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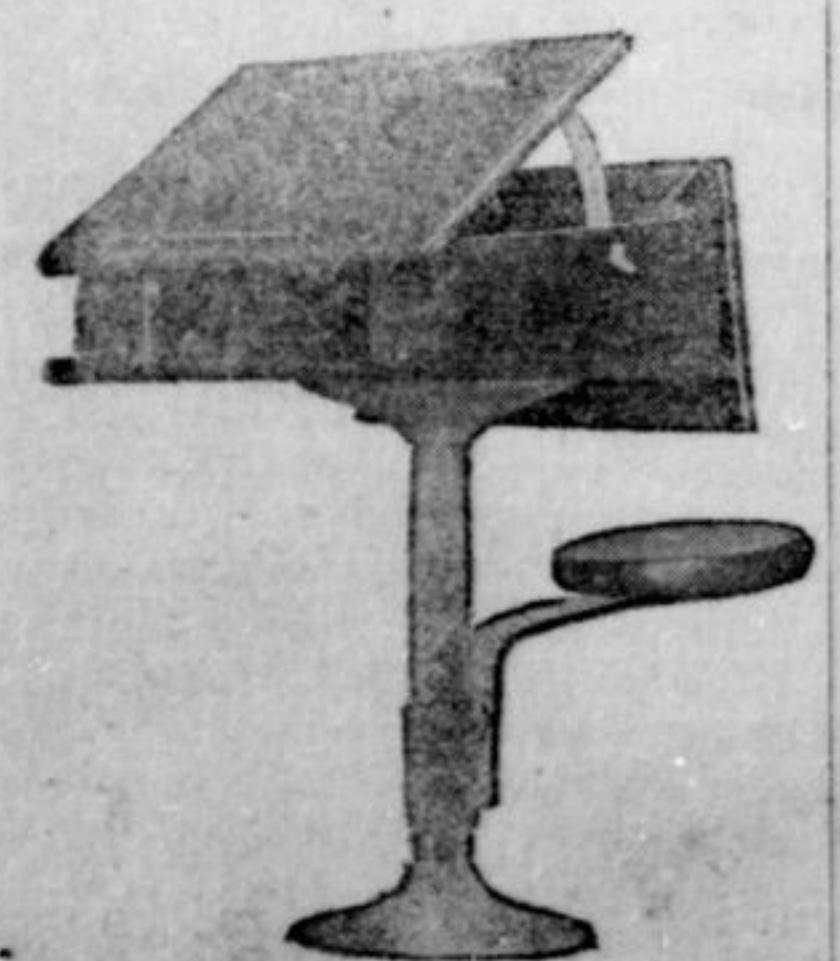
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A SOLDIER OF COMMERCE

By JOHN ROE GORDON

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CHAPTER VIII. THE GOVERNOR'S BALL.

THE ball of the governor of Tiflis was the success he wished it to be. The new palace was ablaze with light. Carriages dashed to the entrance, deposited their occupants and dashed away again. Officers on foot, with their cloaks covering their uniforms, walked in the obscurity of the streets to mingle on equal terms in the brilliant ballroom with princes and pashas. The gay world of the Caucasus was made gayer by the addition of the swarms from the orient. Bands blared their military music. Gowns that came from Paris swept the ballroom floor as the stately dames who wore them walked with Persians and Turks of high degree. Laughter, conversation, introductions and presentations made a perfectly harmonious bedlam.

But there was one at the ball who listened to the words of welcome he received, while his eyes noted the appearance of one he sought. "Will she never come?" he asked himself. "Or does she hate me so that she will brave her uncle's wrath rather than meet me?"

"Colonel Jurnieff and Mlle. Alma," he heard some one say. He turned to look. He stood spellbound. He had not imagined, although he knew her well, that such a being could exist. He entered the door at that moment. By the side of the grim faced colonel walked a vision from some other land, it seemed. Never had anything like it been seen at a governor's ball in Tiflis. Alma's costume was a combination of Paris and the Caucasus—the daintiest lace and the costliest silks. Pearls adorned her snowy neck. Her little feet were clad in dainty shoes of white doekin. Her white arms were round and full, her shoulders perfect. The white fan she carried seemed to waft a mystic thrill upon all she passed. Her voice was silvery in its music. She was the gayest of them all.

"Can it be that that lovely creature has at last consented to be my wife?" said the prince to himself. "Prince Dellnikoff, you know my niece, Alma Jurnieff?"

