

WHAT SHOULD HE DO?

A "Problem" Study by Charles Morris Butler A \$200.00 Free Cash Prize Mystery Story

THE last day of the month arrived. As the head bookkeeper took his departure from the office of the Currier Publishing company, publishers of the Woman's World, he placed upon the president's desk a written statement of the month's business. The president was busy at the time conversing with the advertising manager relative to some new business about to be placed in the magazine. Instead of looking at the report immediately, as was his usual habit, he placed the package, consisting of a number of loose sheets, upon a handy shelf in the vault at hand.

The safe, or vault, was one of those massive concerns built right into the walls of the buildings: a huge iron-bound and fireproof room without ventilation, and supposed to be burglar as well as fireproof. The burglar proof safe was in one end of the vault.

The conversation with the advertising manager took up quite a little time, and finally the twin left the room and adjourned to a nearby cafe for dinner. It was quite dark when the president returned. He always made it a point to closely scrutinize the office reports at the end of each month, to, as he explained it, "start with a clean sheet" for the next month. In the quiet of the evening he turned on the lights in his private office and, going to the safe in the cashier's room, grabbed from their resting place the pile of sheets. Soon he was busy perusing the information contained in them.

The time flew by quickly and before he finished it was pretty near midnight. Somehow or other the sheets did not seem to balance. There seemed to be a difference between the bookkeeper's account of money received and money in hand in the safe. The bookkeeper was known to be a very careful and methodical man. The publisher felt in his heart that the books must have balanced or his employe would have turned the report over to him for inspection. So the

president again and again went through the bundle to try and locate the mistake.

After a long struggle, without managing to make head or tail out of the mess, he was about to give up the quest, when he was struck by a very happy thought.

"Unconsciously," said he to himself, "in going into the vault in the dark I have undoubtedly left at least one sheet of paper upon the shelf, which will clear up this tangle! What a fool I have been to not think of that before!"

Instead of turning on the electric light, which was suspended over the huge iron door, the president, deeming himself sufficiently familiar with the surroundings both outside and inside the vault, groped his way into the next room and the open doorway, and felt around the shelf for the missing sheet. The first place he tried he found nothing but a pile of ledgers. Going in a little farther, he ran his hand against the corner of the petty cash box.

"I am afraid I shall have to strike a match," he said, irritably, "but if the patrolman sees me in here he will think sure I am a robber and either shoot at me or raise such a rumpus that the whole building will be alive with firemen and policemen in a minute!" So he continued to grope. Finally his hand closed upon a piece of paper, which he was sure was the sheet he was looking for.

Then he became aware of a painful accident. In entering the vault his coat had become entangled in the lock of the door. Quickly the door had swung to, and just as he was about to retrace his steps he heard a faint snap, and he became conscious that he was locked within the vault!

Saturday night. Though the air within could be breathed over and over, could it last until Monday morning? The thought was folly. Long before the arrival of the bookkeeper or cashier the president knew that he would be a dead man.

Perhaps an hour passed; to the man in the vault it seemed an age. The air was already stifling. The exertion, mental and physical, that the president was undergoing brought out great beads of sweat all over his body. He pictured himself slowly suffocating—felt his hair turn gray. Imagined his eyes bulging from their sockets. Then merciful oblivion struck him. He fell down, limp and helpless, upon the granite floor.

At about the time the president and the advertising manager were dining together, not far off, in a less pretentious place were also dining two very different characters. The place was the back room of a disreputable saloon; and the two men were of the class called "cracksmen."

"The job's easy enough, I tell you, Bill," said one of the twins. "The firm occupies the whole of a six-story building. There is only one watchman for the place, and there are six floors to guard."

"Well," says Bill, as he took a sip out of a bottle before him, "we're to be got out of it? You know I can't risk getting caught for 15 cents!"

"The firm employs 200 or 300 people the year round. They must take in stacks of dough every day to pay them off and their other expenses. Why, say, I know for a fact, Bill, they give away in prizes every month more money than we ever saw at one time. They can't bank after 2 o'clock, and I'll swear there is thousands in the safe right now!" The talker seemed to be more than half-educated. His speech was refined and the sound of his voice gentle for one of his trade.

