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BY
J. S. GEIGER



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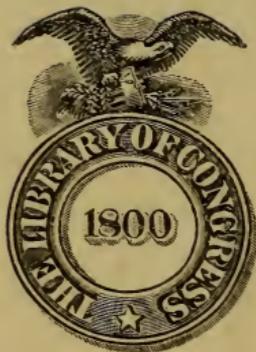
BIG SIX

A TRUE
STORY

HIGHLY
SENSATIONAL

GEIGER & WELLMANN, Pubs
Tampa, Florida.

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“BIG SIX”

TRUE INCIDENTS
IN REAL LIFE.

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SCHEMES BY WHICH HE DECEIVED MEN
AND EXTORTED MONEY.

WITHOUT A PARALLEL
IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD.

HIGHLY SENSATIONAL
BUT CHASTE AND ELEVATING.

BY J. S. GEIGER.



BIG SIX, alias George Asbell, Mariah Dempsey, Mariah Patrick and Ollie Brackett—Was really a man—Personated a woman over fifteen years.—Married a man in Tampa, Florida, and lived with him three months.

To My Readers :

Recognizing the fact that the subject with which I have had to deal in writing this volume is one fraught with great difficulty, and wishing to disabuse your minds of the impression that only men should read it, I wish to say that I have taken great pains to write it in such a manner as that all can read it with impunity, male and female. On account of the peculiarity of the subject, it is but natural for you to regard it with misgivings as to its chastity; but being the author, I am sure that it contains nothing to which even the most fastidious could object.

Respectfully,

THE AUTHOR.

BIG SIX.

CHAPTER I.

A WRETCHED BOY.

GEORGE ASBELL was reared in the mountains of Alabama, only a few miles from Gadsden.

He had three sisters and one brother, of whom he was the youngest.

This family sustained a great loss in the death of Mr. Asbell, and it seemed to Mrs. Abell that she was compelled to marry again to get some one to assist her in raising the children.

They were in such straitened circumstances that she was willing to resort to any honorable method for help, and one day she ventured to tell the children of her plans.

She explained to them that she would much prefer to remain single for their sake, but that the responsibilities incident to raising a family

were so great that she could not dare to assume them alone.

George told his mother repeatedly that some excuse was better than none. He believed that she married simply because she wanted to; and that her excuse was merely a subterfuge.

It is a fact that second marriages are sometimes unfortunate, and it proved to be the case in this instance.

Especially did George think so when his step-father would vigorously apply the rod of chastisement; but the truth is that the old gentleman never struck him a lick amiss only when he struck at him and missed him.

Being the youngest of the family, he was probably petted and spoilt as most juniors are; and for this reason he disliked to submit to a paternal substitute.

Parental restrictions and domestic environments were alike repugnant to him, and he longed for the time to come when he could shake them off. He anxiously looked forward to the time when he could breathe the air of freedom and be his own boss.

He thought that old Nero was a perfect saint compared with his step-father.

It pained his mother deeply to see the great antipathy entertained by him for her husband, and she often remonstrated with him about it, but it did no good.

He was very pleasant indeed when away from home, but the moment he entered his own gate, his expression was so changed that he looked sour enough to turn sweet milk to clabber.

He was an inventive genius as far as making excuses to get away from home was concerned, and he was never at a loss for one.

He was not a George Washington by any means, for he did not mind prevaricating when it suited his purpose better than to tell the truth. It was a common occurrence for him to throw up a breastwork in the form of a falsehood and then get behind it to shield himself.

He regarded everything he was told to do as a burden, and he would writhe in agony beneath its weight. He was not exactly what one would call a lazy boy, but he simply disliked to do anything for his step-father. He was perfectly willing to do anything for his mother, but for any one else to get the good of his labor was more than he could bear. He loved his mother dearly and would have worked his hands off for

her comfort, but he did not think that much of any one else.

His step-father taught him paternal obedience, but he failed to learn him to love it.

In regard to education, his step-father was too poor to send him to school and had to teach him at home. The principal branch taught was "oak branch," in which George said he graduated with honors.

Gadsden was a community where people got along well, being able to raise their children in good style and give them all they wanted; but poor George always claimed that he, being an exception, was raised on hickory.

This diet was indigestible, and he longed for a change; for he never did learn to relish it.

It just seemed to him that he was treated worse than any one else ever was, and he often compared his condition with that of his brother and sisters.

He believed with all his heart that his step-father had a "pick" at him, and no one could convince him to the contrary.

He was evidently born in the objective case, and his poor heart was always aching with imaginary insults and reflections.

He was also very sensitive, and often took offense when none was intended. He kept his feelings spread out all around him, and it was difficult to avoid stepping on them.

The slights of omission and commission were equally repugnant to him, and there was really as much danger of treating him with too much respect as there was of treating him with too little.

He was exceedingly pessimistic, and never failed to look on the dark side of everything.

The cloud of despair was always hanging over him like a pall and caused him to expect something terrible to happen continually.

This can be accounted for, however, when we remember that he had always been a valetudinarian, for it is said that torpid livers have caused more misery than almost anything else in the world. Even suicides have often been traced to this cause.

On account of his delicate nature, his stepfather was considerate enough to exempt him from field duty and let him remain at the house to assist his mother with the work.

This being the case, his brother could rest at noon while he had to help cook the dinner and

wash the dishes. This exasperated him no little; for when his brother rested he wanted to do so too.

Besides this, his sisters being larger than he was, he had to wait on them by making fires, chopping wood, drawing water and sweeping the floor; and he often told them that they were the laziest set that ever lived in the world.

The epithets by which they addressed each other were often very ridiculous, and it seemed that they had lost sight of the fact that they were related.

He would often say, "It doesn't matter how badly I feel, I have to crawl out of bed in the mornings and make the fires, draw water and arrange the pots while the rest can lay in bed and sleep; but it will not always be so and I am glad. When I am gone, I guess you will miss me, and I DON'T CARE HOW SOON THAT TIME COMES."

CHAPTER II.

AN INTENDED TRAGEDY.

THIS rash statement was prophetic, but they were not conscious of the fact. Even George did not know that very soon his words would come to pass.

The future is a starless night through whose impenetrable gloom we are groping our way not knowing what moment we may step over some fearful precipice.

Our mistakes in life may all be charged up to this fact.

George's parents were not prospering as they wished to. They made fairly good crops, but they were getting further behind with their bills every year. It seemed that prosperity had flown away never to return, and that poverty was staring them in the face. When the wardrobe and the pantry are empty, it is almost impossible for any one to be contented.

Especially is this true when there are children to be fed, clothed and educated; for loving pa-

rents feel more for their children than they do for themselves.

This family worked hard, but their coffers were empty and their backs bare of clothes.

This was very humiliating to them under the circumstances, for there were three girls who were nearly grown and they could not receive company on account of the fact just stated.

The girls were anxious to enter society and enjoy themselves, but they could not; and they made it exceedingly warm for their parents.

They should not be censured, for they had natures and rights like other girls; and they were deprived of all their privileges on account of poverty.

It is just as natural for girls to like to dress nicely and receive the admiration and attention of young men, as it is for the sun to shine or for water to seek its level; and it is just as impossible to change them as it is for the leopard to change its spots or the Ethiopian his skin.

Every member of the family was anxious to move to some new locality.

As a prerequisite, however, their place had to be sold in order that they might have the necessary funds with which to purchase elsewhere.

They soon found a purchaser, and the trade was consummated.

They had already selected a new location in another county, and now they had nothing to do but to pack up and go.

Tom Asbell was cousin to George, and he intended to accompany them when they moved to their new home. He had been living with them for several years, and their house seemed like home to him.

He and George were not on the best of terms, or at least it seemed so from the events that subsequently transpired.

Tom was older and larger than George, and would frequently domineer over him; but George was not inclined to submit to it.

It is the glory of some larger boys to domineer over smaller ones, and especially was this true of Tom.

When these boys were sent out together to hunt the cows, they were almost sure to quarrel and fight before they returned.

George was smaller and much the weaker of the two, but still he was not afraid of Tom and would often give him a black eye.

Being of a very sensitive nature, George would

often take offense and put on the war paint before Tom knew anything about it.

George's neighbors were aware of his pugnacious nature and had to be on their guard to keep him from rising up in arms against them. In fact, he was noted for his pugnacity, and it was nothing uncommon for him to have four or five fights a week.

Even his sisters and brother had to walk straight, or they, too, would incur his displeasure and cause him to seek revenge on them.

Retaliation was his chief characteristic and he could not help it.

When he was a friend, his kindness knew no bounds; but when his anger was kindled, he was almost a demon and he cared nothing for results.

The day came at last for them to start on their journey.

Everything was packed up, and the teams were so heavily loaded that George and Tom had to walk. George would have been proud of a seat even on some of the furniture; but then he said it was just his luck to have to walk.

Their road led them through a very picturesque mountainous region. Lofty peaks and

deep vallies abounded on every side, and an occasional spring with beautiful sparkling water. It was just such a place as one would select for a picnic or a day's ramble amid the beauties of nature.

At the end of the first day's travel, George was so tired and weak that he did'nt think he could hold out another day; but his step-father told him there was no remedy for it.

He could hardly keep up with Tom the first day, but he was man enough to do his best.

Tom would often stop and abuse him for lagging, and George was becoming more and more exasperated every time Tom said anything to him.

During the second day's travel, their road led them to the summit of a very steep mountain.

The teams had gone on in advance and had gotten out of sight.

George did the best he could, but he did not feel that he could hold out much further.

About half way up the mountain, he had to sit down and rest; and then Tom opened up his batteries of abuse upon him.

George did not say much, but in his heart he made a solemn and desperate resolution.

He did not know that in carrying out his purpose he would become one of the greatest fugitives and *nom de plumes* that ever figured in the world's history.

When about three-fourths of the way up, he was so overcome by fatigue that he was compelled to stop once more for rest, and Tom again hurled his maledictions at him with relentless fury.

George took it all and said very little, much to Tom's surprise, for he expected to have a regular John L. Sullivan contest before he got through with it.

When they reached the summit, George was completely worn out and he told Tom that he would have to rest again.

Tom was tired of having to stop so constantly and wait on George, and he came back to where George was sitting and began to abuse him as he had repeatedly done before.

This proved to be the straw that broke the camel's back.

George rose to his feet when he saw Tom approaching, for he knew that trouble bordering on to a tragedy was near at hand. He had

never done anything rash before, but he was exasperated and desperate.

His mind was made up and his plans fully developed. He swore in his heart that he would not stand that abuse any longer, and that he would put an end to Tom, even if he had to "swing" for it.

They passed a few sharp, cutting words, and then, in the heat of passion, Tom struck George a fearful blow in the face with his open palm.

This was more than George could possibly stand. His blood was now at boiling heat, and his anger knew no bounds.

He did not think that he had much to lose; for as a fugitive, he could not be any less happy than he had always been.

Without a moment's warning he sprang at Tom with all the fury of an enraged animal.

From a weakly lad he seemed suddenly transformed into a perfect giant in strength.

Summoning all of his physical powers, he picked Tom up and hurled him headlong over the precipice into the yawning abyss.

CHAPTER III.

A DISCOVERY.

AT noon the family waited fully an hour for George and Tom to catch up so they could all eat together, but they were doomed to disappointment.

George's mother began to feel very uneasy about him, for she could not imagine what could be detaining him. She said: "I wonder what can be the matter with George? Surely he has not lost his way or fallen over the precipice."

No one seemed to be at all concerned about Tom, for, being an orphan, he had no mother's love to feel for him. They did not once mention his name, but wondered where George was.

There is just no telling how children ought to appreciate a mother's love, and could Tom have known how he was forgotten in their anxiety about George, he could have realized this fact as never before.

Finally, when they had waited until the

middle of the afternoon and still the boys did not materialize, they organized a searching party consisting of George's brother and step-father.

They saddled a couple of horses, left the girls and their mother with the wagon, and rode back in search of some trace of the missing boys.

They were greatly excited, for they could not imagine what had befallen George and Tom.

On reaching the top of the mountain from whose summit they could see over a mile down the road up which George and Tom should have come, they paused and took a careful survey of the surrounding country.

Failing to see anything of the missing boys, they rode on down, carefully scanning the mountain side as they went.

Seeing the tracks of pedestrians in the road leading to the summit, they followed them until they disappeared near the precipice.

Dismounting, they made a careful investigation as to which way the tracks led from that point, when their attention was arrested by something white on one of the crags overhanging the abyss.

Their hearts leaped with the greatest excitement, for they feared that an awful accident or a terrible tragedy had occurred.

On examination, what they saw proved to be a handkerchief, and gave evidence of having been there only a short time.

This alarmed them more than ever, for it caused them to believe that the boys had met with a fearful fate in some way.

Picking their way carefully from crag to crag, they descended until they saw Tom lying on a rock, face downward, bleeding and considerably mangled.

HE WAS NOT DEAD, but was very weak from loss of blood.

He had regained consciousness and told them all about how it occurred; but could give them no information as to what had become of George.

They assisted him in the perilous ascent and finally succeeded in reaching the summit.

In falling, Tom's clothes caught on the projecting crags, thus decreasing the momentum to such a degree that when he finally struck where they found him, the shock was comparatively slight.

After Tom related how it happened, they knew it was no use to look for George in that locality, for reason taught them that he had fled to parts unknown.

When George's mother heard the sad story, she was almost frantic; for a mother's love never forsakes even a wayward boy.

Yes, he may be a wreck on life's ocean and driven about by wind and tide; his friends may have turned their backs upon him and left him to the mercy of the angry billows of persecution; but the faithful, loving mother will stand alone on the shore and pray for some friendly tide to bring him to her "with all his blight" and tell him she "loves him still."

CHAPTER IV.

DISGUISED.

WHEN George left the scene of the would-be tragedy, he did not follow any road, but went a circuitous route to the foot of the mountain.

