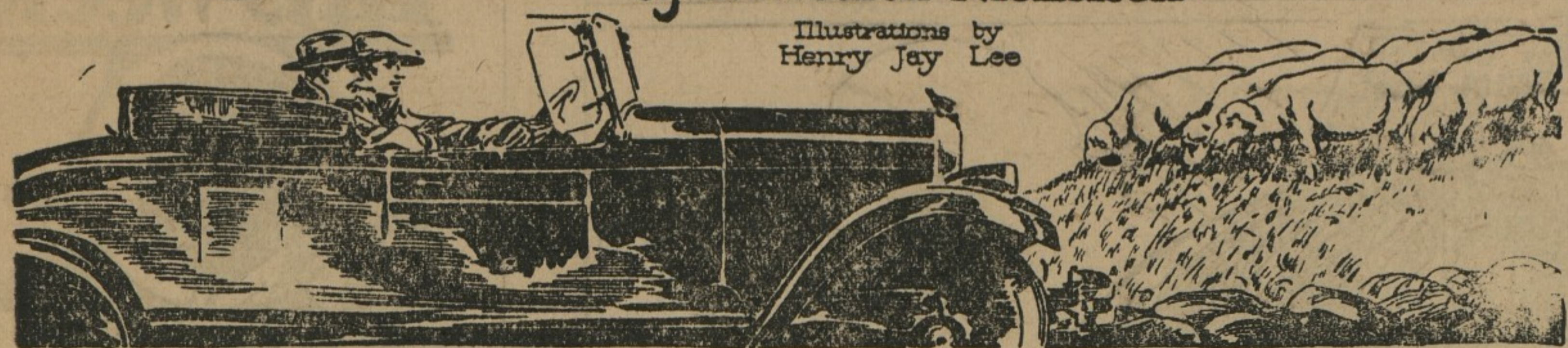


BLACKSHEEP!

By Meredith Nicholson



COPYRIGHT CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS—RELEASED THRU PUBLISHERS AUTOCASTER SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

Archibald Bennett, wealthy bachelor, travels constantly in the interest of his health. He meets Isabel Perry, who recommends a life of crime, adventure, romance and excitement as a cure. He agrees. Archie goes to Bailey Harbor to investigate a summer house for his sister. A heavy storm forces him to spend the night there. During the night he is awakened by footsteps, and in an encounter with the intruder, who near Archie's, he is reflected in the mirror and shoots Archie. Archie fires in return, wounding the intruder, who makes his escape. Archie plans flight to evade publicity. He starts cross-country afoot in the night. At dawn he is stopped on a lonely highway by the Governor, mastermind criminal who mistakes him for a fellow criminal. Archie, fleeing, is afraid to tell the truth—falls in with "The Governor" who whisked across country in a stolen car. Sees story in newspaper of killing at Bailey Harbor and, frightened, he decides to stick with his strange friend and await developments. At Cornford, N. H., Archie comes upon Isabel Perry at the hotel desk but she refuses to recognize him. The Governor, by a clever plan, switches stolen money for good money. Archie used as decoy—making love to niece of agent sent to meet eccentric Congdon here next day. Now read on.

CHAPTER VI

When they reached the dining-room at ten the next morning they found Seebrook and Walters just finishing breakfast. Miss Seebrook was having coffee in her room, her father explained in response to Archie's polite inquiries.

"We're hoping to get away this afternoon," he continued. "It will take only a few minutes to transact our business when the man I'm waiting for appears; but he's an uncertain quantity, and there's no telling when he'll show up. But we're having a good time and I shan't mind another day or two. If only you gentlemen would bear us company!"

"Ah, you are very kind!" said the Governor, "but we must resume our ramble toward the Pacific. We are more or less dated up for little entertainments on the way."

Seebrook and Walters lingered in the office as Archie and the Governor paid their account. As they waited for their car to be sent round from the garage a machine drove up and discharged a short, wiry, elderly man in a motor coat that was much too large for him. He was accompanied by an enormous amount of luggage and from the steps of the inn gave orders in a high piping voice as to the manner of its disposal. As the various pieces were hustled into the office he enumerated them in an audible tone as though inviting the cooperation of all the loungers in making an inventory of his effects. When this had been concluded Seebrook stepped up and accosted the newcomer.

