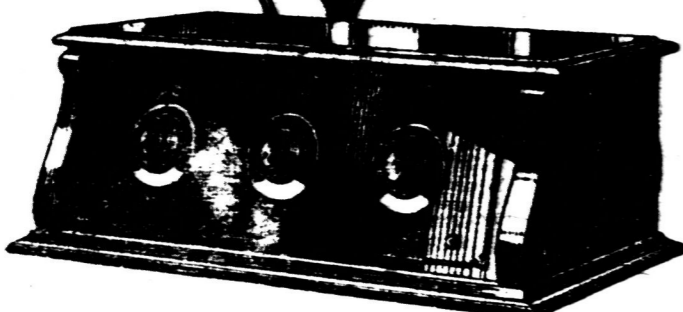


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Queer Things Happen

BY PAUL TOMLINSON.

PART I.

"Unexpected endings? Certainly!" said Roberts. "That's what people like. They love to be fooled, when the process doesn't make fools of them, and a story with a trick ending is always popular. Look at O. Henry. Maupassant, too, did the same kind of thing. I read one of his stories the other evening, and I was completely fooled right up to the last sentence. It made me jump, literally, and of the many stories of Maupassant's that I've read that is one of the few I remember. Certainly people like unexpected endings."

"Do you mean mystery stories?" asked Van Wagenen.

"Yes, of course, although I wasn't thinking of them particularly. The story with an entirely unforeseen denouement was what I had in mind."

"Shall I illustrate?" inquired Copley.

There were five of them seated around the table. Once a month they met and dined together—a custom they had followed for nearly ten years. Classmates at college, they had gone out into the world, worked hard, got married, and drifted apart.

Ten years after their graduation Roberts had conceived the idea of these monthly dinners. From the start they had been a tremendous success, and for nine and a half years they had proceeded with only one interruption. There had been six men in the group originally, and the one break in the chain of meetings had been out of respect for Peter Wigton, an untimely victim of pneumonia.

Archie Roberts was usually the life of the gatherings. A stout, jolly man of 45, he had made a financial success of his life.

Coke was a lawyer, moderately successful—a thin little man, with thin hair, thin lips, and a thin, dry sense of humor.

Van Wagenen was an advertising man, full of ideas, enthusiastic, and bustling. Success had come his way, too, and with it the customary attendant avoirdupois. He puffed a good deal when he got excited, which was most of the time.

Then there was Elder, a physician, who talked little and listened a great deal.

Copley was a merchant in cotton, a handsome, sociable sort of fellow who every one liked, and who liked every

one. Some one has described him as the easiest man to talk to he ever met. The dinner was at his home. He had been absent on a business trip, and had got back to town only that afternoon. In fact, he had cut his trip one day short in order to be there. He had been an attentive listener to the discussion around the table, but had contributed nothing to it as yet. His four friends turned their attention to him as he asked his question.

"How do you mean, illustrate?" asked Roberts.

"By a story," said Copley.

He leaned forward in his chair, rested his elbows on the table, and crossed his arms.

"I was on the Ironbound Limited," Copley began. "I travel on that train a good deal, you know, and feel quite at home on it. At noon I went into the dining car for lunch and was placed at a table for four. There were two men at the table already, and I'd only been seated for a moment when I thought I recognized them as gentlemen reputed to travel on that train for the purpose of extracting money from unsuspecting fellow passengers at bridge."

"We soon got into conversation, and I must say I found them both agreeable. They were well dressed and of good appearance, and they looked me straight in the eye as they talked. Clean-cut citizens they seemed, and I soon began to think I must have been mistaken. One of the men was well above the average height, built in proportion, and really a fine figure of a man. He had the whitest teeth I've ever seen, and he apparently liked to show them off, for he smiled constantly as he talked—and he talked a great deal, telling story after story, most of them gloriously funny. I quite liked the fellow."

"His companion was the silent kind. He spoke infrequently and hid his thoughts behind a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles. I didn't talk much, either, being too much entertained by the big fellow's stories to attempt any conversation myself."

"When we were about halfway through luncheon, we were joined by a little sandy-haired chap, with a cast in one of his blue eyes and a queer smile around his mouth—a smile which seemed to vary in intensity at times, but never to disappear entirely. My two friends soon got him into the conversation, although he didn't talk any more than the fellow with the spectacles, or myself. He didn't have a chance."

Copley picked up his cigar, and, twisting it slowly around with his thumb and first two fingers, held it in the flame of a lighted match.

