

The Missing Millionaire.

Society—with a capital S—made much of Mr. Hiram T. Beats. It accepted his dinner invitations, drank his wines, and smoked his cigars (both of which were excellent) with a refreshingly easy grace; and in consideration of these little items cheerfully forgot what, in other circumstances, it would never have forgiven—namely, that his few odd millions of dollars were the result of a judicious "corner" in pork engineered by the astute Mr. Beats in his native Chicago not many years before.

With such an example it is not to be wondered at that society, without the capital letter—particularly the section of it to which I then belonged—should turn envious eyes in the direction of the wealthy American; and many were the schemes set in motion which had for their end the laudable one of relieving him of some of his superfluous cash.

Personally, I pondered the question as to how this desirable consummation could be brought about for a long time, until, in fact, I had well-nigh given up the task as hopeless. At that precise moment, however, Providence, in the unlikely shape of Jim Braggs, intervened.

Stepping into my little sanctum one evening with the mysterious bearing of one who has important news to communicate, he whispered: "Guv'nor, 'ave you 'eard that old Beats is goin' ter Liverpool? Anyow it's right; an' don't yer fergit it! Four o'clock from St. Pancras, stop the night in Liverpool, an' take the New York boat on the Saturday. 'Ow's that fer a bit of news?" "Glorious," I replied, "if correct. But is it?"

"'Crect! 'Ere, look at that!" Pulling an evening journal from his pocket he pointed with triumph and a dirty forefinger to a paragraph under the heading of "Society Doings," the purport of which was certainly as he had stated. "Now are yer satisfied?"

"Quite," I said. "The opportunity is far too good a one to be missed; and it shall not be my fault if we don't take full advantage of it. Only let me tell you this, Jim, it's going to be a much bigger affair than usual. I can see that plainly. Kidnapping a man—"

"Kidnappin'! Who said anything about kidnappin'?" "—is apt to be risky at any time," I continued, not heeding the interruption; "but when the man happens to be a millionaire is a form of recreation which becomes positively dangerous. Still, the stake is worth the risk, and that's the main thing."

"But what do you want ter kidnap him at all for?" persisted Jim. "Can't we work the oracle without?" "Very likely," I answered, "but not so neatly. You leave it to me. I've got an idea that's going to be worth something considerable to us before it's done with, or I'm a Dutchman!"

"Right you are, guv'nor. That's the way to talk. What's the game this time?" "Very simple! To-morrow we go down to Liverpool together, take a furnished house in a district where it's pretty quiet, and install you in it as caretaker, or whatever you like. I return to London, travel by the same train as our bird on Friday, in order to keep an eye on him, and you meet us at the station with something that looks as much like an hotel omnibus as possible. Into this he must be got somehow, and the rest should not be difficult. Once he realizes the situation I should fancy he'll be willing to purchase freedom at a reasonable price."

"I should fancy 'e will," chuckled Braggs. "'Ere's wishin' it luck, anyow?" And, picking up the glass of malt liquor with which, knowing his propensities in that direction, I had furnished him, Jim drained it without so much as stopping to take breath.

"The first thing," I said, "is to consider what we shall want in the way of tackle. Clothes, for instance—you'll want a different rig-out from that, you know! And perhaps it would be as well to have a couple of the boys to assist in case a little extra persuasion should be necessary—you can arrange that?" "Cert'nly, guv'nor—a very good idea. I'll take those two little commissions in 'and at once."

There, for the nonce, we separated. Eight o'clock the next morning, however, saw us together again—this time as travellers to the Mersey seaport. There is no need for me to describe our doings there at tedious length; enough for me to say that, having secured the necessary house and settled various other matters, I returned to town well satisfied with the way things were shaping, leaving Braggs in charge at the other end.

The only fear now was lest something should transpire to postpone the millionaire's journey; and I must own that it was with a sigh of relief I saw the portly figure that I knew so well emerge leisurely from the booking-office about a quarter of an hour before train time on the fatal day.

Mr. Beats halted at the bookstall to purchase some papers; then turned into the telegraph office. I had

an inspiration to follow; and lucky it was that I did so. Immediately he had scribbled out his form and handed it to the operator, I (who had occupied the adjacent partition on pretence of also sending a wire) tore off the next sheet from the pad which he had used and crammed it hastily into my pocket.

Five minutes later we steamed slowly out from under the big arched roof, and I had an opportunity to examine it away from prying eyes. As I anticipated, the hard pencil had made just sufficient impression on the paper to enable me to decipher what had been written. "Alexandra Hotel, Liverpool," it read. "Reserve rooms for me to-night.—Beats."