He studiously avoided meeting any one, for he did not care to be questioned as to where he was from nor to what place he was heading.

Really, he had no idea himself what his destination was, for he was now a "stranger in a strange land," and a fugitive fleeing from justice.

One place was just as good as another to him, providing it was where no one knew him.

He traveled all that evening, only stopping to get a drink of water at a small branch.

Just about sunset he came to a farm house and asked if he could spend the night. The man to whom he applied for lodging consulted his wife and then informed him that he could stay, much to our wanderer's gratification.

In order to rid their minds of suspicion as to

why he was walking, he told them that he was on some business for his father, and that his horse had gotten away from him.

He then gave them a description of the horse, and asked them to take him up if they saw him.

His story sounded plausible and was entirely satisfactory.

He slept very little that night, for he did not know what moment the officers might ascertain where he was and apprehend him.

The next morning he continued his journey, going in the direction of Fort Payne.

A guilty conscience needs no accuser, and this was the case with George; for he could not help but look behind him occasionally to see if any one were following him.

The falling of a limb or the chirping of a bird would make him start.

When he closed his eyes, he could see his victim falling over the precipice, and he could even hear his agonizing cry of despair.

This mental condition rendered him very unhappy.

Nothing worthy of note happened to him until he reached Fort Payne.

This is a town of about three thousand in-

habitants, and he congratulated himself with the thought that he would scarcely be noticed among so many people.

He was satisfied that no one there knew him and that they had not even heard of him.

His acquaintance outside of his own little neighborhood was so limited that he felt practically safe.

He was confident also that should his mother suspect his guilt, she would not intimate it to a living soul, nor would she allow him to be pursued if in her power to prevent it.

In the event that they did find him, he had made up his mind to tell them that Tom was on an exploring expedition among the mountain crags and accidentally lost his footing and fell.

He knew that his story would have to be accepted as true, for he was the only witness.

His peregrination rendered him very uncomfortable; but still he had never known contentment and his present condition was no departure from the rule.

While the circumstances seemed to justify him in his rash act, he could not help but admit to himself that his pertinacity had a great deal to do with it.

Arriving in the town, he was both hungry and penniless.

He went immediately to one of the principal restaurants and offered his services as waiter.

His proposition was favorably considered and accepted.

It happened that just at this time the mayor's family was absent on a visit and he was taking his meals at this restaurant.

George noticed that this distinguished functionary eyed him very closely, and it caused him to feel a little uncomfortable.

He was afraid that the mayor had seen a description of him and was about to size him up.

Although George was a boy, he had an effeminate appearance; and this resemblance to a girl was so striking that a great many made remarks about it.

The mayor's curiosity was so aroused over George's effeminate appearance that he could not refrain from asking about it.

George was greatly astonished that the mayor should presume to propound such a question, but he frankly admitted that HE WAS A GIRL.

The mayor then informed him that unless he

changed his toilet and dressed like a girl he would have him locked up.

He then explained to the mayor that his reason for dressing as a boy was that he could get through the world with less embarrassment than if he were known as a girl, and his explanation seemed satisfactory.

Really, the mayor's demand just suited George, for he afterwards admitted that he found it easier to personate a girl than a boy.

Besides this, he thought that if he were dressed and known as a girl, his pursuers would be completely thrown off the track and his identification would be a matter of impossibility.

He also remembered what people said about him when he was a small boy dressed as a girl. They frequently called him a "pretty little curly-headed girl," and it always pleased him very much.

To tickle one's vanity generally hits the mark and is much appreciated; and George was not an exception.

He then made the same explanation to the proprietor that he had previously made to the mayor, and informed him of his intentions to change his attire at once.

Having made it all right with these two gentlemen, he had nothing else to fear; for they really believed he was a girl.

Borrowing a few dollars from the proprietor, he embraced the first opportunity to go down town and purchase a complete outfit.

The next morning he carefully arranged his toilet, and the transformation was so complete that he was astonished at his own appearance.

When he looked at himself in the mirror, he was almost persuaded that they had "waked up the wrong fellow."

He then went down into the dining room and presented himself before the mayor and proprietor, for their inspection and approval.

Their ejaculations of astonishment pleased him very much; for they confessed that his transformation was so great that they scarcely knew him.

CHAPTER V.

A CHAMBER-MAID.

SINCE George had changed his apparel, he found it necessary to assume another name.

The author could not ascertain what he called himself when he first reached Fort Payne, but after he disguised himself as described in the previous chapter, he was known as "Miss Mariah Dempsey."

As he grew older his health very much improved; and by the time he was twenty-one he was very tall and well-proportioned.

It is said by those who saw him that when he dressed as a lady he looked like a "veritable giantess."

He wore long, curly hair, and was regarded as very handsome. It is said "his face had the mild appearance of Edwin Booth's Hamlet."

He grew in favor with his employer and guests until he was looked upon with envy by the other employes.

The mayor was very fond of him and would often give him "tips."

The proprietor of one of the largest hotels in the city heard of his popularity and decided to go around and take a meal and make some observations for himself.

This gentleman carried his decision into execution; but of course George did not know him nor his purpose.

Not many days subsequent to this event, George was surprised by receiving a note from him containing a proposition.

The amount offered was double what he was then getting. He carefully considered the matter and decided to accept the offer, for an increase in salary was too tempting for him to resist.

The next day he wrote a letter accepting the proposition, and said that he was ready to go at any time.

He then related the whole matter to his employer, and stated that he had made up his mind to go, as he wished to work where he could receive the best salary.

His employer was very much hurt over the matter, but said frankly that he was paying all

he could afford to give.

Of course this settled it, for George had thoroughly made up his mind to go, and had given his promise accordingly.

A day or two later a hackman drove up to the restaurant and asked for "Miss Dempsey."

George entered the hack and was speedily driven to the hotel.

He felt just about as much elated over the change as a common rail-splitter would feel were he promoted to the President's chair.

When he arrived at the hotel, the porter showed him to his room and told him that the proprietor wished to see him in his private sitting room.

In a short time they met at the place just mentioned, and George was told that his duties were to act as chamber-maid, and see that everything was kept "decent and in order."

He readily agreed to this and immediately assumed the responsibilities devolving upon him in that capacity.

Could he have lifted the curtain of the future, and beheld the new developments that awaited him, he would have been startled beyond measure.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE WING.

GEORGE did not know it, but there was a lady at the hotel who admired him very much.

Having her room in charge, he looked after it so carefully that he could not help but command her admiration and respect.

What his hands found to do, he did with all his might, and this could consistently be termed his crowning virtue.

While he had his faults, he also had his virtues. His faults may have largely predominated; but still, if we "give the devil his dues," we will have to give George credit for possessing at least some good traits of character.

His manners were gentle, refined and winning; and he could act the lady to perfection.

He was so kind to this lady's children that they all loved him and would leave her any time to go to him.

One day she told George to come to her room in the afternoon, as she wanted to have a

talk with him in regard to a prospective business matter.

George was surprised, for he could not imagine what she wanted with him.

He thought that probably there were other chamber-maids in the hotel who were trying to supercede him, and this lady, being a friend of his, wanted to put him on his guard.

Like all others, he had his enemies, but he had no means of locating them.

If we only knew who our enemies were, we would be prepared to meet them; but it often occurs that those whom we regard as our best friends are in fact our bitterest foes.

About the middle of the afternoon George went to her apartment according to her request and found her awaiting him.

She said: "Miss Dempsey, I want to talk to you about a matter which you least suspect. I have been watching you ever since you have been here, and to say that I feel attached to you is to put it very mildly. You have been so kind to my children that I can trust you with them under any circumstances.

"Now, I have a proposition to make to you. I do not wish to take you away from your pres-

ent employer, but if you would rather go with me than to remain here I will give you the opportunity. It is certainly your prerogative to go if you choose and no one has a right to feel offended."

"Where do you contemplate going?" asked George, a little nervously; for he was afraid she might be going to Gadsden, and he would rather have gone to hades than to the place where his crime was probably known.

"I am going to Jacksonville, Florida, within ten days, and I want you to accompany me," said she in a manner that clearly indicated her sincerity.

This was welcome news to him, for he had not dreamed of such good luck coming to him.

He really desired to go to Florida, but no opportunity had presented itself until now.

He longed to get away from the state in which he had tried to kill his cousin, for he naturally felt a little uneasy all the time.

Moving his chair closer to hers, he said: "Do you suppose that my employer will object to my leaving here?"

She said: "It makes no difference if he

does; you are not his slave and he has no claim on you whatever."

A new idea presented itself to George and he said: "Would you assist me in getting his consent?"

"Certainly I will," said she, "and I will see him about it this very afternoon."

"Well," said George, "if you will do that, I will agree to go with you."

Later, she hunted up the proprietor and told him that she was going to Florida, and that Miss Dempsey was going to accompany her.

Hearing this, he said: "It is all right with me, for if she wishes to leave me and go with you I have no desire to prevent her."

This was welcome news to George, for he anticipated trouble in getting his employer's consent for him to leave.

Speedy preparations were made for their departure.

George's services were secured as nurse, and he was to give his whole time to looking after the children.

Strange though it may seem, it is nevertheless true that here was a man six feet and three

inches tall actually engaged as nurse in a respectable private family.

The strangest feature of all, however, was that he could so completely disguise himself as to deceive every one who saw him.

CHAPTER VII.

SUSPECTED.

WHEN they reached Jacksonville, Mrs. Saunders, who was the lady whom George accompanied, did not board at the hotel, but rented a house in the suburbs.

They went to the hotel the first night after arriving, but the next day she secured the use of a furnished house.

She had property in the North from which she received a handsome income, but she felt that she would rather keep house than to board.

Being a widow, she would probably have become smitten with George had she known his true sex, but she supposed, of course, that he was a lady and a doubt never entered her mind.

In his heart, George thought a great deal of her and longed to reveal his real identity to her, but he knew that would never do.

While he afterwards admitted that he had no feeling for the opposite sex, it really took his best to keep from falling desperately in

love with her, for he just thought she was perfection intensified.

She would frequently send him down town on errands, but he would never start until he first arranged his toilet in a superb style.

When he went shopping, the clerks would address him as they would any other lady, and were as polite as they could possibly be.

They never dreamed that the person before them was really a man possessing herculean powers, and in whose hands they would have been mere pigmies.

These proceedings were so novel in their character that George fancied them very much.

He enjoyed having the young men take off their hats to him and smile at him in their peculiar winning way.

He was quite popular with the young men, and often went out walking or driving with them.

A young man thought nothing of spending a couple of dollars for a horse and buggy to take "Miss Mariah" out driving, for she (?) knew just how to win their hearts and play the deceiver to perfection.

He was an adept in lying, and an expert in practicing deception.

The more he mingled with the world the better he liked it, and the less he cared for his respectability.

There seemed to be an innate spark of depravity in his heart that only needed to be fanned by the prevailing vices; for under their influence he began to vacillate.

Although he liked the lady with whom he was staying, he did not like the locality. It was too far from the heart of the city for him to see everything that was going on, and that was not pleasant.

At night, after the family had all gone to sleep, he would go down town and remain there until nearly day.

The place where he was then located was too remote from the localities which he wished to visit, and he resolved to make a change at the earliest opportunity.

One day, after he had been there quite a while, he passed by a house where there were six or eight children, mostly girls and boys, playing in the front yard, and he went in and asked their mother if she had any one to assist

her with the children. She said that she did not, but would like to get some one who understood the business to take charge of them, so as to relieve her of responsibility.

He told her that he could do so if she would take him without demanding references, and then explained that he had only been there a short time and no one knew him.

She scrutinized him closely and propounded many questions; but he seemed able to answer them in such a way as to convince her of his sincerity.

She had no idea that his heart was a manufacturing establishment where lies were turned out by the thousand.

He had such a nice, mild expression that she was satisfied to take him without reference, and they made a bargain.

When he got home, he told Mrs. Saunders what he had done, and to his great astonishment she consented without any protest whatever.

She then frankly told him that she was not satisfied with the way things had been going on, and that he had saved her the trouble of

giving him his walking papers by offering his resignation.

He tried his best to wring the whole reason from her, but beyond what she had already said, she was reticent and could be induced to say nothing more.

He was in trouble over the matter; for he was afraid that she had penetrated the masque behind which he was hiding, and had unraveled the mystery as to his masculinity.

He besought her again and again to tell him the true cause of her sudden and unexpected aversion to him, but she persistently declined to do so.

He would have given the world to know the reason, for if she had suspected the truth, Jacksonville was not large enough to hold him.

He comforted himself, however, with the fact that he knew they were all asleep every time he left the house and returned; and for this reason he thought it safe to carry out his agreement with Mrs. Smiley.

Accordingly he packed up the few effects he had accumulated, bade the family adieu and was driven over to the residence of Mrs. Smiley.

He began to think that attachments were

not worth much since Mrs Saunders had acted so strangely towards him, for he would have wagered his very life almost on the solidity and duration of her friendship.

They were very nice to him at Mrs. Smiley's, and the children seemed very fond of him, but he had lost confidence in human friendship and had no aspirations in that direction.

He had his friends, it is true; but unfortunately they were in the lower circles and he did not prize them very highly.

He was prompt and faithful in the discharge of his duties, and completely won the confidence of Mrs. Smiley; and had he only been prudent he could have remained there indefinitely.

But every night after the family had retired, he was out and gone, and would not return until just before dawn.

He did not seem to realize the great risk he was running, for should he be detected, expulsion and exposure would be his certain doom.

Matters went on this way all right for a while, but of course every earthly thing must have an end, and his game was nearly played as far as staying with her was concerned.

It happened that one of the children was taken seriously ill one night about 11 o'clock, and his services were very much needed. Mrs. Smiley went to his room door and knocked and called, but she received no response.

