

up my job, how shall we pay the rent next week? Or the groceryman? Or anybody else? Listen. He told me to think it over and let him know if I don't feel perfectly satisfied. Know what that means, don't you, honey? It means the bounce! I can't leave there till I get another job; but how can I get another job as long as I'm there? Just as soon as anybody asked him for a reference, I'd get the bounce so quick it would make your eyes blink! No, sir! I've got nerve enough to do a lot of things, but I haven't got nerve enough to take a chance on being out of work for six months, and seeing you and the kids turned out on the street and starving to death. I haven't got nerve enough for that!"

As the old saying goes, "Work is a pleasure, but worry kills." But for the next few weeks Paul proved the first part of the proverb was wrong, even while he was demonstrating that the second part was right.

AND then, one evening when he returned home, he found Margaret attired in her prettiest dress and wearing the unmistakably bright look of one who has good news to tell.

"What do you think?" she began; and, because he could never, never guess, she joyfully added: "The children and I have been invited away for the summer. And oh, Paul, it'll do them so much good!"

Inquiry revealed the fact that the fairy godmother was an aunt of Margaret's who lived in Massachusetts.

"She has the loveliest farm, Paul, and she wants us to go right away and stay till next October."

"Why, great Scott!" cried the astonished Paul. "That means six months."

"Yes! And I've been thinking, Paul. There's no use in paying rent for this big house while the children and I are away. So we might just as well store the furniture, and you can board near the office."

"Well, well, well!" cried Paul. "We'll certainly have to talk this over after supper!"

But, as every married man who reads this story will understand, the matter had been settled from the moment that Margaret had put on her prettiest dress. At the same time, it didn't hurt Paul to talk about it a little; and almost before he knew what he was doing he had fetched a barrel up out of the cellar, and they had started to pack the china.

Oh, a thorough girl was Margaret, as most girls are who go down on their knees to pray; and if you want any further proof of her thoroughness you shall have it in a most unexpected manner just before my story's done.

Meanwhile, the landlord was notified, the furniture was moved into a neighbor's empty barn, and on Saturday afternoon Margaret and the children kissed Paul good-by and started off for Massachusetts.

"You needn't be frightened now!" Margaret whispered in Paul's ear. "Break loose and win!"—and sealed her words with a kiss on the ear.

The train pulled out, and Paul stared after it.

"By jingo, she's right!" he exclaimed at last. "I wonder if she's going to her

aunt's just to give me a chance? By jingo, she's right!" he exclaimed again. "If I don't break loose now, I never shall—never! It's certainly up to me!"

He strode up and down the station platform, waiting for a train to take him to the city, keen-faced, reflective, thinking those thoughts which every clerk knows well. "If I only had a trade I could start a little business somewhere, but—Lord!—the only thing I know is office work, and there's nothing in office work. My job at the office is nothing better than a bad habit, and I've got to break myself of that—or it's going to break me!"

Keen-faced, thoughtful, and most desperately in earnest, Paul reached the city. "I'll get a furnished room somewhere," he thought, "and make that my headquarters. There used to be a lot of places up in the Fifties."

Accordingly he took a car, and twenty minutes later he was walking along West Fifty-fourth Street, looking for those little paper signs over the doorbells. He hadn't gone far when his eyes fell upon a larger sign hanging on the doorway of a garage. "Car Washer Wanted," was the legend.

"Quick on the jump!" muttered Paul. "And I could always leave it when I find something better. One thing sure: I'm through with old Nailor, and I've got to make something to pay my board till I find a good opening somewhere else."

At this he resolutely shook himself free from the restraining hands of pride and marched boldly into the garage.

"Had any experience?" asked the manager, looking doubtfully at Paul's clothes.

"Just try me on one car," suggested Paul. "It won't cost you anything. Then you can hire me or fire me, to suit yourself."

"Good boy," said the manager, with an approving nod. "There's a car on the washing floor now. Go to it, and let me know when it's done."

NOW, there's no great trick in washing a car, particularly when a man is clean by nature and has often helped his wife to wash the dishes, and especially when he has a hose and a sponge and more waste and soft cloths than he knows what to do with. So half an hour later Paul was duly engaged as car washer at the Imperial Service Station. His hours were to be from eight to six, and his wages—no longer salary, but wages—ten dollars a week. Paul worked the rest of that afternoon, and more than once he found himself smiling at a cheerful young mechanic who was making adjustments on cars that didn't have to be taken to the workshop.

"Say," said the latter once, "you ought

to wear a pair of rubber sleeves on that job. Foxy left his hanging in the corner."

"Thanks," said Paul, and he donned Foxy's rubber sleeves forthwith. "You know where I can get a room around here?" he asked.

"Sure," said the cheerful young mechanic. "I eat my prunes next door but one. Six a week, and all you can eat. Say, what's your name?"

"Paul Manion; what's yours?"

"Jimmy Britt—hard to hit—that's me."

At this the young men grinned at each other like two boys in their teens. "All right, Jimmy Britt—hard to hit," said Paul, swabbing away at his car. "I'm Paul Manion—good companion; and I'll take a look at your boarding-house as soon as the whistle blows."

On figuring it over, he decided to board instead of hiring a room and eating out.

