

LOOKING FOR TROUBLE

Being Some Real Stories from the life of a Master Adventurer

by Captain George B. Boynton

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EDITOR'S NOTE—Captain George B. Boynton, who died recently in Brooklyn, actually lived such a life of thrilling action as to sound only in the adventures as are usually blockade-runner, filibuster, revolutionary, sea-rover, counselor of South American dictators, soldier and soldier of fortune the world over, such was this master adventurer. His exploits have been fictionalized into a score of the best sellers of recent years. For the first time Captain Boynton's own story, told by himself, is offered in print. He writes in a straightforward and convincing style and by the admission of his admirers and by the admission of the author.

THROUGHOUT my life I have sought adventure over the face of the world and its waters as other men have hunted and fought for gold or struggled for fame. Whether through the outcropping of a strain of buccaneer blood held in subjection by generations of placid propriety or as a result of some freak of prenatal suggestion, the love of adventure was born in me, deep-planted and long-rooted. Adventure is an essential to my existence as air and food. Through it my life has been prolonged in activity and my soul has been perpetuated in youth; when I can no longer enjoy its electrification, death, I hope, will come quickly.

I have served, all told, under eighteen flags, and to each I gave the best that was in me. In following my natural bent, it perhaps will be considered by some people that I have gone outside of written laws. To such my answer is that I have always been true to my own conscience and to my country.

Red-blooded love of adventure, free from any wanton spirit and with the prospect of financial reward always subordinated, has been the driving force in all my encounters with good men and bad, with the latter class much in the majority. The name by which I am known is one of the contradictions of my life. Save only for my father, who sympathized with my adventurous disposition at the same time that he tried to curb it, I was at war with my family almost from the time I could talk. When I left home to become an adventurer around the globe I buried my real name, and I do not propose to uncover it, here or hereafter.

In the course of my activities I have used many names in many lands, but that of Boynton, which had been in the family for years, stuck to me until I finally adopted it, prefixing a George and a B., which really stands for Boynton.

I was born May 1, 1842, on Fifth avenue, New York, not a long way north of Washington Square. My father was a distinguished surgeon and owned a large estate on Lake Champlain, where most of my youthful summers were spent.

After a somewhat scattered series of escapades, which increased the ire of the family and intensified my dislike of their prosaic protestations, my father solemnly declared his intention of sending me to the United States Naval Academy. I was delighted. The machinery to procure my appointment had been set in motion and I was ready to take the examination when the opening gun of the Civil war was fired at Fort Sumter, April 12, 1861. I was immediately seized with a wild desire to be in the fight. My father would not consent to it, on account of my age, but promised that if I would wait a year, he would try to get me a commission. My sympathies were with the South, but it was more convenient to take the other side, and at that moment I was not particular about principles. The family were duly horrified one evening when I went home and told them I had enlisted. The next day my father bought my discharge and hustled me out to Woodstock, Ill., where I was placed in charge of an unit.

He prevented my joining an infantry regiment, but I got away with a cavalry regiment some months later and was made one of its officers. We went to Cairo, Ill., and from there by transport to Pittsburg Landing, where we arrived just in time to take part in the battle fought on April 6 and 7, 1862. I was severely wounded in that engagement.

When I was discharged from the hospital I was sent into the Tennessee mountains in charge of a detachment to intercept contrabands which was being sent into the south from Cincinnati.

Soon after my return to headquarters I contracted a bad case of malaria and was sent home, which meant back to Woodstock, where I had eloped with a banker's daughter just before going to the front. I was disgusted with the war and I expressed myself so freely and was so outspoken in my sympathy for the South, that I made myself unpopular in a very short time.

At any rate the people set their hearts on hanging me for being "a copperhead," and they might have done it if old man Wellburn, the proprietor of the hotel at which my wife and I were staying, had not helped me to stand off a mob that came after me.

