

A LEAF FROM LIFE.

J. V. JOHNSON.—The week of your employment closes with tonight. Hereafter your services will be dispensed with. A. B. BLOOD.

JAN'Y 12, 1895.

JOHNSON had been telegraph editor of the *Daily Globe* for three years past. He had come to the city of Rockmont after having suffered reverses and misfortune elsewhere, and had procured employment with the *Globe* at twenty dollars a week. His children—there were five of them—were small and helpless.

The trip from Pennsylvania to the Western city was long and expensive, and the little family, forced to emigrate through the fact that the head of it could find no work at home, had been compelled to sell off every article of household furniture they possessed in order to raise the funds necessary for the journey. Rents in Rockmont were high, for the town was thriving, and land was on the rise in value. This made building lots practically inaccessible to the poor, who might otherwise have paid a builder monthly instalments. Conditions, however, being as they were, a house fit to live in could not be obtained for less than twenty dollars a month. This was the rent that Johnson paid, so that during one week in four he toiled for the sole benefit of the landlord.

The thrifty wife did the work of the little household and cared for the children. Her nimble fingers made all their clothing, and her taste and neatness were manifest everywhere within the modest home.

They were, however, deeply in debt. Being without necessary housekeeping furniture when they arrived in Rockmont, they had purchased what articles their comfort required from a second hand furniture dealer, who had let them have the things on a form of lease, whereby the dealer retained the title to them until they should be fully paid for by instalments of a designated sum per month. This sum was sufficiently large to absorb the small margin of wages remaining after the necessary household expenses were paid; so that though the family was as economical as circumstances would allow, yet there was a place for every dollar Johnson received from the paper, and they had never found

an opportunity to start an account with the savings bank.

When therefore Johnson received the curt note of dismissal, it found him not yet out of debt for his furniture, and with but five dollars in his possession. He owed, too, a little bill at the grocer's, and a few dollars at the shoe store; but these debts would readily have been taken care of by the close of the month had things gone well on the newspaper.

It was a great blow to Johnson's wife when her husband told her that he had lost his "job." It required all the efforts at reassurance that Johnson could employ to make the doubting wife feel that the situation held little of the danger she apprehended. His air of confidence was, however, only assumed. Out of his wife's presence, his thoughts were somber enough. What were they to do? He knew nothing but telegraph editing or kindred newspaper work. The offices of the other papers in the city were all full, and filled by men who were as tenacious of their positions as of their lives. He knew no one through whom he could control enough influence to get employment anywhere.

It was a sad and heavy interval, those few hours that elapsed between Johnson's home coming from his last night's work, and daylight. Both he and his wife realized the seriousness of the situation. They had but little food in the house; their small credit at the grocer's would shortly fail them; they had only five dollars in money; and there were medicines yet to buy.

Neither of the two slept. At daybreak they were up. Johnson bustled about the house, helping Carrie with her work. Their breakfast was soon prepared and eaten, and while the day was yet young he was on his way down town in search of work. He visited all the newspapers and publications in the city, the *Globe* excepted. A man was wanted nowhere.

"Ever had any experience as a reporter?" asked the city editor of one of the dailies.

"No," replied Johnson; "I have been a telegraph editor, proof reader, and copy holder. I have never done any reporting, but I should be very glad to take an assignment and try it."

He was told to call at the office frequently, and when it should occur that an extra man was needed, and he was on hand, his abilities would be tested.

For a week he haunted that office. Provisions were getting scarce at home; the family had enough to eat, but of food that was neither dainty nor very nourishing. Finally, one day, the long looked for assignment came. Johnson was to interview a United States Senator of great reputation, upon questions touching the future of the Democratic party. He failed miserably. He was not accustomed to meeting distinguished persons, and he was embarrassed in the presence of this celebrity. In his nervous anxiety to perform the work successfully, combined with his diffidence and his inexperience, and his general lack of knowledge of the subject, he forgot the questions he had to ask, and closed the interview without either securing much information or making a very good impression on the Senator.

However, he wrote up the interview as best he could, and turned it in to the city editor. He received three dollars for it. No like sum of money ever brought more timely succor to human beings. It provisioned the little family for a week. But the work was not done satisfactorily, and Jim ceased to have hopes of further employment in that line.

