THE ANTI-POVERTY REFORMER.

(By Frank C. Wilder.)

I was lying one night, sleepless, watching the moonbeams that had stolen in through the open window, and glinted and danced on the floor, dancing now and anon at play on the floor, dancing with the soft shadows to the music of a friendly zephyr.

I had watched them for a long time, sometimes thinking of them, half sometimes thinking of the sharpen ground that rivet around the sharpen of steel and raiment, then again letting my mind wander over strange experiences and acquaintances of the past year. Suddenly I was startled by a noise as if some one were trying to force an entrance through the door. Burglaries under peculiar circumstances had been a common occurrence of late in the community, and I quietly reached for the revolver, which recently I had kept at hand. It was not a French duelling pistol for touching no stray cats, but a heavy six-shooter weapon that "spoke loud" and meant what it said.

As I reached, I felt a not unnatural curiosity as to the size and courage of the supposed burglar, and whether I would be compelled to shoot, and whether the injured would be hold, and if so, who would be cut on, but this latter train of thought was not agreeable, so I decided to wait on the situation, and if any shooting was to be done, to do my share first. I concluded not to begin with the warrant for entering the door, for the ball carpet belonged to the landlady and a more fussy individual I have seldom seen.

The burglar seemed to be in no hurry to enter, but soon I saw the key turn slowly, as if by an invisible hand, and heard the lock slip back. "Thieves," I thought, "that's easy enough, but now what are you going to do?" for, in addition to the lock there was a heavy bolt on the inside of the door. Although there seemed absolutely no way of unlocking the bolt from the outside when the door was closed, by my cute you I not slipped back noiselessly, the door opened and my burglar entered.

With the revolver still clutched under the bedclothes, feigning sleep, I saw through my half-closed eyes a man apparently of middle age, but in unusual of a kind of clothing which must have dated back hundreds of years.

He stalked majestically, slowly, across the room, and seated himself comfortably in my armchair, taking up a sackful of peannis which I had bought the night before, and beginning to eat them meditatively, as my visitor seemed to pass hours of idle revery. I am not in the habit of becoming excited, until the necessity for action is forced upon me; curiosity as to what my nocturnal intruder would do next overcame my sense of emergency.

For a long time he sat there, until finally I heard the crunch of the last peanut. Then he rose, and, walking over to the place where my clothes were hanging, took the small change from my pockets, counted it and laid it carefully aside. Next he took my watch, and taken off his pocket, put it back on the hook. Further search there seemed to reveal nothing more of value, so he turned toward the dressing case. I was beginning to feel a very particular interest in his movements, for I knew that if he opened the upper drawer he would discover a certain pair of cameo sleeve-buttons, my gold. Aunt Mary had given me, and which had such associations as made them invaluable. The thought of that antiquated, battered, foreign-looking villain carrying them off, the more angry I became. Fearfully the intruder, but heedlessly, stepped to the dressing case, but heedlessly, stopped to shoot. A moment more and I saw the cherished buttons in his hand. I lost all patience:

"Throw up your ——," before I could finish the sentence, I had involuntarily fired. What had I done? It seemed like cold-blooded murder. I could not bear even a groan.

When the smoke cleared, I looked and saw my supposed victim standing broad out and the window, his face turned toward me, with a look of mild remonstrance. I naturally expected to see some wound, for I was certain at that distance I could not have missed my aim entirely, but saw only a small round observant hole in the centre of his breast, through which the moonlight was streaming.

"You ought not to have done that," he said, reproachfully, "just see this hole you have made through me." and, sitting down again, he took from his pocket a little case containing needle and thread and proceeded to carefully darn the hole made by my bullet.

"I am glad I did not have on the King's suit," said he, "for it is hardly sure I should have been ruined.

"Yes," he continued, meditatively, "I would have been sad if you had destroyed my Medal of Honor which I received one dark night from the King of Ghosts for rescuing a lady from a gang of barbarians. I—yes, I—frightened them away. I let them see through me, clear as a bell.

"Ah, it was a rare sight to see them run, and to hear those yell. The lady saw me and almost fainted, but she expected and ran home. And I got the medal at our next meeting. How I prize that medal.