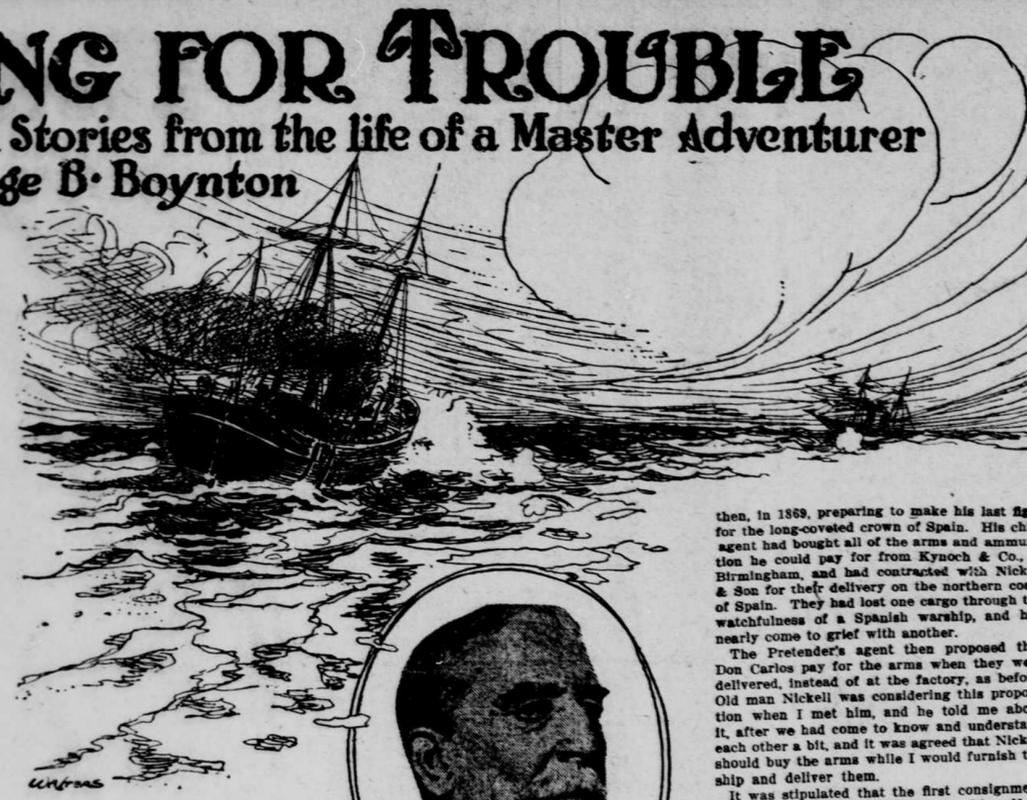
That experience intensified by dissatisfaction with the whole business and I sent in my resignation. It was accepted, and when I had thought it all over I considered that I was lucky to have escaped a court-martial.

I had heard that Carlos Manuel de Cespedes was fomenting a revolt in Cuba, which afterward was known as the "Ten Years War," and had conceived the idea of taking a hand in it.

While I was wondering how I could get into communication with Cespedes by interest was crossed by a newspaper story of the new blockade-runner, Letter B. There was so much money in blockade-running that the owners could well afford to lose her after she had made three successful trips.

In five minutes I decided to become a blockade-runner and to buy the new and already famous ship, if she was to be had at any price within reason. I bought a letter of credit and took the next ship for Bermuda. On my arrival there I found that the Letter B had been expected in for several days from her second trip and that there was considerable anxiety about her. I also learned that her owner was building a second ship on the same lines and for the same trade. A fresh cargo of munitions of war was awaiting the Letter B, and a ship was ready to take to England the cotton she would bring.

I got acquainted with the agent for the



CAPT. GEO. B. BOYNTON

blockade-runner, and offered to buy her and take the chance that she might never come in. He wanted me to wait until the arrival of her owner, Joseph Berry, who was expected daily from England.

After waiting several days I said to him one morning: "It looks as though your ship has been captured or sunk. I'll take a gambler's chance that she hasn't and will give you \$50,000 for her and \$25,000 for the cargo that is waiting for her; you to take the cargo she brings in. I'll give you three hours to think it over."

It looked as though I was taking a long chance, but I had a "hunch" that she was all right, and I never have had a well-defined "hunch" steer me in anything but a safe course, wherefore I invariably heed them. At the expiration of the time limit there was not a sign of smoke in any direction and the agent accepted my proposition. In half an hour I had a bill of sale for the ship and the warehouse receipts for the cargo of war supplies.

On the third day the Letter B came tearing in, pursued at long range by the U. S. S. Powhatan, which proceeded to stand guard over the harbor, keeping well off shore on account of the reefs and shoals that were under her lee.

The Letter B discharged a full cargo of cotton and was turned over to me. She was unloaded in twelve hours, and all of her cargo was safely stowed in another forty-eight hours. I took command of her, with John B. Williams, her old captain, as sailing master, and determined to put to sea at once.

