

THE STRANGE GUEST.

He brought a branch of olive— This stranger guest of mine; Could I deny him entrance...

UNEXPECTED \$10,000.

Willie Smith was 19—pretty, vivacious, ambitious, but just now the very much discouraged owner of the Smith plantation and its encumbrances.

At first she was stunned, for she had already begun to make plans for the improvement and extension of the ancestral acres.

This morning she was in the kitchen helping Aunt Chloe with the ironing, but her thoughts were busy with the formidable problems of the future.

She was fond of scribbling, and was fairly good at drawing and music, and had won a school reputation as a linguist.

"Heyer's yo' mail, Miss Willie," called Uncle Tobe's voice through the open window, and a black hand was thrust in with a package of letters.

Inside was a check and a short letter, with the printed address of a Leadville banking house.

"Willie Smith, Talbotton, Ga.: We are requested to forward you the enclosed check for ten thousand dollars (\$10,000).

She stared at it for a moment, then hurriedly examined the check. Yes, it was for \$10,000, made in favor of Willie Smith.

"I reckon it's all right, Willie," said the old man, after he had carefully examined the envelope and its contents.

"But it can't be mine," insisted Willie. "I don't even know that I have a relative in all the world."

to take the check. Will you have the money, or leave it on deposit? "I wish I felt more sure," hesitated Willie.

"Well, suppose I telegraph to Waldron & Co. Can you come in again this afternoon?" "Yes."

"So you see it is all right," said the cashier. "Now, you will please indorse the check."

"Willie did so with a sudden feeling of exaltation. "How will you have it?" briskly.

"Suppose you give me \$6,000. That will pay off the mortgage and make some necessary repairs. The rest I will deposit with you.

The next few hours were momentous ones in the young girl's life. The mortgage was paid, and visits were made to grocery and hardware and seed stores.

Willie spent most of her time outdoors watching the work and making occasional suggestions. The new cabins were surrounded by generous truck patches.

"Any letters here for Willie Smith?" he asked. "No, she called after them not an hour ago."

"She?" curiously. "Yes, generally her man Tobe gets them, but she happened to be in town this morning.

"No, not exactly." He left the postoffice and walked across the street to the bank.

"Has Willie Smith presented a check here for \$10,000 recently?" he asked. "Miss Willie Smith has," replied the cashier.

"I beg your pardon, I meant Miss Willie Smith. You see, out West, we get in the habit of dropping ceremony."

"So you are a Westerner, are you?" he asked. "I was, but expect to be a Southerner now," said the young man frankly.

"My mother left this country nearly thirty years ago, but I have often heard her describe her old home. When I made my pile I concluded to come down here and look around; and if I liked the place to stay permanently."

"The cashier's face cleared instantly. "Good!" he exclaimed. "You can't help liking such a grand country. All it lacks is money and energy. But what part of the West are you from?"

"Leadville, Col." "Ah, I began to suspect it. You have been connected with the house of Waldron & Co., and called in to see if the check reached its destination all right."

"Indeed! That would have been too bad," said the young man, "but—"

"There's no but now," interrupted the cashier cheerfully. "Her future's as clear as a June sky. If I'd received the check myself I wouldn't have been half as much pleased. Miss Willie's a fine girl—a gem in a land that is full of jewels.

"Indeed! That would have been too bad," said the young man, "but—"

"Nothing would please me better."

"Very well. You'll take dinner with me, and if I can be of any assistance in your plans do not hesitate to use me. Now, there's the Calhoun plantation. Joins Miss Willie and just now can be had for a song. And, really, it's the best thing you can do in the whole country. But you haven't told me yo' name yet, sub?"

easy chair by an open window. Then he settled himself in an easy chair and gave a glowing picture of the Calhoun plantation.

The young man said little, but on his face was an expression of mingled amusement and indecision. And this amused indecision remained with him and even appeared in his voice until they went out to the Calhoun plantation.

"Miss Willie is an exceptionally fine girl," he said, with suppressed enthusiasm, "and if I am not mistaken the community will yet be proud of her plantation. She seems to have the faculty of knowing just what she wants and just how to go about doing it.

