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The Millheim Journal

R. A. BUMILLER, Editor.

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Walter's Speculation.

A Life Sketch.

"Walter, I wouldn't do it. It's a business that we ain't fit for. We are doing very well now; at any rate, we are walking with our eyes open and managing our own affairs. Think how we have worked and contrived, and almost stunted ourselves to get that thousand dollars into the bank. And what have we done it for? Don't you still desire to own the Craston meadow, and don't you mean to put up the new barn? O, Walter! if you will listen to me you will tell Mr. Plausible Sparkler to take care of his own business and allow you to take care of yours. Let us own the beautiful meadow, as we have so long talked of, and let us have barn-room enough for the cattle we can keep when that meadow is ours. O, think, my dear husband, we'll have one of the best and one of the handiest farms in this whole region."

"Yes, I know, Jennie; but you don't exactly understand. You don't take into account what is sure to come back to us. Think of the thousands we'll have where now we've got little or nothing. Why, bless you! look at it, Mr. Sparkler has made me a grand offer. He lets me have the stock for two dollars and a-half and the par value is twenty dollars. Why, I'd be a fool not to take it. He wouldn't do that to many—now, you bet."

"Walter, you are entirely carried away by that man's wonderful talk. Now, will you just listen to me for a few moments. In the first place, you know very well that Plausible Sparkler wouldn't give you a dollar to save you. He is not one of that kind. Now, about the price of the stock. Look me in the eye, Walter; would that man sell you a horse for one-quarter or one-half of what it was really worth? Ah, you know he wouldn't. No, the very fact that he offers the shares at that price is proof that they are good for nothing. And now, there's just one more thing. If the land of which Sparkler tells was so rich in minerals, in coal, and oil, and in such magnificent lumber, do you suppose he and his mates would be around among poor folks like us picking up dollar by dollar? No, you know they would easily find the capital necessary to develop it."

"Ah! but, my dear wife, the very object of this company is to keep out these wealthy capitalists. These men have been poor themselves, and they are bound to give poor men a chance. And, you see, they must have money—capital—with which to develop the property, and put it into working order. There are steam engines to be put up, and furnaces and forges to be built, and a branch road must be built. Don't you see? Our two thousand dollars will—"

"Two thousand! Why, it was only a thousand the other day." "Yes, I know; but d'you see, I've just concluded that two thousand will give me just double what one thousand will give; aye, and more, too; for they will make me a present of fifty shares outright if I put in two thousand dollars. That would be eight hundred and fifty shares; and in less than a year that stock will be worth ten dollars. In two years it will be at par! And we'll live to see it worth an even hundred. I tell you, Jennie, it's a big thing!"

"But where are you to raise two thousand dollars, Walter?" "Why, we've got a thousand in the bank, and I can raise a thousand on the house and farm."

Jennie Witherell turned pale and trembled. She was frightened, for she saw that her husband was entirely infatuated. Walter was thirty years of age, a strong, steady, industrious, simple-minded man; and she, the wife, was two years younger. They had been married eight years, and three beautiful children blessed their home. Walter had received the farm with his wife. It had been her father's, but there had been a thousand-dollar mortgage on it, and that mortgage he had lifted with money of his own when they were married, taking the title-deeds in his own name. Thus far in life he had been content to work honestly and industriously, seeing his store increasing slowly but surely. He was an excellent mechanic—a house carpenter—and when there was building to be done he could assume direction of the work, receiving for his labor sufficient to hire three strong men on his farm for the same time. He had the best breed of sheep in the country, the best cows for milk and butter, and some of the very finest blood in the way of horseflesh. In short, he was one of the most thrifty and most prosperous in every way, of the mechanic-farmers in the State; and the projectors of "The Grand Orient Petroleum, Mining and Manufacturing Company" had spotted him as one of the first of their victims; and so

plausibly had they talked, so grandiloquently had they set forth the golden possibilities of their vast property, and so plainly had they given him to see the wealth that must flow in upon him, that his head was turned.

On the very next day after the conversation to which we have listened, Mr. Plausible Sparkler called at Walter Witherell's house, finding himself and wife both in. He was a man of middle age—about forty—with light, flaxen hair, neatly oiled and curled, an immense flaxen moustache, a pair of eyes of a light bluish gray, which, in certain lights, scintillated like the eyes of a squirrel; a prominent Roman nose, like the cutwater of a boat, with a sloping forehead, and a pair of ears that betokened an insinuating and great caution. He was dressed in the very height of fashion, wore an enormous diamond (or paste) in his shirt-front, and a heavy weight of bright, yellow metal (it looked like gold) attached to his watch.

