THE GIRL AT THE HALFWAY HOUSE

A STORY OF THE PLAINS

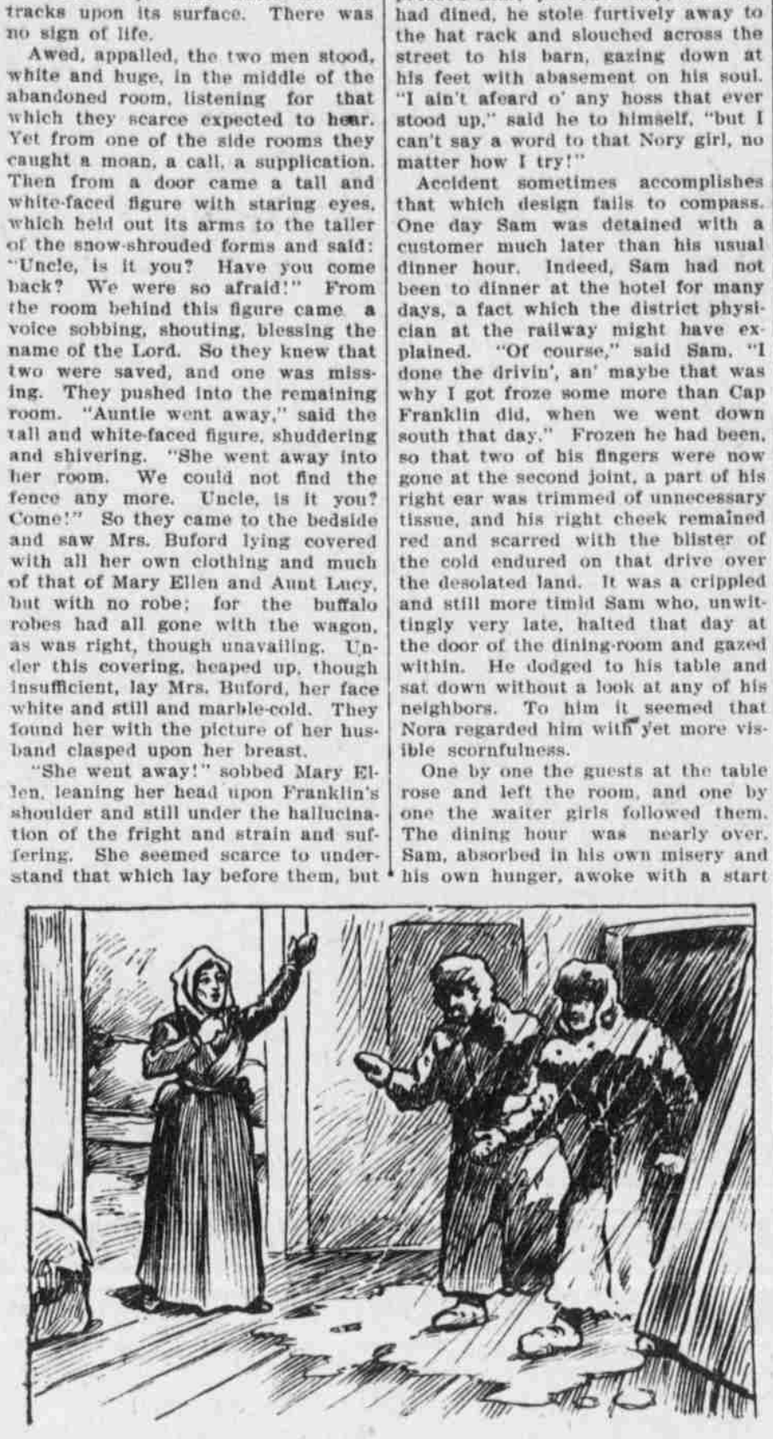
BY E. HOUGH, AUTHOR OF THE STORY OF THE COWBOY

CHAPTER XXV—Continued.

Franklin burst open the door, and they both went in, half pausing. There was that which might well give them pause. The table was gone, the chairs were gone. The interior was nearly denuded, so that the abode lay like an abandoned house, drifted half full of dry, fine powdered snow. And even this snow upon the floors had no tracks upon its surface. There was no sign of life.