"Mr. Congdon, I am very glad to see you. I hope you are not worn out by your drive."

"Worn out!" snapped the little man. "Do you imagine a run of a hundred miles would fatigue a man of my constitution? I assure you that you are greatly mistaken if you think I am feeling my age. Seventy! And I don't feel a day over fifty, not a day sir. But I shall rest for a few hours as a precaution, a mere precaution measure and be able to meet you for our little business at two-thirty sharp."

"That will suit me perfectly," replied Seebrook.

Archie hung about impatiently waiting for the Governor to make his farewells to the old lady and her granddaughters on whom he expended his social talents at the dance. Mr. Congdon was quarreling with the clerk over the location of the room he had reserved. Having frightened the clerk into readjusting the entire registration to accommodate him, he demanded to know whether his son, Mr. Putney Congdon, was stopping in the house.

"Assuredly," Mr. Putney Congdon was not in the inn and hadn't been there within the recollection of the office staff, the senior Congdon exploded violently upon Seebrook and Walters.

"Things have come to a pretty pass in this topsy turvey world when a man can't find his own son! For three days I've been wiring his clubs and all other places he could possibly be without result. And I have learned that his wife has left Bailey Harbor and the house there is closed. Closed! How can they close that house when I was about to pay them a visit?"

Seebrook and Walters expressed their sympathy in mild tones that roused the old gentleman to greater fury.

"Can a whole family be obliterated and no trace left behind? Is it possible that they've been murdered in their beds, servants and all, and the police not yet aware of it?"

At the mention of murder Archie began stealthily feeling his way along the cigar counter to a water cooler. There seemed to be no escaping from the Congdons and here was the father of Putney boldly publishing to the whole staff of New Hampshire his fear that his son had been murdered.

The concentration of the hotel staff upon the transfer of Mr. Congdon's luggage to his room left the

Governor and Archie to manage the removal of their own effects to the waiting car. Seebrook and Walters obligingly assisted, laughing at Congdon's eccentricities.

Seebrook seized the Governor's kit bag containing the sixty thousand dollars and carried it out to the car. The sight of it in Seebrook's hand gave Archie sensations of nausea that were not relieved by the grin he detected on the Governor's face. Within an hour or two at most the substitution and robbery would be discovered and the country would ring with the demand for their detention. But the Governor was carrying off the departure with his usual gaiety. It was clear that he had made the most favorable impression upon Seebrook and Walters; and in the cordial handshaking and expressions of hope for future meetings Archie joined with the best spirit he could muster. A cheery good-bye

ed his origin or the manner of his fall, if, indeed, a man who so jubilantly boasted of his crimes and seemed to find an infinite satisfaction and delight in his turpitude, could be said to have fallen. Having mentioned Bratton as the point at which they were to foregather with Red Leary, the Governor did not refer to the matter again, but chose ruses and made detours without explanation.

It was on the second afternoon out of Cornford that the Governor suddenly bade Archie, whom he encouraged to drive much of the time, pause at a gate.



But he became interested in the transaction that was now taking place between the thief and the Governor. The Governor extracted the sixty one-thousand-dollar bills from his bag, and laid them out on the bed.

is one of the best stations of the underground railroad; safe as a mother's arms, and you will never believe your're not the favored guest of a week-end party. Walker's an old chum of Leary's. They used to cut up in the most reprehensible fashion out West in old times. You've probably wondered what becomes of old crooks. Walker is of course an unusual specimen, for he knew when the quitting was good, and having salted away a nice little fortune accumulated in express holdups, he dwells in peace and passes the hat at the meeting house every Sunday. You may be dead sure that only the artistry of our profession have the entree at Walker's.

A gray-bearded man with a pronounced stoop, clad in faded blue overalls, was waiting for them at the barn.

"Just run the machine right in," he called.

