

going to have you girls up when the house is all settled, and we'll celebrate for fair.

Think of me keeping house! I've sure got lots to learn, and grandma's going to have a grand time teaching me. But honest, Ray, I don't feel as if I deserved it a

bit. I get all choked up when I talk about it; but I gotta meet dad now, and when we get our shopping done, we're going to hurry back to Essex.

We want to see Charley Porter's face when he finds out who dad really is!

# The Corner of Richman Street

THE STORY OF A COMPLETE REVERSAL OF THE SEESAW OF LIFE

By L. J. Beeston

**L**ANDMARK stood under one of the trimmed holly-bushes, his eager and fascinated eyes fixed upon a rather curious sight.

There was a double row of hollies, shaped to pyramid form, between the gate of the suburban house and the lighted window upon which Landmark's gaze was bent. He stood there not merely because he did not wish to be seen, but because a deluge of rain was tumbling from the night sky, beating upon the ground with a seething hiss.

In the interior of the room, which was clearly revealed by the unshaded window, he could see a tall, slender man in evening dress, standing with his back to the fire. On a table in front of the man were three objects. These seemed to absorb his attention, making his eyes glow feverishly, and leaving him oblivious or disregarding of all else.

One of the articles was a ten-pound note; another was an unframed portrait of a woman; and the third was a revolver.

When the tall, slender man looked at the bank-note, it was as if it was the last he had in the world. And it *was* the last he had in the world.

When he turned his eyes from it to the portrait of the woman, the sternness in them faded and was replaced by an expression of love and longing.

When he glanced from the woman's face to the revolver, his jaw stiffened, although his cheek paled, and he drew a deep breath as if he would lift some terrible weight from his heart.

Under the holly, Landmark stooped and watched. He was trembling a little from excitement—an excitement not created wholly by the silent drama he was witnessing. This drama he translated rightly, for he was an intelligent and educated man.

"That fellow in there," he said to himself, "is facing ruin, the love of a woman, and the end of all things which a pistol ball in the brain brings."

He said that; but it did not explain all his interest. As a matter of fact, he wanted the ten-pound note.

He was thinly clothed, and the wet night air went to his bones. The rain made a tenuous veil between him and the window, and beat drearily upon the hard leaves of the hollies.

"I am down," Landmark went on, "but that chap is down and out. Yet he is wearing good clothes, and is obviously well-nourished. I haven't a shirt to my back, my shoes are letting in water, and hunger is gnawing my inside; but I do not want to shoot myself. Why, then, should he? It must be because there is something else—something worse than a back without a shirt, shoes with holes in them, and a stomach without food to put in it. Now what the devil is he going to do?"

The tall, slender man stepped to the table as if he had made up his mind. He pushed aside the ten-pound note disdainfully, took up the photograph, looked at the face as if it was heaven and eternal life, put it down, and lifted the revolver.

At that moment he seemed to hear a sound in the house which caught his atten-

tion, for his eyes, over which a strong flash of light had passed, suddenly sought the door of the room. For a moment he paused, frowning a little; then he put the revolver on the table again and moved to the door, which he opened.

"Now! It is my one chance!" panted Landmark.

The room was empty; the tall, slender man had gone out. The interloper ran forward, threw up the lower sash of the window, put a leg over the sill, and the next moment was in the room.

Half a dozen steps brought him to the table, and his red, numbed fingers closed upon the bank-note like a vulture's claws upon a savory scrap of food. He turned to bolt.

Suddenly he recoiled as a deafening crash rang in his ears.

By a mischance—unlucky for him—the sash-line of the window had chosen that moment to snap, so that the sash fell in its frame with a sound like a gun-shot. Landmark got back his wits before a fraction of a second had passed, leaped to the window, and tried to raise it again; but it was exceedingly heavy with no line to run on the wheel.

While he struggled, he heard a footstep behind him. The occupant of the room had returned, drawn back swiftly by the crash of sound.

Landmark spun round, a bitter curse falling from his lips. He dropped the ten-pound note and made a grab for the revolver, as being more useful to him in the exigency; but before he could make any menace with it the other man leaped forward. His left hand caught Landmark's right wrist in a grip of iron, and his right closed upon the intruder's throat.

