The Mysterious Stories

By EVERETT J. MARKLE

I am a man of artistic taste, but, having taken up business, I have felt the necessity of finding something to occupy and divert my mind during my leisure hours. I began writing stories. After amusing myself at this work for awhile I constructed a story that I thought pretty good and tried it on a magazine. To my surprise, it was accepted. I sent out more and was rewarded with more acceptances.

When I came to be troubled with insomnia my story writing furnished me with occupation during hours of wakefulness. I have written many a story or part of a story between 1 and 4 in the morning. I boarded with a lady, Mrs. Stoughton, and her daughter, Kate. I may admit in passing that when a man boards with a lady who has a daughter, especially if that daughter is attractive, he is likely to put a matrimonial rope around his neck. At any rate, an affair was brewing between Kate Stoughton and myself. She used to twit me for sitting up in the middle of the night scribbling, for I didn't admit that I was troubled with insomnia. But Kate was always joking me, and anything she said was acceptable.

One evening I went up to my room carrying a magazine with me to read during my evening awake. Turning over the leaves, I came to a story by some one who had the same name as myself. I read the story, and it seemed to me as if I might have dreamed it myself. But our mental faculties are very subtle, and it occurred to me that my seeming connection with it might have come from an infinitesimally small period of suspended animation, at the awakening from which I fancied I had seen the story before.

But this did not explain my name being used as the author of the stories I was puzzled over this, especially because I was not familiar with any magazine writer of my name—True It is not an uncommon one, and doubtless there were other scribblers bearing it, but I knew none such, especially with my initials.

I didn't think much of this at the time, for my business, which had been running so smoothly, began to give me a lot of trouble, and I was finally on the verge of closing it out. I was hanging by my fingers, so to speak, when I saw another story with my name to it, and, strange to say, there was the same faint dreamy knowledge of it that had pertained to the former one. The fellow's stories evidently pleased magazine readers, for they began to appear quite often. I read every one I came across, and my astonishment grew with each, for there was none but reminded me of something I had heard or read or dreamed.

Then it occurred to me to go to some of the magazine offices and find out who the writer was. I went first to an editor I knew best.

"Hello!" he said. "You're just the man I want to see. I sent a check to you the other day for one of your stories, and the letter inclosing it came back unopened. Have you taken to scribbling for no pay?"

"I haven't sent you a story for months."

"Not 'The Moonshiner?'"

"No." This was one of the other fellow's I had read.

The editor looked at me, puzzled Then I told him what had happened. He had supposed the stories with my name attached to them came from me, and he had no explanation of the mystery to offer. He handed me a fat check, but I declined it and went to see other editors in whose magazines the other scribbler's stories had appeared. They had all supposed that I was the author of the manuscripts sent in, and all had credited me with the amount due—in all more than a thousand dollars.

Now, I had got through my business troubles, all but a thousand dollar note coming due in a few days. All I had to do was to accept checks in payment for my stories and I would be "out of the woods." But I had not written the stories and had no right to take pay for them. Besides, if I did so and the real author turned up I would be liable to prosecution for swindling.

I was in a condition of mind where a man needs to confide in some one. That evening I saw Kate Stoughton and told her the whole story, including the fact that the use of a thousand dollars would save my business.

"Then go to morrow," she said, "and draw the money from the magazines One morning mother found a manuscript in a drawer of your desk; then another and another at intervals. One night she saw you writing and spoke to you. You didn't answer. You were writing in your sleep or some similar condition. I read the stories, and it occurred to me that it would be a good joke to send them out to magazines. I did so, and they were all accepted In some instances letters came for you from the magazines. Some I opened and found checks inclosed. I resealed the envelopes and returned them Such is my confession. I am sorry now that I didn't give them to you."

I was so delighted at having the money to pull me through in my business affairs that I threw my arms around her neck and thereby put the halter of matrimony that I spoke of around my own.

But how I wrote the stories is still a mystery to me, and no one has ever yet been able to give me any explanation.

SOUND BUSINESS MAXIMS.

Use Your Ability and Take No Stock in the Law of Chance.

