HOW SILAS BURROWS BOUGHT TWO PRINCES OUT OF SLAVERY

The story of the finding of the Silas E. Burrows letters, published in THE CALL of two weeks ago, has aroused an immense amount of interest among the pioneers of this City, to whom Burrows was well known, but few of whom knew of his wonderful history.

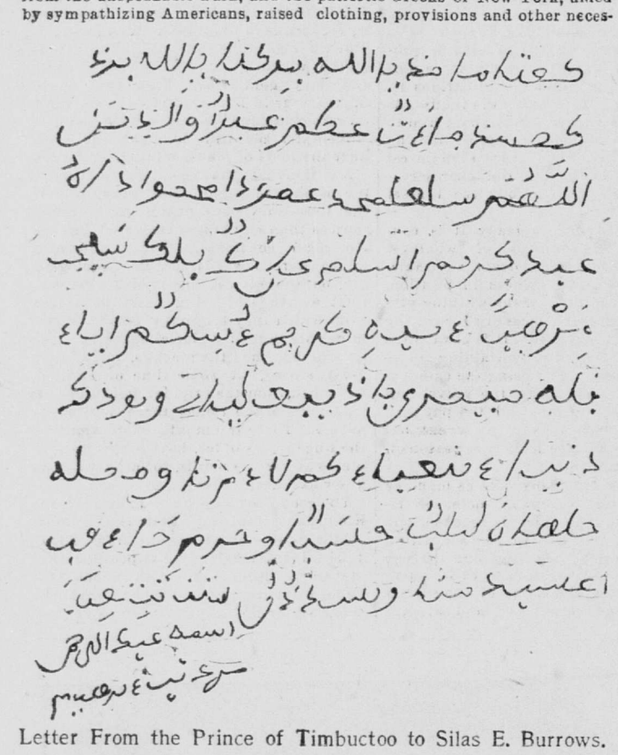
To them he was known as a brilliant, whole-souled fellow, always ready with his purse or influence to help out a friend or even an acquaintance, and prepared at any time to embark in an enterprise, no matter how hazardous, if it promised big returns.

In the days when Burrows was their friend and companion in the quest for gold little was thought of pedigree or records, and the career of the man who helped to make and mold National history was lost to sight in the mad whirl of the gold excitement that possessed the minds of all. The man who had succored princes and presidents and earned the gratitude of nations and kings lived out his quiet merchant's life, and when the final call came he was speedily forgotten, with thousands of others whose search for fortune was over.

This week THE CALL presents letters telling of two of the most remarkable instances of philanthropy that have ever been recorded.

It was in 1827 that the Greeks—in much the same position as they now are—with their backs to the wall, were battling for independence against fearful odds.

The New World was all wrought up over the struggle for freedom from the unspeakable Turk, and the patriotic Greeks of New York, aided by sympathizing Americans, raised clothing, provisions and other necessities for their brave countrymen as a gift from the American people. While they were casting about for a means of transmitting the goods to Athens Burrows came forward and offered the use of his new brig Burrows, previously referred to. She was tendered free of expense, fully manned and ready to sail. Her cargo was safely landed at Athens and was gratefully received by the Greeks.



Letter From the Prince of Timbuctoo to Silas E. Burrows.

This remarkable incident is told in a few rough notes in Burrows' own handwriting—in which he states that he has lost the correspondence relating to the matter—and by a letter from Isaac T. Bragg, a professor of penmanship, to whom was entrusted the work of preparing, as a present to Mr. Burrows from the Greeks of New York, an engrossed resolution of thanks.

A curious and pathetic story that appears to have never before been made public is told by three sheets of paper that are pinned together and were evidently carefully preserved by Burrows. They were written in 1828, the year following the Greek episode, and throw much additional light on his character as a philanthropist.

It appears that Abdallah Rahahman, a powerful Prince of the Ethiopians of Timbuctoo, lost his children and was heart-broken at their absence. After a long search he learned that they had been stolen by Arab slave-dealers, who sold them to those who trafficked in human lives and sent them in ships to America.

