

THE ADVENTURE OF CORKEY AND MR. TUPPER

BY EDEN PHILLPOTTS

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I

WHEN the doctor sent for me to come to his study, I hoped it was about the fireworks, because I was head boy that term and, in a great position like that, there were advantages to make up for the anxiety. You bossed the fireworks on the fifth of November and many other such like things.

But the doctor had nothing to say about fireworks. In fact, a great moment had come in my life: I was to leave.

"Sit down, Corkey," said Dr. Dunstan; and that in itself was a startler, because he never asked anybody to sit down except parents or guardians.

I sat, and he looked at me with a friendly and regretful expression, the same as he did when he had to tell me my father was dead.

"Corkey," he began, "the morning post brings this missive from your maternal aunt, Miss Augusta Medwin. As you know, she is your trustee until you come of age four years hence. Your Aunt Augusta, mindful that the hour was at hand when you would be called to take your place in the ranks of action, has been for some time on the lookout for you, and to-day I learn that her efforts have been crowned with success. It is my custom to require a term's notice, but such is my regard for your Aunt Augusta that I have decided to waive that rule in your case. A clerkship in a London place of business has been secured for you—a nomination to the staff of that famous institution, the Apollo Fire Office. The necessary examination to one who has risen to be head boy of Merivale should prove but a trifle. And yet since nothing can be left to chance, we

must see that you are guarded at all points. In a fortnight, Corkey Major, you will be required to show that your mathematics are sound, your knowledge of grammatical construction above suspicion, and your general average of intellectual attainment all that the world of business—the great industrial centers of finance—have a right to demand from their neophytes. I do not fear for you; the appointment and its requirements are not such as to demand a standard of accomplishment beyond your powers; but at the same time remember that this modest beginning may lead the way to name and fame. The first step can never be too humble if we always look upward and onward. I myself, as all the world knows, was once a bookseller's assistant. But unto God be the praise."

The doctor sighed and continued:

"I am sorry to lose you. You have been a reasonably good and industrious boy. Your faults were those of youth. You go into the world armed, I think, at all points. Be modest, patient, and good-tempered, and choose high-minded friends. I may add, for your encouragement, that you will receive emolument from the outset of your official labors. The salary is fifty pounds a year, and you will work daily from ten o'clock until four. On Saturdays they pursue our own scholastic custom and give their officials a half-holiday. Your vacation, however, is of a trivial character. The world is a taskmaster, not a schoolmaster. One fortnight a year will be all the holiday permitted; and since you enter the establishment at the bottom, you must be prepared to enjoy this relaxation at any time in the year most convenient to your superiors."

He waved his hand, and I got up. One thing had stuck exceedingly fast in my mind, and now, though I did not mean to mention it in particular, it came out.

"Am I really worth fifty pounds a year to anybody, sir?"

The doctor smiled.

"A natural question, Corkey, and I think no worse of you for having asked it. The magnitude of the sum may reasonably puzzle a lad who as yet cannot know the value of money. This, however, is no time to enter upon the complicated question of supply and demand. It will be sufficient for you to know that the managers of the Apollo Fire Office entertain a reasonable hope of getting their money's worth, to speak colloquially. For my part, when I think upon your ten years of steady work at Merivale, I have no hesitation in saying that the salary is not extravagant. Let it be your part to administer it with prudence and swiftly to convince those set in authority over you that you are worth even more than that annual sum."

I cleared out and told the chaps, and they were all fearfully interested, especially Morgan, because when I left, Morgan would become head of the school. He turned a sort of dirty drab green when I told him that I was going, and first I thought it was sorrow for me, and then I found it was funk for himself. He did n't care a button about my going; but he felt that to be lifted up all of a sudden to the top was almost too much.

"I feel like the pope felt when he found he was going to be elected," he said. "Only it's far worse for me than him, because he need n't have entered the competition for pope, I suppose, if he did n't want; but in my case the thing is a sort of law of nature, and I've got to be head boy."

"There are the advantages," I said. But he could only see the responsibilities. He was n't pretending; he really hated the idea—for the moment.

I told Frost, too; and I told him that I'd asked the doctor whether I was worth fifty pounds a year to anybody.

"If he'd been straight," said Frost, "he'd have told you that you've been worth fifty pounds a year to him, anyway, for countless years; because you came here almost as soon as you were born, and your brothers, too."

