

CHARGING the ENEMY

By Martha McCulloch-Williams

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Old Gib Ezell went swinging and stumping upon his crutches down the street and up the steps of his store. It was the biggest store in town, though not the smartest. Joe Beenan, who had opened up the spring before, just across the street, was running old Gib hard in groceries and hardware and leaving him out of sight when it came to knickknacks or dry goods pure and simple.

A man who half knew looked after old Gib, then across at the sign of his young rival and murmured half to himself, "What a pity!" Another man who knew also looked, listened to the exclamation and answered it, sticking out his chin as he spoke, "Better say, 'What a shame!'"

"What's a shame, doc?" a third said, coming up behind them. Doctor Waters smiled half grimly. "I'm not quite sure—it seems to be the hitch in the course of a true love," he answered.

Lew Bayne, the man who had spoken first, shook his head energetically. "I meant that poor old fellow's legs," he said. "I suppose, doc, it's certain he'll never walk again."

"Now you've got me," the doctor protested. "I'd risk my professional reputation that fall he got on the sleety pavement did no worse harm to his shrunken shanks than bark them up pretty generally. There were bruises, of course, and on the shoulder and side as well. I told him he'd be out and about in plenty time for the Christmas trade, but from the first he stood me up and down that he'd never take another steady step, and so far, I'm bound to admit, he was right. There's nothing on earth the matter with his legs, nothing at least that I or the other doctors can see. Against that there is the fact that the minute he tries to stand on them they do the joint rule act—double under him as though they hadn't strength to bear up a spider. The trouble must lie in the nerves. If that's what you meant, I agree with you that it's a pity. I thought you had reference to the trick he's played on Joe Beenan."

"What is it?" asked Merton, the third of the group. "You know I've been away six months! Tell me all about it."

"Not much to tell," Dr. Waters said. "You know Florrie Ezell?"

"I ought to, considering she sent me away," Merton broke in ruefully. "You don't mean Joe is gone on her like the rest of us? I thought—"

"You've hit it," the doctor said. "Joe did stand out mightily well against the prevailing infection, but a man never knows what's coming to him until it hits him square in the face."

"Lord! To think of Joe, the 'bomb-proof,' we called him," Merton chuckled. "How did it happen? Tell me all about it."

Merton, a newly evolved drummer, had given what he would have called "a comprehensive order." Dr. Waters also chuckled as he answered, nodding his head by way of emphasizing his points: "Well, you see, it's this way: The hour struck for Joe when he saw Florrie Ezell swirling around, a blue tarlatan angel, in a waltz with Bob Acton at the Pattons' party. Florrie's a pretty girl anyway you see her. That night she was particularly fetching. But that wasn't the thing. I insist Joe's time had come. He knew it. Soon as the waltz was over he froze to Florrie—didn't get a yard away from her all the evening."

"It was a freezing time, as I remember," Lew Bayne interrupted, with a laugh. "Indian summer up to dusk; then a cold rain, that turned to sleet in short order. Say, didn't old Gib get his fall that very night?"

"I'm coming to that, if you'll wait," the doctor ran on. "I tell you that was a sleet to remember. Joe, of course, wouldn't let Florrie walk home, though the Ezell house is only six blocks from the Pattons'. No, siree! He telephoned for the finest rig at the livery stable and bundled all that blue tarlatan in it as snug as you please. I heard Florrie protesting that she ought really to wait for papa, but we all persuaded her papa wouldn't think of risking himself upon pavement like glass. We ought to have known better. Old Gib always does the thing that any other man would let alone."

"Bet a hat he came," Merton said, chuckling more than ever.

"You win—from yourself," Dr. Waters answered. "He came, he didn't see his daughter, he went back swearing like a trooper, though he is a deacon, and he fell right before Master Joe's fine rig, coming back from leaving Miss Florrie safe at the gate. Of course Joe picked him up and carried him home. Equally, of course, old Gib hates him for doing it. By the time I got to him next morning he was fully persuaded Joe was at the bottom of his fall, with Florrie as accessory; said they ran away and left him, hoping he'd break his neck, so Joe could have both his daughter and his store. You know he didn't take overkindly to competition anyway?"

"That he didn't! Why, he even wrote to our credit man to keep a peeled eye on Joe," Merton interrupted.

"That's like him," Dr. Waters said. "I tell you, boys, nature must work along a certain line of compensation. I'm sure she slipped into old Gib all the small meanness due to two generations of Ezells—it may even be three. His father was a fine man, and

his daughter is just as good a woman as ever was made."

