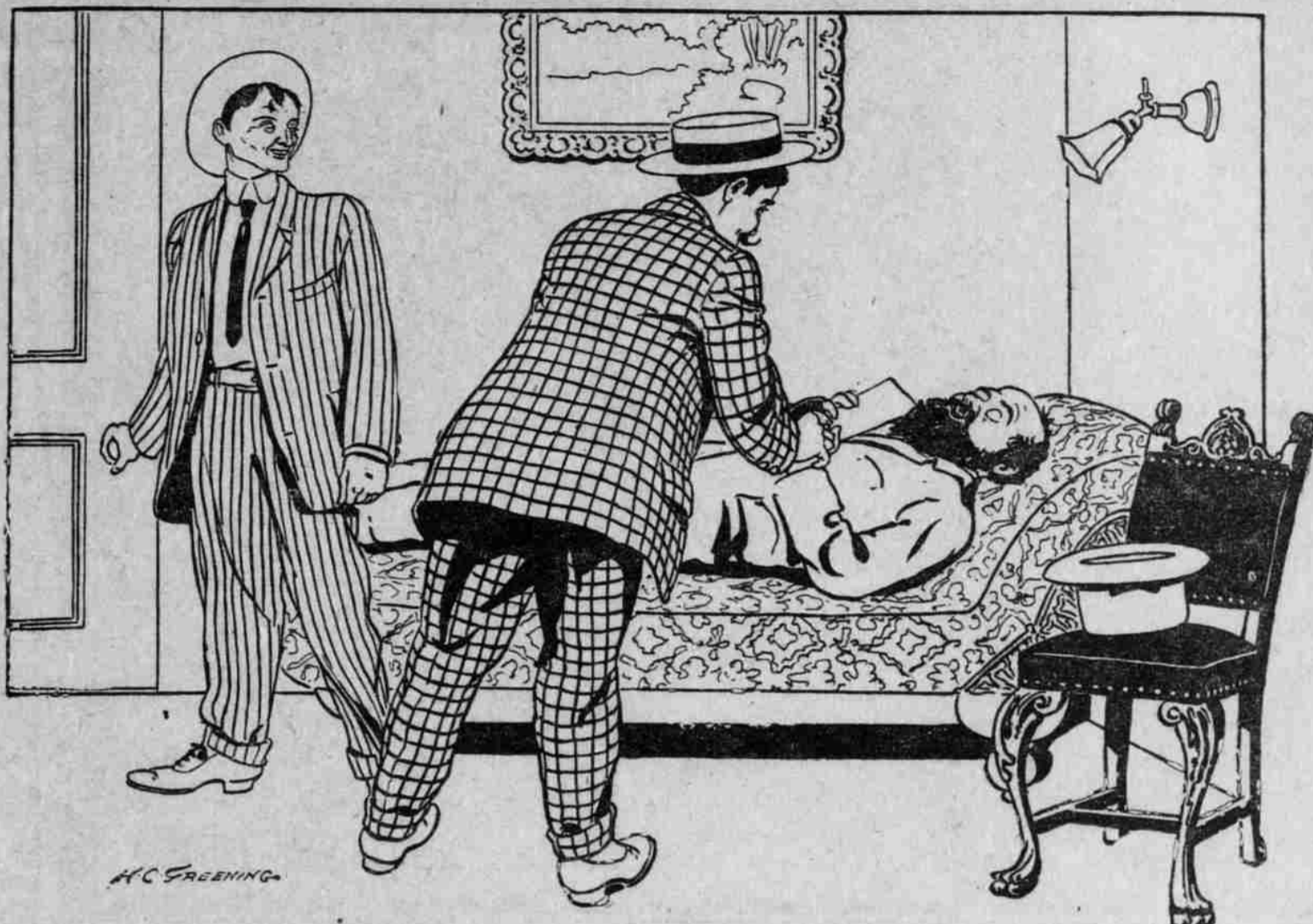


The Gentle Grafter by O. Henry

INNOCENTS OF BROADWAY.



"I WANT YOU TO TAKE CARE OF MY MONEY FOR ME."



"WE PUT THE CERTIFICATE OF STOCK IN THE CIGARMAN'S HAND."

