AN UNGUARDED MOMENT.

Mildred Challener stepped back from the long glass in her wardrobe and smiled at her reflection there. Not satisfied with what she saw, she ceased to smile and tried to assume an expression of complete repose. That was wrong, and she shook her head at herself. The thought flashed through her mind that people had often asked her what was troubling her and they had usually put the question when she was in a day dream. That fact seemed to prove that her natural expression in repose was one of discontent, she told herself that she ought to have remembered that.

It is not easy to appear serious almost intense when one is holding a powder puff, but Mildred Challener made the experiment. She thought she had succeeded until her eyes, sweeping round the glass, came to the powder puff. She tossed it on to the dressing table in disgust and sat down.

Perhaps, after all she ought to have worn a black dress, the one she had chosen was pale blue. Jack's favorite color. It ought to have suited her for her hair was golden and her complexion clear and fair. But somehow the dress was wrong, it always had been wrong.

"I suppose I am really plain," she whispered to herself, and peeped into the glass again. "Men don't usually fall in love with plain women," she went on, "so perhaps after all that detestable Phillipson woman was right and it is my money that Jack—"

She stopped abruptly, rose from her chair and touched an electric bell. Her maid appeared.

"I've changed my mind, Harris. Undo me, please. I shall wear a black frock. This blue is wrong somehow—makes me look too yellow."

"Yellow, miss!" exclaimed the discreet Harris. "Why you look beautiful." Her fingers were busy with hooks and eyes as she went on. "Of course, there's no getting away from black. It shows up the shoulders and arms better'n all your colors. Yours always are a beautiful white, miss but when your wearing black they look like marble."

"Very well, Harris, that will do. I can manage the rest."

Harris subsequently informed the kitchen that "something was up with Mildred." A parlor maid desired further information.

"Don't know yet," said Harris, "but there's one thing certain—I shall have a pale blue skirt to my name, and a low-necked bodice what's no manner o' use to me before the week's out."

Meanwhile the owner of the pale blue dress was in tears. They had come almost unexpectedly and if Mildred Challener had been examined on the subject she would have found it difficult to give an exact reason for their appearance.

She felt a little mean, for she was about to play a trick on the man to whom she was engaged to be married. Not for this was she crying. The tears were there partly because she was half afraid that Jack might not come well through the test to which he was to be submitted and partly through sheer vexation. Whatever trouble might come to her would be entirely of her own making and the more Mildred thought of the whole business the more she despised herself for having been lured into it by the person whom she described privately to herself as "that detestable Phillipson woman."

Maude Phillipson was not a woman, but a girl nineteen years old ravishingly beautiful, and penniless. Mildred Challener was the same age, the heiress of a wealthy merchant, and plain. Her kindest friend had to admit that she was not pretty. Mildred almost knew it herself. That afternoon, while walking home from the ice, Maude Phillipson had spoken bitterly of her lot in life.

"Poor as a church mouse," she had said, "what earthly chance have I of ever getting married?" In her heart of hearts she envied Mildred the possession of Jack Harwood. Mildred had replied that poverty or riches made no difference to a girl's chances of getting married.

"What!" Maude had said, "you mean to say that—oh, I beg your pardon, Millie, I forgot."

"Go on," Mildred had replied, "you were going to say bluntly, until you stopped yourself, that my money is my attraction."

Maude had protested at this, and Mildred had insisted on it, and had offered to prove that Maude was wrong.

"How are you going to do that?" Maude had asked.

"Easily enough. I will tell him quietly tonight that father's affairs are involved, and that the bankruptcy court is——"

"Let the poor man have his Christmas dinner in peace," Maude has said jokingly.

"I shan't get a chance of telling him after dinner," Mildred had replied.

Then Maude had become suddenly serious. She warned Mildred that she was about to do a foolish thing, an unfair thing.

"It isn't fair," she had said, to spring a thing like that on a man without any warning. In an unguarded moment he may——"

"It is precisely at that moment that I want to see him. If he has been thinking of my money—a [illegible] he will assuredly betray himself. But I know he won't."

"And I know, my dear [illegible] if you find you have been [illegible] fool's paradise you [illegible] conceal that fact from me."

