A PRAYER.

God, though this life is but a wraith. Although we know not what we use, Although we grope, with little faith,

Ever in conflict let me be; Make me more daring than devout; From sleek contentment keep me free, And fill me with a buoyant doubt.

Open my eyes to visions girt With beauty, and with wonders lit; But let me always see the dirt And all that spawn and die in it.

Open my ears to music: let Me thrill to spring's first flutes and drum But never let me dare forget

The bitter ballads of the slun From compromise and things half done Keep me, though all the world deride. And when at last the fight is won. God, keep me still unsatisfied. -Louis Untermeyer, in The Century.

WITH INTEREST TO DATE.

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HIS is the tale of a wrong that rankled and a great revenge. It is not a moral story, nor is it precisely unmoral, according to the twentieth century. Bradstreet and Dun standard, and that is the vardstick with which we measure things nowadays. Time was when wrongs amid fanfares and shoutings, but we live in a subtler age, an age in which the keenest thrust is not delivered with a poinard nor the oldest scores settled amid applause. No longer do the men of great muscle lord it over the weak and puny. They toil and lift and do unpleasant duties for the hollow chested, big domed men with eyeglasses, which is quite as it should be. But among the spindle shanked, terra cotta dwellers who cower at drafts and eat soda mints the battle wages flercer than ever. Single combats are fought now as then, and the flavor of victory is just as sweet to the pallid man back of a roll top desk as to the swart, bristly baron behind his visored helmet.

In the same way woman is featured as the world's great trouble workeranother relic of mediaeval times, due to the fact that we read too many books. The best she gets now is second place. Undoubtedly she played the leading role in the earlier, idler days, and that may be why her image is linked with the modern symbol of all that is most fraught with struggle; that may be why the almighty dollar bears the

likeness of her head. If you disagree with me thus far, do not read what follows, for to you the story will be flat and unconvincing. You will find no motive to inspire the actions of Mr. Hanford. Likewise, if you care for the feminine touch in for unless I change my mind as I go along the paragraph above will contain the last gentle reference to her name. All of which may lead you to think this a true story and hence unworthy of perusal.

It began at the time Henry Hanford went with the General Equipment company, a young salesman, full of hope and a somewhat exaggerated idea of his own importance. He was selling shears, punches and other machinery used in the fabrication of structural steel. In his territory the works of the Atlantic Bridge company, a great plant of rumbling, hollow buildings, shaken by the plaint of tortured metal, stuck up like a sore thumb, for, while it employed many men and its contracts were among the largest, the General Equipment company had nev-

er sold it anything. Hanford convinced himself that it needed more modern machinery, so he laid siege to Jackson Wylie, Sr., the president and practical owner. It took him a month to gain the old man's ear, but when he did he laid himself out to sell his goods. He analyzed the Atlantic Bridge company's needs, and he showed the saving his equipment would effect. It meant a big sale and much prestige, both of which young Hanford needed at the time, so he was vastly encouraged when the bridge builder listened attentively.

"I suppose we will have to make a change." Mr. Wylie agreed at last. "But I've been bothered to death by salesmen, and you are the first one to really interest me."

Hanford acknowledged the compliment and further elaborated upon the superiority of the General Equipment company's bridge machinery over that of all rival concerns. When he left he felt that he had Mr. Wylie, Sr., "go-

At the office they told him he had a hard nut to crack, for the president of the Atlantic Bridge company was given to "stringing" salesmen and was very hard to close with, but Hanford smiled. That was all the more reason why he wished to make this sale, and the bridge company really did need more up to date machinery.