"Oho," thought I, "here is a little matter which must be adjusted slightly." Accordingly at Leicester I paid a hurried visit to the telegraph office on my own account. To the Alexandra Hotel I wired: "Cancel wire re rooms to-night; am returning London.—Beats," and, having done so, dispatched a brief message to Braggs telling him how matters stood.

So far so good. There was not likely to be any more difficulty till we reached Liverpool, and I relaxed sufficiently to allow myself the luxury of a cigar.

Fortune seemed to favor us again. When we got to Liverpool it was raining heavily, and fearfully boisterous withal, the consequences being that few people were about. Immediately Mr. Beats descended from his compartment, Jim who was waiting close by with his "bus"—hired for the occasion at a price which effectually closed awkward questions—touched his hat in true professional style, and inquired: "Alexandra, sir? Yessir."

The millionaire nodded, Jim threw open the door, caught up the brown Gladstone bag while I ascended the box from the off side, and in less than half a minute we were bowling away at a smart pace.

Without the least suspicion Mr. Beats had walked into the trap set for him; in fact, the affair could not have been accomplished in neater fashion had we rehearsed it twenty times.

The first intimation he had of anything unusual was when we pulled up in front of a door in a badly lighted street, instead of the palatial hotel entrance he expected to see; and here again the drenching rain and howling wind proved valuable allies. The exclamation which rose to his lips as he put foot on the step was unceremoniously smothered by a hand placed over his mouth; and before he quite realized what was happening we had bundled him through the ready open door into the house. The whole thing only occupied a few seconds.

Once inside I had little fear. Mr. Beats, too, when he saw how matters were, faced the situation with true Yankee imperturbability.

"Wal, p'raps naow, hev'n' concluded your acrobatic performance, you'll condescend to tell me what all this means, mister?" he drawled, when the others had left us in accordance with the arrangement made beforehand.

"Certainly," I replied, in my politest manner. "In the first place, it means, sir, that for the time being you are my prisoner, though I beg you to believe that everything shall be done to make the captivity as little irksome as possible." I added, "Allow me to offer you some refreshment—a little whisky and seltzer, or hock, if you prefer it?"

"Wal, thanks, sonny, I don't mind if I do just hev a small peg. Steady; that'll do nicely!" "I would add," I went on, "that any attempt at escape, even if you contemplated it, would be bound to fail. The only persons in this house besides ourselves are three men who are ready to do my utmost bidding at a touch of the bell."

"That's consoling," he remarked. "Nobody could say you weren't candid, at any rate. Fire away! I reckon it's a question of cash, to come to the point?" "Exactly," I replied. "I am glad to observe that our ideas coincide, and I trust you will not think me unreasonable if I venture to suggest that a thousand pounds would be a suitable ransom."

"Make it dollars, sonny, and it's a deal!" he snapped out; but I shook my head deprecatingly. "Pounds!" I insisted. "Your cheque for a thousand will solve all difficulties. There is a train to town at midnight which I can catch, I shall be at your bank at opening time, and my assistants will have instructions to liberate you half an hour later. The inconvenience which you will suffer will be a mere bagatelle; whereas, on the other hand—"

"Wal? Don't think me inquisitive sonny, but I should like to know the other side of the kyard." "You will miss your boat to-morrow, and consequently your appointment in Wall Street the Saturday following."

"Oh, I shall, shall I?" he drawled, contemptuously. "Look here, mister, I reckon you think yourself pretty smart. Wal, so y'are, p'raps for a Britisher; but when you try to take the gilt off Hiram T. Beats you've got to be a goodish bit sprightlier than y'are—see? What do you say to that?" "That!" I was as quick as he—in fact, I had been expecting something of the sort—and the two shining barrels flashed simultaneously.

"And if the truth's known, Mr. Hiram T. Beats," I said, looking

him straight in the face, "mine's loaded and—yours isn't!" There was a moment's silence; then, seeing that his bluff had failed, he let his arm drop to his side. "Say, sonny," he said—and I took it as a compliment that there was a different note in his voice—"I guess I made a slight mistake when I took you for a green 'un, eh?"

"Green and gold, sir," I replied, sentimentally, "may be an excellent combination from the artist's point of view; but in my profession you seldom find them associated. The hour is, however, getting late. I would suggest, with all due deference, that you now hand me your cheque, and we shall have just nice time afterwards for a quiet supper together before I leave."

He gave a peculiar shrug. "Wal, it's the first time anyone's ever drawn a bead on me, sonny, and that you kin bet your last dollar on; but I reckon it's a case this time. What did you say your name was?"

"Oh, make it out to Smith to save any trouble," I said, passing him the writing materials. "It's as good as any other."

