

# Democratic Watchman

Bellefonte, Pa., January 2, 1903.

## THE GIRL BEHIND THE PIE.

The man behind the cannon and the girl behind the pie.  
Have been sung in fabled story ever since the world began.  
From the day the Trojan Helen, leader of a grizzled herd,  
To the time of Maggie Moorphy, mascot of the bloomers' Third.  
Round the world have spread the stories of the brave who do or die,  
But we've never heard an anthem of the Girl Behind the Pie.  
There she stands, with cups of coffee, slabs of pastry, chunks of cake,  
Temporarily arraigned around her, with dyspepsia in their wags.  
And she eyes the deadly sinkers with a most bewitching eye,  
As a stream of willing victims sorrowfully wanders by.  
Filled or filling, starved or fondered, go they on their varied ways,  
And for her who works the pie pump they have naught but ready praise.  
Call her Liz, or plain Eliza, or Elizabeth, mayhap,  
Since the chance is ten to nothing that she doesn't care a rap—  
Call her "maiden" she will saunter; call her "chocoy" she will frown,  
But you are safe to call her anything, so you don't call her down;  
"Sinkers up—draw one!" she murmurs; Ah! the magic of her voice  
Is a wicked death to sorrow and a bidding to rejoice!  
You may keep your fabled wonder in the long, immortal line,  
But I'll take the little pie girl as the heroine in mine!  
Ay! I'll take the little pie girl in her modest suit of drab,  
As she cuts a brand new custard, when I ask her for a slab!  
Loud your man behind the cannon and his girl to the sky,  
But I'm writing this here anthem to the Girl Behind the Pie!

—Baltimore News.

## BRINER'S WHEAT.

At the edge of Princeton stood the Summit Mill. Dry, dusty, and sunny-yellow was the stretch of wagon ground in front, and the box-like office was in the middle of it, a lone wooden thing. It was half-past eleven. A breeze swayed the corn stalks across the way. An Air-Line engine, switching at the bottom of the descent behind the mill, rumbled and coughed and clattered empty freight cars. The sound that issued from the six wooden stories of the building was like an undercurrent to all things, and the gray edifice trembled—a perpetual agitation, as of palsy. Ed. McNair, the negro packer, came to the door with a flour-sack cap on his head; little Alok Myann, in the dust, was throwing stolen wheat to his fluttering pigeons. And the negro's voice rolled out on the September air in mock-tragic warning: "I take yo' livah, boy! I take yo' livah!" Tom Jordan, the young office man, sat on his stool in the rear room of the box. The desk and the ledger were dusty, the safe was sprinkled over with spilled samples of wheat. The weights that swung from the scale beam by the window swung idly to and fro. In the front room Mr. Dawson argued with old Mr. Shackner. "It's the second offer from Rome, Georgia, in a week, and the third from Tallahassee. It's good; we must conciliate. We must keep their trade whatever we do." Jordan could see black-bearded Dawson flinching. "We wouldn't have done it five years ago," came Shackner's slow and querulous answer. "Three dollars and fifteen cents for a barrel of patent flour. Oh, my—oh, my. We used to make a profit of a dollar a barrel. Dear me, you can thank the Lord if we make five cents now. But go on—do as you like. I'm semi-retired." "Conciliation, you know; following the times," cried Dawson, running about and rubbing his hands. "Now, Tommie; write out that telegram, Tommie." Outside there was the shrill grating of a brake on a wheel, and a farm wagon heavily laden came round the corner of the cooper-shop. James Briner, a weather-beaten, strong-faced farmer, drove the team, and by his side sat a girl in a wide blue hat. Her face was daintily colored; her features were mobile and beautiful. Her eyes were smiling. Jordan made a mistake in the telegram, tore it up, and wrote another, with quick jabs of the pen. "Why, Jamie—why, I'm mighty glad to see you, Jamie!" Mr. Dawson was trotting into the street. "And Miss Maude—well! I thought you were in Greencastle at college. Brought in a little wheat, Jamie! All right—right!" "Times too hard for college!" blurted Briner's staccato voice. His face was rough-cut, not unlike an Indian's, but less, brownish red, vaguely humorous, plainly rendered ruggedly by trouble. "What you goin' to give me for this wheat, hey?" "Oh, Mr. Briner," came old white Shackner's sick and complaining tones, as the senior proprietor of the Summit Mill sauntered into the street. "Fifty-eight is the best we can do; dear me!" "The Lord's tryin' to kill off the farmers—huh—I see that," was the grim reply. "Why, Jamie," cried Dawson, examining the wheat. "We'll make you the very highest price the market allows." One of his old brown eyes always had a look intensely shrewd, half sly; the other was wide, child-like, even plaintive. Maude smiled on him, and cautiously, shyly, stretched her pretty neck and strained her eye a second, sidewise toward the office door, and twisted a little restlessly on the wagon seat. She was flushed and beaming, full of expectant nerves. "Drive right on, Jamie, Tommie, weigh Mr. Briner's wagon, now, Tommie." The horses' feet pounded the wooden platform. "Good morning," cried Tom, through the scale window. "Mornin'," ejaculated Briner. "Good morning," caroled Maude. She bent far over to see the young office man, and then looked up into his eyes out of a summer countenance. "Your daughter would make a fine painting up there," called Jordan. "I'd call it 'July,'" laughed Dawson affably. "She'll freeze up to January if you don't gimme more'n fifty-eight cents," was Briner's jest. "The wagon made the long sweep, scattering the pigeons, and drew up at the mill. Tom, in gray trousers and vest, coatless, lead pencils in his pockets, came over here too.

