

A Government Official.

By IAN MACLAREN, Author of "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush," Etc. (Copyright, 1895, by John Watson.)

Never had I met any man so methodical in his habits, so neat in his dress, so accurate in speech, so precise in manner as my fellow lodger. When he took his bath in the morning I knew it was half past 7, and when he rang for his water that it was a quarter to 8. Until a quarter past 9 he moved about his room in his slow, careful dressing, and then everything was quiet next door till half-past 8, when the low murmur of the Lord's prayer concluded his devotions. Two minutes later he went downstairs—it he met a servant one could hear him say "Good morning!"—and read his newspaper—he seldom had letters—till 9, when he rang for breakfast. Twenty past 9 he went upstairs and changed his coat, and he spent five minutes in the lobby selecting a pair of gloves, brushing his hat and making a last survey for a speck of dust. One glove he put on opposite the hat stand, and the second on the doorstep, and when he touched the pavement you might have set your watch by 9:30. Once he was in the lobby at five and twenty minutes to 10, distressed and hurried by the door, I cut my chin slightly when shaving, he explained, "and the wound persists in bleeding. It has an untidy appearance and a drop of blood might fall on a letter."

say, some ability to compose a really credible schedule, one that will bring out every point clearly and exhaustively—in fact, I have ventured to call it a "schedule." Here Mr. Perkins allowed himself to smile, "and it might be defined as such." "Yes," he said, "I have a double sheet of foolscap divided into some twenty-four compartments, each with a question and a blank space for the answer, is pleasing to the eye, very pleasing indeed."

"What annoys one," and Mr. Perkins became quite irritable, "is to examine a schedule after it has been filled and to discover how it has been miserably mismanaged."

"With your permission I will rise—in a few minutes—9 o'clock, dear me—this is most unfortunate—must get down till 11—must really insist!" But the doctor had come, and Mr. Perkins obeyed on one condition, "Yes, doctor, I prefer, if you please, to know you see I am not a young person—nor nervous—thank you very much—quite so; pneumonia is serious and double pneumonia is dangerous—I understand no, it is not that—I am alarmed at my age, but—yes, I'll lie down—letter must go to office—dictate it to my friend—certain form—leave of absence, in fact—trouble you too much—medical certificate."

"Well, it does not become me to boast, but I have had the honor of contributing 220 myself, and have composed forty-two more which are not yet been accepted."

"Mrs. Holmes, who was as a mother to Mr. Perkins and myself, as well as two younger men of literary pursuits and irregular habits, had a gift of charming irrelevance, and was able to combine allusions to Mr. Perkins' ordinary life and the amatory tendencies of a new cook in a mosaic of entrancing interest."

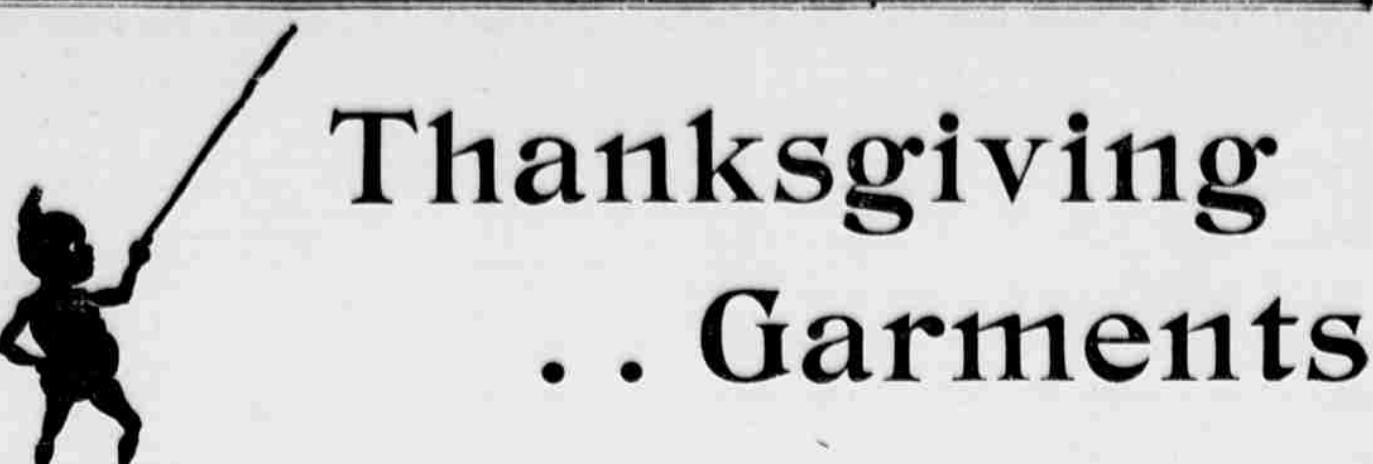
"All past," went on Mrs. Holmes, scornfully, "and I've never varied two minutes in the last ten years, except one night fell asleep in 'is chair, being bad with influenza."

"I feel better already—some words I would like to hear again—thank you, where I can do it—nurse will be so good as to read it."

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"I'm glad to hear of it," said Mr. Perkins, with a smile, "it will be a great honor to me."

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It is most kind of a young man to sit with me. King told me that he was just to see his friend. "What was the upshot with you and friend?"

"With all his little tricks, he knows his business better than any man in the department, and then he's a gentleman, I'd say so." "You mean to say that you could not say a rude word or do a mean thing to save his life—nor made that way, in fact."

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PERKINS LAY VERY STILL AND DID HIS BEST TO BREATHE.

"I have kept copies of the original drafts," and he showed me a bound volume of his works.

"An author? It is very good of you to say so," and Mr. Perkins seemed much pleased with the idea, twice smiling to himself during the evening, and saying as we parted, "It's my good fortune to have a large and permanent circulation."

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ONE GLOVE HE PUT ON OPPOSITE THE HAT STAND. all one now required to know, "are you income tax or stamps?"

"Neither, although my duty makes me familiar with every department in the civil service. I have the honor to be," and he cleared his throat with dignity. "A first class clerk in the schedule office."

"Our work," he explained to me, "is very important, and in fact, vital to the administration of affairs. The efficiency of practical government depends on the accuracy of the forms filled, and every one is composed in our office."

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