Awed, appalled, the two men stood, white and huge, in the middle of the abandoned room, listening for that which they scarce expected to hear. Yet from one of the side rooms they caught a moan, a call, a supplication. Then from a door came a tall and white-faced figure with staring eyes, which held out its arms to the taller of the snow-shrouded forms and said: "Uncle, is it you? Have you come back? We were so afraid!" From the room behind this figure came a voice sobbing, shouting, blessing the name of the Lord. So they knew that two were saved, and one was missing. They pushed into the remaining room. "Auntie went away," said the tall and white-faced figure, shuddering and shivering. "She went away into her room. We could not find the fence any more. Uncle, is it you? Come!" So they came to the bedside and saw Mrs. Buford lying covered with all her own clothing and much of that of Mary Ellen and Aunt Lucy, but with no robe; for the buffalo robes had all gone with the wagon, as was right, though unavailing. Under this covering, heaped up, though insufficient, lay Mrs. Buford, her face white and still and marble-cold. They found her with the picture of her husband clasped upon her breast.

"She went away!" sobbed Mary Ellen, leaning her head upon Franklin's shoulder and still under the hallucination of the fright and strain and suffering. She seemed scarce to understand that which lay before them, but



Came a tall, white-faced figure.

continued to wander, babbling, shivering, as her arms lay on Franklin's shoulder. "We could not keep her warm," she said. "It has been very, very cold!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Artfulness of Sam.

For a brief time there might have been found support for that ideally inaccurate statement of our Constitution which holds that all men are born free and equal, entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. With all our might we belie this clause, though in the time of Ellisville it might have had some footing. That day has long since passed.

The stamping of the social die had begun its work. Indeed, after a time there came to be in the great dining-room of the Stone Hotel little groups bounded by unseen but impassable lines.

Sam, the owner of the livery barn, had one table in the corner, where he invariably sat. His mode of entering the dining-room varied not with the passing of the years. Appearing at the door, he cast a frightened look at the occupants who had preceded him, and in whose faces he could imagine nothing but critical censure of his own person. Becoming aware of his hat, he made a dive and hung it up. Then he trod timidly through the door, with a certain side-draught in his step, yet withal an acceleration of speed which presently brought him almost at a run to his corner of refuge, where he dropped, red and with a gulp. When Nora stood at his chair, and repeated to him frostily the menu of the day, all the world went round to Sam, and he gained no idea of what was offered him. With much effort at nonchalance, he would again wipe his face, take up his fork for twiddling, and say always the same thing.

"Oh, I ain't very hungry; jes' bring me a little pie an' beef an' coffee." And Nora, scornfully ignoring all this, then departed and brought him many things, setting them in array about his plate, and enabling him to eat as really he wished. Whether Sam knew that Nora would do this is a question which must remain unanswered, but it is certain that he never changed the form of his own "order."

Sam was a citizen. He had grown up with the town. He was, so to speak, one of the charter members of Ellisville, and thereby entitled to consideration. There was no reason why Sam might not look any man in the face, or any woman. But this latter Sam had never done. His admiration for Nora bade fair to remain a secret known of all but the one most interested. Daily Sam sat at the table and listened to Nora's icy tones. Daily he arose with the stern resolve that before the sun had set he would have told this woman of that which so oppressed him; yet each day, after he had dined, he stole furtively away to the hat rack and slouched across the street to his barn, gazing down at his feet with abasement on his soul. "I ain't afeard o' any hoss that ever stood up," said he to himself, "but I can't say a word to that Nory girl, no matter how I try!"

Accident sometimes accomplishes that which design fails to compass. One day Sam was detained with a customer much later than his usual dinner hour. Indeed, Sam had not been to dinner at the hotel for many days, a fact which the district physician at the railway might have explained. "Of course," said Sam, "I done the drivin', an' maybe that was why I got froze some more than Cap Franklin did, when we went down south that day." Frozen he had been, so that two of his fingers were now gone at the second joint, a part of his right ear was trimmed of unnecessary tissue, and his right cheek remained red and scarred with the blister of the cold endured on that drive over the desolated land. It was a crippled and still more timid Sam who, unwittingly very late, halted that day at the door of the dining-room and gazed within. He dodged to his table and sat down without a look at any of his neighbors. To him it seemed that Nora regarded him with yet more visible scornfulness.