"You've promised to show me the mill," said Maude, a little diffidently. "Give me your hand," he cried, and she leaped down. She was trimly dressed and graceful. They entered the rumbering edifice. The support under the wagon's rear wheels gave way, the wagon slumped, and its river of wheat ran into the bowels of the earth, where screw conveyors received it. "I'm afraid you'd better let me hold your hand along here," said Tom. "These passages are dangerous, here where the cog-wheels are." He stopped suddenly. "What makes you look so scared?" laughed she, timidly letting him have a finger. "I was thinking how awful it would be if you got your blue skirt caught in there. He was staring at the dress, holding her finger in oblivious delight. "It—it would be bad. But it would be more dreadful if you got your hand ground up in there—ugh!" It was necessary, all over the mill, for him to lead her by her hand; and she shrank, and was afraid, and laughed full of joy at the same time. Descending from the sixth story, they went down into the bowels of the earth. Here, in a kind of big, infernal cavern, endless mysteries of wheels and belts and mighty shafts whirled round. It was dusty and rather dark. "I'll show you where your father's wheat comes in," said he, leading on among those steel monsters. "There it comes." He pointed to a hole, where a line of grain began its screw-like progress. "Maude, I'm glad you couldn't go back to Greencastle. Through the high school, and one year at De Pauw, is education enough." "I was sorry," she murmured, her face turned away. "It's Papa's money troubles. I'll maybe have to teach." "Maude—if you love me, you'll never have to teach!" She started, uttered a faint cry, like a sob and one note of happy laughter mingled together. He put his arms round her and kissed her. "But—what will father say? He's desperate all the time of late. He doesn't like college men very well. You'll have to be very careful, Tom, to say the right things to him!" she cried appealingly. "I'll come to-morrow and I'll try to win him," said he, determined.