BY O. HENRY.
"I HOPE some day to retire from business," said Jeff Peters, "and when I do, I don't want anybody to be able to say that I ever got a dollar of any man's money without giving him a quid pro rata for it. I've always managed to leave a customer some little gewgaw to paste in his scrapbook or stick between his Seth Thomas clock and the wall after we are through trading."

"There was one time I came near having to break this rule of mine, and do a profligate and illaudable action, but I was saved from it by the laws and statutes of our great and profitable country."

"One Summer me and Andy Tucker, my partner, went to New York to lay in our annual assortment of clothes and gents' furnishings. We was always pompous and regardless dressers, finding that looks went further than anything else in our business, except maybe our knowledge of railroad schedules and an autograph from the President that Loeb sent us, probably by mistake. Andy wrote a nature letter once and sent it in about animals that he had seen caught in a trap lots of times. Loeb must have read it 'triplets' and sent the photo. Anyhow it was useful to us to show people as a guarantee of good faith."

"Me and Andy never cared much to do business in New York. It was too much like pothunting. Catching suckers in that town is like dynamiting a Texas lake for bees. All you have to do anywhere between the North and East Rivers is to stand in the street with an open bag marked 'Drop packages of money here. No checks or loose bills taken.' You have a cop handy to club pickers who try to chip in post-office orders and Canadian money, and that's all there is to New York for a hunter who loves his profession. So me and Andy used to just nature fake the town. We'd get out our spyglasses and watch the woodcocks along the Broadway swamps putting plaster casts on their broken legs, and then we'd sneak away without firing a shot."

"One day in the paper mache palm-room of a choral hydrate and hops agency in a side street about eight inches off Broadway me and Andy had thrust upon us the acquaintance of a New Yorker. We had been together until we decided that each of us knew a man named Hellsmith, traveling for a stove factory in Duluth. This caused us to remark that the world was a very small place, and then this New Yorker busts his string and takes off his tin foil and excelsior packing and starts in giving us his Ellen Terries, beginning with the tin foil and shoe-laces to the Indians on the spot where Tammany Hall now stands."

"This New Yorker had made his money keeping a cigar store in Beekman street, and he hadn't been above fourteen street in ten years. Moreover, he had whiskers, and the time has gone by when a true sport will do anything to a man with whiskers. No grafter except a boy who is soliciting subscribers to an illustrated weekly to win the prize air rifle, or a widow, would have the heart to tamper with the man behind the razor. He was a typical city Reub—I'd bet the man hadn't been out of sight of a skyscraper in twenty-five years."

"Well, presents this metropolitan backwoodsman pulls out a roll of bills with an old blue sleeve elastic fitting tight around it and opens it up. 'There's \$5000,' says he, 'I'm showing it over the table to me, 'saves during my fifteen years of business. Put that in your pocket and keep it for me, Mr. Peters. I'm glad to meet you gentlemen from the West, and I may take a drop too much. I want you to take care of my money for me. Now let's have another beer.'"

"'You better keep this yourself,' says I. 'We are strangers to you, and you can't trust everybody you meet. Put your roll back in your pocket,' says I. 'And you'd better run along home before some farmhand from the Kaw River bottoms strolls in here and sells you a copper mine.'"

"'Oh, I don't know,' says Whiskers. 'I guess Little Old New York can take care of herself. I guess I know a man that's on the square when I see him. I've always found the Western people all right. I ask you as a favor, Mr. Peters,' says he, 'to keep that roll in your pocket for me I know a gentleman when I see him. And now let's have some more beer.'"

"In about ten minutes this fall of



"WE CAN'T TAKE IT, ANDY."

