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Needless Sacrifice.
Mr. Flippin—Maria, here's that \$25 you say you need for a new hat. By the way, Maria, do I ever talk in my sleep?
Mrs. Flippin—Thanks. No, John, you never do.—Chicago Tribune.

Maybe So.
Squigg—Why do they call these Interurban cars "limited?"
Squaggs—Because such a small number of people who travel on them get to their destination alive.—Toledo Blade.

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CONQUERS PAIN

The Firm of Girdlestone

BY
A. CONAN DOYLE

CHAPTER VI.

No Clue.
Reporter—I suppose you don't know what the Senator thinks about this tariff reform business?
Senator's Private Secretary—No; no more than you do. I only know what he says about it.

Her Age.
"How old do you think that woman is?"
"I wouldn't like to say, but I'll bet she owns up to being several years younger than any other woman you care to name."—Philadelphia Press.

Giving Sister Away.
Little Kitty (entertaining him)—Mintie thinks a lot of you, Mr. Wellon.
Elderly Suitor—Does she, dearie? How do you know?
Little Kitty—She says you'll be the darlingest old meal ticket that ever happened.

No Need of a Fire.
"Wasn't it awful?" exclaimed the apartment-house girl. "The furnace was entirely out last night."
"I never noticed it," replied her chum.

"What? Never noticed it? And you sat in the cold parlor for two hours with that young man. Who was it, anyway?"
"An old flame."

Practical Demonstration.
Teacher—As to those old superstitions we have been talking about, they are all exploded. Nobody believes now, for instance, that it brings bad luck to walk under a ladder.
Shaggy Haired Pupil—I do, ma'am. I walked under a ladder once, and it fell on me.

Not Cutting Prices.
Caller—Is that the best you can promise me—a wife fifteen years older than I am, with a sharp nose, thin lips, and a sour disposition?
Fortune Teller—What more do you expect? Did you think you could get a real affinity for a dollar?

A Legislative Paradox.
"The representative part of the British Parliament is a practical paradox."
"Why?"
"Because it is a house of commons and yet peerless among legislatures."—Baltimore American.

Local Color.
"George, I shall need some money to-day."
"What for?"
"There's a white sale at one of the stores, and I want to attend it."
"A white sale? All right, Laura. A few silver dollars will do for that, won't they?"

Spread of Knowledge.
Teacher (at night school)—What is a sacred cow, and why is it so called?
Shaggy Haired Pupil—"Sacred cow" is a corruption of "sick red cow," its sickness being caused by a large hump on its shoulders.—Chicago Tribune.

Locating Him.
"Where's the man that's at the bottom of this fuss?" demanded the policeman, forcing his way into the center of the excited crowd.
"He's there, all right!" said one of the eager spectators. "The other man's still on top!"

Environment.
"Madame, your husband does not seem to have any organic trouble," said the physician.
"Land sakes, no!" exclaimed Mrs. Pneuritch. "Not in this neighborhood. But the folks that live next door to us have a graphophone that worries him nearly to death."

The revelation of the real state of the firm's finances was a terrible blow to Ezra Girdlestone. To a man of his overbearing tempestuous disposition failure and poverty were bitter things to face. All his life he had reckoned, as a matter of course, that when his father passed away he would be left almost a millionaire. A single half-hour's conversation had shattered this delusion, and left him face to face with ruin.

He proceeded to qualify himself as a dealer in diamonds. It happened that he was acquainted with one of the partners of the firm of Fugger & Stoltz, who did the largest import trade in precious stones. Through his kindness he received practical instructions in the variety and value of diamonds, and learned to detect all those little flaws and peculiarities which are only visible to the eye of an expert, and yet are of the highest importance in determining the price of a stone. With such opportunities Ezra made rapid progress, and within a few weeks there were few dealers in the trade who had a better grasp of the subject.