"The Calhoun place? Certainly, and for a song." "Well, I want it. I suppose it's too late to get it to-night," regretfully; "but if you'll arrange for its purchase early in the morning, so that the papers can be made out before noon, I'll be infinitely obliged. And I'll make it worth your while."

"But you haven't seen the place yet?" expostulated the cashier in amazement. "Yes, I have—across the river, you know. Besides, I'm willing to take your word for it. If you can have everything settled before noon I will go over after dinner and talk with Miss Willie about the shade trees. And, do you know," with animation, "I've been thinking that those bluffs above the live oak grove will be a fine place to throw a bridge across the river. I wonder if Miss Willie will like the idea."

The next day the good people of Talbotton were stirred to unwonted excitement by the news that an energetic stranger had bought the old Judge Calhoun plantation, and that unlimited improvements were contemplated. And, even while this report was being circulated from mouth to mouth, it was followed by rumors of lavish contracts and engagements made with the townspeople of the town. Decidedly the stranger was no ordinary man.

And evidently Willie thought so, too, for she would flash covert, inquiring glances at him from under her long, dark eyelashes, and sometimes would listen with almost bated breath, wondering what daring scheme would be proposed next. He was so different from any man she had ever met—so energetic and impulsive and chivalrous. She could not help liking him, and she could not withstand his impetuosity any more than the reeds of the river could withstand the current in springtime.

And, indeed, she did not want to. In the fall their engagement was definitely announced, and all Talbotton said it was the most suitable match of the year.

A few weeks before the marriage he carefully overhauled his papers. There were many letters addressed simply to Willie Smith, some were to Willie H. Smith, and a few to William Hamilton Smith. All of them were destroyed.

"It isn't well to keep papers," he soliloquized, as the last one was reduced to ashes. "Some folks see them."—New York Ledger.

The Man and the Snake. The reputed fascination of the serpent's eye is the motive of a story in Mr. Ambrose Bierce's volume of tales entitled "In the Midst of Life."

In a few minutes he gave an involuntary start, and stared into the obscurity under the bed. His gaze disclosed the coils of a large serpent; the points of light were his eyes, but were no longer merely luminous points; they looked in to his own with a malign significance.

The snake did not move, but its eyes seemed to become larger and more luminous. There were strange noises in Brayton's ears as, with reluctant steps, he could not refrain from drawing nearer the bed. Suddenly something struck him a hard blow upon the face. He had fallen to the floor.

"How did this thing get here?" he exclaimed, and pulling out the snake, flung it to the center of the room, where it lay without motion.

"It was a stuffed snake; its eyes were two shoebuttons.

How time flies from the date on which a man distinguishes himself!

CHINESE ARE THRIFTY FELLOWS

Start in Business on Borrowed Capital and Always Repay the Loans. "In some respects the much-abused Chinamen," said Hong Sing Long, one of the interpreters and general agents of the Chinese Six Companies, to a Star reporter, "are way in advance of the ordinary workman, and particularly so in regard to their Ready Money Association."

Hong Sing Long spends most of his time in New York, though he visits Washington several times each year. He is an educated Chinaman and has had the advantage of several years at Harvard and besides has been graduated as a lawyer.

"With the exception of one, all of the Chinese laundry places in this city are the result of the Ready Money associations; that is, the money necessary to start them came from the Ready Money. The plan is not unlike the building associations, which I am told have quite a clientele here, and which were originally started in Philadelphia.

"As a general thing there is but one applicant and he gets it, at a rate of interest agreed upon. It starts him in business and in a few weeks he begins paying back. Now and then there is no demand for the money. It then goes to the cities where it is needed. Just now the Chinamen are starting laundries in a number of small towns of the South, and my errand here now is to get some of the Ready Money funds to be advanced for that purpose."

"Safe! Perfectly safe. The civilization of the Chinese is no new thing. It is 5,000 years old. They have found out that honesty is the best policy; not on account of the moral or religious question involved as you understand it, but on account of the business proposition involved. Honesty is best because it pays, as for many other reasons. In business dealings Chinese are very strict, much more strict than any other people."