Nothing daunted by the distance or the almost utter hopelessness of his search, the black scion of a noble race took passage to a portion of the globe that was strange to him and landed in New York.

Through the interest taken by influential people his search for his loved ones was facilitated, and he eventually found them slaves on a Southern plantation. Then, to his chagrin and despair, he found that to regain them he must pay the high price put upon the children by the men who held them in bondage, and that his resources, depleted by his long and expensive journey, would not meet the emergency.

In his extremity he appealed again to those who had befriended him in New York. Mr. Burrows, hearing of the matter, promptly subscribed $100 toward the purchase price of the children. With the money he sent the following letter:

MAY 24, 1828.

Abdallah Rahahman, Prince of Timbuctoo—SIR: Inclosed is $100 to assist in purchasing the freedom of your children. When this is accomplished I hope you will return to your native land with all your family, possessing grateful feelings toward the people of the United States, who, inheriting unavoidably your countrymen as servants, are gratified in extending relief and liberating from servitude all those whose situation can be improved by the change.

As this no doubt applies to your family, we all unite in securing their emancipation, and when the same can truly be said in relation to your countrymen that you leave behind, be assured the sons of liberty will agree in making it universal.

Accept of my best wishes for your future happiness. SILAS E. BURROWS.

The reply of the black prince was in Ethiopian characters, and translated reads as follows:

WASHINGTON, June 5, 1828.

Mr. Burrows—DEAR SIR: I received the $100 which you sent to me, and I thank you kindly. I received it the 4th of June. I shall come to New York in a short time and inquire where you live. Though I never saw you in this world, I am much obliged to you a thousand times. This will help me a good deal to buy my children. I have five sons and eight grandchildren.

ABDALLAH RAHAHMAN,
son of Abrahim, of the City of Sumboo, County of Toota Sallo.

Chronologically the next story of Burrows' philanthropy that the papers tell is that of his princely generosity to ex-President James Monroe. This incident must have occurred in 1829 or prior to that time, for among the papers is a queer little four-page pamphlet printed in Philadelphia on March 25, 1829, entitled "Annals of Liberality, Generosity, Public Spirit, etc." It is signed plain "Hamilton," and the author in his preface says:

"It is the intention of the compiler of these annals to continue them occasionally as long as he lives should materials be furnished; and although the present is in a certain sense 'the Golden Age,' of which the 'besetting sin' is the 'auri sacra fames,' yet instances of exalted liberality and munificence frequently occur, and shall be put on record if those who possess a knowledge of them will only take a small degree of trouble to communicate them for the purpose of exciting, by force of example, a spirit worthy of this enlightened age and this thrice-blessed country."

Among a score of paragraphs relating to gifts to charity and legacies donated to needy and deserving purposes appears this:

"S. E. Burrows Esq. of New York deposited in bank $1200 to the credit of the ex-President Monroe to pay a sum of money due, and to prevent the sale of his estate."

Letters in the collection refer to the same matter and make it appear that the ex-President had through frequent reverses fallen into such a financial state that a mortgage on his property was about to be foreclosed and leave him penniless. Burrows heard of the matter, and without solicitation placed the unfortunate ex-chief executive out of danger of penury for at least the time being.

Then came a time when Burrows went through that bitter experience that at some period or other falls to the lot of most men—the day of misfortune and the neglect or refusal of those who should to reach out a helping hand to remember that they once were eager to honor him.

From 1833 to 1840 there seems to have been a turn in Burrows' fortunes, judging from the tone of letters he wrote to others, and in 1841 he was reduced, according to his own statements, to almost poverty. The man who had been a public benefactor was compelled to become a suppliant for a public office in order to keep his family from want.

In a letter to President John Tyler he tells his pitiful tale and throws light on the cause of his misfortunes, as well as bringing to light other deeds that the foregoing letters make no mention of.

