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The COUNTRY GENTLEMAN

For the AMERICAN FARMER and HIS FAMILY



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Selling Against Europe's Pioneer

THE CODE OF THE WEST

By Zane Grey

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN S. CURRY

SYNOPSIS—Mary Stockwell, who, as mistress of the school, has come to love the rugged, beautiful Tonto country and its stalwart people, is surprised by a letter announcing the coming of her sister, seventeen-year-old Georgiana May, whose health has alarmed their parents in their Eastern home. Georgie, an imperious little beauty, is the ultra-modern girl—slangy, short skirted, painted and powdered—and Mary fears her effect upon the Tonto people with their rigid code of womanly conduct. Mary lives at the Thurman ranch, and wants one of the riders to meet her sister at Ryson. As a joke, she shows a picture of a spinster aunt as a likeness of Georgie. His duties will keep Enoch, leader of the clan, at home. Boyd, Wess, Lock and Serge Thurman advance courteously mendacious excuses. So do Panhandle Ames, Tim Matthews, Arizona and Con Casey. But nineteen-year-old Cal Thurman, the pride of the family, offers to meet Georgie. The boys are incorrigible jokers, and on setting out next morning Cal is sure that Wess, Tim, Arizona and Panhandle plan to make the trip miserable for him. They have left him only the battered flyver, which he is dubious about driving. En route Cal picks up a tall, grotesque-looking stranger, Tuck Merry, ex-marine and heavyweight boxer, who has vainly sought work. Cal will get him a job; Tuck agrees to teach the boy to box. Cal phones for news of the stage; a friend up the line tells him it bears a painted bare-kneed beauty.

III

CAL THURMAN did not have very much time to ruminate over the mysterious intimations that had been suggested by his talk with Abe Hazelitt on the telephone. For he had scarcely left the post office, to walk down the road towards the garage, when he espied the boys from Green Valley. They were grouped with the garage mechanics round his car. If Cal had needed more to rouse his ire this fact was enough.

He approached them with long strides. Upon nearer view he found, to his amaze, that the boys were clean shaven, and all had donned spick-and-span new suits of overalls and wore their Sunday sombreros and shiny boots.

"Howdy, Cal. I'm shore congratulating you," drawled Wess, placidly indicating the flyver.

"Pard Cal, yore some driver," added Arizona.

"Good day, Cal. Looks like you was a-rarin' to go somewhere," put in Panhandle.

"How air you, boy?" queried Tim serenely.

"Say, you seem mighty all-fired glad to see me," replied Cal sarcastically, running his keen gaze from one to another. They were cool, lazy, smiling, tranquil. Cal knew them. The deeper their plot the harder they were to reach! Their very serenity was a mask hiding an enormous guilt. Cal shivered in his boots. How he wished this day was over! At the same instant a warmth stirred in him—the thought of Tuck Merry.

"**SAY**, if you hombres have been monkeyin' with this car!" he exclaimed, glaring darkly at them.

"Cal, you shore are a chivulus fellar where ladies are concerned," drawled Wess, "but you ain't got any but low-down ideas for your relations an' friends."

"Cal, you've been punched more'n oncet fer insultin' remarks," added Tim Matthews meaningly.

"Aw!" burst out Cal, exploding helplessly. "You fellows can't pull the wool over my eyes. You're up to some deviltry,

Then—Proudest Moment
He Had Ever Known—
She Was Walking Beside
Him, Down the Steps and
Out to the Car

an' I'm bettin' from the looks of you an' your soft-soap talk, it's pretty skunky. . . . An' as for your hunch, Tim Matthews, I'd like to know if you think you can go on punchin' me forever?"

"**WAL**, mebbe forever would be far-fetched," replied Tim dryly. "But jest so long as you live I shore will be able to punch you."

Cal gazed steadily into the grinning face of his friend.

"Tim, you're the big gambler of the Thurman outfit, aren't you?"

"Wal, I reckon that distinction has been forced upon me," replied Tim.

"Huh! You know my black horse Pitch, don't you, an' how you've tried to buy, borrow an' steal him?"

"I'm denyin' the last allegashun," retorted Tim.

"Well, I'm bettin' Pitch against your bronc Baldy that I lick you before I'm a year older."

All the boys stared.

"Boy, hev you been drinkin'?" Tim asked incredulously.

"Bah! You know I never drink," retorted Cal. "Are you on—or are you afraid to bet?"

"See heah, Cal," interposed Wess, "thet's a fool bet. You know you love Pitch an' he was Enoch's gift to you—the best hoss ever broke in the Tonto."

"Sure I know, an' you can gamble I wouldn't bet if I didn't know I could lick Tim," returned Cal.

Tim came out of his trance.

"Boys, I call his bluff. The bet's on—my Baldy agin his hoss Pitch. An' all of you paste the date in your hats."

flapped like sails as he slouched forward. He had a hard face, and though it showed him under forty it was a record of strenuous life.

Hatfield was young, a handsome, stalwart figure. He swaggered as he walked. His garb was picturesque—a huge beaver sombrero, red scarf, blue flannel shirt, just now thickly covered with dust, and fringed chaps ornamented in silver.

"Howdy, Thurman," greeted Bloom as he came up.

"How do, Bloom," returned Cal rather shortly.

Hatfield did not speak to Cal, though he gave him a sidelong look out of his big bold eyes. Then, as before, it struck Cal why Hatfield had gained the favor of most of the girls of the Tonto. But he was not equally popular with the men. Hatfield had few superiors as a rider and roper, and he was a bad customer in a fight; but though these qualities had entitled him to a certain respect he

had never been a friend of any of the Thurmans. Moreover, he did not come of Texas stock, and he belonged to the Bar XX outfit.

THESE two riders passed Cal and had mounted the porch before they espied the ludicrous figure of Tuck Merry lounging with his back against a post. Bloom glanced at him, then halted to stare.

"Haw! Haw!" he guffawed, striding on again. "Hat, did you see thet? Reckon it got away from a circus."

Whereupon Hatfield turned to look at Merry. It was not a gaze calculated to flatter or please the recipient, but though Merry evidently saw he was the object of ridicule he gave no sign. The moment brought Cal both resentment and a thrilling anticipation. Then Bloom and Hatfield, after speaking to the natives on the bench, disappeared in the store.

Cal heard the droning hum of the stage. So did the natives hear it. They woke up and stirred to animation. Cal found a grim consolation in the fact that whatever was to be his ordeal, it would soon be under way. He saw Wess and the boys leisurely approaching. Then he caught Tuck Merry's eye and beckoned to him.

