His Vacation

A little group of men stood in front of the booth where, visitors to the summer amusement park, throw balls at a row of grotesque dolls.

A big fellow with a hoarse voice and a very red face was disputing with the proprietor.

"I gave you a dime," he snarled. "It wasn't a nickel, it was a dime."

The proprietor of the booth, a mild little man with weak blue eyes, shook his head.

"I haven't taken in a dime to-day," he said "Here's my bank" And he pushed an open cigar box toward the big fellow.

"I don't care anything about your bank," the big fellow cried "I tell you I give you a dime. I've had my three shots now gimme my change."

The little man looked about despairingly. No park policeman was in sight. The crowd was growing larger.

"You give me a nickel,' said the little man, "but I dont' want any fuss."

The big man snorted.

"Do you mean to say I'm a liar?" he demanded.

"That's what you are," came a voice from the rear of the crowd.

The big man whirled around.

"Who said that?" he roared.

"I did," the voice replied.

The big man straightened up on tiptoe.

"Where are you?" he cried.

"Here," replied the voice. It seemed from the left of the crowd, which had now grown to considerable proportions.

"Lemme git at him!" roared the big man.

And he pushed into the group.

"Look out where you're going," cautioned a stout man as he thrust an elbow into the fellow's side.

"Easy there," snapped a little man. "You're on my feet." And he kicked the big fellow viciously.

In an instant the sentiment of the group changed. The loungers had enjoyed seeing the little proprietor bullied by the red faced man. Now it turned against the bully. It pushed and buffeted him and when he was clear of it he had lost all desire to find the man who had impeached his veracity. As for the latter, he seemed to have melted into the air.

The crowd broke up with the departure of the bully, and in a moment or two there was no one left in front of the booth save a boy.

He was a boy perhaps nineteen, a clear eyed lad with a sunburnt skin and dark curly hair. He was neatly dressed, but his clothes were old fashioned in cut, and he wore a broad brimmed straw hat that had seen other summers.

The boy looked up at the little proprietor.

"Bad man," he said.

The proprietor nodded.

"Yep. He was out for trouble all right. That was a big bluff, of course, but what could I do? I couldn't afford to have any trouble with him. Business is bad enough as it is."

He sighed as he spoke.

The boy looked at him curiously.

"Bad season, eh?"

"Worst I ever knew. An' I've had some pretty tough ones." His eye wandered over the grounds. "There's that loafer, now. He's having a fuss over there at the chutes. He'd better not fool with those fellows. They'll drop him in the pond." He softly chuckled. "I wonder who 'twas called him a liar?"

"I did," said the boy.

"You! Why, you wasn't even lookin' at him."

The boy laughed.

"Guess I hadn't the courage to look at him when I said it."

"But the voice came from over there," persisted the proprietor.

"It was my voice." The boy suddenly stooped as if to pick something from the ground. As he did so a dog snarled and barked at the proprietor's heels.

"Get out!" the little man shouted, as he quickly looked around—and lo! there was no dog there. He turned to the boy. "Did you do that?"

"You."

The little proprietor pushed the balls toward him.

"As many shots as you like," he said.

"Thank you," said the boy. "Not now. Business is bad, eh? Want a partner?"

"There aint' a livin' in it for one, let alone two."

"But suppose a partner could build it up and put it on a paying basis?"

"That's the kind o' partner I want."

The boy nodded.

"I'm looking 'round," he said. "You've noticed I'm from the country. I had a chance to go on a farm after I finished school, but I thought I'd rather go up to the city and see if I couldn't find some sort of opening. I don't want anything permanent just yet—I've got too much to learn. At the same time, I've got to get a living. Maybe you'd better take me on a salary for a spell. I dont' want to tie up for long. Wait. You needn't give me a cent if I don't put your business here on a fair paying basis. When I do I want a reasonable share of the profits. What do you say?"

The little man stared at him.

"You beat anything I ever saw," he said. "Where did you learn that ventriloquial business?"

The boy laughed.

"Out in the woods," he answered. "I was cutting wood last fall, and, being alone, I fell to trying tricks with my voice. Pretty soon I found I could talk to myself in quite a sociable fashion."