The farm was only a mile from town. The fields were an unmistakable air of prosperity. The house, near the road, with a lawn in front, was of brick. A tall poplar tree shaded it; a turkey who had made a success of life strutted at the kitchen door. Briner trod in and out of the barn, in big boots, his face iron-like, his eyes giving a hint of wild pain. The brim of his hat flopped down over one ear. "That's Shackner and Dawson's buggy, I see that," muttered he, striding to the front gate. "Come in, Mr. Jordan; if you can get mortgaged virtuals you're welcome to 'em." Jordan tied his horse and stepped on to the lawn. "Mr. Briner, I'm sorry if you've been having any trouble," he said. "Mr. Jordan, I have to coax this girl to eat," said Mrs. Briner, pointing at Maude. Mrs. Briner was tall, her face was long and old, and because she was bent a little her chin was thrust pleasantly forward, to counter-balance the angle of her body. She had shy brown eyes. "Maude never eats." Tom sought vaguely for some acceptable speech to bestow on the grim farmer. "About the wheat," ventured he. "I've wondered why the farmers all raise wheat, anyhow. That's why the price goes down. I've wondered now if you couldn't raise something new. I've heard of a jasmine farm in Texas." "Aw!" cried Briner, gazing at the well. He was quite disgusted, but forgot about it at once, and sat a heavy moment with a cast of tragedy over its features. "They have big flower dealers in Indianapolis. Why don't you turn your farm into—well, say—"  
Maude's eyes looked scared. "A violet farm, for instance," said Tom. "What!" burst out Briner, and got suddenly up, the sum of his troubles overflowing him. "Never mind—never mind—young folks have got to talk," and he stalked away. "Oh, Tom; you said the wrong thing," cried Maude.

III  
The sorrows of James Briner were coming to a crisis, and of that crisis the barn was the fitting scene. At four o'clock he entered the red edifice. There were bins of good wheat, waiting. He looked at them sorrowfully. He went to other bins, and gazed at them also, and took up some grain in his hand. "Smutty," muttered he. "Three-fourths of the crop, James Briner, the devil's temptin' you." He took a letter out of his pocket and read it over. It meant only one thing, pay—the creditors can wait no more. He read his doom in that epistle, and, chewing it up, he thought of Maude. "Lord!" cried he, as though his thoughts were half a prayer, "I've slaved too many years for this. It's a great fall, old Briner. And they've called you the richest farmer in Gibson county for years. If I put in the smutty wheat just once, enough to tide over, maybe I could make it up some time again, and the price'll go up next year—sure, the price'll go up next year." He heard the gentle ripple of Maude's laughter by the well, and looking out saw her seated there, the breeze blowing the red bow, her love looking from her eyes on Jordan. "You've been a just man all your life," the farmer said. "You can afford to sin once—to give it to her. A layer of good on top, and the bad underneath. They don't have to examine your wheat any more. Why, they're known my honesty. O Lord, these thirty years—these thirty years."

He in the shadow could see the little sunlit scene at the well, without being observed; and he smiled. "Will he lose everything, Maude?" asked Jordan. "I'm afraid so," her eyes were wet—"I'm afraid so, Tom." Briner's heart smote him. The world had made him, without a rock. The tears of Maude, sitting by the well with her lover, broke him. He rested his head against the boards of the bin of smutty wheat. "The devil's won for once," groaned he. When, in the evening, Tom would have sought him out, wishing to tell him of his love for his daughter, Briner was not to be found.