"Did you notice the two fellows who just went in the store?" queried Cal.

"I'll say so," replied Merry.

"**HUH!** Well, the fat one was Bloom, head of the Bar XX outfit, an' no friend of the Thurmans. The other was Hatfield, one of his riders. There's bad blood between him an' me. I'll tell you why some day. Of all the—but never mind. Now look down the road. . . . See those four boys comin'. Well, they belong to the Thurman outfit. Wess, the tallest, is my cousin. They're just the finest fellows. But they're bear cats on tricks an' fights. They've put up some job on me today. Now you just hang around an' watch, until I call you."

"I get you, Steve," returned Merry with a smile, and then lounged away to his seat on the porch.

The big auto stage turned into the main road and came on with a roar, leaving a cloud of dust behind. It appeared to be loaded down with bags and boxes, piled on top and tied on the sides. The driver came on with unusual speed, and halted with a bang before the porch steps. When he stepped quickly out Cal recognized Jake's face and figure, but not his movements. Remarkable and unnatural energy characterized Jake at the moment.

"Hyar we are," he called cheerily, as he opened a side door. Then he proceeded to



"Pride goes before a fall, my friend Timothy," said Cal deliberately. "Now, boys, I call on you too. An' listen. I know you're up to some tricks, an' that Tim is at the bottom of it. I want you all to be around when I lick him."

Without further comment Cal cranked the car, finding to his secret amaze that the engine again started with unusual alacrity, and then he climbed to the driver's seat. He drove to the post office, and stopped beyond the door near the porch. A number of natives were sitting on a bench, smoking pipes and whittling sticks, awaiting the one event of Ryson's day—the arrival of the stage. On the edge of the porch sat Tuck Merry beside his canvas roll of baggage.

As Cal was about to get out he espied three horsemen trotting down the road from the east. He peered at them, and recognized Bloom of the Bar XX outfit and two of his riders, one of them surely Hatfield.

"Well, I'll be darned!" ejaculated Cal.

"Talk about your hard luck!"

To be made the victim of tricks by his own relatives and friends was bad enough, but to have to endure them in the face of this Bar XX outfit, especially Hatfield, was infinitely worse.

HE WATCHED them ride past the garage, past Wess and his comrades who nodded casually to them, and down the road to the hitching rail under the cottonwood tree near the post office. They dismounted. Bloom and Hatfield approached while the third rider, a stranger to Cal, began to untie a mail sack from the back of his saddle. Bloom was a heavy man for a rider, being square shouldered and stocky with a considerable girth. His huge bat-wing chaps

lift out numerous pieces of hand baggage, grips and bags of a quality and style seldom seen at Ryson. These he deposited upon the steps. Next he helped someone out.

The first passenger to alight was a very young girl, it seemed to Cal. His view was obstructed by Jake, who appeared to be making a gallant of himself. Everybody on the porch stared. The girl, carrying a hand satchel, tripped up the steps. Cal caught a glimpse of blond curls and the flash of a white face and a rosy cheek. She went into the store. Cal, waiting for the next passenger, made ready to go forward and do his duty. But no one else alighted.

Cal stared. Suddenly he realized that the stage was empty. There were no more passengers. His first sensation was one of unutterable relief. Miss Stockwell's sister had not come. She had missed the stage or had not come at all. The joke would be on the boys. He glanced away from the stage to the porch where they stood. Wess looked dazed; Panhandle was in a trance; Tim stared open-mouthed at the wide door of the store; and Arizonie seemed suddenly to be recovering from some shock and to be reminded of his radiant personal adornment. He was fussing with his hair, then his scarf. He changed his gloves from one hand to another, and began to walk toward the door in the most hesitating manner.

BUT he never reached it. He was halted by a vision of youth and beauty that emerged from the doorway. She crossed the threshold, came out on the porch. It seemed to Cal that everyone was struck as he was struck—incapable of movement.

The girl he had imagined a child, now facing him, was certainly a young lady. She had big violet eyes that peered expectantly all around her. Her face was white except for a rosy color high on her cheeks. Her lips were red as carmine. She wore a tan-colored dress, stylishly cut and strangely short. It reached only to the turn of her knees. Cal's bewildered glance caught a glimpse of slender, shapely black-stockinged legs before it flashed back to her face.

"Mister Driver, you said there was someone to meet me," she spoke up, in sweet high-pitched voice.

"Shore thar is, judgin' from appearances," laughed Jake, looking up from his task with the mail bags. His bronzed face wrinkled with a smile. "An' if thar wasn't, miss, you'd hev no call to worry. Wait till I carry in these mail bags."

SHE did not appear in the least embarrassed or concerned in any way, except somewhat curious and interested. Manifestly she expected someone of the group to step forward, and looked from one to another. Arizonie began to thaw under the sweet expectation of that look, but the others remained frozen.

Then Hatfield came out of the store, bareheaded, his sombrero in hand, and his handsome bold face pleasantly alight.

"Miss, I reckon you're the young lady I'm lookin' for," he said easily, as he towered over her.

"I'm Miss Georgiana May Stockwell," she said with a flashing look, taking him in from heated face to spurred boots.

Cal Thurman's strained attention broke. He fell back against the seat of the car. "By heaven!" he whispered. "I understand teacher now. She put this job up on me. . . . That—that girl's her sister—the sister I'm to

meet." Shocked out of his equilibrium, Cal could only sit there and stare and listen.

Manifestly Miss Georgiana expected Hatfield to introduce himself, and her manner was one of pleased anticipation. She liked the looks of this Arizonian. Hatfield, however, did not seem disposed to tell his name; and his manner, though bold and assured, showed something of awkwardness. Either he was not quick-witted enough for the situation or he had not judged Miss Stockwell correctly. She seemed swift to grasp something strange in his omission or in what might be the brusque way of Westerners, and she lost a little of her self-possession. Her sophistication was not very old or deep.

"COME over to the garage with me an' I'll put you in a car," said Hatfield, and gathering up several of her bags he started down the porch steps.

"Thank you—I'll wait here," replied the young lady hesitatingly, and she watched him depart. Then Wess Thurman stepped forward to address her.

"Miss Stockwell," he began with an earnestness that precluded embarrassment. "Shore if you go with Bid Hatfield you'll never be welcome at the Thurman ranch."

She stared up at the tall lean-faced rider, and it was plain now that something seemed wrong to her.