The prince bowed low. Alma extended her hand graciously. "I know the prince very well," she said, "but since I have been enjoying my visit at Tiflis he has been quite a stranger."

"I did not—I did not know—"
"I congratulate you, prince, upon your appointment. My father wrote about it."
"What woman is this?" asked the colonel as he moved away, leaving her with Dellnikoff. "She is a riddle. I cannot solve her. But she loves him. I can see love in her very eyes."

She placed her hand on the prince's arm, and they joined the throng. Turkish pashas saw her and blinked their eyes as they thought of their own faded beauties in their harems; Persian princes sought presentation; Chinese mandarins almost forgot their names when she spoke to them. She had come to conquer, and she conquered. She was the queen of the ball, and Dellnikoff was the envied of princes.

"Mlle. Alma will lead the grand march with the guest of honor," said the governor.

The band struck up "The Czar!" and princes and generals fell in behind her. Dellnikoff's heart beat with pride as he felt the warm and living hand of the girl upon his arm. The warm perfume that came from her fan intoxicated him. He, the suave, the blase, the gay one from St. Petersburg, was like a boy at his first party. In the dance that followed, as he felt his arm around her waist, a thrill of pleasure drove the blood quicker through his heart. After the dance he led her to the conservatory.

"You have changed," he said as his eyes devoured her. "As you grow more beautiful you grow more gracious. A year ago you spurned me almost."

room. With reluctance he relinquished her to the governor. "What a wonderful success!" she said as they swept past the prince, who was devouring her again with his eyes.

"I thank you," said the governor. "It was you who made it the success it is." "Not I, but the genius of the governor of Tiflis," she answered, with a smile that stirred even his old blood.

"What has got into that girl?" asked Colonel Jurnieff of himself as he watched her. "I am beginning to think my brother was a fool in ordering me to keep her confined. Instead I should have given balls and parties for her. My course is plain now that the prince has her won. All I need do is to take the credit and win promotion."

Alma danced with her uncle. During the waltz he fell a victim to her charms. "Am I a dolt? Has she turned my head, too?" he asked himself.

He took her back to the prince, who was jealous even of the uncle. "The next waltz is mine," he said. "But if you are tired I would prefer to sit in the conservatory."

"Would you?" glancing at him archly. "I wonder if I could guess why?"

"Could you guess why? If my manner does not tell you why, shall I permit my tongue to tell? Because I love you. I loved you before, Alma, but never as I do tonight. I thought you hated me. I thought you loved that American."

"Get me some wine, prince." He fetched the wine himself. "For the first time from my hand! You never accepted anything from me before."

"Then enjoy the honor," she answered, laughing. "I may exact more before the night is over."

"Anything! I swear it! Tonight you are welcome to my life, to my honor, to my allegiance to the czar. Only love me."

He bent and kissed her. She drank the wine and patted his arm. "Prince, you are a gay cavalier. One could scarcely know you in St. Petersburg, where there were so many women more beautiful than I. But here one learns that you are a bold and wicked man. Don't dare kiss me again."

"I will the very next time I get a chance."

She seemed exhausted at times and often touched her eyes with her gloved hand. Her eyes were at times reckless and gay, at others thoughtful and intense. These moods passed quickly, as if by superhuman effort. When the prince stepped away for ices, she moaned almost aloud:

"God help me to keep it up! God help me to succeed! It is the only way!"

When he returned, she greeted him with smiles as she accepted the ices. "The next is another waltz," she said. "I love waltzing, and you are such a splendid partner."

"Thank you. I love to waltz—with you. I love you and everything you do."

"Wait—wait till you know me better."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

A Coral Church.

A church of solid coral is a curiosity of the Isle of Mahe. This island, rising 3,000 feet, is the highest of the Seychelles group in the Indian ocean, and its buildings are all from square blocks hewn from massive coral and glistening like white marble.

Table Mats.

Asbestos is so much used now for the protection of different things that many dainty covers are designed for the concealing of the material itself. Dollies are made double, and the table mats are to be slipped inside when used on a handsome polished table as the only covering.

These can be made at home at less expense and much prettier than the machine made ones to be bought. If a woman is clever with her needle she can embroider such flowers as will go with her decorative ideas for a luncheon, a Sunday evening collation or any simple meal, for which an uncovered table is suitable—a set embroidered in strawberries for a strawberry luncheon, one in violets, another in nasturtiums and so on through the list. All sizes should be provided, as even the very dimmed.

