THE BANK ENVELOPE

BY WILLIAM HOLLOWAY.

PART I.

From a second-storey window of the Blane mansion in upper 5th avenue—a street which at 1 o'clock in the morning is virtually deserted—a long white envelope, after describing quaint circles in the air, like a new species of flying machine, fell softly to the pavement.

Of the two spectators of this little incident, one, leaning meditatively against the low stone wall of Central Park, was too far away to notice more than a flutter of white as the envelope settled earthward. The second—a tall, elderly man, whose immaculate evening clothes were hidden beneath a dark overcoat—was not twenty feet from the Blane mansion when the envelope began its volplaning flight. With outstretched arms he followed its eccentric movements until it thudded gently to the sidewalk, almost directly at his feet. In another instant he had clutched it in his trembling fingers.

It was a bulky, oblong, white envelope, of a sort generally used by banks in returning cancelled cheques to out-of-town customers. In the upper left-hand corner above the printed name, "Blane & Co.," were scrawled the initials "B.P.B.," which any Wall Street man would have recognized as those of Bertrand Putnam Blane, head of the great banking house which, for more than a generation, has ruled the financial destiny of New York.

In the lower left-hand corner the same pen had written and underlined the two words, "Very important," but the rest of the envelope, save for the letter "M" in the middle, was entirely blank, showing that fate had taken a hand in the matter just as Mr. Blane was about to write the address!

All this the elderly passerby took in with one feverish glance. Then the envelope vanished from view beneath the dark overcoat. Despite his 70 years, old Henry Porter, head of the banking firm of Porter Brothers—an institution second only to that of Blane & Co.,—was a man of decision.

It was a time when decision was needed; for with Porter Brothers and Blane & Co. contending for control of the famous "L.D.K." Railroad, Wall Street was on the brink of a panic. All that day scare headlines in the press had announced the victory now of one side, now of another, while the price of "L.D.K." shares went soaring.

Somebody was caught in "L.D.K." the wise ones averred, but nobody but Henry Porter himself knew that Porter Brothers was the victim, or that the old-established banking house stood on the edge of a financial abyss.

This very evening he had been wandering restlessly up and down the avenue, mentally reviewing the situation in "L.D.K.," without finding a loophole of escape. To-morrow he would have to go to Blane & Co. and ask for terms. He had even thought of calling at the Blane house this evening and hoisting a flag of surrender.

In emergencies the trained mind acts quickly; and Henry Porter, who had won his spurs in that financial maelstrom which men call Wall Street, possessed an intellect whose conclusions were lightning fast.

The instant his cold gray eyes fell upon the initials scrawled on the upper left-hand corner of the long white envelope, and the words, "Very Important," his decision was taken. Fate, that blind, incomprehensible force which juggles with the affairs of men, had granted him another cast of the dice. And, in the last extremity, who may deny the whims of Fate?

Certainly not the surprised and delighted Mr. Porter, as he turned the nearest corner and walked slowly eastward. After weary delay, the game had certainly come his way with a vengeance. Bertrand Blane did not address important envelopes at 1 o'clock in the morning, with a financial crisis impending unless the contents of the envelope were really important. The heavy white envelope felt as though it contained bonds—and bonds are always negotiable!

There was nothing in his attitude that suggested flight. Tall and imposing a figure, his thin face rounded out by snowy, button-chop whiskers, Henry Porter was the last man in the world whom a passing policeman would have dreamed of halting; though many a policeman up on charges would have envied him his self-possession.

Even the sound of life in the Blane mansion: the opening of the front door and the clatter of a breathless servant upon the sidewalk quite failed to disturb his calmness. Dignified, austere, he continued his stroll, the very last person in the great city who would have been suspected of carrying off an important envelope which he knew belonged to another!

Meantime things were happening in front of the Blane mansion. The servant had barely had time to cast a hurried glance about the sidewalk when the front door opened for the second time and Bertrand Blane appeared upon the threshold.

The great banker's smooth-shaven, clear-cut face was shadowed with anxiety—anxiety which showed in his quick run down the steps to the pavement.

"Did you find it, Henry?" he asked sharply.

"No, sir; not yet, sir," answered the man promptly.

"Then it's here," said Bertrand Blane, and straightway began searching the wide stone sidewalk.