"The Chinaman knows that if he borrows he must pay back, and that the consequences of not doing so are very serious, much more serious than it is with Americans or Europeans. He knows this before he gets the money and does not take it unless he means to pay back. The man who acts as secretary of the Ready Money is also the treasurer. He takes pretty good care to give a good account of his stewardship, for his happiness depends upon his conduct. The Chinese Ready Money frequently close up in a week, though ordinarily they last longer. Each transaction is a separate one. A man may be a member of a dozen or have all of his money in one."

"The great advantage of the Ready Money is that it gives everyone who wants it money to open up business for himself whenever he sees the opportunity. There is no waiting—no security is needed except a promise to pay. The payment never fails, except for good reasons, such as accident or sickness. In fact, it does not pay to fail to pay, for it will cost more in the long run. When your civilization is 5,000 years old, you will know more than you do now, and will understand things that now seem to be wonderful in us."—Washington Star.

Big Cotton Presses. Of the many cotton presses which were in operation in New Orleans sixty years ago the two principal ones were the Levee cotton press and the Orleans cotton press. They were large and massive buildings, each occupying, like most of the others, a square of ground. The Levee cotton press was built in 1832 by a company bearing the same name at a cost of \$500,000, and was two stories high. It compressed some 200,000 bales of cotton a year. The Orleans press, also fronting on the river, occupied an area of 632 feet by 308, the building nearly covering the whole space. This press, which was begun in 1833 and completed in 1835, cost over \$753,000, compressed about 150,000 bales per annum, and could store 25,000 bales of cotton. Its immense length gave it a very imposing appearance from the river.

Alligators Twenty Feet Long. Alligators were formerly one of the chief animal life tenants of Red River and the bayous of Louisiana, where, before steamboat navigation came to interrupt them, they could be seen by hundreds huddled together on the banks or massed on the floating or stationary logs—especially of Red River—waking the solitude of the forest with their bull-like bellowing. Their length was generally between eight and twelve feet, although they sometimes grew to be twenty feet long. Their hides were once used extensively for the making of shoes, but the leather, not proving of sufficiently close texture to keep water out, shoemaking from this material was abandoned.

Likes and Dislikes of Birds. It is said that birds are nearly as sensitive in their likes and dislikes as dogs. Some people can never gain the friendship of a caged bird. A bird has to learn by experience that it is safe with a human being before it will respond to kind treatment.

No man ever disappeared that some one did not invent a woman story on him.



GOTHAM SOCIETY QUEEN.

MRS. WILLIAM C. WHITNEY will soon succeed to the vacant throne of queen of Gotham's society. Such at least seems to be the understanding among those who are familiar with fashionable intelligence. Since the decline and fall of Mrs. William Astor Gotham society has been queenless. It was thought for a time that young Mrs. John Jacob Astor would be elevated, but the fact that she is a Philadelphiaian ruined her hopes. Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont, recently Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt, aspired and was crushed. She will live abroad hereafter. Mrs. Cornelius Vandervilt cannot



MRS. WILLIAM C. WHITNEY.

assume the headship of the butterflies on account of her husband's illness. Mr. Whitney's new wife is just the lady for the crown. She is 36, entrancingly beautiful, and as the wife of Captain Randolph had entree to the very best drawing rooms of aristocratic England. She is eminently fitted for leader of the smart set by reason of her wealth, family and experience. As mistress of the big Whitney mansion at the corner of Fifth avenue and Fifty-seventh street she will be brilliant.

Chop Wood for a Husband. There was a novel wood-cutting contest in the Seventh Ward of Williamsport, Pa., the other day, in which five young women took part. The girls are all employed in the Lyeomung rubber factory, and, having a holiday, they turned their time to good account, besides settling a much-disputed question as to which was the most entitled to a husband. The girls are Bess Mayers, Flora Mahl, Lillie Mahl, Lillie Dunlap, Belle Gouddy and Mary Russell, all pretty, vivacious young women, who earn their own living and make good wages in the rubber factory. In a banter the other day one of the girls proposed that they have a wood-chopping contest, and the one who proved



WOOD-CHOPPING MATCH.

herself to be the champion cutter should be entitled to a husband, while the others, it was agreed, must wait two years before joining fortunes with her best bean.