"I'll give you a job right away at the terms you mention," said the little proprietor. "What do you propose to do to help the business?"

"I propose to look around the park first of all," the boy replied. "I'll come back again a little later."

"You'll be sure to come?"

"I'll come," said the boy as he turned and walked away.

He put his hand in his trousers pocket and jingled a few coins. His finances were getting low. At the same time he realized that he was hungry.

He stepped into the restaurant near the big gates and sought a seat at one of the small tables. A waiter took his simple order and while he was gone the boy studied his surroundings. He was interrupted by the return of his order and by the appearance of a tall man who took a seat opposite to him. The boy looked at the man. He was slender and a little gray, a man close to forty. He had sharp eyes and a firm mouth, and the sharp eyes were now bent on some slips of paper that he scanned pencil in hand.

He looked up suddenly and caught the boy's curious glance.

"Bad thing to bring your business to the table with you," he said with a quick smile. "You must never let the thought of money intrude upon your diet."

"Wouldn't the present price of beef excuse it?" drawled the boy.

"Good," said the tall man. "First time here?"

"Yes. I'm enjoying my first summer vacation."

"How do you like it?"

"It's fine."

The tall man smiled.

"See any chance of improving the place?"

"I see a chance of adding to the attractions."

"Eh! Perhaps you'll kindly enlighten me."

"I'd run a monorail line across the entire plaza."

The tall man stared at the boy.

"A monorail line! May I ask what you know about monorails?"

"I knew something," replied the boy with a quick laugh. "We have an old inventor down at our village and what he doesn't know about mechanics—old principles and new—isn't worth knowing. But he hasn't the ambition to carry out any of his own schemes. He's just contented to be the village gunsmith. We are great friends and I've spent a good many Saturdays in his old shop. That's where I found out about monorails."

The keen gray eyes were studying the boy.

"Would your car be on the principle of the Englishman's invention—the gyroscope idea?"

"No," replied the boy. "I would use a narrow car seating four people. I would balance it on the rail by four twenty-foot steel rods, depending on either side and weighted at the lower ends. I would have it run by gravity. When it reached the opposite side I would have it hoisted by an elevator and sent back on another rail. It would be safe, speedy and a great curiosity."

"When did this scheme occur to you, my boy?" the tall man asked.

"Five minutes ago. I picked out the locations for the two platforms."

"Oh, you have. What are you going to do this afternoon?"

The boy laughed.

"I've got an engagement, to put a man's business on a sound financial basis."

"Eh. Who is the man?"

"He's the man who runs the booth with the dolls that you throw at."

"Oh, yes. Old Tommy Carter. Tommy's in hard luck. And you're going to help him out?"

"He has my promise."

"Good. But you mustn't make any further engagements without consulting me? Wait. I'm John Temple, engineer and showman. People usually call me Colonel John Temple. I'm one of the owners of this and a half dozen other parks. That's why I don't want you to be running about wild with that monorail idea."

"My name is James Harrison," said the boy. "Where I'm known they call me Jim."

The tall man laughed and put out his hand.

"Glad to know you, Jim," he said. "Here's to our better acquaintance." He looked at his watch. "When can I see you again, my boy?"

"Will you be in the park this evening?"

"Yes."

"You'll find me at Tommy Carter's booth.'

"Goodby, boy."

"Goodby, colonel."

The attendance was large in the park that evening. And those who strolled near the Carter booth noticed that the little proprietor had labelled his dolls.

There were only five of them now, and above the quintet stretched a placard which announced in large letters that they were the Original Gooseberry Family. There were "Pa Gooseberry" and "Ma Gooseberry" and "Little Willie," and "Sister Sue" and "Aunt Jane."

Tommy Carter's weak eyes almost sparkled as he chanted the merits of his show.

"Right this way," he called. "An' take a whack at the only original Gooseberry family. Three throws for a nickel an' three elegant cigars for a hit. You cant' miss 'em. Three throws for a nickel. There's Sister Sue and Aunt Jane, too. You can't miss 'em." And he turned around and winked at Jim Harrison, who was standing back ready ready to gather up the balls.