"Well, Cull, you say so, then, I'm wid you!" "Cull" and "Bill" continued to talk and plan for quite a while. Finally they separated, after

agreeing to meet again at a certain time and place, which was at about twelve, in the neighborhood of the Woman's World office.

"Oh, pahaw!" said Bill, "there is a light in one of the office rooms. I suppose dere's some darn fool bookkeeper up there trying to balance his blasted books for the month!" Bill was quite a shrewd man in his way. His "calling" necessarily made him a very "wise" philosopher.

"Hain't seen a form move up there for an hour!" said "Cull," thoughtfully. "Wouldn't be surprised if the darn fool went home and left it burning. It's right next door to the safe, too. We'll have to get the light out some way. Next time the watchman goes into the basement, which should be pretty quick now, we'll go right in and upstairs, and see what it's all about."

They were as good as their word. When the watchman disappeared into the basement they boldly entered the building and rapidly walked up the stairway. Boldness is their great forte. To sneak in would have given them away. They peered through the glass doorway into the president's room, which was ajar.

No one was in sight. The light was burning brightly, but there was nothing like a coat or hat in view to let them know that a human being was around. "Bill" and "Cull" very calmly opened up the window leading to a fire escape at the end of the hall in the rear of the building and rapidly climbed to the roof. Noiselessly they went to the front of the building, and while "Bill" waited, gun in hand, "Cull" climbed down the front fire escape and soon found himself looking into the president's room from the top landing.

One must not think "Cull" did this part openly, or that "Bill" was standing where he could be seen by passers-by on the street. "Cull" was exposed to view for only about thirty seconds. While a passing electric car was moving down the street, with noise of clanging bell and the din of grinding

wheels, which sounded hideous through the quiet midnight air, he made his play, then hid among the scroll-worked landing behind the standpipe. "Bill" was lying down upon the roof in the shadow of the smoke-stack, from where he could peer over the roof at his partner.

Cautiously "Cull" opened the window and entered the room, turned out the light and quickly made his escape up the fire escape again. The watchman made his customary rounds again. He did not seem to think it out of the ordinary that no light was in the president's room. He thought, perhaps, as it was a common occurrence for the president to come and go when he pleased, that the president had finished his work and gone home. Then he went down into the basement to eat his midnight dinner. He had delayed doing so until after, as he thought, all the tenants had retired.

"Cull" seemed to be pretty well aware of the watchman's habits. As soon as the guardian disappeared the two boldly climbed down the rear fire escape, and with a skeleton key opened the office door and entered the room containing the safe. It didn't take them long to get to work upon the vault.

The publisher was aroused from his stupor by an unearthly noise, as it seemed to him. His ears rang; a grating, creeping sensation seemed to split his ears. He thought death approaching. But what he heard was not the clatter of the hoof of the grim destroyer, but the sound of the cracksmen's drill as they laboriously bored their way into the interior of the safe. The noise made was deafening to the man in the vault.

The president did not realize what was going on for quite a little time. Before he realized it fully a very tiny hole had been made in the door. The air revived him. He knew what was up. While breathing in the luxury of fresh ozone he pounded upon the panel.

For a moment the burglars were nonplussed. Then they realized the true situation of affairs. The man who was responsible for leaving the light burning had locked himself in the safe! What should they do? They were confronted with a problem such as they had never experienced before. To leave the man in there they knew would mean his death. To rescue him might mean capture to them.

"For God's sake give me air!" the president finally bellowed through the phole.

As if by mutual consent the daring burglars worked like beavers to enlarge the aperture, and finally a hole the size of the end of a pencil was created. But the problem was still to be solved to them, who was the man in the vault? What would happen if he was released? They were out for money; would they succeed in getting it? Finally, to a certain extent, the problem was settled by the president himself. He poked a thin strip of paper through the hole, upon which was written not very intelligently:

"Turn the handle over to three, then to fifteen, then to sixty-five."