One by one the guests at the table rose and left the room, and one by one the waiter girls followed them. The dining hour was nearly over. Sam, absorbed in his own misery and his own hunger, awoke with a start to find the great hall apparently quite deserted.

It is the curious faculty of some men (whereby scientists refer us to the ape) that they are able at will to work back and forth the scalp upon the skull. Yet others and perhaps fewer men retain the ability to work either or both ears, moving them back and forth voluntarily. It was Sam's solitary accomplishment that he could thus move his ears. Only by this was he set apart and superior to other beings.

As Sam sat alone at the table, his spoon rattling loud upon his plate in evidence of his mental disturbance, he absent-mindedly began to work back and forth his ears, perhaps solicitous to learn if his accomplishment had been impaired by the mishap which had caused him other loss. As he did this, he was intensely startled to hear behind him a burst of laughter, albeit laughter quickly smothered. He turned to see Nora, his idol, his adored, standing back of him, where she had slipped in with professional quiet and stood with professional etiquette, waiting for his departure, so that she might hale forth the dishes he had used. At this apparition, at this awful sight—for never in the history of man had Nora, the head waitress, been known to smile—the heart of Sam stopped forthwith in his bosom.

"I-I-I-I b-b-beg your—I-I d-didn't know you was there," he stammered in abject perturbation.

Nora sniffed. "I should think you might of knowed it," said she.

"I d-d-don't b-b-blame you fer laughin', M-M-Miss M-M-M-Markley," said Sam miserably.

"What at?" demanded Nora fiercely.

"At m-m-my air. I know it's funny, cut off, that way. But I c-c-can't help it. It's gone."

"I didn't," exclaimed Nora hotly, her face flushing. "Your ears is all right. I was laughin' at seein' you move 'em. I beg your pardon. I didn't know anybody could, that way, you know. I'm—I'm sorry."

A great light broke over Sam. A vast dam crashed free. His soul rushed forth in one mad wave.

"M-M-Miss M-M-Markley — Miss — Nory!" he exclaimed, whirling about and facing her, "d-d-d-do y-y-you l-like to s-s-see me work my airs?"

"Yes, it's funny," admitted Nora, on the point of another outbreak in spite of herself.

Sam saw his advantage. He squared himself about, and, looking solemnly and earnestly in Nora's face, he pulled his right and then his left ear forward until the members stood nearly at right angles to his head.

After all, the ludicrous is but the unexpected. Many laugh who see an old woman fall upon the slippery pavement. This new spectacle was the absolutely undreamed-of to Nora, who was no scientist. Her laughter was irrepressible.

Sam followed up his advantage royally. "I can work 'em both to once!" he exclaimed triumphantly. And did so. "There! Look a-here!" He waggled his ears ecstatically. The reserve of Nora oozed, waned, vanished.

Even the sternest fiber must at length succumb under prolonged Herculean endeavor. No man may long continuously wag his ears, even alternately; therefore Sam perforce paused in time. Yet by that time—in what manner it occurred no one may know—Nora was seated on the chair next to him at the table. They were alone. Silence fell. Nora's hand moved nervously among the spoons. Upon it dropped the mutilated one of Sam.

"Nory," said he, "I'd—I'd work 'em all my life—fer you!" And to Nora, who turned away her head now, not for the purpose of hiding a smile, this seemed always a perfectly fit and proper declaration of this man's regard.

"I know I'm no good," murmured Sam. "I'm a awful coward. I-I-I've l-l-loved you ever sence the fust time that I seen you, but I was such a coward, I—I couldn't—couldn't——"

"You're not!" cried Nora imperiously.

"Oh, yes, I am," said Sam.

"Look at them," said Nora, almost touching his crippled fingers. "Don't I know?"

"Oh, that," said Sam, hiding the hand under the droop of the table-cloth. "Why, that? I got froze some, a-drivin'."