"P'raps a peg better than some, sonny!" he flashed back, as he tossed the cheque over. "Like charity, it covers a multitude of sins."

I smiled at his pleasantry—I could afford to be good-humored—and placed the precious slip of paper in my pocket.

"And naow bring on that supper, will you?" he said, coolly. "I'm confoundedly hungry, and that's a fact."

The next three-quarters of an hour passed pleasantly enough. Mr. Beats appeared to regard his enforced captivity as an excellent jest—it certainly had not spoiled his appetite—laughed and joked freely, and declared after the second glass of whisky that I was a capital fellow and that it was "a downright pity I was only a Britisher." From which remark it will be gathered that the whisky, or something else, had exercised a decidedly soothing effect on Mr. Beats' feelings.

At parting he shook my hand effusively, repeating loudly that he would not have missed the adventure for worlds.

"Mind you, sonny," he added, "I'm to be turned loose at 10.30 precisely to-morrow. No hanky-panky!"

My subsequent emotions were a queer mixture of exultation and impatience. The long night journey seemed interminable, for I was too excited to catch even a wink of sleep and when at length we rolled into London in the grey dawn I had perforce to curb my haste for some hours longer until the banks opened.

Punctually at ten I stood before the big stone-faced building at which Mr. Beats transacted his business, and after allowing a few minute's grace, in order that I might not be absolutely the first customer, I swung open the huge door and walked boldly up to the counter.

The cashier glanced at the cheque, made the stereotyped inquiry as to how I would take it, and was about to count out the notes, when something fresh seemed to strike his eye. He scrutinized it a second time, then walked a yard or two away to consult a colleague. The action was significant, and for once my usual presence of mind forsook me. Thinking only of what the possible consequences might be, I did the very worst thing I could under the circumstances, namely, made a bolt for the door.

He nodded his head sharply, and a burly commissioner laid a quiet hand on my arm. I realized the mistake the moment after, and, knowing that any resistance would effectually destroy the last chance that remained of brazening the thing out, submitted to be taken into a private room. There I angrily demanded to know on what ground I was treated in this unwarrantable manner.

"On the ground that this cheque

has been obtained by false pretences," was the curt reply of the manager, who had now taken the case out of his subordinates' hands; and no more could I extract from him. I stormed, argued, threatened in turn; but to no purpose. He was coldly inflexible; and I was informed that I should be detained while inquiries were made. To say that I was astonished at the turn events had taken would but feebly describe the consternation that filled me. What could have happened? Why had fortune so cruelly betrayed me on the very point of victory? These were questions which I vainly attempted to answer as I fretted and fumed the next two or three hours away.

The denouement was just as startling. About four o'clock in the afternoon I was told in the same curt voice that I was at liberty to depart, a letter was pushed into my hands, and I found myself on the pavement a moment after, wondering what it all meant.

Free! It was a joyful sensation coming after the visions of enforced retirement from the world which had presented themselves in such unpleasant guise not long before; and realizing that a speedy disappearance was the best policy to pursue I made off as quickly as possible to my humble dwelling. Safely ensconced there, I bethought myself of the missive that had been handed to me; and, guessing that it held the key to the mystery, with eager fingers broke the seal. This was what I read:—

My Dear Young Friend,—I guess by the time you read this you'll have had plenty of opportunity to cool your heels a bit; and a little advice won't come so much amiss. Next time you try to rook anybody make sure you've got the right man. I was laughing at you up my sleeve the whole time if you'd only known it. Don't think I bear you any malice, however; Hiram T. Beats isn't that sort. To tell the truth, I've a sort of sneaking liking for you; and that's why I've told the bank people to let you go. For years my cashiers have had orders not to pay any cheque of mine which was signed with a Greek 'G' in the word 'Beats'—a little fact of which you were not aware, and consequently failed to observe on that piece of paper last night. Across the pond, you see, we anticipate this sort of thing and provide for it—only they're a lot smarter over there. Here's luck, sonny! You're not half a bad sort, and your whisky was immense.—Yours admiringly,

HIRAM T. BEATS.

I perused this remarkable document twice; then it struck me that the admiration expressed by Mr. Beats was mutual. To this day I regard him as an exceedingly far-seeing individual.—London Tit-Bits.

MIXED.

In some parts of Germany it is the custom to send congratulatory telegrams to friends at a distance who are being married. That is, the message is timed to arrive just after the ceremony and during the feast which usually follows.

Now, a certain man, a large farmer, was about to be married, and shortly before the time he heard that one of his cattle had strayed. It being a valuable animal, he told his bailiff to let him know at once when it was found.

