

## GILBERT WAS NOT A FAILURE

By FANNIE HURST

GILBERT was at least twenty-six before he first began to realize that some of the mountain tops toward which he had directed his footsteps were not going to be so accessible as he had dreamed. Gilbert had come from an achieving family. His father, up to the week of his death, had been one of the most important barristers in town. His mother had practiced law in a highly successful way up to the last year of her life. His brother, at thirty, was already a surgeon of more than local importance. His sister, a college graduate herself, had married one of the outstanding bio-chemists of the world. So it was by background, environment, example and possibly inheritance that Gilbert, even before he was finished with college, should turn his footsteps resolutely toward accomplishment.

It is true that the subject of law had never particularly interested him. He had not a systematic mind. The conception of ideas interested him more than their execution, and if he had any preference at all, it was for lying for a large part of the day before a good fire, or a sun-kissed meadow, and reading.

But a man cannot foster such inclinations if he hopes to get ahead in this world. Gilbert knew that. Unless you had a marked talent of one sort or another, the safest road to achievement lay along lines of one of the substantial, remunerative professions. Medicine. Law.

With his slender talent for writing, the best he could probably hope for would be a journalistic or editorial career.

And so it was that Gilbert turned to law. It was not that he did not bring a fairly average equipment to this work. He had a good mind, even an unusual endowment of intelligence, and every law office of the city was open to the son of his father.

The secret of his failure to progress, along about the time he was twenty-six, was a subtle yet a fundamental one. His heart was not in his work. Intellectually, he wanted to be a successful lawyer. Emotionally, he yearned for the blue days at Capri, where he had been taken as a young boy on his first trip abroad. He yearned for the sweet idleness of that kind of life, with perhaps a pad and pencil at his beck and call, so that he could write as a dilettante writes, from impulse rather than ambition or necessity.

The instinct to struggle was not in Gilbert, and yet, surrounded as he was by the examples of successful people, he had not the courage to let go. And so for four years after these first realizations began to dawn disquietingly upon him, he struggled ahead at a profession that was flavorless to him. It was impossible to plead a case with fervor about which you felt so dispassionately.

The claims of one set of human beings against another could not, did not, interest him. The cunning, devious, shrewd phraseology of the contract, so fascinating to some types of mind, elicited no real interest from Gilbert. The ramifications of the law, its interpretations and its practice, aroused in him nothing more than a weariness for the rather purposeless struggles of mankind against mankind.

At thirty, on an impulse he was never thoroughly able to comprehend—nor the amount of courage that went with it—Gilbert resigned his position as junior partner in a well-known law firm, left superficial explanatory notes to a few of the members of his family and his friends, drew out a saving account of some several hundred dollars and took a ship going Mediterranean way.

That was the beginning of fifteen years of wandering over the hoary face of the hoary earth. Lingered, when necessary, in one city, in one port, in one village or another, long enough to lay up, by simple manual labor, sufficient money to sustain him for a brief period of the future. Those of his friends who happened to encounter him in their travels, described him sadly as a pale, draggled fellow wandering aimlessly across the face of the earth.

In a way, that was how Gilbert regarded himself. While the new life was far, far preferable to the old, and not a regret lurked in his heart, at the same time there was also a futility, an aimlessness, a seeking after he knew not what. Gray began to come out in his hair and a stoop was upon his back. Even the variety of new scenes, new faces, began to pall. The second era of his discontent was upon him.

It was not that the fifteen years following his decision had been unhappy ones. On the contrary, they had been rich, fruitful, yielding and adventurous. The university of the universe had been Gilbert's. Figuratively and literally speaking, he had kept lean, whetted with an appetite for life, for wisdom, for experience, for love. And yet sometimes it seemed to Gilbert, as he entered a new port, as he steamed out of another, as speeded and foreign wines slid against his

palate, as the sweet, mocking eyes of exotic women beckoned him, as he lived and learned and suffered, that after all he was getting nowhere.

And that, for one who has made the kind of momentous decision that Gilbert had fifteen years before, is a disheartening realization. He had sacrificed everything. Well and good, but only if the sacrifice had been justified.

Whither? was the question that began to engrave itself acidly into the heart and mind and the consciousness of the wanderer. Freedom and what to do with it? Leisure and where to spend it? The world his playground and where to play?

