

CAPTAIN JIM'S COURTSHIP

By A. E. RICE, Portland

(Continued from Last Week.)

When Annie abruptly left Captain Jim, she proceeded to the sewing room, just off the parlor, and there found Nan and Kitty. A young friend of Annie's, talking together.

"I shall faint, I'm sure," said Annie joining them.

"Did he squeeze you?" queried Nan.

"No, but he tried to kiss me," replied Annie.

"He's got a heap of money," said Nan, "and he ain't a sort that lavishes endearments upon any female either. It's my opinion he's gone a little soft on you, for which consideration a meeting half way might be of some benefit to a lone woman with three children."

"Do you think he is in earnest?" questioned Annie.

"Try him," remarked Kitty, as if she anticipated some fun.

"Would you, if you were in my place," said Annie smiling.

"Of course I would," promptly replied Nan.

"Maybe I will," said Annie, "if only for the fun of it."

"Do," exclaimed Kitty.

At this juncture, Barbara, Annie's twelve-year-old daughter, entered from the dance room, and abruptly informed "ma" that "there's an old codger in there, wot's got grey hair, who is continually sidelin' up agin me, an' I jist skipt out to tell you."

"What did he say?" inquired ma.

"Oh, he jist wanted to know if I was the Widder Walker's leetle gal," replied Barbara, imitating Captain Jim, "an' I jist up an' told him I was, an' if he felt better to know it, I was glad, and hoped he would keep so. I didn't tell him no more, so help me."

"Hush, child," interrupted her mother, "how your tongue does go."

"It's tied, it is," replied Barbara.

"Post her," suggested Kitty.

"A wise precaution," exclaimed Nan.

"The strings are apt to break and loosen her parts of speech."

"Who air you aludin' to?" snapped Barbara.

"Barbara!" exclaimed her mother, "how dare you?"

"I'm mum, I is," answered the twelve-year-old.

An hour later this twelve-year-old daughter was seated in the parlor, listening to Captain Smeets, who was entertaining her with "yarns" of his early experience in Missouri. He had been very suave and patronizing in his speech and had reached a point where he was satisfied the child felt kindly toward him.

"Now Miss Barbara, I be goin' tew talk tew you like a father," and drawing his chair closer to the child, said, "you be straight with me an' I'll be the best friend you ever had."

The twelve-year-old looked up and replied, "all right, let 'er go," and then turning her eyes to the far corner of the room, added softly to herself: "Ole chump, I'm posted, I is."

"Does that air feller MacDonald call on your ma much?" queried Jim, trying to appear unconcerned.

"Well, you jist bet he do."

"Hum," ejaculated Jim, thoughtfully; "I reckon he be a dark horse, and a regular sticker, tew, them Scotch allus air."

"Nop. Irish, o' course."

"Ain't you mistaken? MacDonald must be Scotch," said Jim.

"No, he's Irish, 'cause got er red top, an' I calls him 'Red,'" facetiously answered the twelve-year-old.

"Be you a callin' of him 'Red' 'cause of his red har?"

"Yep! red hair, red face, all fire," replied the child.

"Does yer ma call him 'Red'?"

"Nop; she tones him up with Mack, 'cause he likes it better," replied Barbara, "but I knows he's Irish, 'cause—well, I knows, don't I."

Captain Jim became deeply absorbed in thought. The information obtained from the child was of a disquieting kind. It made him aware for the first time that Annie had another admirer and one who evidently showed her much attention.

"So this feller Red MacDonald calls on your ma a good deal, eh? Takes her out tew the ope-ra and sich like. I spose?" remarked Jim with a tinge of jealousy.

Barbara carelessly replied to this feeler, "sometimes, but then she only goes to git him out of the house—he bothers the old gal so much."

At that moment, during a lull in the dancing, Captain Jim thought he heard laughter, in which the word, "liar" or some word like it, sounded distinct. He looked sharply at the sewing room door. It was closed. Then he looked at the child, "must er been the wind," he said to himself.