"Then, there was another. It was given me for contracting the view of a sleep-forger who was about to pounce upon a poor soul for stealing a loaf of bread. The poor man started to run and the sleepkeeper started after him. But suddenly I stood in the way, and he could not pass through me.

"He drew his fist and he drive, and his arm shot through my chest as though I were made of tissue paper. Ah, but I gave him a rare frigid and my poor man got away. God speed him.

"My Grand King gave me a medal of honor for that act.

"I should never have forgiven you if you had shot it through and through."

Decidedly, this was a strange experience. I certainly was not dreaming, everything was too vivid for that. Finally I ventured to remark:

"IN UNACCOUNTABLY STRANGE ATTIRE."

"Do you have very much of that sort of work to do?"

"No," he answered, "occasionally some one is awake when I enter a room, but a pistol ballet gives me very little trouble. It only makes one small hole that in five minutes I can sew up so that I am as good as new, just as I have done with this one here."

So saying, he put away the needle and rose with no trace of a wound about him.

"Now, in Nottingham wool," he continued, moving about the room in search of more plunder, "where I remained for some time after my death, people had an unpleasant way of shooting arrows through me that tore great holes which sometimes took two hours to mend neatly. It was very tiresome. That is one reason that I took to traveling, and then, too, I desired to extend my favorite work. You see, I have a grand purpose in life. It never did seem right for some men to own railroads and banks and have horses and carriages, and all sorts of useless but expensive luxuries, while others have to beg a nickel to buy beer.

"My work, begun when a young man, in Sherwood forest, is to rectify this great wrong. I believe in the equal distribution of wealth, and I claim to be the first expounder of the doctrine that wealth has no rights that poverty is bound to respect. But nothing can be accomplished by legislation. A man will not voluntarily surrender his fortune. My way is the only practicable one—to take from the rich by force or stealth. In the distribution of wealth thus acquired, neither I nor the majority of other reformers find much difficulty; it takes it all for our traveling and personal expenses.

"How long have you been in your present state?" I asked. "I mean how long since you ——" I hesitated to say "died," for it scarcely seemed applicable.

"Snuffed," he suggested. "Oh, that deal occurred hundreds of years ago, I suppose. I have the date in my memorandum book, but I left it at home. The circumstances of my death were very peculiar, I remember. I was drowned in a flood of resolutions, and I am the only man who was never resuscitated. But I must be going, so I will just wrap up these few articles I have levied from your wealth and bid you good-bye."

So saying, he carefully folded a bit of paper about my watch and was about to do the same with my sleeve-buttons, when I interrupted him.

"Look here, those sleeve-buttons have been in our family for years, and I will just ask you to put them back where you found them, and you might as well leave that watch, too. I understand the loss of the money under the circumstances, but if you attempt to steal those buttons, you will get yourself into trouble."

"You forget, my dear sir, that you are not able to injure me in the least, and as I have taken quite a fancy to those buttons, I shall carry them with me."

I sprang up and seized my full-magazined Winchester, which stood in the corner. "Now, go!" I said.

"I will, but I shall take these with me. Now don't fire that peg-gun at me, because it won't do you any good, and the one little hole it makes I can sew up in five minutes, as you have seen."

My only reply was to raise the rifle and begin to shoot as fast as I could pump the lever. At the second shot he manifested some surprise and uneasiness, a repeating rifle was evidently new to him, at the tenth he had assumed the appearance of a perfect colander and when I had emptied the magazine, he was all torn to pieces. Fragments lay scattered over the floor, leaving a corresponding space in the ghost, who stood regarding his tattooed appearance much as a bachelor might regard a torn coat.

"I shall have to have myself three or four days at a tailor's," he sometimes, "that thing is worse even than a bore and cyclone."

Walking carefully across the room, lest he should tear himself more, he left the watch and buttons on a little stand.

"THE KING'S SUIT."

then, picking up the pieces of his form lying over the floor, he put them in the empty peanut sack and walked toward the door.

My anger somewhat appeased, I asked him who he was.