"It really was a delightful lunch party," he said. "Unlike most Americans meeting for the first time, we didn't talk personalities. No one asked me what my business was, and no one showed the slightest curiosity even about names of home towns."

"Your card-sharper friends thought it better not to mention such things, I suppose," laughed Roberts.

"Listen to me," said Copley. "Long before we finished eating, I was certain that they were as fair and square as any men I'd ever met. I had taken quite a fancy to them—the big fellow, especially—and really I think I'd have resented any reflections on their honesty. The chap with the cast in his eye liked them, too—I could see that from his manner. He was a queer sort of bird, with thin, nervous hands, never still which seemed to carress everything they touched."

"The big fellow who was telling all the stories seemed to be affected in the same way. At first he had done most of his talking directly at me, but soon he addressed most of his remarks to the little chap, who would smile his queer smile, nod his head, say yes

or no, and go on with his eating. Once in a while he would look my way, and the expression on his face was always hating to me. I could never make out whether he was smiling at me or with an accomplice. Perhaps a trap had been set for my benefit, and mine alone. I looked at him closely. No, I must have been mistaken."

"Thanks," I said, "but I don't play." "It's an easy way to kill time," he remarked, with a smile.

"An easy way to lose money, too," I said suddenly, in a burst of confidence.

"He had a piece of apple pie on his fork, and was about to deposit it in his mouth as I spoke. He lowered his head for an instant, gave me a sharp look, and put the pie in his mouth. As he disposed of it, he smiled his wistful, quizzical smile."

"Well, sir, I could have kicked myself for having spoken as I had. I didn't know for sure that the two men were crooks. I didn't know anything about the little sandy-haired chap. For all I knew he might really be their accomplice. If so, he would probably tell them what I had insinuated, and it might make a heap of trouble for me."

"What do you mean by that?" he asked.

"Nothing," I replied.

"I began checking up the addition on my bill, hoping that the subject might be changed; but no such luck."

"Think they're crooks?" inquired the little sandy-haired chap innocently.

"I could feel myself turning from cold to hot and back again, but I knew I was in for it now, and there was no use begging the question. I looked straight at the cast in his eye."

"They are said to be card sharpers," I told him.

"He took another piece of pie. 'Shouldn't be surprised,' he said solemnly, as if commenting on a remark about the fineness of the weather."

"He looked at me and smiled. This time I was certain that he was not an accomplice, but only an attractive, appealing sort of wistful little red-haired innocent person."

"Don't play with them," I urged. "They'll get your money."

"He seemed to consider my advice for a moment."

"Still, it would be an experience," he remarked finally, as if he had debated the whole matter in his mind, and had decided that it would be worth while to play, even if it did cost him money."

"My heart went out to him. 'Don't do it,' I urged. 'You'll only get trimmed, and experience wouldn't be any kind of compensation.'"

"He considered this for a moment, too."

"I think I'll play," he said.

"Well, you can't say I didn't warn you!" I exclaimed, with some degree of heat, for it made me angry to have him neglect what I considered sound advice."

"He dipped his fingers in the bowl in front of him, which the waiter had

almost immediately his blue eyes and his smile made his face as attractive and appealing as ever. At the same time, the fleeting expression that I had caught surprised me. Perhaps a trap had been set for my benefit, and mine alone. I looked at him closely. No, I must have been mistaken."

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just filled with water. "No," he said, "I can't, and I want you to know I appreciate it, too." "I sat beside him until he was ready to leave the table, and I did my level best to make him say he wouldn't play. It was no use, and my breath was merely wasted. He just smiled at me. Come up and watch the game," he said. "That won't cost anything, anyway."

"Perhaps I will in a little while," I replied, and left him to go back to my chair and the story I was reading. (To be concluded.)

A Poem Worth Knowing.

A Gracie Song.

The "Poems of Innocence," by William Blake, are, of course, classics. There is nothing quite like them in the language. They are simple and profound.

Sleep, sleep, beauty bright, Dreaming in the joys of night; Sleep, sleep! in thy sleep Little sorrows sit and weep.

Sweet babe, in thy face Soft desires I can trace, Secret joys and secret smiles, Little pretty infant wiles.

As thy softest limbs I feel Smiles as of the morning dew O'er thy cheek, and o'er thy breast When thy little heart doth rest.

O the cunning wiles that creep In thy little heart asleep! When thy little heart doth wake, Then the dreadful night shall break.

It has been estimated that the earth can maintain a population of 6,000,000,000—a total which will be reached about 2100, at the present rate of increase.