Mildred recalled every word of the conversation as she sat before her glass. She wished that she had not decided to do this thing. Supposing she lied to Maude afterwards? It would be an easy matter to give a fictitious account of how Jack Harwood received the news of her father's bankruptcy. Why risk losing that which she prized above everything else in the world? She was not a sentimental girl in love with the idea of being in love. Jack Harwood seemed to her to be the sole reason why she lived. Without him there was no necessity for her [illegible]. The thought that after all he might not be her ideal man, might [illegible] her made her wretched. In [illegible] mood she went down to the drawing room.

Jack's eyes brightened as she entered the room. She glanced at them for a second and inwardly laughed at Maude's suggestion that Jack was merely mercenary. She knew instinctively that Maude was wrong. Cheered by this self assurance she felt almost glad that she had promised to test Jack's love for her. He would come through the ordeal well, and they would both be all the happier for it afterward.

Many relations had been invited to the Christmas dinner, and Mildred was busily engaged after dinner in entertaining them. She tried many times to draw Jack on one side, but no opportunity for the carrying out of her plan came till the other guests had left.

"I'm afraid I was awfully slow for you, Jack," she said directly they were alone. She knew that if she did not speak quickly she would miss the opportunity altogether, and then Maude would twit her for her want of courage.

"Slow, dear?" said Jack. "Not at all. I enjoy a good old fashioned Christmas dinner party, charades and things."

"It's no use pretending you didn't want any cadge, Jack, because I know you did. But you see nearly all our relatives are beautifully poor and their stakes wouldn't have amused you."

"Rubbish, my dear. I never really play for money, not entirely for the money—and if it comes to that I'm jolly poor too. You seem to forget that."

Her opportunity had come and she took it. She had rehearsed her story and she told it quickly and simply. Unknown to her father she had overheard a conversation between him and her uncle that afternoon. From that conversation she had learned that affairs in the city were in an awful state and that the failure of the firm might come at any moment.

Then she stopped and peered up under her eyelashes at Jack. His face was very white, but his eyes were smiling [illegible] knew the expression well, and [illegible] that moment she knew also that Maude was wrong that Jack loved her [illegible] and not for her money. The [illegible] of this knowledge came so suddenly that she was almost betrayed into telling Jack of the trick. It was sweet to know that she was loved [illegible] him.

He drew her to him and she lay in his arms [illegible]. Her [illegible] were half closed [illegible] she knew [illegible] her she was [illegible] happy.

"Dearest," he whispered, "I'm awfully sorry for you and your father and yet I'm glad in a way. It's [illegible] can work, you know—I can, and—and that will be all right, won't it? I mean, you're not afraid of poverty, more or less, are you?"

For reply she kissed him.

"I am very, very happy," she murmured, "and you make me so. Do you know, dear, I was half afraid of what you would say when I told you. I thought that perhaps you might—might think it more or more prudent if we—if we—"

"Prudent, darling? As if I could be anything so awfully commonplace! We'll talk it all over tomorrow. You're tired tonight. By by, and cheer up."

When he had left her she ran upstairs, sought out Maude Phillipson's photograph and tore it in pieces. She threw them on the fire and [illegible] then [illegible] was [illegible] her [illegible] to her [illegible] day [illegible] tell him the truth," she murmured to herself. "Thank heaven it was all right." She repeated the exclamation and then, still grasping the photograph, she crept into bed and fell asleep with a smile playing about her lips.

On leaving the house Jack Harwood had driven to his club. His boon friend, Percy Phillipson, Maude's brother—was apparently expecting him.

"All right, old man?" asked Percy.

"Yes, it happened exactly as you said it would, and I'm awfully obliged to you. The news would certainly have caught me at an unguarded moment if I hadn't been warned—and then—well, things might have been serious."

He called for a whisky and soda and sighed with the air of a man who has been through great danger and has come out safely. If the news had been true? he asked himself. Or, if Percy had not warned him that it was coming? He almost shuddered at the thought of what might have happened.

"There's only one thing that bothers me," Percy, he said.