It was a great upheaval, like things always seem to be when they happen, however much you expect them. Of course I knew I had to go sometime, and was thankful to think so, and full of ambitions for grown-up life; but now that the moment had actually come, I was n't particularly keen about it, especially as I should miss the fireworks and lose the various prizes I was a snip for, if I'd stopped till Christmas. I rather wished my Aunt Augusta had n't been so busy and left my career alone, at any rate till after the Christmas holidays. Of course my going was a godsend to various other chaps, and though they regretted it in a way, especially the "footer" eleven, such a lot of things were always happening from day to day at Merivale that there was really no time to mourn me, though, of course the chaps were frightfully sorry I was going when they had a moment to think about it. They were, however, very keen about the things I left behind; but of course these were all handed over to my brothers.

Then the rather solemn hour came when a cab arrived for me, and I went. But everybody was in class at the time, and nobody missed me. In fact, it was n't what you might call really solemn to anybody but me myself.

II

NEEDLESS to say, my adventures on arriving at London would fill volumes, but one in particular I wish to describe because doubtless such a thing often happens in the metropolis to new-comers. London people seem to know if you are a new arrival, probably because you cannot keep your admiration for London off your face as you perambulate the far-famed thoroughfares.

I passed my examination and entered the service of the Apollo Fire Insurance with considerable effect. I lived with my aunt in a flat near Paddington, and walked to the city every morning for the sake of exercise. I wanted Aunt Augusta to take thirty of my fifty pounds, and explained to her my hopes for the future.

"Some day, if things happen as I should like, I am going to be an actor," I told her. "It is a very uphill and difficult course of life, I know; but still that is what I want to be, because I have a great feeling for the stage, and I shall often and

often go to a theater at night after I have done my day's work, if you don't mind—especially tragedies."

She did n't laugh at the idea or scoff at it, but she thought that I must n't fill my head with anything but fire-insurance for the present. And of course I said that my first thought would be to work in the

strenuous course of life from the first; because, if fifty pounds a year is all you've got to depend upon for everything, it is necessary to be fairly strenuous. For instance, the sum to spare for daily lunch will prove on calculation to be rather small. I decided for a bun and a glass of milk. It was hungry work, but you get



Drawn by Fred Gardner

"I SAW YOU HANDLE A BOOK OF MINE . . . AND
I FELT DRAWN TO YOU"

office and thoroughly earn my fifty pounds a year, and perhaps even earn more than I was paid, and so be applauded as a clerk rather out of the common.

She took me to a tailor's shop, and I was measured for a tail-coat. I also had to get a top-hat such as men wear. I was tall and thin, and when the things came they added a good deal of age to my appearance.

I was appointed to the country department of the Apollo, and I began a rather

accustomed to anything, and the result, when dinner-time came at the flat of my Aunt Augusta, was remarkably good, and I used to eat in a way that filled her with alarm. And after eating I felt that I simply must have exercise of some sort, and I used to go out in the dark and get to the Regent's Park and run for miles at my best pace. It worried policemen when I flew past them, because it is very unusual to race about after dark in London, and policemen are unfortunately a suspicious

race and, owing to their work, get into the way of thinking that anything out of the common may be a clue. Once, having flown past a policeman and run without stopping to a certain lamp-post, I went back to the man and explained to him that I had to sit on an office stool most of the day, and that at night, after dinner, I felt a frightful need for active exercise, and took it in this way. I thought he would rather applaud the idea, but he said it was a fool's game, and might lead to trouble if I persisted in it. He advised me to join an athletic club and a gymnasium, and I told him the advice was good and thanked him.

Then it was, after I had been in London for six weeks or so, that my first really amazing adventure overtook me.

One day I had eaten my bun and drunk my glass of milk in about a second and a half as usual, and was looking at books in a very interesting bookseller's window that spread out into the street near that historic building known as the Mansion House, where the lord mayor lives. I had found a sixpenny book about Mr. Henry Irving's art, and was just going to purchase it, bringing from my pocket a five-pound note to do so, when an old man of a religious and gentlemanly appearance spoke to me.

But first, to calm the natural excitement of the reader at hearing me mention a five-pound note, I ought to explain that that morning was my first pay-day at the office—the first in which I had actively participated. The five-pound note was the first that I had ever earned, and it gave me a great deal of satisfaction to feel it in my pocket.

"Good literature here, sir," said the stranger. "I hope you love books, young man?"

"Yes, I do," I answered, concealing my five-pound note instantly.

