

BETWEEN ROUNDS.

Rifts in the Clouds That Darkened the House of McCaskey.

By O. HENRY.
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The May moon shone bright upon the private boarding house of Mrs. Murphy. By reference to the almanac a large amount of territory will be discovered upon which its rays also fell. Spring was in its heyday, with hay fever soon to follow. The parks were green with new leaves and buyers for the western and southern trade. Flowers and summer resort agents were blowing. The air and answers to



"FIS' FACE, IS IT?" SAID MRS. MCCASKEY.

LAVISON were growing milder. Hand organs, fountains and penuche were playing everywhere.

The windows of Mrs. Murphy's boarding house were open. A group of boarders were seated on the high stool upon round, flat mats like German parkbenches.

In one of the second floor front windows Mrs. McCaskey awaited her husband. Supper was cooling on the table. Its heat went into Mrs. McCaskey.

At 9 Mr. McCaskey came. He carried his coat on his arm and his pipe in his teeth, and he apologized for disturbing the boarders on the steps as he selected spots of stone between them on which to set his size 9, width D.

As he opened the door of his room he received a surprise. Instead of the usual stove lid or potato masher for him to dodge came only words.

Mr. McCaskey reckoned that the benign May moon had softened the breast of his spouse.

"I heard ye," came the oral substitutes for kitchenware. "Ye can apologize to riffraff of the streets for settin' yer unhandy feet on the tails of their frocks, but ye'd walk on the neck of yer wife the length of a clothline without so much as a 'Kiss me fat,' and I'm sure it's that long from rubber'n' out the windy for ye, and the victuals cold such as there's money to buy after drinkin' up yer wages at Gallagher's every Saturday evening, and the gas man here twice today for his."

"Woman," said Mr. McCaskey, dashing his coat and hat upon a chair, "the noise of ye is an insult to me appetite. When ye run down politeness ye take the mortar from between the bricks of the foundations of society. 'Tis no more than excessin' the acrimony of a gentleman when ye ask the dissent of ladies blockin' the way for steppin' between them. Will ye bring the pig's face of ye out of the windy and see to the food?"

Mrs. McCaskey arose heavily and went to the stove. There was something in her manner that warned Mr. McCaskey. When the corners of her mouth went down suddenly like a barometer it usually foretold a fall of crockery and tinware.

"Pig's face, is it?" said Mrs. McCaskey and hurled a steppan full of bacon and turnips at her lord.

Mr. McCaskey was no novice at repartee. He knew what should follow the entree. On the table was a roast sfiloin of pork garnished with шамрокс. He returned with this and drew the appropriate return of a bread pudding in an earthen dish. A hunk of Swiss cheese accurately thrown by her husband struck Mrs. McCaskey below one eye. When she replied with a well aimed coffeeport full of a hot, black, semifragrant liquid the battle, according to courses, should have ended.

But Mr. McCaskey was no fifty cent table d'hôte. Let cheap bohemians consider coffee the end if they would. Let them make that faux pas. He was foxier still. Finger bowls were not beyond the compass of his expertise. They were not to be had in the Pension Murphy, but their equivalent was at hand. Triumphantly he sent the granite wash basin at the head of his matrimonial adversary. Mrs. McCaskey dodged in time. She reached for a flatiron, with which, as a sort of cordial, she hoped to bring the gastronomical duel to a close. But a loud, wailing scream downstairs caused both her and Mr. McCaskey to pause in a sort of involuntary armistice.

On the sidewalk at the corner of the house Policeman Cleary was standing, with one ear upturned, listening to the crash of household utensils.

"'Tis Jawn McCaskey and his missus at it again," meditated the policeman. "I wonder shall I go up and stop the row. I will not. Married folks they are, and few pleasures they have. 'Twill not last long. Sure, they'll have to borrow more dish to keep it up."

And just then came the loud scream below stairs, betokening fear or dire extremity. "'Tis probably the cat," said Policeman Cleary and walked hastily in the other direction.

The boarders on the steps were disturbed. Mr. Toomey, an insurance solicitor by birth and an investigator by profession, went inside to analyze the scream. He returned with the news that Mrs. Murphy's little boy, Mike, was lost. Following the messenger, out bounced Mrs. Murphy—200 pounds in tears and hysterics, clutching the air and howling to the sky for the loss of thirty pounds of freckles and mischief. Bathos truly, but Mr. Toomey sat down at the side of Miss Purdy, millinery, and their hands came together in sympathy. The two old maids, Misses Walsh, who complained every day about the noise in the halls, inquired immediately if anybody had looked behind the clock.

