

ARTHUR

TIMOTHY SHAY

OFF-HAND SKETCHES, A
LITTLE DASHED WITH
HUMOR

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T. S. Arthur

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PREFACE

THE reader cannot but smile at some of the phases of life presented in this volume. Yet the smile will, in no case, the author thinks, be at the expense of humanity, good feeling, or virtue. Many of the incidents given, are facts embellished by a few touches of fancy. In all, lessons may be read that some, at least, will do well to lay to heart.

THE CIRCUIT-PREACHER

THE Methodist circuit-preacher is in the way of seeing human nature in many rare and curious aspects. Under the itinerating system, the United States are divided into conferences, districts, and circuits. The conference usually embraces a State, the district a certain division of the State or conference, and the circuit a portion of the district. To every circuit is assigned a preacher, who is expected to provide himself with a horse, and his duty is to pass round his circuit regularly at appointed seasons through the year, and meet the members of the church at the various places of worship established on the circuit. Every year, he attends the annual conference of preachers, at which one of the bishops presides, and is liable to be assigned a new circuit, in the selection of which, as a general thing, he has no choice—the bishop making all the appointments; and so, term after term, he goes to a new place, among strangers. Before any strong attachments can be formed, the relation between him and his people is severed; and he begins, as it were, life anew, hundreds of miles away, it may be, from any former field of labour. To a married man, this system is one involving great self-denial and sacrifice, assuming often a painful character.

In those circuits that embrace wealthy and populous sections of the country, the Methodist minister is well taken care of; but there are many other sections, where the people are not only very poor, but indifferent to matters of religion, ignorant in the extreme, and not over-burdened with kind or generous feelings. On circuits of this character, the preacher meets sometimes with pretty rough treatment; and if, for his year's service, he is able to get, being, we will suppose, a single man, fifty or sixty dollars in money, he may think himself pretty well off.

To one of these hard circuits, a preacher, whom we shall call the Rev. Mr. Odell, of the New Jersey conference, found himself assigned by the bishop who presided at the annual conference. The change was felt as pretty severe, he having been on a comfortable station for two years; but as he must take the evil with the good, he conscientiously repressed all natural regrets and murmurings, and, as in duty bound, started, at the close of the conference, for his new field of labour. A day or two before leaving, and after the appointments were announced, Mr. Odell said to the brother who had ridden that circuit during the previous year—"So, I am to follow in your footsteps?"

"It appears so," was the brief reply.

"How did you like the circuit?"

"I am very well pleased to change."

"Not much encouragement in that answer."

"We can't all have good places. Some of us must take our turn in the highways and byways of the land."

"True; I am not disposed to complain. I have taken up the cross, and mean to bear it to the end, if possible, without a murmur."

"As we all should. Well, brother Odell, if you pass the year on the circuit without a murmur, your faith and firmness will be strong. I can assure you that it will be more than I did—a great deal more."

"I have been among some pretty rough people in my time."

"So have I; but"—and he checked himself; "however, I will not prejudice your mind; it would be wrong. They do as well, I suppose, as they know how, and the best can do no more."

"Truly said. And the more rude, ignorant, and selfish they are, the more need they have of gospel instruction, and the more willing should we be to break the bread of life for them. If our Master had not even 'where to lay his head,' it ill becomes us to murmur because every natural good is not spread out before us."

In this state of mind, Odell went to his new circuit. Having deposited his family, consisting of a wife and one child, in the little village of S—, with a kind brother, who offered them a home

at a mere nominal board, he mounted his horse and started forth on a three weeks' tour among the members of the church to whom he was to minister, during the next twelve months, in holy things. The first preaching-place was ten miles distant, and the little meeting-house stood on the roadside, nearly a mile from any dwelling, and in an exceedingly poor district of country.

Before leaving S—, Mr. Odell made inquiries of the brother at whose house he was staying, in regard to the route he was to take, and the people among whom he was going. As to the route, all that was made satisfactory enough; but the account given of the people was not encouraging in a very high degree.

"The fact is," said the brother, rather warmly, "it's my opinion that they don't deserve to have the gospel preached among them."

To this, however, the preacher very naturally demurred, and said that he was not sent to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.

"Where will I stop to-night?" he inquired. It was Saturday afternoon, and on Sunday morning he was to preach at his first appointment.

"Well," said the brother, slowly and thoughtfully, "I can tell you where you ought to stop, but I don't know you will be so welcome there as at a poorer place. Brother Martin is better able to entertain the preachers comfortably than any one else in that section; but I believe he has never invited them home, and they have generally gone to the house of a good widow-lady, named Russell, whose barrel of meal and cruse of oil deserve never to fail. She is about the only real Christian among them."

"Is brother Martin a farmer?"

"Yes, and comfortably off; but how he ever expects to get his load of selfishness into heaven, is more than I can tell."

"You must not be uncharitable, brother," said Odell.

"I know that; but truth is truth. However, you must see and judge for yourself. I think you had better go to the house of sister Russell, who will welcome you with all her heart, and give you the best she has."

"And I want no more," said the preacher.

After getting precise directions for finding sister Russell, he started on his journey. It was nearly five o'clock, and he made his calculation to reach sister Russell's by seven, where he would remain all night, and go with her to the preaching-place on Sunday morning. He had not, however, been half an hour on his journey, before heavy masses of deep blue clouds began to roll up from the horizon and spread over the sky; and ere he had accomplished half the distance he was going, large drops of rain began to fall, as the beginning of a heavy storm. The preacher was constrained to turn aside and seek the shelter of a farm-house, where he was received with much kindness.

Night-fall brought no abatement of the tempest. The lightning still blazed out in broad masses of fire, the thunder jarred and rattled amid the clouds like parks of artillery, and the rain continued to pour down unceasingly. The invitation to remain all night, which the farmer and his wife tendered in all sincerity, was not, of course, declined by the preacher.

In the morning, after being served with a plentiful breakfast, Odell returned his warmest thanks for the kindness he had received, and proceeded on his journey. He had five miles to ride; but it was only half-past eight o'clock when he started, and as the hour for preaching was ten, there was plenty of time for him to proceed at his leisure. As sister Russell lived nearly a mile away from a direct course, he did not turn aside to call upon her, but went on to the meeting-house. On reaching the little country church, Mr. Odell found a small company of men assembled in front of the humble building, who looked at him curiously, and with something of shyness in their manner, as he rode up and dismounted. No one offering to take his horse, he led him aside to a little grove and tied the reins to a tree. One or two of the men nodded, distantly, as he passed them on his way to the meeting-house door, but none of them spoke to him.