To Sterilize Drinking Water. The latest recipe for sterilizing drinking water and killing off the typhoid germ: Put four drops of tincture of iodine in half a gallon of water and permit to stand at least half an hour. By the end of that time it will be as harmless as distilled water. Many persons have not the facilities for making distilled water. Boiling it also entails a certain amount of trouble. In either case the water is flat and unpleasant to the taste. The few drops of iodine impart practically no taste to the amount of water they sterilize and the same time they answer every medicinal purpose.—American Queen.

A COONSKIN FARE.

It Would Have Paid the Traveler to Let the Change Go.

Many years ago, as the story runs, when coonskins were worth six bits apiece in Arkansas and a regular fee of two bits was assessed for ferrying a horseman across the St. Francis river, there came along a traveler whose entire capital consisted of but a single pelt, and the ferryman hadn't a cent of change in his pocket.

The traveler was bound to cross, but refused to pay three times as much as the man who passed before him or the one who was to come next. The ferryman would not wet an oar unless payment for his services was assured. Here was ample foundation for an argument, and presumably the opportunity was not neglected. But a satisfactory arrangement was finally reached, the traveler getting value received for his coonskin by being waded thrice across the stream. This of course would leave him on the right side, and neither party to the trade would have cause for complaint. Such was the generous spirit of accommodation which obtained in these earlier days, such—hold on a bit.

On the second trip the ferryman chanced to inspect the coonskin closely and found that it was by no means up to the recognized standard. Maybe it had been killed too early in the season or was not properly stretched. Anyway, he decided that four bits was all it was worth, and the traveler frankly admitted the soundness of his judgment, acknowledged that he had received its value in the double ferryage and forthwith started on his fifty mile ride up the river to the nearest point where it was fordable.—Field and Stream.

A LONG LOST CITY.

Tanagra, the Site of the Modern Town of Gremada, in Greece.

Gremada is the name of the modern city in Boeotia, Greece, which occupies the site of the ancient city of Tanagra. The old town was a rich and luxurious place, greatly renowned for the cock-fights that were given there. It had the honor of being the birthplace of Corinna, the great poetess of the fifth century before Christ, and perpetuated her memory by a majestic tomb, on which she was represented five times crowned in remembrance of the five victories which she had gained in the lyrical contests with Pindar. Despite this comparative celebrity it appeared destined to the eternal sleep of forgetfulness when after more than twenty-two centuries of silence chance drew to it the attention of archaeologists.

In 1870 the inhabitants of the neighboring villages while digging in their fields exposed to view some tombs which the French have assigned to the nineteenth century before the Christian era. The discovery of these first sepulchers was the cause of excavations, during which a quantity of other tombs were discovered, all situated along the roads which led from the walls of Tanagra in the direction of Thebes, Chalcis, Harnia and Platae.

Among this mass of tombs belonging to several centuries the most interesting attaches to those of the fourth century before the Christian era on account of their contents. It was in these particularly that the statuettes known today under the name of "Tanagra figurines" were for the most part discovered.



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JUST A SMILE.

"What's that row on the other street?" "Only a wooden wedding." "Wooden wedding?" "Yes, just a couple of Poles getting married."

Why did Noah, when despatching the dove from the ark, not send a female? Because it couldn't keep its mouth shut long enough to bring back the twig.

"Mamma," said the little Boston boy, "can I eat another piece of pie?" "I suppose you can." "But, may I?" "No, you may not." "Oh, darn grammar, anyway."

Music Teacher.—"Johnny is improving daily in his violin playing." Johnny's mother, gratified,—Is that so? We didn't know whether he was improving, or we were just getting more used to it."

The following is an extract from the annual report of a Welsh cottage hospital: "Notwithstanding the large amount expended for medicine and medical attendance there were but few deaths during the year."

"As Shakespeare says," remarked Cassidy, who was fond of airing his "booklarin'" occasionally, "what's in a name?"

"Well," replied Casey, "call me what I don't loike, and I'll show ye."

District Visitor.—I've just had a letter from my son, Reggie, saying he has won a scholarship. I can't tell you how happy I am, I—

Rustic Party.—"I can understand your feelings, mum. I felt just the same when our pig won a prize at the Agricultural show"

First Rustic, (cutting pie in two unequal pieces and giving friend the smaller piece)—"That's yer pie, Jonas." Second Rustic, (in an aggrieved tone)—"Say, 'Elias, if I had been dealing out that pie, I'd 'a' given you the biggest piece." First Rustic—"Wall, Jonas, what's yer kickin' about? Ain't I got it?"