The bailiff, being an economical man, combined the two affairs, and the happy bridegroom received the following message just as they all sat down to dinner:—"Congratulation! The beast is caught!"

It is fair to conclude that the telegram afforded at least as much gratification to the assembled guests as to the actual recipient himself.

Mrs. Bargandy—"Will these socks wear well?" Saleslady—"Will they wear well? Why, they've been on this counter for nearly two days and there isn't a hole in them yet!"

WONDERFUL TREES. Produce Genuine Cows' Milk and the Pan to Boil It In.

No doubt everyone would consider it a great boon to have a tree in their back garden which every morning on being tapped yielded a liberal supply of fresh and luscious milk equal to and almost indistinguishable from genuine cows' milk, without any fear of adulteration from "the cow with the iron tail."

Such a privilege is enjoyed by the inhabitants of South America or at least the tropical parts of it, where the cow-tree (which has been graphically described by Humboldt) grows wild in the forests. All that is necessary is to make a few incisions in the trunk and the milk flows freely, no further trouble being required except to hold a bowl or other receptacle for it to run into. It is in the early morning that the juice flows most freely—just the time when it is required, a fact that will be duly appreciated by the servant-girl who is awakened from her slumbers to receive the matutinal visit of the milkman.

The bowls generally used by the natives of South America to collect the precious beverage are the "calabashes" peculiar to tropical America. These are nothing else but natural pots and pans. The tree that supplies the calabash grows wild, but it is also cultivated, when it produces larger gourds. These gourds, the fruit of the tree, are of spherical or oval shape, and often more than a foot in diameter. The outer shell is extremely hard, so that they are not only unbreakable, but will also resist the action of fire, and are used for cooking-pots by the Indians and negroes of

TROPICAL AMERICA.

All that is necessary is to saw the fruit in half and scoop out the pulp it contains, when each half forms a vessel which can be used either as a bowl or cooking-pot. The gourds, when not used for cooking are often carved or painted with artistic designs.

The tree which yields the milk is a near relative of that which produces the India-rubber of commerce, which is nothing more than the coagulated milk or sap. And apropos of this a short anecdote may be told which will be interesting to tactotalers and of vital importance to tipplers who may visit that part of the world. A planter of Demerara, whilst hunting in the woods with a negro servant, was overcome with thirst, and tapped a cow-tree in order to obtain a supply of milk. Of this he drank a large quantity, qualifying it with a nip of brandy from his flask, and after partaking of this he sat down to rest in the shade. Shortly afterward he was attacked by the most acute pains and had to be taken home, where he expired after terrible suffering. A post-mortem revealed the fact that the unfortunate man's intestines had been literally sealed up with india-rubber, the brandy which he put into the milk having had the effect of solidifying it and turning it into a substance resembling india-rubber.

FROG FARMING IN CANADA.
The Industry Reported to Be Profitable and Growing.

Frog farming as an industry is assuming large proportions in many parts of Canada. Not only are large shipments of frogs' legs made to the United States, but there is a growing demand for the luxury in many of the large centers of the Dominion. One of the most successful frog farms is in Ontario. Last year it produced 5,000 pounds of dressed frogs' legs and 7,000 living frogs for scientific purposes and for stocking other waters.

The Deputy Commissioner of Fisheries for Ontario reports that in the past year a number of applications were made to the Government for leases of lands suitable for this industry. No licenses were, however, granted, as it was found that the territory concerned was already being farmed by a number of people.

It is safe to assume that in the very near future much land now idle will be stocked with frogs. All that is necessary for this purpose is to place a few paired breeders in the water. Natural food is almost always present in sufficient amount for successful growth. The species considered to be most profitable, on account of its size, is the Eastern bullfrog, *Rana catesbeiana*, which reaches a length of more than eight inches. It begins to breed at the end of three years, is very productive and reaches a marketable size in four or five years.

Only the hind legs are marketed, and they average half a pound a pair in weight. They are worth 50 cents a pound, at times, to the producer, and American dealers take as many as Canada can supply.

UGHT TO BE ENOUGH FOR HIM

"Do tell me, Mrs. Barkins," said the young mother, "whether you believe in one cow's milk for baby?" "Well," said Mrs. Barkins, "that depends on the child. If he's a good, strong, healthy baby, and wants it, I'd give him two cows' milk; but it does seem as if any ordinary baby wouldn't need more'n one cow could furnish."

Husband—"After all, civilization has its drawbacks. People in the savage state seldom get ill." Wife (sweetly)—"I wonder if that's the reason you are so healthy?"



"Miss Passe is going to the ball tonight in the character of Night."
"Another case of night made hideous."