Finally she decided that he must be dead; and, securing the aid of her husband, she took an iron bar and forced the door open.

CHAPTER VIII..

A TRYING ORRDEAL.

MR. AND MRS. SMILEY entered the room cautiously, expecting to be confronted by some exciting revelation, for they thought that George was either dead or unconscious, as he had not answered them.

They carried with them a lighted lamp in order that they might have a good view of their surroundings.

They had no idea of the true cause why he had failed to respond, for they naturally supposed that he was in the room just where he should have been.

Mrs. Smiley was so excited and nervous over the matter that she trembled from head to foot and told her husband to go in first and that she would follow.

For the time being, the little one that was sick was almost forgotten, their minds being diverted by this unexpected incident.

To their great astonishment, GEORGE WAS

NOT IN THE ROOM, although the bed bore evidences of his having retired.

They searched the house through and through but found nothing to indicate his presence.

As his clothes were in the room it was clear to them that he had not left permanently; but his prolonged absence at that time of night was a great mystery.

About 12 o'clock, George happened to pass near enough to see that there were lights in the house, and it so upset him that he scarcely knew what to do.

He knew that he had the key to his room with him, and that they could not get in without breaking open the door; but he was afraid of their resorting to this should they happen to need his services and miss him.

He was conscious of the fact that it would not do for them to see him return, and he decided to slip up near enough to watch them unobserved, and as soon as they got back in their room, he would go in as quietly and quickly as possible.

Going in the back way, he got in a position where he could see into their room through a window.

He had not been standing there more than five minutes when he was startled almost out of his wits by hearing something that seemed to be creeping up to him from his rear.

He turned his head and looked, but he could see nothing at all. He was sure it was approaching him, however, for he could hear it distinctly; and he would have given anything just for one ray of light to reveal to him who or what this unwelcome visitor was.

He did not have long to wait before the ray of light came, but it was from the wrong source. Mr. Smiley had decided to take another look for him and had walked out in the back porch with lamp in hand and the light fell directly on him.

As quick as a flash he dropped down behind a small flower bush, hoping that Mr. Smiley would not advance any nearer, for he was already uncomfortably close.

George was lying flat on the ground, face downward, waiting for Mr. Smiley to go back in the house.

He hardly dared to breathe for fear he would be heard.

Just as Mr. Smiley turned and went back

with the light, a huge dog sprang upon George, placing both of its fore feet on his back, and growled most viciously.

The dog belonged to Mr. Smiley, but it was not well acquainted with George, and hence its unfriendly attitude towards him.

George knew that the easiest way was the best, and he spoke kindly to the dog, hoping that his voice would be recognized by the ferocious brute—otherwise he would have caught the dog and choked it to death.

His plan was a good one, for the dog did recognize him and desisted from further demonstration.

He then arose and saw that Mr. and Mrs. Smiley were both in their apartment, and knew that this was his opportunity to get back to his room.

Going to the steps, he slipped off his shoes and then walked cautiously to his room door which he found standing wide open.

It being very dark, and not daring to strike a match, the first thing he did was to fall over a chair.

He made noise enough to almost arouse the dead.

He was sure his time had come, for he knew they would soon be in there investigating the cause of the noise and find him.

He fairly held his breath as he listened for them to come.

Soon he heard Mr. Smiley open his room door and come out.

From the noise he made, George could tell that he was coming directly towards his room.

He did not know what on earth to do, nor what excuse to make.

If he went out, Mr. Smiley would discover him, and if he remained he would be found; and it seemed that every avenue of escape had been closed.

CHAPTER IX.

A FRIENDLY OBSTRUCTION.

It is said that the unexpected is what generally happens, and there never was a truer saying.

In George's precarious condition, it seemed that discovery, exposure and ejection were inevitable; but at this juncture a little incident occurred that made his heart leap for joy.

Obstructions on a railroad track frequently derail trains and do a great deal of damage; but here was one thrown across Mr. Smiley's pathway by an unknown hand that saved George from immediate exposure.

As Mr. Smiley turned the corner of George's room, a large white cat that was being chased by the dog sped by him and disappeared in the darkness.

It was clear to Mr. Smiley's mind that this cat and dog were responsible for the noise he had heard a few moments before, and without investigating further, he returned to his room and so reported to his wife.

By this time, the child that was ill had so improved that Mr. and Mrs. Smiley retired and soon everything was quiet again.

Everything being still, he had sufficient time for consideration, and he did not fail to embrace it.

After a few moments' reflection, he decided that he would again leave the house quietly and then come in boldly through the front gate, so that if Mr. Smiley heard him, he would not have the appearance of trying to slip in.

He hastily threw a cloak around his shoulders and again left the house.

Once outside of the gate, he again paused for deliberation.

He had to manufacture some reasonable excuse for his absence, or his purpose would be construed as criminal.

Assuming the attitude of one suffering great pain, he entered the front gate and let it slam so that Mr. Smiley could hear it, for he was ready to meet him with his explanation, as unreasonable as it was.

As he walked up the steps, Mr. Smiley came out and met him.

He demanded from George an immediate explanation for his absence.

His tone and manner both gave evidence of the fact that he was very indignant over the matter, and George knew that he had to talk fast.

Between apparent paroxysms of pain, George said:

“In the early part of the night, just after you had retired, I was seized with a violent pain in my head. Not wishing to disturb you, and having confidence in my ability to reach the doctor’s place in safety, I hastily dressed and went.”

Here George paused, feigning intense pain.

“Did you not realize,” said Mr. Smiley, that it was a very imprudent thing for a lady to do? I am greatly surprised and will see you again in the morning regarding the matter.”

Mr. Smiley’s remarks were so reprehensive that they filled George with indignation, and he resolved to leave there within ten hours.

Before returning to his room, Mr. Smiley repeated to George with emphasis that he would see him next morning. But George was deter-

mined that he would never give him a chance for another interview.

George boiled over with rage as he reflected on the manner in which he had been treated, and said to himself:

“Smiley, if I give you another opportunity to talk to me, you indulge in such abrupt language as you have just used, I am sure I will forget for the time being that I am personating a lady, and will wear the face of the earth out with you—hence YOU WILL NEVER SEE ME AGAIN.”

CHAPTER X.

A CLANDESTINE DEPARTURE.

WHEN Mr. Smiley returned to his room, he and his wife talked over the night's episode in all its details.

Mrs. Smiley espoused George's cause on the principle that the accused should have the benefit of the doubt. As they were not sure that he left the house with criminal intentions, she regarded it her duty to render her verdict in his behalf.

Mr. Smiley stubbornly opposed his wife's decision in the matter, stating that it was characteristic of women to try to screen each other from scandal.

In this, it is a well known fact that he was mistaken; for, as a rule, men are much more charitable to women than women are towards each other.

In his mind, Mr. Smiley was satisfied that George was not the kind of a lady (?) to have as as a nurse in his family, for he doubted if a

girl of good morals would have ventured down town alone in the dead hours of the night.

“Actions speak louder than words”; and if we would be above the possibility of censure or reproach, we must deport ourselves in a circumspect manner, avoiding at all times even the very appearance of evil. In this respect George had acted imprudently, even if his motives had been pure; for he was personating a lady and should have acted as one.

He knew that he was under a cloud of suspicion, and that the best thing for him to do was to leave at once.

He also knew that it was “Hobson’s choice,” for he firmly believed that Mr. Smiley intended to read the “riot act” to him the following morning and give him a dishonorable discharge.

He did not fear Mr. Smiley in the least, but he was afraid of exposure.

Public opinion was the giant that he dreaded and before which he trembled; for he knew that the one who battles against it is fighting against great odds with no hope of victory.

It is here that a great many make a mistake; for when one becomes so depraved or desper-

ate that he cares nothing for public sentiment, he is almost beyond redemption and is a menace to society.

The man who says, "I am going to do as I please, regardless of what people think," is making an awful mistake; for public censure is more to be dreaded than the bombs from a thousand batteries.

Just how to get away without being seen or heard was a great question; for with their suspicions aroused, he knew how they would construe the slightest noise.

He had just been temporarily saved from exposure by an unexpected intervention, and he regarded this as evidence that he would succeed in making his escape without being seen.

The night was far spent, and he knew that what he was going to do must be done quickly, or it would be too late.

Listening, he heard a sonorous concert in Mr. Smiley's room, and he was convinced that they were all sleeping soundly.

He had a large-sized valise which he had brought with him from Fort Payne, and into it he quickly packed all of his earthly possessions.

Like a gopher, he was not burdened with this

world's goods, for he could carry all he owned on his back.

Everything ready, he took his valise and quietly went out at the back gate, taking care not to disturb anything that would raise an alarm.

When he had reached the street he went west about half a mile and then turned and went north a short distance.

As the day was beginning to dawn, and not wishing to be seen by any one at that early hour, he concealed himself in a cluster of bushes.

About 7 o'clock he came out and took a good look at his surroundings to see if he could ascertain just where he was.

After he had succeeded in locating himself, he walked leisurely in a southwesterly direction towards the union depot.

He passed several persons who looked at the tall, handsome maiden with astonishment as she lugged her own baggage along, but they said nothing.

Just before he reached the depot he stopped and bought some lunch, for he knew it was his

last opportunity until he reached his destination.

When he walked in to buy his ticket he looked around carefully and was gratified over the fact that there was no one present who knew him.

He then boarded a J., T. & K. W. train and left Jacksonville, never to return.

CHAPTER XI.

A NEW DRESS.

MR. SMILEY arose next morning fully determined to get rid of George, for he felt that if he retained him in his service he would bring reproach on his family.

When George failed to come out of his room at the usual time Mr. Smiley^e went to investigate the cause, and was greatly astonished to find that "the bird had flown."

He did not try to ascertain where George had gone, for he was really glad to get rid of him so easily.

Had he known George's true character, and the desperate resolution he had made, he would have congratulated himself still more over the fact that he escaped a genteel flogging.

When the train rolled up to the station at Green Cove Springs George concluded that he would stop off and have him a new dress made, as the one he then had on was a little "the worse for wear."

His real destination was Palatka, but he had too much pride to appear in society clad in such garments as would show him off to disadvantage and make a bad impression on those who saw him.

He believed in the doctrine that men make clothes instead of clothes making men, but he wanted to look respectable whether he was respectable or not.

He made the same mistake that many others make, however, for he cared more about his clothes than he did for his character or reputation.

He spent much time before the glass crimping his hair, and did not seem to realize the fact that, had he taken as much pains with the inside of his head as he did with the outside, he would have risen to prominence.

Leaving his valise with the depot agent, he boarded the street car and went up town.

Looking up the street he saw a dress-maker's sign, and asked the driver to let him get off the car.

Alighting, he walked into the establishment of Miss Emma Chesser, a skillful dress-maker;

who afterwards married Mr. G. W. Sears and now resides at High Springs, Florida.

He asked Miss Chesser if she would take his measure and make him a skirt as quickly as possible, and she told him she would.

After she had succeeded in getting his measure he strolled on up the street towards the St. Johns river, just to pass away the time and see the town while his dress was being made.

About an hour and a half had passed, and he again walked in and asked her if she had finished the skirt, and she informed him that it was ready.

He then put it on over his other skirt, and asked her to quickly take his measure and make him a waist to match the skirt so he could leave on the evening train.

Receiving her assurance that it would be ready for him in due time, he took another walk in a different direction from the way he first went, so as to explore as much of the town as possible.

When he returned the waist was not quite finished, and Miss Chesser asked him to take a seat, promising him that she would be as expeditious as possible.

He knew it was "Hobson's choice," for he could not go without it, so he accepted her invitation.

It would have amused any one, however, to observe how nervous he seemed, and how very careful he was to conceal his dainty little (?) number ten feet under his skirt.

As impatient as he was, he managed to wait until his waist was finished; then putting it on over the one he was wearing, he paid his bill and left.

His appearance was so strange that it aroused suspicion, and there was strong talk of having him arrested, but he had evidently left town and they did not care to bother with him.

He was near the depot, however, and when the train came he boarded it unmolested by any one.

CHAPTER XII.

A MECHANICAL DEVICE FOR DECEIVING MEN.

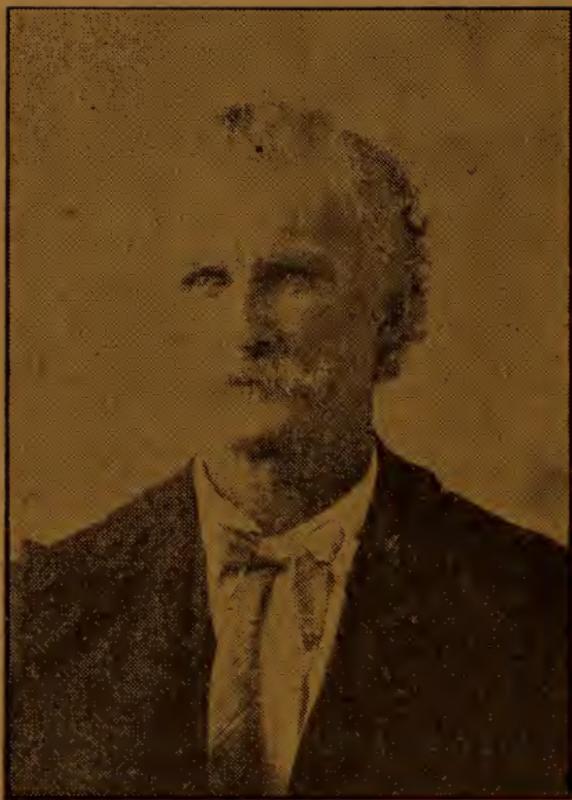
THE greatest fault George had was avarice. He had an almost insatiable desire for worldly gain, and this was really his ruling love. It is said that every one has his ruling love, and "the root of all evil" happened to be his.

So great was his desire for money that he had reached the point where he had no scruples as to the methods he employed to accomplish his purpose.

