

Crowded Knights

DARNED glad to see you back," exclaimed Mr. Stubbs, holding out both hands to Uncle Henry, who had just returned from several months in Europe. "Well," he continued jocularly, "I s'pose you met all sorts of lords an' dukes an' earls?"

"Of course I did," said Uncle Henry, breathing a sigh of pure happiness as he sat down in his old chair and looked around the store. "Not that I wanted to, 'Lonzo, but I jes' couldn't get out of it. They're everywhere. London certainly is no place for an absent-minded man or a jaywalker, for if you don't look where you're goin' you're liable to find yourself wadin' knee-deep in a mess of peers. One mornin' I dashed out of my hotel without watchin' where I placed my feet, an' blamed if I didn't squash two dukes, three viscounts, a marquis an' Heaven only knows how many sirs. I got so nervous at the last I wouldn't walk anywhere except behind a street sweeper."

"No, indeed, my dear 'Lonzo, meetin' titles in England isn't what makes demand on thought an' energy. Avoidin' 'em is what calls for cool thinkin' an' ratlike cunning. It's pretty easy to distinguish an earl or a duke, even at one hundred paces, for their faces usually stop at the upper lip, but there's absolutely no way to tell a baronet, for he looks jes' like everybody else. An' lots of the titles are very old ones, some datin' as far back as the fall of 1925. Maybe 1924."

"The thing got on my nerves to such a degree that I used to take a boat an' go over to Ireland in hopes of bein' able to meet a plain mister or missus. But, Lord bless you, 'Lonzo, Ireland was almost as bad, for virtually everybody you meet claims to have descended from a king of some sort or other. As near as I am able to figure it out, ancient Erin was a good deal like the Mexican army today—all generals, no privates."

"No, 'Lonzo, the trouble with you—an' the trouble with most Americans, for that matter—is that you've got an entirely wrong idea 'bout this here nobility business. You think that an earl, a lord or a baron must necessarily belong to a very old family. At that, all that age does for a family is to give it plenty of time to go to seed."

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Uncle Henry

"In the beginnin', to be sure, a title meant somethin', even though the meanin' wasn't always entirely creditable. Y'see, those old kings couldn't send down to an employment agency for a bunch of high-class gunmen, so Rufus the Rough would wander over to some bull-necked retainer an' say, 'I know a spot where the pickin's look good. Throw in with me, an' I'll provide the divine right, an' you can keep half what you steal.'"

"It was a policy that made England the greatest colonizin' nation in the history of the world. You remember Morgan the pirate, don't you? The one that burned an' sacked without stoppin' for lunch or takin' Sundays off? Well, England made him Sir Henry Morgan. If Captain Kidd had only had the sense to have been born an' Englishman, you'd have seen him endin' his life as Sir William Kidd, the famous colonizer an' unselfish bearer of the White Man's Burden."

Ingratitude of Republics

"But it isn't that way any more, 'Lonzo. England is so free with titles today that soap manufacturers have had to stop givin' 'em away as premiums, an' the king has been compelled to adopt an entirely new procedure. When he knighted a man he used to tap him on the shoulder with a sword, but poor King George got so muscle-bound from constant exercise that he had to cut out the sword in favor of a rubber stamp driven by electricity."

"For the most part, however, titles are given for political service. Over

here we hand out post offices to party workers, or make the more important ones United States marshals or prohibition-enforcement officials, but Merrie Old England slips 'em a dukedom, an earldom or a baronetcy. On the day after an election it takes five movin' vans to carry the recommendations for titles from party headquarters to Buckingham Palace, where the king is waitin' in his overalls."

"The contributors to a successful campaign are remembered no less cordially. After you've paid your money into the war chest of the party, all you've got to do is to walk over to the counter where the samples are on display, an' pick out a title that you think will please the little woman. Why, 'Lonzo, if a good, lavish giver like Sam Insull lived in London instead of Chicago, they'd come darn' near to makin' him king."