The newspapers and periodicals failing to afford him occupation, Johnson hunted among the stores, along the wharves, at the doors of factories—anywhere he thought a man might possibly be needed to do any sort of work, even that of a common laborer. Everywhere his inquiries met with a like response—"No, we don't want anybody." "How many of you fellows is there in town, any way?" Another added to this, "We turn away about fifty men inquiring for work every day."

"Where's your card?" asked the foreman of a foundry, to whom Johnson had applied.

"Card?" replied Johnson. "I have no card. What do you mean?"

"Don't you belong to a union?"

"No."

"Then you can't get any work here; this shop employs only union men."

In a choking voice Johnson told the foreman his circumstances, and implored him that if a man was wanted there, he might be employed. The foreman heard him in silence, and it proved in sympathy, for he pulled out a greasy purse, and taking from it a twenty five cent piece, extended the coin to Johnson.

"Take this," he said. "I'd give you more if I could. I could put a man on, but I couldn't give the job to you. The other men would walk out if I did. The rule is strict that nobody but a union man can be employed here."

Johnson recoiled from the sight of the coin in the black hand of the kind hearted laborer. He could not accept charity. "You are kind," he said, "very kind; but the pain I should feel at taking this would be greater than any I have yet experienced. I thank you very much, but I can't take it."

He hurried away and left the mechanic thoughtfully watching his retreating form. When he reached home he found the landlord waiting for him. He had come to collect the rent, now two months in arrears. Johnson did not have a dollar.

"See here, Johnson," said the landlord, "you can't pay; now get out of my house."

"I'll have work in a little while," returned Johnson; "then I'll pay up." He spoke with a confidence he was very far indeed from feeling.

"That ain't it," returned the landlord. "I can rent this house and get the cash money in advance every month. Now, you're a reasonable man; I'll tell you what I will do. I'll have to pay a lawyer forty dollars and court costs to put you out, if I have to take that means of getting back my house. Now you owe me forty dollars; you're an honest man, and intend to pay it, and will pay it when you can; but there is no telling when you'll be able to pay it, or when you'll get work. Meanwhile you can't afford to live in a twenty dollar house; leave mine and get a cheaper one, and I'll call the back rent square. Go out, and you won't owe me a cent."

"But," replied Johnson, "landlords here demand rent in advance unless the parties bring a reference; I don't know any one to whom I could refer who would satisfy a landlord that I always paid my debts."

"Refer 'em to me," suggested the landlord.

"All right; I'll do it."

"Will you get out today?"

"No, not today, but tomorrow."

"Well, tomorrow, then, but don't make it any later than that."

The landlord left, and in a few minutes Johnson was on his way toward the railroad shops in search of another house. He secured a vacant shack of a single room, far down in the lower part of the city, where the rent was only five dollars per month. The neighborhood was miserable, although not the slums. The people were

all poor, desperately poor. However, Johnson thought it was only a temporary shift; as soon as he found work again he would move out of there into a better neighborhood; and though the outlook did not appear any more promising for paying five dollars a month than twenty, yet he felt relieved that at one stroke fifteen dollars of monthly expense had been lifted off his shoulders.

As soon as he had his family moved into these new quarters, and had made them look as comfortable as their scanty furniture and the ramshackle character of the premises would permit, he left for a trip into the country—"to be gone until he should find work, or for three days at least," he told his wife. He took not a penny with him, for they had but fifty cents, and no credit anywhere. Carrie insisted that he should carry a little lunch in his pocket, but he refused, saying that what they had, together with the money, was scarcely enough to feed the mouths at home until he should return; adding that there was at least plenty to eat in the country, and he would not starve.

Carrie watched him with a heavy heart as he disappeared down the muddy street, picking his way here and there, over the half melted snow. Poor fellow! What must be the condition of the roads in the country! He looked so weak and wan. As for themselves, they had plenty of fuel, for the coal mines were near by, and Johnson had that morning picked up enough coal along the railroad tracks to last till his return; they could keep warm, and there was enough to eat.

Johnson was not more successful in the country than he had been in the city. The farmers appeared to be afraid of him. They "sicked" dogs on him when he approached their places; indeed, the dogs seemed to be trained to "sick" themselves on all strangers. It was only occasionally that he could find an opportunity to talk with any person on a farm.

