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THE GRAND SCHEMER

HE PLANS A DEVICE THAT WILL TAKE THE PUBLIC BY STORM.

Major Crofoot Originates the M. W. B. Company, Filling a Long Felt Want, and Incidentally Takes In a Lawyer Friend.

[Copyright, 1900, by C. B. Lewis.]

The grand promoter sat at his desk in his office with a wandering look on his face and 40 cents in change spread out before him. He had been counting that change over and over and figuring how many times the $28 he owed his landlady, the $12 he owed his tailor, the $4 he owed his hatter and the $75 he owed various other people would go into that 40 cents. He was still about it when he heard a step on the stairs. It was the step of an aggressive man. As it came nearer it betokened the step of a determined man. As the door was burst open without preliminary warning the major recognized the fact that he was face to face with a circumstance. For one brief second his knees weakened, and he caught his breath with a gasp. Then he was on his feet with hand outstretched and a smile on his face and saying:

"Bless my soul, but if you had been two minutes later I should have been on my way to your office! Come in; come in."

"I didn't know as you would remember me," dryly replied the visitor as he looked around the office.

"What! Not remember Thompson of Thompson & Thompson, attorneys at law! You must be joking. My dear

"I WANT TO TAKE YOU IN."

man, Major Crofoot never forgets the face or name of a friend. You more than any other man in the world have been in my thoughts for the last three days, and, as I remarked, I was about to start for your office. Thompson, shake hands again."

"I haven't time," replied Thompson. "Look here, major, bills against you to the amount of $200 have been put into our hands for collection. You promised to pay that old board bill two months ago. I want to know what you are going to do?"

"Do, my dear Thompson? Why, I'm going to give you a check in about ten seconds for the whole indebtedness. You could have had your money long ago if you had given me the slightest hint. Major Crofoot has a good memory, but how can you expect him to keep track of shillings when he is dealing in thousands of dollars."

"I heard you were promoting a little," said the lawyer as he waited for the check.

"Ten companies formed in the last three months, my boy, and the eleventh just ready to be incorporated. Grand aggregation of over $300,000,000 capital thus far, and every company bound to pay at least 30 per cent dividend. What do you suppose I've got on hand now?"

"I can't say, and as I'm in a hurry you may fill out that check."

"The biggest scheme of all—the ne plus ultra!" whispered the major with a flourish of his right arm. "I expected to stop at ten, but this scheme came pushing along and I had to take it up. It's the richest of them all. It'll pay 100 per cent profit from the very start. In a week from now the Standard Oil company won't be on earth."

"But I'm here about those bills."

"My dear Thompson, walk with me. When I was hard up, you were one of the few who did not lose confidence in my integrity. The man or woman who trusts Major Crofoot never regrets it. I might not have picked up this eleventh scheme but for you. I wanted to let you in. I wanted to reward you for your faith in me. Thompson, my boy, sell out your law business—give it away—get rid of it before night."

"I want to know about those bills," said the lawyer as he came to a halt.

"The last and best scheme of all," continued the major as he got hold of his arm again, "is the Musical Washboard company, organized on a capital of $20,000,000. The idea is strictly original with me. Washboard runs a music box while you rub. Music box can be placed in the laundry, parlor, kitchen or even the next house. May arrange later on to have 'em connected with drug stores, kindergartens and public schools. Twenty-four tunes in the box, evenly divided between sad and lively. As the washerwoman rubs away at one of your colored shirts the music box strikes up 'Comin Thro' the Rye.' She changes off to a sheet or pillowslip, and you have 'Home, Sweet Home,' with variations. Thompson, shake hands!"

"I won't do it. I came here to notify you that these bills must be paid at once or you will be haled into court."

"It's a hummer, my boy—it's a success from the start. Costs nothing extra for the music, you know. While you are hiring a woman in the laundry for a dollar and a quarter a day she's furnishing music for the parlor free gratis. Put a bedquilt on the washboard and you can hear the strains of 'The Old Oaken Bucket' from garret to cellar. Let the woman tackle a tablecloth, and everybody goes dancing to the tune of 'Maggie Murphy's Home.' Drug stores can have it at a slight cost for their patrons, and public schools needn't pay a cent. Rub-a-dub-dub! Music by the box! Thompson, don't miss it. Don't throw a good thing over your shoulder. I want to take you in. I have taken you in. You are to be secretary of the M. W. C. at $20,000 a year."