"About Joe, now?" Merton queried. Dr. Waters frowned.

"Joe courted Florrie with such a rush that in a week they were engaged. Then he went right in to old Gib and had it out with him—told him all about himself and his business, in and out, up and down—but the substance of it was he wanted Florrie for his wife, and would do whatever old Gib said if only he could get her. And then the old crocodile pretended to cry; said Florrie was all he had to live for; he hoped Joe wouldn't press him for an answer then, nor, indeed, talk of an engagement until he was either dead or himself again. You know how soft hearted old Joe is, and how he hangs on to his word once he passes it. Of course he promised, never mistaking the old wretch was playing him. So there you are! Florrie's worrying and losing color because Joe only speaks when they pass by, but don't come to the house. Joe's about desperate, and old Gib is fattening and getting ten years younger—on spite and crutches. What the end is to be nobody can guess."

"Can old Gib be shamming?" Merton asked. Dr. Waters shook his head. "I thought so at first," he said. "But if he is it beats anything in the books. There's certainly nothing wrong with his legs, except that they're a bit flabby. It's equally as certain he can't walk on them. I think sometimes he has hypnotized himself. If it was just deceit and what I call cussedness, I would have been able before this to take him off his guard."

"Well, I can at least go over and condole with Joe," Merton said, stepping across the street. "And maybe sympathy will be worth an order," he called back over his shoulder as he struck the store steps.

Although it was late March, it was still nipping cold. A red fire roared in the base burner inside old Gib's store. Old Gib himself sat close beside it, his eye ranging all the miscellaneous merchandise which crowded shelves and floor. His three clerks had been on the jump all morning, but toward noon there came a lull. He was about to send two of them off to dinner when the door opened wide, and Merton came through, with Joe Beenan in his wake and Dr. Waters and Lew Bayne marching solemnly behind. Joe's face was white, his eyes brilliant, his figure tense in every line. Indeed he looked desperate, and his voice rang hard as he said, stopping short three feet away:

"Mr. Ezell, I have come to ask you, here in the presence of these witnesses, to release me from my promise. You know well how it was given—with a total misapprehension of the truth."

"You mean you want to take my daughter, as well as my trade, and leave me, a cripple, to starve!" old Gib roared.

Joe set his teeth. "I mean nothing of the sort!" he said. "Give me your daughter, and our home shall be yours. I will serve and care for you as I would for my own father."

"You won't get the chance," old Gib sneered. Joe half turned to his friends and whispered sepulchrally: "Go away! Quick!"

"Going to murder me, hey?" old Gib sniffed.

Joe stood very straight. The others had slunk toward the door, with the awed clerks huddling after. They heard Joe shout:

"It is not murder! I shall give my life to free Florrie from your intolerable tyranny!"

Then they saw him fling wide the stove door and dash into it what seemed like several pounds of gunpowder.

Old Gib saw it too. With one wild, whooping yell he leaped from his chair, regardless of crutches, of everything but flight, rushed madly for the door, darted through it and did not pause until he came panting and trembling to his own gate. As he clung there the others overtook him, as breathless as himself betwixt running and laughing.

Dr. Waters made a low bow. "If I had thought three pounds of black sand would be so effectual, I would have had you well long ago," he said.

Merton dragged Joe forward. "If you want to kick anybody, kick me," he said to old Gib. "I put this lad," patting Joe's shoulder, "up to playing you that trick."

"Humph! I knew he didn't have the brains for it himself," old Gib snorted. But, though he had found his legs, he was none the less old Gib. The fact was proved by his letting Joe and Florrie marry almost out of hand and presenting them with both his store and his blessing.

THE SEWING MACHINE.

Unsuccessful Inventions That Preceded Howe's Patent in 1846.

The technical beginning of the sewing machine industry in this country was Sept. 10, 1846, when Elias Howe, Jr., obtained a patent for what grew into the first really practical sewing machine. Only three of the first Howe machines were made, however, and one of these was deposited in the patent office in Washington as a model. It was not until after 1850 that a factory for the making of sewing machines was built, so the enormous business of today has grown up in a short half century.

While Howe's invention marked the beginning of a successful industry, he was by no means the pioneer in efforts to substitute mechanical for hand sewing. As far back as 1770 Thomas Alsop patented in England a machine for embroidering. Another machine for embroidering in a loom was invented by John Duncan in 1804, and twenty-five years later another Englishman named Heilmann patented still another embroidering machine.

The first recorded attempt at mechanical sewing was the invention of Thomas Saint, who took out a patent in England in 1790 for a machine which executed the old crochet stitch. It was not a success, but some of the features of the Saint machine appear in the perfected machine of today.