Landmark was a man of powerful build, and the urge of desperation spurred him; but lack of nourishment had sapped his stamina. He tripped his adversary, and fell with him upon the deep-pile carpet; but that did not loosen the grip at his throat. Choked by it, his strength ebbed; he was flung over upon his back; the pistol fell from his hand; a great splash of red light swung before his eyes.

"I'm done! Don't kill me!" he gasped, drawing up his knees.

With a sense of overwhelming relief he felt the squeeze at his windpipe relaxed. A voice pierced his bewilderment.

"You spoke just in time. Get up!"

Landmark reeled to his feet. He was badly shaken.

"What brought you here?" the other man inquired grimly, pocketing the undischarged revolver.

Landmark felt his wrenched throat.

"That brought me here," he answered, pointing to the crumpled note that lay on the carpet.

"How—ah, you were watching me through the window?"

"Yes."

"And you were prepared to face prison for the sake of a paltry ten-pound note?"

"I didn't think of the prison."

"No, I suppose not. You couldn't have. If it had been fifty thousand, now—"

"You might let me go!" Landmark blurted.

"Why?"

"It can't matter much to you—just now—what happens to me, can it?"

The other stared at him gloomily.

"I understand. You have been putting certain constructions on what you saw. No, I care not a curse what happens to you. You are a bungler; there is little of the artist in your methods. Have you tried this sort of thing before?"

"I have not."

"I can believe that. I see! That coat—those shoes—you are out for the primal necessities. You speak well. Where were you educated?"

"Winchester and Trinity, Cambridge."

"All right! You can get out."

Scarcely believing his ears, Landmark turned to make a speedy exit.

"Stop! You are forgetting the ten-pound note. I give it to you."

Landmark faced round.

"You mean it?" he demanded savagely.

"I do. Oh, the note's all right! You needn't be afraid to change it. I give it to you because—because I have no further need of it."

Landmark did not care to argue or ask further questions. He crushed the note in his palm and left the room by the way in which he had entered. He took six steps toward the street, and then, for some reason—possibly to convince himself that he was not dreaming—he stopped and looked back.

What he saw numbed him as if his limbs had been touched with paralysis.

Through the doorway of the well-lighted room a second person had entered—a

squat-built man wearing a blue serge reefer coat and a badly fitting bowler hat. The tall, slender man was facing this newcomer. His cheeks were bloodless as marble, and as he looked at the other he slowly raised his pistol to the level of his own right temple. Only a second of time was between him and no time at all.

The squat-built man did not move an inch; but he called out, in a voice which had the lash of a whip:

"Put that down!"

The other obeyed, abruptly cowed.

"That is sensible," said the intruder.

"Now, Wellman, you know what I have come for?"

"Yes."

"You will make no fuss?"

"No."

"Come along, then!"

Landmark saw and understood. Suddenly he was very much afraid, so that his teeth rattled together. He had never seen a man arrested before; he had never seen any one dragged under in that fashion.

## II

THREE years later Arthur Bascombe Wellman emerged from prison.

With amazed eyes and uplifted palms the world—his world—had seen the well-known financier go into eclipse. The astonishing news made big head-lines in the newspapers, which announced that Arthur Bascombe Wellman had been arrested overnight in his own house by Inspector Redding, on a charge of appropriating funds. The trial followed. It was thought by many that he had been victimized by a partner; but whether victimized or not, he was sent to Irons prison for three years.

Every one knew when he went in; no one cared to know when he came out.

At about eight o'clock one night, a week later, Wellman entered the single furnished room which he had taken in a more than shabby street off the Charing Cross Road. He lighted the candle in a broken china holder on the table. The miserable gleam flickered on the poor environment about it. The man who had been accustomed, before the blow, to every comfort and a good deal of luxury, turned his haggard eyes to right and left, and stifled a groan which his very heart sent up.

He then perceived that a letter had been pushed underneath his door before his return to the room.

A first glance showed him his own name upon the envelope; a second that the little wrapper was not fastened; a third that it had been delivered by hand. It contained the following simple message:

If Arthur Wellman is in need of a good meal, he will be at the west corner of Richman Street, where it turns into Portland Square, at ten o'clock precisely.

So Wellman read. It had a queerish sound, this invitation. When a man is asked to a supper, he is not generally requested to wait at a street-corner. Wellman conjectured that one of his former friends must have seen him, and, from a motive of compassion, had so requested him to call, though in a rather unconventional way.