Early one April afternoon the major was strutting down St. James street, frock coated and kid gloved, with proboscis chest and glittering shoes peeped out from beneath the daintiest of gaiters. Young Girdlestone, who had been on the lookout from a club window, ran across and intercepted him.

"How are you, my dear major?" he cried, advancing upon him with outstretched hand and as much show of geniality as his nature permitted.

"How d'ye do? How d'ye do?" said the other somewhat pompously. He had made up his mind that nothing was to be done with the young man, and yet he was reluctant to break entirely with one whose purse was well lined.

"I've been wishing to speak with you for some days, major," said Ezra. "I wish to speak to you quietly on a matter of business. Can you meet me at Nelson's Cafe at four o'clock? I know the manager, and he'll let us have a private room."

"I'd ask you round to my own little place," the major said, "but it's rather too far. Nelson's at four. Right you are!" It was clear to him that some service or other was expected of him, and it was obviously his game therefore to hang back and not appear to be too eager to enter into young Girdlestone's views. When he presented himself at the entrance of Nelson's Cafe the young merchant had been fuming and chafing in the sitting room for five and twenty minutes.

"I'll tell you why I wanted to have a chat with you, major," Ezra said, having first opened the door suddenly and glanced out as a precaution against eavesdroppers. "I have to be cautious because what I have to say affects the interest of the firm. I wouldn't for the world have anyone know about it except yourself. We have a difficult enterprise on which we are about to embark," Ezra said. "It is one which will need great skill and tact, though it may be made to pay well if properly managed. For this enterprise we require an agent to perform one of the principal parts. This agent must possess great ability, and, at the same time, be a man on whom we can thoroughly rely. You are prepared to put yourself at our orders on condition that you are well paid for it?"

"Not so fast, my young friend, not so fast!" said the major. "Let's hear what it is that you want me to do, and then I'm ready to say what I'll agree to."

Thus encouraged, Ezra proceeded to unfold the plan upon which the House of Girdlestone depended. Not a word did he say of ruin or danger, or the reasons which had induced this speculation. On the contrary he depicted the affairs of the firm as being in a most flourishing condition, and this venture as simply a small, insignificant offshoot from their business, undertaken as much for amusement as for any serious purpose. Still, he laid stress upon the fact that though the sum in question was a small one to the firm, yet it was a very large one in other men's eyes. As to the morality of the scheme, that was a point which Ezra omitted entirely to touch upon. Any comment upon that would, he felt, be superfluous when dealing with such a man as his companion.

"And now, major," he concluded, "provided you lend us your name and your talents to help us in our speculation the firm are prepared to meet you in a most liberal spirit in the matter of remuneration. Of course, your voyage and your expenses will be handsomely paid. You will have to travel by steamer to St. Petersburg, provided that we choose the Ural Mountains as the scene of our imaginary find. I hear that there is high play going on aboard those boats, and with your well-known skill you will no doubt be able to make the voyage a remunerative one. We calculate that at the most you will be in Russia about three months. Now, the firm thought that it would be very fair if they were to guarantee you

two hundred and fifty pounds, which they would increase to five hundred in case of success; of course, by that we mean complete success such as would be likely to attend your exertions."

When the young man had finished, the major stood up with his face to the empty fireplace, his legs far apart, his chest inflated, and his body rocking ponderously backwards and forwards.

"Let me be quite sure that I understand you," he said. "You wish me to go to Russia? You have the goodness to suggest that on my way I should rook me fellow-passengers in the boat?"

"That is to say, if you think it worth your while."

"Quite so. If I think it worth my while. I am then to pretend to discover certain diamond mines, and am to give weight to me story by the fact that I am known to be a man of good birth, and also by exhibiting some rough stones which you wish me to take out with me from England."

"Quite right, major," Ezra said encouragingly.

"I am then to telegraph or write this to England and get it inserted in the papers?"

"That's an ugly word," Ezra remonstrated. "This 'report' we will say. A report may be either true or false, you know."

