"All right, Max," cried Samuel Gembitz, senior member of S. Gembitz & Sons; "if you think you know more about it as I do, Max, go ahead and make up that style in all them fancy shades. But listen to what I'm telling you, Max: black, navy blue, brown, and smokes is plenty enough; and all them copenhoogens, wisterias, and tchampanyers we would get stuck with, just as sure as little apples."


"Well, I got a right to think, ain't I?" Samuel Gembitz retorted.

"Sure," Max said, "and so have I."

"After me," Samuel corrected. "I think first and then you think, Max; and I think we wouldn't plunge so heavy on them 1040's. Make up a few of 'em in blacks, navies, browns, and smokes, Max, and afterward we would see about making up the others."

He rose from his old-fashioned Windsor chair in the firm's private office and put on his hat--a silk hat of a style long obsolete.

"I am going to my lunch, Max," he said firmly, "and when I come back I will be here. Another thing, Max: you got an idee them 1040's is a brand-new style which is so original, understand me, we are bound to make a big hit with it at seven-fifty apiece--ain't it?"

Max nodded.

"Well, good styles travels fast, Max," the old man said; "and you could take it from me, Max, in two weeks' time Henry Schrimm and all them other fellers would be falling over themselves to sell the self-same garment at seven dollars."

He seized a gold-mounted, ebony cane, the gift of Harmony Lodge, 100, I.O.M.A., and started for the stairway, but as he reached the door he turned suddenly.

"Max," he shouted, "tell them boys to straighten up the sample racks. The place looks like a pigsty already."

As the door closed behind his father Max aimed a kick at the old-fashioned walnut desk and the old-fashioned Windsor chair; and then, lighting a cigarette, he walked hurriedly to the cutting room.

"Lester," he said to his younger brother, who was poring over a book of sample swatches, "what do you think now?"

"Huh?" Lester grunted.
"The old man says we shouldn't make up them 1040's in nothing but black, navy, brown, and smoke!"

Lester closed the book of sample swatches and sat down suddenly.

"Wouldn't that make you sick?" he said in tones of profound disgust. "I tell you what it is, Max, if it wouldn't be that the old man can't run the business forever, I'd quit right now. We've got a killing in sight and he Jonahs the whole thing."

"I told you what it would be," Max said. "I seen Falkstatter in Sarachuse last week; and so sure as I'm standing here, Lester, I could sold that feller a two-thousand dollar order if it wouldn't be for the old man's back-number ideas. Didn't have a single pastel shade in my trunks!"

"Where is he now?" Lester asked.

"Gone to lunch," Max replied.

Lester took up the sample swatches again and his eyes rested lovingly on a delicate shade of pink.

"I hope he chokes," he said; but even though at that very moment Samuel Gembitz sat in Hammersmith's restaurant, his cheeks distended to the bursting point with gefüllte Rinderbrust, Lester's prayer went unanswered. Indeed, Samuel Gembitz had the bolting capacity of a boa-constrictor, and, with the aid of a gulp of coffee, he could have swallowed a grapefruit whole.

"Ain't you scared that you would sometimes hurt your di-gestion, Mr. Gembitz?" asked Henry Schrimm, who sat at the next table.

Now this was a sore point with Sam Gembitz, for during the past year he had succumbed to more than a dozen bilious attacks as a result of his voracious appetite; and three of them were directly traceable to gefüllte Rinderbrust.

"I ain't so delicate like some people, Henry," he said rather sharply. "I don't got to consider every bit of meat which I am putting in my mouth. And even if I would, Henry, what is doctors for? If a feller would got to deny himself plain food, Henry, he might as well jump off a dock and fertig."

Henry Schrimm was an active member of as many fraternal orders as there are evenings in the week, and he possessed a ready sympathy that made him invaluable as a chairman of a sick-visiting or funeral committee; for at seven P.M. Henry could bring himself to the verge of tears over the bedside of a lodge brother, without unduly affecting his ability to relish a game of auction pinochle at half-past eight, sharp.

"Jumping off a dock is all right, too, Mr. Gembitz," he commented, "but you got your family to consider."

"You shouldn't worry about my family, Henry," Gembitz retorted. "I am carrying good insurance; and, furthermore, I got my business in such shape that it would go on just the same supposing I should die to-morrow."

