

JUST A LITTLE BUSINESS

BY WILL SEAT.

IMES were hard out in Kansas during the fall of 1907, and the real estate concern of J. Bixby & Co. felt itself so hard pressed that Mr. Jerry Bixby, president, sole proprietor and only representative of said above business, expressed a sincere regret when he came down to his office one morning, following a night on which he had mortgaged his brain to his heart, that he had proposed marriage to Miss Jessie Carter, the village schoolmarm. And, worse, he had been accepted.

Jerry's affections for Miss Jessie were of the deepest and most genuine sort. He had felt it for years, since he had first settled in the place, but further than showing her little attentions and accompanying her to church each Sabbath evening, he had made no open profession of his feelings toward her until under the spell of the moonlight and that October evening, the night before, he did the thing he meant not to do.

All in good time, Jerry had intended to ask Miss Jessie to become his bride. But he was awaiting the day when he could feel himself established before making an offer of such serious character. And that day had almost arrived.

Out in one of the new additions to the town that had been plotted only the preceding summer, Jerry had erected a house on a couple of lots that had fallen to him as a part of the commission due him for promoting the new section. For balance on account with the townsite company, he had accepted more lots.

So far as short-sighted mortal can judge, Jerry considered that he was on the high road to his heart's desire. He took every dollar he had,

and borrowed a little besides, to put into the new house, which he intended as a home for himself and Jessie. Of course he would have to have some cash to get married on, to buy household furniture and to pay living expenses for a month or two, or until he should be able to get a commission somewhere.

For such exigencies, he had reckoned on the additional lots. With things booming in that end of the town, he figured it would be a matter only of form to go to the local bank and pledge his property for whatever small sum he might ask.

And so it would have been, but for the panic.

As he entered his office the morning after that night when things had gone riotous in his breast, Jerry found the mail he had just taken from the postoffice on his desk. An envelope on the top of the package caught his eye.

He opened it and found a statement from the local bank, calling attention to his overdrawn account.

It was this little printed slip that had caused Jerry to "regret his proposal as he went about kindling a fire in the flat rectangular wood stove that stood in the center of the room.

At first he thought of going to Miss Jessie and calling off the engagement. After more deliberate consideration, he resolved to take his troubles to Mrs. Bain, the landlady, who had watched his courtship encouragingly during the last two years.

That evening he arrived home late for supper, purposely, and managed to remain at his meal until after the other boarders had left the table.

Then he arose to assist Mrs. Bain with the dishes, in the course of which he led up the conversation to Jessie and finally succeeded in telling her the kind-hearted matron of his dilemma.

"But, laws, you needn't worry," exclaimed Mrs. Bain. "Jessie, you know, has saved up money from her

teaching, and wouldn't hesitate to advance you a little, if you need it, especially you're going to marry her."

"But that's just it, Mrs. Bain," he remonstrated. "I couldn't think of letting her do it."

"Let her. She'd just do it anyhow, if she knewed."

turned the woman. "That's a mighty smart girl, and if she wanted to do something, she'd do it somehow, money or no bank."

Mrs. Bain went out to shut up her chickens for the night, and Jerry took a chair on the front porch to smoke. Later, he went inside to caution the

me to dispose of it."

"Yes, I take it to be the best way. Then you'd have enough money for you and Jessie to get fixed up on, and you could come and board with me, cheap, until times got better, and then you could sell some of your lots and build another house, when you could afford it."

"Why, nobody could buy that house, now, Mrs. Bain, and give me half what I put into it."

"O, yes, they could."

"O, I know, if you'll only do it."

"Well—" he hesitated. "As others of the boarders began to appear, he added hurriedly, "I'll tell you tonight."

That afternoon Jerry was sitting alone in his office, with his feet propped up on a desk, debating the matter to himself, when Mr. Stanley, president of the bank, appeared. Jerry brought his feet down with bang, and arose in confusion.

"I—I Mr. Stanley," he faltered, "I was just thinking of stepping over to see you about my account, but—"

"No reason for that," returned the other, cordially. "I came over to see you about your new house. I have a client who wants to buy it."

"Well, I hadn't thought about selling," answered Jerry, himself again. Then calculating, "Of course, I never had anything I wouldn't sell, if there were the inducements."

"Well, how would \$2,000 strike you?"

"Two thousand dollars?" he exclaimed, but recovered his composure, and asked, "And who pays your commission, Mr. Stanley?"

"That is already provided for by my client."

"Then I'll sell, Mr. Stanley. Whose name do you want in the deed?" turning to his desk and pulling out a blank form for conveyance.