But neither on the steps, nor on the sidewalk, nor in the street, was there the slightest trace of the missing envelope. The areaway, marble-tiled, immaculate, was also guiltless of any scrap of paper, as an instant's glance showed, an arc light on the corner rendering the neighborhood of the Blane mansion as light as day.

"Confound the thing!" exclaimed the young banker—he was not more than 35, which is young to be the head of a great banking house—just as a stray policeman, scenting trouble, appeared upon the scene.

"Have yez lost something?" he asked, swinging his nightstick.

"A long, white envelope fell out of my library window just one minute ago," explained Bertrand Blane hastily. "It was quite heavy and it couldn't get far out of plumb line. Then, besides, there's not a breath of air stirring; so it must have fallen straight. But there's not a sign of it anywhere."

The policeman surveyed the vacant expanse of lighted sidewalk with professional rapidity. "How big was the envelope?"

"About a foot long," explained the banker; "one of the envelopes used by the banks for returning canceled cheques to out-of-town customers. You know the kind. It was white and in the corner had our name, 'Blane & Co.'"

"Blane & Co.? The big bankers?"

"Exactly," was the impatient answer. "I am Mr. Blane."

"Valuables in the letter?"

"There was no money," Bertrand Blane explained hastily. "But the contents of the envelope were very valuable—very valuable indeed. There were things in that envelope I wouldn't lose at the present time for millions."

"Holy snakes!" gasped the officer, his eyes bulging. "Somebody's copped it for sure!"

He ran hastily to the corner and peered eastward. "There's a guy walking away," he reported. "Looks like there might be something doing. anybody else around?"

He turned toward Central Park—then shook his head. "I just came through the park myself," he said regretfully. "Nobody went that way."

Once more he swung toward the banker, his gestures wonderfully quick for a man of his heavy build. "Did this man come out ahead of you?" he asked, touching the servant with his nightstick.

"Ten seconds, no more."

"Then he'll stand frisking," was the assured answer; and the indignant footman was searched by a practiced hand.

"Nothing doing," was the report. The nightstick was twirled violently. "Better phone the precinct, Mr. Blane," he said hurriedly. "And mention that John Dwyer—Dwyer, do you mind—is after a suspect."

And with another whirl of his nightstick, Policeman John Dwyer dashed hastily eastward on the trail of Henry Porter!

Columbus in sight of land probably experienced a similar feeling of joy to that of Henry Porter, as he strolled carelessly eastward, hugging the precious bank envelope to his breast beneath the friendly shelter of his overcoat.

What there might be in the long bank envelope Henry Porter did not know, nor did he dare pause upon the street to find out. What he suspected, from the bulkiness of the envelope, was bonds—bonds whose value might well run into the millions. He himself had often seen thinner envelopes the value of whose contents could only be expressed in seven figures.

So it came about that Henry Porter, chuckling gayly until his saturnine face fairly began to beam, walked slowly eastward toward his home on Madison avenue. At intervals he glanced backward over the deserted street and laughed softly. And then, suddenly, there came a clatter of feet upon the pavement, and he knew himself to be pursued.

As the sharp staccato sounds of pursuit came nearer, Henry Porter paused idly by the curbstone, his eyes bright with interest—paused until Policeman Dwyer halted, breathless, beside him.

"Good evening, officer," he said with quaint old-fashioned politeness. "How I wish I were young enough to run like that!"

Policeman Dwyer's round face was a study in confusion. "Have ye just come by Mr. Blane's house?" he demanded hoarsely.

Henry Porter slowly shook his head. "I came the other way, officer," he answered quietly; "walking northward. I am Henry Porter, head of the banking house of Porter Brothers, and I have been taking a stroll before retiring. Is there anything the matter at Blane's? House afire?"

Officer Dwyer gurgled hoarsely, inarticulately, and was silent. "There's a valuable envelope missing there," he explained, recovering the use of his tongue. "Somebody picked it up from the street not three minutes ago, and Mr. Blane says he wouldn't lose it for millions."

"Wouldn't lose it for millions," repeated Henry Porter calmly, while his heart gave a fierce, exultant bound. "Then I advise you to hurry on." He then drew out his pocketbook. "Here is my card, officer, if I can be of any service."

Left alone, Henry Porter stood watching the retreating form of Officer Dwyer, while a slow smile overswept his face. "Worth millions!" he repeated exultantly.

