

their windows with paper signs announcing sales. Such a policy was hardly in keeping with their principles and the class of customers they drew.

"Say! I say, Winters!" began one of the clerks, who had watched Tom's movements with growing alarm. "Did Mellet tell you to?"

Tom swung around abruptly. "Mellet," he declared with undue emphasis, "didn't tell me anything. But—"

He closed his lips grimly. The puzzled salesman looked at him, and a new thought was born in his mind. Certainly Winters had been acting strangely all day. Perhaps old man Burr himself—The impression spread to the others.

AT 5.30, when Mellet returned, the shop was doing a hustling business, and Tom Winters was perhaps the busiest of all.

Six o'clock came. The shades were drawn down in the windows, the counters were covered, boxes and papers cleared away, and the clerks filed out with mumbled good-nights.

"Just a minute, Winters."

"Yes, Mr. Mellet."

"Who authorized that change in the windows? And who gave you permission to hold a sale?"

"Nobody, sir. I did it myself. I happened to go into the stock-room for a linen shirt. There has been a sort of new demand for linens. So I just thought this was a good chance to sell off the old stock."

"I see."

That was all. Tom headed for the subway. All the way home he swung from a strap, brooding over the events of the day. He was tired. More, he was depressed. He had made a good start. He had to hand it to himself. But what if it didn't bring him the desired raise?

"Then," he told himself grimly, "it'll be worth the fight just to know that I've won back my pep, my push, my ambition."

At home Rose greeted him with a shy kiss. She had on a dainty little frock that belonged somewhere back in their courtship days.

"Lo, Rose!"

"Hello, Tom! Tired?"

"You just said it! Worked some hard to-day. Something nice to eat? My, but doesn't somebody's sweetheart look ripping!"

It was well toward 10 o'clock when Rose suddenly turned from the piano where she had been recalling old melodies.

"You know, Tom? That suit of yours looks sort of shabby. You ought to begin now to wear your Sunday suit down to business."

"But, good Lord! I couldn't afford another suit right now. Not with the high price of merchandise. Why, you can't touch a really decent suit under \$30, \$35."

"Yes, you can. Mrs. Budson next door showed me a suit her husband just had made. Cost him \$100. But he can't wear it. The coat's too tight across the shoulders."

Hand in hand they knocked at their neighbor's apartment, from which an hour later, having listened to several records, danced a waltz or two, partaken of a glass of root beer, Tom Winters led his wife back, a suit of new clothes over one arm.

"Nice folks, the Budsons."

"Awfully. They're just married about three months. Don't you think Alice is a dear?"

"Yep. Like Budson better, though. Regular fellow. That's a nice suit, too. Bargain. I'll say, Rose, but I look like a million dollars in it."

IT was along during the third week of his self-bestowed increase that the postcard idea struck Tom Winters. They had been taking inventory of their stock, and as back numbers and broken lots were brought to light it suddenly occurred to him that if they only could use some form of advertising, all that back stock could be made to bring very fine returns.

The store had a fine active list of customers. To each of these he would send a postal card purporting to come from a friend. It would run something like this:

Say, Old Man: Drop into the Metropolitan Haberdashery Shop to-morrow. They've an inventory sale which is not being advertised.

Just bought some stuff myself. Some real values. Thought'd let you know. Your friend,

TOM.

"I'll write the things out by hand, and so give them the personal touch," he mused as he looked at his trial card. "And I guess it's all right to sign them Tom. Nearly every man has a friend or an acquaintance named Tom."

Then came another problem. Who would pay for those cards? Mellet would certainly not sanction such an idea.

"I'll order them anyway," he decided. The bill won't come up for another month. If the idea works they certainly won't kick. If it doesn't work—I guess I'll be kicked."

But the plan worked. Out of a clear sky, so it seemed to Mellet and the other clerks, a veritable mob of shop-

pers invaded the store. From early morning till night things hummed along with such speed that Mellet himself was forced to go behind the counter.

And then J. M. Burr himself trotted in.

He was puffing from too much walking, but the genial smile that always lit his face radiated good cheer.

"Hello, Mellet! Just got a card from my friend Tom telling me to drop in here. Could get a few bargains. Got some one to wait on me?"

Mellet took the card from Burr's hand and read it over. Never a word did he say about it.

"Mr. Winters here will serve you."

Tom felt the blood come pounding to his forehead.