Major Griggs, who sat by his fat wife on the top step, arose and buttoned his coat. "The little one lost?" he exclaimed. "I will scour the city." His wife never allowed him out after dark. But now she said "Go, Ludovic!" in a baritone voice. "Whoever can look upon that mother's grief without springing to her relief has a heart of stone."

"Give me some 30 or 40 cents, my love," said the major. "Lost children sometimes stray far. I may need car fare."

Old man Denny, hall room, fourth floor back, who sat on the lowest step, trying to read a paper by the street lamp, turned over a page to follow up the article about the carpenters' strike. Mrs. Murphy shrieked to the moon, "Oh, ar-Mike: fr Gawd's sake, where is me little bit av a boy?"

"Wend' ye see him last?" asked old man Denny, with one eye on the report of the Bunting Trades league.

"No," wailed Mrs. Murphy. "Tis yesterday, or maybe four hours ago! I dunno. But it's lost he is, me little boy Mike. He was playin' on the sidewalk only this mornin'—or was it Wednesday? I'm that busy with work 'tis hard to keep up with dates. But I've looked the house over from top to cellar, and it's gone he is. Oh, for the love av heaven—"

Silent, grim, colossal, the big city has ever stood against its writers. They call it hard as iron; they say that no pulse of pity beats in its bosom; they compare its streets with lonely forests and deserts of lava. But beneath the hard crust of the lobster is found a delectable and luscious food. Perhaps a different simile would have been wiser. Still, nobody should take offense. We would call no one a lobster without good and sufficient claws.

No calamity so touches the common heart of humanity as does the straying of a little child. Its feet are so uncertain and feeble. The ways are so steep and strange.

Major Griggs hurried down to the corner and up the avenue into Billy's place. "Gimme a rye high," he said to the servant. "Haven't seen a boy legged, dirty faced little devil of a six-year-old lost kid around anywhere, have you?"

Mr. Toomey retained Miss Purdy's hand on the steps. "Think of that poor little babe," said Miss Purdy, "lost from his mother's side, perhaps already fallen beneath the iron hoofs of galloping steeds. Oh, isn't it dreadful?"

plunged an audible cadaver of tears. Courtiers came and went.

Loud voices and a renewed uproar were raised in front of the boarding house.

"What's up now, Judy?" asked Mr. McCaskey.

"'Tis Missus Murphy's voice," said Mrs. McCaskey, harking. "She says she's after findin' little Mike asleep behind the roll of old linoleum under the bed in her room."

Mr. McCaskey laughed loudly.

"That's yer Phelan," he shouted sarcastically. "Divil a bit would a Pat have done that trick. If the bye we never had is strayed and stole, by the powers, call him Phelan and see him his out under the bed like a mangy pup."

Mrs. McCaskey arose heavily and went toward the dish closet with the corners of her mouth drawn down.

Policeman Cleary came back around the corner as the crowd dispersed. Surprised, he upturned an ear toward the McCaskey apartment, where the crash of iron and chinaware and the rattle of hurried kitchen utensils seemed as loud as before. Policeman Cleary took up his timespiece.

"By the departed snakes," he exclaimed. "Jawn McCaskey and his lady have been fightin' for an hour and a quarter by the watch! The missus could give him forty pounds weight. Strength to his arm!"

Policeman Cleary stroked back around the corner.

Old man Denny folded his paper and hurried up the steps just as Mrs. Murphy was about to lock the door for the night.

Student Humor.

"When a student does not know the answer to an examination question he does one of three things," said a University of Pennsylvania professor recently. "If he is a good student he will simply leave a blank space, while if he is not he will either try to bluff it through or else pass it off as a joke. These latter cases are rare, and the result is generally painful and does harm to the student who wrote the paper. Occasionally, however, there will be a real gem, which does the student good by putting the professor in a good humor and so making him unconsciously mark the paper less severely."

I came across two such gems in one paper recently. One question was "What was St. Bruno?" to which the student replied, "St. Bruno was a Great Dane, a brother of St. Bernard." The other question was, "What was the difference between the major prophets and the minor prophets?" Here he answered, "It would not be right for me, a sinner, to make invidious comparisons between such holy men."—Philadelphia Record.

When England shook.

In the course of its long history England has known a few serious earthquake shocks. In the days of William Rufus one was felt throughout the country, and in 1274 an English earthquake destroyed Glastonbury amonach's choir damage, while part of St. Paul's cathedral fell in as the result of an earthquake in the sixteenth century. Perhaps the most recent serious shock was that which inflicted much damage in the eastern counties in 1894. A Mansion House fund was opened for the sufferers.—London Chronicle.