To plod his way through the world as a nurse and be compelled to attend a "bawl" every day and night of his life, was very monotonous to him, and he had resolved to quit it even at the cost of his own virtue.

The most serious objection he had to that vocation, however, was the bare pittance he received for his services.

He desired to have a good time and lay up something for a "rainy day," but as he had



CAPT. B. K. WATTS

Who was with "Big Six" in his last hours and secured a dying confession.

succeeded in saving very little of his earnings, he concluded to make a change.

Money is a good thing to have, but there is such a thing as paying too much for it. If it cost one his good name, his integrity and his virtue, it costs too much.

George was unfortunate enough to make this mistake, and he did not see it until it was practically too late to correct it.

His train sped onward until he reached Palatka, which was his point of destination.

He asked the porter to take him to a private boarding house in the suburbs, where he expected to remain only temporarily.

It was while he was staying in this city that he conceived the idea of sending off and procuring a MECHANICAL DEVICE THAT WOULD ENABLE HIM TO SUCCESSFULLY ASSUME THE ROLE AND PERSONATE A WOMAN OF THE STREETS IN EVERY PARTICULAR.

This device cost him twenty-five dollars, and was so perfect that he deceived every one with whom he came into contact.

As diabolical and strange as this may seem, it is nevertheless true.

In regard to this, the Punta Gorda correspondent of the Times-Union said:

“Strangest of all is that such a figure (referring to George) should successfully personate a woman; stranger, too, that she should assume the role of a woman of the streets. Men recall the fact that she would permit none to lay hands on her.”

Armed with this device he rented a house, and with two or three other girls kept a haunt of a very unsavory reputation.

He had lost all of his self-respect, and in proportion had developed “cheek,” as will be seen by his audacity during a Knights of Pythias grand conclave. Referring to this incident, the Times-Union correspondent said:

“In 1891 or 1892, when the Knights of Pythias had their grand conclave in Palatka, it is said that, dressed in a long black velvet dress and wearing a long plume, she headed the procession as it moved from the Putnam. The Palatka boys, who were doing the honors to their visiting brethren, did not much enjoy the joke.”

George did not intend it as a joke, however,

but merely wished to be conspicuous and also to advertise his nefarious vocation.

He was deceiving the world so effectually that he congratulated himself every day on his diabolical achievement.

He had lost all fear of apprehension, and had become exceedingly bold.

He had not forgotten the mountain tragedy, but supposed that it was buried in a grave of oblivion, never to be resurrected.

He had reached the point where he did not care what any one thought of him, just so he could continue to utilize his HELLISH DEVICE to deceive men and obtain their money.

CHAPTER XIII.

MIGRATORY—A DRUNKEN ROWDY.

GEORGE had developed such a roving disposition that he could not be satisfied long in one place.

From a financial standpoint his stay in Palatka had been a success, but he was dissatisfied and longed to roam in new pastures.

He believed in the old saying that "setting hens never grow fat," and he had been "setting" about as long as he could in one place.

He was an object of unusual attraction, for he looked like a giantess as he marched through the streets dressed in his rich attire.

He was "low down" in principle, but certainly not so in stature, for he tipped the scales at two hundred pounds and was all of six feet and three inches tall.

While Palatka was his headquarters, he would occasionally run down to Sanford and Orlando for a short time.

His other vices seeming to be inadequate to

the demands of his calling, he decided to add to them that of intemperance.

It is said that misfortunes go in clusters, and it is none the less true of vices; for where there is one fault it seems to be lonely until joined by others.

It was on one of these trips that he had an experience worthy of mention, and one that is distinctly remembered by many.

Having imbibed a little too freely, he conceived the idea of making himself famous by "painting the town red."

Accordingly, after he had taken the initiative step in that direction, he took the second by assaulting a poor, inoffensive man on the street without any cause whatever.

He simply met the man, and because he did not get out of his way as quickly as he thought he should, George gave him a slap that caused him to turn a somersault.

The old fellow was furious, but he knew it was no use for him to raise his puny arms in defense against such an Herculean giantess.

Brushing the real estate off of his face and clothes, he sullenly walked away and informed a policeman about his trouble.

He returned with the officer near enough to point George out to him, and then got out of the way as speedily as possible.

George saw the policeman coming towards him, and knew what he was after, but he made up his mind not to submit to arrest.

Assuming an air of indifference, he walked toward the officer as though he were innocent of anything wrong.

As soon as they met, the officer asked why he struck the old man, and George replied by snatching the club out of his hand and knocking him twice his length out in the street.

George took care not to strike him with the club, simply using his fist, but the blow was so powerful that the officer was considerably stunned.

The policeman soon recovered, however, and called to the deputy sheriff, who happened to be near, to come and assist him.

The deputy was a stalwart fellow, almost as large as George, and seemed to be eager for the fray.

Walking boldly up to George he said:

“By virtue of authority vested in me as an of——”

“Vip!” George took him side of the head with his fist, and he rolled over in the street with a groan.

There were only two licks struck, for George struck the deputy and the deputy struck the ground.

When the deputy had sufficiently recovered to realize what had happened, he decided that he had made a mistake, and that he was not so anxious to get hold of George as he thought he was.

George was master of the situation, for no one felt like coming into contact with him since he had wiped the earth up so completely with the officers.

CHAPTER XIV.

FINED.

IT was very humiliating to the officers to be knocked out by one of the fair sex, but they had to admit that it was true.

They declared that "she" had the reach and strength of Corbett, and that they had never seen "her" equal.

They were practically nothing in his hands, for he could handle them with apparently as much ease as though they had been children.

A large crowd had assembled at the scene of battle, where the policeman and deputy met their Waterloo, and cheered George as he walked away with victory perched upon his banner. They did not do this as an endorsement of what he had done, but because he was so much their superior in physical powers and had won such an easy victory.

No one else dared to molest him, for they were awe-stricken at what they had just witnessed. A woman (?) possessing such magic

powers as George was so much to be dreaded that they would not have bothered him for pay.

He walked straight to the mayor's office and gave himself up.

The mayor opened court as soon as possible, and the two officers whom George had knocked out appeared against him.

George plead guilty to the charge, but boldly declared that he would repeat it if they bothered him.

He would have wiped the earth up with them again if they had crossed his path in the least, and they knew it.

When the mayor heard the whole matter in detail he was very much amused, more at the humiliation of the officers than anything else, and he told George that he would let him off with a small fine, as that was his first offense. George did not enjoy being in court, nor did he like the idea of parting with his money, and for these reasons he resolved that it would be his last offense as well as his first, especially in that mayor's court.

He paid the fine, and displayed a roll of bills that filled the crowd with amazement.

When they came out of the court room

George said that he came near offering the mayor another ten-dollar bill and asking his permission to take that out in fighting, but he was afraid His Honor might object.

George's difficulty had somewhat sobered him, but as soon as it was all over he loaded up again and promenaded up and down the streets with "blood in his eye." No one dared to molest him again, however, for they had seen him tried to their heart's content.

Mattered not where he went, the crowd followed him and gazed upon him with wonder and astonishment.

He was the sole topic of comment in every town and community where he went.

He really enjoyed notoriety, and it was very gratifying to him when he saw crowds gazing at him. He could not bear for any one to make fun of him in the least, and if he got that impression he was up in arms in an instant, and an apology or an explanation was quickly demanded.

CHAPTER XV.

IN CUPID'S CLUTCHES.

GEORGE returned to Palatka, but he had no idea of remaining.

His roving nature had gotten the upper hand of him, and in a few days he packed his valise and left for St. Augustine.

He did not remain there but a short time, however, before he took his departure for Ocala.

For some cause or other this town did not suit him, and he scarcely knew what to do with himself.

He still evinced the same propensity for libidinousness as formerly, and seemed to delight in practicing his abominable deceptions.

His avaricious nature was really at the bottom of all of his rascality, for it was money that he wanted and he did not care how he got it.

When one starts on the down grade he seems to lose all control of the brakes to his moral

character, and his impetus increases day by day.

In a short time, however, he decided to go to Tampa and see if he would not be better satisfied, for up to this time life had been anything but pleasant. If there was any way by which he could better his mental and physical condition, he was determined to find it.

It is a fact that the object of every sane person is to seek happiness.

Those who use narcotics and intoxicating liquors do so in order to be happy. Avarice may be their ruling love, but still they covet riches that they may better provide for themselves the comforts of life.

This was the case with George.

Another motive that prompted him to go to Tampa was that he might be physically benefited. He had not been feeling very well, and thought that to have his cheeks fanned by the ocean's zephyrs, and inhale the pure salt air, would materially contribute to his health.

When he arrived at Tampa the first thing he did was to engage board at a private house, where he could, to some extent, avoid the embarrassments incident to publicity.

The place did not bear an enviable reputation, but still he did not care much, for he felt that he did not have much to lose as far as chastity was concerned.

He introduced himself as "Miss Mariah Dempsey," and was thus known by all who met him.

It so happened that there was a man, whom we shall call Mr. John Smith, a drayman, boarding at the same house where George was, and when dinner time came the proprietor introduced him to "Miss Dempsey."

They were left in the parlor alone for some length of time, and George could see that Mr. Smith was deeply infatuated with him.

As "like begets like," George soon discovered that their friendship was mutual.

The next day being Sunday, Mr. Smith ventured to ask George to accompany him on a little pleasure trip to Ballast Point, which was about four miles south of Tampa.

Of course George consented, for he thought it would be very pleasant indeed to be alone with the one who liked him so well.

George went to his room and shaved closely. Then crimping his bangs, he arrayed himself

in a fashion that would have made any lady look upon him with envy.

Wishing to look his best, he selected the nicest dress he had for this occasion.

When he came down from his room, he looked so handsome that he would have almost made Cleopatra ashamed of herself.

Had he been half as good as he looked, he would have sprouted wings in about two hours; but "all is not gold that glitters."

As for Mr. Smith, he was completely captivated when he saw George, and felt he was the most fortunate man in the world.

The ride to Ballast Point on the street car was very pleasant, and George enjoyed it immensely.

When they arrived at their destination, they took a stroll along the beach for an hour or two, gathering shells and exchanging compliments of a sentimental character.

Finally they returned and took a seat in the pavilion, which is a "regular lover's retreat."

George was so modest and winning in his manners that Mr. Smith regarded him as "just too sweet for anything."

From where they sat, they had a good view

of the bay, the pavilion being located immediately on the beach, and it was a place calculated to arouse all of the sentimentalism of their nature.

George had worked himself up to the point that he almost believed he had been transformed into a woman, and his fondness for Mr. Smith was strangely increasing.

As actions speak louder than words, George was satisfied that Mr. Smith thought a great deal of him, and he was reciprocating to the best of his ability, BEING A MAN.

That afternoon, just before they started back to Tampa, Mr. Smith presumed to tell George plainly how he liked him, and indulged the hope that his love was not in vain.

To this George modestly replied, informing Mr. Smith that his affections were both appreciated and reciprocated.

That evening when they alighted from the car, they were the happiest couple that had walked the streets of Tampa in many a day.

CHAPTER XVI.

BETROTHED.

NOT many days after George and Mr. Smith took their trip to Ballast Point, the latter decided that he could not defer propounding the momentous question any longer.

He was sure that he loved George with all his heart, for he could not bear him out of his sight. When he entered the house and did not see George, he invariably asked for him, and met him with a smile that manifested great fondness.

He firmly believed that George would make him a good wife (?), and felt that he could not bear life without him.

On the other hand, George was equally fond of Mr. Smith, and believed he would make him a kind, affectionate husband.

He thought it would be exceedingly nice to have some one to bear the relation of husband to him, to love him, care for him and supply him with the necessaries of life.

He imagined that he felt very lonely in the world without a husband, for he had never before had a man to love him well enough to marry him.

Mr. Smith, taking a day off from duty, suggested to George that it would be nice to go out to DeSoto Park and spend a few hours.

George appreciated the suggestion and indicated his willingness to go; for he believed Mr. Smith's purpose in going out there was to be entirely alone with him, so he could propose. As soon as George had arranged his toilet, they boarded the car on Franklin street and went to Ybor City, where they changed and took a car for DeSoto Park.

Arriving at their destination, they immediately went to the pavilion and took a seat.

It happened that there was no one else at the pavilion, and they found themselves all alone.

They appreciated this fact very much; for lovers are never so happy as when they are alone, so they can freely express their sentiments to each other without fear of being heard.

The day was very fine, for there was neither rain nor sunshine, the clouds having formed a

canopy that made it exceedingly pleasant.

DeSoto Park is one of the loveliest spots on the face of the earth; for the Cubans have spent much time and money in beautifying it and making it a suitable place for their enjoyment.

On this occasion, the fishes were playing leap-frog in the bay, the wind was sighing through the tree-tops, the birds were singing their sweetest songs, and all nature seemed to be extremely happy.

The supreme moment had come; and everything being ready, Mr. Smith could not wait any longer.

Holding George's hand affectionately in his own, and looking into his dark, piercing eyes, he said:

"Miss Mariah, you doubtless know by this time that I love you as man never loved before, for I have told you so repeatedly both by word and action.

"My object in coming here to-day is to ask you a question that I never asked a lady before; and the fact that you told me on a former occasion that our friendship was mutual, emboldens me to speak the sentiments of

my heart without any reservation whatever. I trust that you will pardon my presumption under the circumstances and accede to my wishes.

“Do you feel that you could get your consent to become my wife and thus unite your future destiny with mine? I pledge you, on my word and honor, that I will be true and faithful, and will never forsake you for another.”

This was exactly what George wanted to hear, and it made his heart leap with joy.

He replied with as much modesty as a blushing maid of sixteen, and assured Mr. Smith that he was willing to become his wife.

His answer was such as to cause Mr. Smith to go into ecstasies; and so great was his joy that he did not know whether he was on earth or in heaven.

