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HEAD OFFICE, TORONTO.

G. P. REID, — — MANAGER

Capital Authorized...\$2,000,000
Paid Up..... 1,000,000
Reserve Fund..... 850,000

Agencies in all principal points in Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba, United States and England.

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A general banking business transacted. Drafts issued and collections made on all points. Deposits received and interest allowed at current rates.

THE SAVINGS BANK.

Interest allowed on Savings Bank deposits of \$1 and upwards. Prompt attention and every facility afforded customers living at a distance.

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Furniture...

That is sure to please can always be purchased here.

UNDERTAKING PRICES CUT
Also a First Class Hearse always in connection. Embalming a specialty.

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BINDERS, Mowers, Rakes, Wilkinson Plows, Land Rollers, Diamond Smoothing Harrows, McGill Grinders, and Dowell's Churns, Washers and Wringers, U. S. Cream Separators, and Cameron & Dunn Hay Forks

CUTTERS, SLEIGHS, ROBES and COATS.

Horses ALWAYS ON HAND FOR SALE.

Call and see the Ferguson SLOOP SLEIGH, Manufactured in Owen Sound, before buying

JOHN CLARK

(McKinnon's old Stand)

DURHAM, — — ONTARIO

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Machine Oil, Harness Oil, Axle Grease and Hoof Ointment, go to

S. P. SAUNDERS
The Harnessmaker.

AT COST!

Up to the end of March we have decided to make our goods move, if selling at Cost will have the effect.

Some of the goods offered have just been opened, being a month on the road.

We have left of our winter Stock:—

- A FEW OVERCOATS.
- A FEW PEA JACKETS, HEAVY WEIGHT.
- A FEW READY-MADE SUITS.
- A LARGE ASSORTMENT OF TROUSERS.
- A LOT OF UNDERWEAR SOME JUST ARRIVED.
- FLANNELLETTES AND PRINTS.

All these and some other lines will go at Cost.

S. SCOTT

DURHAM, — — ONTARIO.

THE STROLLERS

By FREDERIC S. ISHAM,

Author of "Under the Rose"

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In the parlor the younger lads and lasses were playing snop and catch 'em and similar games. The portly Dutch clock gazed down benignly on the scene, its face shining good humoredly like the round visage of some comfortable burgher. "Green grow the rushes, O!" came from many merry-makers. "Kiss her quick and let her go!" was followed by scampering of feet and laughter, which implied a doubt whether the lad had obeyed the next injunction, "But don't you muss her ruffe, O!" Forming a moving ring around a young girl, they sang, "There's a rose in the garden for you, young man." A rose indeed, or a rosebud, rather, with ruffles he was commanded not to "muss," but which nevertheless suffered sadly.

Among these boys and girls the patron discovered Constance, no longer "to the life a duchess," with gown in keeping with the "pride and pomp of exalted station," but attired in the simple dress of lavender she usually wore, though the roses still adorned her hair. Shunning the entrancing waltz, the inspiring "Monnie Musk" and the cotillon, lively when set to Christy's melodies, she had sought the more juvenile element, and when seen by the land baron was circling around with fluttering skirts. Joyous, merry, there was no hint now in her manner of the ways of the capacity that lay within for varied impersonations, from the lightness of coquetry to the thrill of tragedy.

He did not know how it happened as he stood there watching her, but the next moment he was imprisoned by the group and voices were singing: "There he stands, the booby! Who will have him for his beauty?" Who? His eye swept the group—the merry, scornful glances fixed upon him; the joyous, half inviting glances; the red lips parted as in kindly invitation—shy lips, willing lips.

Who? His look kindled. He had made his selection, and the next moment his arm was impetuously thrown around the actress' waist. "Kiss her quick and let her go!" Amid the mad confusion he strove to obey the command, but a panting voice murmured "No, no!" a pair of dark eyes gazed into his for an instant, defiantly, and the pliant waist slipped from his impassioned grasp; his eager lips, instead of touching that glowing cheek, only grazed a curl that had become loosened, and before he could repeat the attempt she had passed from his arms with laughing lips and eyes.

"Play fair!" shouted the lads. "He should kiss her quick and let her go!" "Oh, let her go first!" said the others. "Kiss her quick!" reiterated the boys.

"He can't now," answered the girls. The voices took up the refrain. "Don't you muss the ruffles, O!" and the game went on. The old clock gossiped gleefully, its tongue repeating as plainly as words:

"Let her go!—ho!—ho!—one—two—three!"

