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alchemists there were syndicates from whom portions of nothing could be had as readily as today.

You could, if you liked, buy shares in the Darien Company that promised the keys of the earth, the dominion of the sea, the lordship of all that in them is, without leaving home or catching cold or liability of any kind. Over a promise so modest, investors went crazy. Over John Law's Mississippi scheme they went crazier still. When they recovered there was the South Sea Bubble to tempt them once more, and, with it, an undertaking to sell warming pans in Brazil and skates in Peru.

The success of these flotations showed that to extract something out of nothing the philosopher's stone was necessary and that the quintessence of things was to be found, not in solvents, but in stocks. The one thing needful was brains. Given that, or rather, given enough wherewith to get ahead of the other fellow, and the secret was yours.

That was the secret of the late Mr. Keely of the Golden Cure. It was the secret also of the more recent Mme. Humbert. With half a dozen neologisms and as many concealed tubes, Keely extracted five million from his fellow countrymen. With nothing more complicated than a belief, perhaps justified, in human stupidity, Mme. Humbert saw the five and went him ten better.

To be born without scruples and, in omitting to acquire any, not to omit to memorize the Carlyllian aphorism that the composition of the census is mostly fools, there perhaps is the secret of the Chimera. In any event, it is the secret of not having any secret and yet of appearing to have one, that constitutes the philosopher's stone. Admittedly, it does not show how metals may be transmuted, but it does show how pocketbooks can. For it consists but in making a stranger feel at home and then in taking his home away.

To these platitudes a story may be added. A German professor devoted his life to the study of the Greek dative. On his deathbed he regretted having chosen a field so wide. The story has a moral, as all proper stories should have. This is the age of specializations. The specialty of all specialties is coin. The way to get coin is called industry. The way to get it from the industrious is called sometimes by one name, sometimes by another; but however called, it is still the art of extracting something out of nothing.

If with cathode rays and vacuum tubes there is another way of doing that—if there is!—there may be a good deal coming to us yet; but meanwhile, in considering again the quintessence of things, it rather seems as though, apart from financial legerdemain, the easiest way to make money is to earn it and that there, perhaps, is the real secret after all.

RE-ASSURANCE

By MADELINE BRIDGES

"BEFORE you ask," she calmly spoke—
"Dear, listen to this word;
You're not the first man I have loved,
Nor second—nay—nor third."

"Am I the fourth or fifth," he asked
In scorn—"or were there more?"
She murmured—"Don't be vexed,
sweetheart,
"For, as I said before,

"This love is not my first—but,
hark!"
He felt her gentle touch—
"I promise it will be my last;
"Now—can you say as much?"

"You are my darling girl," he cried.
And bowed his manly head
Upon her hand—"My love—my
bride!"—
But—that was all he said!



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