On entering the meeting-house, Mr. Odell found some thirty persons assembled, most of them women. If there were any "official members" present, they made themselves in no way officious in regard to the preacher, who, after pausing at the door leading into the little altar or chancel for a short time, and looking around with an expression of inquiry on his face, ascended the pulpit-stairs and took his seat. All was as silent, almost, as if the house had been tenantless.

In a little while, the preacher arose and gave out a hymn; but there was no one to raise the tune. One looked at another uneasily; sundry persons coughed and cleared their throats, but all remained silent. Odell was not much of a singer, but had practised on "Old Hundred" so much, that he could lead that air very well; and the hymn happening, by good luck, to be set to a long-metre tune, he was able to start it. This done, the congregation joined in, and the singing went off pretty well. After praying and reading a chapter in the Bible, Odell sat down to collect his thoughts for the sermon, which was, of course, to be extempore, as Methodist sermons usually are. It is customary for the choir, if there is one, to sing an anthem during this pause; or, where no singers are set apart, for some members to strike up an appropriate hymn, in which the congregation joins. On this occasion, all was silent. After the lapse of a few minutes, Mr. Odell arose, and turning, in the Bible, to the chapter where the text, from which he was to preach, was recorded, read the verse that was to form the groundwork of his remarks. Before opening the subject, he stated, briefly, that he was the preacher who was to labour among them during the ensuing year, and hoped, in the Divine Providence, that good, both to them and to him, would result from the new spiritual relations that were about to be commenced. Then proceeding with his discourse, he preached to and exhorted them with great earnestness, but without seeming to make any impression. Not an "amen" was heard from any part of the house; not an eye grew moist; not an audible groan or sigh disturbed the air. Nothing responded to his appeals but the echo of his own voice.

Never had the preacher delivered a discourse in which he felt so little freedom. His words came back upon his ears with a kind of a dull reverberation, as if the hearts of his hearers were of ice, instead of flesh.

Before singing the last hymn, which Mr. Odell gave out at the conclusion of the sermon, he announced that he would hold a class-meeting. After he had finally pronounced the benediction, there was a general movement towards the door; only seven remained, and these were all female members, most of them pretty well advanced in their life-journey. Mr. Martin was at the meeting, but ere the preacher had descended the pulpit-stairs, he was out of the house and preparing to leave for home.

"Where is the new preacher going?" asked a member, of Mr. Martin, as he led out his horse.

"To sister Russell's, I presume."

"Sister Russell is not here."

"Isn't she?"

"No; she's sick."

"He stayed there last night, I suppose, and will go back after class." Martin sprang upon his horse as he said this.

"We ought to be sure of it," remarked the other.

"I can't invite him home," said Martin. "If I do, I shall have him through the whole year, and that is not convenient. The preachers have always stayed at sister Russell's, and there is no reason why they shouldn't continue to do so."

"I haven't a corner to put him in," remarked the other. "Besides, these preachers are too nice for me."

"It's all right, no doubt," said Martin, as he balanced himself in his saddle; "all right. He stayed at sister Russell's last evening, and will go back and stay there until to-morrow morning. Get 'up, Tom!" And, with this self-satisfying remark, the farmer rode away.

The man with whom he had been talking, was, like him, a member; and, like him, had omitted to attend class, in order to shift off upon some one else the burden of entertaining the new preacher;

for whoever first tendered him the hospitalities of his house and table would most probably have to do it through the year. He, too, rode off, and left others to see that the preacher was duly cared for. An icy coldness pervaded the class-meeting.

Only four, out of the seven sisters, one of whom was an old black woman, could muster up courage enough to tell, in answer to the preacher's call, the "dealing of God" with their souls; and only two of them could effect an utterance louder than a whisper. What they did say had in it but little coherence, and Mr. Odell had to content himself with an exhortation to each, of a general rather than a particular character. When the hymn was sung at the close, only one thin voice joined in the song of praise, and not a sob or sigh was heard in response to his prayer. The class-paper showed the names of thirty members, but here were only seven! This was rather discouraging for a commencement. Mr. Odell hardly knew what course to take; whether to stir up with some pretty sharp remarks the little company of believers who were present, and thus seek to impress the whole through them; or to wait until he came round again, and have a good chance at them from the pulpit. He concluded in the end, that the last course might be the best one.

In calling over the names on the class-paper he found that sister Russell was absent. On dismissing the meeting, all except the old black woman retired. She lingered, however, to shake hands with the new preacher, and to show him that, if she was old, her teeth were good, and her eyes bright and lively.

On emerging into the open air, Odell saw the last of his flock slowly retiring from the scene of worship. For two of the women, their husbands had waited on the outside of the meeting-house, and they had taken into their wagons two other women who lived near them. These wagons were already in motion, when the preacher came out followed by the old black woman, who it now appeared, had the key of the meeting-house door, which she locked.

"Then you are the sexton, Aunty," remarked Odell, with a smile.

"Yes, massa, I keeps de key."

"Well, Nancy," said Odell, who had already made up his mind what he would do, "I am going home to dinner with you."

"Me, massa!" Old Nancy looked as much surprised as a startled hare.

"Yes. You see they've all gone and left me, and I feel hungry. You'll give me some of your dinner?"

"Yes, massa, please God! I'll give you all of it—but, it's only pork and hominy."

"Very good; and it will be all the sweeter because I am welcome."

"Deed massa, and you is welcome, five hundred times over! But it was a downright shame for all de white folks to go off so. I never seed such people."

"Never mind, Nancy, don't trouble yourself; I shall be well enough taken care of. I'll trust to you for that."

And so Mr. Odell mounted his horse, and accompanied the old woman home. She lived rather over a mile from the meeting-house—and the way was past the comfortable residence of Mr. Martin. The latter did not feel altogether satisfied with himself as he rode home. He was not certain that the preacher had stayed at sister Russell's the night before. He might have ridden over from S— since morning. This suggestion caused him to feel rather more uneasy in mind; for, if this were the case, it was doubtful whether, after class was over, there would be any one to invite him home.

"What kind of a man is the new preacher?" asked Mrs. Martin of her husband, on his return from meeting.