"If there's only one you're lucky. Now I'm——"

"[illegible] a fool—just for a minute. What [illegible] ever tell you about [illegible] was going to happen, and why was she so careful to see that you told me?"

"Come and ask her, old chap. It's quite time I gave them the benefit of my presence at the Christmas party. Come along."

Jack found an opportunity of speaking alone to Maude.

"Tell me one thing, Maude. Why did you do this for me?"

"Because I wanted to know—oh you'll think I'm hateful, but I must tell you now. I wanted to know that it was only for her money. Percy didn't know, and I thought if he told you you would let him see if it was only for her money, just for money, that—"

"Maude!"

But she had gone and Jack saw her no more that evening.

"Why do I want money so badly?" he asked himself as he strolled home. "why?" He repeated the question several times but by the time that he had reached his chambers, drunk his last whisky and soda and got into bed he was still without an answer. Failing therefore to discover the reason why he required money but resolved notwithstanding to marry Mildred Challener he gave up thinking and fell asleep. It was the most comfortable thing to do.—Wellesley Pain in Pick Me Up.

TWENTY EIGHT BANANAS

Devoured By the Winner of a Gastronomical Contest.

The people of this section have of late been enjoying a novel form of entertainment in the form of a banana eating contest. The contestants were George Phillips, a former Brooklyn boy, Frank Smith of Brooklyn, and Edward Briggs. There were no restrictions, the only requirement of the match being the devouring of as many bananas as possible. A dollar was the prize. At the start the fruit [illegible] peared as if by magic. At the end of the first dozen the contestants straightened up and a sigh of relief escaped from the onlookers.

Phillips was the first to start in the second dozen. From that moment it was seen that he was to be the winner. He had such a clean cut way of disposing of the fruit. Two movements of the hand removed the outer coverings, as the jaws disposed of the fruit.

While Phillips was masticating his 22d banana Briggs was nibbling in a half hearted way at his 21st. He [illegible] a side long glance at Phillips and, noting how easy he was going, saw that he could not overtake him. Enough came in smothered ones from him that it was all over. Smith, the only Brooklyn representative, had fallen by the way at number [illegible].

Phillips resented insinuations that he would have stopped at 28 and to show the absurdity of this ate an extra half dozen.

While [illegible] gastronomical feats it may be stated that Phillips holds the [illegible] He ate a quart of [illegible] flat. Some [illegible] but the judges [illegible] A challenge is to be [illegible] Mr. Phillips friends [illegible] world. A [illegible] White [illegible] is [illegible] White has [illegible] [illegible] two minutes. [illegible] greatest [illegible] disappears very suddenly. Mr. W[illegible] can place a regulation sized pool ball in his mouth and close his jaws. He can place three regular sized doughnuts in his mouth and remove them without disturbing the sugar.

When he feels the need of a medicine he is just as liberal. He took eight bottles of a patent sarsaparilla blood medicine in seven days and had strength enough left to tell the tale. The only other living Huntingtonian who ever tried the pool ball trick is Frank Townsend, a former valet to Charles A. Bigelow the comedian. Townsend got the ball in all right, but could not open his jaws wide enough to release it. Instead of knocking his teeth out his mouth was thoroughly sawed so that [illegible] who were acting could [illegible] In this way it was at last [illegible]

Mr. Phillips, who [illegible] dress [illegible] Huntington [illegible] that Mr. [illegible] his backer, will be pleased to hear from prospective contestants.—Huntington (L. I.) Cor. Brooklyn Eagle.

Narrowing the Atlantic.

If one is within seventy-five miles of sea distance of one of eleven points on the Atlantic coast, and has been thoughtful enough to bring along a wireless-telegraph outfit, one may advise the family what to have for dinner when the ship arrives, which means, as Mr. H. C. Gauss points out in an interesting article in Harper's Weekly, that three hours of the fastest steaming have virtually been eliminated, for purposes of communication, and the Atlantic to that extent narrowed. The new system which has been devised for the regulation of wireless telegraphy provides, in part, as follows:

A vessel wishing to communicate with a coast wireless station will first ascertain that no other wireless outfit is making use of the ether waves in that locality.