Cut It Out!

Brander Matthews voiced his opinion that correct language is that language currently used. If that be right, a certain teacher in a Manhattan school was wrong when she indignantly vented her dislike of slang. But the wrong was more her own than the scholar's she reproved. During playtime she had listened to the conversation of a number of the boys and noticed a predominance in their speech of American as it is spoken. Forthwith she assembled the offenders.

"Boys," she announced, "I wish you would use better language. I find you much addicted to using slang. Remember that we attend school to learn proper words to use. Slang is deplorable. Hereafter you will have to cut it out!"

And for a time she wondered why the boys laughed.—New York Press.

"I know I am looking like a fright tonight," said the woman.

The man studied her dress, her hair and her complexion closely.

"I don't see anything the matter with you," he said. "So far as I can see, you are looking as well as usual."

"But I am not," she insisted. "There is something wrong, and that head waiter saw at a glance what it is. If I had been up to the mark he wouldn't have put us away over here in this out of the way corner. He would have given us a table right under the chandelier in the middle of the room. All the best dressed people are always seated in the most conspicuous places, so as to make the restaurant look attractive. I am glad to say that this is where I usually sit. The plain people are ranged along the sides of the room just as we are tonight."—Philadelphia Ledger.

JIMMY'S OPPORTUNITY.

A Very Important Conversation That Settled Matters.

By HARRIET LUMMIS SMITH.
[Copyright, 1926, by Associated Literary Press.]

Jimmy Fitzgerald was downcast. Everybody was against him, he told himself, and in that sweeping generalization he included even Carroll. For if it had not been for Carroll's connivance, her tame submission to the maneuvers of interfering relatives, the whole which had tumbled on his lips for three dragging months would have been spoken long ago.

From the standpoint of a disinterested spectator Jimmy was ready to admire the cleverness which so far had circumvented him. "Good team work," he demoted it. The ingenious air with which Grandmother Reynolds would appear to claim Carroll's assistance in regard to a dropped stitch in her knitting just when Jimmy was bringing matters to a climax would give him forty pounds weight brought against the match was that both of them were young. Carroll's sister, Marie, was of the opinion that an engagement would be absurd, and Jimmy thought he knew why. If George Freeman, Marie's latest admirer, had been as eager to propose as Jimmy was, the latter young man felt positive that no obstacles would be put in his way.

With a duplicity foreign to his usually frank nature, Jimmy lost no opportunity of expressing to Freeman the admiration with which Marie inspired him. If the older sister were once engaged or, better still, married, Jimmy believed there would be hope for him.

Meanwhile the family opposition showed itself in a system of espionage which kept Jimmy's great avowal unspoken. If he suggested a walk, either Mrs. Reynolds declared that Carroll's cold would not permit her to venture out or Marie invited herself to accompany him; if the theater was necessary, whose soiled cooperation on Carroll's part would have relieved the situation, but the girl knew so well what Jimmy wanted that her modesty shrank from giving him anything but the most negative assistance. Accordingly Jimmy decided that she, too, was against him and gave himself up to thoughts of unutterable gloom.

He called one afternoon wearing an expression of grim determination which, if he had known it, put the conspirators on their guard. He was ushered into the family living room, and Mrs. Reynolds entertained him till Carroll came down. Jimmy made a few lame comments on the weather, his eyes devouring the pretty girlish figure seated demurely in the opposite corner.

"It's too fine a day for the house," said Jimmy. "Suppose we take a little walk."

"Ready, Carroll, dear," said Mrs. Reynolds before Carroll could reply. "It won't do for you to leave the house. Mrs. Baker is likely to want you any moment. We have a dressmaker here, Mr. Fitzgerald," she continued, turning to Jimmy with her most charming smile.

"Can't we sit on the piazza?" suggested Jimmy. Carroll agreed to the suggestion. But, as it proved, her small brother, Bob, was in possession of the hammock, and he remained for two hours, enlivening the occasion by describing the exploits of the ball team.

An ear splitting whistle in the rear of the house relieved them at length of Bob's company. Without delay Jimmy plunged into the subject uppermost in his mind.

"Carroll, there's something I want to say to you—"

"Carroll, Mrs. Baker is ready for you," said Marie's voice behind the parlor shutters. That shut had been waiting there, hiding her time Jimmy could not doubt. Then the girl closed, and Mr. Reynolds came up the walk. He settled himself in the chair Carroll had vacated, and he and Jimmy talked politics till dinner time.

