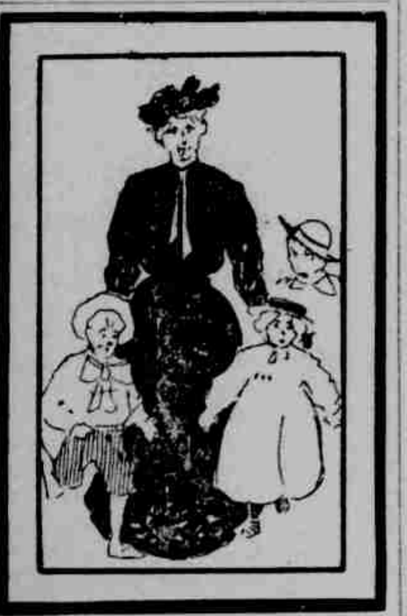
A FORFEITED STEPFATHERHOOD

ELMER Harding picked up an envelope addressed to the firm of which he was senior partner, and which he found lying upon his own desk, the letter itself being placed on file for future reference. Something about the handwriting recalled a memory that was haunting and elusive.

"A woman's fist, evidently," he said to himself, and tucked the envelope into a pigeon-hole only to keep thinking of it to the utter exclusion of more important topics. Then he took it out of its hiding place, and examined it carefully.

"Where have I seen that handwriting before? It is as familiar as a breath of the old lilac tree that stood at the door of the south porch at home. I wish these vagrant memories would not come disturbing me with their vague hints of a happy past. I must find out about this letter."



A TALL, STOUT WOMAN.

He touched a bell and the head clerk responded to the summons.

"Where is the letter which this contained?" asking Harding, as he held up the empty envelope.

"I will bring it. The woman who wrote it wanted us——"

"Oh, did a woman write it? Pretty good business hand, eh, Simpson?"

"Yes, sir; and she's a good business woman, too, I should say. Her husband bought a block of buildings on the South Side, and intending coming to the city to live, but he died suddenly, and the widow prefers to remain on their farm, near Omaha. So we are commissioned to sell the property here. I'll fetch the letter."

The explanation, however, had satisfied Elmer Harding that he had no personal interest in the matter, and he took the letter when it was handed him in a perfunctory manner, and did not even take the trouble to read it. As a mere matter of form, he glanced at the signature and gave a great start. He knew then why his middle-aged heart had thumped so violently at sight of the handwriting, why memory had evoked sweet perfume and wafts of incense out of a dead past. Here was a name to conjure with. Rose Atkinson! She who had been Rose Boynton, the flower that all were praising, and the only one that had ever bloomed for him. Rose of the prairie, rose of his heart. And she had married that red-headed chump, Ed Atkinson, while he, Elmer Harding, was getting ready to start in business, and then go back and ask her to marry him. He knew he had no one to blame but himself, he felt sure it was with Rose a case of a bird in hand, but for long years he was sore and aggrieved over her defection, as he chose to consider it. And now she was a widow.

He read the letter then and found it a concise, well-worded business epistle, quite unlike anything he would have expected of Rose, who had been diffuse and undecided in the old days. It hurt him to think of her as a business woman when he remembered the sweet girlishness of her early youth, the ripple of her Roman gold hair, as he had loved to call it, the music of her merry gurgling laugh. Then he looked in the little mirror over his desk and saw the promontory of knowledge from which his own hair had departed, the lack-luster eyes and the heavy double chin.

"You're a fool, Elmer Harding," he said, pulling himself together with a sigh. "If she did not love you in the old days she would not look at you now," and he gave his mind to business for the rest of that day.

But on the next day he wrote her a letter, friendly, with an apparent business motive but filled throughout with gentle reminders of the past, and asking her as an old friend to answer it and tell him of herself. He had informed her that he had never married and was devoted to old bachelorhood.

He waited for an answer with a feverish interest that gave a new zest to life, and when he found it awaiting him at his apartments—he was too shrewd to have it addressed to the office—he trembled like a love-sick boy as he opened it. The letter was cleverly written, leaving much to the imagination of its reader. Facts were merely touched on. "Several children," a good farm and money in the bank were her portion. She would not speak of her loneliness, but he would understand. She alluded to the "[illegible]" in contrast to her present widowed state and hurriedly closed her letter as if memories overpowered her. Elmer Harding reverently kissed her signature and murmured:

"Dear little Rose! That slight, fragile creature, struggling with the care of a growing family! Why, she is nothing but a child herself. I wonder if she has kept that perfect color she had, like the flower for which she was named. Dear, shy, sensitive Rose, how I would like to see you!"