Ah, Jim, if you had there and then followed up the promptings of your judgment and opened the sewing room door you would have discovered behind it two mischievous women, on their knees, with ears close to the keyhole of the door, a discovery which would likely have spared you many a pang of self-reproach in after years.

Becoming tranquil again he exclaimed, "hum, he does, eh?"

Barbara answered indifferently, "Yep, but ma don't think much of him."

"She don't," ejaculated Jim in surprise.

"Nop, tew young, an' then she thinks he wouldn't be good tew sich chillun." And Barbara added naively, as she looked up in Captain Jim's face, "I think it would be all right fer us tew call you Gov-ner."

Captain Jim failed to hear any laughter that time, though it was more distinct than before. He was over-

joyed. He arose from his chair with proud satisfaction beaming in his eyes, turned his back to the child and muttered to himself:

"Didn't I know it; didn't I say so. Big encumbrance them air three gals tew young fellers. Powerful thing in my favor though. There's a pint I must work on." Turning to the girl again he said, "so yer ma be bottered considerable by that young feller, eh?"

"Awful," replied the precocious child. "Jist ain't got no peace 'tall fir him. She'd like tew go 'way from this place."

"She wud?" exclaimed Captain Jim.

"Cert," answered the child.

"Why don't she go?"

"Got no rocks."

"If I was tew give her some, wud you be a friend tew me?"

Barbara sprang to her feet excited.

"You jist try me once, Friend! Look a 'ere, I'd do most anything fer you. Why old man, I'd call yer dad. There now."

"Dad," muttered Jim to himself.

"Dad. It don't sound bad nuther, kinder like it tew. Dad, hed o' the house, the pillar as it were, round which the mother clings fer s'port? Then he folded his arms and clasped an imaginary Annie with lively satisfaction. "Yum, yum. I swan, I kin taste them lips yit. Barb." He arose from the chair, and gave the girl a four-bit piece. "Buy yourself an' the chillun some sweets, an' tell yer ma I be a comin' tew spend Christmas eve with her an' the chillun."

Barbara took the four bits and going to the sewing room door, turned and said artfully, "all right, papa," and throwing him a childish kiss with her left hand opened the door and quit the room.

As the door closed on her a burst of feminine laughter rolled in, but Captain Jim heeded it not, perhaps heard it not, for he was dense with joyful satisfaction. He stood quite still for a moment, like one dazed. At length he muttered softly:

"Must go now. Reckon it's better not tew git tew fam-eel-er tew once." Passing into the dining room he wished several of the dancers good night, excusing himself with the remark that:

"The Wil-am-eet be a risin' fast, an' the Sel-um's moorins air apt to chafe apart." He went to the kitchen. It was deserted. He put on his slouch hat and pulled it well down over his eyes. Then drawing himself up erect and with a proud smile he exclaimed: "Jim, you be tew winard of them all, a sailin' fast an' a goin' tew win. The Widder be mine, sartin, sure."

PART TWO.

Christmas Eve was exceptionally clear, cold and calm. The day had been stormy, with occasional flurries of snow, but by seven o'clock the high winds had subsided and the angry looking clouds had entirely disappeared.

The stars glittered in the rarefied firmament with unwonted splendor, while the brilliant, silvery crescent of the new moon, as it swung low on the horizon, distinctly defined the irregular line of the dark wooded heights overlooking the western part of the city.

On Columbia, not far from that district known as Goose Hollow, stood Walker's dwelling. It stood about twenty feet back from the street on a large northwest corner lot. The house had been built "T" shape, with the bed-room wall abutting the north line of the lot, thus leaving quite a large garden space, on the corner, which was covered with shrubbery. A mass of tangled berry vines, weighted down with snow, had fallen and lay neglected on the small walk close beside the house completely shutting off outside communication between the front and rear entrances, except around by the street. It was a small house, containing three rooms and a woodshed. The rooms were scantily furnished, though having a clean and comfortable appearance.

The two younger children had been out to bed and were asleep. Barbara was sitting alone by the kitchen stove. Annie and her young friend Kitty, both warmly clad, were in the woodshed, standing close to the kitchen door. They were expecting Captain Jim Smeets, having seen him coming toward the house, and had slipped into the woodshed to play eaves-dropper, anticipating some amusing conversation to occur between Captain Jim and Barbara. A faint gleam of light penetrated through the keyhole of the kitchen door.