"He seemed like a very good sort of man," replied Martin, indifferently.

"Is he young or old?"

"He's about my age, I should think."

"Married?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"Did you speak to him?"

"No, I came away after the sermon."

"Then you didn't stop to class?"

"No."

"Sister Russell was not there, of course?"

"No; she's sick."

"So I heard. The preacher didn't stay at her house last night."

"How do you know?"

"Mrs. Williams called in while you were away. She had just been to sister Russell's."

"And the new preacher didn't stay at her house last night?"

"No. Mrs. Williams asked particularly."

"He must have ridden over from S— this morning. I am sorry I didn't wait and ask him to come home and stay with us."

"I wish you had. Sister Russell is too sick to have him at her house, if he should go there. Who stayed to class-meeting?"

"Not over half a dozen, and they were all women. I left Bill Taylor and Harry Chester waiting outside for their wives."

"They wouldn't ask him home."

"No; and if they did, I should be sorry to have him go there. I wish I had stayed in, and invited him home. But it can't be helped now, and there's no use in fretting over it."

Soon after this, dinner was announced, and the farmer sat down with his family to a table loaded with good and substantial things. He ate and enjoyed himself; though not as highly as he would have done, had not thoughts of the new preacher intruded themselves.

After dinner, Martin took a comfortable nap, which lasted about an hour. He then went out and took a little walk to himself. While standing at the gate, which opened from his farm on to the county road, a man, who lived half a mile below, came along. This man was not a member of any church, and took some delight, at times, in having his jest with professors of religion.

"Fine afternoon, Mr. Ellis," said Martin, as the man stopped.

"Very fine. How are you all?"

"Quite well. Any news stirring?"

"Why, no, not much. Only they say that the Methodists about here have all joined the Amalgamation Society."

"Who says so?" inquired Martin, slightly colouring.

"Well, they say it down our way. I thought it was only a joke, at first. But a little while after dinner, Aunt Nancy's Tom came over to my house for some oats and hay for your new minister's horse. He said the preachers were going to stop at the old woman's after this. I half-doubted the rascal's story, though I let him have the provender. Sure enough, as I came along just now, who should I see but the preacher sitting before the door of old Nancy's log-hut, as much at home as if his skin were the colour of ebony. These are rather queer doings, friend Martin; I don't know what folks 'll say."

We will not pause to describe the astonishment and confusion of Martin, on learning this, but step down to Aunt Nancy's, where Odell, after dining on pork and hominy, with the addition of potatoes and corn-bread, was sitting in the shade before the log cabin of the old negro. The latter was busy as a bee inside in preparation of something for the preacher's supper, that she thought would be more suited to his mode of living and appetite, than pork, corn-bread, and hominy.

Odell was rather more inclined to feel amused than annoyed at his new position. Aunt Nancy's dinner had tasted very good; and had been sweetened rather than spoiled by the old creature's loquacious kindness and officious concern, lest what she had to set before him would not be relished. While he thus sat musing—the subject of his thoughts is of no particular consequence to be known—his attention was arrested by hearing Aunt Nancy exclaim—

"Ki! Here comes Massa Martin!"

The preacher turned his head and saw a man approaching with the decided and rather quick step of one who had something on his mind.

"Is that brother Martin?" asked Mr. Odell, calling to Aunt Nancy, who was near the window of her hut.

"Yes, please goodness! Wonder what he comin' here 'bout."

"We'll soon see," returned the preacher, composing himself in his chair.

In a few minutes, the farmer, looking sadly "flustered," arrived at the door of the old negro's humble abode. Odell kept his seat with an air of entire self-possession and unconcern, and looked at the new comer as he would have done at any other stranger.

"Mr. Odell, the new preacher on this circuit?" said Martin, in a respectful manner, as he advanced towards the minister.

"Yes, sir," replied Odell, without rising or evincing any surprise at the question.

"I am very sorry indeed, sir! very sorry," began Martin in a deprecating and troubled voice, "that you should have been so badly neglected as you were to-day. I had no idea—I never once thought—the preachers have always stayed at sister Russell's—I took it for granted that you were there. To think you should not have been invited home by any one! I am mortified to death."

"Oh, no," returned the preacher, smiling; "it is not quite so bad as that. Our good old sister here very kindly tendered me the hospitalities of her humble home, which I accepted gratefully. No one could be kinder to me than she has been—no one could have given me a warmer welcome."

"But—but," stammered forth Martin, "this is no place for a preacher to stay."

"A far better place than my Lord and Master had. *The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.* The servant must not seek to be greater than his Lord."

"But my dear sir! my house is a far more suitable and congenial home for you," urged the distressed brother Martin. "You must go home with me at once. My wife is terribly hurt about the matter. She would have come over for you herself, but she is not very well to-day."

"Tell the good sister," replied Odell, affecting not to know the individual before him, "that I am so comfortable here; that I cannot think of changing my quarters. Besides, after Aunt Nancy has been so kind as to invite me home, and provide for both me and my horse, when no one else took the least notice of me, nor seemed to care whether I got the shelter of a roof or a mouthful of food, it would not be right for me to turn away from her because a more comfortable place is offered."

It was in vain that Martin argued and persuaded. The preacher's mind was made up to stay where he was. And he did stay with Aunt Nancy until the next morning, when, after praying with the old lady and giving her his blessing, he started on his journey.

When, at the end of four weeks, Mr. Odell again appeared at the little meeting-house, you may be sure he was received with marked attention. Martin was the most forward of all, and, after preaching and class-meeting—there was a pretty full attendance at both—took the minister home with him. Ever since that time, the preachers have been entertained at his house.

THE PROTEST

READER! did you ever have a visit from that dreaded functionary—that rod in pickle, held in terrorem over the heads of the whole note-paying fraternity, yclept a notary? I do not mean to insult you: so don't look so dark and dignified. I am serious. If no—why no, and there let the matter rest, as far as you are concerned; if yes, why yes, and so I have an auditor who can understand me.

As for me, I have been protested. I say it neither with shame nor pride. Yes, I have suffered notarial visitation, and am still alive to tell the tale.

I was in business when the exciting event occurred, and I am still in business, and I believe as well off as I was then. But let me relate the circumstance.