Other letters were exchanged, and finally a meeting between the two was arranged. Mr. Harding had business in that part of the country. Sentimentalist though he might be, he was enough like his fellow men to be able to conjure up business in the Desert of Sahara if necessary, and he wrote to Mrs. Atkinson that he would be in her neighborhood and would call upon her at such a time, but the little god of prudence restrained him from making any open avowal of marriage until he could see his dear one face to face. But he was a very impatient lover.

He reached Omaha a day in advance of the time he was expected, but took an immediate outgoing train for the town on the border of which the Atkinson farm was located. There was one car a day, and Harding seated himself in the back of it, pulling his hat over his eyes, but closely observant of surroundings. A noisy crowd was entering, and he watched them, as, besides himself, they were the only passengers. A tall, stout woman and half a dozen hatchet-faced children, loaded with parcels and lugging baskets, struggled in and were soon haggling over seats.

"Here, you children, get into your seats and stay there! You, Ed, let your sister alone. Wait till I get home—I'll teach you not to scrap in the cars. Elmer, stop eating them grapes."

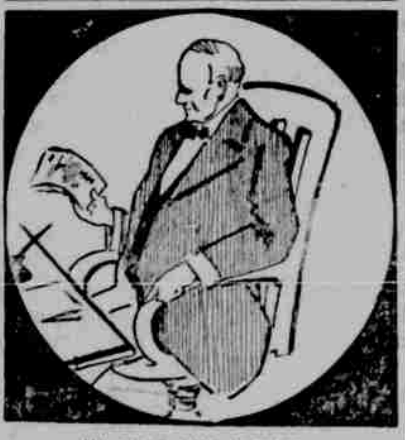
"My name ain't Elmer," said the boy with a grin.

"Yes, it is, and don't you forget it. Your new pa won't take no back talk, if I do. He'll soon size you up."

"Will our new pa pull our hair the way our old pa did?" This from a precocious girl with a shock of fiery red hair.

"You bet he will, Reddy. My, I wonder how he looks. Say, ma, has he got red hair?"

"No, I reckon it's gray now, like mine, though mebbe he hasn't changed as much as I have, seeing he hasn't a lot of young ones to worry his life out. He couldn't hold a candle to your pa when we was all young together, but mebbe he's improved some. Dorindy Atkinson, stop pulling Clara's hair. If you don't behave you can't go to meet your new pa to-morrow."



HE READ THE LETTER.

"He ain't our pa yet," whined Dorindy, whereat her mother shook her, increasing the florid red of that good woman's face to a dark purple hue, while she renewed the threat, "Wait till your new pa comes!"

At the next station the man in the back of the car sneaked out and took the first train back to Omaha.—Chicago Record-Herald.

Windows as Fire-Spreaders.

In a paper read at St. James' Hall before the Society of Architects, Ellis Marsland, honorary secretary of the British Fire Prevention Committee, stated that unshuttered windows are the main cause of the spread of a conflagration. Lantern slides of the Barbican fire emphasized his conclusions, and showed that if, as recommended, all such openings were closed every night by iron, hardwood or asbestos blinds, though the spread of a fire might not be entirely prevented, its progress would be retarded. As it is, immediately the hose plays on the heated and unprotected glass it smashes and the flames fly inward and onward. He suggested that the insurance companies might well encourage this form of protection by reducing fees to clients who introduced it, or there might be legislation making it compulsory.—London Express.

Popcorn Is Excellent Food.

"Popcorn is one of the best foods we have; people don't begin to appreciate its value," said Mrs. Mary D. Chambers, in the course of a lecture on cereals to a class of women in domestic science at the library building in Brooklyn. And then, seeing the surprise on the faces of the women before her, she went on:

"Let your children eat all the popcorn they want. It contains a valuable oil, has high calorific power, and is mostly starch cooked thoroughly by high pressure of steam."

How the girls like to look at a bride's clothes!

THERMOMETER MAKING.