"We've been overrun with tramps this winter," said a kindly faced old lady at a farm house as she handed him some food at the kitchen door. "Many of them are good appearing fellows, too, just like yourself," she went on. "Poor men! They can't all be bad. Why is it that so many men are out of work? It didn't use to be this way. A good many of these tramps are bad men, though. Many of our neighbors have lost chickens and stock by them."

Jim ate cold food passed out to him at back doors, and slept in hay stacks and

lofts, during the entire three days of his tour through the country. At the end of that time he returned home, glad indeed to see Carrie and the children again; glad, too, to escape from further wanderings through a region where it seemed the hand of every man was against him, where every man who met him appeared to suspect him as a thief, or to shun him as a tramp.

He reached his house about six o'clock in the morning. Carrie and the children were just getting up. He was cold, tired, hungry, and in despair. There was a little bread and a little coffee, but not enough to allow them all a full repast, and their money was gone.

Oppressed by the deepest gloom, he related to his wife the story of his trip. She cried softly, but he shed no tear. He took her in his arms, kissed her, and comforted her as best he could. Then they sat down at the table. Their scanty meal was scarcely finished when there came a knock on the front door. Johnson rose and opened it. As he did so a man outside shoved his foot between the door and the casing, so that it could not be closed. He followed this up by forcing his way inside, pressing past Johnson, who stood with the knob in his hand, half endeavoring to close the door against this rude intruder. As the fellow set his foot inside, he called to a man behind him, "Come on, Bill; come right into the house."

"What do you want here?" demanded Johnson.

"I want that furniture, that's what I want," replied the man angrily. "There ain't been no instalments paid on these things for over four months, and I'm not going to stand this any longer. I want my goods back, an' I come here to take 'em back. They're my things till all the instalments are paid; the lease is in default when you've missed payin' one instalment, an' you've missed four. There's the lease, you can see for yourself; but you understand about it as well as I do."

The man drew from his pocket a legal looking paper, and proffered it to Johnson. The latter glanced at it and peered out through the doorway. A furniture wagon was backed up to the sidewalk, and a policeman was strolling leisurely in front of the house. He had evidently been invited there by the furniture man in anticipation of trouble.

Johnson was excited and frightened.

"You wouldn't take this little furniture away from my family after all the money I've paid you?" he expostulated. "I've paid

you the full amount of your original bill ; what I owe you now is merely interest."

But the man was apparently not disturbed by reflections on the consequences of his act as they might bear on the Johnson family. He had in mind one thing—the fact that the law was on his side in taking that furniture ; and he was not displeased that the opportunity should come to him to secure all the goods he had sold, at the same time retaining all the money he had been paid for them. In reply to Johnson's statement about the only money owing being interest, he said,

"That makes no difference ; it's money due just the same, an' you ain't paid it. These things are mine, an' I want 'em."

Johnson lost control of his temper. "You miserable villain," he cried, "get out of my house, or I'll throw you into the street !"

He rushed at the man, but the stalwart fellow brushed him aside and called his attention to the fact that "there's a policeman just outside, an' if you go to kickin' up any row about this thing you'll find yourself in jail. Take down that bed, Bill," he added.

Carrie screamed as she saw her husband throw himself forward at the man, and she ran toward him. As he was pushed away she caught him in her arms and refused to release him. "No, no, Jim !" she implored him. "Let them take everything ; come away, Jim ; don't get yourself into trouble !"

It was impossible for Johnson to extricate himself from the grasp which his wife had upon him ; she clung to him like a vine. In vain did he tell her that they were losing all that they had saved in three years ; she replied, "Let them take it ; don't leave me ! Stay here, Jim, stay here !"

While the little family remained huddled together in one corner of the room, "Bill" was busy taking down the bed, while the thrifty proprietor was carrying various articles to the sidewalk. All the carpets were pulled up from the floor, all the chairs were taken, even the dishes were removed from the table and placed on the floor while Bill staggered away with that necessary article. Nor did they stop here ; the proprietor procured a bucket of water and quenched the fire in the stove, and the last Jim and Carrie saw of them was the two disappearing through the door, staggering under its weight.