IV  
"I'm going up to the depot," whined Shackner. "Here Jim came down and said there weren't any cars for us. Oh, my—what kind of a railroad, anyhow? How do they expect us to ship flour—in the engine, maybe?" "No freight cars? No freight cars?" cried Dawson. "Why, Tommie, you told them we had that Nashville order ready to fill. Why, Tommie—O, say, Mr. Shackner, now I thought I'd make an offer of two-for-ty for that—Oh, Jim! Jim! come in here. Never mind—go ahead! I said go ahead! Now, I thought two-for-ty for that low grade—"  
"Go on, go on," mumbled Shackner as he moved away on the cinder path. "Give it away for nothing if you want to—I'm not going to take it." And Shackner's childlike and plaintive appeal over his shoulder, the shrewd one remaining invisible. "Tommie," ran on Dawson, "now make out that invoice, Tommie. Wheat's gone down a cent; offer fifty-seven, and don't buy anything but the best at that. I'm going down to the engine-room. Wilkinson's going to haul to-day. Ah, Tommie—ha! ha!—where did you drive to Sunday? Try to get it over and your wife back before the busy season." He poked Tom in the ribs and went out. The low rumbling of the mill was the undercurrent to another day; a breeze swept through the wooden box and blew Tom's hair on his temples. He was lost in successive reveries, from which he woke himself every little while with a start. A buggy came round the corner of the cooper-shop at a brisk rate, drawn by a trim little black horse which trotted to the office. Out came a blue hat and a pair of dancing eyes, and a girl jumping to the ground. "Is your father here yet?" cried Maude, daintily cooing. "I was just going to town. Good-by! I wanted to see him." "Don't get in!" implored he. She panned, with her hand on the dashboard, and turned to smile a little, lingering. "Why?" faltered she. "Is that all you came for?" "It's smutty, he would be cold. I brought his muffler," she said, blushing, holding the white thing up. "It's hot as can be," ejaculated he. "But—oh, of course, it'll probably get cold. You'd better come in and wait for him." "To—to give it to him." "Yes." "But—you said it was hot." "Been cold ever since Sunday." She cast mischievous eyes at him. "Since the violets?" sang she. The familiar sound of the grating brake pierced the air, followed by the rasping, angry torture of other brakes, and up the road came four heavily laden wagons, creaking; powerful draft horses straining, heads down. On the seat of the first wagon sat Briner, his red hands gripping the lines, his face set, his hat brim flopping down over his forehead. "Good morning, Mr. Briner," said Jordan, a shade of anxiety on his face, for he remembered that fall of a cent in the market. "Mornin'. You like the millin' business, Maude?" grieved he. She marked a little in the dust with her toe. "We're glad to get your wheat to-day," said Tom, still anxiously. "We need it." "I've waited my head off for the price to rise. What you gimme to-day?" "I'm sorry. The market's very bad, Mr. Briner." Tom was rather pale just now, and his eyes were dim. "We can't give you but fifty-seven to-day." "Git up!" The words were grated in Briner's throat, and a savage desperation was in the quick sweep of his whip. The horses' feet pounded the scale platform. Maude came in to see Tom weigh the wheat. The four loads were weighed. As the mill wagon was being heaped with sacks of "Jersey Cream" at the stink, Briner stared at the horses' hips. His hands gripped the lines so hard that they ached. The wheat was in bulk, filling the wagon-beds, and spread smooth and shining to the gaze of the September sun. "This is your best wheat, of course, Mr. Briner," Jordan climbed to a hub and twirled his fingers in the grain. Briner said: "Yes. Forty loads." Maude thought her father's face looked haggard. She sighed, and stood in the sun. Tom glanced but casually at the wheat. Briner was known to be as honest as the very United Presbyterian church, where he was a pillar. At length the mill wagon drove off, its Clydesdales stamping the earth. "Git up," said Briner.

One quick fall of the wheels would do it. Wheat always ran out swiftly—and the bottom should run evenly with the top. What was the dread law of nature, which unshoaled Briner knew not, about the running of wheat out of a wagon? Would some inexorable principle of friction cause the surface to break, and let the guilty shadow be seen? Briner looked strangely on his daughter and Tom. What brought those young things here, in the very middle of his sin? Maude, with a wistful yet a happy face, stood there to see the wheat run out—for no reason at all. The wagon's end-gate was removed, the wooden lever was shifted, the timber under the rear wheels stretched violently down with a crash the wagon slumped, and the river of wheat flowed into the depths. Briner now stood at his horse's side, and Tom perceived that this rugged farmer had a singular stare in his eyes. Jordan glanced at Maude; she was infinitely beautiful, thought he. He turned his eyes to the vanishing wheat. There was a queer shadow in it. "Why, Mr. Briner!" cried he—then stopped. The blood leaped to his face, and departed entirely. He stooped and caught up a handful of grain as the last disappeared. His trained eye knew too well the matter. He stood a moment, silent, looking at it. "A little smut has got into this, Mr. Briner," he said. Maude was coming to see, half interested, not imagining danger. In Briner's