"Aha!—ha! ha! ha!" laughed Sparkler, after he had laid out his brilliant plan for the hundredth time, and had, in bold fancy, filled Walter's coffers to the brim with gold! "Ha! ha! ha!—old Spoonydyke came to me yesterday and wanted to give me his block of eight-story, marble-front stores in New York, for two hundred shares of our stock. Ah! the old rascal has a long head on his shoulders. He can see—aye, see—what our enterprise must come to. But I did not listen. You can imagine that it was a great temptation; but I put it behind me. We had resolved that we would not give our property to make wealthy men wealthier; but to make poor men wealthy—poor men who were at the same time deserving. Think, my dear Witherell—you will own more stock, very much more, than old Spoonydyke proposed to take for the valuable estate in the great metropolis."

And so the oily-tongued man talked on, until Walter had the same as promised that he would be prepared to take the stock on the morrow."

That very afternoon, after Sparkler had gone, Walter Witherell filled out a mortgage-deed with his own hand, and then called in a justice to acknowledge the signatures of himself and his wife. Jennie signed it; but it almost broke her heart to do it. And during the evening he took the deed to the man of whom he was to have the money, and received a thousand dollars—ten new, crisp, one-hundred-dollar greenbacks, fresh from the United States Treasury.

When Walter reached home, on his return from the money lender's, he found a boy at his door with a telegram. It was from his sister, in a distant part of the State, informing him of the sickness of his mother. "The doctor says dangerous. Come immediately," was the closing of the message.

The nearest rail way station was six miles distant, and there was no train until morning which would help him on his way. However, the business to be done with Mr. Sparkler he could leave with his wife just as well. The preliminaries had been all arranged, and all that remained to be done was to pay over the money—two thousand dollars—and take the certificate of stock.

"There will be a paper to sign—a sort of bond—just for form's sake, which you can sign just as well. The wife's name is good."

"Hadm't you better give me a power of attorney?" suggested Jennie. "Mr. Sparkler may refuse to take my name without some such thing. Just you sit down, and write out a simple statement that you give me entire authority to sign for you a certain paper, stating what it is, and that you will hold yourself bound thereby."

Walter liked the idea, and he proceeded forthwith to make out the paper as his wife had suggested. He gave her this, together with two thousand dollars in money, and she was to do the business with Sparkler. The thousand dollars from the savings bank he had drawn that very day, so that the money was all ready.

On the following morning Walter ate an early breakfast; then harnessed the horse which his wife was used to driving, and having kissed his little ones he entered the carriage, and Jennie drove him over to the station, and stopped there and saw him off. On her way home she stopped at the dwelling of a dear friend—Kate Moulton—whose husband was going to take a thousand dollars' worth of stock of "The Grand Orient Petroleum, Mining and Manufacturing Company."

"Kate," said Jennie, "Charles will surely take the stock?"

"Yes, I have tried to persuade him, but he will not listen."

"Dear Kate, I want you to do me a favor. Listen." And she whispered the requests into her ear, so that even the walls should not hear it. "Will you do it?"

And Kate Moulton promised that she would do it, upon which Jennie Witherell went home quite contented.

It was afternoon when Mr. Sparkler called, bright and bustling, ready for his business with Walter Witherell. He was somewhat disappointed when the wife had assured him that she was fully empowered to act for her husband he was content. She led him into the library, and gave him a seat, after which she proceeded to business. And Plausible Sparkler, Esquire, found her not quite so ready to his hand as he might have found the master of the household. However, she managed to get through with the business after a fashion, and she breathed more freely when she had seen the last of the philanthropic speculator.

On the morning of the next day a telegram came from Walter, to his wife, informing her that his mother was failing, and she had better join him with the children, and on the day after that, leaving the house in the charge of their one servant and the farm hands, she set forth in answer to her husband's call.

She arrived in season to see Walter's mother alive, and to sit by her side when she fell asleep. They tarried until after the funeral, and then returned home, and took up once more the usual cares of life.

It was on the second day after their arrival at home that Jennie gave to her husband a large legal-looking envelope, within which he found a beautifully illuminated certificate of The Grand Orient Petroleum, Mining and Manufacturing Company, certifying that Walter Witherell, in consideration of the sum of two thousand dollars, the receipt whereof was thereby acknowledged, was entitled to eight hundred and fifty shares of the capital stock of said company, etc.

Walter carefully refolded the handsome flaming document, put it back into its envelope, and put it away in the private drawer of his secretary, and from that time ceased to talk about it. That is he talked no more with his wife, but ever and anon, when he chanced to meet Charles Moulton and George Simmons, both of whom had bought some of the same stock, he would pass a few words with them on the subject.

