

FOUR BITES OF A CHERRY.

By George Folsom.

How a Genius Collected \$10,000
At the Rate of \$10,000 a Clip
—and Kept It.

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"Very carefully," returned Captain Chesley, "we mustn't move too fast on such a slight identification. Find his house address, and something about his habits. But be sure there isn't any mistake made; and see what you can find out about Field and his trip to Malden. He isn't with us, and he is worth considering just now."

McGill left the room, and Chesley, after a few words with General Martial, went to his office to attend to routine matters.

Two weeks had passed, and the police were no nearer a solution of the Cossett robbery than they were on the morning after the crime. Mr. Simon Cossett had made no move to discover how Miss Nellie Cossett's picture had found its way to his front steps.

The strange relations between himself and the two cousins who thought he had defrauded them prevented his making inquiries in Malden, and Field could be of any further service to him in this matter. His description of Linden did not prove anything. As for the police inquiries concerning this recently discovered relative of the Malden Cossetts, it was obvious that one of Chesley's men had gone over the Malden ground, and anxious to find a victim, had tried to implicate Linden because he wore a gray suit and looked something like the man seen in front of Cossett's house.

The department had guardedly suggested that he ought to help them find the gray man, and, while they did not mention Linden's name in this connection, there was no doubt that they would like to goad the financier into some action that would give them an excuse for inquiring into the recent movements of his young kinsman. The wonder was that they had not detained Linden and confronted him with the financier.

The latter was acute enough to see that if he were seen with Linden the police would at once come to him with a host of new questions. But angry as Mr. Simon Cossett was, because of the high-handed outrage he had been subjected to, he was not yet prepared to move against Nellie's supposed sweetheart, for Nellie had always been his best-loved relative and, whatever his suspicions of the man, he could not risk making a mistake.

Seated in his down-town office, he looked at the little, feeble portrait, and thought of the futility of trying to solve the robbery problem without implicating or harming his own people, which meant, more particularly, Nellie Cossett.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," said one of his two clerks, opening the door to the private office.

Mr. Cossett signified that he would receive the visitor and the clerk ushered in a tall young man of good build. The visitor was dressed in a blue serge suit and a straw hat. His black hair was worn short, and he had a small black mustache turned up at the ends in the French style.

His movements were quick, almost nervous, and when he spoke a slight accent betrayed a man who was more like a Frenchman than an American.

"I am," he said, after he had taken the seat indicated by Mr. Cossett, "desirous of buying some mining stock, merely for an investment and some amusement. I have friends on your New York Bourse, your Wall Street, mentioning a well-known coffee brokerage firm, and they sent me to you."

It was a quarter to twelve, and Mr. Cossett noted that, with all the man's desire to invest, he seemed in a hurry to get the matter over and done with. However, when the financier had reached a stock on his lists of which there was comparatively little left, the Frenchman decided to take more than half of it.

When the transfer was made, with the usual formalities, the visitor laid down \$10,000 in crisp new notes of large denomination.

"Now," said he, as he placed the stock in the inside pocket of his coat, "I have some very good friends who may, it is possible, wish to have some of the same stock. Can I make an appointment to call once more at, shall we say, the same moment tomorrow morning?"

"By all means," said Mr. Cossett, "I will be pleased to oblige your friends."

"I thank you," said his visitor, as he rose to leave.

The next morning, when, at nine o'clock, Mr. Cossett arrived at his office, he found six telegrams, three

of them from Boston and three from Philadelphia. One from each city contained a definite order for stock of the kind the Frenchman had bought.

The two combined called for an amount which was greater than he would have been able to supply before the Frenchman bought his, and as the senders had said that their accredited New York agents would call between one and two o'clock, Mr. Cossett was in a quandary. If these agents called and found that they would not be able to secure anything like the amount expected, they might go away to get instructions before going on with the matter.

Mr. Cossett now thought of his polite French visitor. If he kept his appointment, he might be willing to sell back at an advance which would net him a neat profit.

