

## A Very Small Room

Capital Short Story by Lauder Clement.

BY LAUDEE CLEMENT.

SHE would often sit crying at my feet in the earlier days of her husband's commitment, entreating me to get him out of prison, but she was able to support her three children throughout the six years of his sentence.

From her first days of despair she soon stepped forth. She began, surmounted, and ended each day with one intent. Through six years she rushed with a splendor on her mind; through a fierce asceticism and self-denial toward a complete self-indulgence. She was often tired, but in the main her strength increased. She became very strong and handsome, with the distinction of a vigorous single-mindedness that never once had broken down.

Nor in the new delight and power of herself did she forget her first object or grow to think less of the reward. Her love for her husband remained lively and fresh, her compassion leaping and intense. During the six years, she had accounted for her over-weening ardor—as one excuses too much love and folds it deeper in the rose by offering a likely and a selfish motive—saying: "He will be a great help to me when he gets out." I told her she could not be sure he would be much help after his six years. She had scarcely listened and had answered, leaning her head to one side, "I hardly care about that."

At the end of the six years her husband was discharged from jail. When he had been at home a few months I went to see her.

"He's no help," she said. "It comes to this"—I saw the twist of a new humor on her mouth—"He's got three children—they are all his, too," (her lips compressed like the lips of young men on street corners whose slightly smiling mouths absorb one more obscenity with a faint tremor and sensation of thanks). "It comes to this. He's got three children—as I say, all his; and I have four, himself the fourth. He's no help. He's cold, too. There's no pleasure in a man like that. He's no help."

"He is ill, though," I said. "Yes," she agreed, "he's sick enough." She took some white, wet fish from a pot.

I followed her down a passage with the wind blowing in it and stood with her outside a small door. "Why do you keep him out here?" I asked.

"He wants it," she said. "It was a good storeroom for provisions, having a window, but since he got back from his jail he wants a very small room. So I cleared the onions and fruit out of this and his saws and tools he used to use, and he sits on the edge of the

bed with his legs apart. He's no help, you can see for yourself."

"He is ill, though," I said. "It seems to me you have changed."

"He's sick enough, surely." "Yes, I've changed enough. You can't like a man like that, timid and quiet. He's quiet enough. Sometimes he puts on his vest wrong side out, but that's all he does. And he wants his meals handed in through a crack in the door. He will not have a lot of blue and yellow and white rushing in at him from outside when he's used to his grey stones, nor a crowd of children—all his, as I say—before his eyes, and the cat walking in and out among them."

She opened the door. "Well, how are you?" I said to the man inside. I saw a small room with a window over the bed on which the man sat, with his legs apart and his waistcoat on wrong side out. I saw the mender branch of a peach tree cross and recross the pane in the slight gusts of spring. "That tree, I dare say, is a pleasure to your eyes," I said to him.

"I don't like it," he said. "The window is too large. And the room's too large. I like a very small room and a small window." His eyes fell on the plate of food in his wife's hand and he threw out his arm with the gesture of shutting a door. He took no further notice of me. We went out again. His wife smiled the smile she had got.

"That fish will be cold enough," she said to me. Then in the kitchen, looking toward the glass, "I'm losing my looks. What do you think?"

"I don't know," I said. "You can see for yourself he's no use," she remarked from the top step. "And no comfort, either."

I said. "That prison was too much for him," "Yes," she agreed, "he's sick enough."—Harper's Weekly.

## Laughs From Far and Near

A DREADFUL story is in circulation about Richard Harding Davis, the novelist.

Mr. Davis, as everybody knows, is a wit. He was therefore terribly annoyed the other day to hear that a brother author has spoken unfavorably of his witticisms. Coming upon this brother author, he said:

"My boy, I hear that in a house where other people were kind enough to consider me witty you declared that I was not so. Is this true?"

"No; not a word of truth in it," the other answered cheerily. "I was never in a house in my life where anybody considered you witty."

DURING a concert tour of the late Theodore Thomas and his celebrated orchestra one of the musicians died, and the following telegram was immediately dispatched to the parents of the deceased:

"John Blank died suddenly today. Advise by wire as to disposition." In a few hours the answer was received, reading as follows:

"We are heartbroken; his disposition was a roving one."