Time passed on—six months were gone, and not a word had Walter heard from Sparkler. He began to be uneasy, and more than once had he said to himself he wished he had not taken that stock. He had heard of the failures of many companies of the same character, companies which had proved to have been simple frauds and cheats.

Nine months had passed, when, one day, Charles Moulton stopped Walter in the street and asked him if he had received a notice of assessment—ten per cent—from the Treasurer of Grand Orient. No, Walter said he had not.

"Well," said Moulton, "they sent to me, and notified me that if the assessment was not paid within thirty days, my stock would be forfeited, or, if they chose they could come on and collect it, as the bond which I signed just for form's sake gave them power to do. So I have sent on the hundred dollars. I tell you, Walter, it came hard. O! I wish I'd listened to my wife, and left the thing alone."

Walter went home feeling unhappy; but he dared not speak with his wife on the subject. "O! if I had only listened to Jennie!" That was the burden of his wail.

It was during the first week in November that Walter had given the mortgage on his home, and drawn his thousand dollars from the Savings Bank. It was in July, next following, that Moulton and Simmons had been assessed ten per cent, on the stock they had taken. At that time, as Walter afterwards learned, Simmons had been inclined to let his stock, and his thousand dollars already paid in, go, rather than be bled any more; but the officers of the company had very clearly shown him that they had power, under the bond he had given, to come on and make distraint on any property of his they could find.

And Walter was in for two thousand! If the worst should come, it would swallow up the rest of his farm—every bit of it! He suffered more and more; and he suffered the more keenly because he would not speak with his wife, and ask her sympathy.

A year had passed, and another November had come. One morning, at the post-office, Charles Moulton, pale and agitated, and quivering with mental torture, pointed out to Walter Witherell an item in a city paper, which a friend had sent him. Walter took the paper, and read as follows:

"A SAD COLLAPSE.—We fear that many of the honest, hard-working farmers and mechanics of the surrounding country are suffering by the collapse of the Grand Orient Petroleum, Mining and Manufacturing Company, so called. The affair has been a stupendous swindle from the first; yet, so adroitly did the corporators do their business that

their victims can gain no redress. The company owned all the land they pretended to own; but, in truth, a more utterly worthless tract of land than was their territory was not to be found on the continent. But the loss of money paid for stock is not all. A few moneyed men have bought up the whole concern, and are now making distraint upon the original subscribers to the stock, for the collection of the full face value of the premium notes which they unwittingly gave at the time of subscribing. We venture to say that scarcely a man of them dreamed that he was giving a bona-fide note when he signed that simple, innocent-looking bond. It is hard, but it might have been worse. Some may find the experience worth all it will cost, while all may do well to remember the homely old saying: Cobler, stick to your last."

Walter gave back the paper with a groan, and quickly sought the fresh air. When he got home his wife was frightened. She thought him deathly sick. She hastened to his side and wound an arm around his neck.

"Dear Walter, what is it? What is the matter?"

"O, Jennie, Jennie! if I had only listened to you."

And then, in broken tones and in tears, he told her of the sad collapse of the Grand Orient. He concealed nothing; but told her the plain, unvarnished truth. Not only was the two thousand dollars gone that he had already paid, but they were coming for two thousand more, and he could not escape paying it.

Jennie sat down and looked into her husband's face. What meant that lurking smile which he caught at the corners of her blue eyes and about the full, ruby lips? Was it possible that she could find it in her heart to make sport of his cruel, bitter agony?

"Walter," she said at length, "will you go and get your certificate of stock and let us look it over?"

He arose, moving like a decrepit old man, and procured the envelope and brought it back. Jennie took it, and drew out the certificate and opened it.

"Where is the company's seal?" she asked.

"What?" cried Walter, "is there no seal?"

"No, and look at the signatures. Do they look as such signatures ought to look?"

A brief silence, and then the wife, with happy tears mingled with her smiles, threw her arms around her husband's neck, exclaiming as she did:

"O, Walter I know you will forgive me now. I did a bold thing; at the time you might have called it an outrageous thing; but I could not pay away that hard-earned money for what I knew to be a mess of pottage. Dear husband, you have never owned a share of this stock. I went to Kate Moulton—I knew that Sparkler was to call there before he came here—and I got her to beg of Mr. Sparkler one of the blank certificates of stock, on the plea that she wanted to keep the pretty picture for a curiosity. He gave it to her, and she brought it at once to me. When Sparkler called upon me I sent him about his business off-hand. I told him just what I thought of him and of his company; and I will only say that he was very soon glad to get away. Then I carried back the thousand dollars to the Savings Bank, and Mr. Holden took it back just as though we had never touched it. And Mr. Baldwin very cheerfully gave me up the mortgage for the return of the thousand dollars he had given you. The certificate I filled up myself, believing you would never notice its strange look."