"Cull" laughed as he read the note by the aid of his dark lantern. "Say, 'Bill,' this is a heap better nor blowing the door open. It makes less noise!"

"What are you going to do with the man if you let him out?" queried "Bill."

"That depends," said "Cull," nonchalantly. "It's an open-and-shut fact, however, 'Bill,' that we have got to let him out. Because if we don't he will die. Then, suppose another case. Suppose we had been seen—got nabbed and all that. If this man is found dead in the safe, what's to hinder the 'fly mugs' from swearing that we put him in there and then bolted the door?"

"That's so, 'Cull.' And then there's another thing; if we don't open the door, we don't get the money. But do we get the money if we open it?" "Don't know, 'Bill.' All I know is, we've got to open the door, no matter what comes."

While the burglars were talking the publisher was thinking. The thought of getting out—he heard the moving of the knob of the combination working—made him a thinking man again. What should he do when he got out? He could picture in his mind's eye the scene which would confront him. Would the burglars meet him at the point of a revolver and bind and gag him without giving him a chance to speak? Or would they be so innocent as to allow him to touch an electric alarm bell by the side of the vault, which he knew exactly where to find. Could he reach his revolver, which lay in his desk, and so bar the way of escape of the burglars in case they tried to escape the front way? But what was the best thing to do?

Suppose he should be able to stop the burglars from escaping, wouldn't that be kind of a dirty trick, a mean reward to offer the men for rescuing him from certain death? What is the value of the money in the safe in comparison with the value of his life? These things flashed through his mind with the rapidity of lightning. The publisher was in a dilemma. WHAT SHOULD HE DO?

"Bill" and "Cull" were not very expert in opening safes by simply using the combination. But finally the door swung open. As the releasing "click" was heard, so also was heard the sound of footsteps upon the stairway. The watchman was coming upstairs. The president stepped out from the vault.

What happened when the publisher of the Woman's World found himself a free man? Did he press the electric button, grab his revolver and bar the burglar's escape, call for the watchman, or what? Here is a problem play, not unlike the deathless story of Frank Stockton and his problem of the "Lady or the Tiger?"

The sequel to this story, and it contains quite a big surprise, will be published in the WOMAN'S WORLD. Wouldn't you like to read the author's surprising solution of this problem? The publishers of the WOMAN'S WORLD also offer \$200.00 in cash prizes for the fifty-two best sequels or endings to this story. The prizes will be as follows: First prize, for best completion, \$50.00; second prize, \$30.00; third prize, \$25.00; fourth prize, \$10.00; seventh prize, \$5.00; forty-five prizes of \$1.00 each for the next best sequels.

The names of the winners and some of the winning articles will be published in the WOMAN'S WORLD. The prizes will be awarded by the author of the story himself, Charles Morris Butler, and everyone who desires may compete. The prizes will not be awarded on the basis of similarity to the author's sequel. This contest closes May 30. Send in your articles. The awards are numerous, the contest interesting, so you had better compete. Address replies to WOMAN'S WORLD, Publisher's Contest, 48 W. Monroe Street, Chicago. Apart from the contest we would like your subscription for WOMAN'S WORLD. You can then see what a splendid magazine we are publishing. For 25 cents per year or 10 cents for a five months' trial the WOMAN'S WORLD is a literary bargain. See advertisement below.

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four colors. The contributors mentioned on this page comprise **only a few** of the well-known names, a guarantee of the high class reading which will appear in the Woman's World. The Woman's World for the small sum of 25 cents is a mammoth literary bargain, containing an abundance of the best reading matter by the best writers in the country. There is no other magazine, price considered, to be compared to it. It is the only low-priced **good magazine** with any circulation to speak of in the whole country. Just think of it—for only 25 cents per year, the Woman's World will publish any number of stories that will appear later in book form and sell for \$1.00 to \$1.50 each. We offer you hundreds of excellent short stories—as high class as any published in any \$1.00, \$2.00 or \$3.00 magazines; fully half a dozen short serials that later will make small \$1.00 books—three or four large novels which later will make \$1.50 books—any number of special articles by world-famous celebrities—articles not only by big people, but articles that are strikingly interesting; many helpful, entertaining and instructive departments, also, by the best writers in their respective fields; the best poems—the best short items and fillers, first-class illustrations, many of them in colors, and **all this for only 25 cents for a whole year.** You will say how can we do it?