He instituted a vigorous campaign; he sent much printed matter; he wrote many letters. He was a thoroughgoing young salesman, so he studied Mr. Wylie's plant from the ground up. learning the bridge business in detail, so that he might talk with authority. He discovered many things that were wrong. He spent days in outlining improvements on paper. He made the acquaintance of the foremen; he cultivated the superintendent; he even met Mr. Jackson Wylle, Jr., the sales manager, a very polished, metallic young man, who seemed impressed with his statements and who encour-

aged him as his father had done. Modern business under our highly developed competitive system is, after something must be wrong with his

all, done largely on personality, and from the attitude of both father and son Hanford began to count his chickens. But instead of letting up he redoubled his efforts. He spent so much time on the matter that his other work suffered, and in consequence his firm ralled him down. He explained his certainty of results and continued to camp with the job notwithstanding its

Sixty days after his first visit he had another interview with Wylie senior, who drained him of information and made an appointment for a month later. Said Mr. Wylie:

"You impress me strongly, and I want my associates to hear you. Get your proposition into shape and make this same talk to them."

Hanford went away elated; he even port got around among the other salesmen that Hanford had really done the impossible and pulled off something big. It was a busy month for that young gentleman, and when the red letter day arrived at last he went on to Newark to find both Wylies await-

ing him. "Well, sir, are you prepared to make a good argument?" the elder man inquired.

months was not long to put in on work of this magnitude, after all. "I want you to do your best," the

ly, then led Hanford into the directors' room, where, to his visitor's astonishment, he beheld tifty men seated. "These are our salesmen." announced were righted by mace and battleax Mr. Wylie. He introduced Hanford with the request that they listen intently to what he had to say.

It was rather nervous work, for Hanford was young, but he soon warmed up to it. He stood on his feet for two long hours pleading as if for his life. He went over the Atlantic plant from end to end, showed the economical necessity of new machinery, then explained the efficiency of his own appliances. He took rival types and picked them to pieces, pointing out their inferiority. He showed his familiarity with bridge work by going into figures which conclusively demonstrated that the Atlantic's output could be increased at a saving. then proved that the General Equipment company was the one concern best fitted to effect the improvement.

It had taken three months of unremitting toil to prepare himself for this exposition, but the young man felt that he had made his case. When he took up the cost of the proposed installment, however, Mr. Jackson Wylle, Sr., interrupted.

"That is all I care to have you cover." he explained. "Thank you very kindly, Mr. Hanford." Hanford sat down and wiped his

forehead, while the other stepped forward, amid a general shifting of feet, and addressed his employees.

about your own business. I want you to profit by this talk. Take it to yourselves and apply it to your own deteriorated lately. You are getting lazy. I want you to wake up and show better results. That is all. You might thank this young gentleman for

his kindness." When the audience had dispersed, Hanford inquired blankly:

"Don't you intend to act on my suggestions?" "Oh, no," said Mr. Wylie easily,

"We are doing nicely as it is. I merely wanted to address the boys." "But I've spent three months of hard labor on this: You led me to believe

you would put in new equipment." The younger Wylie laughed as he



"But I've spent three months of hard

labor on this!" "When we get ready to purchase we will let you know," said be. Six months later the Atlantic Bridge company placed a mammoth order with Hanford's rival concern. He was not even asked to figure on it. That is how the thing began. Of course the story got out, for these Atlantic salesmen were not wanting in a sense of humor. Hanford ran into it everywhere. Then, too, his own firm called him to account for those wasted three months, implying that

methods. It started a lack of confitence that developed into strained reations. There was but one result which Hauford saw coming and was wise enough to forestall by resigning

But it was the ridicule that burt. He was unable to get away from that. Had he been at all emotional he nright have sworn a vendetta, but he did not; he merely failed to forget, which is quite the same.

It seemed queer that Hanford should wind up in the bridge business himseif after drifting through several unsatisfactory positions, but that three months of application at the Atlantic plant came in handy, after all, and be tiually took a desk in the office of the Patterson Bridge company. He worked hard, he was a good salesman, and in time he was promoted. By and by bragged a bit to the office, and the re- the story was forgotten by every one except Henry Hanford. But he had lost some precious years.

