

Recalled to Life

It was partly because he was trembling with fatigue, partly because he wished to save the very thin soles of his shoes, that Christopher Masters sank down on a park bench that chilly afternoon in autumn. Only a few leaves were left on the trees, and a raw wind was fast whirling these away. With numb fingers Masters turned up the collar of his shabby suit-coat against the cold.

Passersby glanced disinterestedly at the unshaven, hungry-looking young man on the bench. There were so many of his type these days, most of them none too honest. It was better not to risk helping them. Masters read their thoughts, and the knowledge stung. A bare six weeks ago he had been as well dressed and as disinterested as they. Six weeks! He had never dreamed that so great a change could be wrought in an individual in so short a time. Six weeks ago he had been a fashion-plate, a welcome guest at every social gathering. Here he was now, clothed in rags, an outcast. Masters had been the junior partner in a brokerage firm. It was the old story. He had invested his savings in a stock, and lost. To recover his losses, he had borrowed secretly from the firm's account, and had again lost. The inevitable discovery of the shortage was made, but instead of being prosecuted, the thief was merely discharged. A lenient sentence, you think? So did Masters—then.

It took him only a few weeks to realize how completely he was ruined. The news of his dismissal, and the cause, soon reached the ears of all. At brokerage houses he was politely but firmly told that there were no vacancies. Most of his former friends treated him with icy politeness, others ignored him completely. Yet there were half-a-dozen or so friends who, he knew, had remained true. But he did not approach them, his pride asserted itself. These friends were old college chums. There was Jim Benson, for instance, who had married Peggy Maxwell, a girl in whom Masters had had more than a mere interest. Most assuredly Jim could set him on his feet again. Masters clenched his hands and shook his head doggedly. No, he would never appear before Jim and Peggy as a failure.

The man on the bench rested elbows on knees and fingered the rough stubble of beard on his face. He was

accustomed to being shaved twice a day, but that seemed ages ago. His future was black, every prospect had been exhausted.

Evening was approaching, and the park had become almost deserted. A harsh, unfriendly wind moaned among the spectral trees. Masters clasped his hands together fiercely. "I'm through! I've nothing to eat, no place to sleep. If something doesn't turn up soon, I'll go back to that abandoned wharf, and this time nothing will stop me!"

He peered eagerly about him, as though he expected to see someone or something advancing towards him. But all was as before. The park was empty save for himself. All the weariness of the past few days seemed to descend on him in one immense wave. His head dropped and he felt an irresistible inclination to sleep. Sliding over sideways on the seat, he pillowed his head in his arms, lifted his leaden feet slowly to the bench, and fell into a heavy sleep.

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He seemed to have slept for hours, yet when he woke a few traces of daylight still remained. Somehow he felt strangely elated, as though he knew something wonderful was going to happen to him. The weather was much milder, and he felt completely rested. Sitting up on the bench, he stretched his arms above his head and indulged in a tremendous yawn. This loosening-up process over, he slowly opened his eyes. It was then that he first perceived that he had an audience. There in the dimming light a young lady and a tall, clean-cut man stood looking at him.

"Why, Kit!" exclaimed the man, stepping forward and grasping Masters by the hand, "Why didn't you come to us?"

Masters stood up and was involved for a few moments in a maze of exclamations and questions.

"I knew I was in desperate straits, Jim," he finished, "But I didn't have the audacity to appeal to you and Peggy."

"Well, we've caught you now," said the lady, "and you must come along with us."

"Yes," agreed Jim, "we'll call a taxi and be home in a jiffy."

It took longer than a jiffy to reach the Benson's home, yet Masters enjoyed every moment of the drive. For

the first time he really appreciated the deep comfortable seats and the easy motion of a car. Even before home was reached, Jim was talking over the matter of securing his friend a new position.

"Nothing to it," he finished triumphantly, "Craig's needs an experienced man badly. I can easily get you the position. I'll see about it the first thing in the morning."

And when the house was reached, what luxury for the one-time tramp! After a hot bath and shave he donned one of Jim's suits and came down to dinner. The table was set for three, and the snowy cloth, silver candlesticks and gleaming cutlery made him recall with a shudder the scenes of his former meals. As they sat at the table, Masters appeared as spruce as Benson himself. The three of them, Jim, Peggy and Kit, grew reminiscent. They talked of college days, of the magnificent run made by Kit on the football field, and of the time Jim captured the boxing championship.

Yet, in the midst of all this happiness and good cheer, Masters began to grow weary. Something seemed to be calling him, trying to attract his attention. He cast nervous little glances over his shoulder, but everything appeared as usual. The summons became more insistent, and he began to fidget. Just when he was on the point of springing to his feet and crying out, he discovered what he had been sub-consciously seeking. In a dim alcove there stood a towering, intricately carved grandfather clock. The heavy pendulum swung slowly to and fro, and as it moved, there sounded a dull, monotonous beat.

This sound of the clock seemed to Masters to grow steadily louder, and not only louder, but deeper and more disturbing. It seemed to beat on his very brain. Nor was its effect only mental, for with every stroke he felt a tremor run through his body. His head throbbed intolerably. The clock swayed in a fantastic dance and everything grew blurred before him. Dimly he perceived that his hostess was speaking to him. He leaned forward and clutched desperately at the edge of the table, trying to bring himself back. But all in vain, the voice faded slowly away. A chill wind seemed to sweep over him.

"Come on now, along with ye! Along with ye!"

The night-stick of officer O'Sullivan thudded with persistent regularity against the paper-thin soles of a

shabby young tramp huddled on a park bench. The sleeper flinched and slowly opened his heavy eyes. He loosened his blue fingers from their grasp on the edge of the boards and painfully sat up. He attempted to look at the policeman, but the glare of a flashlight forced him to lower his eyes. His throat was hot and dry, he was dizzy, with a pulsing headache, and the cold cut him like a knife. There had been a slight snow flurry, and he was covered from head to foot with a thin layer of hard, gritty flakes.

Christopher Masters staggered to his feet and with futile gestures tried to brush the snow off his clothes. Officer O'Sullivan stepped forward and with a few hearty strokes sent every last flake whirling to the ground. Then he gestured with his club.

"Move on there, now. We can't have you fellows freezing in the park, you know."

The tramp, mumbling a word of thanks for the policeman's service, shambled off. O'Sullivan stood there musing for a few moments.

"Now what," he asked himself, stroking his chin, "did that young fellow say to himself about a dream as he went away?"

He looked along the path where he had pointed with his club, expecting to see the young man. But Christopher Masters had not gone that way. He had turned in the opposite direction—towards the river.

—R.S.W., '35



Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.

—Emerson

Faults? The greatest of faults, I should say, is to be conscious of none.—*Carlyle*.

The only way to have a friend is to be one.—*Emerson*

'Tis the sunset of life gives me mystical lore,
And coming events cast their shadows before.

—*Campbell*