eyes was the truth, untrouled—for they had been honest eyes for sixty years. But his face was a blank. The woman's instinct all at once read the whole thing aright, and Maude, full of shame and stronger pity, turned a sudden pale countenance to her father. "Git up!" This time the words were ground between Briner's teeth. The wagon rattled with slow movement. Maude stood forlorn, alone in the dust, suffering. The moment was crisis for Jordan. This was the hardest thing he had ever to do. He wanted this girl—he wanted her now! He might let the smut go. After all, maybe it was only in the one wagon. Briner—Briner of all men on earth! Yet Briner was tempted. To do nothing would be to be faithless to a trust. Forty loads of that wheat would color the floor, perhaps lose thousands of dollars, and a reputation more valuable still, for his employers. One of those seconds of battle which wrench a man left him with a full heart of misery and a blind determination to do right. The wagons must wait. He walked to the office. The day had darkened, but Jordan had won. Maude sat in the door of the mill, full of fear, while Briner walked yonder. Jordan came out of the office with a little pointed tin tester. He climbed to the hub of the second wagon, thrust that came to the bottom of the wheat, and drew out a sample. It was smutty. So it seemed to Tom—who was to be punished. With her eyes on him, he must walk to the third wagon, climb up, and find smut there. Then he must get down, seeing her pallid face, and go to the fourth, and climb up, and find yet smut—smut that colored life itself. Round the corner of the cooper-shop came feeble Shackner, disgruntled about the freight rates. Up from the engine-room Dawson trotting with a smile on his face. Briner was standing stock-still in the sun. "Why, Tommie, why, Tommie, what's the matter, Tommie? Good morning, Jamie—brought in your—"  
"It's full of smut," said Jordan, casting the sample into Dawson's hand. "Smut? What's this? Hm. Why, Jamie, why there's some smut take here; this is a little—this isn't just—Oh, Mr. Shackner!" Shackner put on spectacles; his trousers were all dusty and his knees were bent. "Oh, my—oh, my," complained he. "Is it all like this, Tommie?" Dawson was excited. Tom was in the office now, and cried out with a somewhat anguished-laden cry: "All!" Briner now strode up, a fierce look on his face. "I tell you it's good!" swore he terribly. "Dear me—we'll have to see," and Shackner, grunting, drew himself to a hub and pulled out a sample. "It's smutty," he complained. "Oh, James, what did you do for?" "Some error—it's all right—it'll be all right!" cried Dawson, agitated, patting Briner on the moveless shoulder. "Why, Jamie—where did you—how did it come. The farmer, like some gray crag, gazed at his wagons of ruin. Then he mounted to his seat, swung his whip with a cut of despair, motioned his smile after him, and the wheat was driven away, like a funeral cortege, down over the dusty road, round the corner of the cooper-shop, wheels grating, horses straining with heads down, old James Briner's back disappearing as he sat and gripped his lines and felt the brim of his hat flop on his weather-beaten brow. Shackner and Dawson stood gazing after Maude, got up from the door-sill of the mill, and stumbled to the buggy. She climbed in, and the white muffler fell and lay in the dirt. Tom, looking out of the office-door, saw her drive down the road, letting the little black horse have his way, for Maude was weeping.

"I don't know what the business is coming to," said Shackner, in plaintive distress, "if all our old stand-by's go like that. Oh, my, James, you've made me sick." "The old scoundrel, the old rip!" cried Dawson. "Mr. Dawson," said Jordan, coming in from the rear office, where he had been sitting with his fingers in his hair, "I've something to say about this." Shackner's dissimilar eyes swung round slowly to Tom, with a vague hope in them. "I'm going to try to prove to you," said Tom, with firmness, "that this is a case in which there is reason to excuse." "I don't see how we could," murmured Shackner, seeing, nevertheless, to grasp the vital earnestness of that Briner. "It happens," cried Tom, flushing a little and standing before the two, "that I've seen the cause of this. Mr. Shackner, you've known that man for thirty years, and you never knew him to do a wrong thing before. Every summer, year after year, you've paid him a big check for the best crop in the county. You've lent him money in advance, and without interest. And there you are, this time, when you weren't so well-known here yourself, but that Briner word at the bank gave you a lift." "True," quavered Shackner. "James was sitting here when I got the telegram about the elevator burning down in Petersburg." "You know how long he's worked, for you've worked with him. He never has a piece of ground or built a barn without telling you his plans first. You know what the slow accumulation of his property has meant to him and how it is that his farm and the prosperity of his wife and daughter have been his life. Well—now he's in debt." "They're always in debt, I tell you," cried Dawson, who ever heard of a farmer that wasn't in debt. "I have," said Tom. "There's been many a year when Briner wasn't. Think what it meant to him to lose everything—forty years' work wiped out. Maybe I don't know much about business, Mr. Dawson, but I do know this, that the one time a good man falls down is the one time to be charitable. Now, I don't say that Briner is going to be trusted, as he was before. You can watch his wheat. It's easy enough to keep smut out of the mill, if that's all you want. What I do say is that you men ought to drive out to James Briner's farm and clear this matter up. And if he did this thing because he's been tempted past his powers, you ought to stand by him." "We can't," said Dawson. "The only ground you could possibly do such a fool thing on is that it might be business—conciliation." "I'll declare," said Shackner, mooning about unhappily, "you're right—I was going to anyhow." "To what," sharply rasped Dawson. "Oh—just drive out," whined the other. "James, James, I'd be willing to advance you a little, but—"  
"But!" exploded Dawson, under his breath. "Oh, I'd begrudge him every cent of it, Mr. Dawson, dear me.

