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"By unknown writers in quest of an occasion to complain," the Idiot answered. "Nobody has a right to complain. Nobody has complained," the Idiot answered. Mr. Whitechoker has merely advanced the proposition that it's hard on the little fellow."

"Boosh!" said the lawyer. "The little fellow has no sympathy from me. The little fellow in any business goes to the wall." "I'll give you my sympathy," said the lawyer, "your pardon for so flatly contradicting you. Just because there is one J. Pierpont Morgan in the world, all the little bankers don't have to stop banking and take in the money of the great banker and give it to their children's backs; because Mr. Carnegie gives \$563 libraries a week to the United States, doesn't prevent me from taking the money of the great banker and giving it out of the Common Council; and I haven't observed that the trousers trust has put the pantemaker out of business. But in literature, the little fellow is the great fellow. In literature, the first editions which Mr. Bib says don't exist."

"A good book will find its place," said Mr. Pedagogue sententiously.

"The great fellow is the little fellow. On the top shelf where the dust is thickest, unless it is written by one of the crackerjacks."

"The survival of the fittest is an inexorable law," observed the Bibliomaniac.

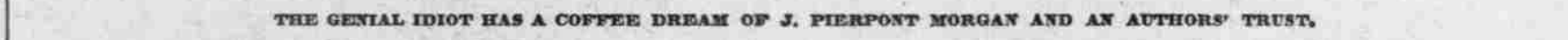
"The great fellow is the little fellow. In the presence of ladies and gentlemen at this time of the day," remonstrated the Idiot. "Submit to you, Mr. Bib, that the great fellow is the little fellow. It is a mistake. Nevertheless, your contention is correct. I still think, however, that something should be done for the others, and I should rejoice to see the literary patron of the great fellow transferred to the little country. Mr. Vanderbilt pays a chef \$10,000 a year to do his cooking for him. Why should he not keep a poet and a novelist as well as a chef? Golum is more important in the development of the nation than a man pate de foie gras, or lobster a la Newburg, and yet we find our billionaires rewarding cooks with large sums of money, and our United States Government never to the literary fellow. It doesn't seem right that a cook should receive \$10,000 a year for preparing indigestible dishes, and destroy a man's stomach with a preparation of foie gras, and that the mental stimulant serving in a garret two blocks away."

"How would you work your plan for the provision of small literary fry?" demanded Mr. Brief.

"There are several ways," said the Idiot. "Either by governmental ownership or by private enterprise. It wouldn't be any business at all, and the great fellow poet could get credit at the grocer's and the mute, inglorious Dickens could fasten a hook on a convenient butcher. The Government ownership of the literary mind is the worst of all. It is the influence of politics, which is always baneful. For instance, no Democratic novelist or Pop poet would be in it with the influence of the Grover Cleveland administration; and unless the Bromo Seltzer reports of last year are entirely wrong, it would be a century before a Democratic novelist or Pop poet would be above water with that system in vogue. These objections countervail the advantages which would result from a thorough governmental inspection of all literary productions before publication, and in view of the Postoffice scandals I for one should doubt the advisability of starting another department at Washington."

"Very wise," said Mr. Brief. "It would merely lead up another field for bribery and corruption."

"But by private enterprise, literary patronage would be beyond criticism," continued the Idiot. "The grocer or the butler would not be guided by his politics, but what we may call a literary vaulter by considerations of politics, and he would also serve as a check upon a too voluminous novelist or poet. I have known, for instance, with his fifteen or twenty homes, each provided with a fullest set of



"Maybe I do," said the Idiot. "Doesn't make any difference, though. Hall Corbett looks alike to me. And so it would go. Out in Pittsburgh he could have a piece of the force to cook up an ode to the

By Edwin Lefevre

called for their usual daily interview with the famous leader of the stock market. There were two United States Senators, an ex-Governor, a score of men who had been in Congress, and a few doubting thoms in the stock market, three or four gray-haired, shrewd-faced capitalists whose names appeared many times on the financial pages of newspapers; a baker's dozen of prominent municipal officials, and a well-known foreign president, with a ruddy face and a snow-white beard; two famous physicians, the vice president of a life insurance company, half a score of wholesale merchants and low-volce, insignificant little men with quiet, almost apologetic look, who seldom spoke and never smiled, but who, next to the Colonel himself, was beyond question the heaviest player in the office. In the office was a big, stout, red-headed man, who sat at a long polished table, were several directors of the Suburban Trolley Company, men to whom the Colonel referred as "prominent insiders." It was a very important gathering. It involved no less than a fine understanding in regard to the great trolley pool, whose operations were to be ascertained, for the 10,000 shares for which the Colonel had advice were "carrying from 500 to 10,000 shares each of Easton & Allentown, leaned toward eagerly. A were men who north of Wall street would not have stooped to such a thing. Their lives depended on it. In a broker's office such notions were absurd, almost wicked. Certainly at that moment 20 pairs of eyes were looking fixed at the great leader of the stock market and his associates.