"What am I up against?" she queried tartly. "How do I know who Bid Hatfield is? He appeared to be the only gentleman to notice that I am a stranger and alone. Besides he said he was looking for me. I took him to be Mr. Cal Thurman."

"Wal, you're shore mistaken, an' Cal won't be flattered," replied the rider. "I'm Wess Thurman, an' we—us heah—thet is I—I come to meet you an' take you to your sister."

Miss Georgiana eyed Wess dubiously, and her thoughts must have been varying and bewildering, until she gathered something of the truth of the situation.

"I was told down the road that Mr. Cal Thurman telephoned he would meet me," she said. "Where is he?"

"Wal, miss—you see," floundered Wess, trying to arise to his opportunity. "Cal's only a boy—an' he was takin' a lot on himself. Now I'm agoin' to take you out to Green Valley Ranch."

"You are very kind," replied Georgiana sweetly. "Did my sister Mary send you to meet me?"

"Wal, I reckon—not jest that—but we—the boys—I mean I said I'd shore see you home safe," replied Wess, swallowing hard in the stress of the moment.

Miss Georgiana gazed roguishly up at him and then at Arizonie, who was edging closer, and then at Panhandle and Tim Matthews, now showing signs of animation.

"WE FETCHED the—big car," said Arizonie breathlessly. That seemed a signal of encouragement to the other boys. Wess and Panhandle and Tim crowded round the girl. Arizonie refused to be edged aside from his favorable position.

"We? Oh, I'm to have several escorts," responded Georgiana demurely.

"Lady, you're agoin' with the right outfit," said Panhandle.

"Outfit! Oh, then you belong to the Four T's—at the Thurman ranch where my sister lives?" cried Georgiana eagerly.

"Wal, miss, you shore hit it on the haid," drawled Wess with his engaging smile. He had recovered his balance. Blandly he introduced his comrades. "This heah is Arizonie, who ain't got any other name. An' this's Panhandle Ames an' heah's Tim Matthews."

Georgiana gave all in turn her hand and a look that further marked their utter demoralization.

"And Mr. Cal Thurman—where is he?" she queried.

"RECKON Cal didn't want to bother about meetin' you, lady," said Tim blandly. "Last night he beefed a lot. He was heah when the stage come in, an' I guess he beat it."

That was all the by-play Cal heard, for his attention was attracted by sight of Hatfield returning from the garage with a hired car. During the amazing and preposterous stand made by Wess and the boys in their endeavor to work this situation to their pleasure, Cal had recovered from his consternation. The boys had been quick to grasp the trick played upon them by the school-teacher, and meant now to turn the tables on Cal and take Miss Georgiana home. Cal vowed they would never succeed. The situation had changed wonderfully to his advantage. How pretty the girl was! Already those deceitful rogues, who had come to Ryson solely to play some outlandish joke on him, had become smitten with her. Cal drew a deep breath and leaped out of the car. He felt master of this situation, and something stirred in him, deeper and more fiery than the situation seemed to justify.

When Hatfield halted at the porch Cal deliberately looked into the car, and seeing Miss Stockwell's bags he promptly lifted them out. Hatfield swaggered out of his seat.

"Hey, Thurman, what're you up to?" he demanded. Everybody turned to stare.

"Bid, I'm relievin' you of Miss Stockwell's baggage," said Cal coolly. "I was sent to meet her an' I'm goin' to take her home."

Hatfield's muscular body jerked with a start of angry passion, and for an instant he glared darkly at Cal, with the blood slowly leaving his face.

There was more here than the mere opposition confronting him. Then he masked his true feelings.

"Well, Cal, you didn't show up an' nobody else in your outfit had any manners, so I offered to escort Miss Stockwell," he said.

"HUH!" ejaculated Cal, taken aback by the rider's terse reply. Whereupon Hatfield mounted the porch, and with a gallant bow he faced the girl.

"Miss Stockwell, will you let me take you to your sister or do you prefer to go with Thurman?" he inquired courteously.

The girl had quickened and stirred with the excitement of the moment. Manifestly she was alive to Hatfield's striking appearance and personality. Then she turned her flashing gaze upon Cal.

That was indeed a trying moment for him. Suddenly, it seemed, as he felt her glance take him in, all his assurance and sense of right in the situation oozed away. What a sorry figure he must cut in contrast to this handsome

(Continued on Page 36)



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The Code of the West

(Continued from Page 13)

Hatfield, or the boys from the Thurman ranch! Cal felt the blood rise to his temples. "Mr. Bid Hatfield, if it were a matter of choice I'd much rather go with you," replied the girl sweetly. "But as my sister sent him to get me I can only —"

"Pardon me," interrupted Cal curtly. "I'm glad to get out of takin' you. But I advise you to go with my cousin Wess. For if you go with Hatfield you will not be welcome at Green Valley. I'm tellin' you this for your sister's sake."

Cal turned away, leaving the girl both affronted and troubled. At this juncture someone shouted from the store: "Cal Thurman, you're wanted on the phone."

Cal plodded up the steps and into the store, looking neither to right nor left. He was aware of footsteps following him in, but he was too miserable to take any further notice of anyone.

"Hello," he called into the telephone

"Hello, is that you, Cal?"

"Yes, it's me."

"This is Mary Stockwell talking. . . . Cal, has the stage come with my sister?"

"I reckon so," replied Cal grimly.

"Oh—oh—Cal, dear boy, is she all right?"

"I reckon so."

"Oh—hurry, Cal. Fetch her out. I'm wild to see her. And Cal, you're glad now I made you go, aren't you? You'll forgive me for fooling you—about the picture?"

"I'll never forgive you—never."

THERE was no instant response. Then the teacher's voice came again, different in tone: "Why, Cal—you don't mean that. It was only fun. You've played jokes on me. And I thought this would please you. I was so glad you alone of the boys offered to go—to meet what you supposed would be a cross, ugly old maid. It was fine of you, Cal. Why are you offended?"

"Aw, because I've been made a fool before a crowd," replied Cal. "Wess an' the boys came in to play some low-down trick on me. . . . You see, teacher, I was lookin' for—for the person who'd look like the picture you showed me. An' when a pretty kid of a girl hops out of the stage—I never thought it might be your sister. I was the last to find that out. . . . Then someone I've no use for went up to her—an' when I woke up an' introduced myself—said you'd sent me to meet her—then—then she insulted me right before him—an' all the crowd."