"Now, Walter, darling, I am ready to be scolded. Let me have it just as savagely as you please; only when you have finished, I have a favor to ask."

"Ask it now, Jennie," he said, in a low, broken whisper.

"It is this; I want you to promise me that you will never—"

"Hold on!" He caught her to his bosom, and kissed her again and again.

"O! my own blessed wife! never, never again, will I step aside from the true upright, straightforward and legitimate path of honest business and labor. I have had enough of speculation. Some men may enjoy it; some may prosper in it; but I was not cut out for it! No, Jennie, your grand lesson shall not be lost on an unworthy husband. When we are done with this home we will leave it to our children and they shall find it in a good condition and unincumbered; and I shall not be ashamed to have them know just how much of the home they owe to their mother. Hush, I wish them to know it. Especially do I wish our son to know it, that he may take warning by the experience of his father; for, though I have not lost my two thousand dollars, yet, believing that was in the trap, I have suffered more than I can tell. Yes, I want our boy to know."

"And now, my darling, let us thank God for the blessing of this happy hour. And I will thank Him for one of the best and noblest wives that man ever had."—N. Y. Ledger.

A philosopher says: "Marriage is like whist; you may ask for trumps, but will you get them? Sometimes you will when clubs are trumps."

Running Out Nights.

So you want to run out o' nights, eh?

Well, my boy, if there is one single habit more than another calculated to bring a lad to evil ways it is that of running around a village, town or city o' nights. All the bad in human nature begins to bubble as soon as the sun goes down. You wouldn't dream of doing a mean act to your neighbors by daylight, but after dark it seems a good joke to lug off gates, upset outhouses, steal fruit or raise a false alarm of fire. It may seem fun to you, but when you come to sit down and think it over you can't help but admit that it is small business. Any action of yours which puts any one else to trouble and expense may be questioned to your detriment.

Find a murderer, burglar or thief—point out to me the biggest loafer in your town—and I will show you a man who began his career by "running out o' nights. I don't say that George Washington or Thomas Jefferson or Abraham Lincoln didn't throw any lumber piles or rob fruit trees at ten o'clock at night, but if so, they started out just right to become bad men.

Don't I want a boy to have fun?

You bet I do! and, by and by, I'm going to put you up to a dozen different things in that line. But this grabbing your hat after supper and sneaking out over the back fence is a mean piece of business when you come to figure it down. Down on the corner you meet Jim this or Tom that. You go "over town" and are seen hanging around this or that place. You may sneak into a saloon to see a game of billiards, but you hate yourself for it. You may sit in Smith's grocery and hear a lot of old bald-headed liars spin yarns and abuse religion, but you go out feeling that you could kick any one of them who dared bow to your mother.

You'd go home and go to bed if it wasn't for Jim or Tom. He wants a little "fun" and he drags you into it. What he calls fun is stringing a rope across the sidewalk. It doesn't occur to him that some person might break a limb and be put to several hundred dollars' expenses, or even be killed outright. He thinks it a cute thing to roll off barrels of salt, barricade the bridges, set an oil-shed on fire or stop up the chimneys on a widow's house. When you have played such tricks it comes very easy to play others which the law won't look at in the funny light.

There is to-day in the Michigan State Prison a boy whose career I watched for two years. I first saw him prowling around o' nights. He had an honest face and a good heart, but his father had seemingly never been a boy himself. He left his lad come and go as he willed, and within three months the police had to caution him. Inside of six months he belonged to a gang of juvenile thieves. Within two years he was a burglar. When he stood up in court to receive his five years' sentence women wept to see that one so young had drifted so rapidly to the bad.

What can you do o' nights if you remain at home?

Scores of things, my boy. In the first place, there's the checker-board, and in the next place, your father wants to sit right down and teach you all he knows about it. Outside of the interest in a chance game your wits are made the sharper by such struggles. A good checker-player will never be a rash business man. This very training makes him cautious in his dealings. There are dozens of good boy-books to be had, and your father had better buy you two or three per week than turn you over to the town. There's no end of mechanical toys and games.

And suppose you learn how to draw or paint? Look at a watch and you will realize that all the wheels and springs and shafts and jewels go to make up a perfect time-piece. Just so with a man. There are lots of one-wheeled men in this world. They can sell goods, make boots, run an engine or keep a butcher shop, but outside of that one thing they are a sea. It is the handy man who is helping this world along—the man who is full of wheels and springs. Don't be afraid because you have planned to study law, to read up on philosophy and science, to learn how to handle tools, to analyze steam, to post yourself on whatever is worth knowing.