"I write books," he told me. "I dare say my name is familiar enough to you, if you are a reader of poetry."

I looked at him and saw that he had a long, gray beard and red rims to his eyes. His clothes were black and had seen better days. He wore rather a low waistcoat, which was touched here and there with grease; but his shirt was fairly white, and through his beard I saw a black tie under his chin. He was tall and carried a black

and rather battered leather bag. I seemed to feel that it contained poetry. It was a solemn moment for me.

"I'm afraid I'm not much of a hand at poetry, sir," I said. "At school one had a lot to learn, and now I'm rather off it, excepting Shakspeare."

"You city men don't know what you are missing," he answered. "I have just come from Paternoster Row, where I have been arranging with a great publisher—one of the greatest in fact—for my next volume of poems. Strangely enough, I saw you handle a book of mine on this stall, only a few moments ago, and I felt drawn to you."

"Then you are Mr. Martin Tupper!" I exclaimed, "for I picked up a book of his just now, though only to see what was under it, I am afraid."

He felt disappointed at this, but admitted that I was right in my suspicion.

"I am Tupper," he confessed, "and owing to the irony of fate, though perhaps nobody in the world has more unknown friends, yet I allow myself no intimates. It is because of my terribly sensitive genius. I read men like books. That is why I am talking to you at this moment. My knowledge of human nature is such that I can see at a glance—I can almost feel—whether a fellow-creature is predisposed toward me or not."

"It is a great honor to speak to you, Mr. Martin Tupper," I answered, "but I'm afraid a man like me, just a clerk in this noisy and booming hive of industry, would n't be any good to you as a friend. I don't know much about anything; in fact, I'm nobody really, though I hope some day to be somebody."

"I felt sure of that," he answered. "Your reply pleases me very much, young man, because it indicates that you are modest, but also plucky. You recognize that you have as yet done nothing, but your heart is high, and you look forward to a time when you will do everything. Had you read my 'Proverbial Philosophy,' you would have discovered that—however, you must read it, to please me. You must let me send you a copy from the author."

I was of course greatly surprised at such unexpected kindness; but there was more to come.

"When I find a young and promising man studying the books upon this stall



Drawn by Fred Gardner

"‘THE BISHOP OF LONDON OFTEN COMES HERE—JUST FOR QUIET,’ HE SAID”

between the hours of one and two o'clock," said Mr. Tupper, "my custom is to ask him to join me at a modest meal—luncheon, in fact. Now, do not say that you have lunched, or you will greatly disappoint me."

Of course I had lunched, and yet, in a manner of speaking, I had n't—not as a famous and prosperous man would understand the word. To tell the truth, I had felt from the first that it was rather sad in a way, having to subsist on a bath bun and a glass of milk for so many hours, and I knew that I never should get to feel it was a complete feed. So when this good and world-renowned man offered me a luncheon, I felt, if not perfectly true, yet it was true enough to say that I had not lunched. So I said it, and he was evidently very glad.

"We will go to the 'Cat on Hot Bricks,'" he told me. "It is an eating-house of no pretension, but I preserve the greatest simplicity in all my ways, including my food and drink. At the big restaurants I am instantly recognized, which is a source of annoyance to me; but I am unknown at the 'Cat on Hot Bricks,' and I often take my steak or chop and pint of light ale there with other celebrities, and

study life. Ah, the study of life, my young friend, is the prince of pursuits! The name that I have made is based entirely upon that study. Long practice has enabled me to see in a moment the constituents of every character, and know at a glance with whom I have to deal."

I told him my name, and he said he had had the pleasure of meeting some of the elder members of my family in the far past. He was immensely interested in my work, and asked me many questions concerning fire-insurance. And then I told him that I hoped in course of time to be an actor, and he said that, next to the poet, the actor was often the greatest influence for good. He himself had written a play, but he shrank from submitting it to a theatrical manager for production. It was a highly poetical play, and made of the purest poetry, and so delicate that he feared that actors and actresses, unless they were the most famous in London, might go and rub the bloom off it and spoil it.

He let me choose what I liked for luncheon, and I chose steak and kidney pie and ginger-beer. He then told me that the steak and kidney pie was all right, but that the only profits made at the "Cat on Hot Bricks" arose from the liquid re-

freshment, and that it would not be kind or considerate to drink so cheap a drink as ginger-beer. So he ordered two bottles of proper beer, and then told me about the place and its ways.

