book. Of course, I may be all wrong, but it's my humble idea that a book with that title ought to teach the reader something about the French revolution. I can't see why it should be considered a mark of mental depth not to say what you mean. It seems to me more like muddle-headedness—as if the writer is not a clear thinker himself, and so he can't make his meaning plain to his reader.

"I prefer a novel that has style as well as a story, but I never get very far in one that is all style and no story. I'm not quite so simple as you think, even if I don't care for poetry and essays. Since I have read so many works of fiction I am able to compare them. It isn't sufficient now for an author to say, 'The rose and lily vied in her cheek,' or 'He was brave as a lion and as strong as an ox.' I know the difference between that sort of thing and the description that makes me seem to see beautiful women or a gallant man. That's one of the faculties of Anthony Hope. He brings a thing right before your eyes, and he doesn't waste any time doing it. Yes, Hope has certainly that 'speed, directness, lucidity,' which Lang considers indispensable for a writer of tales of adventure.

"You say he said that of the elder Dumas? Well, Dumas is a good old story teller, but it always struck me he's rather long winded. It's Hope that has the 'speed, directness, lucidity.' * * * So you think a whole world of delight is closed to me by the narrowness of my literary taste? That's all right," responded the average reader, unblushingly. "I've always read for my own pleasure, not for the approval of others. Doubtless it's a low thing to do, and I ought to be very much ashamed of myself—but somehow I'm not."—Minneapolis Times.

### A Safe Action.

(From the Chicago News.)

"Before stepping into his carriage, President McKinley turned and kissed his pretty niece, Mabel McKinley," excitedly exclaims a faithful recorder of Presidential events. This is much safer than kissing somebody else's pretty niece, or, indeed, hitting his own niece a whack on the face, but it is not as sensational.

### The Jungles of Chicago.

(From the Chicago Journal.)

Chicago has been wearing a very savage appearance during the past few days. Chief Kipley has been fighting blind pigs, a farmer "clipped the tiger's claws," and a man fought a bear hand to paw.