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## The Romance of a Busy Broker

A Lapse of Memory

By O. HENRY

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That was the morning of the day that Northern Pacific stock went to 1,000, or the day when Union Pacific went down to 100, or some other day when there was a cyclone in Wall street that blew the roof off every broker's office, or blew his head off, or blew out his brains, or, at any rate, turned him upside down or inside out or stood the brokers on their heads.

Pitcher, confidential clerk in the office of Harvey Maxwell, broker, allowed a look of mild interest and surprise to visit his usually expressionless countenance when his employer briskly entered at half past 9 in company with his young lady stenographer. With a snappy "Good morning, Pitcher," Maxwell dashed at his desk as though he were intending to leap over it and then plunged into the great heap of letters and telegrams waiting there for him.

The young lady had been Maxwell's stenographer for a year. She was beautiful in a way that was decidedly unstenographic. She forewent the pomp of the alluring pompadour. She wore no chains, bracelets or lockets. She had not the air of being about to accept an invitation to luncheon. Her dress was gray and plain, but it fitted her figure with fidelity and discretion. In her neat black turban hat was the gold-green wing of a macaw. On this morning she was softly and shyly rambling.



"I WANT YOU TO MARRY ME."

diant. Her eyes were dreamily bright, her cheeks genuine peachblow, her expression a happy one, tinged with reminiscence.

Pitcher, still mildly curious, noticed a difference in her ways this morning. Instead of going straight into the adjoining room, where her desk was, she lingered, slightly irresolute, in the outer office. Once she moved over by Maxwell's desk, near enough for him to be aware of her presence.

She hesitated whether to speak to the busy man at the desk or not. At one moment she looked at him wonderingly, at another as if she were about to cry and at another as if she were trying to repress a laugh. Several times she started to speak to him when she saw him about to make a jump from one matter to another, but he invariably jumped before she could get him. Then suddenly he seemed to become aware of her presence and glanced up at her quickly.

The machine sitting at that desk was no longer a man. It was a busy New York broker, moved by buzzing wheels and unceasing springs.

"Well, what is it—anything?" asked Maxwell sharply. His opened mail lay like a bank of stage snow on his crowded desk. His keen gray eye, impersonal and brusque, flashed upon her half impatiently.

"Nothing," answered the stenographer, moving away with a little smile.

"Mr. Pitcher," she said to the confidential clerk, "did Mr. Maxwell say anything yesterday about engaging another stenographer?"

"He did," answered Pitcher. "He told me to get another one. I notified the agency yesterday afternoon to send over a few samples this morning. It's 9:45 o'clock, and not a single picture hat or piece of pineapple chewing gum has shown up yet."

"I will do the work as usual, then," said the young lady, "until some one comes to fill the place." And she went to her desk at once and hung the black turban hat with the gold green macaw wing in its accustomed place.

He who has been denied the spectacle of a busy Manhattan broker during a rush of business is handicapped for the profession of anthropology. The post stages of the "crowded hour of glorious life." The broker's hour is not only crowded, but the minutes and seconds are hanging to all the straps and packing both front and rear platforms.

And this day was Harvey Maxwell's busy day. The ticker began to reel out jerkily its fitful coils of tape. The desk telephone had a chronic attack of buzzing. Men began to throng into the office and call at him over the rattle. Jovially, sharply, viciously, excitedly. Messenger boys ran in and out with messages and telegrams. The clerks in the office jumped about like sailors during a storm. Even Pitcher's face relaxed into something resembling animation.

On the exchange there were hurricanes and landslides and snowstorms and glaciers and volcanoes, and those elemental disturbances were reproduced in miniature in the broker's offices. Maxwell shoved his chair against the wall and transacted business after the manner of a toe dancer. He jumped from ticker to phone, from desk to door, with the trained agility of a harlequin.

