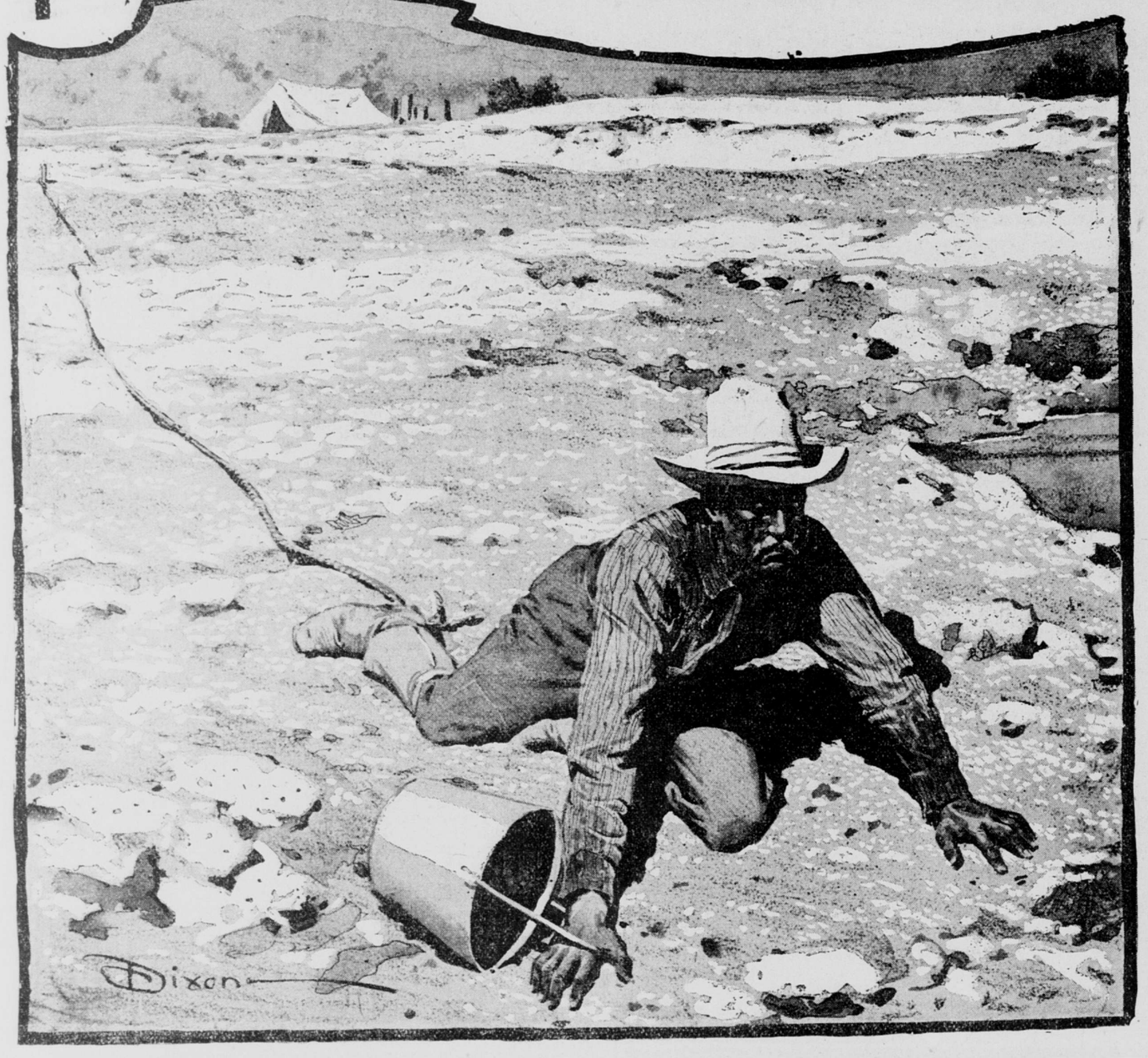
THE ROMANCE OF A LAND SWINDLE

BY CUTHBERT BARMBY. . .



HE REACHED THE STREAM-BED, AND CIRCLING ROUND, FELT IN VAIN FOR THE TINKLING STREAM. . . . . .