Bartholomew Thimmonier patented in France in 1830 the first sewing machine put to practical use. Eighty of his machines were in use for sewing army clothing in 1841, when a mob destroyed them because convinced they would drive seamstresses out of employment. Thimmonier built new and better machines, but all his work was again destroyed by angry artisans in 1848.

John J. Greenough took out the first patent for a sewing machine issued in the United States in 1842. It was intended to sew leather, but was of no practical use.

Walter Hunt of New York built a sewing machine in 1834, but failed to protect it by a patent. After Howe's machine appeared Hunt declared it embodied the ideas of his machine of 1834, but he was unable to establish his claim.

A small army of inventors appeared after Howe's patent had proved successful, and their genius was devoted to perfecting every part of the machine. How well they have succeeded is shown in the 8,500 patents for sewing machines and attachments issued by the United States since 1850 and in the fact that the American sewing machine leads all others in every country in the world.—New York Herald.

Care in Choosing Glasses.

A dealer in optical instruments declared that it gave him real pain to note the careless manner in which half the persons in New York wear glasses. "It is a wonder to me," he said, "that they don't bring on blindness. In the first place, the frames should always be fitted to individual faces instead of being picked up indiscriminately without regard for facial peculiarities. The size of the lenses is another important consideration. Most of the glasses I see on the street are too small. They should be as large as the face of the wearer will permit, for a lens of good size not only affords better protection to the eye, but is more becoming than a smaller one. Another tribulation of the weak eyed is due to the reflection from the edges of unframed glasses. The eyelashes should be attended to in order to get the best results from a pair of spectacles. Many lashes are worn so long that they brush against the glass. This is decidedly injurious.—New York Times.

A Lesson in Hospitality.

A curious instance of provincial hospitality in a small Tuscan town is recorded by Luigi Villari in "Italian Life In Town and Country."

A lady of very noble birth and of considerable wealth was giving a musical party—it was the first time she had invited friends to her house that season. The entertainment began at 2 p. m. and lasted till 7. No refreshments were provided for the guests, but at half past 4 a servant appeared and solemnly presented a cup of chocolate to the hostess and one to her mother. Of this, of course, would only be possible in a very provincial town. In the more civilized spots excellent refreshments are always offered to the guests.

Awkward.

Professor (in a medical college, exhibiting a patient to his class)—Gentlemen, allow me to call your attention to this unfortunate man. It is impossible for you to guess what is the matter with him. Examine the shape of his head and the expression of his eyes, and you are none the wiser for it, but that is not strange. It takes years of experience and constant study to tell at a glance, as I can, that he is deaf and dumb.

Patient (looking up with a grin)—Professor, I am very sorry, but my brother, who is deaf and dumb, could not come today, so I came in his place.—Pearson's.

Foiled Again.

"You are in my power," cried the villain. "Ha, ha! Revenge is sweet." "But," replied the heroine, playing her last card, "your doctor told you you must not indulge in sweet things." "Foiled again!" snarled he and faded away.—Modern Society.

Superstitions.

"Do you think that my daughter is old enough to know her own mind?" The Plutoer—with all my money, sir, she doesn't need a mind.—Detroit Free Press.

No man has ever succeeded in fooling posterity all the time.—Chicago Herald.

Luxury as a Handicap.

The history of our country is a record of the successes of poor boys who seemed to be hopelessly shut off from books, culture and education, except that of the most meager kind—from almost every opportunity for mental development. The youthful Franklin, Lincoln, Hamiltons, Garfields, Grants and Claytons—those who become presidents, lawyers, statesmen, soldiers, orators, merchants, educators, journalists, inventors, giants in every department of life—how they stand out from the pages of history, those poor boys, an inspiration for all time to those who are born to fight their way up to their own loaf!

The youth who is reared in a luxurious home, who from the moment of his birth is waited on by an army of servants, pampered and indulged by overfond parents and deprived of every incentive to develop himself mentally or physically, although commonly regarded as one to be envied, is more to be pitied than the poorest, most humbly born boy or girl in the land. Unless he is gifted with an unusual mind he is in danger of becoming a degenerate, a parasite, a creature who lives on the labor of others, whose powers ultimately atrophy from disuse.—Success.

Pays the Current Price.