"Gott soll hüten, Mr. Gembitz," Henry added piously as the old man disposed of a dishful of gravy through the capillary attraction of a hunk of spongy rye bread.

"Yes, Henry," Gembitz continued, after he had licked his fingers and submitted his bicuspids to a process of vacuum cleaning, "I got my business down to such a fine point which you could really say was systematic."

"That's a good thing, Mr. Gembitz," Henry said, "because, presuming for the sake of argument, I am only saying you would be called away, Mr. Gembitz, them boys of yours would run it into the ground in no time."

"What d'ye mean, run it into the ground?" Gembitz demanded indignantly. "If you would got the gumption which my boys got it, Schrimm, you wouldn't be doing a business which the most you are making is a couple thousand a year."
"Sure, I know," Henry replied. "If I would got Lester's gumption I would be sitting around the Harlem Winter Garden till all hours of the morning; and if I would got Sidney's gumption I would be playing Kelly pool from two to four every afternoon. And as for Max, Mr. Gembitz, if I would got his gumption I would make a present of it to my worst enemy. A boy which he is going on forty and couldn't do nothing without asking his popper's permission first, Mr. Gembitz, he could better do general house-work for a living as sell goods."

Gembitz rose from his table and struggled into his overcoat speechless with indignation. It was not until he had buttoned the very last button that he was able to enunciate.

"Listen here to me, Schrimm!" he said. "If Lester goes once in a while on a restaurant in the evening, that's his business; and, anyhow, so far what I could see, Schrimm, it don't interfere none with his designing garments which you are stealing on us just as soon as we get 'em on the market. Furthermore, Schrimm, if Sidney plays Kelly pool every afternoon, you could bet your life he also sells him a big bill of goods, also. You got to entertain a customer once in a while if you want to sell him goods, Schrimm; and, anyhow, Schrimm, if it would be you would be trying to sell goods to this here Kelly, you wouldn't got sense enough to play pool with him. You would waste your time trying to learn him auction pinochle."

"But, Mr. Gembitz," Schrimm began, "when a feller plays Kelly pool----"

"And as for Max," Gembitz interrupted, "if you would be so good a boy as Max is, Schrimm, might your father would be alive to-day yet."

"What d'ye mean?" Schrimm cried. "My father died when I was two years old already."

"Sure, I know," Gembitz concluded; "and one thing I am only sorry, Schrimm: your father was a decent, respectable man, Schrimm, but he ought to got to die three years sooner. That's all."

No sooner had Mr. Gembitz left Hammersmith's restaurant than the gefüllte Rinderbrust commenced to assert itself; and by the time he arrived at his place of business he was experiencing all the preliminary symptoms of a severe bilious attack. Nevertheless, he pulled himself together and as he sat down at his desk he called loudly for Sidney.

"He ain't in," Max said.

"Oh, he ain't, ain't he?" Mr. Gembitz retorted. "Well, where is he?"

"He went out with a feller from the New Idea Store, Bridgetown," Max answered, drawing on his imagination in the defence of his brother.

"New Idea Store!" Gembitz repeated. "What's the feller's name?"

Max shrugged.

"I forgot his name," he answered.

"Well, I ain't forgot his name," Gembitz continued. "His name is Kelly; and every afternoon Schrimm tells me Sidney is playing this here Kelly pool."

For a brief interval Max stared at his father; then he broke into an unrestrained laugh.

"Nu!" Gembitz cried. "What's the joke?"

"Why," Max explained, "you're all twisted. Kelly ain't a feller at all. Kelly pool's a game, like you would say straight pinochle and auction pinochle--there's straight pool and Kelly pool."

Gembitz drummed on his desk with his fingers.
"Do you mean to told me there ain't no such person, which he is buying goods for a concern, called Kelly?" he demanded.

Max nodded.

"Then that loafer just fools away his time every afternoon," Gembitz said in choking tones; "and, after all I done for him, he----"

"What's the matter, popper?" Max cried, for Gembitz's lips had suddenly grown purple, and, even as Max reached forward to aid him, he lurched from his chair on to the floor.

Half an hour later Samuel Gembitz was undergoing the entirely novel experience of riding uptown in a taxicab, accompanied by a young physician who had been procured from the medical department of an insurance company across the street.

"Say, lookyhere," Sam protested as they assisted him into the cab, "this ain't necessary at all!"