THE two English inhabitants of the city of San Pablo, George Fugard and Percy Hodgson, were celebrating Christmas eve of the year 188— in the principal building of the city. The native population, rural police, Custom-house official, postmaster and representative of the Mexican Government had already celebrated and lay drunk and asleep in the only other building visible in the city, hugging an empty spirit bottle to his breast.

The room was a large one. Its contents were numerous, miscellaneous and in chaotic confusion; the only articles clearly definable being the common chairs on which the men were sitting, the bare pinewood table on which the lamp, bottles and glasses rested, a camp bed in one corner from which the blankets had been hastily pulled to cover the windows, and two gayly colored lithographic maps on the wall. The other miscellany piled about the floor in all directions was only a confused, entangled jumble of things abandoned and cast aside, vaguely suggestive of surveying, farming, mining, colonization—incapable of segregation and mutely telling of impracticability and failure.

The two bright spots in this comfortless room were the maps on the wall. They were very attractive, especially the larger one, with its elaborately flourished and decorated title, "The City of San Pablo Property of the Anglo-Mexican Happy Land Company." This map was indeed a work of art; a beautiful plan of a huge and prosperous city, with banks, churches, schools, parks, plazas, boulevards; a mighty pier, and a harbor thronged with vessels and surrounded by smoking factories. The crudely printed words, "Percy Hodgson, Agent," which had been stamped in one corner of this map, were the only blemish on its otherwise perfect surface.

The other map, though nearly as large, was drawn on a much smaller scale, and the city of San Pablo occupied only an eighth of a square inch on its southern border, while near the northern border, and calculating by the scale some hundred miles away, lay another city, San Pedro by name, and between these two points lay a country of apparently surpassing richness.

"Well, young 'un, who are you murdering?" It was the elder of the men who broke the silence.

"I'm going to cut this, George—don't care if I never get a cent—can't stand it. By the way, have I wished you a blooming merry Christmas?"

"Stow it, will you? Nothing funny or clever in being profane. What's the matter with your lamp? Believe it's got the malarial jim-jams, like poor old Earl."

"What do you mean? What's wrong with Earl?"

"Oh, nothing. Didn't I tell you? Indian swine came into store to-day. Said there was something wrong up there. Toiled up to his patch this afternoon. Found he'd shot himself by accident because he was too doocid happy. That's all. We've got a Christmas burying party on for to-morrow, young 'un."

"Have you told Sanchez?"

"No. Found him lying drunk in his room when I got back. Been celebrating. He'll be all right to-morrow, though, to act as coroner and take possession on behalf of the Government. Celebrate again to-morrow night on the proceeds, unless he bursts from importance in the meanwhile."

"Poor old Earl. Give that whisky a shove, will you?"

The two men puffed at their pipes for some time in silence. Then the younger said:

"Done anything at the store to-day?"

"You bet. Sold all the whisky I had, save that bottle Sanchez stole, to those poor devils of Indians on a strictly credit basis. Sold 10 cents' worth of beans as well."

There was silence again, which the elder man broke again by saying:

"What was that you said about cutting it, young 'un?"

"I'm off for San Pedro to-morrow. I swear it."

"How are you going? In a balloon?"

"Foot it, I suppose, but I'm going."

"Going to leave me stranded here with that devil Sanchez?"

"No. You're coming too."

"And leave the Broncers? No. By —— I won't."

"By Jove! I forgot them. Wonder why they haven't been down. I say, think of Earl. Do you suppose—?"

"No, not yet. Look here. Forgot. Indian brought this in three days ago. Another sale on the credit system. Poor silly devils!"

Fugard handed a note to his companion. It ran as folows:

"Valle del Diablo.

"Dear Fugard: Please send by bearer some quinine, a few pounds of powder and shot, a shovel, an iron pan (basin shape), a gardener's line and some beans. Have you had any rain? None here. Cattle all dead but three. Don't like look of Unky. Wish to G—— there was a woman here. We are camping by the Arroyo. Believe I have struck it rich; if so, home's the word at last. Trust me once more like a good chap, or come and take a cow. Hope we shall be in to wish you a—well, Christmas of sorts. Have you any nitric acid? If so, send some. W. BRONCER."

The young man kept his eyes fixed on this note for a long time, and, when at length he spoke, it was with twitching lip and unsteady voice.

"What a queer chap you are, George, bottling this thing up! Why did you do it?"