"Jes' take some of the British titles, an' you'll see for yourself how they do things over there. Ten or fifteen years ago Lord Birkenhead was only Fred Smith, a clever lawyer with the gift of gab, but he had the sense to switch from one party to the other until he picked a winner; Lord Beaverbrook used to be Max Aitken, a Canadian promoter; Lord Reading was born an' Isaacs, an' Lord Rothermere started out in life as plain Harmsworth."

"If we had the same system over here, for instance, William R. Hearst would be the Duke of Hollywood, Bill Vare the Earl of Schuylkill, and dapper Jimmie Walker would have to take a whole page in a hotel register, for he'd be Earl

Eastside, the Duke of Corlears Hook an' Baron Kill von Kull."

"An' as for a brewer or distiller, 'Lonzo, they haven't got a Chinaman's chance of escapin' a title in England. I knew a poor devil who hid in his malt-house for four years, but along toward the last he got careless. One sunny day he put his head out of a window, so as not to miss the English summer, an' before he could get it back they'd made him a baronet."

"I met an American girl in London who was hysterical with delight at the prospect of meetin' a Lord Somebody, an' on inquiry I learned that he got his title on the strength of makin' an ale that had the kick of a maddened mule."

Beauty Looks Out for Herself

"I'll bet you that that same girl wouldn't have been at all flattered if she was introduced to Anheuser, Pabst, Busch, Schlitz, Ruppert an' others who used to make personal liberty a livin', breathin' thing in the United States."

"However, it's a good thing for England that she's gone into the machine production of titles on a large scale. What with the loss of teeth an' chins, the House of Lords was beginnin' to look like an aviary. New blood is a vital need."

"It was thought for a while that the many stage marriages would help, but England has long since learned that the maternal progenitor of the average chorus beauty didn't raise her girl to be a mother."

"The Prince of Wales is all right, isn't he?" demanded Mr. Stubbs.

"One hundred per cent, 'Lonzo. I saw him at a dancin' club one night, an' let me tell you that he's a true son of the bulldog breed."

"I watched him for half an hour on that crowded floor, an' never once did he have an elbow out of his mouth; never once did he gain a yard. But did he quit? Not much he didn't! An' him havin' to give away weight to every man in the room!"

"Well, he's got a right to a little pleasure," said Mr. Stubbs. "I guess they work those crowned heads pretty hard."

"I'll say they do," Uncle Henry agreed. "King George has laid so many cornerstones that the masons' union has made him take out a card."

"I know a spot. Throw in with me, an' I'll provide the divine right, an' you can keep half what you steal"





Illustrated by
Kurt Wiese

Deaf to the sound of a motor truck he knelt. "Lord!" he began. "Lord—"

The Day of Miracles

By Elsie Singmaster

A SHORT SHORT STORY

EMORY BUPP stood by the un-cleared breakfast table; on the far side knelt Mrs. Bupp. Emory was tall, thin and fair; Mrs. Bupp was short, stout and dark. From outside the house sounded bird songs; inside there was the breathing of Emory, a sigh from Hannah, the bubbling of water on the stove. Hannah was proud to be the wife of so good a man, but goodness had at times its disadvantages. Emory was a Pentecostal Brother, and it was his habit to abandon work and kneel in house or field, uttering eloquent petitions.

Hearing a baby's whimper and a more violent bubbling from the stove, Hannah sighed again. It was Monday morning, and Emory and she should really be about their business. To oblige a friend, he had signed a note for \$200, and unless he could collect various sums owing to him he would be in serious trouble. The note was held by Oliver Krug, who was anxious to get possession of the little house.

"You'll have to pray your own prayers," said Emory suddenly. "I'm saving mine."

Taking from behind the door a blue coat with a braided collar and a cap with a visor on which were embroidered the words "Pentecostal Brother" he walked down the road. A quarter of a mile away he knelt before the open door of a little house.

