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A Trying Predicament.

In the winter of 187—, when business was very dull, I unfortunately happened to be out of a situation. I had traveled through several Western cities in quest of employment, but without success. At last I found myself in one of the hotels in Louisville, studying the state of my finances and prospects.

Having received a good education, I could keep a set of books with any man; few could excel me as a salesman. My lot seemed to be doubly unfortunate. Why was I not a mechanic? I could then have easily obtained what I wanted.

In the midst of my reverie a short, stout, nervous-looking gentleman, who had been eyeing me for some time, asked me if I had been long in Louisville.

Being out of sorts with myself and everyone else, I did not answer him with extreme politeness.

"You seem down-hearted," he continued, still gazing at me as if he not only wanted to know my business, but my height, size and wearing apparel; even my boots were closely scrutinized.

I evaded his question by remarking on the dull business season.

"Are you looking for work?" "You have anticipated my wants correctly," I replied, in hopes of ending the conversation, as he did not look like a man who hired either clerks or book keepers.

"Are you a powerful man?" he said, continuing his examination. "If so, I might hire you."

"There is not a man in the city I am afraid to grapple with," I replied, eagerly, overjoyed at the sudden prospect of getting a situation.

"I think you will answer my purpose," he said, walking around me as if he were purchasing a horse.

Having finished the inspection, he took me aside and informed me, in the strictest confidence, that he had a sick brother who required a nurse. From what he could see, I was competent to fill the berth.

"As to salary," he continued, "if you suit me, I will make it liberal; but one thing you must promise me."

I at once expressed my willingness to make the promise if it would not, at any time, involve me in trouble.

He set my fears at rest at that point, as all he wanted was that while I was in his employ I would not make the world wiser as to what I was doing. There was nothing unreasonable in any employer's exacting such a promise. I accepted his offer.

Bidding me follow him, we traversed several streets until we arrived in front of a large

mansion in one of the principal thoroughfares. My guide using the latchkey, we entered the house without ceremony.

After dinner I was introduced to my charge, who was the exact counterpart in looks of his brother. I glanced from one to the other, wondering how it was possible for two men to be so much alike.

"My name is William Harrison," said the brother who hired me, "and this is Mr. Charles Harrison."

"Twin brothers?" I said, looking from one to the other. "Yes, we are twins," said Mr. William. "Unfortunately, Charles is peculiar in his manner, and I wish you to look after him—in fact, to be his constant companion."

"His constant companion?" I repeated. "What! Is he crazy?" I asked, aside, of Mr. William.

"Yes, a little out of his head," he replied. "You must be careful not to let him get the upper hand of you in any way, and when he is violent, there is a strait-jacket," he said, showing me the article on a sideboard.

"All right," I said. "Now, as I understand you, I must use this when I think proper to do so?"

"Yes," he replied, "whenever you have occasion to. Of course you must use proper judgment, and not be too violent. I can see by your looks that you are a very powerful man—in fact, I pride myself on being so fortunate as to secure you."

He was right in his judgment as to my powers; I have met few men in my lifetime who equaled me in strength.

During our conversation Mr. Charles sat still, without saying a word. I again compared them. The similarity of features, build, even their hair, which was gray, was remarkable; both wore their whiskers alike. It was the first time in my life I was puzzled in making a distinction where by I could tell one man from another.

As a last resource I was obliged to make a note of their different costumes, in order to know Mr. Charles apart from Mr. William.

What if I was to mistake (in my routine as keeper and nurse) one brother for the other? A dread of the fearful consequence that would follow came over me and I can assure you it was some time before I could rest easy in mind.

Mr. William retired, leaving me with my charge. The change at least, furnished the pressing requirements for the time. Unsatisfied though it was to my taste I soon fell into the dull routine of the life of a nurse to a madman.

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Mr. Charles, at times, was violent and rough in his manner but after I had given him a taste of the strait jacket a few times he troubled me very little. Occasionally he would go down on his knees and plead love for an imaginary lady, then start up with a blustering air, and order me out of the room as if I had no business there. And really, I must say, there was very little need of my staying by him all the time; but I was paid for it, so I was obliged to obey.