"Insulted you! Oh, Cal, don't say that," returned Miss Stockwell in distress. "I'm sorry, Cal. Why, I wanted you to be the lucky boy. . . . Tell me, who went up to Georgiana? Was it Bid Hatfield?"

"Yes it was, an' she told him she'd prefer to go with him. Right before Wess an' the boys, an' everybody! That's what's so bad. . . . Why, teacher, you don't know the West. I'll never live that down. . . . It's only fair to say Hatfield was first to show your sister courtesy. But I was loosed, I tell you. . . . Oh, I've made a mess of it. . . . Teacher, I've told her she'd better go home with Wess—that if she goes with Hatfield it might make bad feelin' for you."

"Cal, my sister is coming home with you," declared Miss Stockwell. "Call her to the phone."

Thus admonished Cal turned away, smarting and tingling from the forced expression of his feelings. He almost bumped into Georgiana, who evidently had been standing there. The pertness had gone from her face. She looked perturbed, and her eyes met his rather questioningly.

"Your sister wants to speak to you," said Cal.

THE girl ran, and snatching up the receiver she stood on her tiptoes. "Hello, hello. This is Georgie. . . . Yes, yes! Oh, Mary—sister—I'm wild with joy. I'm here—out West—will see you soon. I've so much to tell you—and presents from mother—everybody."

Cal felt a singular break in his abject misery, and it came through the sweet, low, broken voice of the girl.

"Yes, Mary, I hear you—I'll listen," went on the girl eagerly. At that Cal halted, half turned and watched the slim, slender form, strained up before the telephone. He heard the squeaking of the voice coming over the wire and it seemed to

be direct, forceful speech. Miss Georgiana started. "Oh, Mary!" she expostulated appealingly. Then she became perfectly motionless, intent and absorbed. Cal divined that Miss Stockwell was saying some strong things to this little sister. That seemed to afford him a melancholy gratification. How trim and neat the slight figure of the girl as she stood there breathlessly! He saw the golden, rebellious curls peeping from under her bonnet. Then she spoke again, evidently under different stress. "Mary dear, I'm afraid I've been rude—ungracious to Mr. Thurman. But when I explain you won't think so badly of me. I ran into some deep stuff here, believe me. . . . Yes, I will start at once and with him—if he'll take me now. Good-by."

She hung up the receiver and then she wheeled swiftly and almost ran up to Cal. It was not the same girl.

"MR. CAL," she began, "sister has explained—my aunt's picture—how your brothers and cousins refused to meet me. . . . that you alone were kind enough—good enough to come. That those boys had framed up some trick to play on you. . . . I apologize for what I said. I'm ashamed. Won't you forgive me—and take me to Mary?"

She had seemed to come closer all the time she was speaking, until her appealing hand touched his arm. She lifted her face that suddenly became beautiful and sweet in Cal's dawning sight. Her violet eyes held him. They were darkening with thought, troubled, sincere, yet audacious. And it seemed that before them, in a flash, he fell crashing to the first headlong love of his life. After that nothing was clear. The sweet face floated before him, hazily, the face of a dream. He spoke, trying to tell her he would be glad to take her home. Then—proudest moment he had ever known—she was holding his arm, walking beside him out of the door, across the porch, with her beautiful head erect, looking up at him, seeing none of the gaping bystanders, gliding so coolly and disdainfully past Wess and his comrades, oblivious of the crest-fallen Hatfield—down the steps and out to the car.

Merry and his pack and the girl's numerous pieces of baggage comfortably filled the after section of the car. Then Cal cranked the engine. It started with a strange sound, entirely foreign to him. Was it only the confusion of his brain? Anyway it started. Cal climbed in beside the girl, tremendously aware of her presence, of her perfect self-possession and poise, of the smile that enveloped him. His hands shook a little. Then when he tried to drive off he was dumfounded to see that the car would not budge an inch. The engine had stopped.

IV

CAL sat there at the wheel, suddenly realizing that what he had anticipated had begun to happen. He swore under his breath. And for an instant he hated the curious crowd lined up on the porch. The feeling, however, was only a flash. No matter what happened, Georgiana May Stockwell was with him.

"You stalled the engine," she said brightly.

"Stalled? Well, that's a new one on me," he replied. Then in lower tone he added: "Your sister told you Wess an' his gang had put up a job on me, didn't she?"

"Yes. That's one reason why I was so ashamed."

"I've got a hunch they've fooled with the engine when I left the car at the garage," whispered Cal. "It's sure comin' to me. An' it's hardly fair to ask you to stick by me. But I'm askin' you. It's started bad for me, but will you stick to me an' be game?"

"Game is my middle name," she whispered back with a flash of fun and fire in her eyes. "I'll stick if we have to walk."

The look of her as she faced him, young and eager and defiant, the quick whispered words that established her championship of him—these more than compensated Cal for the humiliation he had suffered.

"Reckon I'd better confess I'm no mechanic. I don't know an engine from a fence post," he said.

Her low laugh was cut short by Wess Thurman's drawling out: "Wal, Cal, do you want a team of hosses?"



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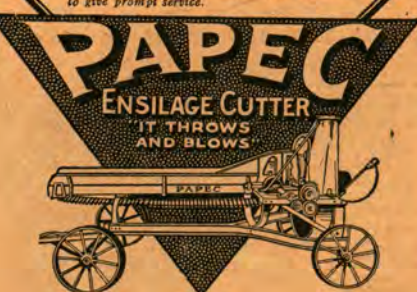
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"Thet tin Lizzie has died right thar in her tracks," said Panhandle.

Tim Matthews sauntered down the porch steps with nonchalant confidence.

"Mebbe yore out of gas," he said.

Cal saw how Georgiana was studying them, wonderingly, as if fascinated. She saw through them. She was biting her red lips to hold back her merriment. Then Cal thrilled to see Tuck Merry unlimbering his long length out of the back of the car.

"Buddy, let me give this can the once over," he said. "I used to run a cheese cutter for a condensed-milk company."

Tuck leisurely went round to the front of the car and threw back the cover of the engine, and craning his long neck he bent his head clear out of sight. He was whistling. Then he straightened up to look over and handle parts of the engine.

"Haw! Haw!" roared Bloom from his post on the porch. "Shore this's a side show."

Merry paid no attention to him or to the others who laughed at his sally, but went on leisurely examining the engine.

Finally he straightened up, and with his hand on the machine stood in the posture of an orator about to speak.

"Buddy, this here engine has been monkeyed with by someone who doesn't know the combination," he said blandly. "The carburetor has been detached from the ventriculator and the trolley wire is off. The ignition system has been jammed in the midriff. Outside of that the engine is all right."