"They used to call me Robin Hood," he answered abstractedly, and, as he disappeared through the door, I heard him say, meditatively, "Well, I'll be darned!"

GHOST STORIES.

THE STRANGE DOINGS OF A DOOR.

BY AUGUSTA PRESCOTT.

I had known both Tom Sinclair and his wife for so many years that it seemed impossible for them to tell me anything out of their own lives that should be new to me. I thought that, as—well, I may, at least, say that I personally superintended the negotiations which eventually made them "Tom Sinclair and his wife," and as I evened out of the question that they should have had a thrilling experience of which I had never heard.

And yet, it was only last Christmas that they told me the story of the door, and it was quite new to me.

It happened after the conclusion of the above-mentioned negotiations, but before they were married. That is to say, they were an engaged couple, and quite seriously engaged, without any probationary understanding or such nonsense. In fact, they were only waiting for a convenient flat at the time, so as to go in modest housekeeping at the very beginning of their married life.

But Tom was a wandering person then—a vagrant of commerce, he called himself—his firm used to send him at a day's notice to the uttermost parts of the United States, and even to Mexico, to make known the advantages of buying their goods rather than others.

One evening when Tom should have gone to talk with Minnie, for he had said he was coming, he sent, instead, a note, saying, "Awfully sorry. I have to start for California in a great hurry. Good-bye. Can't see you before I go."

That, in itself, was hard, but compared to what happened it in the course of two weeks, there was no hardship about it.

Of course she expected to hear from him in a note, long before, before that week was up. But no letter came that week; and, what was worse, there was a report of a terrible train robbery in Arizona, and the people at the office could not say for certain that Sinclair was not based on that train. Then later reports made out that none of the passengers had been killed by the gentlemen, detailing of the train, and some by the relatives of the robbers.

Poor Minnie spent a terribly anxious fortnight, until, at last, it was ascertained that Tom Sinclair was not one of those who had been hurt in the hold-up; in fact, a telegram from him to his firm made it clear that he had not been on that train at all.

But then followed something almost as bad. Of course, Minnie could not say whether she would have thought it quite as bad as Tom's brutal assassination, if he had forgotten all about her, but it had forgotten him enough. He did not write her a line, or it never reached her if he did, for four weeks.

The year went from November to December, and from chilly to downright cold. The people at the office—Minnie would have been surprised to let them suspect that really was troubling her—always smiled and said that Mr. Sinclair was "doing very well out West," and they didn't know whether he would be back before Christmas.

It must have been a terrible trial for her. As I was saying, in the city at which I can't say, from my own recollection, that she pined and grew sickly under the strain, but I know that so long after it as last Thanksgiving her voice had a threat of tears in it when she told the story.

She used to mope a good deal, evidently, which was a great mistake. One evening in early December she was moping, sitting in front of the fire in the parlor, just as she would have been sitting if she expected Tom to come that evening.

The parlor was not a very large one, with one door that opened on to the narrow entrance hall. Of course the street door was closed, for snow was falling, and, as it turned out afterwards, the street door was also locked and fastened with a chain.

Still, sitting there by herself, between the door that opened into the hall and the fire, Minnie felt a draught, as she closed the parlor door.

She had not sat down again two minutes, continuing her sad meditations, wondering why Tom had forgotten her—what she had done—for by this time her mind was almost sense

"AND NOW THEY ARE MR. AND MRS. TOM SINCLAIR."

so to it, that he had forgotten her—when she felt the draught again.

Turning round mechanically, she saw that the door was open. Not only was it open, but it was opening still more. It was slowly opening, wide and wider, as if somebody were slowly and hesitatingly entering by it.

That made Minnie shiver more than the cold draught. In the half light from her shaded lamp the slowly opening door looked so uncanny—and then, thinking of Tom and wondering where "poor West" he was had, too.

It made her shiver, but she was a plucky girl—she is now a plucky woman—she did not jump up and run upstairs to her room. If she had wanted to do that, her only way would have been through that same door. What she did was to go and close the door again, and take particularly good care this time that the latch caught.

Then she sat down again before the fire and wished that—not that the door would open of itself—she wished that the bell would ring, late as it was, and Tom come in—just so that she might give him her opinion of his behavior.