"Yes, and," said Nora accusingly, "how did you get froze? A-drivin' 'way down there, in the storm, after folks. No one else'd go."

"Why, yes, Cap Franklin, he went," said Sam. "That wasn't nothin'. Why, o'course we'd go."

"No one else wouldn't, though."

Sam wondered. "I was always too much a coward to say a word to you," he began. And then an awful doubt sat on his soul.

"Nory," he resumed solemnly, "did ever any feller say anything to you about my—I-I-I—well, my lovin' you?"

"I should say not!" said Nora. "I'd a' slapped his face, mighty quick! What business——"

"Not never a single one?" said Sam, his face brightening.

"No, 'ndeed. Why, I'd like to know? Did you ever ask anyone to!"

"I should say not!" said Sam, with the only lie he ever told, and one most admirable. "I should say not!" he repeated with emphasis, and in tones which carried conviction even to himself.

"You'd better not!" said Nora. "I wouldn't of had you if they had!"

Sam started. "What's that, Nory?" he said. "Say that ag'in! Did you say you wouldn't of had me—you wouldn't of?" His hand found hers again.

"Yes," faltered Nora, seeing herself entrapped by her own speech.

"Then, Nory," said Sam firmly, casting a big arm about her waist, "if you wouldn't of had me then I reckon now you do." And neither from this subtlety nor from the sturdy arm did Nora seek evasion, though she tugged faintly at the fingers which held fast her waist.

"I don't care," she murmured vaguely. "There ain't no coward would of done it!" Whereat Sam, seeing himself a hero, wisely accepted fate and ceased to argue. The big arm tightened manfully, and into his blue eyes came the look of triumph.

"Nory," whispered he loyally, "I'll never work my airs ag'in for any woman in the world but you!"

(To be continued.)

Carnegie Dialect.

Though Andrew Carnegie's English is singularly elegant and pure, he has at his command a weird Scotch dialect.

Mr. Carnegie is a student of Scotch words and idioms. He likes to point out the oddities and freaks of his native tongue. Recently, at a dinner party in New York he said to a young woman:

"So you think you can understand Scots, eh? Well, then, what do we mean in Scotland when we say a person is just fifish?"

"I don't know. What do we mean?" the young woman asked.

"We mean he is a bit of a weed harum-scarum," said Mr. Carnegie.

"A weed harum-scarum? What is that?"

"It is the same as wowf."

"But what is wowf?"

"Wowf is nook or sal. That is to say, a bit by the east. Havers, lassie, ha'e ye no Scots at all?"

Then Mr. Carnegie laughed and explained that a weed harum-scarum, and fifish, and wow, and nook, and sal, and by the east all signified the one thing, "crazy."—Minneapolis Tribune.

Economy Extraordinary.

W. W. Young, who had listened to some remarks on economy, told of a boy who carried the sentiment to excess. "I saw the lad in front of a grocery store in a little town," said he. "He had a big green pepper in his hand and the tears were rolling down his cheek. The green pepper showed the imprints of his teeth. I asked him what was the matter and he said, 'It burns.'

"'Why are you eating it, then?' I asked, and he blubbered out, 'Well, I thought it was an apple when I bought it. I guess it ain't any apple, but I paid two cents for it an' I have to eat it, anyway.'"—New York Times.

Your Corner

The Latest of the Decrees of Fashion—Crepe Marquise One of the New Spring and Summer Fabrics—Japanese Satins That Are Bound to Be Popular.

Red and Pink Combined.

A combination of colors most people would exclaim at has become very popular this season. It is red and pink, and brunettes may consider this a blessing, as it is particularly becoming to their type. Pink is used for the foundation of the frock, and it is trimmed with clusters of cherry or deep poppy shades that blend with it. The effect is very rich, and a handsome gown is the result if care is taken in the shading of the color.

Blouse Eton.