"GEE! Isn't there anythin' more out of whack?" asked Cal, almost bursting with glee. Moreover, there was something marvelous happening. His hand had dropped to the seat and the girl, in her excitement, was squeezing it.

"That's all I can see offhand," replied Tuck, "except some parts are missin'. But I can make her run all right."

Wess dropped back beside Cal. "Wal, kid, I'll relieve you of Miss Stockwell an' get her home for dinner."

"Wess, I'd hate to tell you what I know," said Cal.

"Aw, now, would you?" queried the other banteringly. He did not know just how to take Cal's change of aspect and tone. Then his keen eyes saw Cal's hand over Georgiana's and he actually gave a start.

"Wal, takin' all in all, you ain't so slow," he said. "But considerin' thet Miss Stockwell must be got home I'll have to tag you. Shore it's a cinch you can't take her in this wagon."

Whereupon he strode off toward the garage. Arizonie and Panhandle hurried after him, but Tim lagged behind long enough to shoot a hard look at Tuck Merry and a languishing glance at Miss Stockwell.

"Tuck, hurry an' hook up the engine," said Cal. "Let's rustle out of here."

Merry bent over the machinery, dexterously using his big hands, while the bystanders stirred and shuffled on the porch. Some of them laughed and exchanged jesting remarks. Cal caught the eyes of Bloom and Hatfield upon him and the girl.

"Holdin' hands, heh?" queried Bloom coarsely in his loud voice.

IT WAS Cal who blushed and withdrew the hand that had unconsciously covered hers. Even in the moment of sudden consternation and anger he saw that she showed surprising indifference to the attention thus rudely turned upon her. Merry jerked up quickly from his task over the engine. Bloom must have seen or felt contempt in the girl's utter lack of embarrassment or shame, and probably misunderstood it.

"Wal, Bid," he said just as loudly, turning to Hatfield. "Thet bare-legged chicken is some looker, but you ain't missin' so much. Funny about these Eastern females—"

"Shut up!" yelled Tuck Merry, and moved away from the car toward the porch.

Cal jerked as if a startling current had shot through him. In a furious anger he strove to get out of the car. But the girl held him. "Please—don't—don't—it was my fault," she whispered pleadingly. "Don't let me start a fight the very first thing."

"But—he insulted you."

"Wait! Hold on—please—I beg you," she added, clasping his arm tight. "Oh—think how my sister will be ashamed of me!"

Cal might have been proof against her, but he saw that Merry had taken the matter

in hand, and suddenly he relaxed, to sink back in the car. Georgiana still clung to him.

"What'n blazes's eatin' you?" demanded Bloom, striding to the porch steps to confront Merry.

"I'm a stranger out here," said Merry, mounting the steps. "I'm from the East. And I don't take kindly to the remark you made. Do Arizona men talk that way about Eastern women?"

"They shore do when them women have painted faces an' bare knees like thet girl," declared Bloom.

"But, mister, down East a little artificial color and a short skirt don't call for insults," averred Merry gravely. "It's the style. I've a kid sister who wears the same."

"WAL, you an' your sister an' all sech as thet chicken had better stay where you belong," said Bloom. "The West won't stand for you. An', stranger, let me give you a hunch. The Tonto Basin is shore West clear through."

"Mister, I've met a lot of men, and with all respect to your Tonto code I'll say no real man anywhere talks like you."

"Say, you starved-lookin' bag of bones!" roared Bloom furiously. "Do you hev any idee who you're ravin' at?"

"I'm telling you, mister," replied Merry, his casual voice so marked in contrast to the strident one. "You're no real Westerner. You're a poor fish. I'll bet you're yellow clear to your gizzard."

Bloom appeared suddenly bereft of reason. With a slow, ponderous motion he swung back his arm.

Then Merry's right hand shot up so swiftly that Cal could not follow it. But he saw the result. Merry's fist stopped at Bloom's nose—not a hard blow, but evidently peculiarly placed. Bloom's head jerked back and blood squirted from his nose. He let out a hoarse cry of pain. The spasmodic working of his face likewise attested to a sudden excruciating sensation.

Then as he steadied himself on his feet Merry's left hand shot out. It hit Bloom in the waist somewhere and sounded like a bass drum. Bloom gave a terrible gasp. His mouth opened wide and his whole face became a network of strained wrinkles. His hands fluttered to his body, and he began to sink down. The breath had been expelled from him. Then as he was sagging Merry knocked him in a heap to the porch floor.

"Where's that swell motion-picture pard of his?" inquired Merry of the bystanders. "Keep clear of me or I'll throw a gun," declared Hatfield threateningly, moving back into the store.

"Say, you handsome Tonto masher, you couldn't throw anything but a bluff," retorted Merry, striding across the porch.

ONE of the men barred his way. "Stranger, let well enough alone. Bid might throw a gun at thet. An' seein' you ain't packin' any it's wiser to hold in. Don't ever run after any fights in the Tonto. They'll come to you fast enough."

Thus admonished Merry turned away and went back to the car. Meanwhile the bystanders had crowded round the prostrate Bloom, and Wess with his comrades had arrived in the big car. Cal sat perfectly still, but inwardly he seemed to be a riot of nerve and pulse. The girl was clinging to him, and still clung even when Wess leaped out of his car and jumped to accost Cal.

"Boy, what's come off?" he demanded sharply.

"Wess, it isn't anythin' to get riled at, but I'd given a great deal if you'd seen it. . . . Bloom made an insultin' remark about Eastern girls. An' Merry soaked him. That's all."

"Wal, I'll be gosh-durned!" ejaculated Wess with the tight coldness of his lean face relaxing. "Thet queer-lookin' Jasper! Could he hit anybody? It ain't believable. Reckon he throwed a hammer or wrench, huh?"