They were both bachelors, having considerable property. Mr. Charles became insane a few years previous. His brother preferred taking charge of him instead of sending him to an asylum.

At times Mr. William did not appear as rational as he should be, but it was his peculiar manner. I learned from the servants that he had been for years paying his addresses to a Miss Stebbing, an elderly maiden lady belonging to one of the

first families of Louisville. She often visited the house. He would be very tender in his manner toward her and would offer his arm when they walked in the garden, but marriage, or any arrangement to that end, was never hinted at. He seemed to be content with paying the polite addresses due from an engaged swain to the object of his choice, and there it ended. It was evident that he was either too bashful to proceed with his suit beyond that mark, or else the lady objected to him, and preferred single blessedness to the duties and cares of married life.

The latter seemed improbable, as Miss Stebbins, when they promenaded on the piazza, hung lovingly on his arm and threw such sweet glances at her escort that they betrayed her willingness to unite her fortunes with his. Then it was clear that the fault was altogether on the part of Mr. William.

As the summer advanced, Miss Stebbins came oftener. The greenhouse needed rearranging before winter set in. The alterations were begun and carried out under her plans. Mr. William was a willing slave to her ideas and as I watched him from my window receiving her suggestions about how the dome in the center was to be built, I really believe that had she proposed carrying it up a hundred feet he would have had it done.

It was evidently coming to a climax. Mr. William intended getting married; if not to Miss Stebbins, certainly some lady would soon be mistress of his establishment.

At present, no other female appeared. The only conclusion therefore, to be drawn was that Mr. William Harrison and Miss Clarinda Stebbins, both of the city of Louisville, were about to commit matrimony.

As for myself, during the hot weather having little to do, I was fast growing fat and lazy, and the financial prospect before me looked decidedly cheering. So well had I managed my change that Mr. William hired me by the year; an agreement was made out, which we both signed, that I was to continue in the capacity of nurse to his brother for the space of twelve months, beginning June 1, at a salary of \$150 a month.

Immediately after we had made this permanent arrangement, Mr. William left Louisville for a few days, and I was alone with Mr. Charles.

One fine afternoon he was taking his after-dinner nap, which generally lasted for a couple of hours. I foolishly left him and went out for a walk. I was gone about an hour. When I returned to the house a sight met my eyes that made my blood run cold. Mr. Charles was in the next room next his own, kneeling at the feet of a lady.

I always pride myself on being a gallant, and would never allow a lady to be insulted, much more to see her at the mercy of a madman. I rushed in and secured him.

"How dare you come in here and behave in this manner, you rascal?" he said in his usual crazy manner.

"I'll show you," I replied, taking the strait jacket out of my pocket, where I always carried it, ready for instant use.

"Unhand me, sir, and go out of the room!" he exclaimed, pointing to the door.

By this time the lady had fainted. Seeing her drooping head, as she sank on the lounge was enough. I grappled with him, and, in spite of all he could do, I quickly put the strait jacket on him, and he was incapable of doing any further harm.

Having secured my charge, I turned my attention to the lady. Taking the water pitcher, which stood in the room, I

sprinkled her face; when she revived and looked at Mr. Charles chafing in the strait-jacket she gave an unearthly scream, and fainted in earnest that time. I thought she was dead.

What could I do? The servants were out, and I alone with a madman in a strait jacket and a lady in hysterics. If ever mortal was in a more trying predicament, I should like to know it. "Let me out of this, you villain!" he thundered.

"When I get ready," I replied taking my knife and cutting open the lady's tight dress, to ease her. I fairly drenched her in water, to no purpose. I could scarcely distinguish her breathing. Taking a lump of ice from the pitcher and holding it to her forehead, the chill revived her a little. I was congratulating myself on having saved her life, when she looked at Mr. Charles.

"Oh, my darling!" she sobbed out, then giving another shriek off she went again.

I was in a worse fix than ever with a crazy woman as well as a man to take care of. I believe at that moment, if I had another strait-jacket in my pocket, it would have gone on her.