"Because, young 'un"—and Fugard put a kindly hand on his friend's shoulder—"because I don't see the way out, and—well, you've kicked yourself enough over the wretched business. Poor old Percy! It ain't all jam being a swindling company's agent, is it?"

"But I swear, George——"

"Yes, yes. We know all about that. You were swindled, too. I——"

"On my honor, George, I didn't——"

"You didn't know. All right, all right; don't excite yourself. I should hope you didn't, indeed. Well, well, never mind. No, no, you're not to blame, sonny. You little beast, Percy, you're snivelling! Here, take some whisky; ought to be ashamed of yourself. Wish I could snivel like that, though; must be relieving. What was that? Santa Claus knocking at the door, by Jove!" and Fugard, giving his friend a final kindly pat on the shoulder, walked to the outside door, and, opening it, let a flood of daylight and a cloud of wind-blown sand into the room.

A stern-faced, well-dressed man stood on the doorstep, and close by was a spring wagon with its wheels buried halfway up to the hubs in the fine white sand of the sandhill on which the company's office stood.

"Is this the city of San Pablo?" asked the stranger.

"That's what. This and that shanty over there," answered Fugard. "A bit sandy, isn't it?" he added, as a sudden cloud of sand blinded the stranger's eyes.

"And is that the bay?" asked the newcomer when he could see again, pointing to a vast expanse of sandbanks bisected by a narrow channel of water and stretching miles and miles to a distant line of sea.

"That's what," answered Fugard again.

"Thank you. Here is my card, and I want to see Mr. Hodgson," said the stranger, gravely.

Fugard took the card. Then his bitter voice grew menacing as he said: "See here, Mr. Sneath of London, you're going to step right up into that wagon and get—to Gehenna if you like; but you don't stay here to eat your heart out while I'm around. You're a colonist, ain't you?"

"No."

"You've bought a magnificent cattle ranch in London, haven't you?"

"No."

Fugard looked at the man as though he were a monstrosity. Then he said, "Well, then, what in thunder brings you here?"

"I want to see Mr. Hodgson. Is he here?"

"Yes. He's in there, irrigating his inside. Walk in. You're a phenomenon, Mr. Sneath, and I congratulate you on it. All right, I'll attend to your horses. I see you've brought your own feed. That's lucky. Not a straw to be had in the whole city, and our nags expired in trying to accommodate themselves to the circumstances. Step right in."

The stranger did so.

After nearly an hour of gentle, steady work, Fugard left the horses with a caressing pat and made his way to the office again. He paused for a moment on the doorstep and said: "Percy waxeth eloquent to the stranger." Then he entered.

"I tell you, sir, it was a cruel shame, an outrage, to send those fellows out here."

"Hear, hear," said Fugard.

"Glad you've come in, George," said the boy, as he excitedly strode up and down on the debris-strewn floor. "I've just been telling Mr. Sneath about the Broncers. The company's busted, George. The whole thing's a swindle. Sir Richard Welcher is in quod, and Mr. Sneath has come out on behalf of the shareholders—the widows and orphans—to settle things up, and take over the assets."

"Take over the assets," echoed Fugard. "That's good."

"I have a letter for the Broncers," said Sneath. "How long have they been here?"

"Oh, about forty—I mean about two years," answered Percy.

"But why did they stay?" pursued Sneath.

"You don't know Willie Broncer," answered Percy again somewhat feebly.

"Come, come, sir," said Sneath, "it is an unfortunate case, certainly, but it seems to me that you gentlemen take it almost morbidly to heart. After all, you are not responsible for—"

"No; but you see we have watched them making their fight for it," interrupted Fugard, quietly. "Come out and see the city by moonlight, will you? See that big mountain over there with the moon perched on its camel back? The Broncers' ranch is five miles behind that. Quite a drive, eh?"