When it became known that the English and continental structural shops were so full of work that they could not figure on the mammoth \$5,000,000 steel bridge designed to span the Barrata river in Africa and when the royal commission finally advertised from London that time was the essence of this contract, Mr. Jack-"I am." Hanford decided that three son Wylie, Sr., realized that his plant was in magnificent shape to handle the job with great profit and renown to the Wylie name. He sent his son, or bridge builder continued encouraging. Jackson Wylle "the second," as he was known since he had become a partner, to Loudon armed with the strongest sort of letters to almost everybody in England from almost everybody in America.

Two weeks later-the Patterson Bridge company was not so aggressive as its more pretentious rival-Henry Hanford went abroad on the same mission, but Hanford carried no letters of introduction, principally because he had no pull.

Jackson Wyle the second had been to London frequently, so he found things there much to his liking. He had friends with headquarters at Prince's and Romano's who were delighted to entertain so prominent an American. His letters gave him entree to the clubs and paved his way socially wherever he chose to go.

It was Hanford's first trip. He arrived with nothing but a grip full of blue prints and no destination outside of the parliament buildings, where he counted upon finding the Barrata bridge commission eagerly awaiting his estimates. Instead he failed not only to find the commission, but anybody who knew anything about it. He did locate the offices finally to discover that it was merely a forwarding address. He was informed that the commission had convened once and hence was not entirely an imaginative body. and on one visit to the office he discovered that Sir Thomas Drummond. the chairman, was inside, but his clerk, with whom Hanford had become ac-"Gentlemen," said be. "you have just quainted, informed him that Mr. Jacklistened to the best argument I ever son Wylie the second from America was heard. I purposely called you in from closeted with his lordship, who could the road so that you might have a not be disturbed. When Hanford got practical lesson in salesmanship and thoroughly in touch with the situalearn something from an outsider tion be soon saw that introductions, acquaintance and social influence would go further toward landing the Barrata bridge than mere engineering customers. Our selling efficiency has ability or natural capacity. It also became plain during his early visits that the work would of necessity go to America, inasmuch as no European shop was prepared to complete it on

Owing to government needs this huge eleven span structure must be on the ground within ninety days from the date of the contract and erected eight months thereafter. The commission's clerk, a big, red faced, jovial fellow, informed Hanford that price was not nearly so essential as time of delivery, and, while the contract glittered with alluring bonuses and was heavily weighted with forfeits, neither bonuses nor forfeitures could compen sate for a delay in time. Hence it was that the commissioners looked askance at prospective bidders who might in any way fail to complete the task as specified.

"And that's why Wylle gets the call. eh?" Hanford observed.

"I understand be has the highest references," the Englishman said. "Um-m! Well, inasmuch as I can't arrange an interview with any member of the commission, suppose you

and I go to lunch." The clerk accepted, and thereafter the two saw much of each other. This fellow, Lowe by name, interested Hanford. He was a cosmopolite, a widely traveled, daredevil chap with a cold eye and a firm chin, combining a strange mixture of recklessness, modesty and liberality of morals. He had roamed the far places, had fought in a war or two and had led hopes quite as forlorn as the one Hanford was now engaged upon. It was this, perhaps,

that drew the two together. In spite of Lowe's help, however, Hanford found it difficult to obtain any real inside information concerning the Barrata bridge. He even experienced difficulty in securing the blue

prints he wanted. "It looks pretty tough," Lowe told him one day. "I'm afraid you're going to come a cropper. This chap Wylie has the rail, and be's running well. He has opened an office, I believe."

"So I understand. Well, the race isn't over yet, and I'm a good stayer. This is the biggest thing I ever tackled, and it means a lot to me-more than you imagine"

"How so?" Hanford recited the old story to Lowe's frank amazement. "What a rotten trick," the listener remarked. "Yes! And-I don't forget."

"Well, you'd better forget this job. It takes influence to get consideration from people like Sir Thomas, and Wylie has more than he needs. A fellow without it hasn't a chance. Look at me, for instance, working at a desk! Bah! I'm ready to chuck it."

"Ready to try something else, eh?" "That's what: And you'd better do

Hanford shook his head. "I never guit I can't. When my chance at this bridge comes along"-

the same."