Minard's Liniment relieves headache.



Of Course.

1st Snowman—"Goin' to the ball?" 2nd Snowman—"What ball?" 3rd Snowman—"The snowball, of course."

Minard's Liniment for sore throat.

Then He Tried Again.

A man, dining in a fashionable restaurant and not wishing to exhibit his ignorance of French, beckoned to a waiter and, pointing to an item on the menu, said:

"Walter, I think I will try some of that."

"Very sorry, sir," replied the waiter, "but the orchestra happens to be playing that just at present."



SUN · LIFE · ASSURANCE · COMPANY · OF · CANADA

A BILLION DOLLARS OF LIFE ASSURANCE IN FORCE

1925

ASSURANCES IN FORCE (net) - \$1,021,097,000

An Increase of \$149,460,000

New Assurances Paid For - \$193,477,000

An Increase of \$56,011,000

Total Income - 69,147,000

An Increase of \$6,901,000

Payments to Policyholders and Beneficiaries 35,441,000

Total Payments Since Organization - 219,239,000

Reserve for Unforeseen Contingencies 10,000,000

Surplus over all Liabilities and Contingency Reserve - 28,640,000

An Increase of \$6,532,000

ASSETS at December 31, 1925 303,056,000

An Increase of \$28,925,000

Policies in Force, Excluding Group Policies - 411,492

Employees of Firms Protected by Group Policies 427,555

Dividends to Policyholders increased for sixth successive year

EXTRACTS FROM DIRECTORS' REPORT

Your Directors present the fifty-fifth annual report for your approval. The Company's statements have for years reflected its consistently increasing business and growth, but this year marks a new stage in the life of the organization. It has now passed the Billion Dollars mark in assets in force, the highest ever recorded for any life insurance company in the world.

Applications for new assurances have been the largest in our history, for the amount of \$100,000,000. The new policies paid for amounted to \$193,477,000, the largest in our history, and the total amount of assurances in force has increased by \$149,460,000.

The gratifying evidence of growth and expansion (indicated by the accompanying statement) is presented in regard to assets and liabilities. Notwithstanding the general decline in interest rates, the Company has been able to meet its obligations, and to slightly increase its reserve in the connection, the net result during the year on the assets invested being \$6,901,000.

Several factors have contributed to produce this result, the most important being an increase in the dividends paid by some of the corporations in which the Company has substantial stock holdings.

Over 100,000,000 of the interest yield has been advanced in the market value of our securities. For many years we have specialized in buying term bonds and preferred stocks of companies of established repute, both in Canada and in the United States. We are now making the same practice in the purchase of unsecured debentures and other securities which had been previously avoided, and have realized a net profit of \$2,200,000. It will be seen that the increase in the value of securities held has been most gratifying.

The profits earned by the Company during the year, based on the increase in the value of our securities as made by the government authorities, has been \$22,662,840. We have not thought it wise, however, to take credit for this amount, and have made a deduction of \$5,000,000 from the official statement placed on our books. We have, therefore, added \$17,662,840 to our undivided profits, bringing them up to a total of \$10,000,000.

Following the practice of recent years, we have written off \$75,000 from the value of our Head Office and Branch Buildings and other real estate.

We have also, by setting aside an additional \$250,000, further strengthened the special reserve to provide for possible greater longevity among our policyholders. After deducting this sum, and the increase to shareholders' accounts, and making the necessary heavy deductions, we have yet been able to add \$1,000,000 to our undivided profits, bringing the total surplus over all liabilities, Contingency Accounts and Capital up to \$28,640,000.

During the year we have paid or allowed \$7,662,784.35 in profits to our policyholders. After deducting this sum, and the increase to shareholders' accounts, and making the necessary heavy deductions, we have yet been able to add \$1,000,000 to our undivided profits, bringing the total surplus over all liabilities, Contingency Accounts and Capital up to \$28,640,000.

For the sixth consecutive year we are able to announce an increase in the value of profits to be distributed to our policyholders in the ensuing year.

To provide for the expansion of our business, it has been necessary to make an extensive use of the Head Office building, which has now been completed, and will be formally opened on the day of our Annual Meeting. The building is devoted exclusively to the use of the Company, but it is already evident that we must at once provide for further extension.



SUN LIFE ASSURANCE COMPANY OF CANADA



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WRIGLEY'S

Keeps teeth clean, breath sweet, appetite keen and digestion good.

Great after smoking.

After Every Meal

ISSUE No. 8-26.