

JOE, JACK AND MACK

The stillness of the wee sma' hours reigned in the hotel. The night revellers had long since vanished in the outer darkness. The garrulous politicians had just put away their never ending schemes and sought a few hours' repose. At the clerk's desk the lights kept up a show of the earlier evening's brilliancy. The clerk, fresh from a day's sleep, was the only brisk, animated object visible. The lobby was gloomy and deserted. The corridors at long intervals echoed with the sound of the porter's dragging footsteps. It was like a banquet hall deserted. It was like a theatre after the players and audience had vanished.

The familiar spirits that flit about the lobby of the Lindell hotel in the day and in the early evening would scarcely have recognized the place.

Silence, vast and solemn, settled down with an increasing intensity. The night clerk put his feet on the desk and turned to chapter XIX of his favorite novel. The one lone bell boy curled himself up on the bench and went to sleep. It was almost funereal.

Hark! What is that? The clerk pauses in his reading and listens. The sound waxes louder and louder. Presently a messenger boy, tired and sleepy and unkempt, ambles in. He shuffles across the lobby and wearily hands a yellow envelope to the clerk. The clerk reads—"Jos. Bartley." He hands it back to the boy. "Take it up stairs, third floor, last room on the right hand side of the rear hall." The boy sighs and makes his way to the stairs. The message—or maybe it is his legs—is as heavy as lead. It is hard work climbing up three flights of stairs. And it is so quiet and dark that a creepy feeling comes over the boy. On and on he goes, peering ahead, looking over his shoulder, starting at every faint sound of creaking stairs, or of heavy breathing that comes through the transoms. The corridors get darker and darker. The aspect of things is now terribly dark and forbidding. An air of deep, impenetrable mystery hangs over all. On and on the boy drags his weary way, tired and scared. At last he approaches the door he is seeking. He looks overhead at the transom. The faintest light imaginable is visible. But not a sound breaks the stillness. — and yet as he raises his hand to knock he thinks he hears the buzz of whispered conversation. He knocks. Instantly the faint light visible through the transom vanishes. All is perfectly still. Presently the door is opened a hand's breadth and a voice asks—"What is wanted?"

The boy says—"Here's a telegram for Joe Bartley, state treasurer." A hand reaches out and takes the yellow envelope. The boy is shoved back. The door is closed. The boy finds his way back to the desk, gets the clerk to sign for the message and disappears.

Meanwhile upstairs the faint light appears again over the transom. Inside the room are three men. They are seated around a table. On the table is a mass of telegrams and letters and scraps of paper. One of the men is about medium height. He has long, white whiskers, and a prominent nose. The others address him as "Jack." Of the other two one is short and pudgy, with a mustache. He is called "Clark." The last of the trio is a fairly tall man with a keen eye and a short beard. His companions call him "Joe."

One lamp furnishes a dim, flickering light. The men converse in whispers. Each one is nervous. They all have a guilty, hunted look. A stak creaks and Joe starts as if shot. Jack ejaculates, "Oh, my God." Clark exclaims, "What is that?"

The men wait with anxiety pictured on their faces.

Nothing came and the men resumed their conversation.

Clark addressed the other two: "Boys, we are in desperate straits and we've got to hang together awful close. The people seem to be onto us, and it is going to take a big effort to get me and Jack in. The people seem to have it in for Jack because of his whiskers or something, or because you, Joe, are backing him, and I am catching it all over the state because everybody has got onto the fact that I am your candidate. I supposed, before we started into this thing, that your backing was a great source of strength, but I am afraid it is doing me more harm than good. I think we ought to do something to make the people think we are not in a combination, that you are not behind me and Jack."

Joe chewed the end of an unlighted cigar and gritted his teeth.

"Well," he said, after a pause, "I have got to pull you fellows through

somehow, not so much because I want you nominated, but because it is necessary for my own salvation that you fellows have control of the governor's office. It may be that the public is suspicious of me; I can't say that I can blame them any; and it may be that I was not smooth enough in covering up my tracks, but when a man's as desperate as I am he is apt to be a little careless. He will do anything, even to taking up an old, worn out, tiresome, be-whiskered, kippering man like you, Jack, as a candidate for governor, and an ordinary, happy-go-lucky chap like you, McNish, as my candidate for the treasurer's office."

Jack wrenched his whiskers and said angrily: "You needn't talk that way to me. I may not be quite so slick as you are, Joe, and my whiskers may not be so pretty, but I think I am as good as you are, and a darned sight better. I noticed you have always been pretty anxious to get me into all your schemes. You were mighty glad to have me drop a good sized wad into that Colorado gold mine scheme of yours, and when I am in the governor's office you will be pretty glad to have me exercise my restraining influence when legislators get to prying into old secrets. You'd better not get gay with me, Joe."