He put on his hat and went out. He did not even hesitate. How could he, when he had not had a decent meal for a week? The primal urge of absolute hunger sweeps aside any delicate considerations.

He was at the spot fifteen minutes before the time named. It was a November night, with a thin fog and a drizzle of rain, and he shivered with cold. He kept looking about him, but the few people who passed paid no regard to him.

He soon turned his attention upon the house at the corner. At once his notice was chained by a partly open window on the ground floor, through which poured a flood of light. He saw a dining-room with solid furniture, water-colors in gilt frames, and upon a table an untouched cold supper with a setting of silver and crystal, and red wine in decanters.

The thought that here was his promised meal flitted through Wellman's brain. Absurd! He dismissed the idea.

All the same, the sight of those desirable things, of that interior comfort barred from him by a mere window, began to fret his nerves. And the window was a little open, with only a brass hand-rail between it and the front steps of the house.

A flush began to dye Wellman's cheeks, and he deliberately turned his back upon the inviting scene. He had not come down to that, thank God! He had never been a sneak-thief, at any rate.

The thought of the temptation made him look stealthily about him. At a distance of a few yards a man was watching him. As Wellman peered forward, it seemed to him that the still figure was that of a squat-

built man wearing a reefer-cut coat and a bowler hat tilted over one eye.

That form! Memory of it was seared into his brain!

Wellman shrank back and flattened himself against the railings. Thank Heaven that he had not even toyed with the temptation upon which he had just turned his back!

Possibly, however, his brain, weary and ill-nourished, had tricked him by a fantasy. Possibly he would have imagined the face of the detective upon any pair of shoulders at such a moment. That was true, he felt; but he would linger no longer. He had had enough of this waiting, and he swung upon his heel to go away.

At that instant the door of the house behind him opened, and a man servant ran down the steps.

"Excuse me," he called out quickly. "Are you Mr. Wellman?"

"I am."

"Then will you please come inside?"

The other obeyed, and was shown into the dining-room which he had viewed from a more comfortless angle. The servant drew the curtains, stirred the fire to a fine blaze, and went out without speaking a single word.

Wellman looked at the closed door. It was all very strange. He warmed his chilled hands before the fire and continued his vigil, certain that some one would appear; but no one came.

The house was very silent. Wellman's eyes kept seeking the table, with its most inviting meal. Surely it was to this that he had been asked! He kept looking at the good things on the spotless table linen, and resolution to do nothing gradually ebbed.

Perhaps he was expected to help himself. In that case he was surely wasting time. It was an argument which the gnaw of increasing hunger was not slow to reinforce. He waited ten minutes longer, and, no one appearing, he finally drew up a chair and made a start.

The moment he began to taste the food all doubts whether he ought to do so vanished; but when he had made a hearty meal, when he surveyed the wreckage, and the thing was done, he experienced returning qualms of conscience. However, it could not be helped now; so to clinch matters he helped himself to a couple of glasses of red Burgundy.

Warmed through and through, he felt decidedly better. Only one thing was lacking—a thing that he had not enjoyed for three sad years. It was a good cigar.

No good stopping now! He looked about him, and, sure enough, there was an open box of Havanas on top of a revolving book-case. He rose from his chair and stepped toward it.

When he reached the book-case, his outstretched hand became fixed as if paralyzed. By the side of the box of cigars were three other objects. One was a ten-pound bank-note; the second a revolver; and the third the unframed portrait of the woman he had loved—and lost.

Back from the past—a past which seemed sundered from the present by an eternity—floated to Wellman memory of a night when he had stood and regarded, with weighted heart and darkened eyes, his last ten-pound note, and the picture of the lost one, and the blued-steel instrument of swift death. Recollection furnished a vivid photograph of the incident, but that did not assist his groping wonder in the mystery before him. He stood and stared, utterly lost.

### III

"LIFE, my friend, is a queer seesaw," said a quiet voice.

Wellman spun round, taken by surprise, and looked into the smiling eyes of a young man about five years his junior. It was a good-looking face, strong and cultured, and the evening dress that its owner was wearing set off to advantage his broad shoulders and athletic frame.

"First one is up, and the other is down; and then the other rises and the first descends," continued the newcomer. "Does not that help you to identify me? I placed those articles on the book-case in order that you might hazard a guess. Come, do you not remember?"