"That's all wind," bluntly exclaimed the lawyer, "and it won't work. Will you draw me a check for $200?"

"Isn't it a wonder that somebody else didn't strike on the idea?" whispered the major as he patted Thompson on the shoulder. "The washboard has been known for 200 years. What was easier than to make friction run a music box to soothe the sorrowful, lull the ailing or enthuse the discouraged? It would have saved thousands of lives annually, prevented thousands of suicides, and yet no one thought of it. Thompson, shake hands! It's the secretaryship at $20,000 a year for you, and I'll get you $50,000 worth of stock at ground floor figures. Months ago, when I was hard up and couldn't pay a bill of $7, you put your hand on my shoulder in a brotherly way and said you had every confidence in my financial integrity. Do you imagine I've forgotten that, Thompson? Not by the grave of my grandfather! I never think of it without the tears coming to my eyes."

"Do you want to be sued for these accounts?" demanded the lawyer when he could get in a word.

"And your reward for trusting me is this," continued the major—"the salary of $20,000 is only a starter. I'll double it after the washboards get into the market. The $50,000 in stock will pay you $25,000 a year in dividends at the very least, and perhaps double that, and there you are. You can safely put your first year's income down at $65,000. Is that enough, Thompson? If not, just say the word, and I'll add $20,000 to it. Meanwhile"—

"Meanwhile I want no more of your wind!"

"Meanwhile, my dear secretary of the M. W. C., I owe $200. You have the accounts to collect. Just mark 'em 'collected,' and I'll pay in the $200 to hold your stock. Always have to have a deposit as evidence of good faith, you know. If it was anybody else, I'd demand a certified check for $10,000. Thompson, go home and throw your lawbooks out of the window."

"I'll be hanged if I do! I want to know"—

"Throw your lawbooks out of the window, dissolve the partnership, and then take your position as secretary. No hurry for a day or two, but don't wait too long. I want to get the articles of incorporation through as soon as possible and patent the idea. Good-by, Thompson, good-by."

"But I want that check!" protested the lawyer as he was pushed out.

"And the washerwoman rubs and the box plays on," replied the smiling major. "We'll have 50,000 washboards playing 'Yankee Doodle' and 'Home of My Soul' before the month is out, and if you want $15,000 in advance on your salary and profits send your boy around and I'll fill out a check. Good-by, Thompson, good-by, and remember to keep mum till our patent is secured."

The door was shut and locked, and there was grim silence for five minutes. Then the major heard threats and vows and mutterings, and some one went slowly down stairs.

M. Quad.

Crowing Hatches.

The Belgian artisan spends his leisure in a very curious manner. He keeps a special cock for crowing, and the bird which can outcrow its fellows has reached the highest pinnacle of perfection. The mode of operation is to place the cages containing the roosters in long rows, for it appears that one bird sets the other off crowing. A marker appointed by the organizers of the show is told off for each bird, his duty being to note carefully the number of crows for which it is responsible in the same fashion as the laps are recorded in a bicycle race. The customary duration of the match is one hour, the winner being the bird which scores the highest number of crows in the allotted time. A great number of these competitions have taken place in the Liege district, and in some cases heavy bets have been made on the result.

Radishes.

Radishes originated in China, where they have been cultivated for many centuries and sometimes grow as big as a man's head. In Germany the old fashioned country mothers cure hoarseness and cough with radish juice mixed with sugar candy. The radishes of today have no flavor, no character. Formerly their sharp, biting taste made them palatable.

A Jury Room Gem.

A gem from the records of a Missouri court, given in an address by Hon. William H. Wallace, is the following lucid verdict in a lunacy case: "We, the jury, impaneled, sworn and charged to inquire into the insanguinity of Hezekiah Jones, do occur in the affirmative."

Two Bad Bites.

Diogenes, being asked, "What is that beast which is the most dangerous?" replied, "Of wild beasts the bite of a slanderer and of tame beasts that of the flatterer."

If the average man could read the story of his life he wouldn't believe it.—Chicago News.

A man who finds no satisfaction in himself seeks for it in vain elsewhere.

THE HEDGE.

Fair neighbor of the thatched cot,
With gloire de Dijon clustered gable,
So star sweet, on from plot to plot
Thou trippest, like a nymph of fable.