And while she thought this, and arranged in her mind just what she would say in such a case, and might say the first time she got a chance—How she would give it to him!—the cool draught blew on her again, and there was the door opening.

There was nothing very wonderful in that. One can never tell how the tongue of a spring latch may get worn away, so as to slip and let a door open when a draught on the outside is pushing at it, and certainly, there may well have been a strong draught out in the hall for the door did not fit very tight and the wind was high.

So Minnie simply got up and went to the door. The boy was in the lock on the outside. She took it from the keyhole, put it in on the inside and locked the door.

Before she sat down again she pulled at the handle to make sure that the door was securely locked. Then, having locked herself in, she sat down and stirred the fire.

Mrs. Sinclair does not say that she was not in all nervous when she went back to her chair that second time; on the contrary, she says she thinks the poker shook a little in her hand and rattled against the bars of the grate—an impromptu admission which has much weight in persuading me of the truth of the last part of her story, convincing me that, as I have always thought, she is an eminently veracious person.

What she says followed was that, while she was stirring the fire, something dropped behind her, and she confessed that she was nervous enough to want to look round and see what it was that had dropped.

But she stopped her stirring of the fire, and wanted, and listened to her heart beating.

Then, while she listened and crouched over the fire, she felt a draught behind her and turned round—There was the door slowly opening, for the third time.

SHE BURIED HER FACE IN HER HANDS.

At this point in her story Mrs. Sinclair turned to me defiantly and asked, "Now, what do you think?"

And I said, "Not at all. Please go on."

It seems she was quite frightened this time—not nervous, frightened. She trembled as she crossed the room.

As she came to the door, her foot struck on the key that had fallen from the lock. Then she screwed up enough courage to look out into the hall.

The hall light was burning low. Her brother's overcoat was hanging on the rack near the door, and she noticed that a little one snow had crept in under the hall door.

She called out, not very loud, "Who's there? Anybody there?"

And, as no answer came, she ran upstairs to her own room and buried her face in her hands. Afterwards she wrote a letter.

Mrs. Sinclair has not told me what she put in that letter. She got a friend to address it to Tom, in the care of his firm, not wishing them to know that her poor dear did not know his address "out West."

I infer that there was something very sweet and pathetic in that letter. It was forwarded to Tom, "out West," but to St. Louis, where it reached him only one day before he got home.

The sequel I can tell from my own recollection.

Tom had written very soon after he started out on his wonderings, but the letter had gone wrong, with several hundred others, in a robbery of the United States mail, which, robbery, not, perhaps, been perpetrated by the same gang that had caused Minnie so much anxiety for Tom's life.

Then there was a silence. That was when Minnie was standing on her dignity. And Tom, not knowing that his letter had gone astray and that Minnie had been bitterly offended at the abruptness of the little note he had left for her, began to think of her much as she had begun to think of him.

It was very much the old style of lovers' misunderstanding. And then even the usual candid friend was on hand—one Dr. Midgley, of our city—and he wrote to Tom, through the flesh, to tell him, as he put it, "how things were going," just out of pure friendship, of course.

Now Mrs. Sinclair says that when Tom got home, only a few days after the mysterious behavior of that door, and came straight to see her, "you could have knocked her down with a feather."

She had taken the sign of the door to mean that Tom was dead and turned away out beyond the Great Divide, for she had no skill in interpreting preternatural signs, and had been schooled to talk about the opening of the door, for fear of being disbelieved and laughed at.

But fortunately nobody tried to hit her with a feather. So when she had recovered from her surprise at seeing Tom alive, of course, Tom, on his side, was pleasantly surprised to find that his letter had never arrived to her rather than otherwise. And then—then it all came out.

Not only a missing letter was found, strange to say, when part of the lost United States mail was discovered.

She had not suddenly changed her mind about him and fallen in flirting with any other man. Midgley was an ass—that was the most charitable thing to say about him.

And as for the door, assuming that its goings on were preternatural, which I don't, Tom pointed out that the door meant to say, "It's all right. He's coming back to you."

And so now they are Mr. and Mrs. Tom Sinclair.