I knew the Powhatan would not be looking for us so soon, and planned to catch her off her guard.

The Powhatan saw us sooner than I had expected, and started, but she was not quick enough. She fired three or four shots at us, but they fell far short.

At sunrise we had the ocean to ourselves. I started in at once to master practical navigation, the theory with the handling of a ship.

We arrived off Charleston late in the afternoon and steamed up close inshore until we could make out the smoke of the blockading fleet, which was standing well out, in a semi-circle. Then we dropped back a bit and anchored. All of the conditions shaped themselves to favor us. It was a murky night with a hard blow, which came up late in the afternoon, and when we got under way at midnight a good bit of a sea was running.

With the engines held down to only about half speed, but ready to do their best in a twinkling, we headed for the harbor, standing as close inshore as we dared go. We passed so close to the blockading ship stationed at the lower end of the crescent that she could not have depressed her guns enough to hit us even if we had been discovered in time. But she did not see us until we had passed her. Then she let go at us with her bow guns and, while they did no damage, we were at such close quarters that their flash gave the other ships a glimpse of us as we darted away.

They immediately opened on us, but after the first minute or two it was a case of haphazard shooting with all of them. The first shells exploded close around us, and some of the fragments came aboard, but no one was injured. When I saw where they were firing I threw my ship further over toward Sullivan's Island, where she could go on account of her light draft, and sailed quietly along into the harbor at reduced speed. At daylight we went up to the dock and were warmly welcomed.

Before the second night was half over we had everything out of her and a full cargo of cotton aboard, and we steamed out at once. I knew the blockaders would not expect us for at least four days, and we surprised them just as we had surprised the Powhatan at Bermuda. It was a thick night, and we sailed on account of the fleet at half speed, but prepared to break and run for it at the crack of a gun. Not a shot was fired or an extra light shown.

As soon as we were clear of the line we put on full speed, and three days later we were safe at Turk's Island, the most southerly and easterly of the Bahama Islands.

I made two more trips to Charleston without any very exciting experiences, though we were fired on both times, and then sold the ship to an enterprising Englishman at Turk's Island.

Having succeeded as a blockade-runner, I was ambitious to become a filibuster, which kindred vocation I thought offered even greater opportunities for adventure, and immediately after the sale of the Letter B, in the latter part of 1864, I returned to New York, in the

hope that the Cespedes revolution in Cuba would have been sprung and a junta established with which I could work. I found that the revolt was still hatching and that no New York agent had been appointed, so, for want of something better to do, I bought from Benjamin Wood, editor of the New York News, the old Franklin avenue distillery in Brooklyn.

This venture resulted in an open and final rupture with my family.

I had been in the distillery business only a few months, during which time the property had shown a large profit, when, while attending a performance at the old Grand Opera House, I met "Jim" Fisk, with whom I had become acquainted in my boyhood days, when he was running a gaudy peddler's wagon out of Boston.

Fisk asked what I was doing that I looked so prosperous. I told him briefly and he said he wanted to buy a half interest in the distillery and asked me to put a price on it. I told him I did not want a partner. He insisted and said he had influence at Washington—which he afterward proved—and that it would be valuable to us.

"We will make a good team," he said. "Here"—and he scribbled off a check for \$100,000 and tossed it over to me—"now we are partners."

"Not much!" I said, as I tossed it back to him. "I am making too much money for you to get in at that price, even if I wanted you as a partner."

"All right, then," he replied as he wrote out another check, for \$150,000, and handed it to me; "take that; I am in half with you now."

Before I could enter another objection he stalked out of the room and I let it go at that, for I had a scheme in mind and figured that his influence, if it was as powerful as he claimed, would be useful.

Then followed a year or more of prosperity, flavored with complications with the government, and we finally quit the business with a profit of about \$350,000.

Fisk and I continued in partnership and in the summer of 1866 we bought the fast and staunch little steamer Edgar Stuart, which had been a blockade-runner. We bought a cargo of arms and ammunition and were just putting it on board when the first Cuban junta came to New York and opened offices on New Street. They sent for me and wanted to buy our cargo.

The Spaniards were not so watchful then as later and the arms were delivered without much trouble at Cape Maysi, at the extreme eastern end of Cuba.

The junta then engaged us to deliver several cargoes of arms to the rebels. I was always in command of these expeditions, with a sailing master in charge of the ship, while Fisk stayed at home and attended to the Washington end of the business.