Walking costumes made with short coats and skirts that clear the ground are the latest shown and are charmingly graceful as well as hygienic and comfortable. This one is made of mixed homespun, in tans and browns, with revers of tan colored cloth, and

4674 Blouse Eton, 32 to 40 bust.
4673 Walking Skirt, 22 to 30 waist.

includes the fashionable tucks in both blouse and skirt. The drop shoulders, the wide sleeves and the crushed belt all mark the blouse as essentially smart, while the skirt with front and back alike and short tucks between is one of the newest and best liked. To make the blouse for a woman of medium size will be required 3⅞ yards of material 27, 2⅛ yards 44 or 2 yards 52 inches wide; to make the skirt 7½ yards 27, 5 yards 44 or 3⅞ yards 52 inches wide.

A May Manton pattern of blouse, No. 4674, sizes 32 to 40, or of skirt, No. 4673, sizes 22 to 30, will be mailed to any address on receipt of ten cents for each.

Popular Laces.

Bruges and duchesse figure on many of the new Paris gowns, which means it is hoped that Honiton will have a look in. It is so pretty combined with soft Suede in belts and in appliques on materials. Black lace sparkles with jet and is accompanied by beautiful collars, which are more wonderfully cut than jet has ever been.

Pretty Things to Wear

Voiles for spring wear show faint colored plaids and raised dots, sometimes both in the one pattern.

Small three-cornered hats are to be worn, their severity softened by a ribbon rosette holding a falling bunch of flowers at the side.

Don't try to wear that new "Algerian" blue unless you have a faultless complexion.

Some of the spring walking hats are trimmed with foulard handkerchiefs, which show Japanese centers and plain borders.

Lots of tawny yellow shades and umbers will be worn by those who can do so without endangering their good looks.

Cotton Crepes.

Crepe marquise is one of the new spring and summer fabrics that can be washed. It has a crepe ground of monotones, and is distinguished by embroidered dots. Crepe Jacqueline, another silk and cotton goods in monotones, runs through the gamut of colors from pale ecru to black, with overrunning jacquards. Crepe Armazine is similar to crepe marquise, save that silk stripes instead of dots break its surface. Crepe princess is all cotton, but is a charming fabric. Voile duchess is a new and cheap all-cotton goods, with three threads woven together in such a way as to prevent sagging of the material. Pompadour crepe is another new dress material, with the softness of crepe and the lustre of silk, and printed in Pompadour designs.

Veils Are Passing.

Veils will be much less worn because of the veil effects in the lace trimmings, and feathers, though seen occasionally, will be far less popular than flowers. Roses stand first in favor—very large and small, and pink more than other colors.

And all the handsomest ornaments are in art noveau tinted to match all the spring flowers.

A Belt of Precious Stones.

An attractive new belt is composed of large gunmetal beads and precious stones set in a circle. Olivines, amethysts, topazes, coral and turquoises figure in this belt. Gunmetal beads separate the stones, so that there is no clash of colors.

Kitchen

Alcohol cleans piano keys; kerosene, oilcloth, table and shelf covers.

A tablespoonful of vinegar mixed with three of pure linseed oil will freshen and polish mahogany.

For sponging out bureau drawers or sideboards use tepid water containing a small quantity of thymolin.

To clean plaster of paris ornaments cover them with a thick coating of starch and allow it to become perfectly dry. Then it may be brushed off and the dirt with it.

Polished iron work can be preserved from rust by an inexpensive mixture made of copal varnish mixed with as much olive oil as will give it a degree of greasiness, and afterward adding to this mixture as much spirit of turpentine as of varnish.

To clean a clock lay in the bottom a rag saturated with kerosene. The fumes loosen the dirt and cause it to drop out. In a few days place another cloth saturated in kerosene in the clock. The fumes lubricate the works.

Child's Frock.

Long-waisted or French frocks are among the most fashionable shown for the little folk and are charming in the extreme. This one is made of mercerized blue chambray with trimming of white embroidery and is eminently simple as well as attractive,

4652 Child's Frock, 2 to 8 years.

of 5 years of age will be required 3½ but the design can be reproduced in many materials. The slightly open neck is a special feature and the wide collar is peculiarly stylish and becoming. To make the frock for a child yards of material 27, 3¼ yards 32 or 2½ yards 44 inches wide.