Johnson, Carrie, the baby at her breast, and the four little ones grouped about them, were left sitting on a pine box on a bare

floor, in a house that was cold and without furniture. Every article they possessed was gone, save only a few odd cups and dishes, some pieces of bed clothing, and an oil lamp. They had, prior to this, converted into money every piece of furniture, every trinket, every article of clothing which was their own property and not in immediate use. This leased furniture had come to be practically their sole possession, and now it, too, was gone.

"Oh, God, Jim, *what* are we to do?" cried Carrie. "Are we to starve and freeze to death? My poor little baby, why did you come into the world, where we have to suffer so much? Oh, Jim, *what must* we do?"

Johnson pressed the little wife to his breast, drew the blanket about her thin form, and in a husky voice said, "Don't worry, pet; it will come out all right. I will go down town and get some more furniture. I know another second hand man who is not such a brute, and who will let us have what we need."

Carrie looked up at him through her tears. "But he won't let you have it without some cash down," she said.

"I know," replied Johnson; "but that's all right. I met a friend yesterday from Pennsylvania. He is stopping at the Innskip House, and he told me if I wanted to borrow a little money at any time to come to him and he would lend it to me. Besides, this is Tuesday, the day that man Williams told me to come and see him; I *know* he's got something for me to do, for he got in a new carload of goods yesterday."

"Oh, Jim," said the wife, half hopefully, half despairingly, "you don't mean all that; you're just *saying* it."

"Of course I'm *saying* it, dear," replied Jim, with a painful attempt at a smile, "but it's true ; I know when I go down town to-day I'll get some money and something to do. I'll go right now, because I want to get a stove in here as quickly as possible. You had better take the children and go over to a neighbor's till I return."

Johnson took each of the little ones in turn, clasped them to his heart, wrapped his arms about them and kissed them, looking into their bright young eyes, which gazed back into his, all unconscious of the horror of the situation. He folded his wife and her baby to his breast as though he would incorporate his life into theirs. Carrie burst into tears, and Johnson, unable longer to stanch the pent up flood of his feelings, himself gave way to weeping. The little ones, seeing their parents in tears, joined in the general lamentation. All

were weeping save the baby, asleep at its mother's breast. They sobbed together, till Jim, with a strong effort of will, kissed his wife again and hurried out of the room.

Night came and Jim did not return. Eight o'clock, nine o'clock, ten o'clock, eleven o'clock, and still he had not come. The town hall clock pealed the hour of twelve, and found Carrie anxious, distressed, sitting on a rough cot, which some neighbors, on learning of her condition, had provided, besides giving her a small stove and a little coarse food. The children were asleep, huddled up on the floor, with bed clothing under them and over them. The baby was slumbering on the cot.

Carrie rose and walked the floor in anguish. Her eyes refused to yield more tears; they were hot and red, but dry. She pressed her hands upon her aching head and groaned, "Oh, God, where is Jim? What has happened to him? He would not stay away from me if he could possibly help it."

She could no longer endure the horrible suspense. She threw her shawl over her head and shoulders, and after carefully tucking in the children and the baby, left them sleeping and went out of the house. She locked the front door, and taking the key with her, hurried off. A few minutes later she reached the police station.

"Do you know anything of James V. Johnson?" she asked the sergeant on duty.

"Never heard of him," was the reply.

She gave a description of her husband. They had heard nothing concerning such a man; there was no such man there.

Hastily then she returned home. He might be there by this time, waiting to get in. How her heart throbbed at the thought of meeting him! How close the wolfish destitution that was upon them had driven her to him! She reached the house; he was not there.

Wearily, anxiously, she wore the night away, walking the floor, or sitting upon the cot when her poor, weak frame was too exhausted to move. At six o'clock she was at the police station again. They had heard nothing. She crept to the offices of the newspapers, and furtively scanned the pages of the new issues as they were pasted on bulletin boards in front of the several establishments. No tidings of Jim. She returned home; he was still not there.

Nine o'clock found her again at the police station. A new officer was in charge, and she was obliged to tell her story again.

"Why, that description seems to fit the man they've got in there," said the officer, pointing to a rear room in the station.

"Have they such a man in there?" Carrie asked eagerly, looking toward the door. "What is he there for?"