The car disposed of, the Governor introduced Archie as one of his dearest friends, and the hand Archie clasped was undeniably rough and calloused. Walker mumbled a "glad-to-see-ye," and lazily looked him over.

There was nothing in his speech or manner to suggest that he had ever been a road agent. He assisted them in carrying their traps to the house, talking farmer fashion of the weather, crops and the state of the roads. The house was connected with the barn in the usual New England style. In the kitchen a girl sang cheerily and hearing her the Governor paused and struck an attitude.

The girl appeared at a window, rested her bare arms on the sill and smilingly saluted them with a cheery "Hello there!"

"Look upon that picture!" exclaimed the Governor, seizing Archie's arm. "In old times upon Olympus she was cup-bearer to the gods, but here she is Sally Walker, and never so charming as when she sits enthroned upon the milking stool. Miss Walker, my old friend Mr. Comly, or Achilles, as you will!"

A very pretty picture Miss Walker made in the kitchen window, a vivid portrait that immediately enhanced Archie's pleasurable sensations in finding a haven that promised rest and security. Her black hair was swept back smoothly from her forehead and there was a glow of perfect health in her rounded cheeks. Archie noted her dimples and the white even teeth that made something noteworthy and memorable of her smile.

"Well, Mr. Salsbury, I've read all those books you sent me, and the candy was the finest I ever tasted."

"She remembers! Amid all her domestic cares, she remembers! My dear lad, the girl is one in a million!"

"You'd think Mr. Salsbury was crazy about me!" she laughed. "But he makes the same speeches to every girl he sees, doesn't he, Mr. Comly?"

"Indeed not," protested Archie, rallying bravely to the Governor's support. "He's been saying about you for days and my only surprise is that he so completely failed to give me the faintest idea—idea—"

"Of your charm, your ineffable beauty!" the Governor supplied.

"You'd better chase yourselves in to the house now or pop'll be peevish at having to wait for you."

On the veranda a tall elderly man arose from a hammock in which he had been reading a newspaper and stretched himself. His tanned face was deeply lined but he gave the impression of health and vigor.

"Leary," whispered the Governor in an aside and immediately introduced him.

"The road has been smooth and the sky is high," said the Governor in response to a quick anxious questioning of Leary's small restless eyes.

"Did you find peace in the churches by the way?" asked Leary.

"In one of the temples we found peace and plenty," answered the Governor as though reciting from a ritual.

Leary nodded and gave a hitch to his trousers.

"You found the waters of Champlain tranquil, and no hawks followed the landward passage?"

"The robin and the bluebird sang over all the road," he answered; then with a glance at Archie: "You gave no warning of the second pilgrim."

"The brother is young and innocent, but I find him an apt pupil," the Governor explained.

"The brother will learn first the wisdom of silence," remarked Leary, and then as though by an afterthought he shook Archie warmly by the hand.

They went into the house where Mrs. Walker, a stout middle-aged woman, greeted them effusively.

"We've got to put you both in one room, if you don't mind," she explained, "but there's two beds in it. I guess you can make out."

The second floor room to which Walker led them was plainly but neatly furnished and the windows looked out upon rolling pastures. The Governor abandoned his high flown talk and asked blunt questions as to recent visitors, apparently referring to criminals who had lodged at the farm. They talked quite openly while Archie unpacked his bag. The restless activity of the folk of the underworld, the methods of communication and points of rendezvous seemed part of a vast system and he was ashamed of his enormous interest in all he saw and heard. The Governor's cool fashion of talking of the world of crime and its denizens almost legitimized it, made it appear a recognized part of the accepted scheme of things. Walker aroused the Governor's deepest interest by telling of the visit of Pete Barney, a diamond thief, who had lately made a big haul in Chicago, and had been passed along from one point of refuge to another.

Leary appeared a moment later and Archie was about to leave the room, but the Governor insisted stoutly that he remain.

"I'm anxious for you and Red to know that I trust both of you fully."

"What's the young brother—a con?" asked Leary with a glance at Archie.