Lowe laughed. "Oh, it will come; it always does. Sometimes I don't see it, that's all. When it comes I want to be ready. Meanwhile I think I'll reconnoiter Wylie's new office and find out what's

doing. Day after day Henry Hanford pursued his work doggedly, seeing much of Lowe, something of Wylie's clerk and nothing whatever of Sir Thomas Drummond or the other members of the royal Barrata bridge commission. He heard occasional rumors of the social triumphs of Jackson Wylie the second and once met him, to be treated with half veiled amusement by that patronizing young man. Meanwhile the time was growing short. Hanford began to grow restless. The firm was not well pleased with his progress

Then the chance came, unexpectedly, as chance always comes, the marvel being not that the blind goddess showed ber face, but that Hanford was quick enough to recognize her and bold enough to act. He had taken Lowe to the Trocadero for dinner and, finding no seats where they could watch the crowd, had sought out a stall in a quiet corner. They had been there but a short time when Hanford recognized a voice from the stall adjoining as belonging to the representative of the Atlantic Bridge company. Evidently, from the sounds. Wylie was giving a dinner party, and with Lowe's aid the mests were soon identified as members of the Barrata bridge commission. Hanford began to strain his ears, but as the meal progressed this became less necessary -young Wylie's voice was strident. The Wylie conversation had ever been limited largely to the doings of the Wylies, their purposes and prospects. and having the floor as host on this occasion it was concerning himself, his father and their forthcoming Barrata bridge contract that he talked, his endeavor being to impress his distinguished guests with the tremendous importance and unsurpassed facilities of the Atlantic Bridge company. His experience having been acquired mainly through the handling of municipal contracts and the aldermen incident thereto, he now worked along similar lines, trying to induce Drummond and his associates to accompany him back to America for the purpose of prov-

tract with ease. "As if they would go!" Lowe said softly. "And yet-by Jove: He talks as if he had the job buttoned up."

The Englishman was strained, alert, his dramatic instinct at play. Recognizing the possible value of this unintentional eavesdropping, be waved the waiter away, knowing better than to permit the rattle of dishes to distract his host.

smoldering eyes, Henry Hanford heard his rival in the next compartment identify the state of New Jersey by the fact that the works of the Atlantic Bridge company were located therein, and the Jackson Wylles distinguished it by their residence.

"You know, gentlemen," Wylie was saying, "I can arrange the trip without the least difficulty, and I assure you there will be no discomfort. I am in constant cipher communication with my father, and he will be delighted to afford you every courtesy. can fix it up by cable in a day."

Hanford arose with a word to his guest, then paid the bill, although the meal was but half over He had closed his campaign! Right then and there he landed the great Barrata bridge contract.

The Englishman, sensing some unexpected denouement from his friend's action, made no comment until they were outside. Then he exclaimed:

"I say, old top, what blew off?" Hanford smiled at him queerly.

'The whole top of young Wylie's head, if he only knew it. It's my day to settle that score and the interest will be compounded."

"I must be stupid." "Not at all. You are very intelligent, and that's why I'll need you to help me." Hanford turned upon the adventurer suddenly. "Have you ever been an actor?"

Lowe laughed openly "Never: My people raised me for a gentleman."

"Exactly! Come with me to my ho-We're going to do each other a great favor. With your belp and the help of Mr. Jackson Wylie the second's London clerk I am going to land the

Barrata bridge contract." Hanford had not read the Englishman wrong, and when behind locked doors he had outlined his plan the big fellow gazed at him with amazed ad-

miration, his blue eyes sparkling. "Gad! That appeals to me." 'There was no timidity in Lowe's words. The

two men shook hands. "I'll attend to Wylie's clerk," said the former, "and now we'd better re-

"But what makes you so sure you can handle that young fellow?" queried "Oh, I've studied him the same way I've studied you!"