"Just leave that space blank for the present. My client wants to pay down \$500 in cash—money in hand, you understand—and the balance when the

name is filled in and the deed delivered by myself as third party. Is that satisfactory?"

"That suits, I guess."

Alone in his office again, Jerry threw his hat into one corner and lay back in his chair, chuckling over his good luck.

"Two thousand dollars!" he exclaimed. "It's settled—we'll marry. We'll have plenty for a honeymoon trip to my folks in Missouri. Then, if the deed has not been delivered, we can stay at Mrs. Bain's awhile, and when the balance is paid, there'll be enough to settle my debts and build a new house besides. Glory!"

They were married at high noon the first Tuesday in November. It was planned that they should leave on the 1:25 o'clock afternoon train for Kansas City, and thence to the home of his parents.

After the dinner had been served and while the party awaited carriages to take them to the depot, Mr. Stanley stepped up to Jerry and asked for a moment of his time.

The banker led the way into another room, followed by Jerry and his bride.

"Just a little business," Mr. Stanley said, by way of introduction. He fumbled with some papers and drew out a fountain pen.

"Here's a certificate of deposit to your credit, Mr. Bixby, for \$1,700," he resumed. "Now you will please fill out the space left blank."

"What name?" asked Jerry, taking the pen.

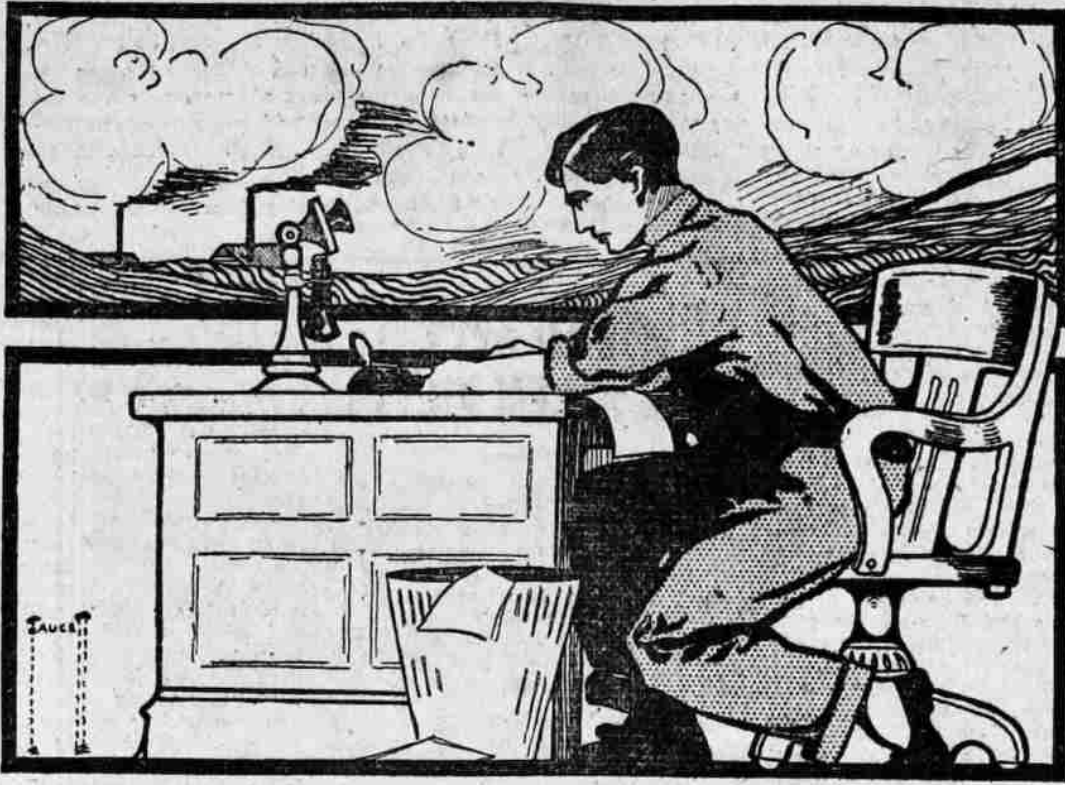
"Mrs.—uhm," as he cleared his voice, maintaining a stolid expression, "Mrs. Jessie Bixby."

Jerry was dumfounded.

"What?" dropping the pen and turning to his bride. "You—you?" he cried, and grasped her in his arms. "You bought the place?"

"Yes," she replied.

"And just to think that the deal alone wasn't half the bargain."



MRS. JENNY BIXBY, PRESIDENT, WAS VERY MUCH DEPRESSED.

"But she doesn't know, and won't know, and besides she couldn't draw more than just a small amount from the bank at present, even if she had a million dollars on deposit."