Most men who have amounted to anything started with nothing but ability and determination, a combination which recognizes no man made limitations.

Any kind of work is better than idleness, which is directly responsible for most of the unhappiness in this world.

Idleness is a dangerous thing. It may grow into a habit that might stick to you after you get back in harness, and the man who loafs on his job is only fooling himself.

Eternal, intelligent effort is the price of commercial growth, and where there is no progression there is bound to be retrogression. Business is something like aeroplaning—to stop is to drop, and to drop is generally to bust.

If I had an enemy and wanted to get even with him I could wish him nothing worse than to land in a soft job and get the loafing habit. It would only be a question of time before he or the job petered out, and the longer he held on the worst off he'd be in the end, for there is a law of compensation which somehow or other makes us work in old age for the time we waste in youth or suffer if we can't make good.

Pin your faith to this law of compensation, but don't take any stock in the law of chance; there's no such thing. Waiting for something to turn up in the belief that things are bound to come your way eventually is throwing dice with fate. Many a good dog never got a decent bone until his teeth were gone.—Maurice Switzer in Leslie's.

GOLF WITH ANY OLD CLUB.

He Was a Shy Man, Too, but Surprised the Clever Amateur.

He was standing looking idly round him when I came forward to the starting tee at Blackhill golf course, a little dapper man, whom any one would have guessed could not play for nuts. Perhaps that latter idea is what caused me to ask if he meant to play a round, I should love to give somebody a proper whacking.

"I would like a round," he said, almost shyly, "but I have no clubs." This was not a chance to be missed. I would let him use mine. How pleased he was in his simple way. Any old club would do for every shot. "Well, well," I crooned to myself; "if the man is out for a thorough drubbing I am the last to deny him it."

He took a dirty ball from his pocket, made an easy sort of swipe at it, and I have never seen a ball so eager to get to the hole as that one was. His method of attack seemed to consist of one or two iron shots and a putt. I will vouch for it that he deliberately allowed me to win a hole or two. I have never felt so completely humiliated in all my life, yet he was quiet, inoffensive and almost shy.

"You are a brilliant golfer," I gushed as we made for the nineteenth hole. "Oh, ay, I ha'e to be!" he said quietly. "It's my work, ye see; it's my work!"

Why don't those professionals try to look more like real golfers?—Glasgow News.

Mules and War.

Along all the frontiers of the world wherever there is a war there is a demand for the mule. Compared with him the much vaunted war horse is a vanishing figment of the past. His strength, his sureness of foot, his wariness of eye, his ability to endure hardship and hard work on little food and with little care, have made him invaluable as a campaigner, whether in deserts or mountains. The mule has seen the camel and the elephant disappear from armies. He may see the horse vanish. He has seen the motorcycle and the motorcar come in. He may see the aeroplanes numbered by thousands. But it is not likely he will ever see himself superseded in his own line of work. There may be mules without war, but probably never a war without mules.—New York World.

A Chip of the Old Block.

"Father," said the student, "I want to talk to you about changing my course of study."

"Talk to your mother, son," directed the father, who was reading the sporting page.

"Mother," said the son, "I made a mistake when I elected chemistry. But it is not too late to change even yet. I want to take astronomy instead."

The mother searched the eyes of her son sharply Then she said:

"Nope. You'll have to think up some better excuse for staying out at night!" —New York Globe

Tantalus.

Tantalus was a king of Lydia in Greek mythology and is represented by the poets as punished in hades with an insatiable thirst and placed up to the chin in a pool of water, which disappeared when he attempted to taste it, and other tantalizing punishments were inflicted for his sins

The Poor Men.

She—They say girls can't throw straight, but when a girl throws sly glances I notice she generally hits the mark He (recently bitten)—Yes—the easy mark.—Boston Herald

Up to Us.

"The human race is dying out."

"Let posterity worry over that."

"How aggravating you are, Maltravers! There won't be any posterity."—Louisville Courier-Journal

Caution is the lower story of prudence.—Carlyle.

