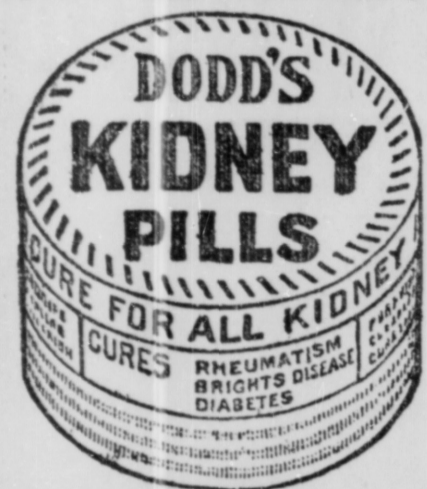


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The Telegraph Message.

By ROBERT BARR (Continued.)

They were entering as he spoke a man who stooped slightly. His smoothly shaved face made it impossible at a distance to guess his age, but closer inspection left no doubt that he was fully entitled to the adjective the young man had bestowed upon him. The lid drooped over the left eye and gave a sinister expression to an impassive face that was at best saturnine. The left arm hung limply by his side and, with the sinking eyelid, gave token of a "stroke" that many regretted had, like themselves, encumbered the old man in vain. Some one had said that confidence would never be restored in business circles until a second attack grappled old Grimwood with more success than the first, for it had been quickly proved that what was left of the seasoned old speculator was a match for the combined intellect and shrewdness of the others in the grain pit. Grimwood's workable eye quickly but furtively ranged the room and finally rested on the fair head of the girl, just visible over the polished surface of the counter as she sat at the telegraph instrument. His face showed no astonishment. It was always expressionless, but his eye remained there.

"I thoroughly believe, Sandys, that old Grimwood has bribed you to place the girl here. Such a withered, ancient branch as he is will be the only man unaffected by her presence. It isn't fair to us youngsters who have to contend with his lifetime of villainy anyhow. I confess I don't want my mind distracted from the wheat quotations just at present."

"I shall give you every assistance to concentrate your mind on that subject, Howard."

"Thanks, old man. I'm infinitely obliged," replied Howard, with a laugh, "but who is she anyhow? We are bound to know sooner or later."

"She is one entitled to the respect and protection of every man here," said Sandys slowly. "She is the daughter of your old chief, Silas McClintoch."

"Good heavens! You don't mean to say so!" cried the young man, sobering. "By Jove, there is a sort of poetic justice in her being here, this inferno which ruined the father now supporting the daughter."

"The Western Union will look to her support," returned the manager without enthusiasm.

"Quite so, and we help support the Western Union. The consumer always pays, you know. But I say, Sandys, I want you to introduce me to Miss McClintoch."

"I don't see the necessity. She is not here socially."

"Oh, that's all nonsense. We're all social equals, and it will do her no harm to have a friend on this side of the counter. You can't be always here, you know. Besides, if you don't introduce me properly I shall certainly introduce myself."

"Miss McClintoch has set out very bravely to earn her own living, and I don't want her interfered with."

"Exactly. I am earning my own living myself, and I not only won't interfere with her, but I will prevent others from doing so."

The manager looked keenly at the speaker for a moment, but met merely the clear gaze of a very honest pair of eyes. At that instant there was a wild rush to the center of the room, as if the human atoms had been caught in a sand-

Now-a-days nearly every woman rides a bicycle. The majority of these who do not, have failed to compass its difficulties because of nervousness. Many women after taking innumerable lessons, and trying vainly to conquer the wheel for weeks, have finally given it up as a hopeless task for this one reason. In nearly every instance severe nervousness in women may be traced to weakness and disease of the delicate and important organs distinctly feminine. No other class of disorders so torture a woman's nerves or break them down so quickly and effectually. Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription is a sure, speedy and permanent cure for all troubles of this description. It acts directly on the sensitive organs concerned, making them strong, healthy, vigorous and elastic. It allays inflammation, heals ulceration, soothes pain and tones and builds up the nerves. It stops exhausting drains. It banishes the indispositions that precede maternity and makes baby's advent easy and almost painless. It insures the little new-comer's health and an ample supply of nourishment. It transforms weak, nervous invalids into strong, healthy, nerve-steady women. Thousands have testified to its marvelous merits. An honest dealer will not offer a substitute.