His voice was so cheery that a little crowd speedily gathered and the first nickel was tendered.

The marksman drew back his arm.

"Stop, sir," cried Aunt Jane in a high cracked voice, "would you strike a lady?"

"Wh-what's that?" stammered the marksman.

"Take one of your own size," said Aunt Jane; "hit the boy."

The crowd roared and the marksman threw wild. He threw wild with the second ball and the third, and then he bought six more.

"Why, that's Peleg Saunders," said Pa Gooseberry. "Howdedo, Peleg."

Again the crowd roared and again and again the chuckling marksman threw wild.

It was a big crowd now and all the new comers wanted to see and hear the talking dolls. The nickels streamed in, and there were dimes, too and even quarters.

"Hit me if you can," screamed Sister Sue. "I don't care, I don't care!"

"She's nailed on," said little Willie.

"Naughty, naughty!" cried Aunt Jane.

"Bow, wow, wow!" barked Little Willie, and the bark was so fierce and so natural that the man with the ball nervously jumped and almost hit Tommy Carter in the ear.

And the crowd roared with laughter and pressed in closer.

"'Tis th' last rose of summer," sang Ma Gooseberry in a cracked soprano.

"Hit her! hit her!" shouted the undutiful Willie.

But every thrower who came forward was so convulsed with laughter that anything like good marksmanship was impossible. Old Tommy Carter's stock of cheap cigars was scarcely broken into.

And still the crowd pressed forward and still the nickels and dimes poured in.

"Getting tired" Tommy Carter found the opportunity to ask the boy.

The latter straightened up with a ball in his hand.

"No," he answered "this is only fun. How's the financial basis?"

"Its nickle plated an' a yard wide," chuckled Tommy Carter.

"What a very handsome young man," said Aunt Jane in her mincing tones as the next thrower poised the ball.

"Don't you believe a word she says," advised little Willie.

"Willyum!" said Pa Gooseberry severely.

"Dodge, pa, dodge!" shouted little Willie. "That's the champion thrower takin' aim at you!"

And the crowd roared, and the nickels flowed in and Tommy Carter wore an indelible smile, and the biggest crowd in the park pressed around and fought for chances to throw.

And when the time was up and the big bell over the main gates sounded the signal for clearing the grounds the crowd reluctantly dispersed.

Tommy Carter turned and caught the boy by the shoulder.

"You're all right, lad," he said and his voice broke a little. "You're all right, partner."

The boy had suddenly turned at Tommy's words. Now he just as suddenly turned back.

"Why, it's Colonel Temple," cried Aunt Jane. "Howdedo, colonel! I hope you're quite pernicketty?"

Tommy Carter looked around with a frightened start.

"Hush," he hoarsely whispered to the boy.

The tall man strode forward. He had laughed until his eyes were wet.

"It's all right, Tommy," he said. "Jim and I are on the best of terms. I'll forgive you both for drawing the crowd away from the other shows. Where are you stopping, Jim?"

"Anywhere, colonel."

"Then you'll stop with me to-night. You needn't be afraid, Tommy. I'm not going to steal your partner away from you. I'm going to make him a proposition for use later on. Come, my boy."

The lad looked around.

"I'm not quite ready to settle down to anything permanent, colonel."

"And when will you be ready, my boy?"

"As soon as I finish my summer vacation. Good-night, partner."

"Good night," Tommy called after them.—W. R. Rose, in Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Try a Change.

Drop persecuting your wife with growls about how big the bills are for the children's shoes. Carry her away for a day of spring rest and recreation, and get a new viewpoint yourself. Take your eyes off the stock ticker and freshen them with an afternoon's vision of the blue sky. Pull your head out of your cash drawer, go to a baseball game and blow some sunshiny air through your musty brain. Give over being a worm merely grubbing for money, run out into the open and be a red blooded, virile human being for a change. Then you will have some real work in you fighting to come out like steam out of a boiler under 300 pounds' pressure. The problem of the children's shoe bills will be solved—and a lot more besides. Quit existing. Try living.—New York Press.

Cow Never said a Word.