A May Manton pattern, No. 4652, sizes 2 to 8 years, will be mailed to any address on receipt of ten cents.

Japanese Satins.

How lovely are the gauzes, some of them exhibiting velvet brocade, some satin stripes; many are embroidered with gold wistaria blooms. Printed satins show something of the Japanese element, and though we cannot quite make up our minds whether we are to be faithful to silk and return with all our allegiance to it, it is certainly making its way for picture gowns, and soft makes are delicately painted with chine effects. Diaphanous silk muslins and tulles cannot be beaten for evening wear, and the amplitude of skirts show them off well.

Informal Talks

When making a pudding don't forget to make a pleat in the cloth at the top of your basin, so as to allow the pudding room to swell.

The hands can be cleansed better with warm water than with cold, but they should always be rinsed afterward with cold water, as this keeps them in a better condition.

A good polish for stoves is made of one teaspoonful of powdered alum mixed with the stove polish. The brilliance that this polish will give to a stove will last for a long time.

To preserve stair carpets put pads of old blankets on each step. If there is no store of ancient blankets to draw from, a substitute may be made of several thicknesses of brown paper.

When a spoonful of borax is put into the last water in which white clothes are rinsed, it has the effect of whitening them. Before it is added to the rinsing water the borax should be dissolved in a little hot water.

Readers of this paper can secure any May Manton pattern illustrated above by filling out all blanks in coupon, and mailing, with 10 cents, to E. E. Harrison & Co., 65 Plymouth Place, Chicago. Pattern will be mailed promptly.

Name .....
Town .....
State .....
Pattern No. .....
Waist Measure (if for skirt) .....
Bust Measure (if for waist) .....
Age (if child's or miss's pattern) .....

Write plainly. Fill out all blanks. Enclose 10c. Mail to E. E. Harrison & Co., 65 Plymouth Place, Chicago.

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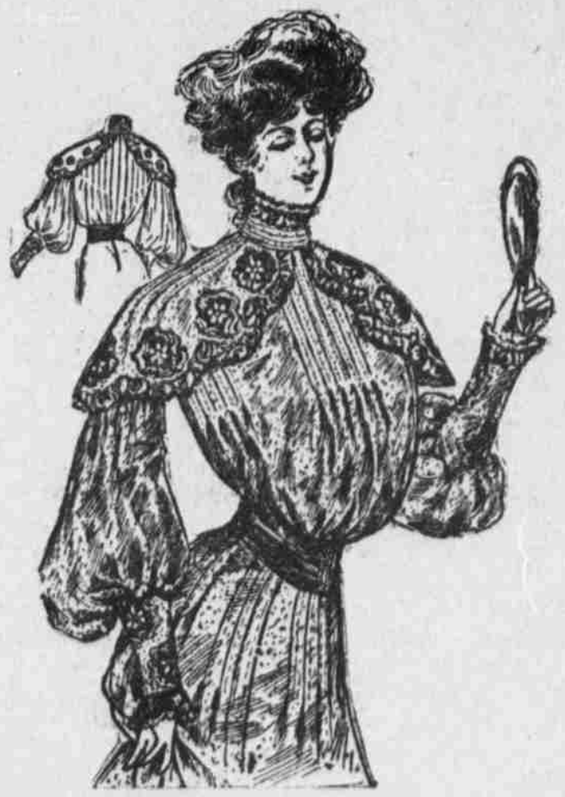

Waists made with fancy capes, or cape collars, are both graceful and fashionable, and also are becoming to the greater number of womankind. This one is peculiarly effective and makes part of a costume of violet seeded voile trimmed with ecru lace applique and worn with a crushed belt of messaline satin. The tucks, that are arranged to give a yoke effect in the waist and to confine the sleeves closely at the shoulders, provide soft fullness below the stitchings that means admirable folds and lines and allows the droop over the wide belt that marks the latest models. To make the waist for a woman of medium size will be required 5½ yards of material 21 or 27 or 2½ yards 44 inches wide, with 5 yards of applique to finish edges of cape, sleeves and collar.

A May Manton pattern, No. 4678, sizes 32 to 40, will be mailed to any address on receipt of ten cents.