"The Bishop of London often comes here—just for quiet," he said. "Of course I know him, and we have a chat sometimes about the see and so on. And the Dean of St. Paul's will drop in now and then. He has a weakness for 'lark pudding,' a very famous dish here. They have it on Wednesdays only. Now, tell me about your theatrical ambitions, for I may be able to help you in that matter."

I told him all about my hopes, and he said that one of his few personal friends was Mr. Wilson Barrett, of the Princess's Theatre, in Oxford Street.

"That great genius, Mr. Booth, from America has been acting Shakspeare there lately," I said.

"He has," answered Mr. Tupper; "his *Lear* is stupendous. I know him well, for he often recites my poems at benefit matinees. But Wilson"—in this amazingly familiar way he referred to the great Mr. Wilson Barrett—"is always on the lookout for promising young fellows to join his company, and walk on with the crowds, and so learn the rudiments of stage education and become familiar with the boards. He is anxious to get a superior set of young fellows on the stage, and he often comes to me because he knows that in the circles where I move the young men are intellectual and have high opinions about the honor of the actor's calling."

"It would be a glorious beginning for a young man," I said, "but of course such good things are not for me."

Mr. Tupper appeared to be buried in his own thoughts for a time. When he spoke again he changed the subject.

"Will you have another plate of steak and kidney pie?" he asked, and I consented with many thanks.

Then he returned to the great subject of the stage.

"Only yesterday," he said, "I was spending half an hour in dear old Wilson's private room at the Princess's Theatre. He likes me to drop in between the acts. He is a man who would always rather listen than talk; and if he has to talk, he chooses any subject rather than himself and his histrionic powers. All the greatest

actors are the same. They are almost morbid about mentioning their personal talent or the parts they have played. But the subjects that always interest Wilson are the younger men and the future of the drama. 'Martin,' he said to me, 'I would throw up the lead in my own theater to-night if by so doing I could reveal a new and great genius to the world. I would gladly play subordinate parts, if I could find a young man to play my parts better than I do myself.' I tell you this, Mr. Corkey, to show you that one supreme artist at least is always on the lookout for talent, always ready to stretch a helping hand to the tyro."

"Perhaps some day," I said, "years hence, of course, when I have learned elocution and stage deportment and got the general hang of the thing, you would be so very generous and kind as to give me a letter of introduction to Mr. Barrett?"

Mr. Tupper filled my glass with more beer, and sank his voice to a confidential whisper.

"I could n't *give* you an introduction, Mr. Corkey, because Wilson himself would not allow that. I am, of course, enormously rich, but it is always understood between me and the great tragedian that I get some little honorarium for these introductions. Personally I do not want any such thing; but he feels that a nominal sum of from three to five guineas ought to pass before young fellows are lifted to the immense privilege of his personal acquaintance and enabled actually to tread the boards with him in some of his most impassioned creations. The money I give to the Home for Decayed Gentlewomen at Newington Butts, in which I am deeply interested. Thus, you see, these introductions to Mr. Wilson Barrett serve two great ends: they advance the cause of the decayed gentlewomen—the number of whom it would distress you to learn—and they enable the aspirant to theatrical honors to begin his career under the most promising circumstances that it is possible to conceive."

"But I ought to go through the mill, like Mr. Barrett himself and Mr. Henry Irving and all famous actors have done," I said; and Mr. Tupper agreed with me.

"Have no fear for that," he answered. "Wilson will see to that. He is more than strict and, while allowing reasonable free-

dom for the expansion of individual genius, will take very good care that you have severe training and plenty of hard work. But the point is that you must go through his mill and not another's. It is no good going to Wilson after some lesser man has taught you to speak and walk and act. You would only have to unlearn these things. If you want to flourish in his school of tragic actors, which is, of course, the most famous in England at this moment, you must go to him as it were empty—a blank sheet—a virgin page whereon he can impress his great principles. Will you have apple tart, plum tart, or tapioca pudding and Surrey cream?"

I took apple tart, but Mr. Tupper said that sweet dishes were fatal to the working of his mind in poetical invention, so he had celery and cheese.

"I see Wilson to-night," he resumed. "To be quite frank, I have to tell him about a lad who is very anxious to join him and wishes to give me fifty pounds for the introduction; but such is my strange gift of intuition in these cases that I would far rather introduce you to the theater than the youth in question. You are clearly in earnest, and I doubt if he is. You have a theatrical personality, and he has not. Your voice is well suited to the higher drama; his is a cockney voice, and will always place him at a disadvantage, save in comedy. Had it been in your power to go before Wilson this week, I should have substituted your name for the other. I wish cordially there were no sordid question of money. I would even advance you five guineas myself, but you are as delicately-minded as I am. You would not like me to do that."