Three o'clock! Admonishingly rang out the hour, the jovial face of the clock looking sterner than was its wont. It glowered now like a preacher in his pulpit upon a sinful congregation. Enough of snap and catch 'em, enough of Hull's Victory or the opera reel, let the weary fiddler descend from the bulrush chair, for soon the touch of dawn will be seen in the eastern sky! The merry-making began to wane and already the sound of wagon wheels rattled over the log road away from the tavern. Yes, they were singing, and as Hepsibeth leaned her head on Josiah's shoulder they uplifted their voices in the good old orthodox hymn, "Come, Ye Sinners," for thus they courted and worshiped in olden times.

"Good night, every one!" said a sweet voice, as Constance passed calmly on with not a ruffle mussed.

"Good night," answered the patron, a sparkle in his eyes. "I was truly a booby."

"What can you mean?" she laughed. "There's many a slip 'twixt 'lip and lip!" exclaimed Susan.

With heightened color the young girl turned, and as she did so her look rested on the soldier. His glance was cold, almost strange, and meeting it, she half started and then smiled, slowly mounting the stairs. He looked away, but the patron never took his eyes from her until she had vanished. Afar, rising and falling on the clear air, sounded the voices of the singers:

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise him all creatures here below; and finally, softer and softer, until the melody melted into silence:

"Praise him above, ye heavenly hosts!" "One good turn deserves another," said Barnes to Saint-Prosper, when Susan and Kate had likewise retired. "Follow me, sir—to the kitchen! No questions, but come!"

CHAPTER V.

A KEEN observer might have noticed that the door of the inn kitchen had been kept swinging to and fro as certain ones in the audience had stolen cautiously but repeatedly in and out of the culinary apartment while the dancing and other festivities were in progress. The itinerant pedagogue was prominent in these mysterious movements, which

possibly accounted for his white cloak being askew and his disposition to cut a dash not by declining Greek verbs, but by inclining too attentively toward Miss Abigail, a maiden lady with a pronounced aversion for frivolity.

The cause of the schoolmaster's frolicsome deportment was apparent to the soldier when he followed Barnes into the kitchen, where in a secluded corner near the hospitable oven, in the dim light of a tallow dip, stood a steaming punch bowl. A log smoldered in the fireplace, casting on the floor the long shadows of the andirons, while a swinging pot was reflected on the ceiling like a mighty eclipse. Numerous recesses containing pans and plates that gleamed by day were wrapped in vague mystery. Three dark figures around the bowl suggested a scent of incantation, especially when one of them threw some bark from the walnut log on the coals and the flames sprang up all the king's horses and all the king's men in the last—that is, indeed, serious warfare.

"True, it will be a roundabout way to New Orleans," continued the manager, disregarding his companion's response, "but there is no better way of seeing the new world—that is, if you do not disdain the company of strolling players. You gain in knowledge what you lose in time. If you are a philosopher, you can study human nature through the buffoon and the mummer. If you are a naturalist, here are grand forests to contemplate. If you are not a recluse, here is free, though humble, comradeship."

His listener gazed thoughtfully into the fire. Was the prospect of sharing this gypsylike life attractive to him? An adventurer himself, was he drawn toward these homeless strollers, for whom the illusions of dramatic art shone with enticing luster in the comparative solitude of the circuit on the wilderness?

As he sat before the glow, the light of the burning shagbark, playing fitfully above the dying embers, outlined the stalwart yet active figure and the impenetrable, musing features. But when, with an upward shower of sparks, the backlog fell asunder and the waning flame cast yet more gloomy shadows behind them, he leaned back in his heavy, hewn chair and again bent an attentive look upon the loquacious speaker.

"Or, if you desire," resumed the manager after some hesitation, "it might become a business venture as well as a pleasure jaunt. Here is a sinking ship. Will the salvage warrant helping us into port—that is, New Orleans? There hope tells a flattering tale. The company is well equipped, has a varied repertory, while Constance—tenderly—is a host in herself. If you know her as I do, had watched her art

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have been denied the scenes a good deal. The greenroom is a fashionable rendezvous. Where are you going? And what—if I may ask—is your business?"

"I am on my way to New Orleans," said the traveler after a moment's hesitation; "my business, fortune getting; in sugar, tobacco or indigo culture!"

"New Orleans!" exclaimed the manager, poisoning the ladie in midair. "That, too, is our destination. We have an engagement to play there. Why not join our band? Write or adapt a play for us. Make a temperance drama of your play!"

"You are a whimsical fellow," said the stranger, smiling. "Why don't you write the play yourself?"

"I? An unread, illiterate dotard! Why, I never had so much as a day's schooling. As a lad I slept with the rats, held horses, swept crossings and lived like a muddark! Me write a play! I might let fall a suggestion here and there, how to set a flat or where to drop a fly, to plan an entrance or to arrange an exit! No, no; let the shoemaker stick to his last! 'It takes'—with deference—a scholar to write a drama."