When I first started in the world for myself, I had a few thousand dollars. In a little while, I found myself solicited on all sides to make bills. I could have bought fifty thousand dollars' worth of goods as easily as to the amount of five thousand dollars; and the smallest sum I have named was about the extent of my real capital. There was one firm importunate above the rest, and they were successful in getting me into their debt more heavily than I was to any other house. If I happened to be passing their store, I would be called in, with—

"Here, Jones, I want to show you something. New goods just in; the very thing for your sales."

Or—

"Ah! how are you, Jones? Can't we sell you a bill, to-day?"

They were for ever importuning me to buy, and often tempted me to make purchases of goods that I really did not want. I was young and green then, and did not know any thing about shelves full of odds and ends, and piece upon piece of unsaleable goods, all of which had to be paid for.

For two or three years, I managed to keep along, though not so pleasantly as if I had used my credit with less freedom. By that time, however, the wheels of my business machinery were sadly clogged. From a salesman behind my counter, I became a "financier." (!)

During the best hours of the day, and when I was most wanted in the store, I was on the street, hunting for money. It was borrow, borrow, borrow, and pay, pay, pay. My thoughts were not directed toward the best means of making my business profitable, but were upon the ways and means of paying my notes, that were falling due with alarming rapidity. I was nearly all the time in the delectable state of mind of the individual who, on running against a sailor, was threatened with being knocked "into the middle of next week." "Do it, for heaven's sake!" he replied—"I would give the world to be there."

On Monday morning, I could see my way through the week no clearer than this note-haunted sufferer. In fact, I lived a day at a time. On the first of each month, when I looked over my bill-book, and then calculated my resources, I was appalled. I saw nothing ahead but ruin. Still I floundered on, getting myself deeper and deeper in the mire, and rendering my final extrication more and more difficult.

At last, I found that my principal creditors, who had sold me so freely from the first, and to whom nearly the half of what I owed was due, began to be less anxious about selling me goods. They did not call me in, as of old, when I passed, nor did they urge me to buy when I went to their store. Still they sent home what I ordered; but their prices, which before were the lowest in the trade, were now above the average rates. I noticed, felt, and thought I understood all this. I had been careful not to borrow money from that firm; still, I was borrowing, somewhere, every day, and they, of course, knew it, and began to be a little doubtful of my stability.

At last, I was cornered on a note of a thousand dollars, due this house. Besides this note, I had fifteen hundred dollars of borrowed money to pay. At nine o'clock, I started forth, leaving good customers in the store, to whom no one could attend as well as myself. By twelve o'clock, I was able to return my borrowed money, and had the promise of a thousand dollars by half-past one. Until half-past one I waited, when a note came from the friend who had promised the loan, informing me with

many expressions of regret, that he had been disappointed, and, therefore, could not accommodate me.

Here was a dilemma, indeed. Half-past one o'clock, and a thousand dollars to raise; but there was no time for regrets. I started forth with a troubled heart, and not feeling very sanguine of success. Borrowing money is far from being pleasant employment, and is only endurable as a less evil than not meeting your obligations. For that day, I had thought my trials on this head over; but I erred. I had again to put on my armour of *brass* and go forth to meet coldness, rebuffs, and polite denials. Alas! I got no more; not a dollar rewarded my earnest efforts. Two o'clock found me utterly discouraged. Then, for the first time, it occurred to me to go to the holders of the note and frankly tell them that I could not lift it.

"But that will ruin your credit with them."

Yes, that was the rub; and then it was so mortifying a resource. After a short space of hurried reflection, I concluded that as I had twice as much credit in other quarters as it was prudent to use, I would ask a renewal of the note, which would be a great relief. It was better, certainly, than to suffer a protest. At the thought of a protest I shuddered, and started to see the parties to whom the note was due, feeling much as I suppose a culprit feels when about being arraigned for trial. It was twenty minutes past two when I called at their store.

"I am sorry," I said to one of the firm, whom I first met, speaking in a husky, agitated voice, "to inform you that I shall not be able to lift my note that falls due to-day."

His brows fell instantly.

"I had made every arrangement to meet it," I continued, "and was to receive the money at one o'clock to-day, but was unexpectedly disappointed. I have tried since to raise the amount, but find it too late in the day."

The man's brows fell still lower, while his eyes remained steadily fixed upon my face.

"I shall have to ask you to extend it for me."

"I don't think we can do that," he coldly replied.

"Will you consult your partners?" I said; "time presses."

The man bowed stiffly, his aspect about as pleasing as if I had robbed him, and turned away. I was standing near the door of the counting-room, inside of which were his two partners, with whom he had retired to confer.

"Jones can't pay his note," I heard him say, in tones most unpleasant to my ear.

"What!" was replied; "Jones?"

"Yes, Jones."

"What does he want?"

"A renewal."

"Nonsense! He can pay, if he finds he must."

"It is nearly half-past two," one of them remarked.

"No matter. It's of too much importance to him to keep his good name; he'll find somebody to help him. Threaten him with a protest; shake that over his head, and the money'll be raised."

With a Siberian aspect, the man returned to me.

"Can't do any thing for you," he said. "Sorry for it."

"My note must lie over, then," I replied.

"It will be protested."

The very sound of the word went through me like an arrow. I felt the perspiration starting from every pore; but I was indignant at the same time, and answered, as firmly as I could speak—"Very well; let it be."

"As you like," he said, in the same cold tone, and with the same dark aspect, partly turning away as he spoke.

"But, my dear sir"—

"It is useless to waste words," he remarked, interrupting me. "You have our ultimatum."

As I left the store, I felt as if I had been guilty of some crime; I was ashamed to look even the clerks in the face. A feeble resolution to make an effort to save myself from the disgrace and disaster of a protest stirred in my mind; but it died away, and I returned to my store to await the dread result that must follow this failure to take up my paper. I looked at the slow-moving hand on the clock, and saw minute after minute go by with a stoicism that surprised even myself. At last the stroke of the hammer fell; the die was cast. I would be protested, that greatest of all evils dreaded by a man of business. As to going home to dinner, that was out of the question; I could not have eaten a mouthful to save me. All I had now to do was to wait for the visit of the notary, from which I shrank with a nervous dread. Everybody in the street would know him, I thought, and everybody would see him enter my store and comprehend his business.

Half-past three arrived, and yet I had not been bearded by the dread monster, at whose very name thousands have trembled and do still tremble. I sat awaiting him in stern silence. Four o'clock, and yet he had not come. Perhaps, it was suggested to me, the holders of the note had withdrawn it at the last moment. Cheering thought!