In the midst of this growing and important stress the broker became suddenly aware of a high rolled fringe of golden hair under a nodding canopy of velvet and ostrich tips, an imitation sealskin sack and a string of beads as large as hickory nuts, ending near the floor with a silver heart. There was a self possessed young lady connected with these accessories, and Pitcher was there to construe her.

"Lady from the stenographers' agency to see about the position," said Pitcher.

Maxwell turned half around, with his hands full of papers and ticker tape.

"What position?" he asked with a frown.

"Position of stenographer," said Pitcher. "You told me yesterday to call them up and have one sent over this morning."

"You are losing your mind, Pitcher," said Maxwell. "Why should I have given you any such instructions? Miss Leslie has given perfect satisfaction during the year she has been here. The place is hers as long as she chooses to retain it. There's no place open here, madam. Countermand that order with the agency, Pitcher, and don't bring any more of 'em in here."

The silver heart left the office, swinging and banging itself independently against the office furniture as it indignantly departed. Pitcher seized a moment to remark to the bookkeeper that the "old man" seemed to get more absentminded and forgetful every day of the world.

The rush and pace of business grew fiercer and faster. On the floor they were pounding half a dozen stocks in which Maxwell's customers were heavy investors. Orders to buy and

for this odor belonged to Miss Leslie. It was her own, and hers only.

The odor brought her vividly, almost tangibly, before him. The world of finance dwindled suddenly to a speck. And she was in the next room—twenty steps away.

"By George, I'll do it now!" said Maxwell, half aloud. "I'll ask her now. I wonder I didn't do it long ago."

He dashed into the inner office with the haste of a short trying to cover. He charged upon the desk of the stenographer.

She looked up at him with a smile. A soft pink crept over her cheek, and her eyes were kind and frank. Maxwell leaned one elbow on her desk. He still clutched fluttering papers with both hands, and the pen was above his ear.

"Miss Leslie," he began hurriedly, "I have but a moment to spare. I want to say something in that moment. Will you be my wife? I haven't had time to make love to you in the ordinary way, but I really do love you. Talk quick, please. Those fellows are clubbing the stuffing out of Union Pacific."

"Oh, what are you talking about?" exclaimed the young lady. She rose to her feet and gazed upon him, round eyed.

"Don't you understand?" said Maxwell restively. "I want you to marry me. I love you, Miss Leslie. I wanted to tell you, and I snatched a minute when things had slackened up a bit. They're calling me for the phone now. Tell 'em to wait a minute, Pitcher. Won't you, Miss Leslie?"

The stenographer acted very queerly. At first she seemed overcome with amazement, then tears flowed from her wondering eyes, and then she smiled sunnily through them, and one of her arms slid tenderly about the broker's neck.

"I know now," she said softly. "It's this old business that has driven everything else out of your head for the time. I was frightened at first. Don't you remember, Harvey? We were married last evening at 8 o'clock in the Little Church Around the Corner."

## Colonel George Pope, New Head Of National Manufacturers



A newly elected president of the National Manufacturers' association, Colonel George Pope of Hartford, Conn., faces an important year in the life of that organization. Because of the tariff changes bound to be made by congress manufacturers the country over felt that the year would be momentous in many ways due to changed conditions. Colonel Pope is head of the Pope Manufacturing company and has long been identified with the industrial interests of the country.

Rome's Gormandizing. The decline of a nation commences when gormandizing begins. Rome's collapse was well under way when slaves were thrown into the eel pits to increase the gamy flavor of the eels when they came upon the table.

Preference. "Do you like a man who quotes poetry?" "Well," replied Miss Cayenne, "he is usually better than one who relies on original conversation."—Washington Star.

GOOD ROAD NOTES. Good roads will make the vehicles last longer. Good drainage is absolutely necessary in building a good road. Every man who owns an automobile, a horse or a bicycle is interested in good roads. The highway and roadside are usually a fair index of the people living in the vicinity.

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## His Little Boy's Pistol

By THOMAS R. DUNN

This happened some thirty years ago. Manners in the far west are better now than they were then. Indeed, they are as civilized there as anywhere else.