VI  
The women, because they can see why a man falls, forgive him. The world seldom sees why. There were three loaded wagons, standing horseless at Briner's barn; the fourth had been left at the gate. There were two days which seemed like Sundays. Nobody worked much, and James stalked twice into the sun, gazed bareheaded out over the scene, turned again and sat down in the bedroom. He sat for hours in there, with the blinds drawn. Mrs. Briner's, and brought him things to eat. Maude came and hugged him, and kissed his big hand. "You're a-huggin' the devil," was his remark, as he leaped into infinite gloom. On Thursday morning, along the road, drove Shackner and Tom in a buggy. Having hitched the horse in front of the house, and come through the gate, they were admitted to the parlor, whose shutters Mrs. Briner threw open in haste, for the room had been dark for a month. She, face thrust forward in a white mockery of its customary pleasantness, and her body more bent, grasped the hand of each, and said in agitation: "He isn't like himself; oh, Mr. Shackner, don't forget that he's getting old." Shackner and Tom stood up, and Maude came in and sat on a sofa. Now Briner loomed in the door, entered, and stood by a what-not with his wife. "Oh, James, you've made me sick," said Shackner, his wide eye shining on the farm. "What did you do for it? Is it a debt? I'd begrudge every cent, but, say, now, this wouldn't—tat, tat. How much is it? Or was it just a mistake?" "No," said James, "it wasn't a mistake. I took that smut and I put it in them wagons, and I took good wheat and I smeared it on top. If there's any mistake, the devil made it. Now, you men have been my friends, and I take it kindly that you've come out here. But you'd better go away. For I say plainly, Mr. Shackner, I was tryin' to stick you." He walked to the window. "Look at them fields, look at that corn, look at these barns, Mr. Shackner, you know what I've done to get 'em. Well, they're in soak, and they can stay there to kingdom come." A haggard look came over his face. "I'm busted." Mrs. Briner wept aloud. Maude was resting her head against the back of the sofa. "Why, James, I can't see you busted," complained Shackner. "I could lend you some. You don't deserve it; I'd begrudge every cent of it—dear me. Wilkinson told me how much you lacked. That's an awful sum. I've made you a check. I had to do it, my—but it's on the corner, mind you, and next year's crop, don't you forget it; you're not going to get out of that. But I can't see your farm go; we mightn't get the wheat off of it—from Wilkinson. Here, take it—I'm just doing it because Jordan there made me. Jordan explained the thing. It's the way Jordan saw it. He smoothed around so. I begrudge you every cent of it." "Take it away," groaned Briner. "Now look here," quavered Shackner's voice, "that time you fixed things at the bank for me—you recollect?" "Aw—!" cried Briner, gazing out of the window. "You just did it as a pure matter of business—to keep in touch with a good buying firm. Now don't deny it. Didn't you now?" "Of course," said James. "I didn't have any more use for you." Well, that's what I'm doing. Now take it, James. Now, see here, James." Maude arose, walked to Shackner, and said: "If you really mean it, Mr. Shackner, and will take my word that father will pay it back, I'll take it." "Your word's better'n his," said Shackner, staring at Briner. She took it and laid it on the what-not. "Now don't come round me about this any more," said Shackner, walking out with a highly disgruntled air. "I've got nothing to do with the business—I'm semi-retired." Tom sat at length sat down stiffly on a chair, and his wife came and clung to him. "Look here, young man, said he after a long time to Tom, at whom he had been staring. "Ain't you the feller that made some crack about jasmies?" Tom's eyes turned to Maude. "Something about a violet farm," continued Briner. "That was a joke, father." "Wuz it? What have you got to do with it? Say, are you still so fond of the millin' business?" "I'm fond of Tom," she said, with her head down. "I told you last night." "Tawm, Tawm," mused Briner. "Young feller, do you want that girl?" Tom's answer was not uncertain. "Well!"—he meditated a long time—"why don't you git hold of her?"—By Charles Fleming Embree, in *McClure's Magazine*.