The girls, each with a brand-new ax, bedecked with red, white and blue ribbons, marched into the back yard of Widow Hartman's home and made an assault on the woodpile. Widow Hartman is a helpless invalid, she having fallen and hurt herself quite badly last winter. Her daughter Lou works in the rubber factory, too, and she was one of the movers in the wood-cutting scheme, although she took no part in the contest.

Five loads of hemlock slab wood, cut to stove lengths, had been delivered at Widow Hartman's place the day before—the girls paying for it—so there was plenty of material for them on which to test their strength and skill. But the way the ribboned axes flew and tongues wagged was only equalled by the shower of split sticks that gradually piled themselves up around each chopping-block. William Baskins and Joseph Schell were there as referees. One of the young men, however, had a more direct interest in the contest than being judge, for one of the girls was his sweetheart, and, according to the compact, if she proved one of the losers in the contest he would be compelled to wait two long years before she could become his wife. For four hours the wood-chopping went on; the girls got red in the face; they rolled up their sleeves until their plump, pink arms were bared almost to the shoulders, and whacked away at the hemlock blocks as though their lives instead of a husband depended upon it.

Finally 12 o'clock came, and at the end of that time there were five weary, perspiring girls and five big piles of nicely split hemlock wood for Widow Hartman. But for the life of them the referees could not decide between the piles of wood cut by Miss Dunlap and Miss Russell, as to which was the larger. And, indeed, after raking over all the sticks and counting them separately,

this discovery was made that the two girls had cut exactly alike. The contest was declared a draw. And now all the marriageable young men of the seventh ward are casting their eyes with favor in the direction of these fair young women who so gallantly demonstrated their ability to cut firewood.

Dance in Mock Marriage. Not a few giddy girls think it is a huge joke to participate in a mock marriage, yet such events have often led to serious embarrassments. Marriage is a matter too serious to be trifled with. Judges in the courts have frequently been called upon to dissolve the sometimes thoughtlessly entered into, yet too lightly, and with the connivance of ministers of the gospel and magistrates who ought to know better than to play the part they do in these affairs. If a clergyman were to announce that a baptizing pool would be opened some evening, either in the church or elsewhere, and that he would perform the rite of baptism as a public entertainment on the fattest woman or the tallest man in the neighborhood, there would be no more sacrifice than there is in a mock wedding gotten up for a public show.

Place to Keep a Bicycle. An ingenious English woman has designed a cabinet for the bicycle in the form of a hall table and hatstand. This cabinet can be made of any wood and finished to suit any style or color. The smoken panels are filled in with Japanese leather paper, both in the doors and on each side of the mirror back. All the ordinary requirements of the entrance hall are supplied, but naturally the interior required a good deal of skillful arrangement to afford the greatest amount of accommodation with the least possible space. The flap in the cabinet above the opening doors is



CABINET FOR BICYCLE.

hinged, to throw back, so that the bicycle can go in without any alteration of the handle bars. Then the floor is fitted with grooves and draws out altogether, to be used as a "home trainer," while in its proper place in the cabinet it serves to keep the bicycle in position. There is plenty of room inside for all the bicycle belongings, as well as the cleaning apparatus.

How to Keep Wrinkles Away. A simple preventive against the appearance of wrinkles is this: Saturate a soft towel in very hot water, wring it and apply it to the face, keeping it there for at least twenty minutes. Then dry the face very gently. This must be done just before going to bed. When traveling, if the skin is very sensitive, do not bathe the face except at night and in the morning, and then throw a few drops of tincture of benzoin into the water, so that it may be made soft and agreeable to the skin.—Ladies' Home Journal.

Grace Howe McKinley.



Niece of the President-elect, who will take a prominent part in Washington society during the next administration.—Boston Post.

Waistcoats for Fair Women. Vests of cream lace over white satin are very dressy, and are particularly chic with the all black braided tailor made gown. Pretty serviceable vest fronts are made of gay plaid silks or striped velvets. These are finished with the full point, which is held in place by small enameled buttons. For morning shopping excursions nothing is smarter than the bright little scarlet waistcoat of smooth cloth, buttoned high to the throat with dull gold or old silver buttons. Any sort of excessive decoration is not considered too much for the little vest, which seems to be a necessary part of every gown, whether it is made with or without a jacket.