Along about 1868, after it had run half its length, the Ten Years War began to bog down. There was nothing else doing in this part of the world, so I decided to go to Europe, being attracted by the prospect of war between France and Germany.

During the Cuban filibustering days I gained more notoriety than I desired, and as I did not wish to be known as a trouble-maker on the other side, where the laws against the carrying of contraband were being rigidly enforced on account of the recent Alabama affair, I lost my identity while crossing the Atlantic. When I reached London in the latter part of 1868 I was George MacFarlane, and in order that I might have an address and ostensible occupation I established the commercial house of George MacFarlane & Co., at 10 Corn Hill. My partner, who really was only a clerk, was a young Englishman named Cunningham, for whom I had been able to do a good turn while living in Chicago. I opened an account in the London & Westminster bank with an initial deposit of close to £75,000, which gave me a financial standing.

Fate was kind to me in throwing in my way the little steamer Leckwith, which I bought at a bargain.

Don Carlos, the Spanish Pretender, was just

then, in 1869, preparing to make his last fight for the long-coveted crown of Spain. His chief agent had bought all of the arms and ammunition he could pay for from Knoch & Co., of Birmingham, and had contracted with Nickell & Son for their delivery on the northern coast of Spain. They had lost one cargo through the watchfulness of a Spanish warship, and had nearly come to grief with another.

The Pretender's agent then proposed that Don Carlos pay for the arms when they were delivered, instead of at the factory, as before. Old man Nickell was considering this proposition when I met him, and he told me about it, after we had come to know and understand each other a bit, and it was agreed that Nickell should buy the arms while I would furnish the ship and deliver them.

It was stipulated that the first consignment should be delivered to Don Carlos himself at his headquarters near Bilbao.

Only a small and light-draft ship could get up the river, and I did not care to try it with the Leckwith, so I chartered a smaller steamer which greatly resembled the Santa Maria, a Spanish coastwise ship. To avoid suspicion, Spanish coastwise ships were shipped to Antwerp and I picked them up there.

As soon as we were out of sight of land I repainted my ship and made some slight changes until she looked almost exactly like the Santa Maria.

We got over the bar at Bilbao with very little to spare under our keel and went on up the river to the appointed place. A band of Gypsies—Gitanos—were camped close by, and in ten minutes they were all over the ship. Among them was a singularly beautiful girl to whom I was strangely drawn. She followed me around the ship, which did not annoy me at all, and insisted on telling my fortune. When I consented she told me, among a lot of other things, that I would be paid a large sum of money in the mountains and assassinated.

The Carlist camp was located well up in the mountains, nearly twelve miles away. After a short wait I was ceremoniously ushered into the august presence of the Pretender. He greeted me with frigid formality in contradiction to the warm welcome I had expected, as due a savior of the Carlist cause, and his first words, spoken in fair English, were a curt statement that he had no money but would pay for my cargo through his London agent within two months.

I pointed out to him, as discreetly as possible, what the result of such a course would be. Failure to keep the agreement made by your agent would destroy your excellent credit with all dealers in revolutionary supplies, and that, of course, is not to be thought of. On the other hand, by paying for this cargo you will establish your credit more firmly than ever. I know that your majesty is not only very honest, but very wise."

This argument appeared to convince him, and, with a smile as though he had really been only joking, he summoned a venerable Jew, evidently his treasurer, who looked like the original of all pictures of Shylock, and ordered him to pay me £28,000, the amount called for by the manifest. The Jew returned in a few minutes with the exact amount. With the transaction completed, Don Carlos dramatically waved me out.

The officer who had piloted us to the camp suggested that we could find our way back to the ship without any trouble, as the trail was clearly defined, and we started back alone. Before we had gone twenty steps Brown, my sailing master, asked whether I had been paid in cash. I pointed to my bulging pockets and told him I undoubtedly had. He then confessed that he thought we were "in for it." Six cavalrymen, he said, had started down the trail not long before I left Don Carlos' tent, and he believed they had been sent out to waylay, rob and probably murder us in the deep canyon into which the ravine from the camp turned.

In a flash I recalled the prediction of the Gypsy girl. I laughed at myself for the spasms of something like fear that came into my mind, yet I was undeniably nervous, for Brown was not a man to form foolish fancies or become unduly alarmed about anything. And none of us was armed.