"Bli'me, you're complimentary!" "And since I know definitely that the cipher code is in that office the rest is comparatively easy. You leave it to

me. Now let's get to work." Back in Newark, N. J., Jackson Wytie. Sr., was growing impatient. In spite of his son's weekly reports he had begun to fret at the indefinite nature of the results. If he could only get that royal commission or some member of it to visit the plant be felt sure that he could get the job Mr.

Jackson Wylie, Sr., had a mysterious way of ciosing contracts once he came in personal contact with the proper people. In the words of his envious competitors, he had "good terminal facilities.' But business was bad, and he had relied upon the certainty of securing this tremendous contract; be had even turned work away so that his plant might be ready for the rush, with the result that many of his men were idle and he was running far below capacity. But he had his eye upon those English bonuses. When his associates rather timidly called his attention to the present state of affairs he handled them roughly and assured them bitingly that he knew his business. Nevertheless he wished it was time to submit the bid that had tain for a month upon his desk. The magnitude of the figures was getting

On the 10th of May he received a cablegram in his own official cipher which, translated, read:

Meet Sir Thomas Drummond, chairman Royal Barrata bridge commission, arriv-ing Cunard tiner Campania 13th, stopping Waldorf. Arrange personally Barrata con-

The cablegram was unsigned, but its address, "At-Wylie," betrayed not only its destination, but also the identity of its sender. Mr. Jackson Wylie became tremendously excited. The last word conjured up bewildering possibilities. He was about to consult his associates when it struck him that the greatest caution he could possibly observe would consist in holding his own tongue. They had seen fit to criticise his handling of the matter thus far; hence he decided to tell them nothing until he had first seen Sir Thomas Drummond. He imagined he might then have something electrifying to say. He had "dealt from the bottom" too often, he had closed too many bridge contracts in his time, to mistake the meaning of this visit or of that last word "Caution."

It was hard work to hold in, however, and he was at a high state of tension when on the morning of the 14th day of May he strolled into the Waldorf-Astoria and inquired at the desk for Sir Thomas Drummond.

There was no Sir Thomas stopping at the hotel, although a Mr. T. Drummond from London had arrived on the previous afternoon. Mr. Jackson Wytie placed the heet of his right shoe upon the favorite corn of his other extremity and bore down upon it heavily. He must be getting into his dotage, he decided, or else the idea of a \$5.000,000 job rattled him.

ing beyond peradventure that the At-At the rear desk be had his card lantic could handle a \$5,000,000 conblown up through the tube to "Mr. T. Drummond" and a few moments later was invited to take the elevator.

Arriving at the sixth door, he needed no page to guide him. Boots pointed his way to the apartment of the distinguished visitor as plainly as a lettered signboard-boots of all descriptions-hunting boots, riding boots, street shoes, low shoes, pumps, sandals, black ones and tan ones, all in his head in negation. He was smiling a row outside the door. Evidently Sir slightly. and had come prepared for emergencies. Nothing was missing from the collection unless perhaps a pair of

rubber hip boots. A stoop shouldered old man with a marked accent and a port wine nose showed him into a parlor, where the first object upon which Mr. Wylie's active eyes alighted was a mass of blue prints on the center table. He knew those drawings. He had figured on them himself. He likewise noted a You will meet me in London later. We hatbox and a great, shapeless English bag, both plastered crazily with hotel and steamship labels from every quarter of the world. It was plain to be seen that Sir Thomas was a globe

trotter. "Mr. Drummond begs you to be seated," the valet announced, with £1.600,000; £1,400,000 to you. I am what semed an intentional accent on the "Mr.," then moved silently out. Mr. Wylie remarked to himself upon the value of discreet servants. They were very valuable, very hard to get. This must be some lifelong servitor of his lordship's family.

There was no occasion to inquire the identity of the tall, florid Englishman in tweeds who entered a moment later, a bundle of estimates in his hand. "Sir Thomas Drummond, Chairman of the Royal Barrata Bridge Commission," was written all over him in

His iordship did not go to the trouble of welcoming his visitor, but scanned him sharply through his glasses. "You are Mr. Jackson Wylie, Sr., he

demanded abruptly. "That is my name." "Owner of the Atlantic Bridge company of Newark, N. J.?"