Minnie, or Mrs. Minnie, often tries to explain the mystery of that door.

Tom says it is plain to him, but she doesn't see through it yet.

So last Christmas night she had a guessing party. And it all turned on how stories with a mystery and a ghost and a door have to end, and how it happened that Mrs. Minnie promised the biggest slice of cake to the one who made the best explanation.

But she didn't get the cake.

Why?

There is a fair question considering the general fairness of Mrs. Minnie.

But you see the girl was very aggravating.

What do you suppose her explanation was? Why, she suggested that Minnie wanted to see Tom so badly that she kept running to the door and expecting to find him there after she had got mad and locked it she went and opened it again. She just couldn't bear to have a door closed on Tom.

When Tom came home that night she was mad, or pretended she was, and made the girls draw for the biggest piece of cake; and the girls, who guessed the solution, didn't get it—but her own Tom got it for her, which was just the same.

The party decided which was the best solution and it let upon this one—that Minnie opened the door.

But a mystery can be decided a great many times over with every time a new solution, so there will probably be solutions of the Minnie and Tom mystery and the door to the end of the chapter.

The Youngest Member of the Family.

SPORT TALKS.

My name is Sport. I haven't been in this big world very long, but I've had a good time, and kept things pretty lively while I've been here.

My first troubles were the washings my master used to give me. I had a brother called Fido, and whenever mother was asleep we would play very quietly for fear she would waken and begin washing us. We used to kick and play with her tail, and pat her paw and do everything to distract her attention, but she would keep up its licking just the same, and sometimes her paw would do a little licking, too, if we got too playful.

Mother was sleeping one day, and Fido and I were having a fine time. We were boxing each others ears, and chasing each other, and playing tag, all the time watching out to keep off of mother's tail, which was stretched way out behind her. Once we got too near it, and I pushed Fido over backwards and down he went right on that tail! There was a sound like a bass fiddle and I made for that as fast as my legs could carry me and hid behind it. Of course, Fido's fall on mother's tail woke her up, and before he could get off his back, mother's tongue was after him giving him the awfullest washing he ever had.

One day the street car ran over poor little Fido and killed him. Mother always told me to keep away from the tracks. I felt very lonesy and sad without Fido.

One day my little master put me to a doll's bed belonging to his sister. It was very nice, and I was just going to sleep when some one said "Shats! I have those covers over in a big hurry and jumped out, but saw no cat. I finished my washing her face very gently, and went for her and chased her up a big cherry tree. I got my ears boxed for it, too, for mother says rabbit dogs never chase cats.

Once I got into a work-basket that was left on a chair, and was having a splendid time tangling up the different colored threads, when I felt a sharp box on one of my ears and felt myself helped out without my asking for it.

I hear my little master calling me now and must go to see what he wants. I hope we are going to have a game of ball.

"SOME ONE SAID 'SHATS.'"

PUZZLE.

FIND THESE CITIES.

(Arrange the letters in each sentence so as to form the name of a city.)

1. Sic Fan on cars.
2. Mole is in pan.
3. Sob not.
4. O loan wrens.
5. As Nell goes.
6. To scare man.
7. Oh, not so!
8. So I'll live, Lo.
9. Eat fans.
10. Sip orange.
11. No cant.
12. No ago.

ARNOLD'S FAIRY.

(By Mabel F. Scofield.)

"Oh, dear! how I hate these old books!" said Arnold pushing them roughly from him, and walking to the other side of the room. Seating himself on a low stool he sat with his elbows on his knees and his head resting on his hands, the very picture of discontent and unhappiness.

"Why, Arnold dear, what is the matter?" said his mother, laying down the paper she had been reading and looking at her little boy in surprise.

"Oh, I'm tired of doing nothing but going to school and getting lessons. I hate these old books!" he said, giving to the poor, unoffending books a look that would have made them feel very bad if they had had any feeling.

"There are plenty of poor little boys who would be very glad to have the chance to go to school and learn, as you have, so that when they are men they will be better able to fight life's battles, and be of use in the world," said his mother gently.