**Porcupines in the Hemlock Forests.**  
There are more hedgehogs or porcupines, as the natives call them, in the hemlock forests of Northwestern Pennsylvania than anywhere in the east," said an old Potter county woodsman. "They are curious creatures, and a great pest around lumber and hunting camps. A peculiarity of these spiny armored little beasts is their fondness for salt. If the four sides of a lumber shanty be salted from ground to roof the porcupines would eat it down over the sides and pieces of ground or built a barn without telling you his plans first. You know what the slow accumulation of his property has meant to him and how it is that his farm and the prosperity of his wife and daughter have been his life. Well—now he's in debt." "They're always in debt, I tell you," cried Dawson, who ever heard of a farmer that wasn't in debt. "I have," said Tom. "There's been many a year when Briner wasn't. Think what it meant to him to lose everything—forty years' work wiped out. Maybe I don't know much about business, Mr. Dawson, but I do know this, that the one time a good man falls down is the one time to be charitable. Now, I don't say that Briner is going to be trusted, as he was before. You can watch his wheat. It's easy enough to keep smut out of the mill, if that's all you want. What I do say is that you men ought to drive out to James Briner's farm and clear this matter up. And if he did this thing because he's been tempted past his powers, you ought to stand by him." "We can't," said Dawson. "The only ground you could possibly do such a fool thing on is that it might be business—conciliation." "I'll declare," said Shackner, mooning about unhappily, "you're right—I was going to anyhow." "To what," sharply rasped Dawson. "Oh—just drive out," whined the other. "James, James, I'd be willing to advance you a little, but—"  
"But!" exploded Dawson, under his breath. "Oh, I'd begrudge him every cent of it, Mr. Dawson, dear me.

**Frightful Railroad Accident.**  
It Happened a Short Distance From the Little Station of Wanstead, in Ontario, on the Sarina Branch of the Grand Trunk Railway. The Loss of Life is Twenty-eight. The Injured Number Considerably More and Many of These May Die—The Express Was Running Nearly Two Hours Late and Was Making Fast Time.  
The most frightful railroad accident in the annals of the past decade happened a short distance from the Little Station of Wanstead in Ontario on the Sarina branch of the Grand Trunk railway Friday night of last week. The trains in collision were the Pacific express and freight. The express was running nearly two hours late and was making fast time. The freight was endeavoring to make a siding to get clear of the express but failed by a minute or two. There was a dreadful crash, the locomotives reared up and fell over in a ditch, the baggage car of the express telescoped the smoker and in an instant the shrieks and cries of the dying and the wounded filled the air. The loss of life is twenty-eight. The injured will number considerably more and many of these will die.  
NO DEATHS SATURDAY.  
LONDON, Ont., Dec. 28.—There were no deaths to-day among the persons injured in Friday night's collision at Wanstead on the Sarina branch of the Grand Trunk railroad, between the westbound Pacific express and an eastbound freight, in which twenty-eight persons lost their lives. To-night the Associated Press was informed at Victoria hospital that, while several of the injured are still in a serious condition it is expected that all will recover.  
The body of Fireman Ricketts, of the express train, which was last night believed to be buried under the wrecked engines, was found today covered with snow in the ditch beside the track. One arm was completely torn off and the body was otherwise mangled. Death must have been instantaneous. It is believed that the body was thrown clear of the engine and into the deep snow in the ditch, where in the storm and darkness the workers failed to find it on Friday night. Snow fell rapidly all that night so that Rickett's body was covered and was not found. One of the men working at the wreck found the body under the snow. Tonight there is but one unidentified body in the morgue here, that of a woman who was ticketed, from Toronto to Duluth. The man's body which was unidentified Friday night was identified as George D. Southern, of Lockport N. Y.