My young friend Jimmy Banks was married a little over a year ago. He had previously spent twelve months in the most furious courtship. The girl had not at first cottoned to Jimmy very much, but he moved heaven and earth so vigorously that she at last consented, says the Cosmopolitan. Now, the other day who appears before me but Jimmy, with a long face, and makes a complaint that the baby keeps him awake nights. "Good gracious, Jimmy!" I said. "Didn't you know that babies always do that? A baby has to have some relaxation. Go home and be thankful that it isn't twins." There is the reverse side to every joy. You can't have the advantages of bachelorhood and married life at the same time. You buy everything with a price—leisure, family, office, learning, wealth, fame, position. Nothing is free. Be sure you want the article, pay the current price and enjoy your possession.

Ham Baked in Cider.

A ham baked in cider is delicious. Choose a good lean ham of about eight pounds. Wash thoroughly and over the fleshy side sprinkle a little chopped onion, a little clove and allspice, a teaspoonful of cinnamon and a half teaspoonful of ground ginger. Make flour and water into a paste as thick as dough and cover the ham. Put skin side down in a roasting pan, fill up with cider, cook slowly for three hours, basting every ten minutes. When done, take off the paste and the rind. An hour before it is wanted for the table return to the baking pan, flesh side down, brush the fat portion with beaten egg, sprinkle generously with chopped parsley and breadcrumbs and let it heat through in the oven. A gravy can be made by boiling down the cider in which the ham was first roasted.

It Grows Feeble.

The attraction of a man's character is apt to be outlived, like the attraction of his body, and the power of love grows feeble in its turn, as well as the power to inspire love in others. It is only with a few rare natures that friendship is added to friendship, love to love and the man keeps growing richer in affection—richer, I mean, as a bank may be said to grow rich, both giving and receiving more—after his head is white and his back weary, and he prepares to go down into the dust of death.—Robert Louis Stevenson.

Gorki's Early Struggles.

Maxim Gorki, the Russian novelist, had an early career that in many ways recalls the early struggles of Jacob A. Riis. He ran away from home when a lad and for years found life mighty hard grubbing. He worked as a day laborer, a sawyer, a cook and a lighterman. Then he heard that free instruction could be obtained at Kazan, and, having no money to pay for his journey, he walked there, a distance of over 600 miles. Then he found he had a head.

At Sea on Land.

A clergyman who had neglected all knowledge of nautical affairs was asked to deliver an address before an audience of sailors.

He was discoursing on the stormy passages of life. Thinking he could make his remarks more pertinent to his hearers by metaphorically using sea expressions, he said:

"Now, friends, you know that when you are at sea in a storm the thing you do is anchor."

A half concealed snicker spread over the room, and the clergyman knew that he had made a mistake.

After the services one of his listeners came to him and said, "Mr. —, have you ever been at sea?"

The minister replied: "No, unless it was while I was delivering that address."—New York Times.

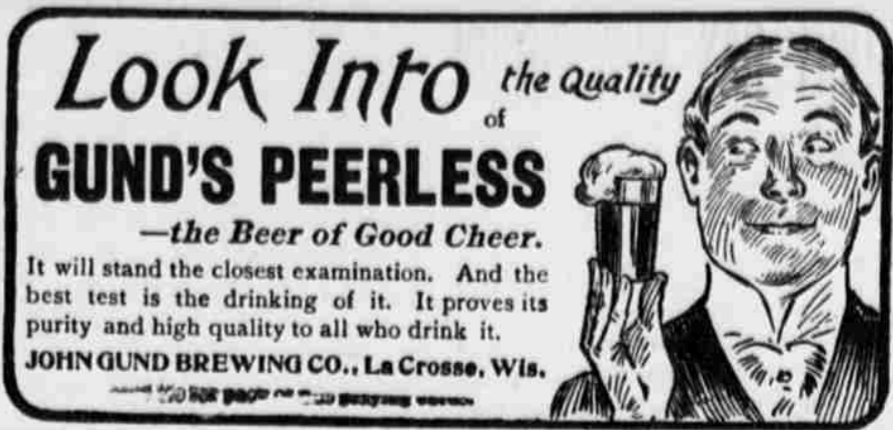
Language.

"It's wonderful," said the meditative man, "how one small word, insignificant in itself, may induce an endless train of thought, speaking volumes, in fact."

"Yes," replied the caustic man. "Take the word 'but,' for instance, when a woman says, 'Of course, it's none of my business, but,'—Exchange.

The Use of Bread on Water.

A loaf of bread is a favorite talisman for locating a drowned body in most European countries. Sometimes it is found sufficient of itself, sometimes it needs the aid of some other substance. Thus in England the loaf is usually weighted with quicksilver.—Notes and Queries.



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