How Boiling and Freezing Points Are Found and Degrees Marked.

The making of a thermometer may be either a delicate scientific operation or one of the simplest tasks of the skilled mechanic, according to the sort of thermometer made. With the extremely sensitive and minutely accurate instruments designed for scientific uses great care is taken and they are kept in stock for months, sometimes years, to be compared with instruments that are known to be trustworthy. But so much time cannot be spent over the comparatively cheap thermometer in common use, and these are made rapidly, though always carefully.

Mercury is generally used for scientific instruments, but most makers prefer alcohol because it is cheaper. The alcohol is colored red with aniline dye, which does not fade. The thermometer maker buys his glass tubes in long strips from the glass factories. The glass blower on the premises cuts these tubes to the proper lengths, and with his gas jet and blowpipe makes the bulb on the lower end. The bulbs are then filled with colored alcohol and the tubes stand for twenty-four hours. On the following day another workman holds each bulb in turn over a gas jet until the colored fluid by its expansion entirely fills the tube. It then goes back into the hands of the glass blower. He closes the upper end and turns the tip backward to make a little hook, which will help keep the tube in place in the frame.

The tubes rest until some hundreds of them, perhaps thousands, are ready. Then the process of gauging begins. There are no marks on the tube and the first guide-mark to be made is the freezing point, 32 degrees Fahrenheit. This is found by plunging the bulb into melting snow. No other thermometer is needed for a guide, for melting snow gives invariably the exact freezing point. This is an unfailing test for any thermometer when accuracy may be suspected. But melting snow is not always to be had and a little machine resembling a sausage grinder is brought into use. This machine shaves a block of ice into particles, which answer the purpose as well as snow. When the bulbs have been long enough in the melting snow a workman takes them one by one from their bath, seizing each so that his thumb nail marks the exact spot to which the fluid has fallen. Here he makes a scarcely perceptible mark upon the glass with a fine file, and goes on to the next.

The tubes, with the freezing point marked on each, now go into the hands of another workman, who plunges the bulb into a vessel filled with water kept constantly at 96 degrees. This is marked like the others, and the tube is now supplied with these guide-marks, each 32 degrees from the next.

With its individuality thus established, the tube goes into the hands of a marker, who fits its bulb and hook into the frame it is to occupy and makes slight scratches on the frame corresponding to the 32 degrees, 64 degrees and 96 degrees marks on the tube.

The frame, whether it be wood, tin or brass, goes to the gauging room, where it is laid on a steeply sloping table marked exactly in the position for a thermometer of that size.

A long, straight bar of wood or metal extends diagonally across the table from the lower right-hand corner to the upper left-hand corner. On the right this rests upon a pivot and on the left it rests in a rachet, which lets it ascend or descend only one notch at a time. Each notch marks the exact distance of two degrees.—London Express.

BIGGEST CRAB EVER FOUND.

One in Brooklyn Museum Over Eleven Feet in Diameter.

The biggest crab ever discovered, it is said, is now mounted and on exhibition in the Brooklyn Museum of Arts and Sciences. The natural home of this creature is under from 600 to 4,000 feet of water. The crab measures 11½ feet in diameter and for the most part it has a very beautiful complexion—for a crab—ranging from a delicate old rose tint on the top of the carapace and legs to a pale brownish shade on the underside.

The two front legs have the usual crab claws, which are big enough to crush a man, but the others end in narrow brown hoofs without toes. The eyes on the branches are enormously large and the feelers are as big as garden hose.

The crab was taken off the Japanese coast and formed a part of a collection made by Professor Bashford Dean, of Columbia College, last year, and it was presented to the Brooklyn museum by Eugene G. Blackford. It took more than a month to mount it.

It is supposed that the giant crabs grow to twelve feet in diameter, says the Detroit News-Tribune, but the one in Brooklyn is the biggest ever captured. Not many of them are captured—not more than ten or twelve a year—although the Japanese are fishing over the grounds where they are found all the time.

The Japanese fishermen set lines several miles in length, with many hundreds of hooks, which are sunk to the floor of the ocean and left over night. When the lines are hauled in the next morning all manner of extraordinary things are found attached, from giant crabs to sea lilies.

None to Spare.

"Tacoma speaks up and says she is not suffering for sweet girls for brides."