"And by this report then," the major continued, "you reckon that the market will be so affected that your father and you will be able to buy and sell in a manner that will be profitable to you, but by which you will do other people out of their money?"

"You have an unpleasant way of putting it," said Ezra with a forced laugh; "but you have the idea right."

"I have another idea as well," roared the old soldier, flushing purple with passion. "I've an idea that if I was twenty years younger I'd see whether you'd fit through that window, Master Girdlestone. I'd have taught you to propose such a scheme to a man with blue blood in his veins, you scoundrel!"

Ezra fell back in his chair. He was outwardly composed, but there was a dangerous glitter in his eye, and his face had turned from a healthy olive to a dull yellow tint.

"You won't do it?" he gasped.
"Do it! D'ye think a man who's worn Her Majesty's scarlet jacket for twenty years would dirty his hands with such a trick? I tell ye, I wouldn't do it for all the money that ever was coined. Look here, Girdlestone, I know you, but you don't know me!"

The young merchant sat silently in his chair, with the same livid color upon his face and savage expression in his eyes. Major Tobias Clutterbuck stood at the end of the table, stooping forward so as to lean his hands upon it, with his eyes protuberant and his scanty grey fringe in a bristle with indignation.

"What right had you to come to me with such a proposal? I don't set up for being a saint, but I've some morals, such as they are, and I mean to stick to them. One of my rules of life has been never to know a blackguard, and so, my young friend, from this day forth you and I go on our own roads. I'm not particular, but you must draw the line somewhere. I draw it at you."

It struck the waiters at Nelson's well-known restaurant as a somewhat curious thing that their two customers should walk out with such very grave faces, and in so unsober a manner.

CHAPTER VII.

There were rejoicings in Phillimore Gardens over Tom's engagement, for the two old people were both heartily fond of Kate—"Our Kate," as they were wont proudly to call her. The physician chafed at first over the idea of keeping the matter a secret from Girdlestone. A little reflection served to show him, however, that there was nothing to be gained by informing him, while Kate's life, during the time that she was forced to remain under his roof, would be more tolerable as long as he was kept in ignorance of it.

After breakfast one morning, the doctor asked his son to step with him into the library. "You must do something to keep you from mischief, my boy," he said at last, brusquely.

"I'm ready for anything," replied Tom. "But I don't quite see what I am fitted for."

"First of all, what do you think of this?" the doctor asked abruptly, handing a letter over to his son, who opened it, and read as follows:

"Dear Sir—It has come to my knowledge through my son that your boy has abandoned the study of medicine, and that you are still uncertain as to his future career. I have long had the intention of seeking a young man who might join in our business, and relieve my old shoulders of some of the burden. Ezra urges me to write and propose that your son should become one of us. If he has any taste for business we shall be happy to advance his interest in every way. He would, of course, have to purchase a share in the concern, which would amount to seven thousand pounds, on which he would be paid interest at the rate of five per cent. By allowing this interest to accumulate, and investing also his share of the profits, he might in time absorb a large portion of the business. In case he joined us upon this footing we should have no objection to his name appearing as one of the firm.

"With kind regards to your family, and hoping that they enjoy the great blessing of health, I remain, sincerely yours,
"JOHN GIRDLESTONE."

"What d'ye think of that?" the doctor asked when his son had finished reading it.

"I hardly know," said Tom. "I should like a little time to think it over."

"Seven thousand pounds is a good round sum. It is more than half the total capital which I have invested for you. On the other hand, I have heard those who ought to know say there is not a

sounder or better managed concern in London. There's no time like the present, Tom. Get your hat, and we'll go down to Fenchurch street together and look into it."

It was a proud day for the ex-medical student when he first entered the counting house of the African firm and realized that he was one of the governing powers in that busy establishment. Tom Dimsdale's mind was an intensely practical one, and although he had found the study of science an irksome matter, he was able to throw himself into business with uncommon energy and devotion. The clerks soon found that the sunburned, athletic looking young man intended to be anything but a sleeping partner, and both they and old Gilray respected him accordingly.

