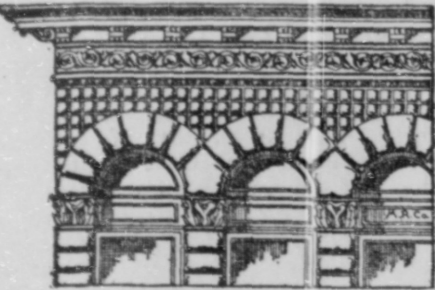


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An Ungrammatical Burglar

He Got Caught on His Grammar. Honest People Will Do Well Also to Speak Correctly.

BY JOHN J. ABECKET.

It seemed almost too soon for Jack to have returned when Mrs. Dorrance heard him ring. He had forgotten his latchkey again. She must buy him a chain and key ring. The little woman glided down stairs in her soft slippers and was about to open the door when a sudden happy thought led her to ask, "Is that you, Jack?"

"Yes. It's me." The cheery pitch of the muffled voice might have left doubt. The bad grammar left none. Her Jack could never have made that slip.

Without a word she fled up stairs into Jack's room, grabbed the six shooter out of the top bureau drawer and ran down again, cocking it en route and congratulating herself on having oiled the trigger lately. Jack would be back soon. This man or men must have known he was gone and she was alone.

She got to the door and in as firm a tone as she could command said in a sharp, imperious way, "Now, who are you, and what do you want?" There was a moment's silence. Then: "If yer open the door, I'll tell yer. I don't mean no harm, missis."

Dot, who knew that her figure could be seen through the glass, put the point of the gun close to it and exclaimed, for her blood was up now, "Move on or I'll fire."

The man seemed disposed to argue the point, for her quick ear caught the sound of hoarse muttering. Then she thought she heard a soft treading step, as of one going away.

But she was mistaken, or else there was a brace of them, for a meanly wheedling voice said: "Missis, I ain't no burglar. I'm jest hungry an' only want a bit o' somethin' to eat. Can't you gimme a piece of bread? I'll go down by the gate an' creak it, an' you c'n slip it out quick an' lock the door ag'in. I wouldn't hurt a lamb."

"I've no time to talk, and this isn't a bakery," retorted Dot. "If you don't go at once I'll fire, though I don't want to wake my husband up or rouse the neighbors."

Dot thought she heard a suppressed snort at this "bluff," but it was followed by a heavy footfall of one walking slowly down the path. Then the gate creaked audibly, as if the hungry man had no need to disguise his comings and goings.

Fluttered, but content with her debut as a heroine, she started up stairs again. A slight sound came to her from above that made her heart flutter wildly.

She remembered the stout trellis Jack had put up against the wall of the house—she had asked him if he meant to train a banyan tree on it—and the window of her room had been raised about an inch, that the air might do Cuthbert good. Her 2-year-old had been feverish all day.

The recollection of that first retreating step and the parley of the other man flashed across her mind. What if the "pat" had scaled the trellis and was kidnapping Cuthbert?

She flew up the stairs, holding her gun tightly, but not daring to put her finger on the trigger. She knew it was twitching, and she might pull it too soon.

She dashed through the sitting room, into the bedroom where Cuthbert was sleeping the sleep of the just in a subdued light. There was a brawny hand, shiny and villainous, grasping the window sill.

This was no time to dally or measure consideration on any delicate scale. Dot raised her pistol, steadied herself, took deliberate aim and banded away. There was a fierce ejaculation of mingled pain and surprise.

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SCROFULA

is indicated by little kernels in the neck. Sometimes they swell, become painful, soften, and end in a scar. Watch carefully, and just as soon as the kernels appear give

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The swellings will grow less and less until they disappear entirely. Continue the Emulsion until the child has good solid flesh and a healthy color.

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and profanity, and she heard some one leap down into the back yard and then scramble off.

She glanced at Cuthbert. The noise had awakened that honor to babydom, and a wide open pair of eyes like her own were looking at her as she stood with the smoke from the pistol curling in a niter scented cloud about her.

Then as the baby boy came to a consciousness that the tense, defiant figure with the pistol in its hand was his mamma heredity asserted itself in a smile that showed small white teeth and almost wrinkled a diminutive nose.

Dot rushed to him and kissed him frantically, wishing she could afford herself the luxury of breaking down and shedding helpful tears over her game offspring. But she couldn't. She was on duty till Jack returned, and she kept her "gun" tight in her hand.

"Go to sleep, baby. Mamma is here," she said, with an effort at playfulness. "What you doin'?" demanded Cuthbert drowsily.

"Keeping away cats—and things. Lie still and go to sleep, baby, like a little man. Mamma is tired."

Was that a stealthy step on the stairs? She raised herself, trembling, and clutched her "gun" anew. The next moment a man rushed into view in the sitting room, paused, looked in where she was and was about to charge forward when:

"If you stir a step, I will shoot!" cried Dot. She had promptly brought her battery to bear on him and even stepped forward a pace or two, as if with instinct to screen Cuthbert, keeping her blazing eyes steadily on the man's face.

"Don't shoot, ma'am," the fellow said hurriedly. "I heard the pistol shot an' thought yer was been attacked by some burglar, an' I broke in the door to come an' help ye. I wouldn't hurt a baby, ma'am. All I wanted at first was a chunk o' bread, an' then, hearin' the gun, I couldn't help comin' to a lady's assistance. Don't p'int that gun at me. It might go off, an' you'd be sorry to hurt a stranger what had nothin' worse about him than a empty stomach."

"I tell you to go down stairs and out of this house, or I will fire, and I don't care whether you are killed or not. Go down and pick up your dead pal. Go anyhow."