The silence was broken by Annie. (The Widdy) who asked her companion in an undertone, "is Frank sure to come tonight?" Frank Wilson was Kitty's "steady."

"Yes," replied Kitty, "he is coming about nine. I blacked his eye with burnt cork and scarred his face with sticking plaster." Kitty laughed and added, "of course, it is supposed he has been done up by Red and expects to meet him here and get satisfaction."

Annie smothered a laugh and exclaimed, "Good Father, and there is no such person as Red MacDonald."

Kitty rejoined, laughing softly, "No, but Frank's appearance will make Captain Jim think there is, a terrible fellow too. If our plan works right, we'll have lots of fun tonight and the old man will never kiss you any more."

"Whist." They suddenly ceased titling. Then Annie whispered, "someone is trying the shed door." The

door was being slowly pulled open from without, and the watchers indistinctly saw a tall dark form cautiously enter. Dead silence followed as though the intruder was listening. Then ensued a slight shuffling sound, like fumbling in the woodpile.

"Thar," softly exclaimed a voice, "I reckon it'll s'prise Annie, when she comes out'n fer wood. Jest a leetle brandy tew keep out'n the cold, an' she won't be knowin' who put it thar, nuther."

The shadow again appeared in the doorway, halted, then re-entered and closed the door. "Guess Annie's a sewin' by herself," speaking in an undertone, but loud enough for the watchers to hear. Continuing the voice said, "maybe I kin see the sweet darlin' through that keyhole. Yum, yum! sew'n I kin taste them lips yit."

Annie and her companion recognized the intruder. Kitty squeezed Annie's arm and whispered in her ear, "your lover."

Captain Jim, groped his way to the kitchen door. The two women pressed close to the wall to give him room to pass and to avoid discovery.

He peered through the keyhole and having satisfied himself, being able to see only one chair and table, he muttered audibly, "no one tew hum but herself an' a waitin' fer me, tew. Jest the time tew do some courtin'. No, I shan't go in this way. It might skeer her an' she'd be a-knowin' of who put that drap o' brandy in the woodpile. I'll jist go 'round to the front door."

He groped his way slowly toward the shed door still muttering to himself, "she's got to promise to be mine this night, or the bilar'll bust sure. I be a-cumin' my immaculate Annie."

Annie, having conceived an idea, lost no time in putting it into execution. She had silently withdrawn her gloves and at the moment when Captain Jim arrived opposite her, she stepped lightly forward, and suddenly uttering a piercing scream, clawed at his face. He sprang aside, yelling with terror, "for God's sake, take the varmint away," and made a dash for the door and liberty.

Annie again screamed and hissed like a wildcat. Her object was understood by Kitty who joined in the hissing.

Jim tore open the door and rushed out, pushing the door shut after him. The two mischievous conspirators smothered their uncontrollable laughter as much as possible. At length Annie exclaimed, "I shall die."

"Me, too," said Kitty.

Barbara hearing the wild screams opened the door and stood in amazement at the two hilarious women. "Well," said the twelve-year-old, "you air queer! What's the racket?"

Her mother motioned her to close the door.

"I think they've been a-drinkin'," she exclaimed as she closed the door and resumed her seat near the stove. Kitty asked Annie why she did it, adding, "you have upset our plan at the start."

"I know it," replied Annie, speaking low, still laughing, "but the temptation overcame me. Take this box and leave it at Webbs, or he may guess who scratched him. Let us go. He'll likely call in the neighbors."

"Very likely," laughed Kitty, "but they won't find the brandy." She had accidentally placed her hand on the small flask.

"Have you found it?"

"Yes," Kitty replied, "what shall we do with it?"

"Hide it," replied Annie.

At that moment, Barbara was startled by loud and rapid knocks on the front door. She sprang to her feet and rushed into the front room and called out: "Who air you, a-tryin' tew bust in the door?"

A voice replied, "Captain Jim Smeets, open the door, and for God's sake be quick."