mannia leans back in his chair and snores. Andy looks at me and says: 'I reckon I'd better stay with him for five minutes or so, in case the waiter comes in.' 'He goes through his pockets and rains \$20 gold certificates on the table till it looked like a \$10,000 'Autumn day in a Lemon Grove' in the salons. Andy almost smiled. 'The first round that was dealt this boulevardier slaps down his hand, claims low and jack and big casino and rakes in the pot. 'Andy always took a pride in his poker playing. He got up from the table and looked sadly out the window at the streetcars. 'Well, gentlemen,' says the cigar man, 'I don't blame you for not wanting to play. I've forgotten the fine points of the game, I guess, it's been so long since I indulged. Now, how long are you gentlemen going to be in the city? 'I told him about a week longer. He says, 'I don't blame you for not wanting to come over from Brooklyn that evening and they are going to see the sights of New York. His cousin, he says, is in the artificial limb and lead cascade business, and hasn't crossed the bridge in eight years. They expect to have the time of their lives, and Mr. Tucker tomorrow afternoon about 6 or 7,' says he, 'and we'll have dinner together. Be good.' 'After Whiskers had gone Andy looked at me curious and doubtful. 'Well, Jeff,' says he, 'it looks like the ravens are trying to feed us two Elijahs so hard that if we turned 'em down again we ought to have the Audubon Society after us. It won't do to put the crown aside too often. I know this is something like paternalism, but

don't you think Opportunity has skinned its knuckles about enough knocking at our door? 'I put my feet on the table and my hands in my pockets, which is an attitude unfavorable to frivolous thoughts. 'Andy,' says I, 'this man with the hirsute whiskers has got us in a predicament. We can't move hand or foot with his money. You and me have got a gentleman's agreement with Fortune that we can't break. We've done business in the West, where it's more of a fair game. Out there the people we skin are trying to skin us, even the farmers and the remittance men that the magazines send out to write up Goldfield. But there's little sport in New York City for red, reel or gun. They hunt here with either one or two things—a slugsnot or a letter of introduction. The town has been stocked so full of carp that the game fish are all gone. If you spread a net here, do you catch legitimate suckers in it, such as the Lord intended to be caught—fresh guys who know it all sports with a little coin and the nerve to play another man's game, street crowds out for the fun of dropping a dollar or two, and village smarties who know just where the little pea is? No, sir,' says I. 'What the grafter live on here is widows and orphans, and foreigners who save up a bit of money and hand it out over the first courier they see with an iron railing to it, and factory girls and little shopkeepers that never leave the block they do business on. That's what they call suckers here. They're

nothing but canned sardines, and all the bait you need to catch 'em is a pocket-knife and a soda cracker.' 'Now this cigar man,' I went on, 'is one of the types. He's lived twenty years on one street without learning as much as you would in getting a once-over shave from a lockjawed barber in a Kansas crossroads town. But he's a New Yorker, and he'll brag about that all the time when he isn't picking up five wires or getting in front of street cars or paying out money to wiretappers or standing under a safe that's being hoisted into a skyscraper. When a New Yorker does loosen up,' says I, 'it's like the spring decomposition of the ice jam in the Allegheny River. He'll swamp you with cracked ice and backwater if you don't get out of the way. 'It's mighty unlucky for us, Andy,' says I, 'that this cigar exponent with the parsley dressing saw fit to bedeck us with his childlike trust and altruism. For,' says I, 'this money of his is an eye-sore to my sense of rectitude and ethics. We can't take it, Andy. You know we can't,' says I, 'for we haven't a shadow of a title to it—not a shadow. If there was the least bit of a way, we could put in a claim to it. I'd be willing to see him start in for another twenty years and make another \$5000 for himself, but we haven't sold him anything, we haven't been imbroiled in a trade or anything commercial. He approached us friendly,' says I, 'and with blind and beautiful idiosyncy laid the stuff in our hands. We'll have to give

it back to him when he wants it.' 'Your arguments,' says Andy, 'are past criticism or comprehension. No, we can't walk off with the money—as things now stand. I admire your conscientious way of doing business, Jeff,' says Andy, 'and I wouldn't propose anything that wasn't square in line with your theories of morality and initiative. 'But I'll be away tonight and most of tomorrow, Jeff,' says Andy. 'I've got some business affairs that I want to attend to. When this free greenbacks party comes in tomorrow afternoon, hold him here till I arrive. We've all got an engagement for dinner, you know.' 'Well, sir, about 5 the next afternoon in trips the cigar man, with his eyes half open. 'Been having a glorious time, Mr. Peters,' says he. 'Took in all the sights. I tell you New York is the onliest only. Now if you don't mind,' says he, 'I'll lie down on that couch and dose off for about nine minutes before Mr. Tucker comes. I'm not used to being up all night. And tomorrow, if you don't mind, Mr. Peters, I'll take that five thousand. I met a man last night that's got a sure winner at the racetrack tomorrow. Excuse me for being so impolite as to go to sleep, Mr. Peters.' 'And so this inhabitant of the second city in the world reposes himself and begins to snore, while I sit there musing over things and wishing I was back in the West, where you could always depend on a customer fighting to keep