"No, I know it isn't," the doctor agreed, in his best imitation of an old practitioner's jocular manner. He was, in fact, a very young practitioner and was genuinely alarmed at Samuel's condition, which he attributed to arteriosclerosis and not to gefüllte Rinderbrust. "But, just the same," he concluded, "it is just as well to keep as quiet as possible for the present."

Sam nodded and lay back wearily in the leather seat of the taxicab while it threaded its way through the traffic of lower Fifth Avenue. Only once did he appear to take an interest in his surroundings, and that was when the taxicab halted at the end of a long line of traffic opposite the débris of a new building.

"What's going on here?" he asked faintly.

"It's pretty nearly finished," the doctor replied. "Weldon, Jones & Company, of Minneapolis, are going to open a New York store."

Sam nodded again and once more closed his eyes. He grew more uncomfortable as the end of the journey approached, for he dreaded the reception that awaited him. Max had telephoned the news of his father's illness to his sister, Miss Babette Gembitz, Sam's only daughter, who upon her mother's death had assumed not only the duties but the manner and bearing of that tyrannical person; and Sam knew she would make a searching investigation of the cause of his ailment.

"Doctor, what do you think is the matter with me?" he asked, by way of a feeler.

"At your age, it's impossible to say," the doctor replied; "but nothing very serious."

"No?" Sam said. "Well, you don't think it's indigestion, do you?"

"Decidedly not," the doctor said.

"Well, then, you shouldn't forget and tell my daughter that," Sam declared as the cab stopped opposite his house, "otherwise she will swear I am eating something which disagrees with me."

He clambered feebly to the sidewalk, where stood Miss Babette Gembitz with Dr. Sigmund Eichendorfer.

"Wie gehts, Mr. Gembitz?" Doctor Eichendorfer cried cheerfully as he took Sam's arm.

"Unpässlich" Doctor," Sam replied. "I guess I'm a pretty sick man."

He glanced at his daughter for some trace of tears, but she met his gaze unmoved.
"You've been making a hog of yourself again, popper!" she said severely.

"Oser!" Sam protested. "Crackers and milk I am eating for my lunch. The doctor could tell you the same."

Ten minutes afterward Sam was tucked up in his bed, while in an adjoining room the young physician communicated his diagnosis to Doctor Eichendorfer.

"Arteriosclerosis, I should say," he murmured, and Doctor Eichendorfer sniffed audibly.

"You mean Bright's Disease--ain't it?" he said. "That feller's arteries is as sound as plumbing."

Doctor Eichendorfer had received his medical training in Vienna and he considered it to be a solemn duty never to agree with the diagnosis of a native M.D.

"I thought of Bright's Disease," the young physician replied, speaking a little less than the naked truth; for in diagnosing Sam's ailment he had thought of nearly every disease he could remember.

"Well, you could take it from me, Doctor," Eichendorfer concluded, "when one of these old-timers goes under there's a history of a rich, unbalanced diet behind it; and Bright's Disease it is. Also, you shouldn't forget to send in your bill--not a cent less than ten dollars."

He shook his confrère warmly by the hand; and three hours later the melancholy circumstance of Sam's Bright's Disease was known to every member of the cloak and suit trade, with one exception--to wit, as the lawyers say, Sam himself. He knew that he had had gefüllte Rinderbrust but by seven o'clock this knowledge became only a torment as the savoury odour of the family dinner ascended to his bedroom.

"Babette," he called faintly, as becomes a convalescent, "ain't I going to have no dinner at all to-night?"

For answer Babette brought in a covered tray, on which were arranged two pieces of dry toast and a glass of buttermilk.

"What's this?" Sam cried.

"That's your dinner," Babette replied, "and you should thank Gawd you are able to eat it."

"You don't got to told me who I should thank for such slops which you are bringing me," he said, with every trace of convalescence gone from his tones. "Take that damn thing away and give me something to eat. Ain't that gedämpftes Kalbfleisch I smell?"

Babette made no reply, but gazed sadly at her father as she placed the tray on a chair beside his bed.

"You don't know yourself how sick you are," she said. "Doctor Eichendorfer says you should be very quiet."

This admonition produced no effect on Sam, who immediately started on an abusive criticism of physicians in general and Dr. Sigmund Eichendorfer in particular.

