The Third Degree

A NARRATIVE OF METROPOLITAN LIFE

By CHARLES KLEIN AND ARTHUR HORNBLOW

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RAY WALTERS

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CHAPTER I.

"I'm it. G.—that's a cinch! The sooner I cinch it the better!"

Caught in the swirl of the busy city's midday rush, engulfed in broadway's swift moving flood of humanity, tostled unceremoniously by the careless, indifferent crowds, discouraged from stemming further the tide of pushing, elbowing men and women who hurried up and down the great thoroughfare, Howard Jeffries, tired and hungry and thoroughly disgusted with himself, stood still at the corner of Fulton street, cursing the luck which had brought him to his present plight.

It was the noon hour, the important time of day when nature loudly claims her due, when business affairs, no matter how pressing, must be temporarily interrupted so that the human machine may lay in a fresh store of nervous energy. From under the portals of prosperous office buildings, mammoth hives of human industries, which to right and left soared dizzily from street to sky, swarmed thousands of employes of both sexes—clerks, stenographers, shop girls, messenger boys—all hurried by a common impulse to satisfy without further delay the animal cravings of their physical natures. They strode along with quick, nervous step, each chatting and laughing with his fellow, intrigued for the nonce in the day's work making plans for well-earned recreation when five o'clock should come and the uptown stampede for Harlem and home begin.

The young man suddenly watched the scene, envious of the energy and activity of all about him. Each one in these hurrying throngs, he thought bitterly to himself, was a valuable unit in the prosperity and welfare of the big town. No matter how humble his or her position, each played a part in the business life of the great city, each was an unseen, unknown, yet indispensable cog in the whirling, complicated mechanism of the vast world metropolis. Instinctively he felt that he was the only one of them, that he had no right even to consider himself their equal. He was utterly useless to anybody. He was without position or money. He was destitute even of a shred of self-respect. Hadn't he promised Annie not to touch liquor again before he found a job? Yet he had already imbibed all the whisky which the little money left in his pocket would buy.

Involuntarily, instinctively, he shrank back into the shadow of a doorway to let the crowds pass. The pavements were now filled to overflowing and each moment newcomers from the side streets came to swell the human stream. He tried to avoid observation, fearing that some one might recognize him, thinking all could read on his face that he was a sot, a self-confessed failure, one of life's incompetents. In his painful self-consciousness he believed himself the cynosure of every eye and he winced as he thought he detected certain faces side glances of curiosity, commiseration and contempt.

Nor was he altogether mistaken. More than one passer-by paused to look in his direction, attracted by his peculiar appearance. His was a type not seen every day in the commercial district—the post-graduate college man out at elbows. He was smooth-faced and apparently about 25 years of age. His complexion was fair and his face refined. It would have been handsome but for a drooping, irresolute mouth, which denoted more than average weakness of character. The face was thin, chalk-like in its lack of color and deeply seamed with the tell-tale lines of dissipation. Dark circles under his eyes and a peculiar watery look suggested late hours and overfondness for alcoholic refreshment. His clothes had the cut of expensive raiment, but they were shabby and needed pressing. His linen was soiled and his necktie disarranged. His whole appearance was careless and suggested that recklessness of mind which comes of general demoralization.

Howard Jeffries knew that he was a failure, yet like most young men mentally weak, he insisted that he could not be held altogether to blame. Secretly, too, he despised these sober, industrious people who seemed contented with the crumbs of comfort thrown to them. What, he wondered idly, was their secret of getting on? How were they able to lead such well regulated lives when he, starting out with far greater advantages, had failed? Oh, he knew well where the trouble lay—in his damnable weakness of character, his love for drink. That was responsible for everything. But was it his fault if he were born weak? Those people who behaved themselves and got on, he sneered, were calm, commonplace temperaments who found no difficulty in controling their baser instincts. They did right simply because they found it easier than to do wrong. Their virtue was nothing to brag about. It was easy to be good when not exposed to temptation. But for those born with the devil in them it came hard. It was all a matter of heredity and influence. One's vices as well as one's virtues are handed down to us ready made. He had no doubt that in the Jeffries family somewhere in the unsavory past there had been a weak, vicious ancestor from whom he had inherited all the traits which barred his way to success.

The crowds of hungry workers grew bigger every minute. Every one was elbowing his way into neighboring restaurants, crowding the tables and buffets, all eating voraciously as they talked and laughed. Howard was rudely reminded by inward pangs that he, too, was famished. Not a thing had passed his lips since he had left home in Harlem at eight o'clock that morning and he had told Annie that he would be home for lunch. There was no use staying downtown any longer. For three weary hours he had trudged from office to office seeking employment, answering advertisements, asking for work of any kind, ready to do no matter what, but all to no purpose. Nobody wanted him at any price. What was the good of a man being willing to work if there was no one to employ him? A nice look-out certainly. Hardly a dollar left and no prospect of getting any more. He hardly had the courage to return home and face Annie. With a muttered exclamation of impatience he spat from his mouth the half-consumed cigarette which was hanging from his lip, and crossing Broadway, walked listlessly in the direction of Park place.