STATEMENT MADE BY CARSON.  
Andrew Carson, the operator at Watford the first station east of the wreck, whose failure to deliver orders to Conductor McAniff, of the Pacific express, to pass the freight at Wanstead, is said by the Grand Trunk officials to have caused the wreck. Saturday afternoon made to the Associated Press his first statement since the wreck. He says he received the order for No. 5, the express to pass the freight at Wanstead at 9:45; but declares positively that a few minutes later Dispatcher S. G. Kerr, at London, called him and ordered him to "bust" or cancel the order. He said: "About 9:45, after calling Wyoming and ascertaining that the freight was there, the dispatcher called me rapidly a half-dozen times. When I answered he told me to 'bust' this order. I wrote 'Bust it' across the order just as No. 5 was coming in. Conductor McAniff came in and asked me what the order book was out against him for. I told him that we had an order for him, but the dispatcher had 'busted' it. He asked me to hurry and write him a clearance order, which I did."  
LEARNED THAT FREIGHT LEFT WYOMING.  
"After the train had started and was out of my reach, the dispatcher learned that the freight had left Wyoming. I told him I could not stop No. 5, as it had left. He immediately began calling King's Court Junction, the station between Watford and Wanstead on the railroad wire, and I tried to raise them on the commercial wire. We both failed to do this, however, until after the express had passed the junction." Carson admitted that he knew it was against the rules of the company to cancel a train order without sending a substitute for it, but said that the dispatcher was his superior officer and he disliked to question his order or dispute his authority to take this action. Dispatcher Kerr's order book, in the local Grand Trunk office, does not show that the order was "busted," or cancelled, as Carson claims. According to the book, it was still in force and should have been delivered to the conductor of the express. Kerr has not made any statement, even to the railroad officials, and will not until he takes the stand at the inquest.  
STRICTEST IN COMPANY'S CODE.  
Division Superintendent George G. Jones, of Toronto, says that the rule against cancelling, or modifying, train orders is the strictest in the company's code. "I do not believe," he said tonight, "that it has been violated since the Standard dispatching rules went into effect. Dispatcher Kerr is one of the best and most efficient dispatchers in our service. He is the operator who accompanied the train bearing the Duke and Duchess of York on the royal tour of Canada a year ago. I have every confidence in him."  
Other Grand Trunk officials who were present also expressed their confidence in Kerr.  
VERY PATHETIC FEATURE.  
One of the most pathetic features of the wreck is the triple loss sustained by the Bodley family, of Port Huron, in the death of Mrs. J. Bodley, her son, Clem Bodley, and granddaughter, little Lettie Lynch, who died at the Victoria hospital. The bodies of nineteen of the victims have been shipped to their sorrowing relatives at home. The trunk of the as yet unidentified woman was located by the Grand Trunk officials and will be searched in an endeavor to find something with which to identify the woman.  
DECIDENCE IN OIL STOVES.  
The Rise in Oil Makes It too Expensive to Use.  
The recent coal famine caused the recourse of hundreds of people to oil stoves for heating and cooking. The demand for the stoves was so great that the manufacturers could not fill their orders. The Standard Oil company put a stove on the market to stimulate the demand for oil, and lots of people found that the oil stove solved the problem of heating rooms on milder days, when the coal stove or furnace made too much heat. A change has come about, as people find their oil bills getting enormous. The Standard Oil company has raised the price two and one-half cents a gallon within the past few weeks, giving the increased demand as a reason. The city dealers report a large falling off in the demand for oil since the rise in price, as heating by oil stoves was expensive at the old price. As it stands now second-hand dealers are buying oil stoves cheap.