THEY were gazing out of the window of the Pullman car. The thin man was rapturously admiring the sunset.

"Ah, Nature is a real artist," exclaimed the thin man, addressing the fat man who sat in the opposite seat.

"Have you never gazed at her wonders?"

"Have you never watched the lam-

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## Expert Discusses Freight Rates

Proposed Increases Will Have But Slight Effect on Cost of Commodities, Is Asserted by Harry Thompson.

BY HARRY THOMPSON.

ONE of the most noticeable things about the proposed 5 per cent increase in railroad freight rates is the wide discussion the subject has provoked in the press of the country. The public will be better informed travel because of its direct part in it; but freight traffic has been a closed book to all except those engaged in overland commerce. It would seem now, however, with this enlightening discussion in progress, that before the proposal at present before the Interstate Commerce Commission is decided, the public will be better informed than ever before on this much more important source of railroad earnings.

Considerable comment has been given to a pamphlet which the railroads have issued, supporting their contention of the necessity of increased rates, in which the roads endeavor to show that their side of the case is really the public's side. This document is subtly entitled "Are the Wages We Pay the Railroads High Enough?" and in it is shown that the tonnage of freight as compared with the weight of passengers is in round numbers, nearly thirty to one, while the average haul of freight is four times the average passenger journey.

The transportation cost to the consumer on articles of every-day use is graphically shown; for example, the railroads get 2-5 cents for carrying a pair of shoes from Boston to Chicago. If the rate were increased 5 per cent the freight would still be less than 3 cents per pair. Should this, the railroads argue, effect the average selling price, \$4 per pair. A \$35 seat of harness is now carried from New York to Chicago for 43½ cents—or 1-80 of its selling price; a \$50 shot gun is carried 1000 miles for 7½ cents—and similarly are shown the insignificant cost of transportation on garden and farm implements, clothing, tools, etc.

hent flame of dawn life leaping across the dome of the world!

"Have you never watched the red-stained islets floating in lakes of fire? Have you never been drawn by the ragged, raven's wing, sky phantoms as they blotted out the moon?"

"Not since I swore off," replied the fat man, as he prepared to hunt another seat.

ALTHOUGH there was not a breath of air stirring little Tommy went out to fly his new kite. In the backyard the servant was stretching the clothes line from one tree to another, it being wash day.

Failure to make the kite fly after a half hour of strenuous effort brought Tommy into the house, eyes and voice filled with tears:

"Mamma, mamma," he pleaded, "make Katie untie the trees, so that the wind can blow. I want to fly my kite."

Good roads enthusiasts, as well as brick manufacturers of Zanesville, O., have made a united protest against the plans and specifications of improving the old National highway with concrete instead of brick, as originally planned. The advocates of brick paving threaten

to appeal the case to President Wilson.

Is it enough? The roads ask. And the question is directed to the general public as the ultimate consumer of transportation. They want the public to remember that present freight rates were made when operating costs were much less than they are now. Wages for all classes of employes are now higher, terminal facilities cost far more, equipment and supply costs have greatly increased, maintenance and repairs are greater—every item of cost that enters into freight carrying has notably increased, while the rate per ton mile has decreased.

To this high cost of living for the railroads is of course attributed the striking decline in railroad construction. In the last ten years the mileage for the whole country increased less than 20 per cent while for the last three years new construction has fallen to almost nothing. The railway mileage of the United States is nearly 250,000—four or five times that of any other country, and nearly half the railway mileage of the world. On the average there is not in the United States a point of habitable land distant more than five miles from a railroad. There is a little new construction for the simple reason that in spite of the amazing industrial growth of the country, new lines do not pay.

A very clear understanding of the needs of the roads is shown by the attitude of the shippers toward the proposed increase in rates. In its inquiry into the justice of the railroads' proposal the Interstate Commerce Commission has received frank statements from shippers favoring the granting of the privileges asked. Probably the fact that the roads have been compelled to retrench in every direction has had something to do with this change of heart.

Everything considered, it would seem probable that some concession will be made to enable the roads to meet their increased expenses.

To prevent scratches, dry the horse's fetlock and heels when he comes in, especially in winter; and rub on a little glycerine or vaseline before he goes out in snow or mud.

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