He had certainly made a mess of things, yet at one time, not so long ago, what a brilliant future life seemed to have in store for him! No boy had ever been given a better start. He remembered the day he left home to go to Yale; he recalled his father's kind words of encouragement, his mother's tears. Ah, if his mother had only lived! Then, maybe, everything would have been different. But she died during his freshman year, carried off suddenly by heart failure. His father married again, a young woman 20 years his junior, and that had started everything off wrong. The old home life had gone forever. He had felt like an intruder the first time he went home and from that day his father's roof had been distasteful to him. Yes, that was the beginning of his hard luck. He could trace all his misfortunes back to that. He couldn't stand for stepmother, a haughty, selfish, supercilious, ambitious creature who had little sympathy for her predecessor's child, and no scruple in showing it.

Then, at college, he had met Robert Underwood, the popular upper classman, who had professed to take a great fancy to him. He, a timid young freshman, was naturally flattered by the friendship of the dashing, fascinating sophomore and thus commenced that unfortunate intimacy which had brought about the climax to his troubles. The suave, amiable Underwood, whom he soon discovered to be a gentlemanly scoundrel, borrowed his money and introduced him into the "sporty" set, an exclusive circle into which, thanks to his liberal allowance from home, he was welcomed with open arms. With a youth of his proclivities and inherent weakness the outcome was inevitable. At no time on earth can you find a more reckless, wilder, wooly set of young men to meet you in the lively, whirling whirlpool of New York night existence as you can in the "sporty" restaurants in New Haven.

The attack expired.

"Say, I'm dead broke. I've got a d—. You know I graduated in June. I'm in business now—in a broker's office in Wall street. Say, great! We had a semi-panic last week. Pittsburg went to the devil. Stocks broke all to pieces. Shouldn't wonder if they did—not on the exchange floor. Our football matches were nothing to it, I tell you. It's great. It's not only broken to a frazzle, Quigley to add—. What are you doing?"

Howard accepted his cue and fingered his head.

"Nothing," he answered gloomily.

Coxe had quickly taken notice of his former chum's appearance. He had also heard of his financial embarrassments.

"Shall you be—interested there, and all that sort of thing—I mean, you know, I've got a—a—influence—in the office, and if you—you—er—care to—to—I mean, if you're not afraid of—of—er—speculation, I can put you on to a good thing. Strictly between ourselves, you know, I'm not supposed to—to—er—let outsiders in on it, but I'll make an exception in your case. Now, what do you say?"

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He Was a Type Not Seen Every Day in the Commercial District.

Howard hesitated. Once more he remembered his promise to Annie, but as long as he had broken it once he would get no credit for refusing now. He was horribly thirsty and depressed. Another drink would cheer him up. It seemed even wicked to decline when it wouldn't cost him anything.

They entered a bar conveniently close at hand, and with a tremulous hand Howard poured greedily to his lips the insidious liquor which had undermined his health and stolen away his manhood.

"Have another?" said Coxe with a smile as he saw the glass emptied at a gulp.

"I don't care if I do," replied Howard. Secretly ashamed of his weakness, he shuffled uneasily on his feet.

"Well, what are you going to do, old man?" demanded Coxe as he pushed the whisky bottle over.

"I'm looking for a job," stammered Howard awkwardly. Hastily he went on: "It isn't so easy. If it was only myself I wouldn't mind. I'd get along somehow. But there's the little girl. She wants to go to work, and I won't hear of it. I couldn't stand for that, you know."

Coxe feared a "touch." Awkwardly he said:

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Illusions.

It is true we labor under many illusions, but if these were to be done away with we should hardly deem it worth our while to labor at all.

Almost none of the things which man so ardently pursues in the belief that they will make him happier is really capable of doing so, and yet it is needful that he keep up the pursuit for the sake of what he incidentally achieves in behalf of destiny.

The illusions we labor under partake, in fine, of the nature of sanitary conditions, though they chiefly affect the health of the spirit, and by that have no municipal functionary appointed to look vigilantly after them. Nor, in fact, do they need any such, since providence has been so kind as to see to it that illusions we shall always have.—Puck.

Being Natural.

Can you, if you be the gentler sex, walk down the street behind an elegantly gowned woman and restrain the impulse to imitate her poise of head, her carriage and the fascinating ways she possesses? Have you ever been in a crowded room where one woman was the center of attraction and seen someone trying to imitate her? A woman is most charming when she is natural. A woman who is natural, even in her erratic moods, does not give offense. One cannot imitate the ways, manners and style of another without appearing ridiculous. The nicest women we meet are those who do not pose or seek to imitate some one else.