We had turned a corner that put us out of sight of the camp, when I saw a dark face peering at us through the underbrush that matted the trail on both sides. At the first glance the face looked like nothing but one of the troopers we had been talking about, but in an instant I recognized the Gitano girl who had told my fortune and begged me not to go into the mountains. She beckoned to us and, without saying a word, plunged off into deep woods, in which we, unguarded, would have been hopelessly lost in ten minutes.

She led us over a hill and across a wide depression and then over another much higher mountain. There was not so much as a suggestion of a path and it was hard going, yet none of us complained. She brought us out to the trail at the point where we had made our first turn into the foothills. From there it was a straight road to the ship with no fear of ambush or attack.

The rest of the cargo was jerked out with all speed and as soon as the last box was on the bank we got under way. Greatly to my surprise we were not even halted by the fort at the mouth of the river, where I had looked for some serious business, and we continued happily on our way to London.

LESSER LIGHTS

If, from the starry heavens' mystic height,
The stariest orbs which now with pinions slow
Through all the hours their way pursue, till low
Within the west they drift down from our sight,
And peerly dawn o'er takes their way with light,
If these should ne'er return, the steady glow
Of countless fainter lights, full well I know
Would lend their soft effulgence to the night.

So, if Earth's mightiest ones were swept away,
If conqueror and conquest were forgot,
And humble folk—accounted little worth—
Alone were left, the burdens (as today)
Would yet be borne; and loving hearts, I wot,
Would still find peace and gladness in the Earth.

Convalescents

By Donald Allen

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If anybody had suggested to Miss May Forbes, of Forbes Manor, that she wring the neck of the parrot she had had for a pet for the last three years, she would have given that person a glance so awful that a congestive chill must have followed. That parrot had a scream that could be heard half a mile away against the wind. She could say that Polly wanted a cracker. She could hang head downwards from her perch. When a stranger called, especially a subscription book agent with a large family to support, she could inquire in aggressive tones what in the devil he wanted.

That parrot had a score or more of cute and cunning tricks, and there was a bit of sentiment connected with her besides. A sea captain had brought her back from a far-off land, presented her to Miss May with his love, and had then sailed away again with a shipload of kerosene in blue-painted barrels and had never been heard of since. Not a barrel of kerosene ashore. Not one of the crew had turned up on South street to explain over his beer that the captain was or was not doing as well as could be expected under the circumstances. Miss Forbes was not one to crush out sentiment by wringing a parrot's neck.

One day, while hurrying home for fear Polly might be lonesome, the young lady stumbled over a barrel that some boy had left on the sidewalk. She was carried home and the doctor called. He could find no broken bones, but after long and serious thought he decided that she had wrenched herself and must take the tenderest care of herself for many days to come. And now, while propped



Could Watch the Bird by the Hour.

up in an easy-chair and tired of reading, how the girl did bless the memory of the man that had given her the parrot! She could watch the bird's tricks and talk to her by the hour.

About the time that barrel had brought about the wrench the Smythes had moved out from next door and the Islington had moved in. Miss May had been told that there were a father and mother and son, the latter about 22 years old. He had been brought to the house in a carriage. A few days before, while trying to beat the record of the high jump, he had twisted his ankle and would be disabled for weeks. One accident was a wrench and the other a twist.

Young Mr. Hugh Islington did not own a pet parrot. Had he been presented with one he would have brained her with an ax within the hour. His pet, outside of high jumping, was the violin. He could make one talk. He could also make people talk for three blocks around. Scarcely had he been carried into the house when that violin began to wail out its musical notes. It wailed high and it wailed low, and as Miss May Forbes' wrenched ears caught the sounds she started and exclaimed:

"Gracious, mother, but what's happening now!"

COLOMBIA EMERALD IS BEST

World's Supply of These Precious Stones Now Comes from South American Republic.

For its supply of the precious stone of beryl variety, known as the emerald, the world relies upon the mines of the republic of Colombia. From these mines the most valuable single emerald of modern times was obtained, now forming one of the gems of the collection of the duke of Devonshire. It is a perfect hexagonal crystal, weighing eight ounces and eight pennyweights. Another fine specimen, in the Hope cabinet, weighs six ounces, while larger but less valuable gems are in various royal cabinets.