Two men went into a Boston drug store and told the proprietor that they had made a soda water bet, and would have their sodas now, and when the bet was decided, the loser would drop in and settle, if that would be satisfactory to the drugist. He answered that it would, and after the sodas had been enjoyed he asked:

"By the way, what was the bet?" "My friend here," said one of the men, "bets that when Bunker Hill monument falls, it will fall towards the north, and I bet it won't."

Aubrey de Vere, in his Life, tells a story of thick skulls. At a political meeting in Ireland, a man in the gallery dropped his umbrella over the rail, and it went crack on the head of an old gentleman below. Whereupon the gentleman arose and appealed to the chairman.

"Mr. President," he said, "I beg to call your attention to the fact that there is a beastliness in this meeting. A man in the gallery has just been after spitting on me head."

Mrs. B., who has passed the meridian of life, and who is am lining down its western slope, had occasion to consult her doctor. Before he diagnosed her illness he asked her age.

"Doctor," said the old lady with some asperity, "I am just one year older than I was this time last year, when you visited me professionally, and asked the same question."

"How old were you then," asked the doctor, "I have forgotten."

"So have I."

Alderman John Edward Scully, of the Thirteenth Ward, was predicting at a banquet on the West Side. The set toasts were finished, and he called upon several of the people present for impromptu remarks, taking care to remind them, however, that the hour was late and the time limited. One of the guests had a reputation for extending his remarks to an indefinite length, but Scully felt in duty bound to give him a chance. When called he rose and asked the toastmaster,

"What shall I talk about, Alderman Scully?"

Glancing at his watch, the Alderman said in a soft voice: "Oh, just talk about a minute"

A story is told about a shock received by a Daluth pastor after the services the other night. He makes it a point to welcome any strangers cordially, and that evening after the completion of the service he hurried down the aisle to station himself at the door.

A Swedish girl was one of the strangers in the congregation. She is employed as a domestic at one of the fashionable east end homes, and the minister, noting that she was a stranger, stretched out his hand. He welcomed her to the church, and expressed a hope that she would become a regular attendant. Finally he said that if she would be at home some evening during the week, he would call.

"Thank you," she murmured bashfully, "but ay have a fella."

Flourfax Fables.

The Young Wife and the Honest Grocer.

A young wife decided to go to house-keeping and do her own marketing.

"Now I want to save all the money I can," she told the grocer.

"I am going to buy just as economically as I can, and I am going to do my own cooking and bake my own bread."

She saw some eggs. "How much are eggs?" "Well, we have them at various prices. The best are thirty cents a dozen."

"My, how expensive! Haven't you some for twenty?" "Yes m'am, but I can't recommend them."

"But we are trying to save money." "True, but you can't afford to save money on eggs, butter and flour."

"Those are three things you want good and you can't have them too good. You can save in lots of ways but don't do it on the necessities."

"What is your best flour?" "Royal Household." "How much does it cost?" He told her.

"Have you cheaper flour." "Yes, cheaper in price but really not as cheap in the end. You see in Royal Household Flour you get the largest amount of flour value for your money."

"The largest amount of wheat nutriment—of pure flour." "The cheaper the flour the less nutriment it has in it and the more bran." "The bran is in all flour till its taken out."

"It's all taken out of Royal Household Flour, and that means the best machinery and the best milling."

"And another thing, madam, perhaps you haven't heard of the new process used in making Royal Household Flour. It is purified by Electricity and that seems to make all the difference in the world in flour."

"Everybody wants 'Royal Household' now—they seem to think it is healthier, and I guess it is."

Suddenly she looked suspicious at the earnestness of his argument. "Don't you make more money on Royal Household Flour?"

"No m'am—not as much as we make on cheaper priced flour."

"Then why do you recommend it?" "Because when a customer once tries 'Royal Household' our trouble is all over. It sells itself after that and we never have any complaints. If you send to The Ogilvie Flour Mills Co., Limited, Montreal, they will send you the Royal Household Recipes."

"Well; send me a barrel of 'Royal Household' then; and I'll have some of those 30c. eggs too."

FLOURFAX.

"You said that your wife had gone away for the first time in three years and there wasn't anyone to say a word, if you went home and kicked over the mantel clock."

"I remember."

"You said that if you stayed out until four o'clock there was no one to look at you reproachfully, and sigh, and make you feel mean."

"Yes, and I stayed out until four o'clock, didn't I?"

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