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Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup for Children teething, softens the gums, reduces inflammation, allays pain, cures wind colic. 25c a bottle.

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A READER CURES HIS CONSTIPATION—TRY IT FREE

Simple way for any family to retain the good health of all its members.

The editors of "Health Hints" and "Questions and Answers" have one question that is put to them more often than any other, and which, strangely enough, they find the most difficult to answer. That is "How can I cure my constipation?"

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UNAPPRECIATIVE SERVANT.

"It is our nurse who has fallen. She knows well that we are not insured against accidents to working people."

"What next will the domestics of today invent to vex their employers?"

PAINFUL FINGER NAILS CURED

"I have suffered from the same trouble (painful finger nails) at different periods of my life. The first time of its occurrence, perhaps twenty-five years ago, after trying home remedies without getting helped, I asked my doctor for something for me, but was not for a year or more that my nails and fingers were well. The inflammation and suppuration began at the base of the finger nail. Sometimes it was so painful that I had to use a poultice to induce suppuration. After the pus was discharged the swelling would go down until the next period of inflammation, possibly not more than a week or two afterwards. These frequent inflammations resulted in the loss of the nail. I had sometimes as many as three fingers in this state at one time.

"Perhaps ten years later I began again to suffer from the same trouble. Again I tried various remedies, among them a prescription from a doctor of a friend of mine, who had suffered from it like trouble. This seeming to help somewhat for a time, but it was not a permanent cure, next tried a prescription from my own doctor, but this was so irritating to the sensitive, diseased skin that I could not use it. I began to use Cuticura Soap and Ointment. I first used the Cuticura Ointment previously on my children's scalps with good effect. I did not use the Soap exclusively, but I rubbed the Cuticura Ointment into the base of the nail every night thoroughly, and as often beside as I could. I had not used it but a few weeks before my nails were better, and in a short time they were apparently well. There was no more suppuration, nor inflammation, the nails grew out clean again. One box of Cuticura Ointment was all that I used in effecting a cure." (Signed) Mrs. J. Horton Katonah, N. Y., Apr. 13, 1910. On Sept. 21, Mrs. Horton wrote: "I have had no further return of the trouble with my finger nails."

Careless and Cappy.

We have undertaken to blend in one the best of the two proverbial conditions—to be careless and happy, hairless and cappy. We are now happy and cappy, and frequently careless as well. A careless man may be configured up—a figure in leaf-green satin velled with rose and silver shot gauze.

The dark hair is covered by a sailor's cap, point and all, worn flatly over the whole head, the point falling at the back. Instead of being made of scarlet cashmere, it is of the gaze over silver tissue, and studded with pink and yellow topaz, while it is bordered with great gray s pear-shaped pearls, these, of course, hanging around the back of the neck and over the soft hair in front.

We have taken to caps.

Easy Game.

"What you need," said the kindly friend, "is a change of air. You should leave the city a bit—forget cares and worries. Travel! Breathe the pure ozone of the prairies. Go out to Montana and shoot mountain goats!"

The listless one bristled.

"Montana!" he snorted. "Why, I know a mountain goat in Newark!"—New York Times.

The Selfish View.

"Do you want cheaper postage?"

"I don't know," replied the men who considers only his own interests. "I don't write many letters myself, and I don't see why I should be eager to make it easier for the men who send me bills."

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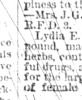

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Fame Thrust Upon Singer

Marvelous Note Emitted Was Great Effort, But Entirely Unpremeditated.

It was Mme. Highnote's first appearance, and she was on her trial trill. The audience sat spellbound. First came a cadenza, and then—the high C. Would she do it? Mme. Highnote thought she wouldn't.

She was just about to attempt the note when a little brown mouse ran across the footlights. The diva shrieked, gathered up her skirts, and ran.

"My prospects are forever blighted," she moaned.

At that moment there came a feverish knocking at the door. It was the manager's assistant.

"The manager," he exclaimed, "wants to know whether you ran away from the curtain because you were ill?"

"No. I am well. It was only—"

"And he wants me to tell you that high C you let out at the end was the finest he had heard for years, and the audience is crazy over you. You must give an encore."

"I can't—I can't," wailed the prima donna; "not unless you get another mouse."

The Truce of God.

The "Truce of God" was introduced by the clergy of Guienne around the year 1030. It was adopted in Spain about 1050, in England about 1080 According to this famous treaty, a cessation of all violent quarrels was enjoined, under heavy penalties, during all church festivals, and from every Wednesday evening until the following Monday morning. This left only about 80 days in the year available for shooting and stabbing one's neighbors. The truce seems to have accomplished much good, notwithstanding the fact that it was very imperfectly observed.