I assured him that such a thing was out of the question.

"Indeed, Mr. Tupper," I said, "you are doing far, far more than I should ever have thought anybody would do for a perfect stranger. And unless I could pay the money for the decayed home, I should not dream of accepting such a great kindness."

He was quite touched. He blew his nose.

"We artists," he said, "are emotional. There is a magic power in us to find all that is trusting and good and of sweet savor in human nature. And yet goodness and gratitude and proper feeling in the young always move me, as you see me moved now. They are so rare."

He brought out a brown leather purse and took from it half a sovereign. He then called a waiter and paid the bill.

"We will go down into the smoking-room," he said. "No doubt a liqueur or a cup of coffee will not be amiss."

I'd forgotten all about the time, and in fact everything else in the world, during this fearfully exciting meeting with Mr. Martin Tupper, and the end of it all was that I forked out my first six weeks' salary for the introduction to Mr. Barrett and my first step on the stage.

"It should be guineas," said Mr. Tupper; "but in your case, and because I have taken a very great personal fancy to you, it shall be pounds. And don't grudge the money. Go on your way happy in the knowledge that it will greatly gladden a life that has a distinctly seamy side. There is a sad but courageous woman whose eyes will brighten when she sees this piece of paper."

But though he idly threw this large sum of money into his pocket as a thing of no account, yet he was a man of the most honorable and sensitive nature.

"I cannot," he said, "leave you without carrying out my part of the contract. I gather that you are rather pressed for time or I would drive you to the Princess's Theatre in my private brougham, which is waiting for me near the Mansion House. No doubt the driver thinks I am lunching with the lord mayor, as I often do. But to take you this afternoon to the theater would interfere with your duties at the Apollo Fire Office, which I should be the last to wish to do; so I will write you a personal introduction to my friend Mr. Barrett, and you can deliver it either to-night or on the next occasion when you go to see him act."

He refused to leave me until this was done.

"We must avoid even the appearance of evil," he said. "You might feel uneasy and suspicious were I to say farewell with nothing but a promise. Martin Tupper's word is as good as his oath, I believe; but it is a hard, a cold, and a cruel world. At any rate, you shall have the letter."

He opened his bag, which contained writing materials, and he had soon written a note to Mr. Barrett, warmly commending me to the attention of that great man. He next gave me his own address, which

was No. 96 Grosvenor Square, one of the most fashionable residential neighborhoods in London, and then hoping that I would dine with him and Mrs. Tupper two nights later, at eight o'clock, and come early, he shook me warmly by the hand, wished me good luck, and left me.

I saw his dignified figure steal into the street, and though the general public did not seem to recognize him in his modest attire, I fancy that a policeman or two cast understanding glances at him. No doubt they had seen him at royal or other functions.

I seemed to be walking on air when I went back to work, for this great man, inspired by nothing but pure good-will, had, as it were, opened the door of success to me and given me a chance for which thousands and thousands of young would-be actors must have sighed in vain. He was hardly the great man I should have chosen to know; but now that I did know him, I felt that it must have been a special providence that had done it. I wished that I could make it up to him, and hoped that he would live long enough for me to send him free tickets to see me act. Meantime I determined to buy all his books, which was the least I could do.

But I was brought down to earth rather rudely from these beautiful plans, for when I got back to the office, the chief of the department, one Mr. Westonshaugh, sent for me; and it then transpired that, instead of taking half an hour for my luncheon, according to the rules and regulations of the Apollo, I had been out for more than two hours!

I felt terribly sorry, and felt the right and proper thing was to be quite plain and honest with Mr. Westonshaugh.

"I met Mr. Martin Tupper at a book-stall, and he introduced himself and asked me to lunch, sir," I said. But the head of the department did not like this explanation at all, and I was a good deal distressed to find the spirit in which he took it. He seemed fearfully startled to hear what I told him; in fact, he showed a great inclination not to believe me.

"Go back to your work, sir," he said in a very stern voice, "and don't add buffoonery to your other irregularities. I am much disappointed in you, Mr. Corkey."

