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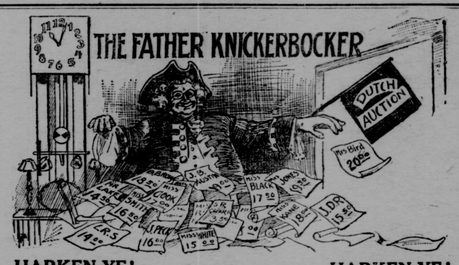

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A Gentleman of Leisure.

By Constance D'Arcy Mackay.

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It was said of him along the street on which he lived that Desmond Fitzgerald was as lazy as he was handsome. While his neighbors rose early and went to work Desmond idled about in the city parks, sitting on the benches and reading papers that brisker occupants had discarded. If this diversion failed he would stroll down Broadway, watching, with an eye keen for every detail of humor, the life that went on around him. Occasionally he procured a job and then gave it up as soon as he had acquired money enough to carry him through the next three weeks. And as his wants were small a few dollars lasted a long time. There was no one dependent on him, and that was the excuse he made to himself for being as shiftless a young fellow as could be found in a summer's day.

When the weather was warm he would loiter along the streets that bordered the water front, where the wind swept in fresh and cool and full of a tang of the sea. Here and there he met acquaintances loading drays and hauling crates. Perching in some convenient nook, Desmond would amuse himself for hours with comments on the season and the advisability of shirking labor whenever it was possible. It was on one of these occasions that he neared a dump where men on wagons and scows were actively disposing of the city's rubbish. There he espied Thomas Macdonough shoveling away for dear life and the lives of others, for Thomas had a wife and six children.

As Thomas paused to wipe the sweat from his brow Desmond strolled up.

"How are you, Thomas, this fine day?" he asked sociably. "That must be hot work you're doing! Who'd think there was that much ashes and old tin cans in New York!"

Thomas' only answer was a grunt. He had no time for such aimless conversation as Desmond's. But the latter, not a whit disconcerted, sat on a barrel near by and watched the workers and beyond them the warehouses and wharfs and the forest of masts and smokestacks outlined against the radiant blue of the sky. Ferryboats passed in the distance. Tugs went busily to and fro and rocked the grimy coal barges with their swell. Presently a hundred bells and whistles proclaimed that it was noon, and Thomas dropped his shovel with a great breath and stretched himself.

"Why do you stop for such an insignificant thing as a midday meal?" queried Desmond amusedly, and then the words died on his lips at the sight of the girl who was bringing Thomas' dinner pail. She wore a pretty blue calico gown which gave a glimpse of her white throat. Her eyes were gray and frank as a child's. Brown hair curled softly around her forehead.

"Here's your dinner, uncle," she said. "I brought you some sandwiches that I made myself and a bottle of iced tea that will do your heart good."

"You're a jewel, Kitty," said Thomas, "a jewel worth having!"

So Desmond thought as he regarded her.

"Will you not introduce me?" he urged, plucking at Thomas' sleeve.

"Kitty, my dear," said Thomas, "let me make you acquainted with Mr. Desmond Fitzgerald, gentleman of leisure."

An adorable dimple showed in Kitty's cheek.

"Uncle Thomas must always have his fun!" she smiled. "Have you been working here long?" nodding toward the dump.

"I don't work here at all," answered Desmond.

"On the river, maybe," she hazard d, "or building houses?"

"No!" This guessing game was making Desmond most uncomfortable.

"Oh, then, you're on the street cleaning force!" she laughed triumphantly.

"Nonsense, Kitty!" her uncle interposed. "What's the good of all these questions? He's what I told you he was—a gentleman of leisure."

Kitty's face grew grave.

"You've been ill maybe and not fit to work?" She turned to Desmond solicitously.

"I don't work at all except when I have to!" he blurted.

"Oh!" said Kitty, and Thomas' iced tea was not half so cold as her voice. "I'd best be running home now," she said to her uncle. "The children will be looking for me. Good day, Mr. Fitzgerald," she added, with a half glance over her shoulder at the miserable Desmond.

"She's a great one to hustle, is Kitty," observed her uncle, his proud eyes watching her retreating form.

"Do they need extra men at this job?" was Desmond's abrupt query.

"They do," replied Thomas, and Desmond went to work next day. It was very hot, and his muscles ached, and he began to think how refreshing it would be to be sprawled on a park bench drowsily reading a paper and listening to the sparrows twittering about the fountain. Shoveling at the dump was the hardest work that Desmond had done in the course of his twenty-five years.

"Bad luck to me for tackling it!" he muttered. "And won't I get out of it in the mischief of a hurry!"

With noon came Kitty and Thomas' dinner pail.

"It is only for a sight of you that I'm here," announced Desmond.