He was always coming, he was always going. Maidens smiled at him out of their casements. They had homes. They belonged there. They were rooted to some soil. Everybody, it seemed to Gilbert, was rooted to some soil and even though the men with whom he came in contact in the cities and along the countryside—family men with responsibilities—listened with wistful eyes as Gilbert recited his adventures, they were secure men, surrounded with the intangible aura of belonging.

It began to dawn upon Gilbert that he belonged nowhere and yet that was not what was bothering him. He would not, had he been able to manipulate backwards the magic time-carpet, have returned to the life he had so debonairly discarded back in his youth days. If certain dissatisfactions, nostalgias were upon him, they were not those of regret.

He was sick with quest. Neither must you think that in all these years Gilbert had been without the pastimes, the amours, the gratifications that have to do with women. He had crossed the paths of many and they had left their memories upon him. Yet, at forty-five, Gilbert, failure, was still seeking.

It was in Naples, of all places, when Gilbert was forty-eight, that he ran across, in the open market place, a girl named Chita. She was selling lemons out of a big beautiful basket and she had driven in that morning with them piled on a donkey cart, from the incomparable hills of Amalfi. She was beautiful in a brown, Italian way, no strapping a girl, but with a blown maturity to her. Rich, rather dusky skin and white teeth that flashed against it.

Gilbert, who spoke many patois of Italian, drove back in the hills of Amalfi with her in the donkey cart. She lived in a white adobe house with an ancient grandmother and their worldly possessions consisted of seven lemon trees, an orange tree, a goat and a silk quilt. The view from the adobe house was the incredible Bay of Naples, Mount Vesuvius, turquoise blue of sky and water.

Gilbert and Chita were married in the small church in the center of the square of the nearest village. She wore orange blossoms from her own tree and the little ceremony was attended with all the pageantry of these peasant people of the hills.

Gilbert has built a wing to the adobe house, which he calls his study. Most of his mornings he writes in there, his view the sail-specked, blue-decked Italian bay. Afternoons, he helps Chita in the orchard and, before supper, he milks their goat.

His book is half finished and he has increased the fruit trees around the house until they number twenty. The old crone of a grandmother blesses him each day. Chita is as full-some as summer. She is with child.

Gilbert knows well in what light his life will be regarded by the world he has deserted.

In his own eyes, he is no longer a failure.

### Mirror Superstition

A woman is apt to be made miserable because she breaks a looking glass. She believes she will have deaths in the family, and other bad luck, for seven years. This belief is one of many popular superstitions which are not supported by scientific or other trustworthy investigation, but are truth to those who believe them. The question of the effect of this belief on the health and outlook of the believer has been the subject of much investigation, but the general answer seems to be that some persons give no second thought to their fortune when they break a mirror, and seem to suffer no ill consequences.

### "Science" and "Art"

According to Jevons, a science teaches us to know and an art to do. Astronomy, for instance, is the foundation of the art of navigation; chemistry is the basis of many useful arts. The arts are distinguished as fine arts and useful arts, the former including painting, sculpturing, music, poetry and architecture, the latter (useful arts) including the trades. The sciences have been variously classified. The principal ones are physics, chemistry, astronomy, meteorology, mathematics, geography, geology, ethnology, anthropology, archeology, biology and medicine.

### Maine First to Can Corn

Maine generally has been acknowledged as the early home of corn packing in this country, and its claim has been a just one, says an article in a Portland (Maine) paper. About 1839 Isaac Winslow began his experiments in canning corn near Portland, but it was not until 1862 that a patent was issued and then it was to John Winslow Jones, Isaac's nephew.

The first recorded sale of canned corn was from Nathan Winslow to Samuel S. Pierce of Boston. The invoice was dated February 19, 1843, and was for one dozen cans of preserved corn at \$4.