When one of the fenders of the City railway cars picked up a young heifer at the corner of Third and Jersey streets the conductor filled out the required report blank to Superintendent Edward Howell. In answer to the question: "What did the victim say?" the employe wrote: "She was carried along on the fender for a short distance, then rolled off and ran away without saying a word."—Dayton Columbus Dispatch.

The Girl

The man in the big easy chair looked across the table at his wife.

"I am repeating what Richardson said. He told me this morning that the boy had braced up in quite a wonderful way. He is punctual and energetic and works as if he meant to climb. Richardson says he is positive that Edgar has stopped drinking. His eyes have lost their dullness and his hand is steady."

The woman breathed more quickly.

"Wh-what will you do, Robert?"

"Do?" the man answered. "Nothing. This isn't the first time the boy has tried to brace up. You know how long it lasted."

"But perhaps a word from you would help him, dear."

"No."

"You are his father."

"See here, Emily, this won't do. I'm the boy's father, and I've been a bad father. Where I meant to please him I proved his worst enemy. He spent the money I gave him in wasteful living. But why speak of it? Before these doors are opened to him again he's got to prove that he's fit to enter them. He hasn't forgotten what I said to him. If there is a spark of manhood left in his breast he will make no attempt to come near us until he shows he is worthy."

"You are very hard, Robert."

"I've been softer than wax. I'm as hard as nails now. But, there, we've had enough of this for to-night. I told Richardson not to report to me until a week from to-day. Then we can tell, perhaps, whether this spasm of reform has any foundation."

"It will be hard to wait, Robert."

The man looked across at the woman. His stern face relaxed.

"Let us hope for the best, my dear," he softly said.

It was a week later and the woman had patiently waited for the man to unfold his news of this erring son.

"Richardson reported again to-day," he said as he sank back in the easy chair.

"Well, dear?"

"The boy continues to do himself credit. Richardson says he is grasping his duties with a firmer grip. The other day he came to Graham, he's the head of the department, and told him he must have more pay. He said he knew he was worth more and that he could get a job at any time with the Ajax people. Graham will double his pay next week. He told Richardson the boy was well worth the raise. It seems that Richardson noticed the change in Edgar two months ago, but wouldn't mention it because he was afraid it might not last." He paused. "Sounds good, doesn't it?"

The woman's head was bowed. She looked up slowly.

"I know what's brought about this change," she said half hysterically. "It's a girl."

The man stared at her.

"Thank God for the girl!" he said in his quick and earnest fashion.

"I I must see her at once," exclaimed the woman.

"Go slow, Emily," said the man. "You are jumping at conclusions. But if there is a girl a good girl, of course with enough influence to turn our boy into the right path when his father and mother have failed—she is not to be interfered with—do you hear me?"

There was a little silence.

"I did so want him to marry Alice Landon," said the woman.

"Huh!" growled the man. "He will please to marry himself if he marries at all—and there's no probability that he will ask our advice. If your suspicion is correct—and I suppose it might be called intuition—don't interfere. There'll be nothing too good for the girl who can awaken our boy to his duty. Let her alone."

But the woman said nothing.

Two nights later they were in their accustomed places beside the big library table.

The man suddenly smiled as he looked across at the woman.

"There is a girl," he said.

"Yes," said the woman, "I have seen her."

The man stared at her.

"I hope you did nothing rash," he said and his voice was almost harsh.

"No," she answered; "I was very careful. What do you know about her?"

"Very little. She is a stenographer in the factory office. She earns a fair salary and bears an excellent reputation. Edgar has been seen in her company a number of times. That's the extent of my knowledge. You say you've seen her. How did that happen?"

"It was easily planned, Robert. I waited about the factory until Edgar came out—I was in the little antique shop across the way and he didn't see me and, oh, Robert, our boy looks ten years older."

She paused with a little catch in her voice.

"Go on," said the man. "Let's hope he has grown ten years the wiser."

"He held himself straight, Robert, and I think there is a new look in his eyes."

"Go on, you foolish mother."

"I saw him quite well, because he crossed the road and passed in front of the shop, walking slowly. And after the others had gone a girl came out of the office, a slender girl, walking alone, and when our boy saw her his face lighted up and something seemed to grip my heart."