"Did you kiss the blarney stone for breakfast?" said Kitty. Her look of approval brightened Desmond somewhat, but he was still in a disgruntled mood.

"What's the use of a man's having to work at all?" he complained. "That's what I don't see! Of course it's different if you have a fine, easy job. I wish I had one like Matthew Carrol's—no work and plenty of pay—or Jim Johnson's, bossing a lot of ditch diggers. That's a comfortable thing! 'Twas by pull he got it, and I wish I had his luck. Then," with a meaning glance at Kitty—"then I'd have a wife and live in fine style."

Kitty's cheeks flamed and her eyes flashed.

"The man I marry," she cried, "will fight his own way up. He'll have a backbone, not a wishbone, Mr. Desmond Fitzgerald."

The phrase dwelt with Desmond the rest of the day. He shoveled vengefully.

"A backbone instead of a wishbone," he kept repeating. "The cheek of the girl to say a thing like that to me!"

His anger at Kitty became more and more poignant, and when Thomas spoke to him he made it apparent that he wished to have nothing further to do with any member of the family of Macdonough.

Next noon a tousle-headed youngster brought Thomas' dinner pail.

"Where's Kitty?" Desmond ventured to inquire.

"Sick." Thomas was huskily laconic.

Desmond's anger cooled with a suddenness astonishing even to himself. A lump rose to his throat and a quick mist to his eyes. Sick, was she, the poor girl! Like as not she had overworked helping her aunt and the children. What she needed was some one to watch over her and take care of her. He would buy her some flowers that very evening. But when he came to turn out his pockets he found that 50 cents comprised his worldly store.

"It will buy a dozen of some kind of posies, though," he thought, "and what's a bite to eat compared to that? I'm not hungry, anyhow."

He found his way to Kitty's tenement with a box of pink carnations, and Kitty's aunt opened the door.

"Who will I say they're from?" she questioned in the subdued tones people use in sickrooms.

"Tell—tell her they're from Desmond," he stammered, swallowing hard. He groped his way down the rickety stairs, inwardly determined to send her roses every other day. As for the money, he could work evenings. There were always plenty of odd jobs for a man who was willing.

So each morning Thomas told him how she was, and all day long and far into the night Desmond worked with passionate energy, an energy which helped him in part to forget two dreadful questions: What if Kitty didn't get well? And what if there were another man whom she loved?

"And not the lazy vagabond I must have seemed," reflected poor Desmond, musing bitterly on his wasted years.

But Kitty gained and gained and was sitting on a rocking chair by the window when Desmond went to see her, a box of roses under his arm. She was as pale as the soft white wrapper that she wore, yet she flushed at sight of him and held out a thin little hand.

"Oh, Desmond," she said, "you've been so good to me, and the flowers were lovely. I couldn't have got well without them. They made my room like a garden when I used to lie there and look at them. And they tell me—they tell me you're doing fine!"

"If I am it is all owing to you, Kitty," said Desmond, fumbling in his pocket.

"What have you there?" she cried.

Desmond looked a bit shamefaced and drew out a wishbone.

"Do you mind what you told me about a backbone being the best thing in life? I've brought you this as a sign I'll win my own way up instead of wishing."

Kitty's eyes danced.

"But, Desmond," she objected, "the bone was meant to be broken, so suppose you take one wish more, the last of all, and then have done with it forever? 'Twill be a kind of celebration."

"Right you are!" cried Desmond. "Here goes!"

They pulled.

"I win!" cried Desmond breathlessly, "I win! And do you know what it was that I wanted? I wished that I might marry Kitty Macdonough, the sweetest girl in the whole wide world."

Kitty hid her blushing face on Desmond's shoulder.

"And I wished the very same thing," she whispered.

Montaigne's Chateau.

The upper room in the round tower of the chateau of Montaigne, in Perigord, is practically unaltered since the lord of the chateau housed his books there and wrote his essays. On the walls and on the ceiling are traces of the paintings that once adorned them. A visitor to the tower says in the London Globe:

"On the ground floor was Montaigne's chapel, above were his bedchamber and private apartments, while on the third story was a beloved book room. 'There,' says the essayist, 'I turn over now one book and then another on various subjects without method or design. One while I meditate, another I record and dictate, as I walk to and fro, such whimsies as these I present to you here.' The walking to and fro seems to have been essential to production. Montaigne says his thoughts slept if he sat still. His fancy only went as his legs moved. Round the walls of the room stood the ordered ranks of books arranged upon five rows of shelves, while from the three windows the peripatetic essayist could not only overlook his own family and household concerns below, but could let his eyes range over fine and varied prospects."

Poor William!