"Well, there is one thing sure, and that is that none of the other cities is suffering from an overplus."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

GOOD Short Stories

At an inquest on a case of a suicide recently held in England, the foreman returned this remarkable verdict: "The jury are all of one mind—temporarily insane."

A solicitor for a charitable institution went to a woman's door recently and asked her for a contribution. "We have," he stated, earnestly, "hundreds of poor, ragged and vicious children, like those at your gate, and our object is——" "Sir!" interrupted the indignant woman, "those are my children!"

Mark Twain, since he advertised for editorial obituaries of himself, has received some very amusing contributions. A Baltimore admirer writes: "Some people think you are immortal, but if you really ever do intend to die it is certainly your duty to go to Hades. Funny men are needed there, but they are very small potatoes up in heaven. You have always preached philanthropy, and now you have the chance of your lifetime to demonstrate your consistency."

When speaking before the House, Reed avoided the customary tricks of the spread-eagle stump orator, and contented himself with saying what he had to say in his own characteristic drawl, without any oratorical flourishes. Colonel W. C. P. Breckenridge came to Congress with the reputation of a "silver-tongued orator," and used in his speeches in the House all the expedients that Reed avoided. He could not speak for five minutes, even on ordinary subjects, without falling into a funereal tone that grated exceedingly on Reed's sensibilities. One day, when Colonel Breckenridge was holding forth in his usual mournful cadences, Reed's attention was caught by the colonel's melancholy tones. Turning to a friend, Reed asked in a drawling but solemn voice: "Judge, were you acquainted with the deceased?"

When President Roosevelt received the Carlisle Indian School's crack football team at Washington, D. C., he made every one of the red men feel at his ease. He knew some of the big chiefs in some of the tribes represented, and when he mentioned their names the players addressed were mightily tickled. Most of the Indians have adopted the names of white men, and those the President asked what they were called by their own people. "No need to ask you, Mr. Tomahawk," said he, beaming on the right guard; "I know what your name means." There was one player whose Indian name was Bear. "De-lighted!" cried the President, grasping his hand warmly; "I'm well acquainted with the bear family. I met some of them in Mississippi, and I know Baer, of the Reading Coal Company. He is harder to catch than any of them. You are built like a football player. I'm glad you are not one of the bears I chased in Mississippi. They'd make good football players, too."

LOOK OUT FOR HIM.

Dodge the Man in Bad Humor If You Want Good Bargains.

"If you want to get a good bargain dodge the man who is in a bad humor," said a gentleman to a New Orleans Times-Democrat representative, "which reflection is made as a sort of prelude to a few remarks on the relation of mood to results in the affairs of life. Here is a rule which is as broad as human nature, and quite as deep in its significance. No matter what you want, how much or how little, if you are wise you will steer clear of the man who is in a bad humor. Nine times out of ten he will give you the worst end of the bargain, if he does not actually skin you. There are two kinds of men to avoid when you go out after anything from a shovel to a sealskin coat. One is the man who is always jolly and cheerful, and the other is the glum, disagreeable fellow. In either case you will get the little end of the deal. If anybody is to do a "jollying" turn, you do it, and if anybody is to be glum, you simply nominate yourself. If you don't you can put yourself down as an ass, and you might as well pay the price and go on about your business. Instances: Here is a barber. Ordinarily, he can give you as smooth a shave as you would care to have. He knows his business, if you happen to catch him when he is in the right kind of mood. Catch him when he is off a bit, not in form, as the race horse men put it, when he is not exactly in the 'pink of condition' mentally because of something which has happened to him, or because of something you have said—well, you are in for a rough time and no mistake. What he will do to your face will be enough to last you a lifetime. Remedy: Cheer him up. Jolly him. Throw a wad of sunshine into his life, and make him feel that the game is worth the candle after all, and he will give your face a dollar's worth of attention for a dime. This illustrates the point I had in mind. Barbers are not different from other men in this respect; in fact, men of all kinds of callings are the same way. There is a little lesson, after all, in these reflections. They teach us that there is much good in the cheerful way of doing and saying things, and a good, too, that is not confined to spiritual uplifting. There is a material benefit in it all, a certain tangible good with which we may reckon immediately. Of course, there is the other type—the glum type—and it often happens that this mood is needful in the consummation of a desired result. Use it only when the end justifies the means. But the main point is that you must be the aggressor in whatever mood you choose to select, and hence the admonition to beware of the man in a bad humor unless you can 'jolly' him out of it."