The true emeralds of the ancients are said to have been obtained from the workings of Mount Zabarah, in Upper Egypt, although the reopening of the mines in the nineteenth century by Mehmet Ali did not prove commercially profitable. In this district was probably mined the jewel adorning the breastplate of Aaron, described in Mosaic writings and forming part, possibly, of the spoils carried from Egypt by the departing Israelites.

The huge emerald used by Emperor Nero as a corrective for his poor vision; the engraved emeralds set in gold, presented by Ptolemy to Lucullus on his landing at Alexandria; the robes worn by Cleopatra and other famous beauties of the past, whose embroideries were interspersed with emeralds, and the exquisitely graven seals of antique Egyptian pharaohs seen in museums and private collections all prove the esteem in which the emerald was held. Ornaments of emeralds have been unearthed in Theban tombs and excavated from Pompeii and Herculaneum, and in all ages the stone has been classed among the rarest of gems.

British Like Cuban Cigars. Cuba's best customer for cigars is Great Britain, which takes sixty million every year.

"Only the young man next door playing on the fiddle, dear."

"Only playing on the fiddle! Only! Only! And I must be wrenched again—wrench upon wrench! Mother, waken up Polly!"

Polly was given a poke and she opened her eyes and ears and screamed out. She had a rival at last. The idea that something had come into the neighborhood to compete with her voice maddened her, and she set out to do justice to the occasion.

"Great snakes, mother, but what is that!" gasped young Islington as he ceased to draw the bow to turn pale.

"It's nothing, dear—nothing tall," soothed the mother. "I think the folks next door have a parrot—just a parrot."

"Think! Think! Why, of course they have, and I am housed up here with this twist and may be for a month to come! By the high jumpers of Jericho, but I won't stand it!"

"But, Hugh dear—"

And he fiddled and fiddled and fiddled, and the parrot yelled and yelled and yelled, and the minister writing his next Sunday's sermon in the house across the street mopped his brow and walked the floor and didn't say anything—not aloud.

From the first wall of the violin and the first yell of the parrot it was rivalry. It was violin vs. parrot—parrot vs. violin. Oh, the sadness of it—for the neighbors!

From morning 'till night, day after day! If the best Polly could do was to yell out that she wanted a cracker, the best the fiddler could do was to play "Old Black Joe" over and over again. The advantage rather rested with the violin. It didn't have to sleep o' nights, while Polly did. She did her very best to realize that honor was at stake, and that she must triumph or perish, but two hours after lamplight would find her nodding and played out, while the violin was still wide awake at 11 p. m.

"Mother, that wretch shall never conquer me—never!" Miss May would exclaim half a dozen times a day; and like an echo young Mr. Islington would call out:

"I'll bring her to her knees, mother—to her knees!"

For a long month the battle raged. When a doctor who knows his business catches a patient with a wrench or a twist he is not going to surrender his inestimable privilege a day short of four weeks. Even at the end of that time he is going to pay an extra visit—fee \$2—to warn him not to try to climb a thorn tree without pulling on stove-pipe trousers.

But the day came when Miss May was permitted to walk out. Also Mr. Islington! There was a grove a quarter of a mile away. Miss May naturally headed for the grove. Mr. Islington naturally headed for the same place.

Miss May naturally carried Polly along to reward her for her heroic efforts to preserve the family honor, and Mr. Islington carried his violin along that he might once more hear the sweet strains of "Old Black Joe" in the sunshine. The girl reached the grove first and was softly meditating when a step aroused her. That young man! That violin! They stood before her, and as she shuddered the parrot screamed.

"You—you—you!" gasped the "wrench-girl."

"The girl with the parrot!" exclaimed the "twister."

Could aught save the day? Could anything avert the impending tragedy? Had it been two old men or two old women—good-bye! But it was a good-looking girl and a not at all bad-looking young fellow, and they had had a square fight and were a bit ashamed of their petulance, and after a gasp or two a bit of a smile came to their faces. Then the smiles broadened. Then grins succeeded. Then Polly stood on her head and there were two hearty laughs and Mr. Islington said:

"You are Miss Forbes, I believe, and I congratulate you on getting out again."

"And you are Mr. Islington, I believe, and I also congratulate you."

"I hope my violin was not disagreeable to you."

"And I trust that Polly's chatter did not make you nervous."

He sat down beside her and he told her about that high jump, and she told him about the barrel, and it's on record at the county clerk's office that she even said that of all musical instruments she preferred the fiddle, and that he replied that no night-gale was in it compared with a parrot. And they went home to tell their mothers a lot of good things about each other.