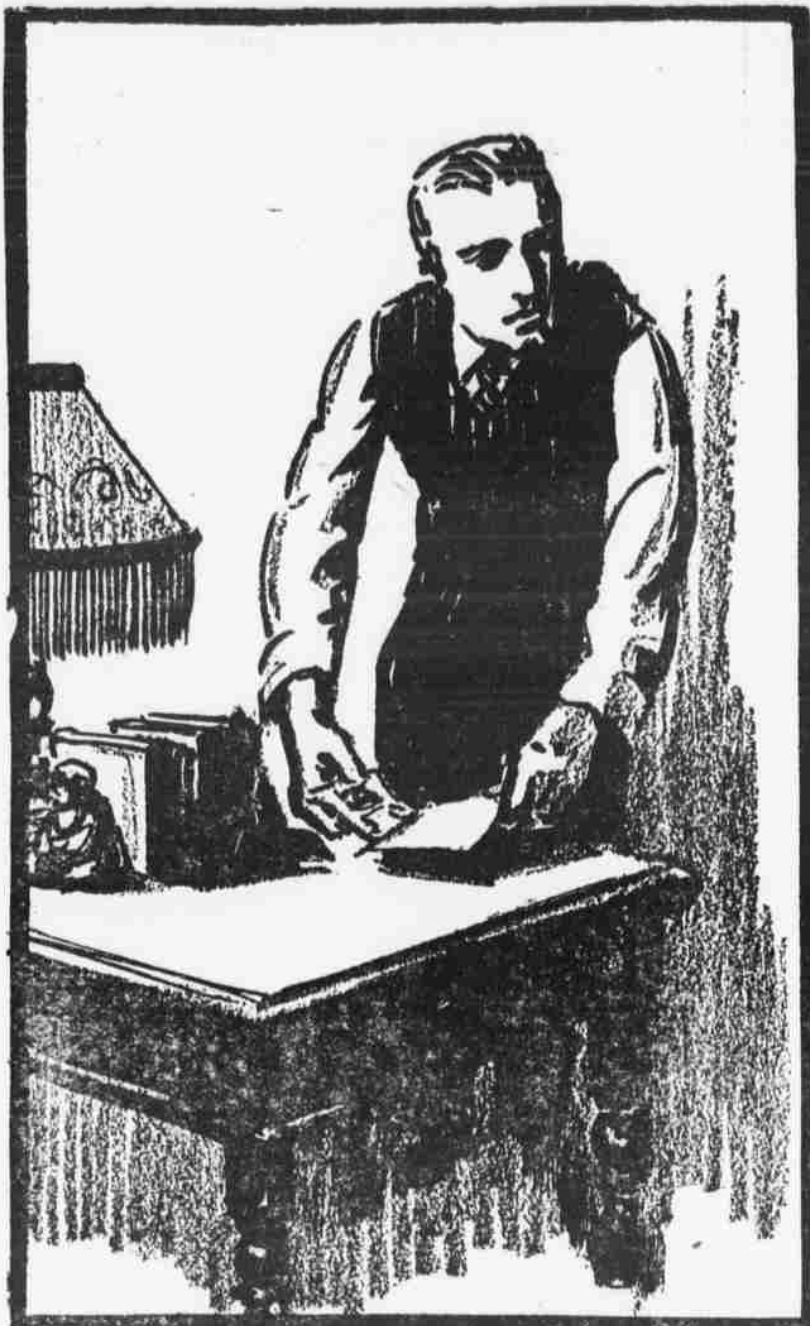
the memorable poker game.

"Time's almost up," he murmured. All during that fifth week he went about with a sick heart, forcing a spirit of cheerful pep into his rebellious soul. At noon hour he ate no lunch, but went around to the different shops to see whether he could land another job that would pay him more. But they were scarce and hard to find, and the salaries, he discovered, were fully \$10 less than he was then getting. In every place it was the same old story. Didn't make any difference what your record was before—you had to make good in the new place.

And in one of the shops he encountered Burr.

"Hello, Winters!"

"Hello, Winters!"



"COUNTED A FIVE-DOLLAR BILL FROM HIS CARD EARNINGS. PLACED IT WITH THE FOUR TENS AND CAREFULLY RESEALED THE ENVELOPE."

"Hold tight!" he counselled himself fiercely. "Here's your test!"

"Yes, sir?" he stepped forward briskly. "Shirts? Certainly. Here are some of the finest linens. Pre-war stock offered at pre-war prices. Just six of them left. You know their brand. Marked to-day at \$7. Sold them only last week at \$8.95. All six, sir? Hard or soft collars to wear with them? Both? Yes, sir. Here are the latest models—low and comfortable. No, sir. No reduction. New stock. Have you seen our socks for sports shoes? Look them over, sir. Not a flaw in the weave. Six pairs? All right, sir."

Moving so swiftly as almost to dazzle Burr, keeping up a convincing line of chatter, Tom pretty soon piled up a considerable mound of merchandise. The bill totalled way past \$50.

Burr laughed as he drew the money from his pocket.

"Tell you what, Mellet," he chaffed, "I haven't bought as much from myself in a long, long time. Got to hand it to you, old man, you're some shark at training salesmen. So long, Mellet!"

ON Saturday night, for the fourth time, Tom Winters steamed open his envelope and inserted \$5. Then he looked at the ten still remaining from

"How-do, Mr. Burr!"

"What you doing here?"

Tom gulped.

"Looking over the merchandise and comparing prices," he lied promptly.