Then, running back to the door, he pushed in the dog which had followed him, saying as he did so: "There's company for you, young 'un. Good-by, and leave that whisky alone, will you?" Then he slammed the door. Left alone, Percy Hodgson filled his glass and emptied it many times as he sat in brooding dejection. The dog roamed uneasily about the room, and— Did the lad sleep? Did he dream? Well—

Only a trickle of water remained in the ruddy-colored bed of the Arroyo del Diablo to reflect the burning thirsty rays of a cloudless December sun, although, according to precedent, the stream should have been madly rushing and swirling between those parched up banks, still lined with the debris left by the torrent of more than a year ago. In the bed of this well nigh dried up stream a man was working with feverish energy. On the bank of the stream, some fifty yards away, stood a much patched tent and beside it a farm wagon; two mules, with pinched up bellies, protruding ribs and fore feet hobbled were visible in the nearer distance as they moved to and fro with that kangaroo-like movement which hobbling engenders. High up to the west, three miles away and divided from the stream by many a rugged gulch, stood the crazy Diablo ranch house, its white-washed, sun-bathed boards gleaming brightly through the dancing transparency, and far away behind it again rose the towering camel-backed mountain, the largest of all the threatening fantastic volcanic monsters which completely surrounded the landscape. Not a tree was visible—not a patch of green; nothing but a cheerless, sun-cracked broken waste of bowlder-strewn reddish soil, with here and there a sapless, blackened shrub, or a patch of dull gray brushwood, or the gleam on the bones of a long dead beast, or the sheen on a swollen hide yet to be picked by yonder carrion birds.

Hour after hour the man plodded on at his work, his mouth firmly set and the perspiration steadily dripping from his face and standing out in beads on the gray-flecked hair on his temples. He had dammed the stream some yards above him, and had conducted the accelerated current to the place where he was working, and his labor consisted in filling a large iron basin with the red soil dug from the banks and swaying it gently to and fro as the water played on it with an even, rocking motion, until all the soil was washed away. It was wonderful, exhilarating! No matter where he plunged his shovel, the loosened soil fairly glittered with shining metal, and the worker, as he toiled in the sun, filled a huge, bulging sack with great knobs of shining gold, until the banks of the stream were punctured in a hundred places by his miniature excavations, and the bed of the stream was littered with glistening fragments. It was plain from the man's frantic exertions that he was working against time, and though his tall spare frame and muscular arms showed no sign of strain or tiring, the drawn and driven expression on his deeply lined handsome face was repulsive in its intensity.

At length, when the sun had sunk behind the hills and a vapor was beginning to rise from the stream, he dropped his tools, and picking up a gardener's line measured out a square which included all his workings, marking out each corner with a heap of bowlders. Then, lifting up the sack as though it were a feather, he ran headlong to the tent.

On a cot inside the tent a man was lying, muttering to himself and ceaselessly chewing the blanket which partially covered him. One of his feet was swathed up in an old horsecloth, and fever shone in his eyes and burned on his puffed ghastly face. Up to this cot the laborer strode, and taking the burning hand of the sufferer cried exultingly:

"Can you start for home to-morrow, Unky? Home, Unky! Home at last!"

"Home! Home! Never again, never again," echoed back from the dusk-enshrouded bed, the whisper falling hoarse and strange on the evening stillness.

Passing a hand across his forehead, the laborer took a stable lamp from the floor, and, lighting it, gazed long and earnestly in the sick man's face with unspeakable dread in his own. Then, putting down the lantern, he filled a capsule with quinine, and, tenderly raising the lolling bald head, said:

"Is the pain very bad? Here, take this. That's right. Can you eat some beans?"

But the sick man, feebly shaking his head, dropped to the pillow again, fixed his eyes vacantly on the tent-roof, and beat with his hands on the cot.

Leaving his side, the laborer quietly busied himself in preparation for the morrow's departure. Not a tremor in his voice betrayed the patient, hopeless suffering which his face expressed, as he chatted blithely on of the home-coming in store and the well-loved faces so soon to be seen again; and as he worked, unconsciously gripping each thing he touched with the full force of his hands, his eyes ever wandered to a species of altar by the side of his own cot, consisting of a packing barrel, round the top of which a mantelpiece border, once, no doubt, a masterpiece of feminine achievement, but now faded and tattered, had been ruthlessly nailed, and on which was enthroned the single photograph of a girl, whose trusting, steadfast eyes followed his regarding gaze, no matter whence directed. And always as his eyes met hers a flood of hopeless bitterness seemed to shine from their depths, and the lines seemed to deepen round his mouth.