The Impatient American

By WALTER BARTLET

An American, accustomed in his own country to the free use of elevators, lavatories and such like, when he goes to Italy is somewhat taken aback at being charged every time he is lifted to an upper story or washes his hands. I had paid a couple of soldi when I used the elevator in the Victoria galleries at Naples, though I ascended for the purpose of buying something from a shop facing on one of the galleries. I had also paid a soldi and was handed a slip to sign for riding to the upper floors in apartment buildings. When, therefore, I reached Rome and was about to take the elevator at my hotel to go to my room and was given a printed slip I was not surprised. But there was a detail in this case that broke down my American patience. I was asked to give my age, the place of my birth, nationality of my parents, my profession and other matters of a similar character.

"See here!" I said indignantly. "Take that thing away. If I've got to pay and sign such a paper as that for the purpose of riding on an elevator—in any city in America I can ride to the thirty-fifth story for nothing and no questions asked—I'll sail for home on the first ship that goes."

The hotel official, who had handed me the paper and who did not understand a word I said, bowed and withdrew with a simple "Si, signore." I was elevated to my room and went to bed.

I was awakened in the middle of the night by a sharp rap. Tumbling out of bed (I feared the house was on fire and was being aroused to go down an escape) I threw open the door. There stood two men in military claw-hammer coats, cocked hats and big swords by their sides. I knew them at once for gendarmes in the national service. They stepped into the room, turned on an electric light and began to examine my personal appearance critically, noting my height, hair, eyes, etc., and comparing them with something written on a paper one of them held in his hands. Then they jabbered Italian to each other and at me till I said "Non capisco" (I don't understand), when they pointed to my clothes, pantomiming for me to put them on.

Satisfied by this time that I was in a scrape, I tried to bribe them, but it was no go.

Well, I was taken downstairs in the elevator by the gendarmes. I was very mad. "Why don't you sign a description of yourselves," I said tartly to my guards, "and hand out a couple of cents each for the ride? A people small enough to divide a cent into five parts are capable of charging a man for an elevator trip and making him sign a description of himself to see that he doesn't ride twice on the same fare."

The gendarmes simply raised their hats, took me out of the hotel, called a cab and, lighting long thin cigars, told the cabman to drive somewhere. We alighted in front of a big building. I entered it between my guards (after I had paid for the ride), and the next thing I knew I was behind bars. I never was so mad in my life. "Say," I called to the gendarmes, "you popinjays! You've forgotten to collect for letting me stay in here. I've 2 soldi for the privilege, and I'm ready to give you a passeporti to prevent my staying here twice on the same ticket."

They turned, took off their hats and went away. It is needless to say that my broken slumber was not renewed. In the morning I called an official and said to him:

"Americano consulati. Allez vite. Tell him un Americano has got into a scrape, to venito and get him out."

I shoved a two lira piece into the man's hand. He went away and brought an official who spoke English. Through him I secured writing materials and sent a note to the American consul, and before noon he came to see me. I had little difficulty in convincing him that I was an inoffensive American citizen (traveling for pleasure) and he went off to find out what was the matter When he came back he asked:

"Why didn't you give your landlord a description of yourself?"

"He didn't ask for one."

"He says you were handed the printed slip he must turn into the police describing every person who comes to his house and you refused to fill it out He then reported your arrival, a description of you and your refusal to give him the required information They are looking for an anarchist about your size and thought perhaps you might be their man. They arrested you partly on account of your refusal to give information of yourself and partly on suspicion You should have accommodated them."

"Well, I'll be jinged!" I exclaimed "A hotel official handed me a paper to sign when I arrived and was about to go to my room, but I supposed it was a part of the red tape they have over here connected with riding on elevators."

I signed a statement, giving full information of my progenitors as far back as I knew about them, my age, profession and gave an explanation why I had refused to conform to the usual requirements on my arrival in Rome. Then after much consultation among the officials and many arguments on the part of the consul I was released.

LIFE IN THE LONG AGO.

When Huts Were Homes and Beds Were Shakedowns of Straw.

For centuries the common people of England made their home in wooden huts of one room. When a family increased in numbers or wealth another hut was built beside it, or, rather, a lean-to was added and then another and another, as need required.