"Don't you just be too sure," re-

landlady to say nothing to Jessie, but he could find her nowhere. She had not returned when he retired to his room near midnight.

The next morning Mrs. Bain knocked at his door a half hour earlier

ing her hands beneath her apron, she proceeded.

"Mr. Bixby, why don't you sell the house?"

"Sell it? Why, Mrs. Bain, you know why I built it, and now you ask

FINDING AN IDEAL

BY ELSIE ENDICOTT.

FRANCES KENNEDY, what a frank are you up to now? Why, Aunt Flossie, don't you remember my telling you this morning that Elmer Bergen was going to take his sister and me tobogganing tonight? You didn't think I would wear my hair up so it would all come down the minute we started to slide, did you?"

The heavy braid fell below her waist and a fluffy wool cap was pulled well down over her ears. Her dress reached her—shoe tops, thus making a charming school girl of the mature young woman.

"What a child you are, Frances; I don't believe you ever will grow up. The idea of a college graduate going to slide down a country hill with a small boy and his sister!"

"That is just where the fun comes in—I am tired of the conventional way of doing things. Goodby—I am certain to have a jolly time."

"Bless the youngster, I only hope she keeps the child spirit all her life," thought Aunt Flossie as she watched her niece join Elmer and his sister at the gate and then pass from sight down the moonlit road.

It did not take the trio long to reach the steep hill down which they were to slide, and when the girls

were safely tucked in front of him Elmer said warningly before starting the toboggan. "You must be prepared for a surprise at the foot of the hill, Frances—I shan't tell you what it is."

Then they were off, going faster and faster over the crusted snow, Frances enjoyed the slide immensely, until the "surprise" came.

This proved to be the shooting out into the air of the toboggan over the top of a high stone wall, and alighting of the same in the field several feet lower down with such a hearty thud that the breath was about knocked out of all three passengers.

Elmer did not wait for the vengeance he knew awaited him, but as a warning shout sounded at the stone wall, she sprang aside just as another toboggan plumped down beside her brother's.

"O, Roy," she cried, as she recognized the newcomer. "You almost landed on top of me. I was too excited to think of moving, it is such

fun." In a few words she explained the cause of the chase going on before them.

Big Roy Singleton watched Frances with admiration. "My, but she's a fine runner," he said shortly. "Elmer has met his match this time—look at the young scamp doubling back here for protection."

"Save me, Roy," gasped Elmer, as he neared them. "Don't let me be scalped before your face and eyes," and he darted behind his friend to drop on the snow, after his run.

Frances was too taken with her pursuit to notice anything but her proposed victim, and as she was almost within reaching distance when he swooped around Roy, she ran headlong into that young man's open arms.

"My, but you are a wonder!" he cried as he held her tight. "I would never have believed that a mite of a girl could give Elmer such a hard run for his life if I hadn't seen it for myself."

Frances struggled to free herself. "I am not a 'mite of a girl,'" she flared out wrathfully, "and how dare you hold me!"

Roy released her instantly, looking decidedly sheepish. His first glance showed him that his escaped captive was not the child for which he had taken her.

"I beg your pardon," he began stammering.

Frances interrupted with a stamp of her foot. "O, bother, I forgot my hair—you are not to blame. Come,

Elmer, is there any way out of this horrid field?"

She turned her back on Roy and marched toward the wall with Etta and Elmer and the toboggan trailing meekly in her wake.

"We have to go up to the far end to get out," Elmer informed her, and soon the three were climbing up the long hill down which they had come.

"What rot," was Elmer's answer. "You are the only nice grown up girl I ever knew. Most of them are so stupid and slow they make me tired."

Frances had a smile at this plain expression of opinion. "I am glad you like me, but what do you suppose that young man will think of a person of my age sliding down hill dressed up like a school girl?"



"WHAT WOULD BE AN IDEAL WITHOUT A TEMPER?"

It was Elmer who broke a glum silence. "You aren't mad, are you, Frances? You were 24 last June, but he likes to have a good time same as he ever did—has all the digging he wants at the office and is in for some fun when he can get away."

This was comforting to Frances' wounded self-esteem, but she utterly

refused to take another ride down the hill, though Elmer coaxed.

"I have had all the tobogganing I want," she said decidedly. "You and Etta can keep on if you want to, I am not afraid to go home alone."

But they would not listen to this, and the three turned their steps homeward.

"Just wait till I get a chance at Roy," grumbled Elmer to his sister after they parted from Frances, "I'll give him a piece of my mind. If he hadn't butted in at the wrong minute Frances would have stayed out a long time."