Girdlestone called him into the office one day, and congratulated him upon the progress which he was making. "My dear young man," he said to him in his patriarchal way, "I am delighted to hear of the way in which you identify yourself with the interests of the firm. If at first you find work allotted to you which may appear to you to be rather menial, you must understand that that is simply due to our desire that you should master the whole business from its very foundations."

"There is nothing I desire better," said Tom.

"In addition to the routine of office work, and the superintendence of the clerks, I should wish you to have a thorough grasp of all the details of the shipping, and of the loading and unloading of our vessels, as well as of the storage of goods when landed. When any of our ships are in, I should wish you to go down to the docks and to overlook everything which is done."

In one respect Tom Dimsdale was immeasurably the gainer by his connection with the firm, for without that it is difficult to say how he could have found opportunities for breaking through the barrier which separated him from Kate. The surveillance of the merchant had become stricter of late, and all invitations from Mrs. Dimsdale or other friends who pitied the loneliness of the girl were repulsed by Girdlestone with the curt intimation that his ward's health was not such as to justify him in allowing her to incur any risk of catching a chill. She was practically a prisoner in the great stone cage in Eccleston square, and even on her walks a warden in the shape of a footman was, as we have seen, told off to guard her. Whatever John Girdlestone's reasons may have been, he had evidently come to the conclusion that it was of the highest importance that she should be kept secluded.

As it was, Tom, thanks to his position as one of the firm, was able occasionally, in spite of every precaution, to penetrate through the old man's defensive works. If a question of importance arose at Fenchurch street during the absence of the senior partner, what more natural than that Mr. Dimsdale should volunteer to walk round to Eccleston square in order to acquaint him with the fact. And if it happened that the gentleman was not to be found there, how very natural that the young man should wait half an hour for him, and that Miss Harston should take the opportunity of a chat with an old friend? Precious, precious interviews those, the more so for their rarity. They brightened the dull routine of Kate's weary life, and sent Tom back to the office full of spirit and hope. The days were at hand when the memory of them was to shine out like little rifts of light in the dark cloud of existence.

And now the time was coming when it was to be decided whether, by a last bold stroke, the credit of the house of Girdlestone was to be saved, or whether the attempt was to plunge them into deeper and more hopeless ruin. An unscrupulous agent named Langworthy had been dispatched to Russia well primed with instructions as to what to do and how to do it. He had been in the employ of an English corn merchant at Odessa, and had some knowledge of the Russian language which would be invaluable to him in his undertaking. In the character of an English gentleman of scientific tastes he was to establish himself in some convenient village among the Ural Mountains. There he was to remain some little time, so as to arouse confidence in the people before making his pretended discovery. He was then to carry his rough diamonds to Tobolsk, as the nearest large town, and to exhibit them there, backing up his assertion by the evidence of villagers who had seen him dig them up. The Girdlestons knew that that alone would be sufficient when telegraphed to England to produce a panic in the sensitive diamond market. Before any systematic inquiry could be made, Langworthy would have disappeared, and their little speculation would have come off. After that the sooner people realized that it was a hoax the better for the conspirators. In any case, there seemed to be no possibility that the origin of the rumor could be traced. Meanwhile Ezra Girdlestone had secured his passage in the Cape mail steamer Cyprion. On the night that he left he sat up some time in the library at Eccleston square talking over the matter for the last time with his father.

(To be continued.)

"Biggins is always repeating the things his children say."

"Well," answered Miss Cayenne, "he ought to be encouraged. I have no doubt they are much less wearisome than his original remarks would be."
—Washington Star.

Philosophical.

"Beg pardon, ma'am," said the butler, "but your son has just eloped with the parlor maid."

"Oh, that isn't so bad," rejoined Mrs. Uppson. "He might have eloped with the cook—and I never could have replaced her."