Of course, on the impulse of the moment, they could not resist the temptation of expressing their love by saluting each other with a kiss of affection.

It was an occasion of great joy to both of them, and George admitted afterwards that he never forgot the day of his betrothal.

As they went home they felt that they both had won a victory of which they should feel proud—Georgè having won a husband (?) and Mr. Smith a wife (?).

CHAPTER XVII.

A QUIET MARRIAGE.

The time was fixed for the consummation of their marriage, and they began to arrange the preliminaries, looking forward to that great occasion with much pleasure.

George did not intend to make any elaborate preparation, but he concluded to have a white dress made, as that would be more in keeping with the occasion.

The fact that he was to be married and have a kind, loving husband to care for him, was the predominating thought in his mind and the most precious anticipation of his life.

He had saved up considerable money since he had given up attending "bawls," and was able to fit himself out in good style for the grand occasion which was so near at hand.

What he was doing was all for Mr. Smith's sake (?) and he did it cheerfully, feeling that it was for one who was worthy.

Mr. Smith was a hard-working, honorable

man, and had no idea that he was being deceived.

What he did was all in good faith, and he never dreamed that he was actually going to MARRY A MAN.

The thought would have been most revolting to him had he known the true condition of things, but as he was not aware of it, he anxiously awaited the arrival of the day when he could consummate the matter.

He felt exceedingly proud of his conquest, for he believed that he had won the heart and hand of the most admirable lady in all the world.

Who could blame him when they remember that George had deceived every one else whom he had met? As he could so successfully deceive others, it is natural to suppose that he could deceive Mr. Smith.

Desiring to look his best, Mr. Smith invested in a handsome black suit that contrasted beautifully with George's white costume.

When the engagement was announced it caused considerable comment among their friends; and quite a number of young men ex-

pressed themselves as wishing it was THEY who were going to get George instead of Mr. Smith.

Mr. Smith looked forward to the time of their marriage with much impatience, and it seemed to him that it would never come. He was counting the hours, but they seemed to pass very slowly.

At last the hearts of both bride and groom-elect were made glad by the arrival of the time when the pleasures of anticipation would be swallowed up by the sweets of realization.

It was a beautiful day indeed; and not a ripple could be seen on their life's ocean.

No cards had been sent out inviting friends to witness the ceremony and participate in the festivities incident to such occasions, for they wished it to be as quiet as possible.

Mr. Smith had engaged Mr. Charles Doveran, a notary public, to officiate, but this functionary had not yet made his arrival.

Just as the clock indicated the hour that had been set for the performance of the ceremony, however, Mr. Smith's two friends, O. O. Lison and Manuel Delgado, walked in. He had asked them to attend, not as guests especially,

but as witnesses; and they had come in response to that invitation.

About five minutes after the arrival of Messrs. Lisson and Delgado, Mr. Doveran made his appearance and was ready for business.

George, having completed his toilet, sent Mr. Smith a message informing him of the fact; and soon they appeared in the parlor before the officer and witnesses, he modestly holding to Mr. Smith's arm.

Arising to his feet, Mr. Doveran read the ceremony with all the dignity possible, stating that if any one present knew of any just cause why the marriage should not be consummated, to "speak, or forever henceforth hold your peace."

Silence reigned supreme.

Not a word of objection was uttered, all seeming to be perfectly satisfied that there was no barrier whatever existing to prevent the contracting parties from executing their matrimonial designs.

No objection being raised, Mr. Doveran sol-

emly pronounced them "HUSBAND AND WIFE," thus entwining the destinies of two of the strangest characters that ever lived in the world.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DOMESTIC INFELICITY.

Being a workingman, Mr. Smith could not conveniently spare the time nor money to visit any of the popular resorts.

He was compelled to settle down to the usual routine and not lose a day when he could possibly avoid it; for he now had a wife (?) and felt the necessity more than ever of sticking close to his business.

A cloud of great disappointment was rapidly gathering over them, and the time was near at hand when it would burst in its fury, devastating all their hopes of domestic happiness.

George did not prove himself to be the ideal wife that Mr. Smith had pictured him as being.

They lived in a small cottage, and George did his best, as he thought, to make home agreeable and happy; but he made a signal failure. It is a fact, however, that he came

nearer accomplishing his purpose than any other man in the world could have done.

He was as happy as any one could be under the circumstances, but the fact that he was deceiving his husband rendered him somewhat miserable.

It is just as possible for Niagara to turn and flow up stream as it is for any one to be happy in wrong-doing.

In his ideas George was inclined to be extravagant and wanted too many dresses to suit the size of Mr. Smith's purse.

To draw continually on a man's pocket never sets well, especially when he hasn't got much init. It could truly be said of Mr. Smith that he didn't have much "cents."

George had money of his own, but he did not care to use that when he had a husband to support him.

It has often been said that the two most vulnerable points in a man's character are his politics and his religion; but to them could safely be added that of avarice. Touch a man's pocket-book and you touch his heart.

Being somewhat of an epicure, George never failed to express dissatisfaction when the table

was not provided with those things that suited his taste. He wanted his steak every morning for breakfast, regardless of how much it cost, and he just had to have sugar and milk in his coffee. He was equally particular about what he had for dinner and supper, claiming that he would not be a wife to any man who treated him as though he were an air plant and could subsist on nothing but wind.

This was very annoying to Mr. Smith.

He had not found things as he had expected to find them, and saw, when it was too late, that he had made an awful blunder.

He often brooded over the mistakes of the past and the prospects of the future until he would become perfectly desperate.

Mattered not which way he turned, there was nothing but a life of sorrow and disappointment before him, and he actually cursed the day that he was born.

He had about concluded that George lived to eat instead of eating to live; and he was confident that he could not afford to feed him in the future as he had in the past.

Two months had barely passed and George had threatened several times to leave him, de-

claring that such a man as Mr. Smith was not worthy of a "GOOD WIFE."

George also loved his dram and that was not at all pleasing to his husband. He had more than once gotten on a "bender" during the two months they had been married; and during these periods of intoxication, he would "raise Cain" with his husband, giving demonstrations of his great physical powers.

Mr. Smith was so awe-stricken by his wife's superior strength that he became as docile as a child, never daring to assert his rights as the head of the house.

He was not a coward by any means, but he disliked for it to be circulated among his neighbors that he had actually had an altercation with his wife.

Three more weeks passed, and George had reached the point where he cared nothing for any one, himself and husband included.

He would get drunk every opportunity he had, and while in that condition he was becoming more and more desperate.

Mr. Smith saw that a crisis was rapidly approaching, and that his domestic troubles would soon culminate in a separation. He did

not care how soon, for he was sick and tired of living like cat and dog. While he was a poor man, he possessed the principles of a gentleman, and the life he was living was very humiliating to him.

One Saturday night, after they had been married about three months, Mr. Smith went home from his work as usual, and to his astonishment, George was not there. He looked the place over thoroughly, but could not find him.

About this time, he heard some one coming down the street swearing at the top of his voice and it sounded to him like some demon had been turned loose.

He could not help but tremble as he listened to such vehement expressions of anger.

Finally he recognized the voice as that of his wife, and he knew that something of a serious nature was going to happen soon.

He could not tell exactly what was the matter, but he was satisfied that liquor was at the bottom of the trouble.

When George came up, he ruled as he walked, and his face bore evidences of rough treatment or a serious accident.

Big Six.

Seeing Mr. Smith George seemed to be more angry than ever, and he sprang at his husband with all the fury of a demon.

CHAPTER XIX.

SEPARATION.

MR. SMITH evaded the blow by springing behind a post, and it was well he did; for George struck with the force of Sullivan.

George had just participated in a bar-room altercation and had knocked out half a dozen men. He felled them right and left, striking with both arms at the same time. Although they were stout men, they were nothing more than children in his hands. When he had a fair blow at a man there was nothing to fear; for his victim was invariably disabled or intimidated.

During this encounter no one struck him, but he accidentally collided with some object that caused him to fall and bruise himself.

Notwithstanding the fact that he had been victorious, he was so maddened by drink that he was as unreasonable as a maniac.

Mr. Smith would have been at great disadvantage had he attempted to stand before George and fight him fairly, so he adopted the

policy of getting out of his way as quickly as possible. He remembered the old adage which says: "He who fights and runs away, will live to fight another day." He didn't fight any, for he concluded that they were very poor feet that wouldn't take care of the body, and he made excellent use of them on this occasion.

By skillful maneuvering and making lightning express time, Mr. Smith managed to shut himself up in a room, and then he excitedly asked George what he meant by such pugnacious conduct.

George replied that he did not mean a thing in the world but to give him a genteel flogging, and added that if he would only open the door he would still accommodate him.

After due consideration he said to Mr. Smith that he was very sorry for what he had done, and only wished he had done more for which to be sorry.

This was very cold comfort to a fond (?) husband who had been outraged by an aggressive wife (?); and he resolved that their domestic relations should be severed in short order.

George finally assured him that he would

desist from further attack, and then Mr. Smith cautiously opened the door and came out.

George then tried to pour oil upon the troubled waters and insisted^d on reconciliation, promising^d never to repeat it again. He argued that it was not HE, but LIQUOR, that had caused the trouble; and declared that he never intended to take another drink while he lived.

The apology was all very nice, but Mr. Smith could not be induced to accept it. He was afraid of a repetition, and no appeal from George, however earnest and pathetic, could convince him to the contrary. He had forgiven George and trusted him on many former occasions, and now his confidence had been betrayed for the last time.

Seeing that reconciliation was out of the question, George began to pack his trunk.

His appeals had all been in vain, and it now came his turn to be obstinate.

He had made up his mind to leave Mr. Smith's home immediately, not even remaining there another night.

Observing George's intentions, Mr. Smith began to cool down, and it was his time to plead for reconciliation. He asked George not to

leave him and promised forgiveness, but ALL IN VAIN.

George informed him that it was no use for them to try to live together any longer, and that he did not intend to make further effort in that direction.

Mr. Smith realized that it was useless to plead with George any more, and he braved himself up to face the inevitable.

George's trunk being small, he placed it on his shoulders and walked out.

As he passed Mr. Smith he paused and said: "Smith, I have been tied to you just as long as I intend to be. My liberty to do as I please has been fettered by matrimonial restrictions, and now I am going to sever our relations if it costs me all I am worth.

"If you have occasion to speak to me it must be in a respectful manner, or I will call you to a personal account. In the future I shall have no interest in you, and you must have none in me.

"Now, old Smith, I have finished what I had to say to you, but I want you to remember

that, as far as I am concerned, you can just step down to hades and stay there.”

George then closed the front gate behind him and disappeared in the darkness.

CHAPTER XX.

INDISPOSED.

MR. SMITH was very sorry that matters had developed so disastrously to his hopes of domestic happiness, but as there was no remedy he had to bow to the inevitable.

His life for the past three months had been anything but pleasant, and now that he was freed from his marriage relations he hoped to be able to forget the past and once more to be happy.

George carried his trunk to the front gate of a certain place where he knew he could get lodging and went in to see the proprietor. After making satisfactory arrangements with Mr. Baker, who was the proprietor, he carried his trunk to his room and found himself very comfortably located.

He again assumed his maiden name and was once more known as "Miss Mariah Dempsey." Had any one called him "Mrs. Smith" after the

separation, he would have considered it a grand insult and a fight, might have been the result.

In his heart George was glad to be free once more, for he had felt very much cramped during the three months that he had lived with his husband.

He naturally felt under some obligation to do as Mr. Smith said as long as they were living together, but now he had no one to consult and could exercise his own pleasure about everything.

On the night of the separation George retired, but he could not sleep. He sought repose, but it fled from him like mists before the rising sun. The events of the previous day crowded themselves upon him with such relentless fury that he thought himself the victim of a hideous nightmare. He could do nothing but roll from side to side and groan in mental agony.

The reflections of his past life were so terrible and clung to him with such tenacity that he fain would have plunged himself into a gulf of oblivion if such a thing had been possible; but to his sorrow he realized that he must face them.

Being worn out by unusual mental exercise, he dozed off into a semi-conscious condition just before day and did not awaken until he was aroused by the ringing of the breakfast bell.

One must be either dead or very sound asleep when this welcome alarm fails to awaken him. It had always been the sweetest of music to George, and although he was not hungry on this occasion, there was a peculiar charm about it that caused him to suddenly spring out of bed.

When he struck the floor he involuntarily placed his hands on his forehead, for not until then did he realize that his head was almost bursting with pain and that he was literally roasting with fever.

Having had no illness of any kind before in fifteen years, it caused him great alarm. He really felt that he was in a fair way to "pass in his checks."

As he was unaccustomed to pain he could have no reasonable conception of its intensity, and hence he naturally thought that he was worse off than he really was.

He laid down again and gasped for breath.

His respiration was very quick and his temperature exceedingly high.

He said that he felt as though he had been dropped down into the bottomless pit and caused to writhe in the flames of the infernal regions.

He called for help and Mr. Baker went to him as quickly as possible.

When he reached the bedside George looked up appealingly into his face and said:

“Sir, you have no idea how sick I am, for—is that my trunk? I do wish I had some ice—so I could see the men I struck. That saloon is a bad partner to dance with. I made ’em “solo gent” and now I am just like a mouse after a cat—raise up my head and tell me where I can get a nap.”

Mr. Baker was convinced that George was delirious, for his sentences were so disconnected that there was absolutely no sense in them.

The altercation he had had in the saloon the day before and his forsaken husband seemed to be on his mind, for he could talk about nothing else.

His fever seemed to be rising still higher and

higher and the pain in his head getting more and more intensive.

The doctor was speedily summoned and came with all haste. When he arrived he diagnosed the case and prescribed the necessary medicine.

About an hour later George recovered consciousness and seemed much better.