The evening following the tobogganing experience, Frances was reading aloud to her aunt when a loud knock sounded on the front door and she answered the summons to find standing before her, big Roy Singleton.

"I called to ask if I might have the pleasure of giving you a ride down the long hill," he said at once. "I am sure Mrs. Frencham will vouch for my reliability." Aunt Flossie on hearing his voice had come forward.

"Why, Roy, you are a sight for sore eyes," she said heartily. "Come right in and let me introduce you to my niece, Frances Kennedy, who is paying me a visit."

"I had the happiness of meeting Miss Kennedy last evening, and now I want to induce her to take another try at tobogganing," explained Roy as he entered.

Aunt Flossie looked surprised, for she had heard nothing of the encounter. Frances had told her that she found coasting uninteresting.

But with Roy on the scene the whole affair was soon made clear to her, and she laughed unreservedly at his account of the fleeing Elmer and his valiant pursuer.

"I don't see how you could call such an incident uninteresting," she told Frances. "I thought you had been unusually quiet today, you little humbug."

Roy's pleading was ably seconded by Mrs. Frencham, and the two young people started for the long hill, which was at the opposite side of the village from their former evening exploit.

Etta and Elmer came rushing up as they reached the summit. "O, I say, isn't this fine?" cried Elmer at sight of them. "I take it all back, Roy, now you have made up with Frances and got her to come out again."

That evening began a new era for Frances and Roy. It was not many weeks before the straightforward young man said to her, "Ever since I first held you in my arms I have loved you, Frances. I knew when you left me below the stone wall that I had found my ideal."

Frances asked demurely, "Don't you think it was most unworthy to throw myself at your head, and anything but an ideal action to lose my temper and stamp my foot?"

"What would an ideal be like without a temper?" was Roy's counter question. "I fell head over ears in love with you on the spot—I know perfection when I see it."

LOST--A POODLE

BY WALTER GREGORY.

AJ. SINGLETON was an old bachelor, with money invested. He had been a boarder at Mrs. Sherman's villa for three or four years, and they looked up and stood in awe of him.

The widow Washburne was an intruder at the villa.

That is, she was the last comer. She also had money invested. She had to wait for her husband to die before she could become a widow and have money invested and become a boarder at the Sherman villa.

Maj. Singleton didn't like it that a widow should be taken into the house. He didn't like it before seeing her, and he liked it less afterward.

She was not awed. She didn't defer to him. She sought the opinion of the floor-walker boarder as often as that of the major.

The major was nettled, but he was a gentleman. He went around the corner to swear, but in the house he was gracious and courteous. He even played cards with the widow and turned the music as she played the piano.

Mrs. Sherman was just congratulating herself that the earthquake had slanted off in some other direction, and the other boarders were drawing long breaths of relief, when the blow fell. The widow bought a poodle dog. She bought it because life was dreary to her. She bought it that her mind might not dwell on the late Mr. Washburne too much.

The major was out for a walk in

the park when the dog arrived. He had always understood the Sherman Villa as a dog and a babe, and there was a surprise awaiting him.

His rooms were opposite those of the widow. In the hall he received a sudden bite in the leg, and he canted about and swore. He swore almost as hard as he had at the battle of Cedar Mountain.

The widow stood in the door of her room and looked at him, and after he had calmed down she asked:

"Will you tell me, sir, what sort of a performance this is?"

"Your dog, there—your dog!" he replied, pointing to the poodle. "The infernal thing bit me in the leg. I'll have him shot by the police!"

"Major Singleton, I have a dog! It is a poodle dog. I have owned him only two hours, and yet I love him. I shall guard him with my life! You are no gentleman, sir, to complain of a dog-bite!"

The major called the landlady to his room and gave her an ultimatum. Either he or the dog must go. He was a bitten man, and further, the owner of the biter had said that he was no gentleman.

Mrs. Sherman temporized and flattered and shed tears. It is the landlady who can't do that that are sold out by the sheriff. The dog was to be chained up, and the major was to be allowed a full hour at dinner to tell war stories.

It was this last concession that melted him. Indeed, after three or four days he brought himself to believe that he owed the widow an apology. He went to her room to make it, and that poodle dog bit him for the second time.

"This—this is too much!" he shouted

as he hung to the door and held up the bitten leg. "I came in here to offer you an apology for my words the other day, and that infernal contemptible—"

"Maj. Singleton," interrupted the widow, "no true gentleman will swear in a lady's presence."

"But that infernal poodle—"

"And, sir, I must request you to withdraw. A man who will complain when bitten by a dog should seek another strata of society!"