The Colonel felt this intuitively. He confirmed it with a quick glance of his sharp little eyes. He had not sold all his Easton & Allentown, but he had sold half. It was not likely that the stock would go much higher. Wall street, ever loath to believe well of any stock operator, used to comment on his "bearishness." He had heard much about the "Treadwell buying," but never a word about the Treadwell selling.

If the Colonel gave a hint to the customers, they would make the price of the stock break sharply, and this would not benefit anyone. He had advised them to buy the stock at 90 and 95—it was now 100. He had told them to sell at 100. If they did not sell out, in the hope of making more, it was their own lookout. But there was the boy with the 100 shares, the pleasant little clerk from out of town, who had made an entire fortune, his accumulated savings of 100,000. He was a stranger to Wall street. But supposing he should tell that he had been advised to sell. There would be the deuce to say.

Lucy looked took chances. Out of one corner of his mouth, so that he did not even turn his head toward the boy and so that the watching customers could not see his face, he said, "I don't know what a quarter—"

A specter—a loathed but philanthropic

United States Steel Corporation every morning for his breakfast; in New York some of the press correspondents, like Richard Harding Davis could keep himself informed as to the romance of life in high society; and, if he wanted to laugh, he could have a private humorist always at his side to make jokes for him. Carnegie would be a literary patron not to be sneezed at, and in the end it wouldn't cost him a cent, because he'd get his money back by requiring every library he owned in the world to buy a copy of each of the books his library lent out to him.

"You are a brainy Idiot," said the Bibliomaniac. "I don't believe J. P. Morgan himself ever reasoned out so ingenious a scheme as this."

"No—but he'd be the man to take the job of patron general, all right, under an Incorporated United States Literary Corporation," said the Idiot. "If J. Pierpont Morgan would organize an American Trust and buy in all the independent operators, it would be the finest thing in the world for American literature."

"It would be enormous overproduction," said Mr. Brief. "Mr. Morgan would be stuck, I am afraid."

"Never," said the Idiot. "Because why? He'd shut down the unproductive mills he found he didn't need."

The Poet laughed.

"Mills, eh?" he asked.

"That's the word," said the Idiot. "A large number of the authors nowadays are merely grinding the grist of words into unsalable sentences. Mr. Morgan could afford to buy these fellows out, pay 'em not to write for a period of years, and give 'em good money in advance, on the principle of his—make no brakersmen of 'em, or bank clerks, or stokers on his ocean steamers. That would rust 'em up for a while, and then they'd have to earn 'em a fresh start when they took up the pen again."

"I don't quite catch the value of the scheme," said Mr. Witchever.

"Well, says Mr. Morgan controls America's 25,000 authors," observed the Idiot. "He says to 3,000 of 'em, 'you swear off ink until I send for you.' To the other 22,000 he says, 'you're on duty for a year. We shall need for the consumption of the reading public for 1904 750 historical novels, 100 volumes of short stories, 50 detective stories, 100 volumes of Wild Animals We Rarely Meet, 53 psychological novels, five racy volumes on New York Society and Divorce, two books of essays, and one poem of any length. It's up to you, my friend, to earn 'em out, and here's \$25,000 a year for every one of you. Get busy. Don't you see? By that one act 24,000 American authors would have a job, and the rest would be a highly organized body with a precise knowledge of what they had to do, plenty of time to do it in, and food galore while doing it, with the few fad writers to spare for luxury. Mighty few of 'em have that now."

"Most ingenious," said Mr. Brief. "And what do you suppose the public would say to this?"

"Thank you, Mr. Morgan," said the Idiot. "You have checked the literary deluge that was drowning us in a babel of letters."

"Tut!" ejaculated Mr. Pedagogue scornfully. "Do you think the Authors themselves would consent?"

"Well, as to the thousands," said the Idiot, "I can't say. These mighty few Authors, however, who would refuse an income of \$25,000 a year, and as for the 24,000, if Mr. Morgan would give them that, they would be fad writers to spare in a given year. I think he'd get a working majority of them."

With which the Idiot with a polite bow to the Bibliomaniac, and a respectful one to his week before last bill, and sailed stately out of the room.

"What do you think of his scheme, Mr. Pedagogue?" asked the Bibliomaniac.

"I don't know," said the Poet, with a sigh. "Considering the number of words in the language, 2 cents a piece for letting 'em alone is mighty fine pay."

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Lefevre

fair at him: "Look at the color of your money, boy! Take your profits and get nothing!" And he walked into the room where the Suburban Trolley magnate awaited him, impatiently.

Carey, thrilled but tactless, gave his order to sell his Easton & Allentown, unsuspected by the mob. They sold it for him at 105%. Deducting commissions and interest charges the Colonel's whipper had put \$1000 in the young clerk's pocket.

And the stock went a little higher and then declined slowly to about 95. The customers all made a great deal of money as it was, but not as much as they would have "taken out" of the Easton & Allentown "deal" if they had overheard that one of Colonel Treadwell's many white-pers-imbibed but philanthropic affairs!

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