He desired to be appointed Consul to Liverpool, at that time worth $40,000 a year, and was indorsed by many of the prominent men of the day. Extracts from his letters to President Tyler, written in Washington, where he had gone to plead his cause, follow:

"* * * My situation is one of such painful character that I can no longer remain here, and I cannot leave without stating my real situation to the President, painful and heartrending as it is to me.

"You have seen, sir, in the Richmond Whig and in the Enquirer, the united feelings expressed by all parties in Virginia toward me. To know that I am in want has opened the kindest feelings of the heart among her citizens.

"In the changing revolutions of this life the heart and hand that were once so ready to act have become palsied and this through no fault of mine. My home, where are concentrated all those ties now dear to me, must in a few days be broken up, unless the President remembers me in his kindness before I leave this city.

"I have arrested the hand of the destroyer and really have not fortitude enough to go to New York and see my home broken up and my children scattered. A dread of this has prolonged my stay in Washington. The wife of my heart, who, when living, sustained me in my troubles, was placed by the side of Colonel Monroe in his vault the 28th of March last, leaving me with six children. I have not fortitude sufficient to sustain me in seeing those things once my dear wife's pass away into the possession of others, and the appointment to Liverpool would save all.

"* * * Colonel Monroe was not the only distinguished son of Virginia whom I have met in life when my aid was required to add to his comforts. General Harrison knew and realized what my feelings and intentions were and in the Enquirer of this date the President will see what was my conduct to him in a 'land of strangers.' He, too, filled the high station now held by yourself and had he lived I should not have been compelled to pain the President with this recital nor to have obtained the names of others to aid my application. If the spirits of Monroe and Harrison can influence the decision of the President I feel secure.

"* * * I have been greatly injured by the Russian Government in loaning them nearly $60,000. This was the origin of my difficulties, and I have felt too indignat at their treatment of me to complain to any one. If the President should be pleased to send me to Liverpool I have no doubt the Russians will do me justice, but if I am deserted by my own country how can I expect to be remembered by a foreign nation? * * *"

Among the hundreds of letters addressed to the President on Burrows' behalf were indorsements from Colonel John Sutterford, acting Governor of Virginia; Benjamin Harrison, afterward President of the United States; Congressman George B. Carey of Virginia, General Erastus Root; General Van Rensselaer; L. S. Ives, Episcopal Bishop of North Carolina; Congressmen F. Mellory and Brooke of Virginia, Judges of the Supreme Court of Virginia; John H. Pleasants, editor of the Richmond Whig, and others.

Apparently Burrows did not receive the coveted appointment, for the autograph letters from these distinguished personages were returned, and he soon afterward sailed for Montevideo, South America, where he still had some interests, and of his life there the letters reveal little beyond the fact that he engaged in one of the periodical revolutions that shook the country. A letter from Mrs. L. H. Sigourney, the celebrated authoress, who was an intimate friend of Burrows, referred to the rigors of war that he is then undergoing and expresses hope that he will get safely through the campaign.

The soldier of fortune apparently retrieved his financial condition to some extent in the South American republic, for he returned to New York, and appears to have been again in affluent circumstances, judging from a letter written to President-elect General Zachary Taylor in 1848, of which a copy was preserved.

He states that he is about to sail for St. Petersburg in his own yacht, a vessel of eighty tons, and that he is carrying important state dispatches.

Burrows apparently made friends in the European courts he visited, for a printed letter from Minister of Foreign Affairs Stierneld of Sweden, dated January 19, 1849, speaks of the high esteem in which the American is held by the King. The letter reads:

STOCKHOLM, Jan. 19, 1849.