Barbara unlocked the door and opened it. Captain Jim pushed in, looking somewhat frightened. Barbara slammed the door shut and locked it.

"Ma sed fer me tew let no person in but you. Come in tew the kitchen." "Whar's Annie?" he inquired abruptly.

"She's out but won't be long. Sit down."

"Barb!" said Captain Jim, "bolt that door," pointing to the kitchen door.

"Ain't no bolts on it," serenely replied the child.

"Oh Lord!" wailed Captain Jim.

"Then pile up the chairs an' table again it."

"Take the lamp, come on; be quick." He thrust the lamp into her hands and pushed the table against the kitchen door.

Barbara could not understand the meaning of his singular action and though of a crazy man flitted through her mind. Her temper began to rise too, for her nature was not of fear. She finally said, "do yer drink?"

"Me drink!" exclaimed Jim, turning to her in wonder, "Me drink, did I hear you say?"

For reply the imperturbable Barbara simply nodded her head.

"Never tetch a drop, strictly temperate," replied Jim. "It's cats, Barb, wild cats," and he upended the table against the door. At the same moment, snarling yells were heard in the woodshed. Annie and her companion, having hid the small flask of brandy, remained in the shed long enough to hear Captain Jim enter the house and barricade the door. Kitty suggested that they both yell, which they did and immediately thereafter they left the shed, being careful to leave the door ajar. Captain Jim stared at Barbara, who was apparently unconcerned.

"Don't you hear them?" said he sharply. "Why child, don't you be astandin' thar like as if you was paralyzed. You'll be torn tew pieces." With that he savagely braced a chair against the table.

(To be Continued.)

His Little Scheme.

Rent—"I am going to open an engagement in Scranton next week.

INTERURBAN ELECTRIC RAILROADS IN THE MIDDLE WEST.



ONLY about fifteen years ago, when the electric car began a timid assault on the immediate suburbs of large cities, it was always considered doubtful whether it would ever successfully bring people of small towns to become regular travelers if it ventured on interurban work. No such fears now haunt the minds of those who are promoting trolley car enterprises. From every part of the United States is coming a steady demand for interurban electric service. Municipalities so small as to be able to find their way onto the maps only by sufferance are demanding connection with larger centers and their citizens are coming to the front with such pledges of support that they will not have to wait long before they are satisfied.

Among the smaller towns and cities of the United States people are beginning to realize more and more that isolation means neither superiority nor comfort. There is a constantly growing desire to join hands with other localities, to be enabled at all times to come into actual physical contact with the people of other centers of population, and to establish not only interurban communication by means of telephone service, but through a system of travel that shall be pleasant, easy of access and inexpensive.

This sentiment is increasing every day. To satisfy it the electric trolley car has begun its march away from the great cities, and its advent into new neighborhoods is being welcomed with every demonstration of delight. It is invading the mountains, the lakes, the prairies; establishing rapid transit between villages, towns and cities, bringing the people of different counties in daily and hourly touch with one another, and creating for itself a wonderful sphere of usefulness.

It has no fear of competition, even when it saucily whizzes along past towns already well provided with steam transportation, for it invariably gets its share of the business, and, more remarkable still, opens up an entirely new traffic of its own that never could have existed without its coming.

Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio are pushing the building of these electric roads in a manner almost beyond belief of those to whose notice this subject is brought for the first time. In Illinois alone from fifty to sixty million dollars is now being spent in construction and maintenance of interurban roads and half as much again is being gathered for new construction already planned. The people of every locality in the State seem to have awakened within the past three years to the great value of service of this character, and every month towns are being placed within an hour's distance of one another that formerly were as far apart as if they had been separated by hundreds of miles.

The interurban electric car of to-day and the roadbed on which it runs are splendidly equipped. The cars make from thirty to fifty miles an hour and are fitted with the most modern air brake appliances and lighting and heating systems. The roadbed is often as substantial and as carefully constructed as those of the best steam road service, and continuous sprinkling service in summer and snowplow service in winter keep it free from the annoying conditions so often met with on routes of steam travel.