"What does that dummer Esel know?" he demanded. "I bet yer that the least he tells you is I got Bright's Disease!"

Babette shook her head slowly.

"So you know it yourself all the time," she commented bitterly; "and yet you want to eat gedämpftes Kalbfleisch when you know as well as I do it would pretty near kill you."

"Kill me!" Sam shouted. "What d'ye mean, kill me? I eat some Rinderbrust for my lunch yet; and that's all what ails me. I ain't got no more Bright's Disease as you got it."

"If you think that lying is going to help you, you're mistaken," Babette replied calmly. "To a man in your condition gedämpftes Kalbfleisch
"is poison."

"I ain't lying to you," Sam insisted. "I am eating too much lunch, I am telling you."

"And you're not going to eat too much dinner!" Babette said as she tiptoed from the room.

Thus Sam drank a glass of buttermilk and ate some dry toast for his supper; and, in consequence, he slept so soundly that he did not waken until Dr. Sigmund Eichendorfer entered his room at eight o'clock the following morning. Under the bullying frown of his daughter Sam submitted to a physical examination that lasted for more than an hour; and when Doctor Eichendorfer departed he left behind him four varieties of tablets and a general interdiction against eating solid food, getting up, going downtown, or any of the other dozen things that Sam insisted upon doing.

It was only under the combined persuasion of Max, Babette, and Lester that he consented to stay in bed that forenoon; and when lunchtime arrived he was so weakened by a twenty-four-hour fast and Doctor Eichendorfer's tablets, that he was glad to remain undisturbed for the remainder of the day.

At length, after one bedridden week, accompanied by a liquid diet and more tablets, Sam was allowed to sit up in a chair and to partake of a slice of chicken.

"Well, popper, how do you feel to-day?" asked Max, who had just arrived from the office.

"I feel pretty sick, Max," Sam replied; "but I guess I could get downtown to-morrow, all right."

Babette sat nearby and nodded her head slowly.

"Guess some more, popper," she said. "Before you would go downtown yet, you are going to Lakewood."

"Lakewood!" Sam exclaimed. "What d'ye mean, Lakewood? If you want to go to Lakewood, go ahead. I am going downtown to-morrow. What, d'ye think a business could run itself?"

"So far as business is concerned," Max said, "you shouldn't trouble yourself at all. We are hustling like crazy downtown and we already sold over three thousand dollars' worth of them 1040's."

Sam sat up suddenly.

"I see my finish," he said, "with you boys selling goods left and right to a lot of fakers like the New Idea Store."

"New Idea Store nothing!" Max retorted. "We are selling over two thousand dollars to Falkstatter, Fein & Company--and I guess they're fakers--what!"

Sam leaned back in his chair.

"Falkstatter, Fein & Company is all right," he admitted.

"And, furthermore," Max continued, "we sold 'em fancy colours like wistaria, copenhagen, and champagne; and them navy blues and browns they wouldn't touch."

"No?" Sam said weakly.

"So you see, popper, if you would been downtown we wouldn't got that order at all," Max continued. "So what's the use worrying yourself?"

"He's right, popper," Babette added. "You're getting too old to be going downtown every day. The boys could look after the business. It's time you took a rest."

At this juncture Doctor Eichendorfer entered.
"Hello!" he said. "What are you doing sitting up here? You must get right back to bed."

"What are you talking nonsense?" Sam cried. "I am feeling pretty good already."

"You look it," Eichendorfer said. "If you could see the way you are run down this last week yet you wouldn't talk so fresh."

He seized Sam by the arm as he spoke and lifted him out of the chair.

"You ain't so heavy like you used to be, Mr. Gembitz," he went on as he helped Sam to his bed. "Another week and you could sit up, but not before."

Sam groaned as they tucked the covers around him.

"Now you see how weak you are," Eichendorfer cried triumphantly. "Don't get up again unless I would tell you first."

After leaving some more tablets, Doctor Eichendorfer took his leave; and half an hour later Sam knew by the tantalizing odours that pervaded his bedroom that the family dined on stewed chicken with *Kartoffel Klösse*. For the remainder of the evening Sam lay with his eyes closed; and whenever Babette approached his bedside with a tumbler of water and the box of tablets he snored ostentatiously. Thus he managed to evade the appetite-dispelling medicine until nearly midnight, when Babette coughed loudly.