Wellman struggled, but shook his head.

"I was the last visitor you received before—before you went under," explained his interlocutor, the smile lingering in his eyes. "An unexpected, an uninvited guest. We had a bit of a scrap, I believe, for that ten-pound note which you—"

"Ah, I place you now!" interrupted Wellman, much surprised.

"I came in and helped myself without being asked; and—pardon a mere jest—it is what you appear to have done, likewise.



Don't look embarrassed, man! It is your end of the seesaw, that is all."

"You—you sent me a letter?" faltered Wellman.

"Yes, and I expected you to come."

Suddenly an idea sent a painful flush to Wellman's cheeks. Had he been asked to wait outside the house in order that he might be tempted to enter without ceremony? The flush revealed his thought.

"I admit that that was my notion," explained the other apologetically. "I wanted to complete the reversal of what occurred at our first meeting. I see now that it was rather brutal of me, and I ask your forgiveness. Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Landmark. Pray be seated—here, by the fire. I am glad to see you, Wellman. I took a keen pleasure in arranging this meeting, which I wanted to be as dramatic as possible. Take a cigar. I have only nice things to say to you."

Landmark himself lighted one. When he had seen his visitor comfortable he went on complacently:

"My servant tells me that you were out when he called, and that he put my letter on your table."

"Under the door."

"Much the same thing. For an entire year I have been waiting for you to be set at liberty, in order that I might thank you in a substantial manner."

"Thank me?"

"I can never do so enough."

"What for?"

"You might have sent me to prison. Instead, you gave me ten pounds and my liberty."

Wellman smiled faintly.

"I do not remember giving you the money."

"No? I can understand your forgetting details at such a moment as that; but you did. It was the turning-point in my life. Those ten sovereigns laid the foundation of my present wealth. Two years later I found myself a rich man. I am rich now—very rich."

"Ah!" sighed Wellman.

"And I am going to pay you interest on your money."

"Interest on ten pounds, for three years?"

Wellman's smile deepened. He drew with keen enjoyment on his cigar. How nice it was in this warm, well-furnished room! He had once owned such comfort

himself; and this well-dressed man who sat opposite to him had come to him driven by the sharp urge of want. Truly, life was a seesaw!

"It does not sound much," answered Landmark. "If we look at it commercially, it would mean but a few shillings; but I do not regard it that way at all. I consider that you have been responsible for all my good fortune, and you shall be recompensed accordingly. You shall not leave this room, Wellman, without a check in your pocket. More, I need your brains. The world knew what they were before you made a false step. Three years of hard luck cannot have killed them. My prosperity is not so great but that it may be doubled—trebled; and you shall come in with me and help me do it!"

The words quickened Wellman's heart, sending a glow of pleasure to his worn cheeks and haggard eyes.

"You are very good," he said simply. "I must esteem myself very fortunate."

"I am hoping you will repeat that remark—when I have finished."

Landmark climbed out of his chair and stood with his back to the fireplace.

"The seesaw on which we find ourselves," he continued, "is more complete than you suppose. When you were in my position, you loved a woman. Well, now that I am where you were, I, too, love a woman."

"But not the same," sighed Wellman.

"Yes, the same."

Wellman started. All at once a tingle of hostility ran in his veins.

"It is easily explained," went on the other. "Wishing to do you a good turn when you had been sentenced and I was prospering, I inquired into the facts of your life, to see if I could help any one who had been dependent upon you. That was how I came to meet—the original of that photograph there. Oh, she did not need help—I am aware of that; but, as I say, I got to know her, and then I began to love her. I hide nothing from you. I say that she who loves you still is the one woman in the world for me."

Wellman tossed aside his cigar and waited, ill at ease.

"Yes, I will be candid," continued Landmark determinedly. "She loves you still, Wellman. I know that she has made advances to you since you came out from Irons. I know that you have kept away—

because you feel, I suppose, that shame for the past puts an insuperable barrier between you and her; but whenever you choose to go to her she will offer you welcome, forgiveness, happiness."

Wellman's chest rose and fell. He groaned and clinched his hands.

"But if you do *not* go," went on Landmark, almost fiercely, "I shall have a chance. The question is, will you, or will you not?"

Wellman drew a deep breath.

"Is your promised help to me conditional on my answer?" he asked.