Just then I saw a lad enter the store and speak to one of the clerks, who pointed back to where I sat. The boy was not over fourteen, and had, I noticed as he approached, a modest, rather shrinking look.

"Mr. Jones?" he said, when he had come near to me.

"Yes," I replied, indifferently, scarcely wondering what he wanted.

"Will you pay this note?" he said, opening a piece of paper that I had not observed in his hand, and presenting it to me.

My head was in a whirl for an instant, but was as quickly clear again.

"No, my lad," I replied, in a composed voice, "I shall not pay it."

"You will not pay it?" he repeated, as if he had not heard me distinctly.

"No," said I.

The lad bowed politely, slipped the dishonoured note into his pocket, and retired.

I drew a long breath, leaned back in my chair with a sense of relief, and murmured—"Not such a dreadful affair, after all. So, I am protested! The operation is over, and I hardly felt the pain. And now what next?"

As I said this, the man whose Siberian face had almost congealed me entered my store, and came hurriedly back to where I still remained sitting. His face was far less wintry. The fact was, I owed the firm fifteen thousand dollars, which was no joke; and they were nearly as much alarmed, when they found that my note was actually under protest, as I was before the fact.

"Is it possible, Mr. Jones," he said, his voice as husky and tremulous as mine was when I called upon him an hour or two before, "that you have suffered your note to lie over!"

"Did I not inform you that such would be the case?" I replied, with assumed sternness of voice and manner. The boot was on the other leg, and I was not slow in recognising the fact.

"But what do you intend to do, Mr. Jones? What is the state of your affairs?"

"At the proper time, I will inform you," I answered, coldly. "You have driven me into a protest, and you must stand the consequences."

"Are your affairs desperate, Mr. Jones?" The creditor became almost imploring in his manner.

"They will probably become so now. Does a man's note lie over without his affairs becoming desperate?"

"Perhaps"—

There was a pause. I looked unflinchingly into the man's face.

"If we extend this note, and keep the matter quiet, what then?"

"It won't do," I returned. "More than that will be required to save me."

My creditor looked frightened, while I maintained an aspect of as much indifference and resolution as I could assume.

"What will save you?" he asked.

I was thinking as rapidly as I could, in order to be prepared for striking while the iron was hot, and that to good purpose.

"I'll tell you," I replied.

"Well, what is it?" He looked eager and anxious.

"My fault has been one into which your house led me, that of buying too freely," said I; "of using my credit injudiciously. The consequence is, that I am cramped severely, and am neglecting my legitimate business in order to run about after money. I owe your house more than half of the aggregate of my whole liabilities. Give me the time I ask, in order to recover myself and curtail my business, and I can go through."

"What time do you ask?"

"I owe you fifteen thousand dollars."

"So much?"

"Yes; and the whole of it falls due within seven months. What I propose is, to pay you five per cent. on the amount of my present indebtedness every thirty days from this time until the whole is liquidated; you to hand me a thousand dollars to-morrow morning, to enable me to get my note out of bank, in order to save my credit."

The gentleman looked blank at the boldness of my proposition.

"Is that the best you can do?" he asked.

"The very best. You have driven me into a protest, and now, the bitterness of that dreaded ordeal being past, I prefer making an assignment and having my affairs settled up, to going on in the old way. I will not continue in business, unless I can conduct it easily and safely. I am sick of being on the rack; I would rather grub for a living."

I was eloquent in my tone and manner, for I felt what I said.

"It shall be as you wish," said my creditor. "You should not, you must not, make an assignment; every interest will suffer in that event. We will send you a check for a thousand dollars early to-morrow morning, and, as to what has occurred, keep our own counsel."

I bowed, and he bowed. I was conscious of having risen in his estimation. Get such a man in your power, and his respect for you increases fourfold.

My sleep was sound that night, for I was satisfied that the thousand dollars would come. And they did come.

After that, I was as easy as an old shoe. I was soon off the borrowing list; my business I contracted into a narrower and safer sphere, and really made more profit than before.

I have never stood in fear of notaries or protests since. Why should I? To me the notary proved a lamb rather than a lion, and my credit, instead of being ruined, was saved by a protest.

RETRENCHMENT; OR, WHAT A MAN SAVED BY STOPPING HIS NEWSPAPER

NOT many years ago, a farmer who lived a hundred or two miles from the seaboard, became impressed with the idea that unless he adopted a close-cutting system of retrenchment, he would certainly go to the wall. Wheat, during the preceding season, had been at a high price; but, unluckily for him, he had only a small portion of his land in wheat. Of corn and potatoes he had raised more than the usual quantity; but the price of corn was down, and potatoes were low. This year he had sown double the wheat he had ever sown before, and, instead of raising a thousand bushels of potatoes, as he had generally done, only planted about an acre in that vegetable, the product of which was about one hundred and fifty bushels.

Unluckily for Mr. Ashburn, his calculations did not turn out well. After his wheat was harvested, and his potatoes nearly ready to dig, the price of the former fell to ninety cents per bushel, and the price of the latter rose to one dollar. Everywhere, the wheat crop had been abundant, and almost everywhere the potato crop promised to be light.

Mr. Ashburn was sadly disappointed at this result.

"I shall be ruined," he said at home, and carried a long face while abroad. When his wife and daughters asked for money with which to get their fall and winter clothing, he grumbled sadly, gave them half what they wanted, and said they must retrench. A day or two afterwards, the collector of the "Post" came along and presented his bill.

Ashburn paid it in a slow, reluctant manner, and then said—

"I wish you to have the paper stopped, Mr. Collector."

"Oh, no, don't say that, Mr. Ashburn. You are one of our old subscribers, and we can't think of parting with you."

"Sorry to give up the paper. But must do it," returned the farmer.

"Isn't it as good as ever? You used to say you'd rather give up a dinner a week than the 'Post.'"

"Oh, yes, it's as good as ever, and sometimes I think much better than it was. It's a great pleasure to read it. But I must retrench at every point, and then I don't see how I'm to get along. Wheat's down to ninety cents, and falling daily."

"But the paper is only two dollars a year, Mr. Ashburn."

"I know. But two dollars are two dollars. However, it's no use to talk, Mr. Collector; the 'Post' must be stopped. If I have better luck next year, I will subscribe for it again."