"William, my son," said an economical mother to her boy, "for mercy's sake, don't keep on tramping up and down the floor in that manner. You'll wear out your new boots." (He sits down.) "There you go sitting down! Now you'll wear out your new trousers. I declare, I never saw such a boy!"—London Tit-Bits.

His Bright Idea.

Not many years ago a well known dealer was visited by a would be seller who had in his hand an envelope containing seventeen signatures of Samuel Pepys, which, he said, he had just cut off the original letters to save trouble! By so doing he had diminished the value of his property by nearly £200.—London Opinion.

It is hard to get women to admire a man for his genius if he neglects to help his wife on with her wrap.—Chicago Record-Herald.

RANDALL'S BEST CATCH.

By Colin S. Collins.

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Winter quarters had wakened from its long nap. Over in the car sheds men were touching up the brilliant advance cars with vermillion and gold leaf. In the wagon shop stood rows of chariots resplendent in gilt and crimson. In the loft last touches were being given to the "big tops," the huge canvas structures which went to make up the city of tents. From animal house and training barn could be heard the sounds of activity as trainers put horses and elephants through their paces, while the performers freshed up their acts. In three weeks the show would take to the road, opening in the south to escape the frosts and to get an additional month of "season."

Caley Randall's appearance in the ring barn was the signal for a general stoppage of work on the part of those who had been with the show the season before. Randall had been a general favorite, and even the equestrian director, the autocrat of affairs in the ring, came over to greet the newcomer.

"The rest of the boys are here and have your traps all up," he told Caley with a glance aloft where the trapeze rigging of the Randall-Ransome troupe glittered in the light, filtering through the wire glass. "The other troupe is here."

"Who the mischief are they?" demanded Randall curiously. "I never heard of the Bannard troupe."

"Neither did any one else," agreed the director. "They do a ripping good casting act, though, and they'll work well in the big act. Come over and I'll introduce you."

He led the way across the tanbark to where stood a little group of men and women curiously regarding his approach. Randall was famous in the circus world, and the Bannards, accustomed to the drudgery of obscure one ring wagon circuses and small vaudeville performances, looked with awe upon this star of the big show. Some of Randall's boys were standing with the group; but, after a pleasant nod to his own men and an acknowledgment of the introduction to the strangers, Randall saw only one of the troupe, a lithe, graceful girl not yet out of her teens.

Bannard hurried to compliment Randall on his work, but Caley scarcely heard him. His attention was centered upon this queenly girl with the flashing black eyes, and when at last he moved on to the dressing room to see that his trunk was all right he turned to his "bearer," who did the catches for his leaps.

"What was the old chap saying?" he asked. "I didn't quite catch."

Clute laughed.

"Better get that idea out of your head," he advised. "The girl is the whole show with that troupe, and the old man doesn't want her marrying into another act."

"You be hanged," said Randall. "If you think you're funny I don't mind telling you that you're not."

"You agreed to a rehearsal at 3 o'clock," said Clute. "It's all right, Caley. I'd be stuck on her myself if I wasn't married. Come out and get a bite to eat."

Randall followed Clute across the lot to the hotel, where most of the performers stopped, and by 2 they were in practice dress and up in the dome of the practice ring, getting the stiffness out of their joints.

It was the custom with the show to mass all the aerial acts into one big troupe for a finish to the show. While the arena was being made ready for the hippodrome races the attention was centered upon the one big act, and in this Bannard's troupe worked with Randall's. A huge special apparatus was provided for this act, and it was to get used to this that the two acts were to rehearse together.

To his delight Caley found that Bannard's daughter did the principal leaping for their act and was to share the narrow perch from which he worked. It was scarcely more than a shelf, high above the ring, but to the gymnasts it was as secure as the ring itself, and Caley found time to chat with the girl while they worked out the details of the routine of tricks.

But once the rehearsal was over and Caley, hurrying into his street clothes, reached the exit to wait for Grace Bannard he realized that what Clute had said was right. Bannard whisked Grace and her sister off to the boarding house where they were stopping before Caley had a chance to say a word.

But opposition only made him the more determined. There was little time to talk up on the shelf where they rehearsed, for either Caley or the girl was flying through the air while the other rested, and at best conversation was fragmentary.

Two weeks passed, and Caley became more and more certain that his interest was returned. Evidently Bannard was not ignorant of the state of affairs, and he redoubled his watchfulness.

For years he had played in the small circuses. It was only Grace's work which had enabled him to get with a big show, and he was not minded to lose this advantage the first season out.

Some time, he knew, she would get married, and he would have to go back to the wagon shows where the artists had to help with the horses and even drive a van to the next stop. Meanwhile he would enjoy the comparative luxury of the more important circus where "razorbacks" were employed to get up the tent and the performers could spend the night comfortably in the sleeper and not have to reach the lot until breakfast time.