his money hard enough to let your conscience take it from him. 'At half-past 5 Andy comes in and sees the sleeping form. 'I've been over to Trenton,' says Andy, pulling a document out of his pocket. 'I think I've got this matter fixed up all right, Jeff. Look at that.' 'I open the paper and see that it is a corporation charter issued by the State of New Jersey to The Peters & Tucker Consolidated and Amalgamated Aerial Franchise Development Company, Limited. 'It's to buy up rights of way for airship lines,' explained Andy. 'The Legislature wasn't in session, but I found a man at a postcard stand in the lobby that kept a stock of charters on hand. There are 100,000 shares,' says Andy, 'expected to reach a par value of \$1. I had one blank certificate of stock printed. 'Andy takes out the blank and begins to fill it in with a fountain pen. 'The whole bunch,' says he, 'goes to our friend in dreamland for \$5000. Did you learn his name?' 'Make it out to beaver,' says I. 'We put the certificate of stock in the cigar man's hand and went out to pack our suit cases. 'On the ferryboat Andy says to me: 'Is your conscience easy about taking the money now, Jeff?' 'Why shouldn't it be?' says I. 'Are we any better than any other Holding Company?' (Copyright, 1907, by S. S. McClure Co. in the United States and Great Britain.)

STORIES BY AND ABOUT PROMINENT MEN

The Wrong One.

MARTIN A. DECKER, of New Palis, is one of the Public Utilities Commissioners of New York, a body of men with sweeping jurisdiction over the street and steam railways and the gas and electric companies of the state.

Mr. Decker, discussing the duties of his new post the other day, said: "Ours is work that must be done with the utmost prudence and care. Nothing must be undertaken by us hastily, or else noise arises in the room next to him."

"There was, you know, a new superintendent appointed to a certain school—a zealous man, but a choleric and hasty one as well."

"Now, it happened that on the day of his arrival at the school, while he was working hard in his office, a maddening noise arose in the room next to him."

"The superintendent stood this noise as long as he could. Then he looked over the glass partition into the uproarious room, and saw among the noisy lads a combed there a tallish chap who seemed to be making more of a row than all the rest combined."

"Beside himself with rage, the superintendent reached out his arm, seized the tall boy by the collar, dragged him over the partition, and banged him down into a chair beside his desk."

"No," he said, "sit still there, and don't open your lips till I give you the word."

"Then he bent over his papers, and in the ensuing quietude worked away busily. "Some 15 minutes passed. Then the head of a small boy peered timidly over the partition, and a meek little voice said: "Please, sir, you've got our teacher."

Caste.

"THE late Francis Murphy," said a Pittsburg man, "was perhaps the greatest temperance reformer our country has ever seen. Over ten million people, thanks to his labors, took the pledge."

"Mr. Murphy, a plain, sincere man, hated snobbishness hardly less than drunkenness. At a dinner here in Pittsburg I once heard him rebuke, with a little anecdote, a snobbish millionaire."

"He said there was a rich and snobbish Englishwoman living in the country. Her husband put himself up for a political place, and in order to help his campaign, the woman gave a garden party to which every voter for miles around was invited."

"Amongst the humble guests was a very independent grocer. The grocer made himself quite at home. No Duke's manner could have been easier and freer. Indeed, the man's total lack of subservience an-

gered his hostess extremely, so that in the end, thinking to take him down a peg, she said to him significantly: "You know, Mr. Green, in London shopkeepers don't go into the best society."

"The grocer looked at her, and nodded and smiled. "They don't here, either, ma'am," he said.

The Retort Courteous.

PAUL MORTON, the president of the Equitable Life Assurance Society, was talking on La Savalle about the London cabbie.

"A hansom or a four-wheeler is supposed to be cheap in London," Mr. Morton said, "but let the average American tourist go driving about in one of them day after day, and at the week's end the size of his expenditure will shock him."