The man softly laughed.

"The mother love showing itself through maternal jealousy. Go on, my dear."

"Edgar crossed the street quickly and fell into step beside the girl. They walked slowly, the girl looking up into his face now and then. There's no doubt that she loves him, Robert."

The man laughed again.

"And did your eyes tell you all this?"

"My eyes and my heart, Robert. When Edgar and the girl turned the corner I hurried out and found Michael—he had the car on a little side street—and I followed them."

"In the car?"

"Yes, Robert."

"Rather an obtrusive way to trail your prey. But go on."

"They were standing still when we turned the corner, but Edgar did not look around. Michael ran ahead slowly and as we passed them Edgar left the girl she gave him her hand as he turned away—and ran and caught a car. The girl looked after him—she is very fond of him, Robert."

"We will admit the fondness, my dear. What next?"

"I told Michael to stop at the curb and I leaned out and called to the girl."

"Was that discreet?"

"Wait, dear. At first she didn't hear me. And I called again, and she heard me and came toward the car. She—she has a nice face, Robert."

The man laughed once more.

"Your mother heart is defending the boy's taste."

"No, Robert, the girl has an attractive face."

"You will admit it's a little crafty and hard about the mouth?"

"No."

"And that it suggests paint and flaunts its powder."

"No, Robert."

"And that it is feebly pretty and altogether cheap?"

"No."

"Then it was much better than you expected?"

"Yes, Robert. She has a nice face—not beautiful but frank and clear eyed." She paused. "If she had been simply pretty it would have hurt me, Robert. It would have looked as if Edgar had been caught by a dimple and a curl. But the affair is more serious than I thought."

He caught her eye and nodded.

"What you are telling me is good to hear," he said. "I'm feeling easier about Edgar than I have felt since he left college. It looks very much as if his liking for this girl was the first sensible symptom he has shown. And there's another thing."

"Well, Robert?"

"If the girl can run the gauntlet of your critical mother eyes there must be something very attractive about her. But you haven't told me all the story."

"I called to her and when she realized that I wanted her she came to the car. I told her I was nervous and a little faint, which was quite true, Robert. And I asked her if she wouldn't sit by me for a few moments until the attack passed away. She looked at me wonderingly and then something in my face decided her and she took the seat by my side. I asked her where she lived and she told me and I directed Michael not in a hurry. Then I talked to the girl and found out something about her. She is an orphan and came to the city from an interior town. She has been well educated and is qualified to teach singing, but her present work is fully as remunerative and more certain. And she is twenty-three."

The man laughed.

"That's extremely interesting—I don't refer to the age item especially, but go on."

"I don't know what she thinks of me. I tried to interest her."

"By asking her questions?"

"I asked no questions. She told me all this voluntarily. I am quite sure she will tell me more the next time we meet."

"Then you have planned to see her again?"

"Yes. I am going to take her with me for a ride in the parks Wednesday evening. I told her I was a fussy old woman and that she was doing the best kind of charity work in amusing me. I said I had taken a fancy to her—and it's true, Robert."

"Eh!"

"Yes, Robert. I can't quite say that I am ready to take her as a daughter-in-law. Think of the talk it would make!"

The man laughed.

"I see you haven't quite surrendered, my dear. And what's the girl's name?"

"Elinor Viets."

"That's not bad. Of course, you didn't exchange cards?"

"I thought of inventing a name, but I couldn't bring myself to do that. I suppose she thinks I'm a forgetful old creature who doesn't remember even the common usages of polite society."

The man leaned back in the deep chair and interlocked his fingers.

"Well," he said, "things are not nearly so bad as they might be. Up to the present moment I must frankly admit that the girl seems too good for the boy."

"Robert!"

"It's the unpleasant truth. Of course, he's improving, but don't let your mother heart cherish any belief that this fine young girl—I take her at your own valuation—isn't much better than this wayward boy of ours. But there, we'll postpone any further discussion until after the coming tide."

So it was Wednesday evening when they took up the subject again. The man was waiting in the library for the woman to come home.