But Caley was not to be kept off. They were having their last rehearsal before the traps were taken down and put aboard the cars. Once the season opened there would be little time for courtship, and he determined to put his fate to the test.

"Next time we work it will be before an audience," he commented as he climbed to the platform to which she already had been hoisted. "No more chance for chats then."

"I should say not," she assented, with a smile. "We'll be too busy then."

Caley let his swing go and sway across the space. Clute slipped down on his swing to catch the count, and a moment later Caley shot across the space, let go of his swing to grasp Clute's hands, pirouette and catch the swing again on its return. Just as he reached the platform Grace shot past him to do her leap. She landed back on the platform presently.

"We won't have a chance to talk down below either," Caley went on as unconcernedly as though they had not both risked their necks since the preceding sentence. "I never get a chance to talk to you."

"Father doesn't like"— she commenced as Caley sprang from the platform.

"I know he doesn't," agreed Caley as he swung back and Grace jumped out. She was back in a moment, and a lesser important member of the troupe did some single trapeze work to rest the stars.

"Let's fool papa and get married this evening," he suggested. "I'll be in front of your boarding house at half past 10, and I'll have it all arranged with the minister."

Before he could get his answer the girl shot past him, and he was gone before she had returned. The next few tricks kept them too busy to talk; then came a breathing space, and he urged his cause.

He had to make good use of his time, for the act was drawing to a close, and he could not delay a trick without throwing the entire routine into confusion. He believed an assent trembled on her lips as he swung out, but his heart sank as he swung back to the perch and Grace shot past him.

This time she would not return to the platform, but would stay on the other side for the "somersault pass," which concluded the act. For this Bannard came over to his platform and swung him out on the swing, while Clute, from the other side, threw Grace to her father as Caley turned a somersault in the air and caught Clute's hands the instant after she left him.

It was a trick that brought the audience to its feet the year before, and Caley was proud of it, for it was his own invention.

The swing was properly made, and as he threw the somersault he heard a cry below him. It was only the one word "Yes," but he knew what it meant. He had been accepted in midair, and Grace would meet him that evening. He made his dive to the net and came up with his face wreathed in smiles.

"Pretty catch," commented Clute, swinging over the edge of the net and dropping beside him.

"The catch of a lifetime," assented Randall joyously, and he made off for the dressing room, leaving Clute wondering what had happened.

Venus' Flower Basket.

If, when you are in Washington, you will go into the "children's room" at the Smithsonian Institution, you will see one of the most beautiful productions of the sea. So frail and artistic is its makeup that you feel sure that not nature, but man, must have produced an object of such delicate beauty. But nature did do it and made it on the bottom of the sea too. If you will go down into the waters in the region of the Philippine Islands and dig around in the mud, you might bring up a spongy looking object that resembles the white of an egg in its consistency. It looks like a flower basket and may have a hermit crab inside, for the crab lives at the same depth and likes to crawl into the basket, but he does not find much hospitality awaiting him, for the sponge closes over him and holds him forever. This product of the sea is called Venus' flower basket, so named because in its finished state it might well make a receptacle for the garlands of the goddess of beauty. This is after it is cleaned and prepared for sale, for it then looks as if it were made of fine spun glass, with its filaments spreading out from the bottom. These are called "spicules" and serve to anchor the animal to the bottom, and so firmly does it hold on that it takes a good strong pull to bring it up. The first Venus' flower basket to be cleaned and sold easily brought the price of $150. Now, however, a few dollars will buy a very beautiful one. —Pathfinder.

Pounds and Weights.

Here is a question that will tax the arithmetical powers of a youth. Suppose that for some reason or another a shopkeeper who sold goods by pounds and half pounds, but never in quantities exceeding twenty pounds at a time, was told that he must transact all this business with four weights only, what must these four weights be? The answer is half pound, one and a half pound, four and a half pound and thirteen and a half pound. With these it will be readily seen that any weight from half a pound to twenty pounds may be determined in pounds and half pounds.—Gateway Magazine.

Pleasant Anticipation.

The Rev. Dr. C. M. Lamson, once president of the American board of foreign missions, was called as a pastor over a parish and was undergoing examination before a council when the question was asked him, "Do you believe in a hell?"

The retiring clergyman of the parish sat beside him and, giving him a nudge, said: "Tell them yes. If you don't now you will before you have been here six months."—Argonaut.

Just the Other Way.

Fortune Teller—Beware of a short, dark woman with a fierce eye. She is waiting to give you a check. Visitor (despairingly)—No, she ain't. She's waiting to get one from me. That's my wife.—Baltimore American.

Carries Weight.

"Pa," said Freddy, "what is a social scale?"

"Generally speaking," replied pa, "it's a place where they weigh money."—Bohemian Magazine.

Advising is easier than helping.—Rochefoucauld.