The young man refused an invitation to remain to dinner. He went away with a lowering brow and a heavy heart. But at half past 9 that evening the telephone bell rang, interrupting a game of bridge going in the den. Carroll, who was nearest to the instrument, pushed up his chair and went to answer the summons.

"Hello—hello! Oh, yes, this is Carroll." She turned a pretty, flushed face toward the three at the card table. "Please don't talk for a minute. I can't hear."

The next minute she heard very distinctly for the room had become absolutely still, and the voice at the other end of the wire was clear and penetrating.

"This is Jimmy, Carroll. There's something I've been trying to say to you for three months. And I'm going to say it now."

"Why, I don't see—"

"Well, it doesn't matter whether you see or not. Just listen. Ever since I—"

"That man yonder has a shady record. You can tell as soon as you see him at work that he has something to screen in his life."

"What do you think it is he has to screen?"

"Mostly suburban porches."—Baltimore American.

THE SKYLIGHT ROOM.

How Dr. Billy Jackson Found the Girl It Sheltered.

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First Mrs. Parker would show you the double parlors. You would not dare to interrupt her description of their advantages and of the merits of the gentleman who had occupied them for eight years. Then you would manage to stammer forth the confession that you were neither a doctor nor a dentist. Mrs. Parker's manner of receiving the admission was such that you could never afterward entertain the same feeling toward your parents, who had neglected to train you up in one of the professions that fitted Mrs. Parker's parlors.

Next you ascended one flight of stairs and looked at the second floor back at \$8. Convinced by her second floor manner that it was worth the \$12 that Mr. Toosenberry always paid for it until he left to take charge of his brother's orange plantation in Florida, near Palm Beach, where Mrs. McIntyre always spent the winters that had the double front room with private bath, you managed to babble that you wanted something still cheaper.

If you survived Mrs. Parker's scorn you were taken to look at Mr. Skidder's large hall room on the third floor. Mr. Skidder's room was not vacant. He wrote plays and smoked cigarettes in it all day long. But every room hunter was made to visit his room to admire the lambrèques. After each visit Mr. Skidder, from the fright caused by possible eviction, would pay something on his rent.

Then—oh, then—if you still stood on one foot, from your hot hand clutching the three moist dollars in your pocket, and hoarsely proclaimed your hideous and culpable poverty, never more would Mrs. Parker be a cicerone of yours. She would hunk loudly the word "Clara." She would show you her back and march downstairs. Then Clara, the colored maid, would escort you up the carpeted ladder that served for the fourth flight and show you the skylight room. It occupied 7 by 8 feet of floor space at the middle of the hall. On each side of it was a dark lumber closet or storeroom.

In it were an iron cot, a washstand and a chair. A shelf was the dresser. Its four bare walls seemed to close in upon you like the sides of a coffin. Your hand crept to your throat, you gasped, you looked up as from a well—and breathed once more. Through the glass of the little skylight you saw a square of blue infinity.

"Two dollars, sub," Clara would say in her half contemptuous, half Tuskegee tones.

One day Miss Leeson came hunting for a room. She carried a typewriter made to be lugged around by a much larger lady. She was a very little girl, with eyes and hair that had kept on growing after she had stopped and that always looked as if they were saying: "Goodness me! Why didn't you keep up with us?"

Mrs. Parker showed her the double parlors. "In this closet," she said, "you could keep a skeleton or an aesthete or coal."

"But I am neither a doctor nor a dentist!" said Miss Leeson, with a shiver.

Mrs. Parker gave her the incredulous, pitying, sneering, icy stare that she kept for those who failed to qualify as doctors or dentists and led the way to the second floor back.

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"Dear me! I'm not poor, if I do look green. I'm just a pretty little working girl. Show me something higher and lower."

Mr. Skidder jumped and strewed the floor with cigarette stubs at the rap on his door.

"Excuse me, Mr. Skidder," said Mrs. Parker, with her demon's smile at his pale looks. "I didn't know you were in. I asked the lady to have a look at your lambrèques."

"They're too lovely for anything," said Miss Leeson, smiling in exactly the way the angels do.

After they had gone Mr. Skidder got very busy craning the tall, black, hair-beroline from his latest (unproduced) play and inserting a small, rough, one with heavy, bright hair and vivacious features.

"Anna Held! I jump at it," said Mr. Skidder to himself, putting his feet up against the lambrèques and disappearing in a cloud of smoke like an aerial cuttlefish.