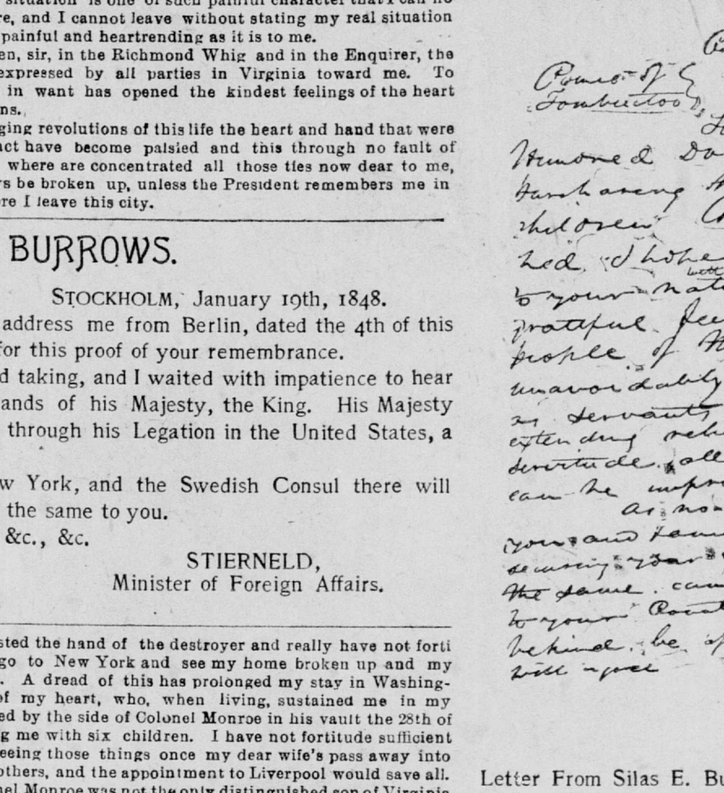
Sir: I have just received the letter which you had the kindness to address me from Berlin, dated the 4th of this month, and I hasten to have the honor of tendering you my sincere thanks for this proof of your remembrance.

When you left Sweden I was wholly ignorant of the route you intended taking, and I waited with impatience to hear of you, that I might be enabled to address you, and to execute the commands of his Majesty, the King. His Majesty desires, sir, as a mark of high esteem and regard for you, to send you, through his legation in the United States, a souvenir of your visit to his capital.

The present will be sent next spring by the first opportunity to New York, and the Swedish Consul will inform you of its arrival, and the legation will have the honor of presenting the same to you.

Accept, sir, the assurances of my most distinguished consideration, etc. etc., STIERNELD, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

To Silas E. Burrows Esq.



Letter From Silas E. Burrows to the Prince of Timbuctoo.

KING OF SWEDEN'S GIFT TO BURROWS.

STOCKHOLM, January 19th, 1848.

SIR: I have just received the letter which you had the kindness to address me from Berlin, dated the 4th of this month, and I hasten to have the honor of tendering you my sincere thanks for this proof of your remembrance.

When you left Sweden I was wholly ignorant of the route you intended taking, and I waited with impatience to hear of you, that I might be enabled to address you, and to execute the commands of his Majesty, the King. His Majesty desires, sir, as a mark of his high esteem and regard for you, to send you, through his Legation in the United States, a souvenir of your visit to his Capital.

The present will be sent next Spring by the first opportunity to New York, and the Swedish Consul there will inform you of its arrival, and the Legation will have the honor of presenting the same to you.

Accept, sir, the assurances of my most distinguished considerations, &c., &c.

STIERNELD,
Minister of Foreign Affairs.

To SILAS E. BURROWS, Esq.

The Last Hold-Up on Silver Ridge. A Stirring Tale of Early California.

It had been a long, hard day for the little schoolteacher, and after the pupils had gone she sat for fully half an hour at her desk, her head resting wearily upon one dimpled hand, the lashes of her big, blue eyes shading the rounded cheeks below them. She was good to look upon, this toiler in the educational cause, whom fate or chance, or whatever else you choose to call it, had sent to the wilds of a picturesque county in the northern part of California. Very good indeed to look upon, but just now observed by nothing more appreciative than a bushy-tailed squirrel, poised alert upon the doorstep, with inquisitive eyes turned toward the solitary figure in its neat, print gown, with a bit of bright ribbon at the throat, and a small, dusty shoe, decidedly the worse for wear, at the hem.