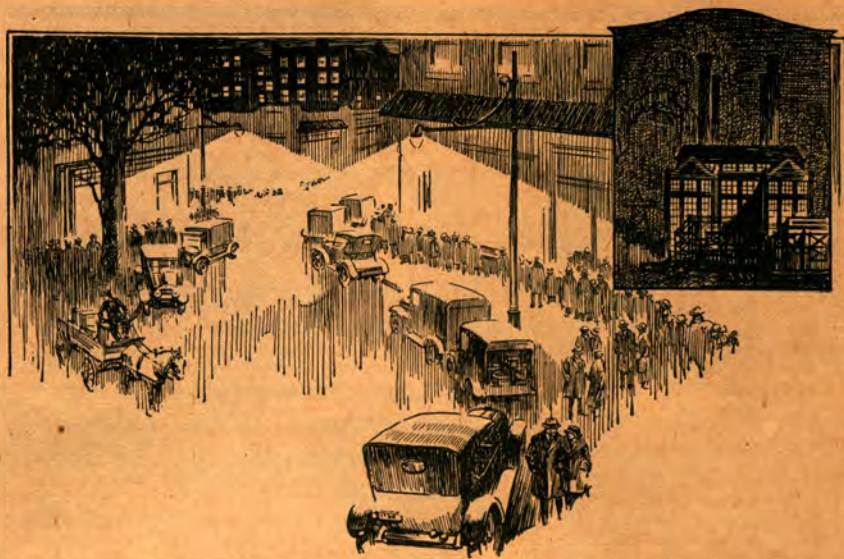
"Oh, Merry throwed somethin' all right," laughed Cal.

Just then the circle of bystanders round Bloom opened to show several of them assisting him to his feet. He was unable to stand alone.

"I'll get you!" he cried hoarsely as the men dragged him into the store.

Very curiously then Wess Thurman strode up to Merry, and after him came Arizonie and Panhandle, unquestionably friendly.

Merry paid no heed to Wess and went on working over the engine until suddenly it started.



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"Cal, see heah," Wess said, turning, "you'd better let the little lady go home with me."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Thurman, you're very kind indeed," interposed Georgiana demurely, "but I'm going with Mr. Cal."

"Wal, you might have to walk," rejoined Wess rather gruffly.

"That would be lovely. I adore walking."

Wess vouchsafed no reply to this, manifestly giving in with poor grace, and with a meaning glance at the rattling derelict he strode back to the touring car.

Merry climbed into the back seat and slammed the door. Cal, with deep and secret misgivings, put on the power, half expecting that the car would refuse to move. But to his delight it started off as if running smoothly was its especial forte.

"Say, Cal," yelled Arizonie, "we'll hang along behind an' pick up the pieces."

Cal drove by Wess and Panhandle and Tim, on past the garage, where the mechanics peeped out in sure betrayal of their part in the plot, and down the dusty road out of the village into the country. The driving, and getting away from Ryson, relieved Cal of the necessity of strain and left him to the mercy of new and strange sensations. Much that he had feared had come to pass, but differently, and it had lost its hatefulness. All the rest seemed mysterious and exalting. Something had happened. He felt keen, light, buoyant, and yet shy. A glamour floated over the valley, not all the rosy veils and golden glints of the westering sun. The drowsy air, beginning to cool, smelled and tasted sweet to Cal. But despite all this there was a vague strange dread deep in his soul. Like a shadow behind the radiance of mind!

THE girl sat quietly for the first mile or so of that journey. Cal saw out of the corner of his eye how still and thoughtful she appeared. He noticed when she began to take interest in the ride and in him. Several times she peeped up at him, and each time that sign thrilled him.

Presently she turned to address Merry. "Mr. Merry, thanks for—for defending Eastern girls," she said hesitatingly. "That boob was horrid and just what you called him. I never saw any one hit as you hit him. I'll say you handed him one."

"Don't mention it," replied Tuck gallantly. "I'm a ladies' man. And I've a little sister just like you, only not so pretty."

"Thank you. So you're a flatterer as well as a slugger," she said merrily. "Mr. Cal, what do you think about it?"

"Please don't call me mister," replied Cal. "What do I think about Tuck? Wonderful fellow! Oh, it was grand when he walked up on Bloom and called him all that—and punched his nose—thumped his big paunch—then slammed him hard. Aw, great! If only Enoch could have seen that!"

"Who's Enoch?" asked the girl.

"My older brother. He's the finest fellow. He an' Bloom are set against each other something bad. An' we all side with Enoch. A Thurman sticks to a Thurman, right or wrong. But in this case we're right. Bloom is no good, an' that showy rider of his, Bid Hatfield —"

Cal checked his impulsive speech. Recall of Hatfield was singularly bitter at this incomprehensibly sweet moment. And likewise, Miss Georgiana seemed to feel the silencing effect of the thought of Hatfield. Her pensiveness stormed Cal's heart with an utterly new sensation—the fire of jealousy.

ONCE he looked back down a long straight stretch of road. The big Thurman car, with Wess and the boys, was hanging back there. Cal was grimly reminded of the fact that they were driving slowly, waiting for the inevitable disaster.

"Cal, this limousine seems to be holding together," she said presently.

"Yes. Did you expect it'd fall apart?"

"It'll spread pretty soon and we'll go one way while Mr. Merry goes the other."

"Aren't you afraid of autos?" he queried curiously.

"Afraid! I should say not. What of?"

"Why, accidents, of course. I sure am afraid of them. But I love a wild horse."

"What's the use to be afraid? If you're going to get it in the neck you'll get it, that's that. Oh, I should worry."

She was a wholly new species of girl to Cal, and the more he talked to her the greater grew his confusion. But one thing he

gathered—along with his confusion grew her charm.

"Oh, what beautiful country!" she exclaimed when Cal turned the last curve of the valley road and headed into the foothills.

"Beautiful isn't strong enough, Miss Georgiana. It's glorious. You just wait."

"Cut out the formal stuff, for tripe's sake," she said impatiently.

"What?" asked Cal blankly.

"Can the miss, will you? I'm not an old lady. I'm only seventeen. Call me Georgiana."

"Oh—I—I see—all right," rejoined Cal confusedly. But the shock he had sustained was not pleasurable. Still her praise of his beloved Tonto warmed him toward her.

THE sun was about to go down behind the ragged golden-hazed range of mountains in the west, and the most lovely moment of the day was at hand.

Cal yielded to an uncontrollable impulse. At the summit of a foothill he stopped the car and bade Georgiana look around. She uttered a little cry, not of delight or wonder, but of some new emotion, born of that wild mountain prospect. The green rolling valley waved away to the Mazatzals, blue massed, gold tipped, marvelously canopied in a purple haze. Long dark green slopes lifted for leagues and leagues mounting to the noble brow of the Mongollon Rim, where blazed the last fire of the sun.