"I mean to give you five hundred pounds whatever that answer may be; but if you assert, in the most explicit and final fashion, that you feel you never can seek that lady again, then I shall ask you to accept five thousand."

Wellman got up instantly.

"No, by God!" he said vehemently. "I can never sell her affections in that way! I do not want your money; I do not want your five hundred. Whatever I may do is my business—and hers!"

"You definitely decline my offer?"

"I must."

"You will admit that I have been frank?"

"Yes, I admit that."

"I have been more—much more. By assuring you that she loves and wants you still, I may have killed my own chances."

"I cannot help that."

"No, you could not. Sit down, I pray. Do not go yet. Well, I have spoken of one matter, and I have had the worst of it. We will forget it. There remains another for discussion. I will not press any ready money upon you, since you are inclined to regard it in the way you do; but my offer to take you into partnership remains open, and is unprejudiced by any condition at all. I repeat that I need your brains, Wellman. You possess in them an asset which I must call mine!"

The speaker's voice had changed. It had become stern and authoritative. The word "must" had been shot out with vehemence. Wellman considered and remained silent.

"I may count upon you, then?" insisted Landmark.

"You are forgetting one thing."

"And that is?"

"That my name no longer carries weight in the world of business and finance. It

was once a high guarantee; it is now—what you know it to be."

"True; but it is not your name I need, but your experience. Come, I think we understand each other?"

"I understand—now," replied Wellman gloomily. "And I say no. I have had three years of it."

"And they have beaten you—you?"

"Possibly. Who knows? You talked of being frank. Tell me, are you offering me the straight or the crooked?"

"We will make it seem straight. Will that answer do?"

Wellman shook his head.

"I might have known!" he muttered.

"Known what?" demanded Landmark sharply.

Wellman glanced round the richly furnished room expressively.

"Remember in what circumstances you forced yourself on my notice," said he. "And now I find—these sure symptoms of money. You have not changed your methods; you are but flying in much higher circles."

"Damn your criticism!" retorted the other with a vicious snap of his jaws.

"Certainly I have small right to put them forward."

Wellman took up his hat.

"But wait—wait!" urged Landmark impatiently. "If you are afraid of the police, then you need not be. I will look after that."

"I don't know. I am discharged, but I shall be under surveillance. While waiting outside this house I was passed by a detective officer."

"Imagination!"

"I think not. I knew the man at once. It was Inspector Redding. It was he who arrested me. I have reason to remember that face!"

Wellman moved toward the door and opened it.

"Good night," he said curtly.

He was not answered, and he let himself out of the house. At the corner he paused. Where was he going? What did he mean to do?

A woman's name crept into his mind. Still was he loved and wanted. One of all the many he had known still remembered him, and more than remembered. He had but to go to her, and he would find the compassion and love for which he hungered and thirsted.

Well, he would go; he would put aside the shame which had stopped him; he would be happy once more!

## IV

At that instant, as Wellman was about to turn, a slight sound drew his gaze to the ground-floor window of the house. Landmark had jerked aside the curtains and was looking out. For a few moments he stood immobile, then returned to the fireplace, his back to the blaze. He was clearly visible from outside, and Wellman, in the drizzle and fog, regarded him reflectively.

Between Landmark's eyes a frown of perplexity deepened. He was saying to himself:

"I reckoned upon Wellman. Damn his scruples! I am in a most awkward hole, and his brains could have got me out. Yet in one way I can give him points. When *he* made a false move, he allowed the police to see it. I am more wise to the danger of the game than he, and I fear nothing that way, thank God!"

He removed his cigar from his mouth, looked at it for a moment, and turned it about meditatively.

"I know how to throw dust in their eyes," he continued, muttering. "I soar too high in the blue to fear any swoop from the police. Now Wellman—by the way, it was queer that he was under observation outside my house. And then that letter which my servant delivered, and which he assured me he had placed on a table. Wellman said he found it under the door, which suggests that it might have been tampered with and read. I wish I had asked him if it was sealed, as when it left me. If I was

nervous, I might imagine that I, and not he, am being watched, and my correspondence opened! I might even spoil my peace of mind by fancying that that detective brute was not hanging outside the house with an eye to Wellman, but that he meditates a pounce on me! That would indeed be a complete reversal of the seesaw—and damned strange, too!"