Promptly at a quarter to twelve Mr. Louis Delaine, the visitor of the day before, was announced. After a few pleasant words of greeting, Mr. Cossett said:

"Mr. Delaine, I am about to throw myself on your good-nature. I had forgotten that I was partly pledged to parties in Philadelphia and Boston for the stock I sold you. If you are willing to sell at an advance of two hundred it would please me greatly. It is rather irregular to ask a gentleman to give up his holdings for a mere—what is your French word?—a mere bagatelle. But you see how I am situated."

"Oh, that is too bad," said Mr. Delaine, with an expressive movement of the eyebrows. "And then I was about to ask you for still more for my friends. But of course I cannot hold a gentleman to a 'perhaps I will want more.'"

"And for mine; well, two hundred dollars is not bad for one day in your country or any country, so—well, I think you may take it again, if you are somewhat obliged to first consider your regular patrons. I am pleased to do this, but disappointed, too, my dear sir."

"You are very kind," returned Mr. Cossett blandly, "and if I can find anything else you would care for—"

"Not until I see my friends," said the visitor suavely, "I will call soon again."

Mr. Cossett rose and opened his safe. "I will be able to return you your money with the addition of the two hundred," he said, taking out the bills the man had given him the day before, and adding the premium.

"That is good—or no," replied his visitor, appearing to ponder over something. "I think, as I cannot go to my friends empty-handed of your stock, I will go into the country for a little visit, and I do not care to carry so much money on a journey abroad from the city. Perhaps you will give me your check instead, and you will favor me more also by going with me for luncheon."

"With pleasure," said Mr. Cossett, and then, having arranged the transfer of the stock, he returned it and the money to his safe. Then he said, "I will have my clerk write you a check."

When the check was brought in Mr. Cossett signed it and passed it over to the Frenchman. At this moment the telephone bell in the outer office sounded. After a moment's colloquy over the wire the clerk came in and said that Mr. Lewin, of Lewin & Holden, wished to know if Mr. Delaine was still with Mr. Cossett.

"Would you object?" said Mr. Delaine, pointing to the branch telephone on Mr. Cossett's desk, "this is a very personal affair with Mr. Lewin, you see."

"No objection at all, my dear sir," replied Mr. Cossett, rising to give his chair to the visitor. "Put it on my 'phone, Mr. Sneed," he said to the clerk.

"Thank you so much," said the visitor, as he walked around the big desk and sat down near the open safe.

Another ring was now heard at the outside telephone, and, as before, the clerk came to the door of the private office. "A call for you, Mr. Cossett," he said.

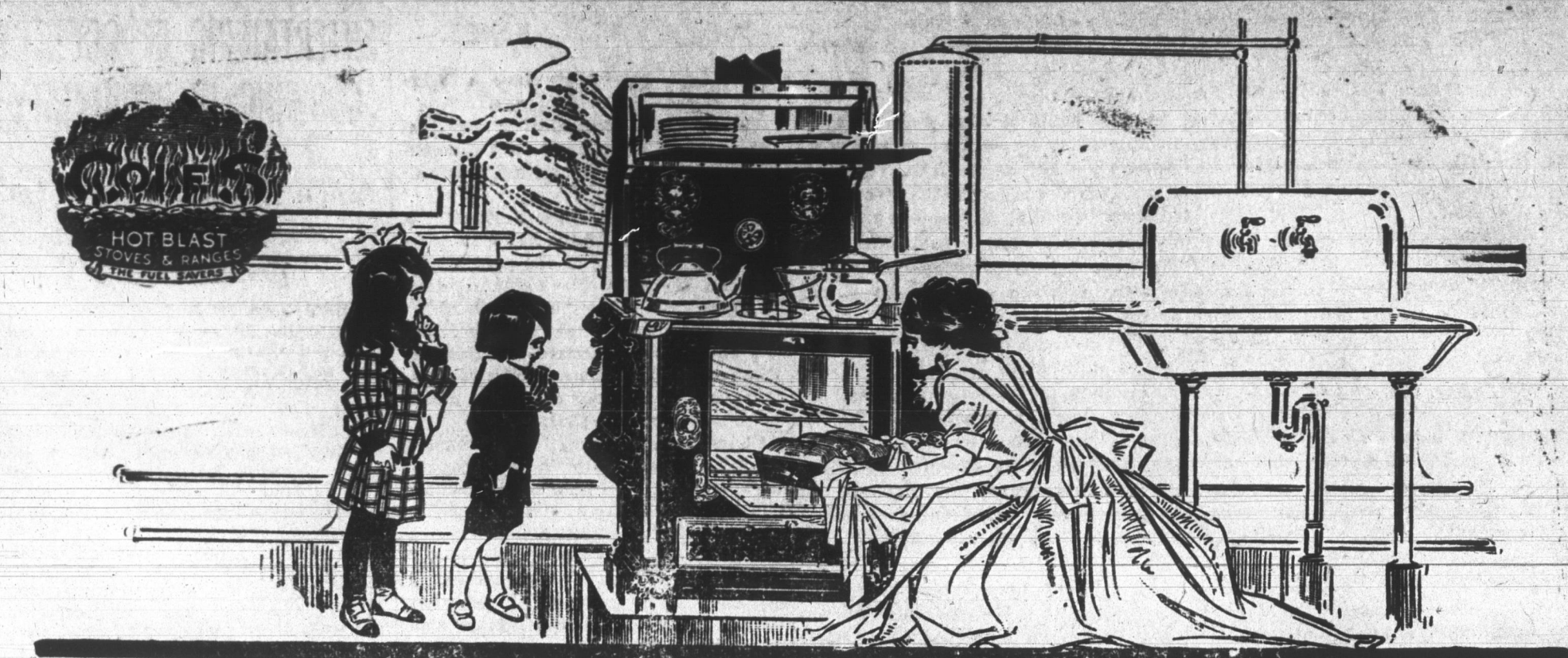
Mr. Cossett was very near the door. On the opposite side of the desk, directly back of the safe door, Mr. Delaine was listening intently to what was coming over the wire, while waving his check carelessly to and fro. His restless black eyes were twinkling with excitement as Mr. Cossett walked into the outer office and closed the door as though to give greater privacy to the visitor.