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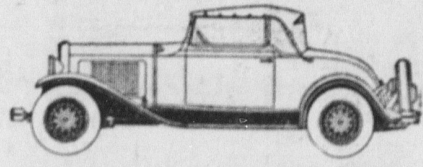
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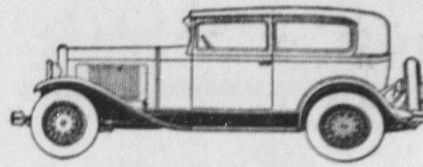
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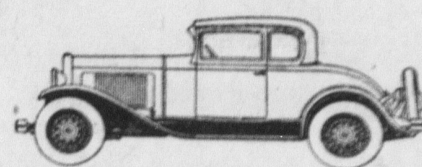
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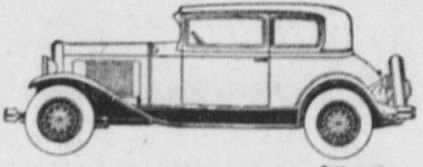
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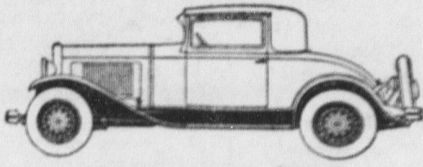
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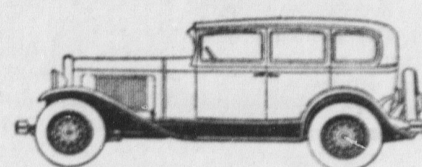
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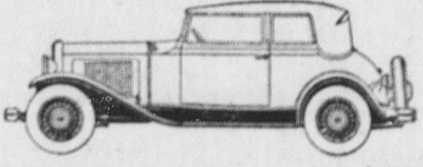
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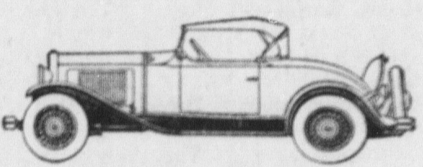
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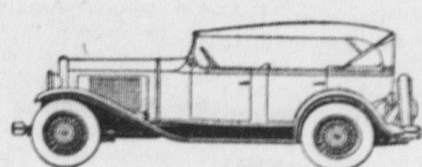
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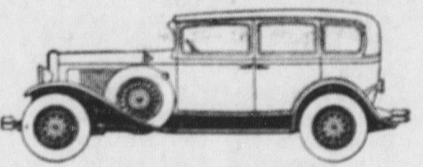
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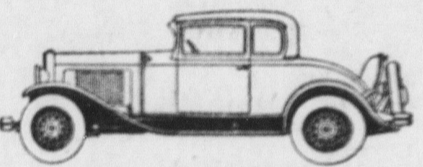
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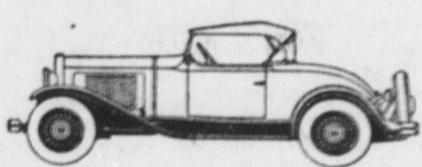
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### Mishap Helped Famous Hymn Win Popularity

In the St. Nikolaus church at Oberndorf, near Salzburg, Austria, on Christmas eve in 1818, "Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht," was sung for the first time. The curate, Joseph Mohr, had composed the text and the teacher and organist, Franz Xaver Gruber, the melody. To the fact that the little organ in Oberndorf had broken down is due the widespread popularity of the hymn. The organ builder, Karl Manacher, of Fügen, in Zillertal, had been sent for to make the necessary repairs. He heard the air and hummed it in his native country, where it became very popular in a short time. There were four brothers, by name Strafer, who went to the big German markets every year selling products of the Tyrolean home industry, and at the concerts of Tyrolean songs they sang the air which had become so popular "back home." Thus the melody was introduced to the North, from whence it started around the world.—Detroit News.

### Stockings Might Have Fitted Lincoln's Hands

Even Abraham Lincoln had to bow a little to prevailing styles, a fact which recalls a highly amusing incident that happened on the eve of a big White House reception. It was one of those affairs at which the President would be compelled to shake hands with thousands of people and Mrs. Lincoln sent out for a box of white silk gloves, both to protect Mr. Lincoln's hands and to make sure that by frequent changes he would look neat and fresh throughout the reception.

The gloves came but were far too small to fit the mighty hands of Lincoln. An emergency call was sent out. All Washington sent gloves but none were large enough. Mrs. Lincoln was greatly vexed and on the verge of tears when the President turned to her and said with a chuckle:

"Better get me some of your stockings; they're bigger."—Los Angeles Times.