Coyote Canyon was drowsy with the heat of a summer afternoon. Upon one side of it, to the east of a rough road, perched the schoolhouse, not unlike a large-sized cracker-box. A shaft of golden sunlight from the west, slanting inward at the open door, finally reached to the fair head above the desk, where it caught a glint of its own color amid the smooth, shining braids. The girl stirred and drew toward her a pile of examination papers, scrawled over almost illegibly by scholars new to their task, as indeed the majority of them were, the school having been established only since the beginning of that term.

Suddenly a shadow blotted out the light. A tall figure stood on the spot whence, at its approach, the squirrel had leaped in swift alarm, and a voice started the occupant of the room. It was a musical voice, such as one hears but seldom excepting in the throats of mountain people, whose lungs are fed by pure mountain air; and something in its tones seemed to vibrate in the girl's ears after it had ceased speaking.

"Don't be frightened," the intruder said, answering the question in her wide-open eyes by a smile that disclosed white, even teeth. His bearded face was strong and handsome, perhaps a half dozen years older than her own, with the courage in it that women are quick to recognize and to like. A thin line of red trickled from his left temple and stained the handkerchief knotted at his neck. The girl rose nervously when she saw it.

"I only want a drink of water," he explained, "if you will be so good as to give it to me or tell me where to find it."

For a few seconds she hesitated, her eyes fixed on his. Whatever doubt she may have felt vanished before his answering gaze.

"You are hurt," she said gently.

"It is scarcely more than a scratch," he replied. "A hunter mistook me for game in the brush yonder, and, as luck would have it, he was a poor shot."

"Sit here at my desk," she said with piquant authority. "I am not much of a surgeon, but I will do what I can for you."

In a moment she had filled a basin with clear, sparkling water from the spring back of the cabin and brought a towel. Neither spoke while she deftly bathed his forehead and from between the leaves of a tattered geography took a square of courtplaster, divided it into small strips and applied them to the cut on his forehead.

When she had finished he rose and looked down at her from his height of six feet.

"Nobody was ever so kind to me before," he said, "and I shall not forget your goodness, Miss—"

"Miss Hunt."

He bowed and left her. The girl went back to her work, and in the cooler dusk locked the door and walked the mile that lay between her and the farmhouse where she boarded. She did not know that from the gloom of the scrub oaks, madrones and manzanitas behind her a pair of brown eyes watched her eagerly until she had disappeared, and a heart that had known no throb of affection since his boyhood went longingly out to her in the gathering darkness.

A few mornings thereafter she found a handful of ferns and wild flowers tied to the knob of the schoolhouse door when she reached it. They were bound together with grasses and bore no message, but she guessed who had placed them there, and knew that he must have walked miles to find the blossoms, for the heat had parched all flowers not sheltered from the sun. It was pleasant to be remembered by some one in her isolated life. She sang snatches of a merry song as she arranged the flowers, and when every two or three days thereafter she found other offerings like them awaiting her, she wondered when she would see him again.

It was not until she was detained by the usual monthly examination papers that he came. She started up at his footstep, but this time with a blush and shy welcome. Presently they were chatting like old friends. It seemed as though they had known each other always. So quickly does love find its way, even though it be thousands of feet above the wide Pacific's level.

"She wondered when she would see him again."

He was a rancher, he told her, and would have come to see her sooner but that his presence before the children might embarrass her. For the same reason he declined to accompany her home. And the summer faded all too quickly into the fall, while the rough-board shanty in Coyote Canyon, gilded with love's strangely glorifying radiance, became a bower of happiness.

Once he asked if she were not afraid to go home alone. She laughed, all the dimples in her face playing hide-and-seek with each other.