"Now!" muttered the Frenchman, when the financier began a reply to some inquiry he had received, "Creel is holding him on the wire. I will shut off my caller and go to work."

Then he called into the 'phone, "I thank you very much, Mr. Lewin, I will see you tomorrow."

While saying this he had drawn from an inner pocket a package made up to resemble the one he had given Mr. Cossett the day before. The top bill was the only genuine one of the lot. In a second he had pocketed the good money and put the other in the safe.

He walked to the outer side of the desk, still holding his check, and studied the effect of the substituted package. To his eye it was a perfect



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copy of the abstracted one, and he smiled as he thought how easily he had carried through his project. But there was still the danger of Mr. Cossett's making some examination of the safe on his return. The Frenchman now picked up his hat and waited near the door for Mr. Cossett. In a minute or two the door opened.

"Ah!" said the Frenchman, gaily, shaking his check at the financier, "now we must go to that little luncheon. Here is the profit which I did not expect so very soon when I came yesterday."

"To be sure," returned Mr. Cossett, and as he spoke he walked around his desk and, after glancing into the safe from force of habit, he closed the door and turned the knob. The visitor seemed faint for a moment.

The possibility of those three seconds of suspense had meant so much. At the least movement of surprise or alarm on the part of the financier, a sudden break through the outer office to the hall would have been the only hope of escape.

When Mr. Cossett turned he faced a man pale and rigid.

"I am so very hungry," murmured the Frenchman, apologetically. "I feel that I am almost ill of waiting for our luncheon. You must pardon me, but I breakfast so very little, you know."

"A great mistake, Mr. Delaine," laughed the financier, "a very great mistake. But I will go with you at once. The Pavarin is quite near, and you will feel at home there."

And, taking up his hat, he led the way.

"Mr. Sneed," he said, pausing for a moment in the outer office, "if the gentlemen representing the people who telegraphed us should call earlier than I expect, tell them I will return by 1:30 at the latest."

When the two men had reached Broadway, Mr. Delaine stopped suddenly and said: "I think after all I will not leave the town today. Would it be asking a favor too great if I re-

quest that you go with me to your bank and identify me for the cashing of this check?"

"Not at all," replied the financier politely, wondering a little at the suddenness with which the Frenchman had changed his mind. Mr. Cossett also gave a fleeting thought to the fact that the foreigner had made his request almost at the door of the bank on which the check was drawn, but he said nothing more until the money had been paid.