It was a fearful thing to have Mr. Westonshaugh misunderstand me so com-

pletely. In fact, the blood of shame sprang to my forehead, a thing that had never happened before. And then he made another even more terrible speech.

"You look to me very much as if you 'd been drinking," he said. "Have a care, young man; for if there is one thing that will ruin your future more quickly than another, it is that disgusting offense."

I sneaked away then in a state of bewildered grief, sorrowful repentance, and mournful exasperation. This was by far the unhappiest event in my life, and it got worse and worse as the day wore on.

Mr. Blades, who was my special friend at the Apollo, asked me what the deuce I 'd been doing, and when I told him, he said, "Rats!" This was a word that meant scorn combined with disbelief. Then he continued, and even used French.

"Martin Tupper! Why don't you say it was Martin Luther at once? I believe it's a case of '*Sasshay la fam*!'"

"Martin Luther died in 1546, so it could n't have been him; and I don't know what '*Sasshay la fam*' means," I said; and Mr. Blades replied in a most startling manner.

"So 's Martin Tupper dead—sure to be; ages ago, no doubt. Anyway, I happen to know that Mr. Westonshaugh thinks the dickens of a lot of him, so when you said he 'd been standing you a lunch, you told about the worst lie you could have."

Of course it was n't a lie, but quite the reverse. In self-defense I told Mr. Blades how I had an open letter of introduction to Mr. Wilson Barrett at that moment in my pocket, to prove the truth of what I was saying.

"Mr. Tupper read it to me, so no doubt anybody can read it," I said.

Then Mr. Blades perused the letter carefully and shook his head.

"You 're such a jug, Corkey," he declared. "This is neither more nor less than a common or garden confidence trick. The beggar saw you had a 'fiver' at the book-stall, and spotted you were a soft thing. Then he pretended to be friendly and just hammered away till he found the weak spot. If you 'd go and have a sensible lunch, like everybody else, instead of wandering about London in the helpless way you do on a bun and a glass of milk, this would n't have happened."

"The lunch was genuine enough, anyway; but the great point is whether Mr. Tupper is or is not dead," I told Mr. Blades. "If he is really and truly dead, then no doubt I have been swindled by a shady character; but if he is not, then there is still hope that it was really him."

Mr. Blades, with his accustomed great kindness, himself went in to Mr. Westonshaugh with me and explained the painful situation in some well-chosen words.

"I should n't have thought of using the name of such a world-renowned poet, sir," I said to the head of the department, "but he told me so himself, and he was exceedingly serious-looking and solemn and kind and far above clean clothes, which is a common thing with poets. But of course, if he's dead, as Mr. Blades thinks—"

"He is not dead," answered the chief. "I am glad to say that he is not dead. It is my privilege to correspond with Mr. Tupper occasionally. I heard from him on the subject of a difficult passage in one of his poems only a month ago."

"Does he live in Grosvenor Square, sir?" I asked. "Because this Mr. Tupper said he did—at No. 96."

"He does not," answered Mr. Westonshaugh. "He does n't live in London at all."

Then Mr. Blades had a brilliant idea.

"Would you know Mr. Tupper's handwriting, sir?" he asked, and Mr. Westonshaugh said that he would know it instantly.

He examined the letter of introduction to Mr. Barrett, and pronounced it to be an unquestionable forgery.

"A great crime has been committed," he declared. "A professional thief has used the name and signature of Mr. Tupper in order to rob you of five pounds, and he has succeeded only too well. Let this be a lesson to you, Mr. Corkey, not again to fall into conversation with the first well-dressed—or badly dressed—stranger who may accost you. To think that the insolent scoundrel dared to use that hallowed name!"

Mr. Westonshaugh evidently considered it a very much worse thing to forge Martin Tupper's name than to steal my five-pound note. And I dare say it was.