"Popper," she said, "I'm going to bed and I want you to take your tablets."

"Leave 'em on the chair here," he replied, "and I'll take 'em in a few minutes."

He watched her place the tablets on the chair; and as soon as her back was turned he seized them eagerly and thrust them into the pocket of his night-shirt.

"Where's the water?" he mumbled; and when Babette handed him the tumbler he gulped down the water with noise sufficient to account for a boxful of tablets.

"Now, leave me alone," he said; and Babette kissed him coldly on the left ear.

"I hope you'll feel better in the morning," she said dutifully.

"Don't worry," Sam said. "I'm going to."

He listened carefully until he heard the door close and then he threw back the coverlet. Very gingerly he slid to the carpet and planted himself squarely on his feet. A sharp attack of "pins and needles" prevented any further movement for some minutes; but at length it subsided and he began to search for his slippers. His bathrobe hung on the back of the door, and, after he had struggled into it, he opened the door stealthily and, clinging to the balustrade, crept downstairs to the basement.

He negotiated the opening of the ice-box door with the skill of an experienced burglar; and immediately thereafter he sat down at the kitchen table in front of a dishful of stewed chicken, four cold boiled potatoes, the heel of a rye loaf, and a bottle of beer. Twenty minutes later he laid away the empty dish on top of the kitchen sink, with the empty beer bottle beneath it; then, after supplying himself with a box of matches, he crept upstairs to his room.

When Babette opened the door the following morning she raised her chin and sniffed suspiciously.

"Ain't it funny?" she murmured. "I could almost swear I smell stale cigar smoke here."

Sam turned his face to the wall.

"You're crazy!" he said.
During the ensuing week Sam Gembitz became an adept in the art of legerdemain; and the skill with which he palmed tablets under the very nose of his daughter was only equalled by the ingenuity he displayed in finally disposing of them. At least three dozen disappeared through a crack in the wainscoting behind Sam's bed, while as many more were poked through a hole in the mattress; and thus Sam became gradually stronger, until Doctor Eichendorfer himself could not ignore the improvement in his patient's condition.

"All right; you can sit up," he said to Sam; "but, remember, the least indiscretion and back to bed you go."

Sam nodded, for Babette was in the room at the time; and, albeit Sam had gained new courage through his nightly raids on the ice-box, he lacked the boldness that three square meals a day engender.

"I would take good care of myself, Doctor," he said, "and the day after to-morrow might I could go downtown, maybe?"

"The day after to-morrow!" Doctor Eichendorfer exclaimed. "Why, you wouldn't be downtown for a month yet."

"The idea!" Babette cried indignanty. "As if the boys couldn't look after the place without you! What d'ye want to go downtown for at all?"

"What d'ye mean, what do I want to go downtown for at all?" Sam demanded sharply, and Miss Babette Gembitz blushed; whereupon Sam rose from his chair and stood unsteadily on his feet.

"You are up to some monkey business here--all of you!" he declared. "What is it about?"

Babette exchanged glances with Doctor Eichendorfer, who shrugged his shoulders in reply.

"Well, if you want to know what it is, popper," she said, "I'll tell you. You're a very sick man and the chances are you'll never go downtown again." Doctor Eichendorfer nodded his approval and Sam sat down again.

"So we may as well tell you right out plain," Babette continued; "the boys have given out to the trade that you've retired on account of sickness--and here it is in the paper and all."

She handed Sam a copy of the *Daily Cloak and Suit Record* and indicated with her finger an item headed "Personals." It read as follows:

NEW YORK.--Samuel Gembitz, of S. Gembitz & Sons, whose serious illness was reported recently, has retired from the firm, and the business will be carried on by Max Gembitz, Lester Gembitz, and Sidney Gembitz, under the firm style of Gembitz Brothers.

As Sam gazed at the item the effect of one week's surreptitious feeding was set at naught, and once more Babette and Doctor Eichendorfer assisted him to his bed. That night he had neither the strength nor the inclination to make his accustomed raid on the ice-box, nor could he resist the administration of Doctor Eichendorfer's tablets; so that the following day found him weaker than ever. It was not until another week had elapsed that his appetite began to assert itself; but when it did he convalesced rapidly. Indeed, at the end of the month, Doctor Eichendorfer permitted him to take short walks with Babette. Gradually the length of these promenades increased until Babette found her entire forenoons monopolized by her father.