You will discover as you grow up that the man who knows the least is the greatest bigot to argue with and the meanest man with whom to transact business. Not one in twenty of our high-school pupils knows how a mason mixes his mortar or a painter his colors. They never saw a tinsmith at work or a grainer imitating the various woods. Now, then, when you find the evenings dull ask your father to put on his hat and help you post yourself. Did you ever look over the queer machinery in a tin-shop which bends the metal in shape for covers and bottoms and handles? Ever visit the gas works, or go through a big flouring mill or pass an hour in a foundry? There are dozens of places to be visited at night where

you can learn something useful. Each point you seize upon helps to broaden and enlighten your mind and make a well-posted man of you. And, instead of shoudering a gun on Saturdays, or tramping off after a good time in a swamp, go down to the round-house and look over the mechanism of a locomotive—go into a wheat elevator and see how curiously everything is arranged—go into a machine shop and see how iron can be turned as easily as pine—go into a planing-mill—down where they saw blocks of stone by steam—go somewhere and see something to post yourself.

Ah! boy, if you only realized how much this country will depend upon you twenty years hence you wouldn't waste your time! You will sooner or later have to take hold of the rest of us did. There will be the same strife for place and fame and riches as you see to-day, and the boy who has wasted his time will be the man who is pushed here and jostled there and driven to the back seats because he is in the way of the busy, money-making world.—"M. Quad," in Detroit Free Press.

FOR SALE.

A citizen in the western part of the city who has a house for sale says that he has learned more of human nature in the last three months than during all his life before. Nine people out of ten who come to look at his \$10,000 house have not ten dollars; to buy with. The same proportion are deliberate liars. Nineteen out of twenty want every room changed about. Ten out of twelve get all through the house and then object to the street. Not one single woman out of the scores that have called at the house had any other idea than to satisfy a temporary curiosity. One woman had every room in the house measured to see if her carpets would fit and then suddenly discovered that the house was a whole block from the street cars. Another sat for two hours and planned how she would fix every room, and then left the place in a huff because there wasn't a Methodist Church on the next corner. A third was about to leave two hundred dollars to bind the bargain until next day, when it suddenly occurred to her that her sister out in Pontiac might not like the location. Out of sixty or seventy men who have called every single one liked the location, thought the property cheap, and would return next day. The citizen finally got tired of such conduct, and now when any one calls he asks:

"Do you wish to look at the house or the furniture?"

"O, the house, of course."

"Well, this house stands on the north side of the street. It is by block fourteen, lot forty-two. The house is of wood. It is forty rods to a church and eighty to a school house. Street cars do not pass the door. Circus processions never come this way. Now, then, have you any idea of buying?"

"Certainly. We must move next week."

"Very well. Please deposit two dollars for my trouble in showing you over."

"Two dollars! I'd like to see myself. Why, your house is the poorest one for sale in Detroit, and I'd not live in it if rent free!"

"But you came here to buy?"

"No, I didn't. I happened to be passing, saw your sign, and I thought I might as well tramp over your premises as to go down town. Good morning, sir! You'd better insure your house and set fire to it!"—Detroit Free Press.

ADVICE TO MOTHERS.

Are you disturbed at night and broken of your rest by a sick child suffering and crying with pain of cutting teeth, and if you have a bottle of Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup for Children's Teething, its value is incalculable. It will relieve the poor little sufferer immediately. Depend upon it, mothers, there is no mistake about it. It cures dysentery and diarrhoea, and regulates the stomach and bowels, cures wind colic, softens the gums, reduces inflammation, and gives tone and energy to the whole system. Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup for Children's Teething is pleasant to the taste, and is the prescription of one of the oldest and best female nurses and physicians in the United States, and is for sale by all druggists throughout the world. Price 25 cents a bottle.

A Sweet Thing in Collars—Lady: 'I should like to choose a few of those lovely collars. I suppose they are the newest style out?' Counterman: 'Excuse me, madame, those are not collars exactly, but lamp-shades!'

Natur doan make no difference in de kere o' her chillun. She takes ez good kere o' de jimpson weeb ez she does o' de stalker cotton.

A fisherman of Union Springs, Ala., has invented an attachment to fishing hooks which is quite an improvement. About midway of the staff of the hook he has placed a straight projection, which serves three purposes—viz: First it prevents a fish from swallowing the hook; second, when a fish bites at the hook if his mouth strikes the projection he involuntarily closes it and is thus caught; third, it prevents bait from slipping off the hook. The hook has been tested by several expert local fishermen, and all pronounce it a decided success.