"Of course, it is impossible to ride in a London cab and pay only the legal fare of a shilling for two miles. Try cab-riding without liberal tipping, and the cabmen will assail you with the most brilliant and witty sarcasms."

"I know a lawyer who, through ignorance, rode from the British Museum to the Ritz Hotel, in Piccadilly, and gave the driver only the shilling required by law."

"The driver looked at this shilling and bit his lip. Then, in the most courteous manner, he motioned to the lawyer to get in again."

"Go on," he said, "do step in again, sir. I could a' drew ye a yard or two further for this 'ere.'"

Let Off Easy.

LINCOLN BEACHY, the well-known aeronaut, was criticizing in New York the airship of a rival.

"I don't want to be too severe on this dangerous contrivance of yours," Mr. Beachy said, "it is a bad affair all through, but I am willing to let it off easy, as the customer did with the careless barber."

"There was a barber in South Bend who, having been out late the night before, had a shabby hand the next morning, and cut a patron's cheek four times. After each accident the barber said, as he sponged away the blood, 'Oh, dear me, how careless!' and laughed, and let it go at that."

shake his head from side to side and to toss it up and down. "What is the matter? the barber asked, 'You ain't got the toothache, have you?'"

"No," said the customer; "I only just wanted to see if my mouth would still hold water without leaking, that was all."

Unenviable Fame.

LINCOLN STEFFENS, in an address on municipal politics, said in Chicago of a certain city:

"That city is as notorious for its rottenness as the town of Peebles is notorious for another characteristic."

"Here is an incident that will give you an idea of the reputation of Peebles."

"On a train one day a man rushed into a car, held up his hand for attention, and shouted excitedly: 'Anybody here who belongs to Peebles?'"

"Aye, I do," said a small, dry old fellow calmly. "Then," said the other, "lend us yer corkscrew."

It Had Been a Rough Passage.

JACOB HOPE, the head of Philadelphia's famous phonograph school for parrots, said the other day:

"There are worse things than a swearing parrot, and one was brought over on a German boat last month. His owner, a sailor, swore that this travestied bird knew no profanity, and a lady bought him."

"But she had to bring him to me. The parrot, though he didn't swear, had evidently spent most of his time on shipboard in the ladies' saloon, for what he would do was this: 'For hours at a time he would choke and gasp and hiccup as if he'd never stop, and then he'd sing out feebly, 'Steward—bucket.'"

Humble Fruit.

JAMES WILSON, the Secretary of Agriculture, was discussing in Washington the aid which his department gives the American farmer.

the reach of all. Then the story of the boy and the hot-house grapes will be as dead and antiquated as the theater hat stories of the past."

"This boy—he was a boothblack—entered a grocer's one day, and, pointing to some superb grapes, said: 'Wot's the price o' them there, mister?'"

"'One dollar a pound, my lad,' the clerk replied. 'A look of anguish passed over the boy's face, and he said hastily: 'Then give us a cent's worth o' carrots. I'm dead nuts on fruit.'"

No Longer Safe and Sane. MORRIS SELLERS LARGEY, the young Montana millionaire, who is devoting himself to the theatrical business, said at a dinner, apropos of his new theater in New York:

"I think that theatricals offer a fine field for shrewd investors. They are very steady. They are not as the slave trade was during the Civil War."

"Perhaps you have heard of the slave who wanted to buy his freedom. This was before the war, and, since he was a very good slave, his master would not sell him to himself at any price."

"But as the war approached its end the master, not unaturally, changed his mind. He sent for the slave one morning, and asked him if he was still of the same mind about purchasing himself."

"The slave scratched his head, looked at the grocer and faltered: 'Well, Marsie Henry, Ah did wanter buy mahself, but Ah been a-studyin' 'erbout it right smart lately, sah, an' Ah done come to de 'cision dat in dese times nigsah prophy am too onastant, sah, to put any money in.'"

A Felicitous Aside. SENATOR BEVERIDGE, describing a campaign wherein he had outgeneraled a rival, said:

"When it became plain that victory was mine, when my opponent's face began to grow darker and more forbidding, I smiled to myself; I could have muttered to myself some such felicitous aside as that which came from the small boy who was being spanked."

"In the seat of my trousers might injure her delicate hand."