Sometimes they followed a straight line. At other times they were built out from the central hut at various angles. The roofs of these huts were thatched. An opening was left in the center for the smoke to escape. The fire was always built in a hollow in the center of the room. Beds were made of straw. Often they were merely shakedowns in the corner. Occasionally the straw was held in a little frame resembling the ribs of a ship.

Houses built by Saxon knights were much more pretentious. They were big halls, like the Roman atrium, with a lofty roof thatched with slate or wood shingles. The floor was of hard clay. In the middle was a great fire of dry wood. The thin, acrid smoke from the fire escaped through an opening in the roof directly above the hearth.

Round the fire were long benches, on which hearthsmen and visitors sat when not fighting or at work, and talked and drank the hours through. The tables were long boards on trestles. At night the floor was strewn with straw, and, like the less prosperous folk, host and visitors slept together.—Youth's Companion.

CURIOUS MEXICAN TREES.

One Whose Fruit Is the Counterpart of the Green Parrot.

Mexico probably has a greater range of remarkable vegetation than any other country in the world. The parrot fruit tree produces an odd shaped fruit, bearing a close resemblance to green parrakeets. When the parrakeet is frightened it makes a dash for the parrot tree, where it assumes a position which makes it look like the fruit itself. So close is the resemblance that their enemies, the hawks, occasionally fly by a tree on which a dozen or more of these birds are sitting, apparently unaware of their presence.

Another remarkable tree is the arbol de dinamite—dynamite tree—whose fruit, if kept in a warm place, bursts with considerable force and a loud report, scattering its flat seeds to a surprising distance.

One of the most interesting fruits in Mexico is known as the melon sapote, or papaya. It contains considerable pepsin, which reacts against both acid and alkaline conditions of the stomach, and it is said that a diet which includes papaya precludes dyspepsia. Both the fruit and the leaves possess the singular property of rendering tough meat tender. When the pulp of the fruit is rubbed over a piece of tough meat the juice attacks the fiber and softens it.—National Geographic Magazine.

Mexico's National Pawnshop.

One of the most remarkable institutions in the City of Mexico is the Monte de Piedad, or national pawnshop. The monte is one of the oldest buildings in the capital, having been built for the private residence of Cortes in 1520, and it has been fortunate enough to escape the hands of restorers. It was acquired in 1744 by Count de Regla Terreros, who laid out $300,000 in organizing the Monte de Piedad, with the idea of saving the needy from the usury of the ordinary pawnbroker. Its success is attested by its long history, and Mexicans today can get one-third value on their goods at a rate of interest seldom exceeding 3 per cent per annum. If any one fails to keep up his payments the deposited goods are sold, and any balance over the sum advanced is handed to the depositor.

A Monstrosity Among Newspapers.

Those who object to the widespread newspaper may see the apotheosis of their bete noire in the museum at Aix-la-Chapelle, the only existing copy of the Illuminated Quatruple Constellation, published in New York in 1859. Happily this monstrosity did not survive the first issue, for its pages measure eight and one-half feet by six feet, and each contains thirteen columns forty-eight inches long.

By way of comparison it may be mentioned that the smallest newspaper in the world is the Mexican El Telegrama, with pages four inches square.—London Chronicle.

Stoats Hunt in Packs.

In some years stoats appear to be more numerous than in others, and they are seen not in ones and twos, but in dozens, hunting together in small packs. Stoats will hunt together from scent and in full cry like a pack of hounds, one always keeping the line and followed closely by the others. This sight has been recorded by different observers who have also seen weasels hunting in the same way.

Valuable Services.

"I have indeed done a service," the orator declared. "I have given the people cause to think."

"That was something at least."

"Yes, oh, yes. But I have done a further service. I have told them just how to think."—Buffalo Express.

Silent Service.

"Don't you like silent service in the house?"

"Sure. That's one reason we put in a dumb waiter."—Baltimore American.

Making Connections.

Knicker—Life is hard. Bocker—Yes. By the time your mother stops forbidding you to eat jam the doctor begins.—New York Sun.