A stagecoach drew up in front of a tavern in a small town where gun law was the only law on the statute book. But even that was an unwritten law, for there was no statute books to write it in. A young man, dressed in the ordinary business costume of New York or Chicago or Philadelphia or any other eastern city, got out of the coach with the other passengers and went into the tavern. He asked if there were any letters for him. The landlord handed him one. He read it and hunted through his pockets for his cigar case. Not finding it at once, he took out seven articles while making the search, among them a small pistol. Several men, denizens of the country, were lounging about, among them a red faced man with a stubble beard and as many scars on his face as a German student member of a duelling corps. This man caught sight of the new arrival's pistol, and it at once excited his interest.

"Lemme see that, stranger," he said. The young man handed him the pistol, and he looked it over with evident pleasure and amusement.

"Purty, isn't it?" he remarked. He continued to examine it, cocking and uncocking it. Meanwhile the stranger found his cigar case and, leaning a chair up on its hind legs against the wall, sat down on it, resting his heels on the front round and, lighting a cigar, smoked.

"What do you do with it?" inquired the red faced man.

The stranger smoked on without making any reply. His sang froid excited the attention of the bystanders, who commenced to move uneasily away. The man who asked the question was Scar Joe, so called from the traces of his many fights. He was not used to asking questions and receiving no reply. He cast a single glance at the stranger and went on cocking and uncocking the revolver.

"Goin' to make a birthday gift of it to your little boy?" he asked.

"Will it shoot?" persisted Scar Joe. This third question eliciting no reply, the westerner took a quick aim at the stranger's cigar and fired, and cigar and sparks left the smoker's lips.

He didn't turn pale. He didn't look at Scar Joe reproachfully or fearfully or any other way. He didn't look at him at all. He simply took out another cigar, lighted it and went on smoking.

"Does shoot, don't it? Shoots purty straight, don't it? I wonder if I could do it again?"

He fired a second shot with like results. The stranger remained as imperturbable as before, taking out another cigar and lighting it with as little apparent objection to this waste of cigars as if he were loaded down with them. Again Scar Joe sent it flying amid a shower of sparks.

"Stranger," said the smoker in a soft voice, "you're one of the best shots I ever saw. That pistol I've brought from the east as a present for my wife. I've got another for my little girl that I'll bet you can't hit a silver dollar with at ten yards."

"Lemme see it."

The stranger thrust his right hand into his trousers pocket and grasped something that he drew out so clutched in his fist that it was not easy to discern what it was. One of the lookers on, with better or quicker sight than the others, seemed to get on to something about to happen, for he ducked under a table. The stranger reached the thing out to his tormentor. It exploded, and Scar Joe staggered backward, at the same time putting his hand to his hip. The something in the stranger's fist exploded again, and the westerner fell dead.

One would naturally suppose that those present would be chiefly interested in the fallen man. So they were till they were convinced that he had received his last scar. Then all of a sudden their minds concentrated on the thing in the stranger's hands that had done the work. All eyes turned toward him curiously. He had returned the explosive thing to his pocket.

"Landlord," he said, "I'd like something to eat before I go. My wife writes me that she'll send a team for me to be here at 2. It's now 1. I've just time for dinner."

"I say, stranger," said one present, "would you mind lettin' us see what that was you shot him with?"

"I know what it is," said the man who had sought safety under the table. "It's a bulldog. I seen 'em before. They're the ugliest weapon at short range they is goin'."

The stranger took out a short, thick pistol with a very stocky barrel and allowed the party to examine it.

"Was 't'other one really a gift for your wife?" asked one.

"Certainly. When I was called east she asked me to bring her a revolver suitable for a woman."

While the stranger was dining the body of his victim was being removed. When his team arrived and he was driving away one of the crowd who had gathered to see him off cried out: "Much obliged for gettin' rid of Scar Joe. He was gittin' to be a nuisance."

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