Often he went to his cot, and smoothing the pillow with womanly tenderness, or holding water to the dried-up lips said, "Home, Unky, Home." Once he shook some of the contents of the sack which he had carried into his wide-brimmed hat, and held it before the sufferer's eye, but looking suddenly into the hat himself he saw its contents were black as night, and rushing across the tent, he hurled the hat through the gaping flap out into the darkness. Then, going to the little table by the tent-pole on which the lantern stood, he took from its drawer a paper bag of powder and some shot, and loaded a rusty gun with suggestive deliberation. Leaving the bag open on the table, he went to the occupied cot, wrung the ceaselessly beating hand, and, turning, knelt for a moment before the young girl's photograph. Then blowing out the lamp he threw himself on his cot.

The restless hands beat ceaselessly on. The trickle of the vapor-spread stream sounded loud in the outer stillness, and the famished roar of a mountain lion roaming the rocky fastnesses echoed round the hills, and mournfully moaned itself into silence, and the beaming moon shone placidly on, on, on, as though it were fixed forever. Then an indistinct muttering arose on the night and struck on the listener's ear—a muttering of fragments without sense or sequence, which gradually rose to a frenzied shriek, and, arresting his beating heart, caused him to leap from his cot. He struck a match, and fumbled as he bent over the lantern on the table, but his hands trembled so that the match went out, and, as he cast it, glowing, aside, a mighty hissing flame leapt out from the table and lit up the tent for a moment with its blinding light. There was the sound of a crashing fall, and the air was charged with a suffocating smoke, but the frenzied voice never ceased to rave and babble to the silent night.

The moonlight waned, and the sun peeped up from behind the hills and glanced through the wide open mouth of the tent on the form of a black-skinned devil or man as he sat on the floor within. He was listening to the raving voice, and rapidly striking match after match from a box which he held in his hand, then cursing them and throwing them flaming away. Taking the last remaining match from the box, he struck it and held it downward until the flame burnt his fingers. Then the blank expression on his frightful, sightless face, was horrible to see. Dropping the box he gropingly crept to the place whence the raving came, and seizing a beating hand, cried:

"Unky, Unky! I have dropped a match into the gunpowder, and—" But, the voice raving on, he rose to his feet, and suddenly grasping the figure on the bed, raised it in his arms and shook it with fearful force, crying out, "Hold your cursed noise and listen, will you!" Then he dropped it again and said:

"Poor old Unky! What a beast I am!" and kneeling by the cot he sobbed aloud, as though in torturing pain. Then he crept to the place where the water had stood, and groping with trembling hands seized in his grasp the overturned pail and the gardener's line. Taking the line he tied its end to the tent pole and crept groaning and writhing from the tent, paying out the line as he went until the stick on which it was rolled was bare in his hands. Then pulling the line taut he scratched with his fingers in the sun-baked soil until his nails were broken and torn, and planted the stick in the hole so made. Guided by the line he crept back once more, and unfastening it from the tent pole tied it round his waist, grasped up the bucket and began to describe a sweeping circle over the uneven rocky ground. His journey occupied interminable time. But he reached the stream bed, and circling round strained the line to its fullest stretch, as he felt in vain for the singing, trickling stream. Then he tied the line to his foot, and lying flat on his face stretched out his hands, straining and striving until his arms seemed to crack and his body to stretch to an abnormal length. He touched the water and filled the bucket with a scream of joy, and turning commenced to crawl again on his endless, torturing way. He reached the tent and crept toward the raving voice. Then he arose to his feet, and feeling for the sufferer's head raised the bucket nearer, nearer, and it came up lightly—so lightly that he dropped the round bald head and fearfully plunged his arm into its depth. It was empty!

Incalculable time passed away, but the raving voice shrieked ever on and on in the tent, while a form like that of a tortured devil tied by a cord to a peg in the ground kept ever round and round outside, moving, ever moving in an endless dizzy circle, while the flame of undying reproach blazed from its sightless eyes. Faster and faster the motion became, until the figure seemed to fly in a maddening dizzy whirl.

"Percy! Percy! Percy!"

The form had risen, and was shrieking the name, waving its arms and gnashing its teeth in terrible denunciation, and even as it rose a short, squat, bald-headed form in pajamas, with frenzied shining eyes, appeared in the tent opening and madly laughed as it raised the rusty gun and drew a bead on the circling thing outside. There was a report, and the world seemed to rock and shake, and a thousand voices clamored in the air, and—

"Percy! Percy! Percy! Wake up, you drunken little devil, you! The Broncers have come and so has the rain. Wake up! By Jove, what a stink; your lamp has exploded, young 'un. Wake up, will you! Wonder this cur of mine didn't wake you; been yelling and whining like mad. Willie Broncer's discovery was nothing but mica. Sneath has brought a letter saying that their uncle's dead and has left them a pot of money. They are going home but are going to stand treat all round first. Pot of money, I tell you. Wake up, sonny; Unky's better." Fugard encircled the boy's shoulder with a kindly arm and dragged him from his chair.