After the vessel has sent her message, the station will transmit any business it may have for her, in the following order:

Government business; business concerning the vessel; urgent private despatches, limited; press despatches; other despatches.

OUR FUTURE RAILWAY RIVAL.

It Will Be Russia, Which Now Is Second to Us in Mileage.

If it is a question merely of bigness the Russian railway system is far and away the first in Europe. There are already many more miles of railway in this vast empire than in any other country in the world excepting the United States, and Russian railways are still only in their infancy.

It is of course quite true that there are now in the United States more miles of railway than in all Europe and almost as many as in all the rest of the world put together, and that our territory is so large and as yet so far from complete development that we shall probably keep the lead as far as railway enterprise is concerned for a long time to come.

But in taking these large views, says Moody's Magazine, we have forgotten that Russia is two and a half times as large as all the United States put together with a population more than half as large again as our own, that in territorial extent it is more than twice as large as all Europe, that it stretches across the world for 170 degrees of longitude, nearly half way around the globe, and that it includes one sixth of the land surface of the planet.

It is not surprising that in such a country railways should have had a large development, that already there is a considerable mileage and that the prospects in this direction seem to have no limit. In the future Russia and the United States are likely to divide the railway empire of the world between them.

Money in Rats.

The only good rats are dead rats. Alive the rat carries disease. Dead it may have a commercial value. The skin is fine material for book covers and for making purses and photograph frames. It may also be used in the manufacture of gloves for women and in several of the great cities the rat killing industry is assuming large proportions. The rat in Scandinavia as well as the species known as the Norwegian, a big bothersome rodent, because of its fighting proclivities is particularly valuable for the purposes named. The bodies can be converted into fertilizing material. Thus in many commercial centres abroad is the rat being killed by the many thousands not because it is a menace to public safety but because uses have been found for the heretofore worthless hide. The time may come when the rat will be hunted assiduously in this country not only because of the money that's in it, but because it is our enemy.—Indianapolis News.

The Strange New Creed.

Professor Percival Lowell, the famous astronomer and editor, said the other day of the [illegible] where [illegible] matters are concerned:

"I can't discuss my Martian theories with the average man. He is [illegible] of a [illegible] as one of our Flagstaff [illegible] Latin [illegible]

"This [illegible] arrested the other night an elderly gentleman who was parading the street in a white night gown.

"'Good gracious [illegible]' said the old gentleman [illegible] start. It's a [illegible] a [illegible]

"But the [illegible] tightened his grip on the old fellow's [illegible]

"'It don't make [illegible] what your religion is,' he said, 'you come along with me.'"

Remington's Frank Criticism.

Frederic Remington the illustrator, fresh from a Western trip on which he had been making studies of Indians and cowpunchers and things outdoors, met an art editor who was [illegible] to an exhibition of very impressionistic pictures.

"You don't seem enthusiastic," remarked the editor as they were coming [illegible]

Remington [illegible] what he had been told [illegible] before [illegible]

"[illegible] Say! I've got two [illegible] can knit better [illegible]

The Bar Habit.

The [illegible] of drink [illegible] staring [illegible] New England [illegible] the theory that a man would sooner get drunk and go home if standing than sitting—a whisky custom but very bad for beer which New Englanders knew not, for to stand to the bar to drink and to keep drinking to stand there is not gentlemanly nor wholesome.

Great Friends.

"Friendship, boys and girls," said a member of a provincial educational committee, "is a thing to be cultivated and practiced by all of us. Read and ponder over the stories of the great friendships of sacred and profane history. Take them for your models: David and Jonathan, Damon and Pythias, and Scylla and Charybdis."—London Daily News.

Pretty Good.

A boy was asked to explain the difference between animal instinct and human intelligence: "If we had instinct," he said, "we should know everything we needed to know without learning it; but we've got reason and so we have to study ourselves most blind or be a fool."

Virtue of White Clothes.

White clothes do not get dirty any sooner than black clothes; they simply show the dirt more—greatest virtue and advantage.

EARTHQUAKE PROOF HOUSES.

Tree Homes of Mexico—Twigs and Grass Interwoven with Branches.