He looked up as she came through the doorway. Then he quickly arose and went to her, and took her cloak and led her to a chair.

"Why, Emily," he said. "What's happened?"

For a moment she could not find her voice.

"They are to be married Tuesday evening," she sobbed.

The man whistled.

"The boy seems to be developing energy enough with his other awakened qualities. There, there, calm yourself and tell me about it."

The woman waited a moment.

"I drew her out," she began, "and soon found that she wanted to talk to a woman—it seems she has no intimate girl friends—and she told me just what I wanted, and yet dreaded to hear. She is very fond of Edgar and she has the fullest confidence in him. He has told her about his wild days and how he quarreled with his father and mother. She doesn't know who his parents are—Edgar doesn't want to talk about the past—but she feels convinced they were wrong in their treatment of Edgar. She is sure they didn't understand him that his mother was indulgent and his father unwise. Edgar needed an object in life, he needed to be thrown on his own resources. Now he had his ambition to rise and he had her." She paused and drew a quick breath. "Think of a mother listening to all this!"

"You will be an unbidden guest, you know."

"I want to be there, Robert."

"Perhaps you would prefer to have it stopped?"

"How, Robert?"

"I might buy off the girl."

The woman shook her head.

"You haven't money enough to do that, Robert."

"Fine. Then the wedding goes on. And to-morrow I will send for the Rev Frank Darnley. He will be glad to come. I believe I have a little gift for his mission project. When he comes I will make the necessary arrangements." He went over and gently smoothed the woman's hair. "I think this is going to turn out all right," he said.

It was Tuesday evening and the Rev Frank Darnley sat in his little parlor and waited for the girl and the man who had asked his professional services. It was a neat little parlor, nicely furnished, with folding doors that connected it with the sitting room beyond. These doors were closed and the Rev Frank Darnley inspected them carefully before he answered the bell.

When he returned from the front door he brought with him the girl and the wayward son. He greeted them cordially and bade them be seated.

"We are in something of a hurry," said the young man. "We have a brief little trip in view, and time tables make no provisons for delayed happy pairs."

He laughed and the young pastor laughed with him.

The girl unfastened her travelling cloak.

"Would it be possible," she said, "for you to have a woman present during the ceremony? I have a fancy that I would like it better."

The young pastor brightened.

"Why, yes," he answered. "I have two visitors at the present moment, a very worthy couple. I will ask them to be witnesses—in accordance with the State law."

And he slipped from the room. He was back presently.

"They will be glad to aid us," he said a little hurriedly. "They will stand in the doorway here while the ceremony proceeds. If you are quite ready you may arise."

The doors at the back were softly opened.

The ceremony proceeded, the most nervous member of the trio being the Rev Frank Darnley.

When it was all over and the Rev. Frank had shaken hands with both and wished them joy, the girl looked around and suddenly started. A man and woman had entered the room, but it was the woman who startled the girl.

"Why, madam!" she cried. "Are you here?" And she advanced with her hands outstretched. The woman was crying and could not answer. But she opened her arms and held the girl close.

The bridegroom had whirled about, and then catching sight of the man and woman had drawn back.

"Elinor," he cried, "do you know this lady?"

The girl released herself from the woman's embrace.

"Why, yes," she answered. "She has been kind to me—as a mother might be. There is no person I could so gladly greet on my wedding night."

The young man stared at her.

"Don't you know her name?" he demanded.

"Why, no, Edgar; I don't know the lady's name. I never thought of it."

He was still amazed.

"Do you mean to say that you don't know this is my mother?"

"Your mother!" she cried. "Your mother! Oh, I'm very glad! Don't cry—mother."

The older man took a step forward.

"Eddie," he said, "I hope your resentment doesn't go so far as to prevent your father from kissing his new daughter—God bless and guard her!"

The younger man gave a quick start and put out his hand.

"Father!" he cried.

And the Rev. Frank Darney smiled approvingly.

Duchess Can Be Shabby.

A duchess may be as shabby as she pleases, and, in spite of socialism and a badly hanging skirt, she will remain a power in the land, but the suburban lady does not care to be seen with her best friend if the latter be wearing an old-fashioned frock. — Black and White.