### Whole World Enriched by Poet's "Golden Pen"

Omar Khayyam, Persian poet, was born about the middle of the Eleventh century at Nishapur, Khorassan, where he died about 1123. As an astronomer he was known for a revision of the Persian calendar, and occupied a position of importance at the court of Mahmud of Ghazni. It is as the author of a collection of quatrains, called the Rubaiyat, that Omar Khayyam is more popularly known. These poems—isolated, impulsive, unrestrained and characterized by rapid transitions from love minstrelsy to grave argument, and from a deadly fatalism to ribald tavern songs—are an interesting development of Persian mysticism. There is little doubt that Omar was not the author of all the poems which inspired his translator Fitzgerald's pen. Fitzgerald's translation was first published anonymously in 1859. "Rubaiyat" (or rubary) is the Persian word for quatrain or epigram, a stanza of four lines, the first, second and fourth lines rhyming. "Rubaiyat" means a collection of quatrains.

### Ancient Rhodesian Foundry

An ancient iron foundry, buried six feet in a cavern, has been dug up by the Italian expedition which is searching for traces of prehistoric man near the Livingstone rocks in Rhodesia. Here 3,000 or 4,000 years ago a superior, intellectual race melted iron by primitive methods, such as are now known to the Bantu people. The discovery indicates the great age of the Zimbabwe and other Rhodesian stone ruins, and throws new light on the history of metallurgy.

### Pretty Tribute

"I have three grandmothers," said little Evelyn White to her mother. "How do you make that out?" asked Mrs. White. "Grandmother Leach, Grandmother White, and you certainly are a grand mother," replied Evelyn.—Chicago Tribune.

### Great Patriotic Society Formed in Revolution

The Society of the Cincinnati is an hereditary patriotic society organized in 1783 by the American and foreign officers of the Continental army assembled in their cantonment on the Hudson river near Fishkill, N. Y. The original meeting was held in the Verplanck house, then the headquarters of Baron Steuben. The objects of the society were: "To perpetuate as well the remembrance of the Revolution as the mutual friendships which have been formed under the pressure of common danger. . . ." Since most of the officers were returning to their farms, which they had left to fight for the republic, they named their organization the Society of the Cincinnati, after their Roman prototype, Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus. George Washington was the first president general. He was elected in 1787 and re-elected until his death. Presidents general succeeding him have been Alexander Hamilton, C. Cotesworth Pinckney, Thomas Pinckney, Aaron Ogden, Morgan Lewis, William Popham, H. A. S. Dearborn, Hamilton Fish, William Wayne and Winslow Warren. The state societies meet annually and the general society meets once in every three years. The living hereditary members number 980. The emblem symbolizes the union of France and America.

### Babylonian Lawgiver

Hammurabi was the most illustrious of all the Babylonian kings. He was the sixth of the Amoritic or West Semitic dynasty and reigned 43 years between 2067 and 2025 B. C. Hammurabi promulgated for use throughout his empire one of the greatest legal codes ever devised. A fairly complete copy of the code was found about the Twelfth century at Susa inscribed on a diorite stele eight feet high. Apparently the stone had been taken to Elam as plunder by invaders during the later period of Babylon's decline.—Pathfinder Magazine.

### Houses of the Poor in Korea

Houses belonging to the common people of Korea are for the most part small, low and thatched, and have few rooms, the walls being made of stone and clay and usually only one story high. High buildings were forbidden by the old laws of the country, but now that no such restrictions exist there are many two-story houses, some of them brick, especially in urban districts. A unique part of the Korean house is its heating arrangement. The floor is made of flagstones plastered over with clay and covered with thick oiled paper. Underneath, forming what would be the joists, run a series of horizontal flues. Fire is made outside the room and the hot smoke-laden air circulates through the flues and escapes at the opposite end. Thus the floor is thoroughly heated.

### The Po'house

Dropping down to old Richmond from Washington, the tourists decided that literary shrines should have first attention, so they asked a negro taxi driver to take them to the Poe house. After the dial showed two or three miles of travel, they became doubtful of their driver, but he reassured them and soon stopped before a vast brick dwelling. "Here's the po'house," declared the driver, and over the door was chiseled, "County Poor Farm." There was a \$3 fare before they finally reached the Poe memorial.—Library Journal.

### "Robbing Peter to Pay Paul"

"Fable has it," according to Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, "that this phrase alludes to the fact that on December 17, 1550, the Abbey church of St. Peter, Westminster, was advanced to the dignity of a cathedral by letters patent; but ten years later it was joined to the diocese of London again, and many of its estates appropriated to the repairs of St. Paul's cathedral." The expression may have been a familiar one much earlier than that.