"Thus you disqualify me," laughed the other, drawing out a pipe, which he filled and lighted with a coal held in the iron grip of the antique tongs. "If it were only to help plant a battery or stand in a gap!" he said grimly, replacing the tongs against the old brick oven at one side of the grate. "But to beset King Bacchus in three acts! To storm a castle in the first, scale the walls in the second and blow up all the king's horses and all the king's men in the last—that is, indeed, serious warfare!"

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grow—his voice trembled—"and to think, sometimes I do not know where the next day's sustenance may come from! That she!"

He broke off abruptly, gazing at his companion half apologetically. "We players, sir," he resumed, "present a jovial front, but—tapping his breast—"few know what is going on here!"

"Therein," said the younger man, emptying his pipe, "you have stated a universal truth." He pushed a smoldering log with his foot toward the remnants of the embers. "Suppose I were so minded to venture—and he mentioned a modest sum—"in this hazard and we patched up the play together?"

"You don't mean it?" cried the manager eagerly. "He regarded the other suspiciously. Your proposal is not inspired through sympathy?"

"Why not through the golden prospects you have so eloquently depicted?" replied Saint-Prosper coldly.

"Why not indeed!" exclaimed the reassured manager. "Success will come; it must come. You have seen Constance but once. She lives in every character to her heart's core. How does she do it? Who can tell? It's in-born—a heritage to her!"

His voice sank low with emotion. "Yes," he murmured, shaking his head thoughtfully as though another image arose in his mind. "A heritage, a divine heritage!" But soon he looked up. "She's a brave girl!" he said. "When times were dark she would always smile encouragingly, and in the light of her clear eyes I felt anew the Lord would temper the wind to the shorn lamb."

"One, two, three, four," rang the great clock through the silent hall, and at its harsh clangor Barnes started.

"Bless my soul, the maids 'll be up and doing and find us here!" he exclaimed. "One last cup! To the excess of the temperance drama!"

In a few moments they had parted for their respective chambers, and only the landlord was left downstairs. Now as he came from behind the bar, where he had been apparently dozing and secretly listening through the half open door leading into the kitchen, he had much difficulty to restrain his laughter.

"That's a good one to tell Ezekiel," he muttered, turning out the lights and sweeping the ashes on the hearth to the back of the grate. "To the temperance drama!"

CHAPTER VI.

DOWN the hill, facing the tavern, the shadows of night were slowly withdrawn, ushering in the day of the players' leaving. A single tree at the very top, isolated from its sylvan neighbors, was bathed in the warm sunshine, receiving the earliest benediction of day. Down, down came the dark shade, pursued by the light, until the entire slope of the hill was radiant and the sad colored foliage flaunted in newborn gayety.

Returning from the stable, where he had been looking after his horse, the soldier stood for a moment before the inn, when a flower fell at his feet, and glancing over his shoulder, he perceived Susan, who was leaning from her window. The venturesome rose which had clambered as high as the second story, was gone, plucked, alas by the wayward hand of a coquette. Saint-Prosper bowed and stooped for the aspiring but now hapless flower which lay in the dust.

"You have joined the chariot, I hear," said Susan.

"For the present," he replied.

"And what parts will you play?" she continued, with smiling inquisitiveness.

"None."

"What a pity! You would make a handsome lover." Then she blushed. "Lad! What am I saying? Besides," maliciously—"I believe you have eyes for some one else. But remember"—shaking her finger and with a coquettish turn of the head—"I am an actress and therefore vain. I must have the best part in the new piece. Don't forget that, or I'll not travel in the same chariot with you." And Susan disappeared.

"Ah, Kate," she said a moment later, "what a fine looking young man he is!"

"Who?" drawled her sister.

"Mr. Saint-Prosper, of course."

"He is large enough," retorted Kate leisurely.

"Large enough! Oh, Kate, what a phlegmatic creature you are!"

"Fudge!" said the other as she left the chamber.

Entering the tavern, the soldier was met by the wiry old lady who bobbed into the breakfast room and explained the kind of part that fitted her like a glove, her prejudices being strong against modern plays.

"Give me dramas like 'Orlana,' 'The Rival Queens' or Webster's pieces," she exclaimed, quoting with much fire her years:

"We are only like dead walls or vaulted graves!"

"And do not forget the heavy 'your piece'" called out Hawkes across the table. "Something you can dig your teeth in!"

"Nor the 'juvenile lead,'" chimed in the Celtic Adonis.

"Adonis makes a great hit in a small part," laughed Kate, appearing at the door. "My lord, the carriage is waiting!"