"The only way you can beat the furnished room game is to starve to death," said Jimmy. "Say, ask her to give you the other bed in my room, will you? There's a fellow there now who snores like a pipe-organ. She can shift him to somebody else who's studying music."

So, before dark, it happened that Paul had found three things he hadn't known that morning: a new job, a new place to live, and a new friend.

"And now," thought Paul, "I must keep my eyes open and be quick on the jump. Then I'll find something better, just the same as I found this."

FOR three weeks Paul washed cars at the Imperial Service Station, and every time he cleaned one he learned a bit more about it. He got a list of spares from the office; and when he had exhausted that he bought a second-hand edition of "Homan's Self-Propelled Vehicles," and began to learn the whys and the wherefores. At odd times he ran upstairs and watched the mechanics doing repair work; and one day, greatly daring, he climbed into a machine he had just cleaned, started it, and ran it slowly off the washing floor. From that it was only a step to when he was driving machines into the street and lining them up against the curb; and after that, of course, it was no time at all before he was running them around the block.

One day he was polishing the nickel-work on a car, when the manager came out of his office and called him by a name to which Paul was rapidly growing accustomed—to wit: "Hey, you!"

"Hey, you!" said the manager. "I've got a hurry call and all the boys are out. You can drive a car, can't you?"

"Yes, sir!" said Paul.

"Come to the office, then. I'll find you a cap and a coat."

For two hours that afternoon, Paul conscientiously tooled two old ladies around Central Park and up to Grant's Tomb, driving with such great care that they fell violently in love with his caution.

"Those old ladies want you again," said the manager next day. "You'd better get a license, and I'll hire somebody else to wash the cars. You certainly made a hit yesterday."

"I guess it was because I went slow," thought Paul. "If I was an old lady with a lot of money, I'd want to travel slow, too. It's only human. I'm beginning to see that whenever I get down to something human I'm pretty sure to be right."

So Paul, beginning to get in touch with human nature for the first time in his life, started to figure what he would like if he

were a passenger and some one else were the chauffeur. As a result he bought the nattiest motoring togs on Broadway, kept his car shining like a piece of jewelry, drove elderly passengers with decorum, and whisked dashing young couples over the road at intoxicating speeds. And whenever he wasn't out on the road or polishing his car, Paul Manion was in the repair shop, preparing himself for the next jump he had in mind.

One day, when taking out his two old ladies to Grant's Tomb, it suddenly occurred to him that he had seen that interesting mausoleum quite enough for the present. "I'll be doing this for the next ten years if I don't look out," he thought. "It's time to jump again!"

Accordingly, upon his return to the Service Station, Paul spent the better part of an hour in putting a perfect polish on his car, and then he slowly drove around to the front office, as the Broadway sales-room of the Imperial Car Company was called. He knew that Mr. Martin was the big boss of the New York office, and Paul went straight to him.

"Mr. Martin," he said, "I started in your garage washing cars. Then I became chauffeur, and have helped on repairs. I know the Imperial car almost as well as I know the alphabet, and I'd like to have a job as demonstrator. It isn't more money I'm after," he quickly added. "I only want a chance to get on. I'll work a week for nothing if you like, and then you can keep me here or send me back to the Service Station—as you think best."

Mr. Martin looked him over keenly. "Know the car pretty well, do you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Mmm. Let's see. One of our customers has just brought his car around here because the gear-lever is sticking all the time. Oh, Mr. Wisnor!"

A disgusted-looking man approached from the other end of the room.

"Let's go out and look at your car. Perhaps this young man can put you right."

As a matter of fact, Paul could have put him right without moving from the office; for in his experience sticking gear-levers were always caused by the same trouble. Without a word, Paul unscrewed a grease-cup in the floor-board.

"A most natural thing to forget, Mr. Wisnor," he said. "You see? No grease here. If you'll jump in the car with me, we'll run around to the Service Station and I'll fill your cup."

"Very good!" cried Mr. Martin heartily. "And when you're through with that, young man, come back to the office."

"Getting there with both feet," wrote Paul to Margaret that night. "Tell the Little Wonder he's going to college when he grows up, and with heaps of love—"

IT was the custom in the Imperial office to have one of the salesmen go out with a prospective customer whenever a demonstration was made. But sometimes—when all the salesmen were out, for instance, or the prospective customer didn't look sufficiently promising—the demonstrator was placed in sole charge. "When I get a chance like that," thought Paul, "I've got to be ready for it."

Now, one of the first things that Paul did after getting his job as a demonstrator was to explore the streets in the neighborhood of the Imperial sales-room, making careful note of those thoroughfares where the asphalt was in a particularly good condition.

"No use bumping 'em," he thought. "It's the first and last impressions that count; and it's only human."

So, early the next week, on an afternoon when all the salesmen were busy and Paul took out his first prospects by himself, he turned and twisted around the streets in a truly wonderful manner. "You see what a flexible car it is?" he smiled over his shoulder. "See how easily she threads in and out and round the corners?"

"It certainly rides easy," said the prospective customer. "Does it have regular springs?"

"If that isn't the greatest compliment I've heard yet!" said Paul. "Yes, sir; it's a stock car in every detail!"



"For two hours that afternoon, Paul conscientiously tooled two old ladies around Central Park and Grant's Tomb."