This left the collector nothing to urge, and he withdrew. In his next letter to the publishers, he ordered the paper to be discontinued, which was accordingly done.

Of this little act of retrenchment, Jane, Margaret, and Phoebe knew nothing at the time, and the farmer was rather loathe to tell them. When the fact did become known, as it must soon, he expected a buzzing in the hive, and the anticipation of this made him half repent of what he had done, and almost wish that the collector would forget to notify the office of his wish to have the paper stopped. But, the collector was a prompt man. On the second Saturday morning, Ashburn went to the post-office as usual. The postmaster handed him a letter, saying, as he did so—

"I can't find any paper for you, to-day. They have made a mistake in not mailing it this week."

"No," replied Ashburn. "I have stopped it."

"Indeed! The Post is an excellent paper. What other one do you intend to take?"

"I shall not take any newspaper this year," replied Ashburn.

"Not take a newspaper, Mr. Ashburn!" said the postmaster, with a look and in a tone of surprise.

"No. I must retrench. I must cut off all superfluous expenses. And I believe I can do without a newspaper as well as any thing else. It's a mere luxury; though a very pleasant one, I own, but still dispensable."

"Not a luxury, but a necessary, I say, and indispensable," returned the postmaster. "I don't know what I wouldn't rather do without than a newspaper. What in the world are Phoebe, and Jane, and Margaret going to do?"

"They will have to do without. There is no help for it."

"If they don't raise a storm about your ears that you will be glad to allay, even at the cost of half a dozen newspapers, I am mistaken," said the postmaster, laughing.

Ashburn replied, as he turned to walk away, that he thought he could face all storms of that kind without flinching.

"Give me the 'Post,' papa," said Margaret, running to the door to meet her father when she saw him coming.

"I haven't got it," replied Mr. Ashburn, feeling rather uncomfortable.

"Why? Hasn't it come?"

"No; it hasn't come."

Margaret looked very much disappointed.

"It has never missed before," she said, looking earnestly at her father.

No suspicion of the truth was in her mind; but, to the eyes of her father, her countenance was full of suspicion. Still, he had not the courage to confess what he had done.

"The 'Post' hasn't come!" he heard Margaret say to her sisters, a few minutes afterwards, and their expressions of disappointment fell rebukingly upon his ears.

It seemed to Mr. Ashburn that he heard of little else, while in the house, during the whole day, but the failure of the newspaper. When night came, even he, as he sat with nothing to do but think about the low price of wheat for an hour before bedtime, missed his old friend with the welcome face, that had so often amused, instructed, and interested him.

On Monday morning the girls were very urgent for their father to ride over to the post-office and see if the paper hadn't come; but, of course, the farmer was "too busy" for that. On Tuesday and Wednesday, the same excuse was made. On Thursday, Margaret asked a neighbour, who was going by the office, to call and get the newspaper for them. Towards evening, Mr Markland, the neighbour, was seen riding down the road, and Margaret and Jane ran down eagerly to the gate for the newspaper.

"Did you get the paper for us?" asked Margaret, showing two smiling rows of milk-white teeth, while her eyes danced with anticipated pleasure.

Mr. Markland shook his head.

"Why?" asked both the girls at once.

"The postmaster says it has been stopped."

"Stopped!" How changed were their faces and tones of voice.

"Yes. He says your father directed it to be stopped."

"That must be a mistake," said Margaret. "He would have told us."

Mr. Markland rode on, and the girls ran back into the house.

"Father, the postmaster says you have stopped the newspaper!" exclaimed his daughters, breaking in upon Mr. Ashburn's no very pleasant reflections on the low price of wheat, and the difference in the return he would receive at ninety cents a bushel to what he would have realized at the last year's price of a dollar twenty-five.

"It's true," he replied, trenching himself behind a firm, decided manner.

"But why did you stop it, father?" inquired the girls.

"Because I can't afford to take it. It's as much, as I shall be able to do to get you enough to eat and wear this year."

Mr. Ashburn's manner was decided, and his voice had a repelling tone.

Margaret and Phoebe could say no more; but they did not leave their father's presence without giving his eyes the benefit of seeing a free gush of tears. It would be doing injustice to Mr. Ashburn's state of mind to say that he felt very comfortable, or had done so, since stopping the "Post," an act for which he had sundry times more than half repented. But, as it had been done, he could not think of recalling it.

Very sober were the faces that surrounded the supper-table that evening; and but few words were spoken. Mr. Ashburn felt oppressed, and also fretted to think that his daughters should make both themselves and him unhappy about the trifle of a newspaper, when he had such serious troubles to bear.

On the next Saturday, as Mr. Ashburn was walking over his farm, he saw a man sitting on one of his fences, dressed in a jockey-cap, and wearing a short hunting-coat. He had a rifle over his shoulder, and carried a powder-flask, shot and bird bags. In fact, he was a fully equipped sportsman, a somewhat *rara avis* in those parts.

"What's this lazy fellow doing here?" said Ashburn, to himself. "I wonder where he comes from?"

"Good morning, neighbour," spoke out the stranger, in a familiar way, as soon as the farmer came within speaking distance. "Is there any good game about here? Any wild-turkeys, or pheasants?"

"There are plenty of squirrels," returned Ashburn, a little sarcastically, "and the woods are full of robbins."

"Squirrels make a first-rate pie. But I needn't tell you that, my friend. Every farmer knows the taste of squirrels," said the sportsman with great good-humour. "Still, I want to try my hand at a wild-turkey. I've come off here into the country to have a crack at game better worth the shooting than we get in the neighbourhood of P—."

"You're from P—, then?" said the farmer.

"Yes, I live in P—."

"When did you leave there?"

"Four or five weeks ago."

"Then you don't know what wheat is selling for now?"

"Wheat? No. I think it was ninety-five or a dollar, I don't remember which, when I left."

"Ninety is all it is selling for here."

"Ninety! I should like to buy some at that."

"I have no doubt you can be accommodated," replied the farmer.

"That is exceedingly low for wheat. If it wasn't for having a week's sport among your wild-turkeys, and the hope of being able to kill a deer, I'd stop and buy up a lot of wheat on speculation."

"I'll sell you five hundred bushels at ninety-two," said the farmer, half-hoping that this green customer might be tempted to buy at this advance upon the regular rate.

"Will you?" interrogated the stranger.

"Yes."