The doctor came back the next day and made a careful examination. He told George that his disease would probably confine him to his bed for several weeks and that the best thing he could do would be to go to the hospital.

George was opposed to that, for he knew it would not do.

The secret which he had so successfully concealed for over ten years, was dearer to him than his own life; and if he went to the hospital he was afraid that the truth might be discovered.

He had plenty of money to hire a nurse and he saw no necessity of going to the hospital.

Mr. Baker agreed to let him keep the room until he got well, and then he sent out and secured the services of a trained nurse.

The doctor made his daily visits and insisted

on George's going to the hospital, but he persistently declined to go.

Of course he would not tell the real reason, for that was a secret so long cherished and concealed that it had become a part of himself.

Two weeks passed and he was still in bed. Mr. Baker was worn out and told George frankly that he could not remain there any longer.

This so vexed George that his indignation knew no bounds, for Mr. Baker had promised him the use of the room as long as he needed it.

Although he was very weak he got up, dressed himself without the aid of any one, and then walked out and shook his fist in Mr. Baker's face in a most menacing manner.

Mr. Baker did not like to take this abuse, but he saw there was fire behind that fist and he was afraid to resent it. He knew, too, that George had just cause for feeling indignant, and that was another reason why he remained passive.

Seeing that George was becoming more and more vexed he finally agreed to let him remain

until he had entirely recovered, for he was really afraid to do otherwise.

After cooling down a little, George went back to his room and retired. There he reflected on the event that had just transpired and he felt like shaking hands with himself because he contended for his rights and would not suffer himself kicked out like a dog.

Two days subsequent to the event just related, George decided that he could dispense with the doctor's visits, for he was able to walk about in the house and yard and take considerable nourishment. So the next day when the doctor came, George informed him of his decision and asked him for his bill. When it was presented, George glanced over it and then counted out the cash, much to the doctor's surprise.

Feeling that he could also get along without his nurse, he paid her off and told her that he would not need her any longer, as he was able to wait on himself.

CHAPTER XXI.

A FISTICUFF BATTLE ON A TRAIN.

George continued to improve very rapidly. Each day he could discover that he was gaining strength, and his appetite was very good. He was careful to eat only such things as were best for him in order that he might not relapse, for he knew that in his case relapse meant collapse.

Having a good constitution, the convalescent period was very much abbreviated; and it was only a short time until he felt that he was well enough to go out into the world and face the responsibilities incident to his wayward life.

Many of the events that had transpired during his stay in Tampa were so unpleasant that he made up his mind to leave there as soon as he was able.

He had no desire to stay where he would be constantly meeting the man to whom he had plighted his marriage vows. He did not care

to have old memories revived, for he had buried them with the hope that they would never be unearthed.

Before leaving, however, it was necessary that he have a legal matter settled; for he owned some property and wanted it entirely freed from his husband's jurisdiction. It is said that the lawyers experienced great difficulty in adjusting the matter, as they had neither precedent nor statute by which to be governed, he being really a man and at the same time bearing the relations of wife.

As soon as this was arranged he lost no time in carrying his decision into execution.

Having settled his board, he made all other necessary arrangements and boarded a Plant System train for Bartow.

When he arrived at his destination he secured a house best suited for his vile purpose and again resumed his diabolical practices.

It did not matter much to him what the world thought of him, just so he carried his point; for to make money and have a good time constituted the supreme motive of his life.

He was the most popular girl (?) in town of

his class, and they looked upon him with a great deal of envy.

It did not matter how other girls shone with their flounces, ruffles, ribbons, laces and plumes, George always managed to outshine them.

He possessed the peculiar power of compelling them to look up to him, for he was at least a foot and a half taller than any other girl in the community.

When he had been at Bartow two or three months he decided that he would take a little trip down the road towards Punta Gorda for a change.

Accordingly he dressed in his most exquisite style, loaded up on "tangle-foot" and boarded the train.

He was determined to have a "big time," and this was the preparation he generally made for such occasions.

He was in unusually good spirits that day, and it was apparent to the other passengers that he had about a pint of good spirits in him.

He would walk up and down the aisle and smile in a most comical manner.

So amusing were his antics that the passengers were convulsed with laughter.

Occasionally a peal of laughter would burst forth from the crowd that sounded almost like thunder, and then he would turn and politely bow in recognition of the same.

When the conductor would pass him and start out of the coach, George would follow him and brandish his fists in a menacing manner, much to the amusement of the crowd.

The conductor had no idea that they were having their fun at his expense, or he would have objected in a most emphatic manner.

It soon happened that, as he was following the conductor in the same attitude as he had formerly done, the latter suddenly turned around and saw him.

Indignant over the fact that he had been made the laughing stock of the crowd, he instantly seized George by the arm and vehemently commanded him to sit down and behave himself.

Of course George could not bear such a rebuke as that.

He knew he was not doing exactly right, but still he meant no harm by anything he had

done, and thought the conductor should have regarded it as a joke instead of taking offense.

It seemed that George was suddenly transformed into a fiend. His recent gayety and happiness were turned into desperation.

As quick as a flash he placed his right hand in the conductor's collar and snatched him down and almost demolished a seat with him.

In an instant the conductor arose and made another effort to get hold of George, for he was determined to subdue him at any cost.

Being a gentleman, he did not care to strike a woman (?) if he could possibly avoid it, and he was going to exhaust every other means before resorting to such extreme measures.

By this time the struggle was becoming very interesting to the passengers, for they had never seen a "lady" fight so dexterously before.

There happened to be a dashing young drummer among the passengers who was so much in sympathy with the conductor that he offered his assistance in subduing the "lady."

This young adventurer then walked boldly up the aisle and reached out his hand to take hold of George; but before he could succeed in his purpose, George gave him a fearful blow

with his fist that sent him clear right over three seats.

The drummer thought he had made a mistake and had shaken hands with a mule.

The passengers were amazed beyond measure and could hardly believe their eyes.

Being mad and drunk, George was a most formidable foe.

The conductor and drummer were no match for him, for he had the reach and strength of Corbett.

Walking up the aisle and facing the conductor, George told him that he would sit down when it suited him, and that there were not men enough in the train to compel him to do so against his will.

They all seemed inclined to take George at his word, for no one dared dispute his right to stand up if he so desired.

George looked around for the drummer, thinking that he might possibly be preparing for a renewal of hostilities, but that officious gentleman had crouched down so far behind a seat that only the top of his head could be seen.

With only two licks George had cleaned up the train.

He had not received as much as a scratch himself, but his two antagonists were bruised and bleeding.

They were not cowards by any means, but simply could not stand such sledge-hammer blows as George inflicted.

While the fight was progressing, great excitement prevailed among the passengers.

So boisterous were George's uncomplimentary epithets that nothing else could be heard; and when he knocked the drummer over three seats and the conductor half way up the aisle, some even declared that he had "ACTUALLY KICKED THE GABLE END OUT OF CREATION."

CHAPTER XXII.

A VILLAINOUS SCHEME TO EXTORT MONEY.

WHEN George had gone as far as he wished to go, he left the train with the same independent and defiant spirit that he had manifested when confronted by his antagonists.

He was over six feet tall and stood in his own shoes.

Neither fear of the law nor physical manhood could awe him in the least.

He could truthfully boast of his prowess and triumph, for he had never been whipped except by his parents in the early days of his boyhood. He had often been engaged in "scraps" with officers and private citizens, but he had always come out victorious.

I wish the reader to bear in mind that while this is always the case with imaginary heroes in works of fiction, it can truthfully be said of George, who was a real character.

He was universally regarded as a giantess possessing Herculean physical powers, and he

rather enjoyed the reputation he had along that line.

In a short time he returned to Bartow, but not to remain; for he had developed such a migratory disposition that he could not remain long at one place contentedly.

About this time he conceived a most diabolical scheme for extorting money from a man with whom he had been unduly intimate at the town of A——.

As has been stated in a previous chapter, his love for money constituted the weak link in the chain of his character, and he was willing to resort to any method in order to obtain it.

The BASENESS of the scheme just mentioned is without a PRECEDENT OR PARALLEL in the WORLD'S HISTORY.

It was so villainous that it should thoroughly disgust even the most depraved, and cause them to be struck with horror.

No one but George ever conceived such an idea before, and to him is due the originality of the scheme.

The following is an extract from the Times-Union and Citizen correspondent at Punta Gorda:

“In Poik county, where she (George) lived several years, it is reported that she made a man give her \$25.00 to aid her in an alleged delicate condition, she charging him with the responsibility.”

George's victim was no doubt convinced that the allegations were true, and that his paramour was in a condition to need his financial aid.

George dressed up in a style peculiar to that condition and presented himself before his victim, his external appearance seeming to clearly corroborate his statement.

The victim of this vile scheme thought that to pay George the \$25.00 was the easiest way out of the trouble; otherwise he would be forced to foster and support his illegitimate offspring.

This thought was exceedingly repulsive to him and he could not bear the idea. To be compelled to own and maintain one of whom he was ashamed would be an outrage; and he would fain have given a thousand dollars rather than do such a thing.

George's pathetic appeal and physical appearance touched a responsive chord, and the

money was promptly paid without a murmur.

When George saw how cheerfully his request was complied with, he was heartless enough to regret that he had not demanded \$500.00 instead of \$25.00; for he believed that the former amount would have been paid as promptly and cheerfully as the latter.

He had "gall" enough to receive the money with as much grace as though he had gotten it by honest methods; but this is not to be wondered at when it is remembered that he had no compunctious of conscience.

His scheme was not known to any one but himself, and was one of the profound secrets of his life.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SHOT.

ABOUT the time that George left Tampa, he decided to drop the name of Mariah Dempsey and call himself "Miss Ollie Brackett."

While I have been calling him by his real name, which was George Asbell, he was also known as "Mariah Dempsey," "Mariah Smith," "Ollie Brackett," and "Big Six."

He acquired the name of "Big Six" by virtue of his colossal stature and without his knowledge or consent. It was indeed very appropriate, for he towered far above ordinary men and women.

For ten years he paraded Florida from Jacksonville to Fort Myers, and was universally known as "Big Six."

He was such a remarkable character that his fame spread over the entire state.

Soon after the incidents related in the last chapter occurred, Big Six decided that he would go further south in order that he might

successfully carry out the scheme by which he had duped his paramour.

He knew that he had received \$25.00 on the strength of a certain claim, and he was compelled to take his departure or be branded as a liar and a thief.

He knew also that should his villainous scheme be found out he would be liable to prosecution on the ground of obtaining money ON FALSE PRETENSES.

If he remained, certain developments would naturally be expected in a few months; and if they did not materialize he would be exposed and his rascality revealed to the world.

With all of these facts staring him in the face, it is not strange that he sought to cover up his deed by moving to a town remote from the one in which he was then living.

Yielding to the demands of necessity, he lost no time in making preparation for his departure to Punta Gorda. He made it convenient to leave on a night train so that he could dress in his usual way and avoid the scrutiny of those whom he had so grossly deceived.

In his new field of operation, he supposed that he was out of all danger of being molested

by the one whom he had wronged, but such was not the case.

Being a conspicuous character, his name and character soon spread, and it was not long until his victim received tidings of his whereabouts.

Having a curiosity to see Big Six again and ascertain what developments had taken place, the victim of the \$25.00 scheme decided to pay him a visit at his earliest convenience.

It was common for Big Six to take a walk in the mornings, and it was during one of these perambulating tours that he was surprised by coming face to face with the man whom he had hoped to never meet again.

Big Six had great nerve, but he did not know what to do.

From his general appearance it was plain to his keen-eyed observer that a great fraud had been perpetrated, for there were no evidences of what he had claimed being true.

He then frankly asked Big Six to tell him all about the matter so that he would understand the sudden absence of his superfluous avoirdupois, but this he declined to do, declar-

ing that it was no one's business but his own.

Big Six's visitor was not disposed to be trifled with, for he was an interested party. He had at least twenty-five dollars worth of interest in the matter, and he was determined to get satisfaction in some way or other.

If Big Six had known that he was going to be the recipient of a visit from the man whom he had deceived, he would have been prepared to receive him and extend the deception still further; but as it was, he was caught napping.

Mustering up all of his courage, Big Six assumed a bold front and decided to try his old game of bluff; and if that failed, he would simply roll up his sleeves and wade into him as he had done many others.

There was one thing about it: Big Six was not afraid to face a meat axe, for fear was something with which he had no acquaintance whatever.

One word brought on another until Big Six and his visitor became greatly enraged and they both prepared for battle.

There were two or three spectators, and they knew that something serious was going to hap-

pen very soon. They were afraid to interfere, for the very atmosphere seemed impregnated with brimstone from the infernal regions.

Loud curses and shocking epithets rent the air and the echo reverberated for hundreds of yards in all directions.

Finally Big Six advanced towards his antagonist with blood in his eye and vengeance in his heart.

A fiend let out of haunts of darkness could not have looked more formidable.

Raising himself to his full stature, and summoning all of his physical power, he prepared to strike.

He was so furious and looked so frightful that his antagonist was somewhat daunted. He was afraid it wouldn't be healthy to measure arms with such a creature, and he drew his revolver, hoping to intimidate him.

But even a loaded gun in the hands of a desperate foe could not daunt one who was such a stranger to fear.

In another instant Big Six would have given him a blow almost equal to a thunderbolt, but before he could do so, his antagonist fired.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONVALESCING.

BIG SIX staggered and would have fallen, but his friends caught him. He did not feel much pain, and could hardly realize that the ball had taken effect; but he was wounded very seriously. The ball passing through his neck, almost paralyzed him and rendered him helpless.

When the smoke of battle had cleared away, there was great excitement; for the friends of Big Six did not know whether his wound was fatal or not.

The man who did the shooting was greatly unnerved also, for he knew that he had violated the law and was guilty of assault with intent to kill.