In order to protect their homes from earthquakes many of the natives in the territory around Chilpancingo and other towns in the State of Guerrero, Mexico, live in trees. Some of these tree homes are of large size and are ingeniously constructed. Reeds and grasses are interwoven with the twigs and branches of the tree, much in the manner that a bird builds its nest.

The severest wind seldom looses these houses from the tree. Where the trees are large and stand closely together houses of two and three rooms are frequently built in their branches. These houses also afford protection from the "tigers" and other wild animals which are found in that region in large numbers. It is claimed that a "tiger" will not attack its prey unless it is upon the ground. The prime object of elevating these houses into the trees, however, is to keep them from being shaken down by the severe earthquakes which visit the Guerrero territory at frequent intervals.

The rocking of the earth gives the trees a swaying motion that does no damage to the houses. In some localities whole villages of these tree homes are to be seen. None of them suffered damage from the recent earthquakes which wrought such ruin to the buildings on the ground.

An Old Fable.

"Metaphysics," said Bishop Castle of Oregon, at a dinner in Philomath, "is a subject that always makes one think of the cat and the owl.

"A cat, you know, once set forth in quest of happiness. She wandered up, she wandered down, she questioned this animal and she questioned that. Finally, wrapped in meditation in a tree she perceived an owl.

"'Owl,' said the cat, 'tell me, most wise bird, where happiness is to be found?'

"In meditation,' the owl replied. 'Meditation alone is the true secret of happiness.'

"'But,' said the cat, 'on what subject am I to meditate?'

"'On the subject,' the owl answered, 'which has occupied the race of owls since the beginning of time, namely: Which came first, the owl or the egg? for, while the owl comes from the egg, so also does the egg come from the owl.'"

Famous Golf Match.

The projected golf match between two well known amateurs and a leading member of the London Stock Exchange for a stake of £500 recalls the famous foursome in which the Duke of York, afterward James II., took a prominent part on the Leith links in the year 1682. It was really an international contest in which the Duke with John Patersone, a golfing shoemaker of great repute, champion ed Scotland against two noblemen of England, a heavy wager depending on the issue. The Duke and the cobbler had an easy victory, thanks largely to the man of the last, and John Patersone's share of the stakes was so substantial that he was able to build a goodly house in the Canongate, in a wall of which the Duke caused a stone to be placed bearing the Patersone arms with the motto "Far and sure," a tribute to the cobbler's driving powers. Patersone's house we understand survives today.

The Blacksmith's Sleeves.

An aged woman was standing before a beautiful picture of a blacksmith standing at his forge, which was blazing with a light that illuminated the whole room. The woman came to the canvas with several younger women apparently her children. All stood with rapt attention before the work of art, contemplating the light effects and the beautiful shadows. One of the younger women asked of the elderly one what she thought of the picture.

"Well, it's all right but the sleeves," she replied. "I lived in the country a long time and I know something that the painter with all [illegible] didn't know. That blacksmith's sleeves are rolled out. Now [illegible] don't wear them that way. A [illegible] always turns his sleeves [illegible] flyin' sparks won't [illegible]"

What a Bonanza Is.

A certain Western congressman has had disastrous experiences in gold mine speculations. One day a number of colleagues were discussing the subject of speculation when one of them said to the Western member:

"Tom, as an expert give us a definition of the term 'bonanza.'"

"A 'bonanza,'" replied the Western man with emphasis, "is a hole in the ground owned by a champion liar!"—Success.

Immortality.

Nothing except fire burns and pains and inflames like intense cold and frost bites. Neither boiling water nor cold 200 degrees below zero kills the sprout in some seeds. Professor Becquerel found three seeds eighty-seven years old that sprouted. This suggests that life may really be immortal, even to stand the purgatorial and penitential fires.

No Avoiding It.

If a man gets into the habit of hunting trouble he's sure to find it, and if he's so lazy that he always tries to avoid it, it will find him.—Catholic Standard and Times.

Circumstantial Proof.

"So you danced with my fiance last night at the ball?" "Yes. Did she tell you?" "Oh, no! I notice that she was limping to-day!"