He was still smiling when a hand was laid upon his arm, and a shiveled, wrinkled face—the face of a man whom the years had treated unkindly—looked into his.

"Hand it over!" ordered a sharp voice.

Henry Porter came to himself with a start. In a flash his triumphant visions faded into dull reality. A man was actually holding him up in the street!

With Henry Porter to think was to act. He turned swiftly upon the intruder, his clean-shaven face set and stern.

"If you don't move on I'll have you arrested," he said sharply. "There is an officer just around the block."

The newcomer, who was a small, nondescript type of man, wearing a dark derby hat, plain dark overcoat and dark clothes—the kind of elderly man who swells the returns of the suburban railroads—laughed quietly.

"I'm not after your money, Mr. Porter," he answered grimly. "What I want is the envelope that fell out of Blane's window five minutes ago."

"My good man!" exclaimed the great banker icily. "Do you happen to be drunk, or crazy? Envelope that fell out of Blane's window? Do you mean Bertrand Blane's?"

"No, I mean Charlie Murphy's," said the small man flippantly. He shifted his position and a sharp protuberance became visible in his right-hand overcoat pocket. "I've got you covered with a pleasant little automatic, you old pirate," he went on. "Suppose you hand over that envelope."

"Really," remurred Henry Porter, "you must be dreaming. Do I look like a man that would take anything not my own?"

With the swiftness of decision that marked all his movements, the other changed his tactics. "Suppose we talk the thing over," he suggested. "You are misinformed, but I am willing to talk matters over. Are you in trouble?"

The bulging automatic became more prominent. "Look here," said the little man savagely, "every cent I have saved went into Steel. I bought at 90. This week I had to sell out—that's too long a story to tell now—and I got 18. Why? Because you and Blane are fighting over 'L.D.K.,' putting it up to the sky and slamming every other stock down. I'm not a speculator. I'm an investor. Do I get a show? Not on your life. You pound me out of four-fifths of every cent I had in the world; my wife gets sick worrying; and you turn Wall Street, that ought to be a place where an honest man can invest his earnings into an inferno."

"Now really," protested the banker, lifting his hand.

(To be concluded.)

One of the crew of an Arctic vessel holds a rodeo of his own by lassooing a polar bear found swimming in the water. The animal was drawn up on deck by use of a cargo net.

OVERSEAS TOURIST TRAFFIC FOR CANADA

A DEVELOPMENT GREATLY TO BE DESIRED.

Europeans Have the Capacity for Enjoying That Unique Charm Possessed by Canada.

The recent session of the Canadian Parliament has brought up for serious consideration a matter which quite pertinently demands attention at the present time—the desirability and possibility of Canada's developing a tourist traffic from Europe. The question has been brought sharply to a head by the report of the Wembley Exhibition Commissioners, who apparently feel strongly on the subject and make some actual and pertinent recommendations. The report reads:—

"Canada's participation in the British Empire Exhibition, insofar as it affects tourist traffic, has been fully justified. It is a well-established fact that immigration and commerce follow the tourist, and we believe fully that an intensive development of the tourist business for Canada would mean not only immediate benefits that would accrue from that travel, but would also be the means of interesting the right kind of investor and settler to our country.

"Canada possesses practically all attractions that tourists can desire. She has the mountains and lakes of Switzerland; the hills, valleys and lakes of Scotland; coast resorts on both Atlantic and Pacific, the equal of any on the continent of Europe or in the United States; and, in addition, wonderful forests and prairie lands to an extent which no other single country possesses."

Need of Greater Advertising.

"With the exception of some work done by the Canadian railways, little has been done in Canada in the way of developing a world-wide tourist business. Switzerland and Italy practically live on the revenue derived from tourists, and France and several other countries in Europe look upon them as one of the largest sources of revenue. This exhibition has aroused a keen interest among the leisured class of Europe as to opportunities afforded in Canada to sportsmen, hunters, and those desiring travel, and hundreds of inquiries have been made by people who have never looked on Canada as a country for holiday-making, and we are sure that next summer travel from Europe to Canada will increase considerably.

The mere idea opens up tremendous possibilities. It is only of comparatively recent years that Canadians in general have been brought to anything like an adequate realization of the enormously valuable resource and potential source of revenue dormant in the Dominion's scenery and holiday attraction, and this, to some extent, was forced upon them. Whilst Canada has been exerting strong effort to enhance her revenue along industrial and agricultural lines, Americans, in search of diversion, have, with considerably less inducement, insisted in crossing the border in ever increasing numbers and incidentally leaving much wealth behind them.