He was conscious of the fact that the chances were against him, and that he would be tried for his life in a court of justice over his case.

He was a criminal in the eyes of the law, for he had assaulted a defenseless woman (?) with

a revolver and was branded as a would-be murderer.

Big Six was carried by his friends to the place where he was stopping and a physician speedily summoned.

When the doctor arrived he thoroughly examined the wound and said that although it was dangerous, it was not necessarily fatal.

The revolver was held in such close proximity to Big Six that it burned his face badly. The ball was of such large caliber that it made a fearful rent in his neck.

On account of loss of blood, he was so weak that he could scarcely raise his hand.

The doctor, being one of the best that the country afforded, knew just how to treat the wound, and the patient was practically safe in his hands. He went twice a day to look after his patient and to see that his instructions were faithfully carried out by the nurse.

Again Big Six's good constitution was of great help to him in his recovery. It is very difficult for ordinary disease or wounds to kill one who possesses a robust constitution, for it will come to his aid in time of need.

In addition to his good constitution, Big Six

had an indomitable will that knew no such words as "give up." The power and influence that mind has over matter is simply phenomenal. What might have been fatal to many would scarcely confine him to his bed. So great was his power of endurance, that when the doctor probed his wound he did not utter a single exclamation.

As the days passed by Big Six gradually grew better. His wound began to show evidences that it was healing and would soon be well.

In a short time he was able to be on the street again and take much-needed rest.

He seemed inclined to drop the matter as to his trouble with his would-be murderer, and scarcely ever mentioned it.

For the first time in the history of his life he had been foiled in his purpose; but he congratulated himself over the fact that it was not accomplished fairly. He was man enough to have worn the very ground out with his antagonist, but the almost fatal bullet disabled him so that he was powerless.

When he had completely recovered his old propensity to rove re-asserted itself, and he began to make preparations to move to a more congenial clime.

CHAPTER XXV.

A LAUNDRESS.

AFTER due consideration as to where he should go, Big Six decided that he would cast his lot with the people of Fort Myers.

Accordingly, the next place we find him, he is comfortably domiciled in that town and is trying to solve the problem as to what he should follow as a business.

He had sailed under false colors so long that he really desired to earn his living in an honest way.

What his sad experience at Punta Gorda had to do with this new and noble resolution, I am unable to say; but he was evidently sincere in his purpose, for he afterwards "proved his faith by his works." When one makes a good resolution and carries it into execution, we have no right to doubt his sincerity.

He had lived a double life, and was a most remarkable character on account of the diabolical schemes which he had conceived to defraud

men out of their money ; but there seemed to be something good in him after all, and he sincerely wished to atone for the wrongs of the past by living right in the future.

He did not wish to continue to personate a woman of the street, but he still dressed as a lady and was regarded as one by all who saw him.

This he could not very well change under the circumstances, for he had made the mistake of saying the "horse was ten feet high," and he was now honor-bound to stick to it. He had been posing as a woman for nearly twenty years, and he did not like to renounce his past life as a falsehood. He could not see how it would injure any one for him to dress as a lady, and consequently he made no change in that respect.

Having considered the matter thoroughly, he made up his mind firmly to try the laundry business ; and accordingly he "hung out his shingle."

Work soon began to come in from all sides so rapidly that it was impossible to accommodate all who wished to patronize him, and he was compelled to procure more help.

It was a new experience to him to feel that he was earning an honest dollar, and for once in life he was happy.

It is impossible for any one to be contented and happy if his life is a living falsehood. He may make money and have a gay time, but his conscience will continually hound him and render him extremely miserable.

Notwithstanding the fact that Big Six toiled hard from early morn until late at night, he was contented and could sleep soundly.

One thing that contributed largely to his happiness was the fact that he was respected by some of the best people in the town—but of course they did not know what his past life had been. Up to this time he had not enjoyed the respect of even the lowest and most corrupt, but now he was both respectable and respected.

He was not only respected, but he was really popular as a lady (?), and attracted considerable attention from the gentlemen, they supposing him to be a lady.

There was a great surprise in store for him, but he had no idea of its character. Such a thing had not been intimated to him, and hence he was not expecting it.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A REJECTED LOVER.

BIG SIX was surprised one night by receiving a letter bearing the postmark of Punta Gorda.

He was not corresponding with any one at that place, and consequently was not expecting a letter.

Taking the letter home, he opened it; and its contents were a far greater surprise than its reception.

It was from a man at Punta Gorda, whom I shall call "Mr. Brighton," for I prefer to withhold his real name under the circumstances.

This Mr. Brighton had fallen deeply in love with Big Six, and his letter was a gentle reminder of that fact.

He informed Big Six that he had admired and even loved him ever since the first time they had met, and that he had never been able to muster up courage enough to tell him so face to face.

They had met many times while Big Six was

in Punta Gorda, but no intimation was ever made of the fact conveyed in the letter.

Big Six believed that Mr. Brighton admired him to some extent, but he had no idea that his admiration had actually ripened into love.

Sitting in an easy chair, Big Six read the letter over and over in order to get the full meaning of its contents, for he could scarcely believe his own eyes.

Mr. Brighton not only told Big Six of his love for him, but also asked permission to go to see him.

Big Six did not care to answer hastily and without due reflection, so he placed the letter under his pillow to dream over the matter.

Of course, he appreciated the friendship of any one; but he had no desire for another love affair.

He was getting along well, and did not feel the necessity of fastening himself up in the meshes of matrimony in order to get some one to provide for him.

He was also able to protect himself, and a dozen more if need be; and hence he needed no help along that line.

After carefully considering the matter, he

sat down and wrote Mr. Brighton a polite answer, but declined to accept his proposition.

He then took the letter to the office and mailed it, feeling that he would never be bothered from that source again.

But he was doomed to disappointment.

Not more than a week from that time he answered a knock at his front door, and was very much surprised to find that his visitor was none other than Mr. Brighton.

The latter had duly received the letter which was sent him by Big Six, but he was not inclined to take "no" for an answer.

Mr. Brighton's love for Big Six was so ardent that he was determined to press his suit even at the expense and risk of a personal visit.

Big Six cordially invited him into the parlor, and then the "tug of war" began.

With very few preliminary remarks, Mr. Brighton reiterated what he had said in his letter, and then proceeded to pour out his sentiments in most ardent and endearing terms.

He even volunteered to get on his knees before the object of his affections in order to prove the intensity of his love and the sincerity of his purpose; but Big Six protested against

such uncalled-for demonstrations and would not permit it.

His assertions and earnest appeals were listened to with apparent interest by Big Six, but without any manifestations of sympathy or reciprocation.

Mr. Brighton was a keen observer, and could not fail to see the lack of appreciation depicted in the face of the one to whom he was pouring out his ardent appeals, and the fact chilled him to his very heart.

Big Six was respectful but positive. He told his admirer that he was not a candidate for matrimonial honors, and that he would not serve in that capacity even if elected.

Mr. Brighton pressed his suit with great vigor until he saw that his efforts were all futile; and then he began to look around for the easiest way out of his dilemma.

He told Big Six that he did not see how he could possibly survive such a blow, and that there would be nothing in the world worth living for without him. He then went so far as to intimate that he would get out of his troubles even if he had to go out through the back door of suicide.

Big Six was really amused at the diplomacy practiced by Mr. Brighton, but still he assumed an air of solemnity in order to be respectful.

He appeared in a thoughtful mood for a few seconds, and then looking Mr. Brighton squarely in the face, he said:

“I am not the only girl (?) in the world, although you seem to think I am; and besides that, your admiration may prove to be only a fancy. I hope, therefore, that you will pardon me for saying that I cannot entertain your proposition. I am happier in ‘single blessedness’ than I would be in ‘married cussedness,’ and I trust that this explanation will suffice.”

This was the finishing touch. The climax had been reached, and Mr. Brighton had to submit to the inevitable.

Being satisfied of the futility of his object, and that it was useless for him to remain longer, Mr. Brighton arose, bade Big Six a sad farewell, and left.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN GREAT EXTREMITY.

I NEGLECTED to say that Big Six had unfortunately become addicted to the morphine habit, but at just what time I am unable to say.

Under the destructive influence of this poisonous drug, his health was rapidly breaking down.

As he looked out on his life's horizon, he could plainly see a cloud of doom approaching. Each day it rose higher and seemed more menacing. He knew that the time was not far distant when it would burst in its fury, blasting his hopes and consigning his body to the silent tomb.

This terrible morphine habit had so firmly taken him in its deadly embrace that he was unable to tear himself away from it. It had also sapped his system of all its vitality, and he was forced to give up his business.

He disliked to do this, for this being his only source of income his funds would soon run low,

and when they were exhausted he would be dependent on the generosity of an ungenerous world.

He continued to grow worse and worse until he became greatly alarmed—not so much on account of his fear of death, but the great secret which he had so long kept from the world was in danger of being disclosed.

Should he become delirious, or so ill as to make it necessary for him to go to the hospital, he knew that his MECHANICAL DEVICE, which had been such a factor in his diabolical scheme of deception, would be DISCOVERED.

He was in great extremity.

He did not like to part with his device, and still he could not bear the thought of letting it fall into the hands of an uncharitable world.

He calmly thought the matter over and over and tried to find some means by which he could save his device, but he could not. It must go. That was his decision, and he lost no time in carrying it into effect.

Accordingly he took it and consigned it to the flames with as much reluctance and solemnity as though he had been cremating a human being whom he loved most dearly. He even

wept; for he felt that he had parted forever with the best friend he had on earth.

Although he had made such a sacrifice, his conscience was easy, for he knew that "ashes tell no tales," and that no one would ever ascertain his secret unless he divulged it himself.

He now felt that he could go to the hospital with impunity if it became necessary, and he was in a much better frame of mind over the matter.

Several weeks had passed, and he had been unable to earn anything in so long that his funds were all exhausted, and he would soon be suffering for the necessaries of life.

He was almost desperate over his condition, for he did not know just what to do. He was too sick to work and too proud to beg. Having destroyed his device, he could not work that "gag" any more, and there was nothing left for him to do but beg or steal.

After much consideration, however, he decided that his only resort was to apply to the town authorities for help.

This was very humiliating to him, for he possessed a very independent disposition. While he had no self-respect as far as force of char-

acter was concerned, he was very proud and wanted to subsist on his own resources.

After making up his mind as to what he would do, he went to a member of the town council and made his application, stating his condition in detail, and received a promise that the matter would be taken up, considered and acted upon at the next meeting.

He then went home and was cared for temporarily by his neighbors, for they were good people and would not see him suffer when it was in their power to avoid it.

The day came for the council to meet and he met with them.

His physical appearance made an eloquent appeal to them for aid.

He admitted that he took morphine, but said that he had reached the point where he could not live without it. He was troubled very greatly with chronic dysentery, and that was one reason why he had contracted the morphine habit.

He was then asked to retire, and they discussed the matter thoroughly as to the best disposition they could make of his case. They were satisfied that he was an object of charity,

for that was apparent to all.

The most emphatic request that he had made was that he might be sent back to Punta Gorda, and they decided that they would comply with his wishes. They did not do this to get rid of him, but because it was his request. They would have cared for him and kept him there willingly if he had wished to remain, but as he seemed so anxious to go they appropriated the money to defray his expenses.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN OLD SCHEME RESUMED.

BIG SIX landed back at Punta Gorda safe and sound.

He was still unable to do anything, but he put his wits to work to see if he could find some way by which he could again earn a living for himself.

He figured the matter out upon the hypothesis that NECESSITY KNOWS NO LAW.

He made a mistake in this, however, for there is no necessity for one to do wrong in order to make a living. If physically unable to perform any labor, and the same is brought to the attention of the authorities, a way will be provided for his comfort and maintenance.

But the "sow returns to her wallow," and so it was with Big Six.

He decided that the old scheme which he had worked so successfully at Palatka, Ocala, Sanford, Orlando and St. Augustine would be just the thing to work here.

It seems that he had forgotten the good resolutions which he had made while at Fort Myers, for his old depraved disposition reasserted itself and he was once more its victim.

He could not practice all of the deception that he had formerly imposed, for he had destroyed the MEANS by which he accomplished his vile purpose.

There was only one thing to which he aspired. He wanted to be mistress of a disreputable house and have girls who had "fallen from virtue's heights" to do his bidding.

The first one whom he met and who agreed to be one of the girls, was a tough character known as "Big Belle." She still lives and is said to be a resident of Key West.

Big Six found four or five girls as depraved as he, and together they carried on their infamous business with a high hand and a suggestive mien.

He procured a house that was suitable for his purpose, and it was a very popular resort for such characters as visit questionable places.

His health improved to some extent, and he was able to go down town once a day "to see and be seen."

An amusing little incident occurred one day which is still well remembered by at least one of the ladies of the town.

Big Six was passing by the place of business run by a prominent lady; and just as he passed, one of his under garments became detached and dropped down unobserved by him.

The lady, being greatly shocked by such a ludicrous accident, called his attention to it.

He caught the garment up and politely asked permission to go into her store to adjust it. She kindly consented. He tried to fix it himself, but of course he was very awkward, and it was apparent to her that he would not succeed in arranging it as it should be, and she volunteered her services to pin it for him.

Her proposition was accepted, and she proceeded to arrange it in good shape; but she did not have the slightest idea that she was actually pinning up an under garment on a man, or she would have been shocked more than ever.

It is also a fact worthy of mention that at this juncture in the history of Big Six, he had become rather bare of nice dresses. He had not had any made in some time, and conse-

quently he needed his wardrobe replenished very badly.

To go tidy was his chief commendable characteristic. In this respect he was something like a rotten fence that had been painted white in order to hide the defects. He had an idea that if he dressed nicely it would, in a measure, atone for his moral rottenness; and accordingly he proceeded to put on the paint.

The dress-maker here was an expert in her business, and for this reason Big Six patronized home industry.

