

he had avoided his office during business hours for a week past, in anticipation of a request to call and show cause why he should be trusted with anything more valuable than a pipeful of tobacco.

"The next time you take an order from me, Greenwood," he continued witheringly, "you'll know how to proceed. You were too anxious to work off this stock. Question my credit before you accept my order next time. Good-bye," and he hung up.

An hour later he was aboard a train, speeding to Fresno, and before the office of the Tuolumne Flume & Irrigation Company closed that day, they had accepted Rube Pitcher's draft at sixty days' sight, and Pitcher was on his way back to San Francisco with the acceptance in his pocket. Weary, sleepy and hollow-eyed, he got to bed at two o'clock next morning, and at ten o'clock, when the bank opened, he was on hand to discount his sixty-day acceptance. Half an hour later he walked in on Greenwood and showed a certified check for the full amount of the invoice, less his commission, under that perturbed gentleman's nose.

"I want you to know, Greenwood," he said sternly, "that when I do business and specify cash, I mean cash. I feel grieved at the stand you have taken in this matter. I've been twelve years in the lumber game, and to have my credit questioned—"

"Tut, tut," purred Greenwood soothingly, "we didn't question your honor, my boy. Not-a-tall, NOT-A-TALL. Mere question of business precaution—"

"Well, don't be so confounded cautious next time," growled Pitcher. "I just wanted to teach you a lesson and nail to the wall any suspicion that I'm operating on anything except a cash basis. Furthermore, I want to know right now if you intend to repeat this precaution on my next shipment."

"Certainly not, my dear boy. Won't you listen to reason—"

"Well, that's reasonable, I guess," Pitcher reluctantly admitted, and adroitly changed the subject.

THE day the last of his short stock went onto a flat car, Reuben K. contrived to have three representatives of commercial agencies call upon him and quiz him for a rating without their even remotely suspecting that Pitcher himself had instigated the visit. They asked him how much money he had.

"I bank at the Marine National," he said. "Ask them about me. When I speculate I pay cash, and I don't owe a dollar on earth. Ask these people," and he handed them a list of ten redwood lumber companies.

When they had departed, he perched his feet up on his desk and fell to musing.

"They'll rate me F-2½, ten to twenty thousand, or I miss my guess," he soliloquized, "and a seven-thousand dollar roll is n't half bad to make my start on. It certainly removes the worry."

He glanced at his watch. It was just five o'clock, and he rose hurriedly, and shut down his desk.

He had forgotten the High Cost of Living and remembered only that Queenie quit work in the Arago Mill & Lumber Company's office at five fifteen.

Reuben K. Pitcher was riotously happy and proud of himself, as he hurried to intercept her, for his dream had come true, and there is nothing like sniffing the air of freedom to make a man unburden the little, sentimental secrets of his soul. Mr. Pitcher was sniffing it now for the first time, and on a sudden his heart had grown all warm and mushy; an impulse to be garrulous had stolen over him and would not be denied.

He had something to say to Queenie.

A second story dealing with the hazards of Mr. Pitcher in love and lumber will appear in an early number of the SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

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