I rubbed her forehead with ice, and chafed her hands, whilst my knife had perfectly loosened her dress from neck to waist.

I was afraid she would die under my hands; then what should I do? I rang the bell for the servants, but they were out so no help came from that quarter.

Going to the sideboard, I took some brandy and held it to her lips; my charge was raving all the time.

"If you don't stop your row, and let me attend this lady, I will gag you!" I said, threatening.

The brandy had the desired effect. She started up and rushed to him. Her dress, which before was a perfect fit, now hung in shreds. She clasped him around the neck, declaring I should not kill him.

I gently disengaged her from him. "Come," I said, soothingly. "It pains me to see you so excited. Calm your self; I will soon get some one to take charge of you."

Seating her on the lounge, I again rang the bell for help; visible signs of hysterics appeared; she was having a relapse I shouted for some one to come. Judge of my astonishment when she began calling me a villain for serving her darling in that way.

"My good lady," I replied, "although you are old enough to be my mother, I beg to disagree with you, it is for his good."

How far I should have gone, or what other means I should have taken to quiet my two mad people I really cannot say, had not one of the servants entered at that moment. She, too, gave a scream at our ludicrous appearance.

"What! are you mad as well?" I said. "Come here and help me out of this plight."

She came up to us. A word was enough to reveal to my blundering eyes the mistake I had made. It was Mr. William I had been handling. To take the strait-jacket off him and retire to my room was the work of a moment. I locked the door after me.

The imprecations I overheard heaped on my head were certainly enough to frighten any man of moderate nerve. Miss Stebbins' new mauve silk was all cut to pieces; even her fancy corsets were ruined by my cutting them in two, not to mention a splendid sash of watered silk, costing I don't know how much, and the shock to her nerves was irreparable.

I found my charge, the real maniac, sleeping quietly in bed. Leaving him to finish his nap,

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I began to ruminate on the chances of my going to the penitentiary. Just then I overheard Mr. William Stebbins ordering the servant to fetch a policeman, when Miss Stebbins interrupted him.

"Do not send for the police," she said. "We shall have to go to court, and our love will be made public in the eyes of the gaping world; the Clarendons will torment my life out of me."

"So much in my favor, my good lady," I said to myself, at the keyhole.

"I will get rid of him at once," said Mr. William. "The rascal! It was only the other day that I hired him for a year. Come out!" he continued, knocking at the door of my room.

My overhearing their conversation had set my mind at rest on the jail question. Miss Stebbins being in high social standing, money could not have hired her to be cross-examined in a public court, and the result of my blundering interruption of their interesting tete-a-tete made known to her friends. She was quick sighted enough to see that, in the midst of her trouble.

When I thought their passions had cooled a little, I opened the door, and at the sight which met my eyes it was impossible for me to repress a hearty laugh, which did not raise me any higher in their opinion.

Mr. William was wiping the perspiration off his face and declaring to Miss Stebbins that the disagreeable affair should have no effect on their engagement, while she stood by holding her dress, the splendid mauve silk, in anything but graceful folds about her lovely person.

"Villain!" said Mr. Williams, "get out of the house!"

"Yes, scoundrel that you are!" said Miss Stebbins, getting decidedly passionate. "I'll teach you to cut my new mauve silk sash all to pieces! And my French corsets have not escaped; you shall be hung for it!"

I stood still, unable to say a word in my defense.

"What are you staring at?" said Mr. William.

"I am going to stay my year out," I replied doggedly. "I sha'n't budge until the first of next June without my salary."

There was another difficulty for him to surmount.

"Get rid of him," said Miss Stebbins, "or I leave Louisville."

Her word was the law. He went to his room, and returned in a few minutes with a check, which he handed me, saying:

"There, sir, now go, and never darken my door again."

I took the check, which was for my year's salary, and went out of the house and situation in five minutes. Eighteen hundred dollars was quite an item for the loss I sustained. I came to Northern Ohio, started in business, and, in spite of Mr. Harrison's maledictions and the ruined mauve silk, I am doing well from the proceeds of my "trying predicament."

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