Being below the ordinary lady in height, she experienced considerable difficulty in taking his measure; and it became necessary for her to stand on a stool in order to reach the back of his neck.

Then she attempted to take his waist measure, and found herself in a dilemma as to how to proceed. On account of his colossal stature, it was impossible for her to reach around him. She tried it repeatedly, but failed. Indeed, this must have been very embarrassing to a lady possessing chastity and refinement. Finally she told him to stand in the middle of the room and hold one end of the tape while she

took the other end and walked around him to the point of beginning. In this way she succeeded in getting his measure, but it was a very comical performance.

The measuring process having been finished, Big Six selected a piece of goods and asked the lady to measure it. She did so and found that it consisted of just fifteen yards. She then told him that it was sufficient to make the dress, she guaranteeing to make it for a certain amount, and he left with the understanding that he was to return the next afternoon to try it on.

Before he took his departure, however, she informed him that he would have to settle for the goods and the making in advance, and he promptly complied with her request.

The next day when he arrived as per agreement, she was greatly excited and he asked her the cause. She told him that after cutting the dress according to the measure she found that there was not enough to make the dress, and that there was not another pattern like it in town. She then added with emphasis: "If I had only known that it required all of the cloth in town to make you a dress, I am sure I would

not have undertaken it; and now you must find and purchase enough cloth like this to finish the dress, or lose what you have already paid.”

She had the advantage of him, for she had made him pay in advance.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DEAD.

BIG SIX was very much offended on account of her demands, for he did not feel like losing what he had paid her; and besides that, he needed the dress. He was also very much averse to disappointment.

If she had been a man there would have been serious trouble; but under the circumstances he thought that forbearance was the best policy. So he told her that if she could afford to treat him in that way, he could afford to submit; and with that parting shot he took his departure.

A short time after this he discovered that he was gradually growing weaker and that the end was rapidly approaching.

Dr. F. G. Thomason, one of the most prominent physicians in the state, and who now resides at Punta Gorda, was called and did everything in his power for the sufferer, but all in vain. It seemed that he was "wasting his

sweetness on the desert air," for the remedies appeared to be powerless to do any good.

The human mechanism of Big Six had become so worn by continued dissipation that it was impossible to repair it by any means known to the medical fraternity.

He had been blessed with an almost iron constitution, but even iron will wear out.

Death and decay are stamped upon everything in this world. The pyramids of Egypt are said to be sinking in the sands of the desert. The throne of the Cæsars, that seemed stamped with immortality, crumbled to the earth, much to the astonishment of the nations. The empire of Napoleon, whose perpetuity was unquestioned, went to pieces in a single day.

So it was with this man whose history I have attempted to write.

He had fought many battles and won many victories; but at last he had met his Waterloo.

As to his ailment, he had chronic dysentery and other complications that were brought on by exposure and dissipation.

His friends went to see him and tried to inspire him with hope, but all in vain. His impressions as to the proximity of death were as

immovable as Gibraltar, and no amount of dissuasion could convince him to the contrary.

His ailments continued to wage war upon his system until he was a physical wreck.

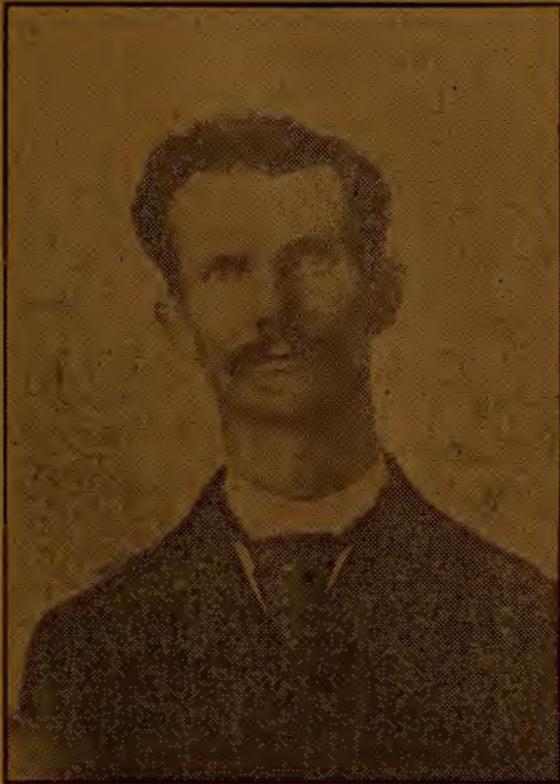
His life had been a failure, for he had spent it in utter disregard of his own welfare.

He seemed to think that it was "all of life to live and all of death to die."

As he lay upon his dying pillow, with the death-dew gathering upon his brow, his mind went back into the past and gazed upon his life in all its vicissitudes; and no doubt it was a most unhappy reflection.

Dr. Thomason made him a professional visit every day to see how he was and to make such changes in the medicine as he deemed necessary.

It was during one of these visits that he made a discovery that astonished him more than Columbus was surprised when his eyes rested upon the half naked savages of the new world. He discovered that Big Six had been sailing under false colors and deceiving the public by making them believe he was a woman, when he was really a man, and well developed in every particular.



DR. F. G. THOMASON,
Of Punta Gorda, Florida, who treated
Big Six in his last illness, and
made a startling discovery.

Observing that Dr. Thomason possessed the great secret of his masculinity, Big Six said:

“ Doctor, for God’s sake let me beg you not to divulge my secret until I am dead, for there are men in this town who would come and kill me if they only knew the enormity of the deception which I have practiced upon them. When I am dead, you have my permission to tell them, for they cannot hurt me then.”

This request coming from a dying man, though a great sinner, was held sacred by Dr. Thomason, and he did not divulge his secret to any one as long as his patient lived.

There is a prominent gentleman living in the same town by the name of Capt. B. W. Watts. He was kind and sympathetic, and went over several times to see how Big Six was getting along. He believed in being kind to all, matters not how low or depraved they may be, and he believed it strong enough to go. He thought it wrong to ostracise those who had made mistakes and had fallen low in the scale of humanity; and for this reason he went to see Big Six frequently, regardless of what some self-righteous Pharisees might say by way of impugning his motive.

What a beautiful world this would be if people would look at this matter as Capt. Watts did! Scalding tears would be wiped from the cheeks of the fallen by the hand of sympathy, and many would be redeemed.

“Ye, who all profess to follow
In the steps of Christ alone,
Why are ye the first to ‘wonder,’
Why the first to cast a stone?”

A day or two before Big Six breathed his last Capt. Watts visited him and asked him for a brief history of his life, hoping to receive information that would be of great interest to the public.

The history which Big Six gave him corroborated the statements I have made in this book, and the information thus obtained must be true. In fact, it is not questioned by any one who ever met him.

He also claimed that he had no feeling for the opposite sex, and in that respect he must have been different from other men. This statement may seem absurd, but it was made by him in his dying moments. One might prevaricate under other circumstances, but when

Time stands over him with the sharp sickle of death in his hands, ready to sever the brittle thread of life, he would not dare to tell anything but the truth.

Referring to the confession made by Big Six on his death-bed, the Times - Union correspondent said :

“From her talk in a delirious state it is assumed that she (Big Six) committed some crime on her cousin, Tom Asbell. Tuesday she became conscious, stating that she would rather die than live. She said that she had done much of which she ought to be ashamed, but that she had violated no law.”

In this Big Six was mistaken, for he had violated physical laws and was then paying the penalty.

The reader will observe that he said he OUGHT to be ashamed; but he did not say that he really WAS; and this fact shows that he was very depraved.

While he was making his confession to Capt. Watts, he grew so weak that he could not finish it; and his death was expected any moment.

Of course, he had some kind friends around

him who sympathized with him, but there were no tears, no broken hearts, no sobs.

How sad to die and not one tear be shed, nor one sob be heard around one's dying pillow! But it is often the case. Many poor, unfortunate, friendless creatures die and are buried, and nothing marks their resting places but little mounds of earth. The wind sighing through the tree-tops is the only requiem that is sung over their graves. To die in this way
IS DEATH INTENSIFIED.

This was the sad condition of Big Six.

His time had come, and he must cross the turbid stream of death.

There was profound silence in that death chamber, and a pin dropping on the floor could have been heard distinctly.

He rolled his eyes upward and gasped for breath.

The muscles twitched violently at first and then grew fainter; the heart discontinued to beat, respiration ceased, and BIG SIX WAS DEAD!

CHAPTER XXX.

A STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT.

IT WAS at 8:10 p. m., December 5, 1894, that Big Six died. It may seem to some that his history should have been complete at this juncture, but I beg to say that the climax had not yet been reached. He had died as he had lived, and his life was still shrouded in mystery. People still knew him as a woman, for the veil had not yet been lifted and his real identity was a profound mystery.

While this chapter will contain a reiteration of facts already stated, it is the most interesting and sensational of any part of this book.

Never were people astonished as those living at Punta Gorda, the next morning after Big Six died, when the startling announcement was made that HE WAS ACTUALLY A MAN!

It was so incredible that they could not believe it. That he was a woman, had never been questioned by any one! and such a thing as his being a man had not been suspected.

Up to the time of his death, no living being knew that he was a man, for he had studiously kept his secret.

Regarding this matter the Times-Union correspondent said:

“Before returning to this town about a month since, she (Big Six) was living at Fort Myers, where she claims she reformed and made a living by washing. It is reported here that she married there also. Some thought that it might be a case of mistaken identity or that she might be a hermaphrodite. There is no doubt as to identity. SHE is simply HE, and nothing more. The story is so strange that the Times-Union correspondent would not credit the evidence of the best men in town, but in company with the mayor and a prominent physician, he saw the examination himself. Even when unconscious, Big Six would modestly try to cover up the evidences of her masculinity.”

The above is startling evidence given in the correspondent's own words, and no one can reasonably doubt its correctness. His description is chaste, graphic and comprehensible. His veracity has never been questioned by any

one, and consequently his statements, though strange and without a precedent in the world's history, are accepted as being true. He still resides at Punta Gorda and is one of the most prominent gentlemen in the state. He was a distinguished officer in the Cuban war between Spain and the United States, and figured conspicuously in several political campaigns.

So incredulous were the people when they heard the strange story, that every man in the town who was able to go went to see for himself; for nothing like it had ever happened before and they could not let it pass without thorough investigation.

The ladies of the town, old and young, were greatly shocked when they heard the startling announcement that BIG SIX WAS A MAN, and it was the topic of conversation and discussion for a whole month subsequent.

Even those who lived in the house with Big Six were as much surprised as any one else, for they had no doubt as to his femininity. They could not believe it when the announcement was made by the physician, for it was too unreasonable. They forgot that "truth is stranger than fiction," and hence they were loath to place credence in the singular story.

It is also stated on good authority that his husband was as greatly mystified as others, never having dreamed that his WIFE WAS A MAN.

The burial of this strange personage was largely attended, for the sensational events connected with his life, having been disclosed, had filled every one with astonishment that beggared description.

Should any one doubt the statements I have made, I refer you to the Hon. James Swift, who was then mayor of the town of Punta Gorda, and is well acquainted with the facts I have stated.

Now, dear reader, in conclusion I beg to say that while you are reading the strange events recorded in this book, remember that **THEY ARE ALL TRUE.**

Remember also that in writing this biography of an unfortunate and fallen creature, it is my hope that it may be a beacon light on life's ocean to reveal to you the "dangerous rocks and treacherous shoals" incident to a life of depravity! and that you may profit by his mistakes.

THE END.

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PUNTA GORDA, DeSOTO COUNTY, FLORIDA,



Its Location, Attractions and Advantages,

PUNTA GORDA is located on Charlotte Harbor, at the terminus of the Plant System of Railways, and is the most southern railway terminus on the west coast of Florida. It is 100 miles south of Tampa, and twelve hours' run from Jacksonville. Population, 1,000—cosmopolitan and noted for their hospitality. Churches: Advent, Baptist, Episcopal, Methodist and Presbyterian. School, 175 pupils.

Phosphate, fish, oranges, vegetables and pineapples in abundance. Many fine orange groves, and have never been injured by freezes. About 50 pineries. Will bear in fifteen to eighteen months. Average income from one acre, \$5,000 a year. Wants 1,000 families to grow pineapples.

Hotel Punta Gorda has 300 rooms, all facing the bay. Finest fishing and hunting in the United States. Does a commercial business of \$1,000,000 a year.

Among the business firms of the town may be mentioned, Albert W. Gilchrist, real estate; Con-cannon & Huffman, real estate; A. C. Freeman, dealer in hardware, undertakers' goods, groceries and furniture; Geo. W. McLane & Sons, dealers in hardware, groceries and furniture; R. K. Seward, dealer in groceries, shoes, hats, etc., gents' furnishings, hardware, paints, and feed; W. A. Roberts, druggist.

Cheap Homes

in the

Banner County

of Florida. Orange, Banana and
Pineapple lands for sale. Abstracts
furnished and taxes paid for non-res-
idents,

Jno. L. Jones.

DeSoto County.

Arcadia, Florida

DR. P. W. FANT,

PHYSICIAN AND SURGEON.

...Proprietor of the...

CRYSTAL RIVER DRUG CO.

Prescriptions carefully compounded.

A choice line of Perfumery, Toilet Articles,
Fancy Soaps, Sponges, Combs, Hair and Tooth
Brushes, Rubber Goods, Druggists' Notions,
Oils, Varnishes and Dyes kept on hand.

CRYSTAL RIVER, - - - FLORIDA

**“DeSoto, the Banner
Orange County.”**

Orange Groves, Phosphate and Vegetable
Lands. Farms, Turpentine, Timber Lands and
Town Property for sale at reasonable figures.

**J. G. Slavin,
Arcadia, Fla.**

J. W. BURTON,

Attorney-at-Law,

ARCADIA, - - - - FLORIDA

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