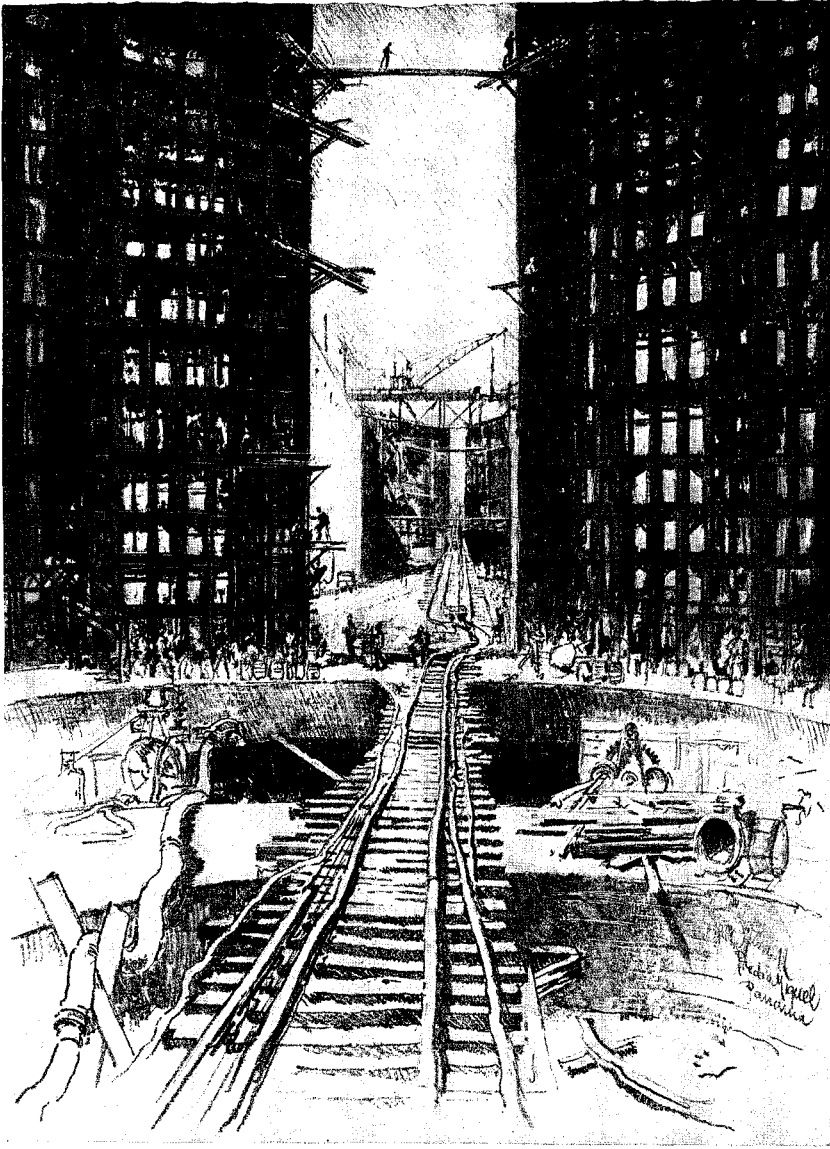
He forgave me, however, and withdrew his dreadful hint about my having had too much to drink.

Then I left him, and worked in a very miserable frame of mind until six o'clock to make up for my wasted time.

It was my earliest great and complete crusher; and coming just at this critical moment, made it simply beastly sad. Because my very first earnings were entirely swallowed up in this nefarious manner. I had hoped to return home and flourish my five-pound note in the face of Aunt Augusta and tell her to help herself liberally out of it; but instead of that I had to horrify her with the bad news that my money was gone forever. In fact, you might say beyond recall. If it had happened later, I believe that I should have made less and even felt less of the affair; but such fearful luck falling on my very first "fiver" added a greater element of tragedy than it otherwise would have been. And then I got a dark idea that losing my very first honest earnings meant a sort of curse upon everything I might make in after life. I felt that a bad start like this would dog me for years, if not forever. I had a curious and horrid dread that I should never really make up this great loss, but always be five pounds short through the rest of my career to my dying day.

Aunt Augusta tried hard to make light of it. In fact, it is undoubtedly at times like this that a woman is more comforting than a man. She went to her private store and brought out another crisp and clean five-pound note and forced me to take it. She insisted, and so reluctantly I fell in with her wish; but I did n't spend it in the least with the joy and ease I should have spent the other. It was, in fact, merely a gift, good enough in its way, but very different to the one I had earned single-handed by hard work in a humming hive of industry.

To speak honestly, the whole affair had its funny side—to other people. In fact, I heard a good deal about it at the Apollo Fire Office, and I must have done the real Martin Tupper a good turn in a way, because it was the fashion for everybody to quote from his improving works when I passed by.



THE LOCK-GATES AT PEDRO MIGUEL

BUILDING THE PANAMA CANAL

FROM EIGHT LITHOGRAPHS DRAWN
FOR THE CENTURY MAGAZINE IN
THE CANAL ZONE, FEBRUARY, 1912

BY JOSEPH PENNELL