"Lord," said he, "Thou knowest Brother Wildasin owes me \$30. Put it into his heart to return it." There was no response. "If he has it," concluded Emory with a sigh.

At last Wildasin came to the door. "I haven't it," said he curtly.

Emory stepped down the road. Seeing William Ebert plowing, he knelt and prayed in a loud voice, "Oh, Lord! I need the money I lent Willie Ebert!" When he opened his eyes William was at the far end of the field.

Rising, he stood and looked at the ground. He cherished no resentment against Oliver Krug; Oliver had a right to his money. The half past eleven whistles were blowing when he stepped upon the paved streets of the county seat. His fellow believer, Thomas Shrader, who owed him \$30, invited him to dinner, but could pay him nothing. Thomas was sincerely troubled. "But if I don't have it, how can I give it?" he asked.

"I have yet Brother Fry," said Emory to himself. "He owes me \$50."

Brother Fry was angry; overpersuaded by his wife, he had yesterday spent \$50 for unnecessary furniture.

"Is it said we should pester a man when we have done him a kindness?" he demanded.

EMORY left the house hurriedly. It was now mid-afternoon, and he had collected nothing. Seeing a wood, he entered, and kneeling down prayed for light. Still convinced that the Lord would help him, he determined to go home on quiet roads, and when the spirit moved him, to pray. Sometimes he spoke at length, sometimes he said only, "Lord, Thou knowest."

Toward dark he came in sight of the hill at the foot of which he lived, and

realized that he had stupidly set a term for the Almighty. He expected that his prayer would be answered before he reached home, and here was home almost at hand!

Instantly he dropped into the middle of the road. He saw now the stern face of Krug. He no longer took it for granted that the Lord knew his trouble; he explained it at length:

"Thou knowest I have done Thy will! I shall go on doing Thy will whatever happens. But if I had \$200 my heart would be at rest. Lord, hear!"

When he rose he could no longer see the hill or exactly place his little house. Hungry and weary, he quickened his steps; then he slowed down.

"I trust Thee!" said he. "I trust Thee!"

Here was the forlorn dwelling of Uriah Bupp, who, though he had the same surname, was no kin. Uriah was a bad man, supposed to be the go-between for wicked men who transported liquor.

Emory feared the mysterious ways of evil; he walked past rapidly, and the spurt carried him into his own road. He could see Ebert's light, farther away Wildasin's, still farther away his own. In a sweat of alarm he stopped short, as though at the edge of an abyss. A few more minutes and he would be confessing to Hannah that he had failed. Deaf to the sound of a motor truck near at hand, he knelt.

"Lord!" he began. "Lord—"

Confused by sudden thunder, he

sprang up. A truck bore down upon him, traveling with dimmed lights. He saw Hannah, his baby, all his pleasant life, and, uttering a shout of terror, threw out his arms to protect his head.

By a mighty effort the driver brought his giant vehicle to a stop. He swore vigorously, appalled by the imminence of tragedy.

"What's your name?"

"Bupp," gasped Emory.

"You ought to have a flash!" As though he meant to present Emory with a flash, whatever that might be, he handed him a small parcel and instantly was gone. It was amazing that so ponderous a vehicle could get under way so quickly. That which Emory held in his hand was an envelope—he felt it; it was sealed. His childish mind was puzzled and he hastened home, pressing the envelope as he ran. Its contents seemed to be paper. A wild notion flashed through his mind—no, that was impossible!

He burst open the kitchen door. Supper waited for him on the table. Seeing him Hannah began to cry. "You didn't get it!"

The light illuminated Emory's face; it was pale, awed. He handed over the envelope. "Open it," he said solemnly.

HANNAH tore across the edge. "Money!" she cried. "Money!" Tears ran down her pale cheeks. "Do you have it all?"

"Count it," commanded Emory with assurance.

"It's \$200," wept Hannah.

"Of course," said Emory calmly. "The day of miracles is yet here, and what we need we get."