Clark pounded his fist on the table. "Yes," he said, "here too. You haven't got any edge on me, Joe. You haven't forgot how you made me go on your bond to the tune of \$260,000. And you know about those other deals. It strikes me we are all of us in the same boat, and the only thing we can do is to stick together."

Joe responded: "Of course we will stick together; but you fellows might as well know your places. To be sure you have put some money into the mine, Jack, but I guess you have profited by my friendship in more ways than one, and you can't afford to break faith with me. Why, you, Jack, you old, grinning, hollow trunk, what would become of your boom for governor if I should quit you? And you, too, McNish. Suppose you did go on my bond. What did you get in return? Answer me that. No, you fellows want to keep quiet and do as I tell you. When we get into the convention I want you to wait for my signal before you make a move. Of course you are a little hot, Jack, because Ager is talking Hayward now, but I want you and Clark here to do what Ager tells you to do, for Ager will represent me. I don't want any slips in this. You fellows want to win. I've got to win, and I want my orders obeyed. Do you understand?"

MacColl said, despondently: "Well, we will do the best we can, but, honestly, I think we are lost. And I think it is your fault, Joe."

And McNish joined in: "Yes, I am pretty sure we are done up, and I know I wouldn't have had my trouble if it hadn't been for Joe."

Then the three settled grimly down to sorting telegrams and adding figures, and there we will leave them.

Dr. J. S. Matt of Kansas City, who was the guest of his daughter, Mrs. Fred Cornell, has returned home.

Mrs. Nat Coffin of Des Moines and Miss Quick of New York, are guests of Miss Mame Carson.

Capt. and Mrs. J. L. Carson are in South Auburn.

Miss Myrtle Bayes of Seward is the guest of D. M. Druse.

F. W. Collins will deliver the Fourth of July oration in Ashland.

The Botanical Gazette for June contains a reference to Dr. C. E. Bessey that is highly complimentary.

E. A. Church went to Chicago this week. S. T. St. John of the John Griffith company will continue his connection with the company next year. He will spend the summer in Juniata, Neb.

Prof. W. L. G. Taylor and family and Mr. and Mrs. Taylor sr. have gone to Colorado Springs for the summer.

Miss Stoddard has gone to Indiana. She will join a New York party of tourists that will leave for Europe July 7.

Mrs. R. L. Rehlaender and daughter are entertaining Judge G. W. Norris of Beaver City.

Otto Mohrenstecker sailed for Hamburg Thursday of last week.

Miss Anna Barr has gone to Lake Geneva, Wis.

Miss Mary L. Jones, librarian at the state university, left Tuesday for the Pacific coast, where she will spend the summer.

HERE ARE SOME PLUMS

These are are the prices for
this week

Great sale on Ladies'

SHIRT WAISTS

This week.

15 doz n, to be closed out in the
next ten days, formerly 50c,
75c and \$1.00 this week

38c, 57c, and 69c

SUMMER DRESS GOODS

Closing out prices for this
week. 10 pieces Challies this
week, per yard 3c

12 pieces Scotch lawns, reg-
ular selling price 5c, this wee-
per yard 3½c.

15 pieces Ardmore dimity
formerly sold at 7c, this week,
per yard 5½c.

Our 15c Organdies and novel-
ty dress goods, this week per
yard 12½c

MASON'S FRUIT JARS

Special prices for this week.
Pints 60c dozen, quarts 70c
dozen, ½ gallons 90c dozen, reg-
ular price 70c, 80c and \$1.00.

200 dozen men's brown
balbriggan undershirts and
drawers.

Our regular price is 50c which is
a very low price, this week you
can buy them at, each 39c

SHOES!!

Just received 120 pairs
Ladies' kid button, patent tip
shoes from 2½s to 8. These
are worth \$1.75 a pair. We
make the price for this week
\$1.39

Bargains in Ladies', Misses'
and children's Oxfords, in
black and tans

Ladies' at 95c, \$1.12, \$1.23,
\$1.34, \$1.57, \$1.98. A reduction
from 10 to 20 per cent.

Child's Oxford's, 5 to 8, at
89c

Child's Oxfords, 5 to 8, at 90c
Misses' Oxford's, 11 to 2, at
\$1.12

Our constant aim is to sell to our customers goods that are
up to standard and will please.

FRED SCHMITD & BRO.

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