"Of course not," she answered lightly. "Nothing ever happens in the canyon. But I shouldn't care to go as far north as Silver Ridge. Mr. Haskins and his wife were telling me last night at supper about the stage robberies there, five of them in the last two years, but not one has taken place since I came here. They say everybody thinks it is the work of one man and perhaps he has given up in disgust, for not once has he secured any money. You see he never happened to hold up the stage on the trip that carries the coin to the mines to pay off the men else he would have made a haul of several thousand dollars. Mr. Haskins says next payday is to be a heavier one than usual—the stage goes up on the 10th—and they ought to take extra precautions. Just fancy how frightened I would have been if such a thing had occurred when I crossed the ridge in that lumbering old mud coach, for I was the only passenger. Imagine a fierce highway robber, mask and all, poking a loaded gun in at me and saying: 'Young lady, your money or your life!'"

The canyon echoed her merry laugh, but her companion did not smile.

"Maybe he isn't quite as bad as you think, Babe," he said gravely. "I am told that it's the Wells-Fargo box he is after, and he has never yet molested a passenger."

Little Miss Hunt shrugged her shoulders as she tied on her hat.

"What is the difference between robbing a company and an individual. Fred? I say it is thievery, whichever way you look at it, and the man is a criminal. But why are you so serious to-day?" she questioned, smiling mischievously up into his sunburned face. "Haven't I promised to stay all through vacation, just for your sake! And since you don't think a ranch life is good enough for me, haven't I said I would teach until you could provide another home?"

He caught her in his arms and kissed her.

"You are an angel, Babe," he said earnestly. "Now listen. There is a good prospect that I will sell the ranch in a few days, and then we'll leave this part of the country forever. The school term closes on the 10th. Meet me here that afternoon. We will make all the arrangements for going away early next morning, will get married at the county seat and then go down to the bay and begin our happy life together. Is it a bargain, sweetheart?"

The girl reached up on tiptoe to kiss him.

"It is a bargain," she repeated. "Good-by until the 10th."

* * * * * * * *

A heavy rain had washed down the sides of the canyon and clouds scurried overhead. The schoolhouse door was barred inside and the girl bounded eagerly forward, to slip the bolt at sound of a well-known knock. Her lover put her gently away from him as he closed the door.

"Don't touch me, Babe," he said huskily, "I'm not the man you think I am, and I've come to make a clean breast of it. You must brace up, little girl, for what I have to say will be ugly news for you to hear. For God's sake, don't look at me like that. It cuts me like a knife to hurt you, but the sooner it's over with the better. I played a desperate game to win you, and I've lost. I'll make the miserable story as short as I can.

"When I was 16 my mother died. My father was a stern, cruel man, and I ran away from what was a cheerless home. I came West, and have knocked about at one thing or another ever since, always making an honest living, but a couple of years ago I had a run of hard luck and began to get reckless. There was no one to care. Then I saw you, and from that day I loved the very ground that your dear little feet touched. I had no home to offer you, nor a dollar I could begin to save for you."

"But you were going to sell the ranch, Fred?"

"That was all a lie. There was no ranch to sell. I have deceived you in everything except my great love for you. Babe, I am the man who has robbed the stage at Silver Ridge."

The girl leaned against the wall with a low cry. Not trusting himself to look at her he went on, trying to steady his voice.

"The first time I stopped the stage I was hungry—starving, in fact—and after that it seemed as easy a way as any to try to get on my feet again. Then you came and I realized what a life I was drifting into. I resolved never again to do anything unworthy of your confidence. But all the while I was planning how I could get a start in life that would enable us to marry, and when you in your innocence spoke of the money the stage would carry to-day some devil kept whispering in my ear to try my luck; that the company could better stand the loss than I could to give you up. Well, three of the passengers followed me and cornered me. I gave over the coin—I've never made anything but a failure of the whole despicable business—and begged them to let me keep my appointment with you. They're outside now. I'll not ask you to forgive me yet, but sometimes, when you think of a convict who still dares to love you, though he is not worth your slightest thought, perhaps—"

"The five faced each other in the twilight."

His voice choked and he moved toward the door, but the girl was there before him, opening it upon three waiting figures.

"Will you please come in?" she said in a clear, sweet voice. When the five faced each other in the twilight she stepped to her lover's side and laid her hand upon his arm.