Close at hand the foothills presented soft rounded contours of green brush and yellow earth alternating in patches. Cal pointed out to the girl the manzanita, with its smooth red-barked branches, its glistening green leaves, like wax, its gold-hued berries. To the eastward rose the foothills, higher and higher, growing green and dark with cedar, juniper and at last the pines, all mounting in sloping billows to a great dominating landmark, a flat-topped, black-fringed mountain called Promontory Point, standing out from the Rim to catch the last glittering rose and gold of the sunset. To the southward the country fell away into the numberless dark shadowy lines of ridges and cañons that constituted the Tonto Basin, and at this bewitching moment all was bathed in a strangely beautiful and unreal light, purple and lilac, exquisite and intangible as the shadow cast by a rose.

"You love it all—don't you?" she said as Cal ended his enthusiastic designation of the country visible to them.

"Yes," he replied.

"Oh, it's nifty, all right," she replied, "but too wild and woolly for muh. I went to New York City once, and say, take it from Georgie, there's the place for me."

"HUH! I don't doubt it," replied Cal, rather bluntly in his disappointment. Then, as if to find solace for his hurt he turned to Merry, who had evinced a keen interest in all Cal had pointed out. "Tuck, do you like it?"

"Buddy, here's where I homestead," was the hearty reply. "I've been all over the world. But this Tonto has got 'em all skinned to death. I want to live here a hundred years and bury four wives."

Cal joined with Georgiana in mirth at Merry's facetiousness. Then the hoarse honk of an automobile horn hastened Cal to start on again. Wess was creeping up on him.

"I'm nearly—frozen," said the girl, presently.

"That's too bad. I forgot to fetch a robe. Haven't you a coat?"

"Yes, I've a heavy coat and a sweater, too, but I can't unpack them now," she replied. She was indeed shivering. With the setting of the sun and the growing altitude, the air had become cold, marked by a penetrating quality of the desert land.

For the first time Cal deliberately ran his glance over her, from head to foot. Indeed the light flimsy dress she wore, low at the neck and startlingly short, was no garment for the Tonto at night. A girl needed to wear wool. Cal's quick glance caught a glimpse of her bare knees, shapely, slim and pink, and her black stockings rolled low. If he had experienced any shocks heretofore, what was this now? Quickly he averted his glance, back to the road ahead, and he tingled under a sensation of amaze, disgust, and something else he could not define.

"If you—you suffer from cold—why don't you dress differently?" he queried, in a tone he meant to be casual.

"Don't you like this dress?" she asked quickly.

"I should smile I don't," he replied.

"What's wrong with it?" she added with an irresistible concern. "It's new—stylish—all the boys said it was some swell rag."

"Boys!" retorted Cal. "What kind of boys?"

"Why, all my friends," she replied in a dangerous tone that warned him. Then as he did not answer she asked again: "What's wrong with it? I suppose you're the arbiter of style in your wonderful Tonto."

"I don't know anything about style—or swell rags," said Cal, stung by her sarcasm. "But I've got some sense. This is a mountain country. You're six thousand feet above sea level right here, and going higher. You'll freeze to death in that—that thing. It's too thin—and too low—and a mile too short."

"But that's all the rage," she protested. "Every girl wears them this way. You're buried alive out here. What do you know of styles for women?"

"Nothing, Miss Stockwell," he said stiffly. "I acknowledge that. But I can't see the sense of being uncomfortable for the sake of what you call style."

"How'd I know I was going up into the mountains where it's winter in summer? But if I had known I'd have worn the same, only I'd had my coat out. . . . Mister Thurman, it may interest you to learn that last winter all the fashionable women wore skirts almost to their knees—and openwork lace or silk stockings and slippers. There! Do you get that, Mister Backwoodsman?"

"HUH! I reckon that is interestin'," replied Cal just as tartly. "Women back East dress that way? In wintertime?"

"Yes, I'll say so."

"Well, they're loco," declared Cal shortly. "Plumb loco—an' that means crazy, Miss New York."

"I think you're horrid," she retorted hotly. "It's strange my sister is so fond of you. . . . I wish I had come with Mr. Bid Hatfield."

Cal felt the blood flame and sting his face. What a little cat she was! He thought he hated her then.

"Huh! Thank you. That's two speeches of yours I'm not likely to forget," he flashed back at her. "You've got some Western ways to learn, Miss Stockwell, an' I'm

sorry I was fool enough to open my mouth. We don't savvy each other. . . . An' as for what you said about Bid Hatfield—let me tell you out straight—you're bein' driven home now by a gentleman, even if he does live in the backwoods; an' if you had come with Hatfield you'd have learned what he thought of your rolled-down stockings."

She turned quite pale and sat perfectly motionless, looking ahead of her. Presently she spoke in a different tone.

"Is that straight talk or just temper?" she asked quietly. "Is it square to Mr. Hatfield?"

"Yes, it's straight an' it's square. I could tell you a lot, but all I'll say is, Hatfield once insulted my sister. . . . Reckon I'll kill him some day."

THAT gave her a slight start and she turned sharply, with lips parted. Nevertheless she did not reply. Presently she relapsed into pondering thought. At that moment Cal experienced a singular conception of what was going through her mind, and it seemed to him that she was struggling against something he had stirred, either anger or contrition—that she had suddenly been confronted with a naked truth never seen before and was fighting it with all her strange, practical force. The feeling left him as quickly, but he had sensed it and could not get away from its influence. Maybe this girl was not all she pretended to be.

"I ought to apologize for—for talkin' familiarly about a lady's way of dressin'," added Cal with finality. "But I'd never have done so if you hadn't said you were freezin'."

What her reply might have been Cal never knew, for as she turned to him the engine emitted a grinding bang from its internals, the wheel turned out of his grasp and the car ran into a bank with a thud.

The girl was thrown violently against Cal. She did not cry out. There was a sound of breaking glass and of the baggage shifting in the back of the car.

"Buddy, we struck a hard wave," cheerfully called out Merry.

"That'll be about all," added Georgiana.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Tilth

(Continued from Page 5)

excellent results generally secured from growing mixed crops seem to tie on closely with the observation that the bacterial life of the soil is always found in a more healthy state when several plant varieties are grown together than when one crop occupies the land. And every observing farmer knows that mixed-grass pastures and meadows, and of small grains grown for feed, make a bigger yield than when a single variety occupies the land.