"Do you believe in the value of fresh air?"

"I do, indeed. I spent a week in the mountains and it cost me $200.—Brooklyn Life.

CHARACTERS.

MRS. ROBBINS, president Vinculum Club.
MRS. TARBOX, MRS. GOVE, MRS. FORD, MRS. ROE, MRS. DOE, MISS SMITH, MRS JONES, MRS. STEELE, directors of the Vinculum Club.
MISS BROWN, member Vinculum Club.
SCENE: A meeting of the directors in clubhouse. (All are present except Mrs. Steele, Miss Brown and Mrs. Jones.)

* * *

Miss Smith—Of course, we fully appreciate Miss Brown's motives in presenting the resolutions—no one doubts them for an instant—but are they, the resolutions, in accord with the constitution?

Mrs. Ford—Of course they're unconstitutional.

Mrs. Gove—Why?

Mrs. Ford—Why—well—they're so unusual, you know.

(Enter Mrs. Jones.)

Mrs. Jones—Pardon my tardiness! I hope I haven't kept you waiting.

Mrs. Tarbox—The constitution distinctly says that the club shall not take part in any religious, political or charitable demonstration, and (triumphantly) if you can find anything under the sun that cannot be made to come under one of these three heads, I'd like to know of it.

Mrs. Jones—Will some one please explain? I was not present at the last meeting of the club.

Mrs. Robbins—At that meeting some resolutions were introduced by Miss Brown and adopted by the club. Mr. Baldin, who is largely interested in the Railroad Trust, is a candidate for President of the United States, and he has issued an order discharging several thousand women employes of the trust because they are not voters. By the resolutions adopted this club condemns his action and appeals to the 525 federated clubs, to the 22,000 women who compose the Daughters of the Revolution, and to various other organizations of women to do the same. This action of the club is intended to be a rebuke and to carry the same weight as public opinion.

Mrs. Jones (with a gasp)—What a startling proposition! It quite takes one breath away. How did the club ever come to adopt it?

Mrs. Tarbox—That's what we'd like to know. I think it took away the club's breath.

Mrs. Robbins (rapping)—The object of this meeting is to consider what is to be done—if anything can be done—in regard to the action of the club.

Mrs. Ford—Oh, it must be stopped, somehow.

Mrs. Gove—What for?

Mrs. Tarbox—It's not along the club lines. What do you think, Mrs. Doe?

Mrs. Doe (nervously)—I—I am not prepared to say. I expected Mrs. Steele would be here to-day.

Miss Smith—We must consider the matter conscientiously from all standpoints. Aside from the immediate question there is the precedent to be considered. We are here to serve the club and we must be fair to all.

Mrs. Roe—The plan seems to me to be Quixotic.

Mrs. Gove—In what way?

Mrs. Roe—Oh, well—because anything we haven't done before is always Quixotic.

Miss Smith—Ladies, there seems to be some doubt in regard to the purpose, or rather the effect of the resolutions. Miss Brown is waiting in the library—she thought you might like to question her in regard to her motives in introducing them. Suppose we ask her to tell us her views?

Mrs. Tarbox—Very well. Only, my mind is made up. (The others assent. Miss Smith leaves the room and returns with Miss Brown.)

Mrs. Robbins—At the request of the directory, Miss Brown, will you explain your reason for introducing the resolutions?

Miss Brown—The principal one was a desire to help those unfortunate women. A man may maintain that he has the right to employ whom he chooses. When, however, he discharges his employes, through no fault of theirs and from a purely selfish motive, he is guilty of an act which merits universal condemnation.

Mrs. Roe—Most of those women are Catholics, I am told. This makes the question come under the head of a religious demonstration, and it would be unconstitutional.

Mrs. Robbins—I am quite convinced that their belief concerns no one but themselves. Surely, you will all agree with me in dismissing the objection just made?