"The same." "You received a cablegram from your son in London?"

"Yes. your lordship." Sir Thomas made a gesture as if to forego the title. "Let me see it."

Mr. Wylle produced the cablegram, and Drummond scanned it hastily. Evidently the identification was com-

"Does any one besides your son and yourself know the contents of this message?"

"Not a soul." "You have not told any one of my coming?" "No. sir."

"Very well." Sir Thomas deliberately tore the cablegram into small bits, then tossed the fragments into a waste paper basket before waving his caller to a chair. He was very cold, very forceful.

"Do you understand all about this bridge?" he demanded brusquely. Wylie senior nodded. "Cap you build it in the time speci-

"With ease." "Have you submitted your bid?"

"Not yet. I"-"What is the amount of your pro-

The president of the Atlantic Bridge company gasped. This was bolder than anything he had ever experienced. Many times he had witnessed public officials like Sir Thomas Drummond approach this delicate point, but never with such matter of fact certainty and lack of moral scruple. Evidently, however, this Englishman had come to trade and wanted a direct answer. There was no false pose, no romance here. But Jackson Wylie, Sr., was too shrewd a business man to name a rock bottom price to begin with. The training of a lifetime would not permit him to deny himself a liberal leeway for hedging; therefore he replied cautiously:

"My figures will be approximately £1.400 000." It was his longest speech thus far.

For what seemed an hour to the bridge builder Sir Thomas Drummond gazed at him with a cold, hard eye, then folded his papers, rolled up his blue prints, placed them in the big traveling bag and carefully locked it. When he had finished he flung out

this question suddenly: "Does that include the commission

Up to this point Mr. Jackson Wylie had spoken mainly in monosyllables



"I shall ask you to add £200,000 to your price."

Now he quit talking altogether. It was no longer necessary. He merely shook

000 to your price," Lis iordship announced without a quaver. "Make your bid £1.600,000 and mail it in time for Wednesday's boat. I sail on the same ship. Proposals will be opened on the 25th. Arrange for an English indemnity bond for 10 per cent of your proposition. Do not communicate in any manner whatsoever with your son except to forward the bid to him. He is not to know of our arrangement. will take care of that £200,000 out of the last 40 per cent of the contract price, which is payable thirty days after completion, inspection and acceptance of the bridge. You will not consult your associates upon leaving here. The figures are easy to rememberpleased with the facilities your plant offers for doing the work. I am confident you can complete the bridge on time, and I beg leave to wish you a very pleasant-'Good day.'

Wylie senior did not really come to until he had reached the street; even then he did not know whether he had come down the elevator or through the mail chute. Of one thing only was be certain, he was due to retire in favor of his son. He guessed he needed a trip through the Holy Land with a guardian and a nursing bottle. He paused on the curb and stamped on his corn for a second time.

"Oh, I'm an idiot!" he declared savagely. "I could have gotten £1,600,000 to start with, but-by gad, Sir Thomas is the coldest blooded thing I ever went against! I can't belp but ad-

Having shown a deplorable lack of foresight. Mr. Wylie determined to make up for it by an ample display of hindsight. If the profits on the job were not to be so large as they might have been, he would at least make certain of them by obeying instructions to the letter. He made out the bid himself. He mailed it with his own hand that very afternoon. He put three blue stamps on the envelope. although it required but two. Then he called up an automobile agency and ordered a town car his wife had admired. He decided that she and the girls might go to Paris for the fall shopping-he might even go with them, in view of that morning's epi-

sode. For ten days he stood the pressure, then on the morning of the 24th he called his confreres into the directors' room, that same room in which young Hanford had made his talk a number of years before. Inasmuch as it was too late now for a disclosure to affect the opening of the bids in London he felt absolved from his promise to Sir Thomas.

"Gentlemen. I have the honor to inform you," he began pompously, "that the Barrata bridge is ours! We have the greastest structural steel job of the

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