THE SECRET—The Woman's World is printed on one of the fastest 4-color presses in the world—a press that cost \$50,000.00 and can print a quarter of a million completely folded copies in four colors a day. Neither do we use coated paper, but a good clean sheet of what is called No. 2 book paper. These items of fast presswork and low priced paper enable us to furnish a year's subscription to the Woman's World for only 25 cents per year. Whereas, if it was printed like the high priced magazines and on similar presses, we would be obliged to ask \$1.00 per year for the Woman's World. The Woman's World is like a high priced book with cheap binding—the content is there just the same, only one is bound in cloth or leather and costs \$1.50, and the other in imitation cloth or paper and costs 25 cents.

THE CORN KING—In the May issue will be commenced the opening chapters of a new novel "The Corn King," which was written for the Woman's World by Forrest Crissey. It is a love story full to the brim with charm and excitement, and we believe when it is published in book form later that it will be the "Book of the Year." The story has to do with the history of a country boy's success on the Chicago Board of Trade, the mammoth "deals" and "corners" he manipulates, his social success and his "heart troubles." The tap-roots of the Corn King run straight to the heart of the reader, leaving him breathless with excitement, apprehension and fascination.

OTHER THINGS As stated above and contributions mentioned on this page are only a few of the good things about the Woman's World. We could enumerate many others. For example: Peer Sirovina, the greatest writer on Scandinavian life in America, contributes to Woman's World; so does Samuel R. King, Stanley Waterloo, Major Arthur Griffiths, Frank S. Skason, W. D. Nesbit, Maryn Johnson, Julia Bottomley, Al Albert, editor of the Washington Times; Rosetta, and many, many others. Also such additional helpful and instructive departments as "The Capital and the White House," "Home Dressmaker and Fashion," "How to Decorate the Home," "Millinery," etc., etc. Also such interesting and timely articles on such subjects as "Should Young Girls Marry Old Men," "How Fast Baby Should Grow," "The Origin of Trade Names," "The Story of the Sewing Machine," "The Male Gossip," "The Care of Spectacles," "The Temperament of Men," "The Name of the Game," etc., etc. You will also find a big list of books in the Woman's World for 10 cents per year.

Forrest Crissey
Writes the editorials in Woman's World. Mr. Crissey is the author of "The Country Boy," "The Making of an American School Teacher," "The Battling of a Believing Politician," and the series on country life now appearing in Harper's Magazine. We have selected Mr. Crissey for this important work because he is in such close touch with the people of this country. Anyone who reads the "Saturday Evening Post" will agree with this statement.

Roswell Field
The best critics say, speaking of Roswell Field, that "he writes English as pure and charming as Hawthorne's." He is a brother of the late Eugene Field, the famous "Post of the Children." Roswell Field's name will appear in a number of early issues of the Woman's World. In the next issue we will publish quite a long story from his pen, entitled "Her First Lesson in Crimeology," a strong, intensely interesting narrative of a striking adventure in a girl's life.

Ella W. Peattie
Ella W. Peattie's name is familiar to all readers of the high-priced magazines. Every story she writes is the best. Her stories, "At the Edge of Things" and "A Mountain Woman," were praised far and wide. Her short serial story, "The O'Hellian," now running in the Woman's World, is equally sure to attract wide attention and comment. Besides this serial Mrs. Peattie will also furnish other contributions to the Woman's World during the year. "A Tear Vase," another new story by Mrs. Peattie, will appear in the June Woman's World.

Opie Read
Probably Opie Read is the most popular writer in America. Certainly he is one of the most delightful of American story tellers, as he has the rare faculty of blending delicious humor with fascinating romance. Mr. Read has a new original story in nearly every issue of the Woman's World and we can promise our readers full eight of his stories during the current year.