The major hopped across the hall into his room on one leg and Mrs. Sherman was sent for. By the time she arrived he had his trouser leg rolled up, and was ready to point to the two bites and exclaim:

"Behold that poodle dog! Either he goes or I do."

But neither went. Mrs. Sherman wept, and Maj. Singleton melted after an hour. He never could bear to see a woman weep. Besides, Mrs. Sherman hinted that the poodle was ill and would probably die within a few weeks. If not, then he might be lost or stolen.

The major had made use of the words "infernal" and "contemptible." On thinking things over as the expressions he had used in the hot fighting at Manassas. On that occasion his men were falling all around him, while on this he had simply been bitten by a poodle.

True, it was the second time, but what are two bites from a small poodle in comparison to holding down one's dignity?

Maj. Singleton rubbed the bites and reflected and regretted, and inside of a week he was again ready to apologize. The widow Washburne had risen from the dinner table right in

the midst of one of his best war stories, but he could even forgive her for that. Could any widow be expected to care whether the Union was



MAJOR SINGLETON.

saved or not? Yes, he would apologize. He would apologize and look out for his legs at the same time.

The opportunity soon came. He was coming home from his walk when

he met Mrs. Washburne starting out on her leash. She had the dog along on his leash. The major was halting and raising his hat when the poodle made a half-circuit around a lamp-post to take him in rear and bit him on that same leg—bite number three!

It was taking a diabolical advantage. There were pedestrians. There was a cop across the street. There was an ash cart man grinning and treating from first Bull Run, but the major made it in good shape.

"I hope you are not going to complain of a little thing like that," called the widow after him as he limped away, but he had no grape-shot to fire in reply.

Mrs. Sherman was called up for the third time. There were the bites—two—three—and there was the major. His trunk was open and ready to be packed. He was not excited, but stern. He was not vacillating, but determined.

He pointed to the bites and grimly said: "Which—the major or the dog?"

Then Mrs. Sherman sat down and sobbed and sobbed. If the major departed who would there be to tell war stories to make them shudder. No one. They must put up with the common, everyday murders found in Paris.

He always had a hard-boiled egg with his breakfast. Who would eat that egg now?

Twice a week he was out till midnight at his lodge. When he came home he would always stumble on the stairs. Who would stumble now? She made an impression. She melted him for the third time. He had taken the bite and never uttered a

word. Let him stay on and hope for the death of the dog.

He was there telling his war stories at dinner, but a little later he was sauntering the streets and looking for a boy. He wanted to find a peculiar boy—one who was not a constant attendant at Sunday school. He looked long, but found him. Then there was a quiet confab and money passed, and the non-Sunday school boy went away saying, "I'm on to de racket, old man, and don't you lose any sleep."

Next day the widow and her dog walked out. The major didn't. It was a fine day, but he had inside business. He walked to and fro. He expected things. He drew long breaths.

After a while a cab whirled up to the door. A minute later there was a scream in the hall. Then there were shrieks on the stairs.

"O, Maj. Singleton, she's lost—she's lost!" Tell the police—advertise—do everything!"

"My dear Mrs. Washburne, you have appealed to the right man. Everything shall be done. She bit me, but I love her still. Indeed, I was hoping she would bite me again today."

The police found no clew. The advertisement brought no poodle. The major's hours on the street resulted in nothing. He took the widow's hand and spoke consoling words. He referred to his three dog bites as nothing compared to the three cannon balls flung at him at Cedar Creek. He apologized some more.

Only a week had passed when one evening Mrs. Sherman whispered to the ladies in the parlor:

"Just think. Three bites of a dog did it!"

"What?"

And pointing to the ceiling with her finger she almost winked an eye and said:

"Cooling going on! I just passed the open door of her sitting room and though she was leaning her head on the major's shoulder she never jumped!"

Why She Knew.

She—Mr. Reid is a man of superior intelligence.

He—How do you know that?

She—Because he admitted that I knew more than he did.

How it Happened.

"Say," queried the ordinary policeman, "how did you get next to the fact that the chap you arrested was a counterfeiter?"

"I overheard him making 'queer' remarks," explained the great detective.

Higher Education.

Little Willie—Say, pa, what is the higher education?

Pa—The higher education, my son, is one that teaches a young man that he must work in order to earn an honest living.

Jumbo Diet.

"I should be afraid to accept Tom, my dear," cautioned the fond mother.

"Why so, mamma?" asked the fat cooking-school graduate in surprise.

"Why, he is such an athletic young man, I heard him telling some friends that he had an appetite like an elephant."

"Oh, don't let that worry you, mamma. If he has an appetite like an elephant I'll just feed him on peanuts and baled hay."