"I'm half-tempted to take you up. I really believe I—no!—I must knock over some wild-turkeys first. It won't do to come this far without bagging rarer game than wheat. I believe I must decline, friend."

"What would you say to ninety-one?" The farmer had heard a rumour, a day or two before, of a fall of two or three cents in wheat, and if he could get off five hundred bushels upon this sportsman, who had let the breast of his coat fly open far enough to give a glimpse of a large, thick pocketbook, at ninety-one, it would be quite a desirable operation.

"Ninety-one—ninety-one," said the stranger, to himself. "That is a temptation! I can turn a penny on that. But the wild-turkeys; I must have a crack at a wild-turkey or a deer. I think, friend," he added, speaking louder, "that I will have some sport in these parts for a few days first. Then, maybe, I'll buy up a few thousand bushels of wheat, if the prices haven't gone up."

"I shouldn't wonder if prices advanced a little," said the farmer.

"Wouldn't you?" And the stranger looked into the farmer's face with a very innocent expression.

"It can't go much lower; if there should be any change, it will doubtless be an improvement."

"How much wheat have you?" asked the sportsman.

"I've about a thousand bushels left."

"A thousand bushels. Ninety cents; nine hundred dollars;—I'll tell you what, friend, since talking to you has put me into the notion of trying my hand at a speculation on wheat, I'll just make you an offer, which you may accept or not, just as you please. I'll give you ninety cents cash for all you've got, one half payable now, and the other half on delivery of the wheat at the canal, provided you get extra force and deliver it immediately."

Ashburn stood thoughtful for a moment or two, and then replied—

"Very well, sir, it's a bargain."

"Which, to save time, we will close immediately. I will go with you to your house, and pay you five hundred dollars on the whole bill for a thousand bushels."

The farmer had no objection to this, of course, and invited the stranger to go to his house with him, where the five hundred dollars were soon counted out. For this amount of money he wrote a receipt and handed it to the stranger, who, after reading it, said—

"I would prefer your making out a bill for a thousand bushels, and writing on it, 'Received on account, five hundred dollars.'"

"It may overrun that quantity," said Ashburn.

"No matter, a new bill can be made out for that. I'll take all you have."

The farmer saw no objection to the form proposed by the stranger, and therefore tore up the receipt he had written, and made a bill out in the form desired.

"Will you commence delivering to-day?" inquired the sportsman, who all at once began to manifest a marked degree of interest in the business.

"Yes," replied the farmer.

"How many wagons have you?"

"Two."

"As it is down hill all the way to the canal, they can easily take a hundred bushels each."

"Oh, yes."

"Very well. They can make two loads apiece to-day, and, by starting early, three loads apiece on Monday, which will transfer the whole thousand bushels to the canal. I will go down immediately and see that a boat is ready to commence loading. You can go to work at once."

By extra effort, the wheat was all delivered by Monday afternoon, and the balance of the purchase-money paid. As Mr. Ashburn was riding home, a neighbour who had noticed his wagons going past his house with wheat for the two days, overtook him.

"So I see, friend Ashburn, that, like me, you are content to take the first advance of the market, instead of running the risk of a decline for a further rise in prices. What did you get for your wheat?"

"I sold for ninety cents."

"Ninety cents!" exclaimed the neighbour. "Surely you didn't sell for that?"

"I certainly did. I tried to get ninety-two, but ninety was the highest offer I could obtain."

"Ninety cents! Why, what has come over you, Ashburn. Wheat is selling for a dollar and twenty cents. I've just sold five hundred bushels for that."

"Impossible!" ejaculated the farmer.

"Not at all impossible. Don't you know that by the last arrival from England have come accounts of a bad harvest, and that wheat has taken a sudden rise?"

"No, I don't know any such a thing," returned the astonished Ashburn.

"Well, it's so. Where is your newspaper?—Haven't you read it? I got mine on Friday evening, and saw the news. Early on Saturday morning I found two or three speculators ready to buy up all the

wheat they could get at old prices; but they didn't make many operations. One fellow who pretended to be a fancy sportsman, thrust himself into my way, but, even if I had not know of a rise in the price of wheat, I should have suspected it as soon as I saw him, for I read, last week, of just such a looking chap as him having got ahead of some ignorant country farmers by buying up their produce, on a sudden rise of the market, at price much below its real value."

"Good day!" said Ashburn, suddenly applying his whip to the flank of his horse; and away dashed homeward at a full gallop.

The farmer never sat down to make a regular calculation of what he had lost by stopping his news paper; but it required no formality of pencil and paper to arrive at this. A difference of thirty cents on each bushel, made, for a thousand bushels, the important sum of three hundred dollars, and this fact his mind instantly saw.

By the next mail, he enclosed two dollars to the publishers of the "Post," and re-ordered the paper. He will, doubtless, think a good while, and retrench at a good many points, before he orders an other discontinuance.

HUNTING UP A TESTIMONIAL

"DOCTOR," said a man with a thin, sallow countenance, pale lips, and leaden eyes, coming up to the counter of a drug-store in Baltimore, some ten years ago—"Doctor, I've been reading your advertisement about the 'UNIVERSAL RESTORER, AND BALSAM OF LIFE,' and if that Mr. John Johnson's testimony is to be relied on, it ought to suit my case, for, in describing his own sufferings, he has exactly described mine. But I've spent so much money in medicine, to no purpose, that I am tired of being humbugged: so, if you'll just tell me where I can find this Mr. Johnson, I'll give him a call. I'd like to know if he's a real flesh-and-blood man."

"You don't mean to insinuate that I'd forge a testimonial?" replied the man of medicine, with some slight show of indignation.

"Oh, no. I don't insinuate any thing at all, doctor," answered the pale-looking man. "But I'd like to see this Mr. John Johnson, and have a little talk with him."

"You can do that, if you'll take the trouble to call on him," said the doctor, in an off-hand way.

"Where can I find him?" asked the man.

"He lives a little way out of town; about three miles on the Fredrick turnpike."

"Ah, so far?"

"Yes. Go out until you come to the three-mile stone; then keep on to the first road, turning off to the right, along which you will go about a quarter of a mile, when you will see a brick house. Mr. Johnson lives there."

The thin, sallow-faced man bowed and retired. As he left the store, the doctor gave a low chuckle, and then said, half aloud—"I guess he won't try to find this Mr. John Johnson."