"Why, it's a dead man that they found hanging to the bridge down here about an hour ago; he's supposed to have committed suicide. He's in there now with the coroner."

"My God!" gasped the woman, throwing back her head, and pressing her temples with her hands. She staggered toward the door indicated. "Let me see him! Let me see him!" Her face was ashen pale, and she clutched at her throat in her efforts to breathe. She reached her trembling arm toward the officer. "Take me to him!" she begged.

The officer touched her elbow in a half movement to take her arm, and said with suppressed nervousness, "Come this way;" then adding, with an effort at reassurance, "Oh, I don't suppose it's the man you're after," he led her to the door, opened it, and entered.

"Oh—it—is—Jim!" she moaned, as she threw herself across the body of the man extended on the table in the center of the room. "My God! My God! My poor husband! My poor boy! Why have you done this! Oh, let me die too, let me die. My children! My baby! Ah!" A shriek that rent the air terminated the distracted words, as the woman reeled and fell heavily to the floor.

The swollen lips responded not, the blue, pale face gave no expression; a tragedy was being enacted at its side greater than that self imposed one beneath the bridge, yet the figure heeded it not. On one side of the room were twelve jurors; the coroner was on the opposite side, the body in the center. Beyond were witnesses and spectators. Several of the jurors ran to the aid of the swooning woman, and the coroner, who was also a physician, rendered some skilled assistance. She was tenderly lifted from the floor and carried into the purer air of the large corridor without. Then the door was closed, and the business at hand proceeded.

A policeman was sworn and placed on the stand. He testified that he was making the last round on his beat shortly before six o'clock that morning, when he discovered, from a distance, what appeared to be a body suspended by a rope from an under girder of the St. Charles Avenue bridge. He approached nearer, and though it was scarcely daylight, he could see enough to tell that it was a man hanging there. He climbed over the railing, and

with much difficulty got down on the girder from which the body was suspended. Witness caught hold of the rope, and tried to pull it up, thinking the man might not yet be altogether dead. He drew him high enough to feel the face, and to see that life was entirely extinct, when he let him slip down again. Then witness went back up on the top of the bridge and hunted up officer Flynn and Sergeant McKee. Together they returned to the body and succeeded in getting it up on the bridge.

Sergeant McKee and officer Flynn testified to their participation in the affair substantially as above.

The coroner then inquired if there was any further evidence.

There was none.

Had the body been searched?

It had not.

The coroner then directed the officers present to search the body.

They proceeded to do so. From the inside pocket of the vest nearest the heart was drawn a sealed envelope. It bore the address:

MRS. CARRIE E. JOHNSON,
1924 Ludlane St.,
City.

"Tear it open," directed the coroner; "and if it contains any writing the clerk will read it."

It was torn open, and a paper was disclosed, from which the clerk read aloud as follows:

MY OWN DARLING WIFE:

I give up the battle. Not for my own sake, darling, but for yours. For myself, I could starve and die in the streets and not complain, but I cannot see you and the babies starve. My death,

the manner in which I die, and the reason why I die, will surely attract public attention. I do not believe that God has put a flinty heart in every breast in this city, though we have not found an exception. I believe that when it is publicly known that a well bred and carefully raised American white woman, with her five babies, is starving to death, and that her husband, after the most diligent and protracted search for employment, is unable to find it or to secure food for them, and has hanged himself in desperation—I believe, I say, that when this is printed at length in the newspapers, assistance will come to you and the little ones.

As long as I live there is no sympathy or succor for any of us. Though I refused money extended me through sympathy in the earlier stages of our calamity, I have since begged men for money to buy food, and told them my children were starving. They would coldly laugh and tell me they heard that a dozen times every day; ask me why I did not go to work and earn money to support my family. In short, I was not believed.

I could not longer eat a part of the little food which the poor neighbors brought you and the children, thereby depriving you and them of what you both so much needed.

I do not fear death. I am sure there is a life just beyond that is filled with lightness and happiness; that in that life I can even see you daily as I do now, can be with you and sit with you.

My dear, sweet one, how my heart bleeds to part with you! I leave you and my little ones in the hands of God and charity. If there is a fraction of gold in this city that is not held by wild beasts' claws, it will bring food to your mouths. Kiss my darling babies. We shall meet in heaven, and at last be free from suffering and misery.