Presently the tocsin call of "Clara!" sounded to the world the state of Miss Leeson's purse. A dark goblin seized her, mounted a stygian stairway, thrust her into a vault with a glimmer of light in its top and muttered the menacing and cabalistic words "Two dollars!"

"I'll take it," sighed Miss Leeson, sinking down upon the squeaky iron bed.

Every day Miss Leeson went out to work. At night she brought home gaggers with handwriting on them and

LET LOOSE THE PRACTICED SCALPEL OF HIS TONGUE.

slapping of wrists and burnt feathers proving of no avail, some one ran to phone for an ambulance.

In due time it backed up to the door with much gong clanging, and the capable young medico, in his white linen coat, ready, active, confident, with his smooth face half demobair, half grim, danced up the steps.

"Ambulance call to 40," he said briefly. "What's the trouble?"

"Oh, yes, doctor," sniffled Mrs. Parker, as though her trouble that there should be trouble in the house was the greater. "I can't think what can be the matter with her. Nothing we could do would bring her to. It's a young woman, a Miss Elsie—yes, a Miss Elsie Leeson. Never before in my house—"

"What room?" cried the doctor in a terrible voice, to which Mrs. Parker was a stranger.

"The skylight room. It"—

Evidently the ambulance doctor was familiar with the location of skylight rooms. He was gone up the stairs, four at a time. Mrs. Parker followed slowly, as her dignity demanded.

On the first landing she met him coming back, bearing the astronomer in his arms. He stopped and let loose the practiced scalpel of his tongue, not loudly. Gradually Mrs. Parker crumpled as a stiff garment that slips down from a nail. Ever afterward there remained crumples in her mind and body. Sometimes her curious roomers would ask her what the doctor said to her.

"Let that be," she would answer. "If I can give grief-need for having heard it I will be satisfied."

The ambulance physician strove with his burden through the pack of bounds that follow the curiosity chase, and even they fell back along the sidewalk abashed, for his face was that of one who bears his own dead.

They noticed that he did not lay down upon the bed prepared for it in the ambulance the form that he carried, and all that he said was "Drive like sin, Wilson," to the driver.

That is all. Is it a story? In the next morning's paper I saw a little news item, and the last sentence of it may help you as it helped me to weld the incidents together.

It recounted the reception into Bellevue hospital of a young woman who had been removed from 49 East—street, suffering from debility induced by starvation. It concluded with these words:

"Dr. William Jackson, the ambulance physician who attended the case, says the patient will recover."

A Quaint Tract.

A quaint tract entitled "Woe to Drunkards," being a sermon by Samuel Waid, preacher of Ipswich, was printed in London in 1627. The preacher based his remarks upon Proverbs xxiii, 29-32. "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red," etc., and illustrated his arguments by examples from various parts of the kingdom of "God's judgments on drunkards."

Among other instances he quotes the following one from Tenby: "At Tenby, in Pembrokeshire, a Drunkard being exceedingly drunk broke himself all to pieces off an high and steep rock in most fearful manner, and yet the occasion and circumstances of his fall so ridiculous as I think not fit to relate, less in so serious a judgement I should move laughter of the Reader."—Cardiff Times.

Ants That Fight Spiders.

Few more wonderful adaptations are seen in the whole world of nature than the webs spiders spin to entrap the wary ant. They are not high built, lacy affairs, creasing every breeze, but low set stifen tubes stretched in the grass, the crevices of rock or about tree roots. Ants of every size creep heedlessly into them. The spiders eat them with relish, but occasionally a very little spider and a very big ant engage in a duel to the death. If the spider can bite, the ant can sting and does it with a right good will. The spider does not try to get rid of such an ant and does of a wasp or bee too strong to be safely attacked. Such an insect, which threatens destruction to the web, is often cut out of it by the web builders. The entangling cables are not loosed, but the web rays neatly snipped in two, first those underneath and at the very last the highest filament. Often the letting go of such a captive means destruction to half the nest. But some spiders are wiser than some people. They know not merely when they have enough, but when they have too much.

An Uncomplimentary Estimate.

"No," said Mrs. Tackpoint, "I don't want woman's suffrage. It's liable to cause embarrassment."

"In what way?"

"Suppose the average woman's husband is running for an office. If she doesn't vote for him it will cause comment, and if she does vote for him how is she going to satisfy her conscience?"—Washington Star.

In the Georgian language, spoken in the mountains between the Caspian and Black seas, dada means mother and mamma father.

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