A STUPID MAN

By LOUISE B. CUMMINGS

Farmer Jenkins until his wife's death was afraid his son Abel would marry Elizabeth Parks, the daughter of widow Parks, who owned the adjoining farm. Elizabeth was plenty good enough for Abel, and the old man's objections to such a match were quite unintelligible except that if Abel married and set up for himself his father would be obliged to hire a farm hand.

But Mrs. Jenkins had not been in her grave six months before the farmer one day suggested to his son that it was kind of lonely in the house; they needed a woman to do the cooking, and he rather thought Abel had better marry Elizabeth and bring her in for the purpose.

Though Jenkins senior had no suspicion that Abel had any intentions concerning the girl, Abel had been making love to her for some time, and Elizabeth was responding so far as she thought best. Abel reported to her what his father had said and supposed that she would be pleased to know that the way was made easy for them. But to his surprise she received the announcement with knitted brows.

"Abel," she said, "you're a fool."

It's not a pleasant thing to be called a fool by the woman one loves even if one is a fool, and the statement made a temporary estrangement. Abel sought to know why he was a fool, and the reply was:

"Why didn't he encourage you to propose to me before?"

"I don't know," said Abel.

"And why does he do it now?"

"I don't know," Abel repeated.

"I know. In telling you to bring me home to do his housework he's grinding his own ax."

"Of course he wants you to help us out, but wouldn't we all be happy?"

"In the first place he doesn't want me to come to his house at all, and in the second we wouldn't be happy together. If I marry you I'll marry you alone and not with him thrown in."

"Well, what shall we do?"

"Wait."

In this one word "wait" Abel received his orders. He was not taken into his betrothed's plans at all. He had been told by her that he was a fool, and as to the matter in question he was. Abel was a very smart fellow in some respects, but in seeing through this change in his father's designs for him he was stooped to his ears in stupidity. Nothing is so irritating to one who sees a thing with absolute clearness as to be confronted by one who cannot see it at all. In other words, if I see plainly before me a horse slipping the grass in a pasture, just as I have seen hundreds of horses doing the same thing hundreds of times before, and one comes along who tells me the horse is a camel and sticks to it, it makes me mad.

One morning Farmer Jenkins awoke at daylight, as was his custom, to find a number of the widow Parks' pigs rooting about among his spring vegetables that were of a very tender age. He found that a loose bar in the fence separating the two places had been removed during the night. Such a thing had never happened before, and he couldn't account for it. He drove the pigs back, and, while angry at the loss of dollars' worth of peas, string beans, radishes and other similar green things, he happened on the widow.

"Mrs. Parks," he said, "yer pigs cost me a hundred dollars' wo'th o' garden truck last night."

It was the tone that was offensive.

"Well, if you wont keep your fence in condition, Mr. Jenkins, you have only yourself to blame."

"It's your fence."

"It's no such thing. The fence on that side o' my farm don't belong to me, and it isn't a party fence neither: it's yours."

That was a mere starter—the beginning of a war. The widow's sharp tongue cut gashes all over the farmer's feelings and lashed him to a fury.

When there was a lull on the firing line Abel went to see Elizabeth.

"What a pity," he said, "that my pop and your mom have got to fighting."

"Oh, Abel, you make me tired!"

"How have I blundered now?"

"I let the pigs into your farm; I did it a purpose."

"Did it a purpose? What did you do it for?"

"To make a break between your pop and my mom. I could see before your mother was buried that your pop would go for mom as soon as he dared do so. He knew he would find an enemy in me, and he thought he'd fix me by withdrawing his opposition to your marrying me It was plain as the nose on your face."

"Elizabeth," said Abel, after giving himself time to digest this astonishing information, "I wonder how you knew all this."

"I wonder how you didn't know it."

"Maybe you're wrong, after all."

"Try and see"

"How?"

"Tell your father you and I are going to be married, and I'm going to keep house for you and him."

That night when Abel went home he acted on Elizabeth's suggestion.

"Abel," said his father, bringing his fist down on the table "you let them critters alone. They're terrible!"