A Hard Lesson

He was the picture of humiliation and despair as he sat with his face buried in his hands, his elbows resting on his knees. On the other side of the room sat his mother, her face wearing a look of mingled pain, pity and reproach, while leaning against her chair was his fair young sister with an expression of wonderment and half comprehension.

In the room adjoining his father could be heard pacing nervously to and fro, while now and then a heavy sigh escaped from his lips.

In the doorway stood a young woman attired in street costume, her eyes still riveted upon the article that she had just been reading. Her cheeks were aflame from the tumult of emotions within while on the third finger of her left hand gleamed an unusually handsome diamond.

"I don't believe it," she cried, "there must be a mistake somewhere. It isn't true, is it Rob?"

Thus appealed to, without lifting his head, he replied: "It is true, Marjorie, every word of it. I did not know that they had found me out until you came in with the paper. Probably my arrest is near at hand or the story would not be out. Oh, why did I do it? Why did I blot my career so?" And with a moan his head went lower, while a shudder as of dread shook him.

Suddenly it seemed as if the radiancy of the diamond must have penetrated through his fingers, for he hastily arose and quickly withdrew the ring from her finger. "Why, Rob," expostulated his mother. Marjorie's eyes met his and she looked into them steadily for a moment and then recoiled from him.

"You cannot love a thief," he exclaimed bitterly as he put the ring into a pocket, "but that is not the reason I take this away. This was paid for out of my employer's money and shall be paid back. It is not to escape the penalties of the law that I shall do this but to do what I can toward becoming an honest man."

"Have I anything else that can be returned that you—" she hesitated. "Stole money for," he finished.

"No, nothing else but our pastimes have cost heavily, automobiling, theatres, suppers, drives, big games—it all counts heavily with a limited income."

"Ah, Marjorie! When you spoke of the pleasures of your friends or those who would call themselves your friends if you could make the same display, could I not read your thoughts?" he replied.

"Even then you should have had moral courage to state frankly that you could not afford such things," she argued.

"But I might have lost you," he answered.

"Rob, what sort of a woman do you think I am?" she cried.

His mother prepared to leave the room. "No, mother, stay," he insisted. "Marjorie," he continued, "do you remember the little girl who stayed outside the fence and watched while a little boy stole fruit and helped him to carry it off?"

"Mother, do you remember your indifference to the fact that the boy stole pears, apples, cherries and the like because 'boys would be boys,' and you could not stop them?

"I stole those things year after year without intending to pay back; it made it easy to take what didn't belong to me if I wanted some seemingly small thing. You see now where it has ended.

"If the boy of the past had been made to take back the fruit, the man of today would probably not have failed in a matter of character.

"If the girl had been taught to refuse that which was stolen, the boy would have learned a lesson in honesty that he did not learn at home. But oh, forget what I have said; I am too harsh. I ought to have been an honest man in spite of these things."

A step was heard outside, a step that Rob knew well and he shuddered again. A ring and Rob himself with a word ushered in his employer.

"Pardon me all," he began, "but I have just been eavesdropping. I think it is safe to give this young man another trial. By going a little slower he will soon be able to make up everything, and Rob, I wish every mother, every girl, could have heard you to-night, then there would be no need of the hard lessons that some young men have to learn."

Rob made no reply, but sat perfectly still, looking over at Marjorie. His employer seemed to read his thoughts, for after whispering in her ear, he laughingly said, "Come, Rob, place that ring where it belongs," and escorted Rob over to Marjorie, who, as the ring was again placed on her finger, exclaimed, "Oh, Rob, I am better fitted now to be a helpmate to you. If we had to learn a lesson, it is better now."—ANNIE M. KEMPTON.

Nature's Economy.

"Looky yere, mammy," said Pickaninny Jim, "at de knot holes in dis here piece of wood. What does you 'spect dem is fur?"

"Why, honey," answered Aunt Elvira Ann, "dems de button holes what de branches is fastened on to de trees."—Washington Star.

He Knew.

First Traveler—Where did you buy those cigars? In Paris?

Second Traveler—No, indeed. In Cologne.

First Ditto—They don't smell like it!—Yonkers Statesman.

ROCHESTER