BIG LANDLORDS OF IRELAND.

Marquis of Londonderry Leads the List in Extent of Acreage.

To judge from the prominence given to Lord Barrymore and to Colonel Saunderson in the question of the landlord-tenant conference, it might be imagined that they were almost the largest landowners in Ireland, whereas neither the one nor the other would, in point of acreage, come among the first three hundred of the four thousand owners of over five hundred acres who have just been polled. Lord Barrymore owns 21,000 acres, and Colonel Saunderson 12,362. There are twenty-two Irish landlords owning more than fifty thousand acres, two of them—the Duke of Devonshire and the Marquis of Lansdowne—being members of the present ministry, and the marquis, with his 121,349 acres, would seem to be, in point of acreage possessed, the largest Irish landlord. The other cabinet minister, whom most of us take to be the typical Irish landlord, the Marquis of Londonderry, shows quite small by the side of his brother marquis, for he owns 27,416 acres only; but as they are in Ulster—or, rather, in East Ulster—they produce over thirty thousand a year.

One would wonder whether the big landlord may not be, after all, the curse that the older generation of the last century made him out to be. Scotland and Ireland for the purpose of this proposition are practically equal, yet while there are in Ireland two-and-twenty landlords owning over 50,000 acres, there are in Scotland forty-seven. It may be news to many Englishmen that one of the broadest-acred of these Scottish landlords is the prime minister, who owns just 90,000 acres, with a rent roll of some £20,000. The laird of lairds is, of course, the Duke of Sutherland, who possesses over a million and a quarter of acres, which bring him in some £70,000 per annum.—London Chronicle.

THE FLOWER OF THE ORIENT.

Exquisite Gentility of a Group of Japanese People.

It is still true that westward the course of empire takes its way, but any one who disdains the teachings of the East must be a superficial student of human life and manners.

A company of Japanese, a baron and baroness with their suite, have been visiting the United States for the study of certain commercial conditions. As they sailed away on a great ocean-liner they showed to marked advantage among the throng of American and English tourists.

They were short, swarthy, plain of feature, as we count plainness, save for one extremely pretty young woman. But they had the manners of great nobles. They were gentle of bearing, considerate of the claims and the pleasures of others, low-voiced, unconscious—or seemingly unconscious—of rude stares or noisy comment.

Their courtesy among themselves was beautiful to watch. It was noticeable that the radiant girl was not more devotedly attended by the men than were the middle-aged women, who had no slightest pretension to beauty.

Among the crowd of loud-speaking, pushing, self-satisfied dwellers in this Western Hemisphere this little group of Easterners were like some white, still bloom of one of their own exquisitely blossoming trees—the final product of ages on ages of the cultivation that forgets nothing, omits nothing that may enhance the charm of social life and intercourse.

Senator's One-Horse Hack.

Senator Dolliver, of Iowa, according to the Pilgrim, tells this story at his own expense, as illustrating the pitfalls that beset a man of modest means at the national capital:

"On one occasion I was invited to attend a social function given by a high official. I went and had a delightful time, concluding that Washington social life was not a thing to be in the least afraid of. This conclusion was reached, by the way, just as I was taking leave of the host.

"A liveried servant approached me and asked if my carriage was in waiting and whether it was a single or double conveyance. Out of consideration for a lean pocket book I had ordered a cab rather than a two-horse carriage. I had the pleasure of hearing the servant shouting to the carriage driver:

"'Senator Dolliver's one-horse hack! Senator Dolliver's one-horse hack!'

"The man then came to me, and, with his head high in the air, announced: 'Your hack's waitin', Senator Dolliver.'"

Supply and Demand.

"Extry!" shouted the dirty faced newsboy with the foghorn voice. "All 'bout the double murder and suicide!"

"Extra edition!" piped the other newsboy. "Philanthropist gives a million dollars to found a hospital!"

But the boy with the double murder and suicide edition sold all the papers.—Chicago Tribune.

The Astute Farmer.

"Silas Wiggins has got a new kind of health food he's feeding them city folks, Malviny."

"What's that?"

"Last winter's hay."