To be referred to as a confidence man by a gentleman of Leary's professional eminence gave Archie a thrill. The Governor answered by drawing up his sleeves and going through the motions of washing his hands.

The brushing of the hands together Archie interpreted as a code sign signifying murder and the subsequent interchange of words he took to be inquiry and answer as to the danger of apprehension. He felt that Leary's attitude toward him became friendlier from that moment. There was something ghastly in the thought that as the slayer of a human being he attained a certain dignity in the eyes of men like Leary.

But he became interested in the transaction that was now taking place between the thief and the Governor. The Governor extracted the sixty one-thousand-dollar bills from his bag, and laid them out on the bed. He rapidly explained just how Leary's hidden booty had been recovered, and in the manner in which the smaller denominations had been converted into bills that could be passed without arousing suspicion.

Leary philosophically stowed the bills in his clothing.

"You're done, are you?" asked the Governor; "out of the game?"

"I sure have quit the road," Leary answered. "The old girl has got a few thousands tucked away and I'm goin' to pick her up and buy a motion picture joint or a candy and soda shop somewhere in the big lakes—one of those places that freeze up all winter, so I can have a chance to rest. The old girl has a place in mind."

"On the whole it doesn't sound exciting," the Governor commented, inspecting a clean shirt. "Did your admirable wife get rid of those pearls she pinched last winter? They were a handsome string, as I remember, too handsome to market readily. Mrs. Leary has a passion for precious baubles, Archie," the Governor explained. "A brilliant career in picking up such trifles; a star performer, Red, if you don't mind my bragging of your wife."

Leary seemed not at all disturbed by this revelation of his wife's lascivious affection for pearls. That a train robber's wife should be a thief seemed perfectly natural, indeed it seemed quite fitting that thieves should mate with thieves. Archie further gathered that Mrs. Leary operated in Chicago, under the guise of a confectionery shop, one of the stations of the underground railroad, and assisted the brotherhood in disposing of their ill-gotten wares. A recent reform wave in Chicago had caused a shakeup in the police department, most disturbing to the preying powers.

"There clean off me, I reckon," said Leary a little pathetically, the reference being presumably to the pestiferous police. "That was a good idea of yours for me to go up into Canada and work at a real job for a while. Must a worked hard enough to change my finger prints. Some bloke died in Kansas awhile back and got all the credit for being the old Red Leary."

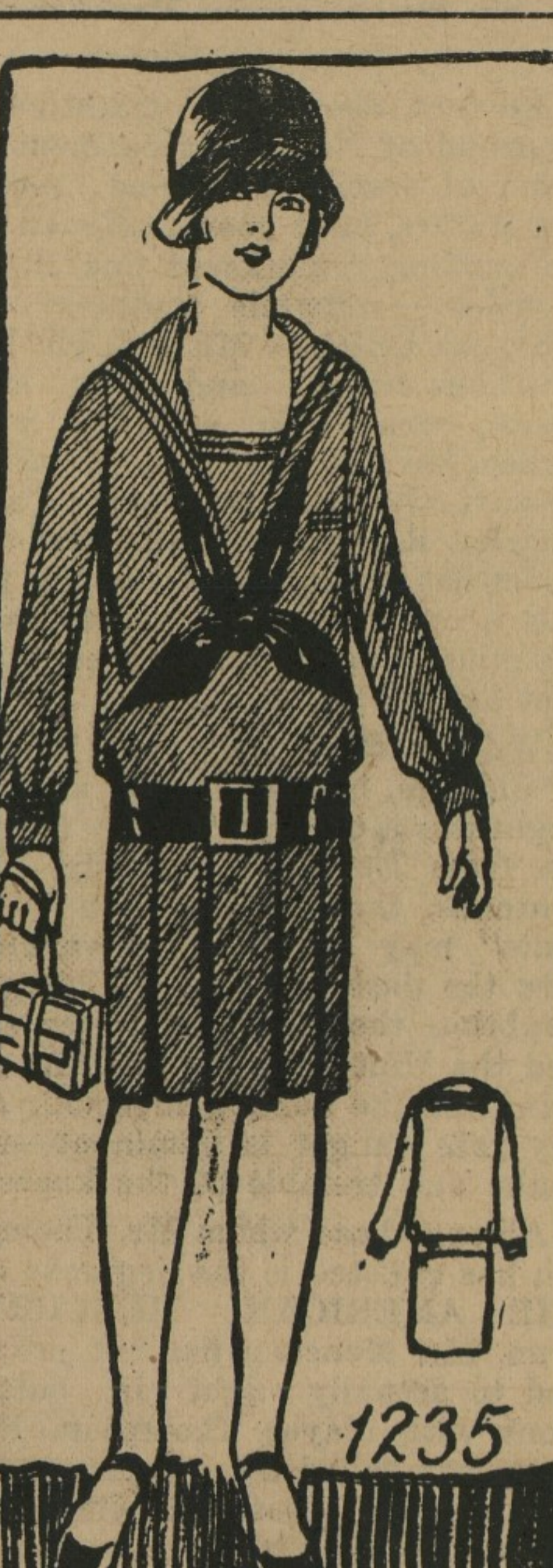
This error of the press in recording Leary's death tickled the Governor mightily, and Leary laughed until he was obliged to wipe the tears from his eyes.

