

Two Minutes of Optimism

By HERMAN J. STICH

Now Is Your Time

WAR'S demands played havoc with your plans. Unexpected and unexampled contingencies turned your ideas and your purposes topsy-turvy. The pranks and seasaws of a nation in arms dumped you in despair and bogged you in uncertainty. You did not dare build because no foundation was sure. Now it is all over. No military draft will frustrate your plans. No governmental restrictions can curtail your imagination. By the might of right and resolution you have been given a fresh start, and you ought to pluck revivifying heart. The United States has become the banker, the granary, the savior of the world. Our ships will soon congest the ocean. We will live to see our aircraft darken the skies. Our submarines may dispute with the fishes the depths of the seas. From the straits of Bering to jagged Cape Horn, around and about and through and under the entire globe our floating, flying and diving ambassadors of commerce will abound, and will carry with them the product of the worker's hands, his head and his heart. Never before in history has the call been so compelling for live-wired workers, efficient workers, ambitious, earnest and honest men and women—who will think and search, and find and found, and exert to have. And with unprecedented generosity the world stands eager and ready to reward munificently any kind of productive endeavor. We are in an era of construction and reconstruction, of accomplishment and achievement unrivaled. Unparalleled and unlimited opportunities await you—take them, make them, you can almost pick them. There never was and there probably never will be another period to match the present for wealth of chances to BECOME. Leadership in all activities, in which men aspire are within hailing distance—in a few years they will have been seized by people, probably now obscure, who made them a guide and goal. Our country was never so great and its good openings never so plentiful as today. All the lines of industry, trade and the professions have grown banner Opportunity Crops. Now is the time to harvest your share.

THE DAILY NOVELETTE

Captured

By WILLIAM R. COWLES
THE express had left the plains and was climbing the foothills in eastern Tennessee when, in response to a low-sounding siren, it came to a grinding halt. A tall, well set up young fellow glanced quickly out of the window at the wild, rugged country without a sign of habitation. Hastily grabbing his suitcase and a leather-cased shotgun, he walked to the door, manipulated the gas, and dropped off just as the train started. He stood watching it speculatively as it drew away. Had he been too precipitate, attracted undue attention? Yet if that chap behind him had really been on his trail—Oh, impossible—he wasn't that important! With a shrug of his shoulders he set out up the track, turning off at the first crossroad, a mere grass-grown trail to which he came. An hour's walk and, set back in a grove, a tiny schoolhouse. It was the noon hour, and a scant dozen callow and jean-clad children were playing about. On the door sill sat a

girl, high booted, in khaki hunting clothes, she was oddly dressed for a school marm, he thought—and yet, on reflection, in this rough hill country, how sensibly. The man dropped his cases and advanced with hat raised, and a friendly smile. "Good morning," he said. "Is there a house anywhere around where I can get something to eat and, possibly, board for a time?" The girl's warm brown eyes met his reflectively. "Why?" she asked. He looked surprised. "Why, because I'm hungry!" he retorted. A flicker of amusement appeared in her eyes. "Not that," she said. "I'll share my lunch with you. The only place where you would care to stay is my father's. But why? Strangers are a matter of comment—usually adverse—in Burlesville. Look at the children!" Glancing behind him, the man became aware for the first time that play had stopped while the youngsters stood about in silent knots, regarding him hostilely. "Think I'm a revenue man, do they?" he suggested, with a smile. "A prohibition enforcement agent, which is much the same thing," she replied. "Are you?" "Far, far from it!" he exclaimed. "My name is—in Kirk Leighton. He glanced at her sharply to see if the name—his real one—meant anything to her. Apparently it did not, for she responded simply, "I am Astrid Blaine. Will you share my lunch?"

That gave him another reason for lingering a while, just to watch how so incongruous an affair progressed. The days passed and Kirk stayed on. Astrid proved a good shot and a most desirable companion for a day's hunting in the autumn woods. In spite of the precariousness of his fortunes, which Kirk continually reminded himself, for he made any contemplation of marriage, he became strongly attached to her. As for the girl herself—Kirk was a type so different from the men to whom she was accustomed that the very contrast could not fail to interest, particularly as he offered frequent escape from the unwelcome attentions of Jim Tourtelot. One afternoon she and Kirk were beating the woods, several miles from home, and had separated to circle a hill in opposite directions. Kirk, even as he kept his eyes out for game, was with- ing bitterly that he could tell Astrid how he loved her, how he wanted to take her away to an environment she would so fittingly adorn. Suddenly, came a sharp crack and Kirk, a stinging pain in his side, dropped. He came to in Astrid's arms, his tears raining upon his face. "Jim Tourtelot did this—but he'll swear it was an accident—mistook you for game," she said. "The moment you are well again, you must go back home." "I can't go home. Even as he explained, Kirk struggled to his feet. "You see, I was house superintendent for one of the big clubs there, and when the prohibition people raided it, the club directors accused me of bringing in the stuff on the sly and selling it on my own. Unable to prove the contrary, I got out."