A woman may be a good talker and still have an impediment in her thoughts.

WHAT HE SAW IN MONTANA.

Experience of an Eastern Man Among the Mountains of the West.

A Detroiter who had been spending two or three months in Montana arrived home the other day, and when a reporter called at his house to interview him the little affair was found to be typewritten and all ready for instant delivery. It reads as follows:

"I gained fifteen pounds.

"Haven't felt so well for ten years.

"Climate of Montana is the most glorious in the world.

"Saw many Indians. Saw many Indians playing poker.

"Bought an Indian blanket to bring home. After boiling it for a week or so it will be left out about forty nights to freeze.

"Bought several Indian arrows stained with blood. Didn't ask whether it was human or cow's blood. They never make any explanations in Montana.

"Rode a bucking broncho. Usual results followed. Broncho also broke his neck at the same time.

"Was impressed by the mountains. Have returned home dissatisfied with Michigan because she has none.

"Saw many genuine cowboys. Was rather disappointed to find most of them deacons of churches, but was assured that they couldn't help it.

"Was out for grizzly bears several times, but obtained no interviews. Was told that this was the season when they retire to the tops of the highest trees to hibernate. I did not argue the matter. They never argue in Montana.

"Heard the howl of a mountain lion one evening when returning to camp. Was informed that he was howling to pass away the time, and that he probably hadn't heard of my being out there. Made no remarks. Remarks don't go in Montana.

"Saw the tracks of an elk. Might have seen the elk who made the tracks if I had followed the trail three or four weeks longer. Was neither encouraged nor discouraged by the people. They let you do as you want to in Montana.

"Saw a man hung for stealing a horse. It wasn't clear whether it was a horse or a steer, but as he wanted to be hung they didn't split hairs over it. The people of Montana are an accommodating lot. They would have hung me had I requested it.

"This is all. Do not fail to speak of me as an eminent citizen and one largely interested in the future of Detroit, and see that the proofs of this article are read twice and are clear of mistakes."—Detroit Free Press.

WHY THE LEAVES TREMBLED

Savages are supposed to have keener senses, especially a keener sense of sight, than civilized races. The author of "Idle Days in Patagonia" does not accept this theory. He believes that savages have no keener senses, but that they pay closer attention to what comes within the range of their perception. As an instance of quick response to an impression, he tells the following story:

On March 12, 1861, a company of hunters were camping beside a grove of willows in Patagonia. About 9 o'clock that evening, while they were seated round the fire roasting their ostrich meat, Sosa suddenly sprang to his feet and held his open hand high above his head for some moments.

"There is not a breath of wind blowing," he exclaimed, "yet the leaves of the trees are trembling! What can this portend?"

The other stared at the trees, but could see no motion, and they began to laugh at him. Presently he sat down again, remarking that the trembling had ceased; but during the rest of the evening he was very much disturbed in his mind. He remarked repeatedly that such a thing had never happened in his experience before; for, he said, he could feel a breath of wind before the leaves felt it, and there had been no wind. He feared that it was a warning of some disaster about to overtake their party.

The disaster was not for them. On that evening occurred the earthquake which destroyed the distant city of Mendoza and crushed twelve thousand people to death beneath the ruins. That the subterranean wave extended east to the Plata and southward into Patagonia was afterward known; for in the cities of Rosario and Buenos Ayres clocks stopped, and a slight shock was also experienced in the Carmen on the Rio Negro.

Hired Carriages.

Every year hired carriages are becoming more in demand in New York. An amazingly small number of the private vehicles seen on the avenue in the afternoons or in the park belong to the persons who are in them. The convenience of hired vehicles is enough to compensate many persons for the loss of the pleasure of owning their own horseflesh. They are to be had at all hours, and persons who hesitate to take out their own horses at certain times have no hesitation in making use of hired horses. Then there is the question of ailing horses, which never need trouble a person who hires his carriage. If one horse is sick, another is always at hand. The difficulty of keeping satisfactory coachmen is also transferred to the shoulders of the stablekeeper. The stables that make a specialty of letting vehicles by the season are always willing to provide an entirely new vehicle, which is, of course, kept exclusively for the use of the person who has engaged it, and with these advantages there is said to be no more expense.

Lots of poor men are the architects of other men's fortunes.