"You know our down-town banks, then, Mr. Delaine?" he said.

"This one," replied his companion, "very well. Many of my friends have accounts here. I bank up-town."

After a frugal luncheon Mr. Cossett urged his engagements between one and two, and asked Mr. Delaine to excuse him.

"You might give me your address before I go," he said, "for I may soon have something to offer you and your friends."

Mr. Delaine was at a loss for a moment. "I have no card with me," he said, fumbling in his inner pocket, "but perhaps this will do."

He pulled out a bluish-white card with one irregular edge, and wrote upon it, "Louis Delaine, Brantome Apartments, Fifty-Fourth Street."

Mr. Cossett put this card in his pocket without giving it more than the mere glance which politeness demanded. Then rising, he said goodbye to his host and left the place.

When he reached the sidewalk he took out the card and saw that one of its edges was torn.

Something in its appearance brought the remembrance of Nellie's picture. With a trembling hand he reached into his pocket and took out the printed face he had looked at a dozen times every day. He laid it beside the other. The torn edges matched perfectly.

An indefinable fear took possession of him. With almost undignified haste he pushed his way through the Wall Street crowds, rushed to his office,

and ran to the safe. In his excitement he found difficulty in keeping the combination numbers in their proper order.

At last the door swung open, and reaching down he picked up the package of stage money topped with that one good note which gave the whole a superficial appearance of value.

"Again!" he cried, but in a low tone, "and by the same hand. Can Linden be the scoundrel after all?"

Henry Linden, at eight o'clock on the evening of the second robbery, was ushered into Mr. Fenton's study.

"Young man," said the lawyer sternly, "you are getting on my nerves. For two weeks I have picked up my daily paper with fear and trembling. And you have another disturbing story to tell me, of course? Or, maybe it is in the evening paper you have there?"

"I have a story, but it is not in the paper. That fact is puzzling me, for, at noontime, I got ten thousand more of Cossett's money."

"I wish you would abandon that mad enterprise!" cried the lawyer, peevishly. "Be content to restore half of the inheritance and leave the rest where it is. You cannot possibly carry this criminal proceeding to a finish."

"As I said the first time I met you," replied Linden, "I don't consider my proceedings criminal. But I confess I am mortally afraid of arrest and its ignominy. But as for stopping—never!"

"Ah!" sighed the lawyer. "Then tell me your story."

Linden related in substance all that had happened that day and the day before.

"I took a long chance," he said, "when I paid out the ten thousand with no very clear chance of getting it back until I sold the stock to some one, somewhere. But thanks to my telegrams sent from Philadelphia and that of my confederate sent from Bos-

ton, Mr. Cossett was anxious to buy at a premium of two hundred.

"That telephone call from Mr. Lewin was easily arranged, and the call which took Mr. Cossett to the outer office was managed by my confederate. Mr. Lewin will wonder what has become of Mr. Louis Delaine. And Mr. Cossett is still wondering why the New York agents of the Boston and Philadelphia firms did not turn up before two o'clock."

"As for the two hundred premium, its equivalent is on the top of Mr. Cossett's stage-money package. I thought he would offer about that figure if he offered anything. But he must have soon discovered his loss. Assuming that, why is the robbery—as you call it—not in the evening papers?"

"As though in answer to this query, Mr. Fenton's servant tapped on the door, and when told to come in, announced: 'Mr. Simon Cossett.' Both men rose hurriedly, startled. It seemed, somehow, like a pursuit."

"Go out this way," said the lawyer to Linden, opening a door on his left.

"When Mr. Cossett has come in here my man will show you to the door. Come back tomorrow night if you have more to tell me; as for Mr. Cossett's business, it probably has nothing to do with the robbery."

By this time Linden had passed into the side room, and in a few moments he was on the street.

When Mr. Cossett had taken a seat in the study, he evidently was at a loss to state his business. But finally, as though with an effort, he blurted out: "I came here, sir, to engage your services for a criminal."

(To be continued.)

Running up and down stairs, sweeping and bending over making beds will not make a woman healthy or beautiful. She must get out of doors, walk a mile or two every day and take Chamberlain's Tablets to improve her digestion and regulate her bowels.