One of the valuable considerations that has turned the attention of country towns to the great value to their people of interurban trolley connections has come through the almost impassable condition of the country roads at certain times of the year. With the electric car running at stated intervals and connecting farming communities with main centers of population at all times, irrespective of weather conditions, they are able to assure themselves of steady delivery of their produce where it can command the best rates.

TWELVE INSECT PESTS THAT COST UNCLE SAM \$358,000,000 ANNUALLY.

TWELVE insects will cost the United States \$350,000,000 this year. The chinchbug will draw \$100,000,000 of this amount, the grasshopper will take \$90,000,000 and the hessian fly will call for at least \$50,000,000 more. Three worms that attack the cotton plant will assess the farmers for a total of \$60,000,000 and the potato bug will eat \$8,000,000 worth of its favorite kind of garden produce. Ten millions of dollars is a moderate estimate of the injury that will be done by the apple worm, and the caterpillar that makes cabbages its specialty will destroy \$5,000,000 worth of crisp green heads.

The estimate, which is conservative and under the mark, is as follows:

Chinchbug	\$100,000,000
Grasshopper	90,000,000
Hessian fly	50,000,000
Potato bug	8,000,000
San Jose scale	10,000,000
Grain weevil	10,000,000
Apple worm	10,000,000
Army worm	15,000,000
Cabbage worm	5,000,000
Boll weevil (cotton)	20,000,000
Boll worm (cotton)	25,000,000
Cotton worm	15,000,000

Total

How absurd it seems that the United States government, with an army of 65,000 men, 254 warships and more money in the treasury than any nation has ever before possessed, should be helpless in a fight against twelve objectionable bugs!

Yet such is the fact. The individual bug is small, but its "strong hold" is its tremendous power of reproduction. What is to be done in conflict with an adversary which is capable of having a billion descendants in a summer? In conflict with such an enemy Uncle Sam finds himself in much the same situation as that of Gulliver when he discovered that he was at the mercy of the Lilliputians.

MODERN ENGINEERING FEATS.

Recent Work in Australia Has Been of Value to Gold Fields.

An unparalleled engineering feat has recently been achieved in Australia of immense value to the gold fields.

The Coolgardie water scheme is to Australia what the famous Assuan dam is to Egypt. The remarkable feat of pumping 6,000,000 gallons of water a day for a distance of 350 miles, from the Helena River to Kalgoorlie, has been accomplished by English engineers by means of a great dam, called the Mundaring weir, ninety feet high, constructed across the Helena River twenty miles from Perth. The reservoir capacity is about 5,000,000,000 gallons. There are a number of auxiliary reservoirs and pumping stations along the thirty-inch steel water main which runs along the railroad line to the goldfields—the "richest square mile of earth on the globe"—near Kalgoorlie. The only foreign enterprise of equal importance is the Simplon tunnel, the great burrow which will make Switzerland and Italy next-door neighbors. In a short time Pullman trains will pass through the Simplon Alps in a few minutes, 7,000 feet under the snow-covered diligence road which Napoleon Bonaparte built a hundred years ago and which takes about ten hours to traverse in favorable weather. This

tremendous rathole, which passes under Lake Avino, will cost the Jura-Simplon Railroad over \$15,000,000.—Collier's Weekly.

Built Better Than He Knew.

A Wednesbury, England, resident in the sixteenth century left \$1,000 to provide annually on St. Thomas' day three gowns and three coats to indigent persons of the parish. Following the custom of the times the money was invested in land (in this case in minerals), and the original legacy has increased in value to \$30,000. Instead of the three gowns and three coats the charity commissioners who administer the funds are able to present 200 gowns and sixty coats.

He Wanted Specifications.

"There is never any uncertainty where I stand," said the pompous speaker at the ward meeting; "I'm a stalwart!"

Whereupon the little man with a squeaky voice half arose and, putting his hand to his ear, inquired: "What kind of a wart?"—Kansas City Journal.

Books Well Done.

"I have something exceedingly rare in the way of books."

"Thanks. When it comes to a book, I prefer one that is well done."—Harper's Bazar.