"My wife was troubled with 'female weakness' for several years," writes James Caswell, Esq., of Ocheltree, Johnson Co., Kans., (P. O. Box 61). "She had bearing-down pains and pain in back. Her periods were irregular, she would have fainting spells, the best doctors did her no good. By the time my wife had taken four bottles of the 'Favorite Prescription' she was completely cured. No more pain. Her monthly periods are regular, she is stout and strong. When she commenced taking your medicine she weighed about 125 pounds—now she weighs 160 pounds."

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were. They gesticulated and shouted all together. It seemed as if a madhouse had unexpectedly debouched its contents. Young Howard wavered a moment, seemingly drawn by some unseen force to plunge into the melstrom. Then his gaze wandered toward the telegraph office, where he saw the girl standing with wide open eyes looking at the turmoil, while Johnnie Fielders was quite evidently explaining that there was no danger and that it was not a free fight nor the beginning of a football match.

"Come," said Howard; "now is the time."

The manager, still with visible reluctance, turned and led the way to the telegraph office.

"Miss McClintoch," he said, making his voice heard with difficulty above the din, "may I introduce to you a friend of your father's, Mr. Stillson Howard?"

The girl, raising her eyes, saw before her a young man who might be conventionally described as fine looking, with a dark mustache and a firmly molded, self-reliant chin.

"I am pleased to meet any one who knew my father," she said.

"I not only knew him, Miss McClintoch, but I am indebted to him for many kind words and much encouragement at a time when I had no great stock of either. I was once a clerk in his office. If there is anything I can do to help you here, I hope you will let me know, for I would esteem it a privilege to make at least partial return for the debt I owe your father."

"Thank you," replied the girl simply.

"Telegram, miss, if you please," said the falsetto voice of old Grimwood as he leaned against the counter, holding in his hand a written message and fastening his fishy eye on the group. "I take it, Mr. Sandys, that this young lady is going to do us the honor of sending and receiving our dispatches, and that will be very nice indeed."

There was something in his tone which said as plainly as words could have done, "I should be much obliged if you would all attend strictly to business."

Sandys frowned, but said nothing. Fielders sprang forward, took the message and rattled it off to Chicago. Miss McClintoch sat down before her compartment at the table, and young Howard left the room, followed by the manager, who once outside in the hall touched his friend on the arm and spoke in a low voice seriously.

"If I may say it in all kindness, Howard, I think you will only be a hindrance and not a help to Miss McClintoch if this acquaintance goes further."

Howard's reply was an impatient malediction on old Grimwood, more terse than polite.

"Oh, no!" continued the manager. "Mr. Grimwood is quite within his rights. Our old friend's daughter is there to do her duty and is anxious and well qualified to do it, if, as I said before, she is not interfered with."

"I'll break old Grimwood's neck for him yet," growled Howard, still harping on the interruption, "in a Stock Exchange sense, of course," he added.



The signature was that of Grimwood's agent in Chicago.

seeing the other's look of alarm. "I'm not going to assault a crippled man, you know, but I'll give him a lift in wheat some of these days. See if I don't."

"The bankruptcy courts have been kept busy for years with men who have endeavored to give Mr. Grimwood a lift, as you term it. Better proceed with caution, Stillson."

"That's all right," cried Howard, with the supreme confidence of a young man in his accent.

Shaking hands with the manager, he entered the board of trade room and was speedily absorbed in the tumult there, but nevertheless found occasion now and then to direct his eyes briefly toward the telegraph office.

As time went on Elinor McClintoch's new occupation became less and less strange to her. She quickly mastered the details of her calling, and, Fielders departing, not without a manly sigh, the whole duty of the office devolved upon her. Messages, code or plain, passed rapidly to and fro under the nimble manipulation of her pretty fingers, and there were no complaints that information now reached ears not intended for it. But even had she done

her work had been a brave man who found fault with her conduct of business, for the whole board of trade, with the possible exception of old Grimwood, was avowedly in love with her. Some of the older men said they liked her for

her father's sake; but, popular as he had undoubtedly been, this hardly accounted for the universal admiration bestowed upon his daughter, and the Stock Exchange would have risen as one man to protest against her removal had Mr. Sandys proposed such a thing. For the first time in history an action of the Western Union received unstinted approbation. But they all recognized that Howard had the lead as far as the telegraphist was concerned and that he was the man to keep it. The reluctant introduction which he had practically forced from the manager had given him an advantage at the beginning, and many of his young rivals maligned their luck that this advantage had not been theirs. Howard sent many telegrams, and lingered over the counter as he handed them in, turning away often to find the cold, critical eye of old Grimwood fastened upon him, which made him rave inwardly and wish the ancient broker would attend to his own business—a complaint which few had ever urged against the hardened speculator.

(To be Continued)

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