"Gentlemen," she continued, "I love this man better than my life. He has told me everything. In a way, I am directly responsible for what has happened to-day, for it was in order to get the means for us to marry that he resorted to this crime. The money he has restored to you. I beg of you to let him go, on my word of honor that we leave this place immediately, never to return."

"My dear young woman," spoke one of her audience, "we appreciate your feelings, but this man—"

"Has done wrong for my sake," she interposed quickly. "And what is the benefit to you or to any one if he goes to prison for it? It will ruin his career and break my heart." The tears, brimming up, filled the blue eyes and bathed the soft cheeks in a shower.

One of the group stepped forward after a silence broken only by her sobbing.

"Deuce take me, boys, if I don't think we'd better let him off, and give him a chance to reform, although I don't go much on reformations myself. I know well enough that it isn't exactly the thing to do. I'm a Justice of the Peace—"

A pair of small hands clasped his arm and a tear-stained face smiled into his.

"Oh!" said a tremulous, eager voice. "Then you can marry us right here. All you need tell any one is that you found the box somewhere, you know. Gentlemen," she added, with a brave attempt at gayety, "I invite you to be guests at my wedding!"

And in the deepening twilight the solemn words were spoken.

* * * * * * *

That was years ago. There is a gray-headed Judge in San Francisco who has changed his opinion on the subject of reformation. And a friend of his, blessed with a charming wife whose head is scarcely so high as her husband's shoulder, is a business man of considerable standing in the same community. Bradstreet rates him A1, and Bradstreet, I take it, is rather good authority.

LILLIAN FERGUSON.

A $20,000,000 Fraud.

"I hate to shatter a pet delusion by giving the facts in the case," said a former clerk in the Treasury Department at Washington to a New York Sun reporter, "but fraud ought to be exposed, regardless of consequences, and the greatest fraud I know of is the famous 'bridal package' of the Treasury vaults.

"I say famous; but it isn't famous in a general sense. It is famous only among bridal couples. I don't know how it is, but every bridal couple that go to Washington on their wedding tour—and it seems to me that about nine-tenths of the bridal couples of the country go to Washington—know all about that package, and the bride can't rest until she goes through the regular routine connected with it. No visit to Washington by a stranger is complete without an inspection of the treasury vaults; but if his or her visit is a nonbridal one the fraud of the package isn't played on them.

"I don't know who it was in the department that first imposed it on a bridal pair, but it went, and it grows in popularity every year. When the couple enter the vault the man in charge, after a few preliminary and perfunctory remarks, reaches up on a shelf, takes down a package of notes, and tells the bride to take it in her hand, if she hasn't asked for it the very first thing. He then tells her that the package contains $20,000,000 in treasury notes, all in denominations of $10,000 each. The bride is delighted, of course, and when she goes back home she talks for weeks about having held $20,000,000 in her hand all at one time. The bridegroom can't resist enjoying the same pleasure, and he fondles the package a while, and the pair go away blissful over the experience, while the treasury-vault man tosses the package back on the shelf and chuckles.

"Now this is all simply a gigantic fraud on the young people. The treasury at Washington does not hold that amount of money. The bulk of the Government money is at the sub-treasury in this city. That 'bridal package' is a gay deceiver. It does contain notes to the amount of $20,000,000, of the denomination of $10,000 each, but they're not money, because they're not signed. So, instead of having held in their hands $20,000,000, the happy couple have fondled simply a package that represented no more value than the price of the paper and the printing on it. It may be cruel to shatter this pretty delusion, but my conscience forbids me to carry the burden of its concealment any longer. Hence these facts."

Bismarck and the Emperor.

Bismarck, who had worn himself out in the service of Germany and of his Emperor, rarely referred to his labors for the Fatherland. One morning he and the Emperor William were riding together in the park. They had not gone far when Bismarck complained of fatigue. The Emperor, who was quite fresh, said somewhat testily:

"How is that though I am an older man than yourself, prince, I can always outride you?"

Bismarck's reply was as reproachful as it was epigrammatic.

"Ah, sire," he said, "the rider always outlasts the horse."—Youth's Companion.