Development of U.S. Traffic Great.

The great possibility to Canada in tourist and holiday traffic is well illustrated in this United States development. Regarded retrospectively, there was scarcely and essentially holiday traffic from the United States to Canada in the days before the war. It is a very difficult matter to pin down with figures the volume and accruing revenue from this resource, but a good idea of the general trend may be gleaned from the number of touring automobiles crossing the border, of which record is taken by the Customs' Department. The traffic began to develop in the war years when holidaying in Europe was seriously affected, and Canada required merely to be known to induce an increasing volume of travellers annually. In 1919, after the traffic had been growing for five years, the total number of United States cars entering Canada to tour was 273,953. In 1924 the number was 1,899,210, or nearly eight times as great. At a conservative estimate last year a total of more than 7,500,000 United States citizens visited Canada, in this manner leaving $143,500,000 behind them. It can safely be said that at least as many came to Canada by train, placing total visitors in the neighborhood of 15,000,000, and the revenue accruing from them about $300,000,000.

Europe Knows Little of Canada.

There is no reason to suppose but that a tourist movement once started from Europe would gather the same impetus and develop as rapidly and beneficially. Canada and Canadian holiday attraction require simply to be known to bring this about, and, unfortunately, Europeans know too little of the Dominion's possibilities in this regard. As pertinently cited by the Exhibition Commissioners, Canada has in one realm greater and more diversified holiday possibilities than probably any country. To-day the continents are, with the great developments in steamship travel, drawn very close. So many people in Europe have not only the leisure and money which would enable them to holiday in Canada, but a peculiar capacity for enjoying that unique charm the Dominion possesses.

Could but sufficient people be brought to know the virgin freshness of the great Canadian open spaces, the glories of the Wesetern Rockies, the magic lure of the great lakes, the silences of the untamed woods, the superb hunting and splendid fishing the country affords in every section, and advertise these to others, there is no doubt a movement would start which, once under way, would gather force as that from the United States has done, and result in a vast revenue for Canada.

He—"I'm sure I could make you very happy."

She—"You sure could—if you'd just beat it."

The Unknown Word.

A little boy recently puzzled his mother with this query:

'What's the Miz?"

"The Miz, dear? I'm sure I don't know. Where did you hear about it?"

"At Sunday school. The superintendent said god made heaven and earth an' all that in the miz!"

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The popularity of stripes is admirably exemplified in this practical suspender costume. To begin with, stripes are the home dressmaker's delight, because they give the simplest frock all the trimming it needs. In the one-piece model pictured here they form an attractive border effect on the suspender skirt. The blouse is of a plain material with centre-front opening, and round boyish collar. The sleeves may be long or short. The diagram pictures the simplicity of the pattern, and the whole costume may be made in a day. Sizes 16, 18 and 20 years. Size 18 years requires 3⅛ yards of 36-inch, or 2¼ yards of 54-inch material for the skirt, and 2¼ yards of 32-inch or 36-inch material for the blouse. Price 20 cents.

Many styles of smart apparel may be found in our Fashion Book. Our designers originate their patterns in the heart of the style centres, and their creations are those of tested popularity, brought within the means of the average woman. Price of the book 10 cents the copy. Each copy includes one coupon good for five cents in the purchase of any pattern.

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Write your name and address plainly, giving number and size of such patterns as you want. Enclose 20c in stamps or coin (coin preferred; wrap it carefully) for each number, and address your order to Pattern Dept., Wilson Publishing Co., 73 West Adelaide St., Toronto. Patterns sent by return mail.

For a Treat.

An old customer was astonished to find one morning that, instead of his usual barber, there had been assigned to him a mere apprentice, the son of the proprietor.

"What!" exclaimed the old patron. "Are you going to let this boy shave me?"

"Oh, come," said the proprietor, "let the boy have his fun for once. It's his birthday, sir."

Minard's Liniment for Burns.

The Biggest Feet.

A policeman of Oakland, Cal., lays claim to possessing the world's biggest feet. They measure 14¼ inches in length by 6 inches in width.

Minard's Liniment for Dandruff.

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