Farewell.

Your loving husband,
JAMES V. JOHNSON.
John E. Bennett.

A SON OF THE SEA.

I WAS born for deep sea faring;
I was bred to put to sea;
Stories of my father's daring
Filled me at my mother's knee.

I was sired among the surges;
I was cubbed beside the foam;
All my heart is in its verges,
And the sea wind is my home.

All my boyhood, from far vernal
Bournes of being, came to me
Dream-like, plangent, and eternal
Memories of the plunging sea.

Bliss Carman.

IN THE PUBLIC EYE

In a modest, three story frame house, overlooking the quiet New Jersey village that bears his name, there lives, at the age of ninety three, a plain old man who has perhaps amassed a larger fortune than has ever rewarded the industry of any one man through the channels of legitimate business. To those who look upon wealth as a proof of dishonesty, and regard the owner of millions as a public foe, we recommend a glance at the character and the career of John I. Blair of Blairstown.

At ten years of age, he began life as clerk and errand boy in a store in the old Moravian town of Hope. At seventeen he was managing a store of his own at the hamlet of Gravel Hill, twelve miles from the Delaware Water Gap. This place has been his home ever since, and long ago rechristened itself by his name. At twenty seven he was operating five stores in adjoining towns, and four flouring mills; was supplying the Morris and Essex Canal Company with produce which his own teams carted across the State to Paterson; and had cleared fifteen thousand dollars by the purchase of a cargo of cotton, supposed to be damaged by water, but which he shrewdly discovered to be nearly uninjured. Next he organized the Belvidere Bank, through which many of his large transactions have been made, and which still lies nearer the old capitalist's heart than the great Wall Street banking house that bears his name.

Almost everything that came in Mr. Blair's way paid tribute to his wonderful business foresight, adding its part to the steady stream of gold flowing into his capacious pockets. His financial genius rapidly expanded its scope. In 1846 the brothers George W. and Joseph Scranton secured the assistance of Mr. Blair in the first attempt to manufacture iron with the aid of anthracite coal. A few years later he was the prime factor in the organization of the Scranton Coal and Iron Company, which gave its name to what is now one of the important industrial cities of Pennsylvania. To carry its products to market, a railway was a prime necessity; and the Delaware, Lackawanna, Western was the result. Of this road he is still one of the largest stockholders, as well as its oldest director. The development of the city of Scranton was a new source of

wealth to Mr. Blair, who had invested largely in coal lands and building sites.

In 1859, while a delegate to the convention that nominated Lincoln for the Presidency, Mr. Blair accepted an invitation to ride over the Chicago, Iowa, and Nebraska Railroad, which was then in financial straits. Mr. Blair's examination led him to purchase a controlling interest in the road. He extended it to Omaha, and before a year had passed trains were running as far as the Des Moines River. Here the engineers reported that a million dollars must be expended in throwing a bridge from bluff to bluff, two hundred and seventy five feet above the stream. Another man might have accepted such a report as final, but Mr. Blair, accompanied by a single friend, started in the dead of winter to search along the river banks for some place where his line could descend toward the water by an easy grade. It was a week before they found an available spot, where a narrow ravine sloped down to the river; and there, at Honey Creek, the railroad still runs.

Mr. Blair was one of the first men to realize the marvelous possibilities of the westward flow of immigration, and to foresee the immense value of a transcontinental railroad. In 1862, accompanied by his son, De Witt Blair, and Oakes Ames of Boston, he traveled across the prairies, to investigate the best route for the proposed trunk line. They decided upon the Platte valley; and although strong influence was urging a more southern route, when the Union Pacific was finally organized—with Charles Francis Adams as president, and Oakes Ames and John I. Blair among the directors—their plan was adopted, and Omaha chosen as the eastern terminus. The building of this and other Western roads gave Mr. Blair several million acres of valuable land from the government grants, the control of more miles of railroad than were held by any other man in America, and most of his immense wealth.

Learning, as a railroad maker, the superiority of steel rails over iron, and finding the prices of English steel exorbitant, Mr. Blair, with his associates, undertook the manufacture of their own rails, and so gave birth to the great Lackawanna Steel Company. It was largely at his instance that Congress assisted the "infant industry"—