Abel and Elizabeth were married, but they went to live on a small farm of their own.

KIDNAPING VOTERS.

Once a Regular Feature of Political Warfare in England.

In England a generation or two ago kidnaping was a regularly organized feature of political warfare. On the eve of an election especially men of influence on either side would mysteriously vanish to reappear later with strange tales of forcible seizure, and racing across country in post chaises driven by yelling postilions, followed by longer or shorter terms of gilded imprisonment in great mansions, where they were wined and dined in sumptuous style and treated right royally in every way, only their liberty being denied them.

Quite humble voters, too, were forcibly abducted, but these did not always fare quite so well. Thus one victim made complaint before a magistrate that he had been decoyed from his house by a ruse and kept shut up in a coal hole for three days.

Wholesale kidnaping of voters in batches, too, was not unknown, the process being rendered easier by the custom of candidates paying the traveling expenses of their electors to and from the polling places.

For instance, at a certain Newcastle election a whole shipload of freemen of the borough, dispatched from London by sea, were taken by the captain—who had been heavily bribed—to Ostend and there left stranded.

During the same contest, too, and under similar circumstances a number of Berwick electors who happened to reside in London were dumped down in Norway, and a group of thirty Ipswich voters found themselves on the day of the poll cooling their heels upon the quay at Rotterdam.—Pearson's Weekly.

MARRIAGE FAILURES.

Two Crises in Wedded Life That Are Mainly Responsible.

That there should be such involved discussion and so many amazingly contradictory theories about the cause of the failure of marriage is surprising.

The plain fact is that marriage is always the end of romance and the beginning of history. This is so true that Homer tells us the women of ancient Greece reckoned their ages not from the birth date, but from the wedding day. A good many husbands in this twentieth century are a good deal more certain about the number of years their wives have lived since marriage than about the summers and winters they had numbered before they became wives.

Failure to recognize the difference between romance and history causes failure of marriage. Romance is all play; history is a serious business. Courtship is pie; marriage is potatoes. The comedown from pie to potatoes sometimes overstrains matters seriously. But if this crisis is safely passed another awaits.

Love is the spice of life, but friendship is the nourishing food without which life, except in unusual individuals, becomes a burden. The marriage which is all spice and no food soon gives one or frequently both of the parties thereto acute indigestion. When the ecstatic emotions of the honeymoon have fled, marriage must find some other substistence or it cannot thrive. And the only satisfying food is friendship.—Mother's Magazine.

Trivial Causes of Wars.

A bucket was once the innocent cause of a terrible war. Nine centuries ago some soldiers of Modena stole a bucket as a joke from a public well at Bologna. When they refused to restore it scrimmaging commenced between the soldiers of the rival states, and a war ensued, which spread until it involved the greater part of Europe. In more recent times a debt of a few shillings of which the bey of Algiers demanded payment through the French consul led to a war which lasted twenty years, cost more than 500,000 lives and made Algeria a French possession.

Good That He Returned.

"Boy, watch my horse till I come back," called a man to a boy lounging around the station, as he hastened to bid farewell to a departing friend.

"Sure!" said the boy, taking the reins.

Just then the locomotive whistled and the horse, rearing suddenly, started at full speed up the road.

The boy stared after the runaway animal, and, as the owner appeared, exclaimed with relief:

"It's a good thing you came now, sir, for I couldn't have watched him much longer."—Ladies' Home Journal.

Jolting Him.

Bashful Youth—Miss Bella, does—does your mother object to my coming here so much? Fair Charmer—Oh, I think not. I heard her telling papa the other evening that you merely came to pass away the time; you didn't mean anything serious.—London Tit-Bits.

Word of Caution.

"Never propose to a girl by letter."

"Why not?"

"I did it once, and she stuck the letter in a book she was reading and lent it to my other girl."

Talking Machines.

Willie—Paw, where are all the talking machines made? Paw—They are not made, my son. They are born. Maw—You go to bed, Willie.—Cincinnati Enquirer.

Learning without politeness makes a disagreeable pedant, and politeness without learning makes a superficial, frivolous puppy.—Chesterfield.