Margaret Sangster
Certainly no woman with a home can afford to miss the combedental counsel which this rare woman, Mrs. Sangster, writes in the Woman's World to its big family of housewives and housekeepers. Margaret L. Sangster is possibly the most celebrated writer about affairs of the home on this continent. The title of her regular department in the Woman's World is "Mrs. Sangster's Home Page."

Henry M. Hyde
"Marvels of Modern Science and Mechanics" is the name of a regular department in the Woman's World which delights and interests every member of the household from the boy or girl of eight to the grandmother or grandfather of eighty. It is illustrated and conducted by Henry M. Hyde, editor of the "Technical World" and an author of wide reputation. Here are the titles of a few of the subjects touched on in this interesting department: "How to Sew a Suit that Shines at Night," "To Make Magic Polishing Cloth," "How to Sew a Perfectly Fitting Hat," "To Build a Home-Made Icebox," "How to Make Waterproof Glass," "How to Best Remove Ink Stains." The department embraces the latest practical scientific information.

General Charles King
This popular writer has been engaged to write a new serial story for the Woman's World, which will start in an early issue, possibly in the June or July issue. It is a story which a number of careful critics have pronounced General King's masterpiece, and is sure to delight the readers of the Woman's World.

Jane Addams
The Ladies Home Journal in an editorial in the March issue says that Jane Addams of Chicago is the greatest living American woman. Miss Addams has written an article on her work for the Woman's World, which will appear in an early issue.

Edwin Balmer
Mr. Balmer is the author of the brilliant "Wireless" stories which appeared in the Saturday Evening Post. He first appeared on the literary horizon as a result of the first "Culler Prize Story Contest." "The Relief," by Edwin Balmer, will appear in the May issue of the Woman's World. It is a new fiction in the June issue, and other stories by the same author in later issues.

Harriet Prescott Spofford
"A Way and a Will" is the title of a new story from the pen of this gifted writer, which has been written for the Woman's World. It is the story of a woman who later loses her wealth and who in return is dependent upon the little heroine of the story. Nearly everyone who has read the manuscript of this story has been compelled to wipe their eyes, though everything "comes out all right" in the end.

Maud Ballington Booth
Putting Jane Addams first, the editor of the Ladies Home Journal considers Maud Ballington Booth of the Volunteers in Service to America the second greatest woman in America. Desirous to furnish its readers with the best from the greatest and most widely known of the Woman's World, in addition to having secured an original and exclusive article from Jane Addams, has also secured an article of great merit and interest from Maud Ballington Booth, which will be published in the June or July issue.

William Evans, Chicago's Health Commissioner
Health papers by celebrated physicians will be contributed in nearly every issue. Dr. Evans, who is the Health Commissioner for the City of Chicago, has already contributed to the April issue one fine article on "Dirty Air is Death," and we hope to have many other articles from Dr. Evans, as he is one of the most eminent and well known authorities on all "Home Health" subjects.

Frances A. Stetson
Needlework, with original illustrations, is conducted in the Woman's World by one of the best, if not the best, authorities on this subject in America. Mrs. Stetson's department in the Woman's World is a "joy forever" to ninety per cent of the women readers. Fancy work designs of all descriptions, including crocheting, knitting, embroidery, etc., are illustrated and so carefully described, with such clear directions that they can be worked out with ease by any reader who does this work.

Elliott Flower
This writer is perhaps the only one who ever enjoyed the distinction of having twelve separate short stories published in the Currier Magazine in one year. Mr. Flower's story, "A Leap Year Lesson," which appeared in the April issue of the Woman's World, made a great hit with our readers, and we are pleased to announce the early publication of numerous other stories under his signature, which is a guarantee of being "well worth while."

Ella Wheeler Wilcox
A new lot of poems by Ella Wheeler Wilcox, who has been termed the "Poet of the West," has been secured for the Woman's World from Mrs. Wilcox, who is now in Honolulu. These splendid poems will be published exclusively in the Woman's World during the year.

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