TALES OF MYSTERY.

MY LITTLE CARD GAME.

BY HARRY CORMAINE.

We had been talking very absorbedly for some time, seated side-by-side in a car, on our way to Philadelphia, the conversation began, I believe, on Cuba, from which it branched out to the West Indies generally. That brought us to the subject of cyclones, and I found that my companion was interested in such meteorological knowledge in that direction in fact he had written and published a little pamphlet on the subject of the West Indian cyclone. If I would let him have my card and address, he would take much pleasure in sending me a copy of his little work. Once I secured to take an journal in his favorite hobby.

Now, I always carry calling cards with me, and the address of the city where I am always to be found. Even though I am a bachelor, there is enough on those cards, just some no some. So I took from my pocket a small leather cardcase and extracted a card which, without looking at it, I handed to this chance acquaintance.

He, in his turn, was looking for a card to give to me in exchange. But he paused in his search, his face, looking as if with deep attention, he stared at me in astonishment.

"Very remarkable," he said. "This is a very remarkable coincidence, sir, as you will see when you look at my card. Our names appear to be identical. May I ask what the 'H' stands for in your name?"

"The 'H?'" I repeated, in some surprise.

"What 'H?'"

He replied by showing me the card I had just given him. The name on it was "Wentworth H. Waxham."

"Did I give you that card just now?" I asked.

"That is the card you handed me," he said, with an amused smile.

I took out another card, made sure that it was my own, and gave it to him, remarking, "I think this is right."

"Thank you," he said, and it seemed to me that he showed some hesitation in the manner of handing me back the card I had first given him.

After that we talked no more of orchids or anything else. For one moment the turning up of that "Wentworth H. Waxham" card had taken me by surprise, but I soon remembered the odd circumstance by which it had come into my possession. I should have been only too glad to give Mr. Waxham the history of it, had it not been for a sudden exhibition of reserve in his manner which made me suspect that this man

"I SAID, 'WAIT TILL I GET MY HAT.'"

supposed me. To be frank about it, I really saw that he took me for one of those people who are always on the watch to make a point of collecting visiting cards to be used in their "business." In a much different way.

The matter of Mr. Waxham was a most remarkable one. I was trying to make up my mind whether to make my explanation or not, when the train finally arrived at Philadelphia.

I carried my card about me, but I had no idea, I was meeting to be the man to use that I was even aware of his existence. And in the confusion, the train was anxious on to Philadelphia. The longer the science lasted, the more awkward would it be to break it, and the more likely that Mr. Waxham would take my account of the matter for a trumped-up story, which I had been quite preparing for his benefit, while we both sat there.

Just as we were reaching the end of our journey, I turned once more to the second card and said, "You didn't tell me, by the way, whether you live in Philadelphia."

"I live in New York," he answered. Just turning his head slightly from the window through which he had been looking, he fixed his eyes on me, as the conductor came into the car, and all the passengers began moving their hats and overcoats. I could plainly see that Mr. Waxham regarded me as a decidedly suspicious character. He only nodded as he walked away down the aisle, and said nothing more about sending me his card.

My only hope of a meeting up of the mystery was that Mr. Waxham would take the trouble to call and inquire about me at the club. But this was out of his power, by reason of the pasteboard book. I made it a point to ask the club porter a few days after we returned, and the truth, and there was the little pasteboard waiting for me in a pigeon hole. The author had hastily scribbled his name and "compliments" on the fly leaf, but no address was given.

Well, I thought, if Mr. Waxham did thought of me as a confidence man, go out about with a handful of other people's cards to sell, he would certainly resolve his doubts by calling at the club and questioning the hall porter, giving a description of my personal appearance. In case he should do so, I wrote a polite note of thanks for the pasteboard and left it at the club to be given to Mr. Wentworth H. Waxham, if he asked for me.

Then I made an expedition to the drug store, where I had obtained chance possession of that unfortunate card.

"Do you remember me?" I said to a clerk whom now I proceeded to recognize. "I have only once before been in here."

The young man looked hard at me, but could see no recognition.

"I remember you very well two months ago," I went on, and asked you if you keep cigarette papers. You said you did not. Do you remember now?"

"No, sir, I'm afraid I don't."

"There was a customer sitting in this chair over there—"

"Oh," he said, "now I think I do remember something about it. Didn't he give you a package of papers?"

"Yes, sir," I said. "He gave me a half-used package of cigarette papers which he found in his pocket. I want to know who he is."

The clerk seemed to be thinking hard, then he said, "I believe that gentleman was in here, both evenings and asked who you were, sir."

"Did he give you his name?"

"No, sir, he did not. But I think he said he had left a case in the cigarette room in the car, and all the passengers began marking their hats and overcoats. I could plainly see that Mr. Waxham regarded me as a decidedly suspicious character. He only nodded as he walked away down the aisle, and said nothing more about sending me his card.

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