(The others smile. Mrs. Roe perceives her mistake and decides to smile with the majority).

Mrs. Tarbox—But—if their employer is a candidate for the Presidency and dismisses them, because they have no votes, then it's political; and we should be going against the constitution if we took it up.

Mrs. Gove—I cannot see anything political in it. Since they could not vote, even if they would, for their employer or any one else, it is certain that they have no part in politics.

Mrs. Ford—Isn't it a charity? These women are in need and we propose to assist them. I think that would make it come under the head of "charitable" and render it unconstitutional.

Miss Brown—They certainly are in need of—justice. But they are not paupers and none of them need become an object of charity if the women of America use this power which has been placed in their hands. It is a reproach not to use it for the cause of justice and humanity. A rebuke to one evil-doer would menace others. This club was formed for culture—it is a composite gentlewoman. Yet, because of this, is it to be exempt from duty? Should a gentlewoman refuse to lend her influence for the right? We are looked to as a leader among the women's clubs in this community. Noblesse oblige!

Mrs. Tarbox—It is so radical. It is not along the club lines.

Miss Brown—Who can foresee, infallibly, what lines will be best for a club or an individual? No one could foresee this power which federation has given into our hands. All power, whether the result of genius, position or wealth, brings its obligations. Some day an accounting will be required of you. You find this in your hands—a sacred trust. Is it to be used or discarded? In place of the scissors of former years a sword is given you.

Mrs. Doe—Gracious!

Mrs. Roe—Very poetical, but—a sword is so unladylike. (Shudders.)

Miss Brown—Yet you must admit that it is more efficacious than a pair of scissors.

Mrs. Tarbox—I agree with Mrs. Roe; it is not so ladylike.

Mrs. Roe—Besides, one can jab with the scissors—they're a prod.

Mrs. Doe—They can snip, too. I agree with Mrs. Roe, a sword is a barbarous weapon; entirely out of place in the hands of a lady.

Mrs. Jones (sighing)—As if we didn't have trouble enough already!

Miss Brown—My metaphor was most unfortunate, it seems; but it was only a metaphor—I withdraw it.

Mrs. Tarbox (to Miss Brown—It wouldn't have made any difference. The thing had to be stopped.

(-- pause.)

Mrs. Robbins—Have you anything more to say, Miss Brown?

Miss Brown (dejectedly)—Nothing.

Miss Smith—Wait a little. If we should make use of this power, Miss Brown, might we not be drawn into many things?

Miss Brown—Possibly. Of course, we should have to use discretion in regard to the causes advocated.

Mrs. Roe—We should be deluged with fads—simply deluged.

Miss Brown—Better a growth of fads should flourish—they are short-lived—than that one case of injustice should appeal in vain.

Mrs. Tarbox—We should be ridiculed. Goodness knows, we've had enough of that of late.

Miss Brown—Yes—because of a misunderstanding. It goes without saying that no one would believe that this club, alone, could wield an appreciable influence in this matter; but no one could doubt that the concerted action of the representative women of America, exerted through the Federated Clubs, would fail to have a marked effect.

Mrs. Tarbox—We have been laughed at for trying to do it—

Mrs. Gove—Alone.

Mrs. Roe (to Miss Brown)—We look at things so differently. Now, you are visionary, aren't you?

Miss Brown—I suppose I may be called so, for visions do descend upon me, sometimes.

Mrs. Roe—Well, I'm not. I'm always practical. Now, it seems to me that, should we decide to do this thing, we might be doing those women a real injury.

Mrs. Gove—In what way?

Mrs. Roe—Why, how do we know that each one of them, on account of losing her position, might not marry some good man and be nicely taken care of for the rest of her days?

(Enter Mrs. Steele.)

Mrs. Steele (she holds out a telegram)—It's all right! He's promised not to discharge them. Isn't it glorious! It was all our doing—that's what makes me so late. Owing to that newspaper notoriety about the resolutions—we deplored it so, too—they came to his ears and he sent this dispatch to a friend, who desires me to bring it to you. Read it. (She hands it to the president, who passes it to the secretary.)

Miss Smith (reads)—"Have decided not to discharge women employes. Stop action of women's clubs if possible. HERVEY S. BALDIN."

Mrs. Tarbox—Well! I hope he'll have the decency to give us the credit for it.

ELIZABETH GERBERDING.