So blithe thy smile, so soft thy tone,
Thy love so good a life to lead in,
I'd fain the hedge were overthrown
And our two gardens made one Eden!

But "No!" cries Wisdom. "Spare the fence,
The thorn, the ivy blackbirds nest in;
Leave something for the finer sense,
Some dream of joy to hope and rest in,

"Some glad surprise, some mystery
Of inconceivably sweet meaning!"
Wisdom is wise. My friend and I
Scarce press the topmost twigs by leaning.
—G. D. C. in Good Words.

NIGHTMARE.

The Sensation That Always Makes a Man a Coward.

"Strange that we are always so cowardly in nightmares," remarked a New Orleans lawyer who has a taste for the bizarre. "I don't believe anybody ever lived who stood up and made a square stand against the amorphous horror that invariably pursues us in such visions. When I have a nightmare and the usual monster gets on my trail, my blood turns to water, and my conduct would disgrace a sheep. I am beside myself with stark, downright fear, and I have no idea left in my head except to run like a rabbit. All pride, self respect, dread of ridicule and even the instinct of self defense are scattered to the winds, and I believe, honestly, I would be capable of any infamy in order to escape. I have no hesitation in confessing this, because, as far as I have been able to find out, everybody acts exactly the same way in the throes of nightmare, and I feel certain I would not make such a pitiable spectacle of myself in real life, no matter what might befall.

"I think that the explanation of the nightmare panic is to be found in the fact that the dream is almost invariably accompanied by a sense of suffocation. It is well established that choking—the 'shutting off of one's wind,' to use a homely phrase—has an effect upon the mind which is entirely distinct and different from that produced by any other form of pain or peril. It fills the victim with such horror and distraction that he is for the moment insane. He will do anything to get relief. This has been brought out on more than one occasion in the defense of men who have been choked and killed their assailants, and judges have held that the circumstances of such an attack should be given special consideration as extenuating the deed. In dreams the entire nervous system is relaxed, and it is natural to suppose that the mental effect of suffocation would be intensified. At least, that is the best apology I have to offer for my sprints through nightmare land."—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

Habit In a Horse's Work.

"When I retired from the contracting business a short time ago," said a well known man, "I had a number of horses that I was anxious to dispose of. Among them was one named Jerry, which for several years had been used to working on a drum. In such work a horse becomes accustomed to lifting his feet high to avoid striking the hoisting ropes. When the horses were put under the hammer, Jerry went to a Harlem grocer.

"About a week later the purchaser of Jerry called at my house and told me that he had a lot of trouble with the horse. He said that Jerry would go a short distance, when he would stop short and lift his feet high, and after doing this would go a little farther, only to repeat it again. I told the grocer why the horse stopped short and lifted his feet and also advised him to look up some contractor and sell the animal to him for hoisting purposes. He did so, notifying me that he received a larger price than he paid me for the horse."—New York Sun.

How He Got It.

In one of Chauncey M. Depew's stories he told of meeting a man as funny as himself.

"One day," said Mr. Depew, "I met a soldier who had been wounded in the face. He was a Union man, and I asked him in which battle he had been injured.

"'In the last battle of Bull Run, sir,' he replied.

"'But how could you get hit in the face at Bull Run?' I asked.

"'Well, sir,' said the man, half apologetically, 'after I had run a mile or two I got careless and looked back.'"

Sulphur Will Put Out Fires.

Grant me space in your paper to make more generally known a fact which has been known to me many years and doubtless to others, that sulphur thrown into the fire of a stove, furnace or fireplace will instantly extinguish the fire in a chimney or flue. If a small bag or parcel of sulphur, say three or four ounces, were kept in a handy place and used when needed as directed above, it might be the means of saving property and perhaps life.—Letter in New York Times.

A Success.

"Was the wedding a success?"

"I guess so. The bride's mother was in tears, the groom's mother went her one better and had hysterics, you couldn't hear a word of the ceremony, and the church was so crowded that three women fainted. Yes, it was a success all right."—Life.

Milk is suggested as a good extinguishing agent for burning petroleum. It forms an emulsion with the oil, and by disturbing its cohesion attenuates the combustible element as water cannot.

Among the aborigines of Australia the most common form of punishment less than death is the spearing of the offender through different parts of the body.