Arnold said nothing, but sat with his head in his hands. His mother was too wise to preach a long sermon to him, and so said nothing more.

He sat quite still, thinking for a long time, and feeling sleepy, put his arm on the sofa near him and laid his head on his arm. Before long he was in dreamland, far away from school and books.

He was started by a voice calling him, and raising his head, he saw some one standing by his side.

"Come, Arnold," said the voice, "I want you to come with me."

"Who are you?" asked Arnold, rubbing his eyes and staring at the stranger.

"Never mind about that, now," was the answer, "but get your coat and hat and come with me."

Arnold did not be was bidden, and soon the two stood at the front door of the large, beautiful house that was Arnold's home.

They went swiftly down the front steps, out into the street. As it was night, they met few people that Arnold knew.

"We are going too far to walk," said the stranger, "so we will take a street car."

They rode and rode for a long time, until they were out of the city, and then left the car and walked for about a mile.

Arnold could see they were out in the country, not a prosperous farming district, either, where the homes were large and comfortable and the barns big and roomy, but where the stables sheltered stock, not animals; but a place where the dwellings were small and worn, and poverty seemed to rule everything around.

Entering through a broken gate of one of these houses, the stranger remarked as they mounted the tottering steps to the door, "We will rest here to-night."

Arnold said nothing. It seemed as if he had no power to do otherwise than what the stranger directed. He he followed into the house and upstairs to a room, a room the stranger pointed out to him.

Tired out with the long ride and tiresome walk, he soon fell asleep, thinking of his own attic, little room at home and missing the loving touch of his mother's hand as she tucked her boy snugly in bed.

He was awakened next morning early by a loud voice calling him.

"Come, Arnold, you've slept long enough. Don't know why he's so sound here! get into your clothes and get down here to work."

Arnold obeyed, and soon appeared in the little bare kitchen for breakfast, for a dining room was an unheard of luxury here. After a scant breakfast Arnold ventured to say, "Where is the school house?"

"School house! There ain't no school round here. What you want that for, anyhow? You've got to work, boy. No time for schooling here."

Arnold thought of the spurned books of the night before. They would be quite pleasant to look at now.

"I spose you ain't worth much for work—you look puny and pale, but we'll soon take that out of you. To begin with, you'll sight fix that pile out there. I see the old cow has broken it down. And then them apples is to be sorted and put in barrels and carted in to the city to sell. My, there's a lot of wood is to be sawed up for kindling."

Arnold started for the door to begin his work, but was stopped with

"BEFORE LONG HE WAS IN DREAMLAND."

"Here! you a'int goin' to work in your Sunday clothes."

"This is my every-day school suit," protested Arnold.

"Take 'em off, I say, and put these on," was the answer, and a coarse suit of blue jeans was handed Arnold. Arnold worked with a will, and tried to persuade himself he would like this better than sitting in school all day. He surely had a variety of things to do now.

But his mind would turn to the school room, to the play ground, to his own pleasant home, in spite of himself.

After three days of this new life, Arnold thought he could stand it no longer. He was tired, he could not sleep—he was thinking of his former life and of his present one. His mother's words came to him:

"There are plenty of poor little boys who would be very glad to have the chance to go to school and learn as you have."

He felt as if he would enjoy struggling with the hardest problem in fractions, and he certainly would like to study the rest of that chapter in history where General Wolfe is planning to capture Quebec. He felt very homesick about geography, grammar, and his other studies; he certainly would not like to go through life knowing no more about them than he did now. "And I want to see mamma," he said aloud. And at the thought of it all he burst into tears that would not be kept back longer.

"Why, Arnold, what is the matter?" said a sweet, familiar voice, near him.

Arnold jumped up, rubbed his eyes, saw his mother sitting at the library table reading the paper.

He ran to her crying out, "Oh, Mamma! Mamma! I'll never say that again! I want to be happy, I'll be truly stay at home and go to school!"

"Of course you shall, Arnold, what do you mean?"

And Arnold told of all that had happened to him.

"That fairy sleep has been showing you some strange things while in dreamland," said his mother, "and I think she has taught you better than I could have done."

And Arnold never forgot what the fairy had shown him.