But he was mistaken. Three hours afterwards, the sick man entered the shop, and, sinking upon a chair with an expression of weariness, said, in a fretful tone—

"Well, doctor, I've been out where you said, but no Mr. John Johnson lives there."

"Mr. Johnson lives at the place to which I directed you," said the doctor, positively.

But the man shook his head.

"You went out the Fredrick road to the three-mile stone?"

"Yes."

"And turned off at the first road on the left-hand side?"

"You told me the *right* hand side!" said the man.

"Oh, there's the mistake," replied the doctor, with the air of a man who had discovered a very material error, by which an important result was affected; "I told you to turn off to the *left*."

"I'm sure you said the right," persisted the man.

"Impossible!" returned the doctor, in a most confident tone of voice. "How could I have said the right-hand side when I knew it was the left? I know Mr. Johnson as well as I know my own brother, and have been at his house hundreds of times."

"I am almost sure you said the right!" persisted the man.

"Oh, no! You misunderstood me," most positively answered the doctor.

"Well, I must only try it again," said the man, languidly; "but shall have to defer the walk until to-morrow, for I'm completely worn down."

"You'd better try a bottle of the RESTORER," said the doctor with a benevolent smile. "I know it will just suit your case. Mr. Johnson looked worse than you do, when he commenced taking it, and three bottles made a well man of him."

And the doctor held up a bottle of the Restorer, with its handsome label, temptingly, before the eyes of the sick man, adding, as he did so—

"It is only fifty cents."

"I've been humbugged too often!" replied the suspicious patron of patent-medicine venders. "No; I'll see Mr. Johnson first."

"Well, did you see Mr. Johnson?" asked the doctor with a pleasant smile and confident air, as the testimonial-hunter entered his shop on the next day, about noon.

"No, I did not," was replied, a little impatiently. "Ah? How comes that? Did you follow the directions I gave?"

"Yes, to the very letter."

"Then you must have found Mr. Johnson."

"But I tell you, I didn't."

"It's very strange! I can't understand it. You turned off at the first road to the left, after passing the third milestone?"

"I did."

"Two tall poplars stood at the gate which opened from the turnpike?"

"What gate?"

"The gate opening into the lane leading to Mr. Johnson's house."

"I didn't turn off at any gate," said the man. "I kept on, as you directed, to the first road that led off from the turnpike. You didn't mention any thing about a gate."

"I didn't suppose it necessary," replied the doctor, with a show of impatience. "A road is a road, whether you enter it by a gate or in any other manner. Roads leading to gentlemen's country-seats are not usually left open for every sort of ingress and egress. I don't wonder that you were unable to find Mr. Johnson."

"I wish you'd give me a more particular direction," said the invalid. "I'm nearly dead now with fatigue; I'll try once more to find this man, and if I don't turn him up, I'll let the matter drop. I don't believe your medicine will do me much good, anyhow."

"I'm sure it will help you," replied the doctor. "I can tell from your very countenance that it is what you want. Hundreds affected as you are have been restored to health. Better take a bottle."

"I want to see this Mr. Johnson first," persisted the sick man.

"Get a carriage, then. This walking in the hot sun is too much for you."

"Can't afford to ride in carriages. Have spent all my money in doctor-stuffs. Oh, dear! Well! You say this man lives just beyond the three-mile stone, at the first road leading off to the left?"

"Yes."

"Two poplars stand at the gate?"

"Yes."

"I ought to find that," said the man.

"You can find it, if you try," returned the doctor.

The man started off again.

"Plague on the persevering fellow!" muttered the man of drugs, as soon as the invalid retired.

"I wish I'd sent him six miles, instead of three."

The day wore on, but the testimonial-hunter did not reappear. Early on the next morning, however, his pale, thin face and emaciated brows were visible in the shop of the quack-doctor.

"Ah! good morning! good morning!" cried the latter, with one of the most assured smiles in the world. "You found Mr. Johnson, and pleasant of course?"

"Confound you, and Mr. Johnson, too! No!" replied the invalid impatiently.

The doctor was a man of great self-control, and, of course, did not in the least become offended.

"Strange!" said he, seriously. "You surely didn't follow my directions."

"I surely did. The first gate on the left-hand side. But your two tall poplars was one tall elm."

"There it is again!" and the doctor, in the fulness of his surprise, actually let a small package, that he held in his hand, fall upon the counter. "I told you poplars, distinctly. The elm-tree gate is at least a quarter of a mile this side. But, to settle the matter at once," and the doctor, speaking like

a man who was about doing a desperate thing, turned to his shelves and took therefrom a bottle of the Universal Restorer—"here's the medicine. I know it will cure you. Take a bottle. It shall cost you nothing."

The sick man, tempted strongly by the hope of a cure, hesitated for a short time, and then said—

"I don't want your stuff for nothing. But half a dollar won't kill me."

So he drew a coin from his pocket, laid it upon the counter, and, taking the medicine, went slowly away.

"Rather a hard customer that," said the doctor to himself, with a chuckle, as he slipped the money in his drawer. "But I'll take good care to send the next one like him a little farther on his fool's errand. He'd much better have taken my word for it in the beginning."

The sick man never came back for a second bottle of the "Restorer." Whether the first bottle killed or cured him is, to the chronicler, unknown.

TRYING TO BE A GENTLEMAN

THE efforts which certain young men make, on entering the world, to become gentlemen, is not a little amusing to sober, thoughtful lookers on. To "become" is not, perhaps, what is aimed at, so much as to make people believe that they are gentlemen; for if you should happen to insinuate any thing to the contrary, no matter how wide from the mark they go, you may expect to receive summary punishment for your insolence.

One of these characters made himself quite conspicuous, in Baltimore, a few years ago. His name was L—, and he hailed from Richmond, we believe, and built some consequence upon the fact that he was a son of the Old Dominion. He dressed in the extreme of fashion; spent a good deal of time strutting up and down Market street, switching his rattan; boarded at one of the hotels; drank wines freely, and pretended to be quite a judge of their quality; swore round oaths occasionally, and talked of his honour as a gentleman.

His knowledge of etiquette he obtained from books, and was often quite as literal in his observance of prescribing modes and forms, as was the Frenchman in showing off his skill in our idioms, when he informed a company of ladies, as an excuse for leaving them, that he had "some fish to fry." That he was no gentleman, internally or externally, was plain to every one; yet he verily believed himself to be one of the first water, and it was a matter of constant care to preserve the reputation.

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