"Fine idea. I tell you, Mellet has the right slant on things. You can't have faith in your own stuff unless you are absolutely sure it's the best there is at the price. Well, see you again."

Mellet had the right idea! A bitter smile forced itself to Tom's lips. What a world this was. People getting credit for the things they didn't do; other people not getting credit for the things they did do. Some little old game. Either you beat the game to it, or the game beat you.

There came the night when he put the last five-dollar bill into his pay envelope. Before him lay an empty, dreary week, and at the end of it—a confession to Rose. He would have to tell her. He would have to see the stricken, disappointed look flash across her face and a quiver take the softness from her lips. She wouldn't sing to him any more. They would have to forego their Sunday outings—and he would fall into the place of a liar and a deceiver.

Yet when the night came, he weakened. As he passed a pawnshop he fingered his watch. It would bring

\$20. But he—couldn't. It was Rose's gift to him some four years before and never for a day had he been without it. If he could only put off telling her for a week or two. There had been something in Mellet's attitude that afternoon—

"Well, Winters," he had queried, "all played out? No more new money?"

"Not on your sweet life!" Tom had retorted. "I'm just laying 'em till things establish themselves on this new place. We don't want a become an everyday sale and bargain house. Like those places that are going out of business every day for the last ten years. Too many sales apiece too putty. The idea is to hold one every now and then—with a considerable lapse of time in between. That's what brings results."

"I see."

"You see," Tom had thought. "I wonder how much you really do see."

At the subway entrance he met a friend, who flashed a heavy and fat bank note roll. He could ask him for a loan. He was sure he'd get it, too. People trusted him.

"But what's the use? What's the use?"

He stumbled homeward.

"Hello, dear!" Rose's soft arms twined themselves about his neck as she kissed him gently.

TOM reached into his pocket and extracted his pay envelope.

"Haven't time to take it now. Drop it into my bag. Will you? And hurry up. The Budsons are having a little party to-night and we're invited to supper. Go on, dear, rush into your things! They're all laid out on the bed."

It was a jolly assemblage that gathered in the Budson home. The little repast was delicious; and, to finish, there were home-made cookies and fresh orangeade.

Then Budson enjoined quiet upon every one, and led Rose to the piano.

"Mrs. Winters is going to give us a tune or two," he announced.

Tom started. There was a time when it was quite natural for Rose to perform publicly. But now—she gave so little time to practising. Why, it was only six weeks ago that she had approached their own piano for the first time in nearly four years! He didn't want her to trip up on anything.

Nor did she. Smoothly, with all their old agility, her fingers flew across the keyboard as the old favorite melodies sang out into the night.

Two bright spots of color leaped to her cheeks; her eyes shone with pleasure; and as she received the sincere little compliments and plaudits, she flashed Tom a glance of utter happiness that struck despair into his heart.

How could he tell her? She had been so happy these last weeks. There had been born between them something tender and fine. Could he tear that apart and consign themselves again to the prosaic, hopeless plane of living that had imprisoned them before?

"I'll just run into the kitchen and take a cup of milk," whispered Rose as they entered their own flat. "Want some, too?"

"No, thanks. I'll turn in. I'm tired."

In the bedroom, however, he momentarily awaited a cry from her. Doubtless she would open the envelope now. How he dreaded to meet her questioning face! For ten minutes he hesitated before switching off the light, and then, leaving it bright, he crept into bed, where he lay for another quarter of an hour staring at the ceiling? What could be detaining her?

And then the door opened and she came into the room. The opened envelope was in her hand.

"Why—why—oh, Tom! why didn't you tell me?"

Cold apprehension gripped at his heart. He sat up and looked her bravely in the eyes.

"Oh, Tom!" The tears came, and, sobbing convulsively, she sank down on the bed.

A whole torrent of words flew to Tom's lips and in their effort to gain precedence over one another, he became quite tongue-tied.

"Why—you see, dear—Rose dear—I was trying to save it for the morning when you would be able to take it more calmly. I wanted to—"

"But—but seventy-five a week! Tom! That's a fortune! I—oh—I—"

Tom sat bolt upright.

"What—what are you talking about?"

He took the envelope out of her hand and read the slip of paper that accompanied the bills:

The Metropolitan Men's Haberdashery Shops wish to thank you for your very fine work.

Beginning Monday, you will be in charge of the shop now conducted by Mr. Mellet, who has enthusiastically recommended you to succeed him while he takes charge of our new shop on 59th Street.

Your salary will start with \$75 a week. JAMES M. BURR.

That night Tom Winters lay awake again, and if ever a man wanted to cry for sheer thankfulness it was he. It was a good old world after all, and the man who fought his game bravely, squarely, ceaselessly, was bound to win!

NEXT SATURDAY'S COMPLETE STORY

WEST WIND

By SOPHIE KERR UNDERWOOD

Illustrated by WILL B. JOHNSTONE

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