As he spoke, with a grim and skeptical smile, he mechanically lifted his gaze toward the door. The handle was turning—the door was opening!

Landmark stiffened to stone. He did not breathe.

On the threshold stood a man in a square-cut blue serge coat and a hard felt hat set at a rakish angle. Landmark knew him at once; he had seen him on one other occasion—just as Wellman, out in the night, rigid with a paralysis of emotion, was seeing him now.

Landmark uttered a snarling cry. Breaking the spell upon his senses, he leaped to the revolving book-case and snatched up the revolver. His cheeks were bloodless; and as he looked at the other, he slowly raised his pistol to the level of his own right temple. Only a second of time was between him and no time at all.

The officer called out, in a voice which had the lash of a whip:

"Put that down!"

Landmark obeyed the order, his fell purpose dissolved.

"That is better," said the detective. "Now, Landmark, I think you know what I have come for?"

Wellman waited to hear no more. He fled, with quaking heart and shaking knees.

## OUTPOSTS

LIFE changes—only change abides. Youth goes,  
Fair with its dreams, from childhood; its forays  
Into the land of fancy cease, and days  
Of sober effort their steep front oppose  
Until at last the blackening shadows close,  
And the sun sets, and sets with a false peace;  
And the dark comes, whose rest is man's decease.

Yet here and there on the black front of night,  
Like the far bivouac of a battled host,  
The stars advance their distant points of light,  
And God's immortal soldiers keep their post!

Harry Kemp

# Not So Easy\*

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE — THE ADVENTURES OF A BRAVE  
YOUNG MAN WHO UNDERTOOK TO TELL THE TRUTH

By William Slavens McNutt

AT ten o'clock on an evening in early May the New York City Hall Square stirred Clare Knowlton with a deep sense of the proximity of world power and romance. The Woolworth Building, its soaring, slender length exquisitely revealed in the glow of reflected light, reminded her of a bejeweled steel finger reaching experimentally skyward to prod the stars. It occurred to her that reaching for the stars was a natural effort for a structure rooted in a soil so rich and pregnant with startling progress as lower Manhattan.

On all sides the huge buildings of downtown New York — man-made mountain-ranges of steel and stone — were more felt than seen in the soft night. Clare thought of them as volcanic peaks, reared by human hands and daily active with human energy.

The day stunned her with the sheer volume of its activity, and the sharp details of that volume blurred her vision of its grandeur and romance. Only at night, in the deserted little park that was like a valley of silence in the midst of hills of muffled, pregnant sound, was she able to approximate a realization of the magnitude, potentiality, and romance of the daily pageant of which she was a professional observer and recorder. In the glare and bustle and roar of the day, history was made in the vast structures that surrounded her; in the muffled, rumbling mystery of the night it was balanced and written. Clare was proud of her little part in the writing.

As she stood in front of the City Hall steps, waiting, she was thrilled with the thought of the news from all the world flowing into the sparsely lit masses of stone and brick and steel that rose from Park Row. From the farthest corners of the world it

came, from battle-line and council hall, from arctic outposts and jungle stations. Flashing swiftly in through the astounding length of impertinent cables that mock the depth and width of oceans, thrumming along thousands of miles of tiny, humming wire, even riding the empty air as swift and sure as an omnipotent spirit's thought, it came to its home of the written word in that dark mountain-range of buildings, and was hastily made into a mirror in which a hurried world at breakfast might casually glance and see its true reflection.

Clare was passionately glad to be a recording cog in one of the great machines that ground out the news. She loved the work, with its peculiar obligations and opportunities. She was in her early twenties, a trim, blond girl wholesomely intense and sparkling with enthusiasm. Her thoroughly feminine charm was, if anything, accentuated by a certain boyishness of thought and manner.

She had been waiting for perhaps fifteen minutes when she saw Jim Pickering approaching from the direction of Park Row.

Her pulse quickened as she watched him — a rugged, confident young fellow with a peculiarly proprietary air. Wherever he was, he always seemed to belong there. He could go farther without a police card or a press badge than any reporter in town.

"Sorry, Clare," he apologized, as he came near. "Been waiting long?"

"Just a few minutes," the girl answered, laying her hand on Pickering's arm and swinging happily into step beside him. "You all up?"

"At last," he said grouchyly. "After I phoned you they stuck me for about a half-column of bla-a-ah on that pure milk thing