"I'm going to pull my freight after supper," he said. "Walker's going to take me into town and I'll slip out to Detroit where the old girl's waiting for me."

Walker called them to supper and they went down to a meal that met all the expectations aroused by the Governor's boast of the Walker cuisine.

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

Our Practical Pattern



Back-to-school time, again—sewing time for mother—new, dress-time for big and little sister! And how proud that young daughter of yours will be when she wears this smart new dress to school for the very first time! In the conventional navy or any desired material.

May be obtained in sizes 8 to 14. Size 10 requires 2 yards of 54 inch plaid material for dress and 1 1/4 yards of 54 inch plain material for jacket.

No dressmaking experience is needed to make Design No. 1236 if you use these patterns which are individually hand-cut of heavy paper. A perfect fit in every size is guaranteed.

Patterns will be delivered to any address upon receipt of 25c. in cash or U. S. postage. Always mention size wanted. Address, Pattern Dept., this newspaper.

DR. H. C. HUGHES
DENTIST
Office in the Telephone Exchange Building, Chestertown, Md.

WM. C. SUTTON
SANITARY PLUMBING
Steam—Hot Water Heating
Our Work Our Reference
TERRA COTTA PIPE
Phone—Residence 60; Office 327

DR. H. T. WORKMAN,
DENTIST
Specialist In Extracting
Plates, Crowns, Bridgework, Filling
Alveolar Teeth—Stayite Plates
All Work Guaranteed—Extracting Free

When Having Other Work Done
Chestertown, 347 High St.
Opposite M. E. Church
Hours 9 to 5 Daily
Phone 88W

Betterton
Home Cottage
Hours 7 to 9 P. M.
Phone 39F22

Arlington L. Sparks
CHESTERTOWN'S BEST STORE

FALL Coats And Dresses



DR. H. C. HUGHES
DENTIST
Office in the Telephone Exchange Building, Chestertown, Md.

WM. C. SUTTON
SANITARY PLUMBING
Steam—Hot Water Heating
Our Work Our Reference
TERRA COTTA PIPE
Phone—Residence 60; Office 327

DR. H. T. WORKMAN,
DENTIST
Specialist In Extracting
Plates, Crowns, Bridgework, Filling
Alveolar Teeth—Stayite Plates
All Work Guaranteed—Extracting Free

When Having Other Work Done
Chestertown, 347 High St.
Opposite M. E. Church
Hours 9 to 5 Daily
Phone 88W

Betterton
Home Cottage
Hours 7 to 9 P. M.
Phone 39F22

IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE IN THE ENTERPRISE

**Right
Down
Here**

is something you ought
to know

THE ENTERPRISE

is carrying, this year, a Complete
line of Christmas Cards. They
range in price from Two to Fifty
Cents each, with envelope.

You may have your name imprinted on
them at a small cost.

Ask to See Our Line

PHONE 19