Dot felt steadier. If she could only hold out till Jack came back! The man had counted on making a rush on her, but had failed in that. She didn't think he was armed, but she was on the lookout unwaveringly for the slightest movement of his hand toward any weapon, and she was covering him well.

At that moment her heart gave a great bound. In his flannel nightgown Cuthbert had slipped by her and, ambling straight up to the invader, beat him on his legs with his baby fist.

"Go away!" he cried crossly. Quick as a flash the man bent and had him in his arms, holding him so that the baby covered his head and chest.

"Now, drop your gun, or I'll brain the kid," he exclaimed with savage determination. "Throw it over there, away from yer. Quick!"

She dared not fire. He surely would not kill the two if she obeyed him and cast away her pistol.

But her temper was fully roused. Oh, for one moment in which to get a show at him without imperiling the life of her life!

All this passed quicker than the telling. But in that second of irresolution Cuthbert, who did not take kindly to strangers and had conceived this one as a grossly unwelcome intruder, was bringing his small fists down on the man's head and eyes. The fellow angrily jerked his head out of reach, putting up his arm and pushing the infant assailant to one side.

It was enough. Dot rushed forward, took quick aim and let go. With a groan the fellow's arm relaxed. She had just time to drop her pistol and catch Cuthbert before the man fell in a heap on the floor, very still, the blood from somewhere spoiling Dot's pretty rug.

She sank into a chair and felt that she was going into a faint. But there was another step on the stairs, quick, but light. Was there an army of burglars let loose on the house? And had Jack gone to the Klondike?

She clapped Cuthbert into her rocking chair, his pink legs protruding from his nightgown, the picture of anything but a victorious infant conqueror, and jumped for her faithful "gun." A man rushed into the room.

"Stop, or I'll fire!" she quavered forth. "Dot! It's me! Chuck that gun!"

She "chucked the gun" and luxuriously fainted in Jack's arms. Cuthbert inaugurated the family retirement from warfare by a lusty yowl, to which Jack, who was busy wetting Dot's face with cologne, loosening her gown and fanning her, paid no attention whatever. He was not a nervous man and had great confidence in his son.

The mother's ears were perchance awakened by that mellow wailing, with its croupy touch. Dot's eyes, with the fire all out, opened, and as she recognized

Jack's dear face, which had never seemed so dear, she drew a long, quivering breath and wound her arms tightly about him.

"You're not hurt, Jack?" she said weakly. "Not a bit. And Cuthbert's roaring like a blast furnace. You'd better brace up, and we'll tidy up the place a bit. Dust out the burglars. Did any escape? Or is the gent on the floor the whole collection?"

"I think there's another in the back yard," faltered Dot in an awestruck tone. "Well, let's look him up. First, I'll see what trim this fellow is in."

Examination proved that the hungry caller on Mrs. Dot was alive, but not in distressful consciousness. The bullet had remained in his system.

Mrs. Dot hastily restored Cuthbert to his little bed, where, weary with battle, he gave a grateful sigh and slumbered, his pink hands no longer aggressively clinched, but placidly open like rosy starfish.

"He's all right, Dot, I think," said Jack after his examination of the burglar. "He's made a mess of your rug, and I don't know what we are to do with him. I don't care to go out again, and you ought to be in bed."

"We might put him in the spare room till morning," said Dot helplessly. "Yes, and let Cuthbert mount guard over him till breakfast time," returned Jack sarcastically. "I think it will be better to deposit him gently on the front steps and let nature look after him till we can do something more."

Jack shouldered the unconscious man and, helped by Dot, got him down stairs. He laid him tenderly out on the front step. There was no one to call, and he would not leave his wife alone to go in quest of help for disposing of him otherwise.

Dot suggested that they put a sofa cushion under his head, well covered with a long Turkish bath towel, which Jack remonstrantly did. The next morning the burglar, the bath towel and the cushion were gone to parts unknown.

Then Jack made a hurried trip around the premises. They were littered with no burglars, so, locking the inside door, they went up stairs. Half way up Dot stopped suddenly short and gasped: "Oh, Jack!"

And she looked at her husband with the queerest smile. "Well?" said he. "Do you remember what you said when you dashed in?"

"Why, I told you not to shoot: that as long as it was Davy Crockett at the other end of the gun I'd come down."

"No. Think what you said." "I said: 'Don't shoot, Dot. It's L.'"

"You didn't," cried Dot merrily. "When I asked the man at the door, 'Is that you, Jack?' he said, 'Yes, it's me.' Whereupon I knew it wasn't and ordered him to move on. Do you see what a narrow escape you had? Oh, Jack," and she snuggled up to him, "do be careful about your grammar."—Criteria.

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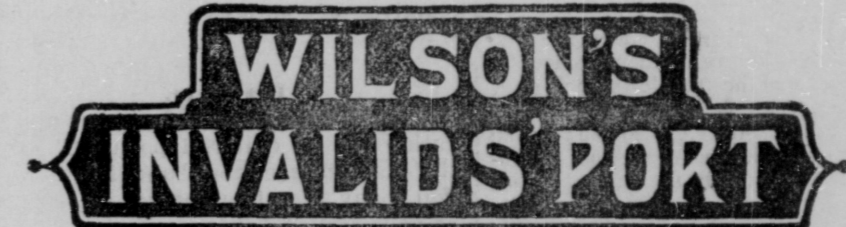
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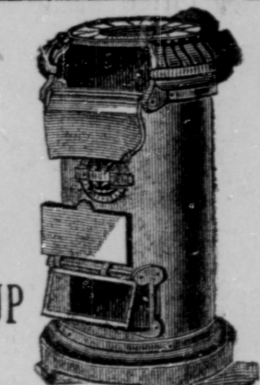
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