While soil bacteria in the main feed upon vegetable matter and the only way to keep the land in a high state of fermentation and tilth is to supply this favorite bacterial food, mineral fertilizers enter into the problem to a more or less important degree. The nitrifying group of germs of the so-called azotobacter group is considered now to be the real backbone of our farming. But for these little busybodies working night and day, our nitrogen balance would be struck so far in the wrong direction that farming would be a more or less hopeless task. This group of bacteria shows a strong liking for phosphatic fertilizers, growing and multiplying at a rapidly increased rate when this element is fully supplied. Possibly this fact explains, fully as much as does the direct plant food theory, good returns from far and wide through using phosphate fertilizers. The bacterial reaction to potash is noticeable, but not so striking. Mineral nitrogen fertilizers show a pronounced effect in this wise: Application of nitrate of soda tends to make the soil reaction alkaline, while the action of ammonium sulphate is to make the soil acid. Bacteria thrive best in an alkaline soil. Alkalinity, however, can be carried too far, causing too great activity of bacteria, too rapid breaking down of the soil vegetable matter and a waste of plant food, as well as destruction of bacterial food, and a consequent period of famine, unless heroic measures are taken to keep up the vegetable-matter supply.

There is something in the old saying about lime enriching the father but impoverishing the son. Farmers who use lime liberally should make equally liberal provisions for keeping the soil provided with vegetable matter. Excess lime builds up a terrific bacterial appetite which makes sometimes for a wasteful burning out of vegetable matter that must be replaced or else soil tilth will suffer.

Plants do not take up carbohydrates from the soil, relying on their own leaf laboratories for the production of these substances. Yet it is a fairly well-known fact that molasses or sugar often shows a great stimulating effect on plant growth. A week ago I sprinkled a few spoonfuls of sugar over a fern pot here by my writing table. It had already been liberally supplied with dumpings from my pipe. A new burst of growth and a deepening in color is now noticeable. The explanation lies in the fact that sugar is ideal food for bacteria, greatly stimulating growth and activity. This more active germ life has broken down the tobacco and other vegetable matter in the pot, and has probably fixed a considerable quantity of nitrogen from the air, making available a bountiful food supply for the fern. Of course sugar is too expensive a product to be used in field application under any circumstances, and I merely cite the case to show how crops are fed by this indirect method of feeding soil bacteria.

We are doing pretty much the same thing when we plan a rotation so as to yield a bountiful crop residue, or to have catch crops or winter cover crops fitted in along with or between the major plantings. We are merely feeding the soil bacteria. And in no inconsiderable degree this is what we do when we apply lime or phosphatic fertilizers to the land. Starve the soil bacteria and the land loses tilth. Feed this germ life in the land and the soil mellows and yields its fruit in season.

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stock breeders make the same report. If you wish, let us help you reach the responsive market for your *Country Gentleman*. Address

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THE COUNTRY GENTLEMAN PHILADELPHIA PENNSYLVANIA

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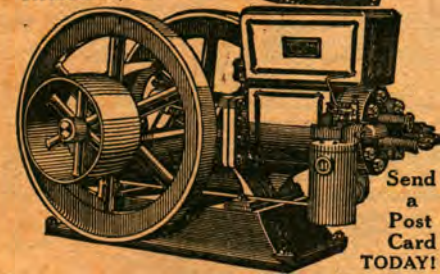
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New invention, resulting from radio experiments, enables the deaf to hear. Write for details or FREE demonstration.
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CHAFF



Every Man

MAN discovers that one of the buttons on his coat is hanging by a thread. Examines it and wonders if it will last all day. Decides it would be better to ease it off and keep it safe in his pocket.

Gives button gentle hint, expecting it will drop in his hand. No result. Gives button hard pull. No result. Gives button vicious yank. Immovable.

Concentrates all his physical and nervous energies in one prodigious tug. Result: button yields a trifle and is now hanging by a thread slightly longer. Gets sore and determines to ignore button; to let it swing. No danger of losing it; coat may fall off button, but button will never fall off coat. Glances grimly buttonward at intervals during day. Button still there.

Evening at home; discovers that he has lost a button from his coat; one of the other buttons.

Looking Forward

WE USED to see the President,
In pictures, twice a year;
And if, perchance, we saw him thrice,
We gave a hearty cheer.
But since they show the Weekly News
A half block from our door,
We've got to have a picture man
In Nineteen Twenty-Four.

The G. O. P., the Democrat,
The "anti" and the "pro"
Had better, when they nominate,
Go cautiously and slow;
For if their man won't "movie well,"
He'll be a four-year bore —
We've got to have a picture man
In Nineteen Twenty-Four!
—Alexander Charles Gwin.

Almost

"AUNTIE, did you ever get a proposal?"
"Once, my dear, a gentleman speaking over the telephone asked me to marry him, but he had the wrong number."

A Comparison

"I SAW the governor of the state yesterday," related old Riley Rezzidew, of Petunia.

"How did he impress you?" we asked.

"Well, sir, he looked to me as if it would take about six of him to equal in importance of appearance the conductor of the 'leven o'clock flyer that goes through here."



MOTORIST: Hey, Son, Want a Lift?
SMALL BOY: Nuthin' Doin'! D'y'e Think I'm
in a Hurry to Git to th' Dentist's?

The Last Word

AFTER a protracted rainfall recently in Tidewater, Virginia, a farmer gazed over the water-soaked landscape and said to his colored tenant:

"Jim, if it hadn't been for this big rain we would have had all our potatoes planted."

"Yessir, boss, yessir, but you know the way it is, sir; man app'ints and God dis-app'ints."

News That's Never Printed

THINKING them to be mushrooms, Mrs. Chroline Bambinette and her children picked and ate a quantity of fungi in Hildale Park yesterday afternoon. They were mushrooms.

James McJames, ninety-four years old, who for years had lived upon two bananas a day in a squalid little room, died last evening without leaving a tin box filled with government bonds.

Rocco Collelo, four years old, fell asleep yesterday morning on the rear fire escape of the flat on Siegel Street. He awoke after two hours, much refreshed.

A small gray kitten, chased by a dog, scrambled to the top of a tall tree on Main Street today and got down again without difficulty. No crowd collected.

Half a dozen small boys, playing scout in a clump of woods near East Gimlet, did not find the slightest evidence of a murder.

Seven years ago this month, Bernard Blooie, a young man of the poor-but-honest type, helped a tottering old fellow to cross a crowded street. This morning Blooie received a letter from Torts & Titmarsh, attorneys, and on opening it discovered that it was a hand-somely engraved notice of the firm's removal to a new set of offices.

John Redfeather, an Indian fisherman and a local character of considerable note, died this week of some other complaint than the infirmities of age. He was not 127 years old, he never claimed to have seen George Washington, and he was not the last survivor of a line of chieftains. Historical societies everywhere are not at all interested.

A. H. F.

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