"But that's all over, Kirk," said Astrid. "The government people kept right at the investigation and have exonerated you completely." "But how on earth?" he demanded. "Why," she explained, enjoying his mystification. "I had taken the New York papers. Only—I kept them hidden." "You hid them?" Kirk was beginning to wonder. "Why?" "Because," she returned defiantly, but unashamed, "I—I wanted you to stay!"

And Astrid, hearing him, was happy. Then she laid a soft hand on his arm. "The government didn't capture you," she said, whimsically, "but I'm afraid—"

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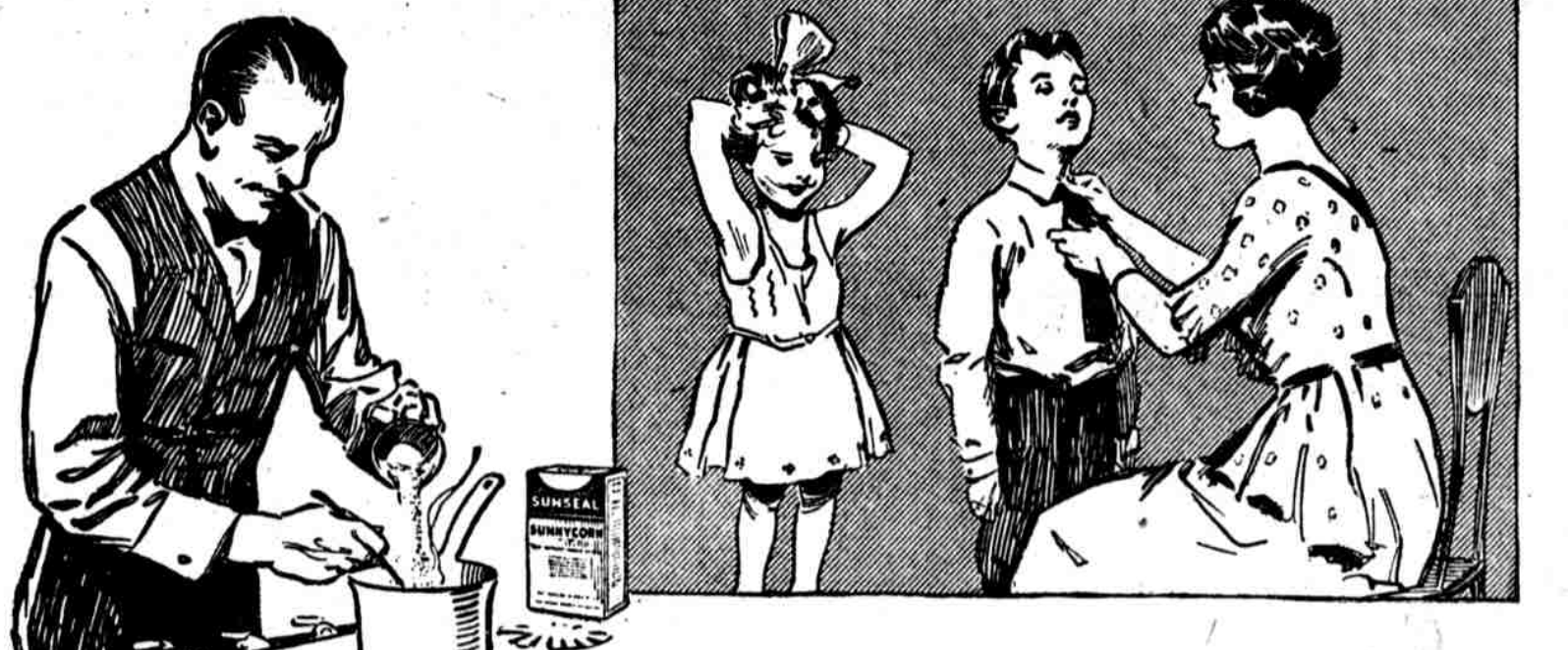
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