"Ain't it awful!" she said to Sam one Sunday morning as they paced slowly along Lenox Avenue. "I am so tied down."

"You ain't tied down," Sam replied ungraciously. "For my part, I would as lief hang around this here place by myself."

"It's all very well for you to talk," Babette rejoined; "but you know very well that in your condition you could drop in the street at any time yet."
"Schmooes!" Sam cried. "I am walking by myself for sixty-five years yet and I guess I could continue to do it."

"But Doctor Eichendorfer says----" Babette began.

"What do I care what Doctor Eichendorfer says!" Sam interrupted. "And, furthermore, supposing I would drop in the street--which anybody could slip oncet in a while on a banana peel, understand me--ain't I got cards in my pocket?"

Babette remained silent for a moment, whereat Sam plucked up new courage.

"Why should you bother yourself to schlepp me along like this?" he said. "There's lots of people I could go out with. Ain't it? Take old man Herz oder Mrs. Krakauer--they would be glad to go out walking with me; and oncet in a while I could go and call on Mrs. Schrimm maybe."

"Mrs. Schrimm!" Babette exclaimed. "I'm surprised to hear you talk that way. Mrs. Schrimm for years goes around telling everybody that mommer selig leads you a dawg's life."

"Everybody's got a right to their opinion, Babette," Sam said; "but, anyhow, that ain't here nor there. If you wouldn't want me to go around and see Mrs. Schrimm I wouldn't."

Babette snorted.

"In the first place," she said, "you couldn't go unless I go with you; and, in the second place, you couldn't get me to go there for a hundred dollars."

Beyond suggesting that a hundred dollars was a lot of money, Sam made no further attempt to secure his liberty that morning; but on the following day he discreetly called his daughter's attention to a full-page advertisement in the morning paper.

"Ain't you was telling me the other evening you need to got some table napkins, Babette?" he asked.

Babette nodded.

"Well, here it is in the paper that new concern, Weldon, Jones & Company, is selling to-day napkins at three dollars a dozen--the best damask napkins," he concluded.

Babette seized the paper and five minutes later she was poking hatpins into her scalp with an energy that made Sam's eyes water.

"Where are you going, Babette?" he said.

"I'm going downtown to that sale of linens," she said, "and I'll be back to take you out at one o'clock."

"Don't hurry on my account," Sam said. "I've got enough here in the paper to keep me busy until to-night yet."

Five minutes later the basement door banged and Sam jumped to his feet. With the agility of a man half his age he ran upstairs to the parlour floor and put on his hat and coat; and by the time Babette had turned the corner of Lenox Avenue Sam walked out of the areaway of his old-fashioned, three-story-and-basement, high-stoop residence on One Hundred and Eighteenth Street en route for Mrs. Schrimm's equally old-fashioned residence on One Hundred and Twenty-seventh Street. There he descended the area steps; and finding the door ajar he walked into the basement dining-room.

"Wie gehts, Mrs. Schrimm!" he cried cheerfully.

"Oo-ee! What a Schreck you are giving me!" Mrs. Schrimm exclaimed. "This is Sam Gembitz, ain't it?"

"Sure it is," Sam replied. "Ain't you afraid somebody is going to come in and steal something on you?"
"That's that girl again!" Mrs. Schrimm said as she bustled out to the areaway and slammed the door. "That's one of them Ungarischer girls, Mr. Gembitz, which all they could do is to eat up your whole ice-box empty and go out dancing on Bauern balls till all hours of the morning. Housework is something they don't know nothing about at all. Well, Mr. Gembitz, I am hearing such tales about you--you are dying, and so on."

"Warum Mister Gembitz?" Sam said. "Ain't you always called me Sam, Henrietta?"

Mrs. Schrimm blushed. In the lifetime of the late Mrs. Gembitz she had been a constant visitor at the Gembitz house, but under Babette's chilling influence the friendship had withered until it was only a memory.

"Why not?" she said. "I certainly know you long enough, Sam."

"Going on thirty-five years, Henrietta," Sam said, "when you and me and Regina come over here together. Things is very different nowadays, Henrietta. Me, I am an old man already."

"What do you mean old?" Mrs. Schrimm cried. "When my Grossvater selig was sixty-eight he gets married for the third time yet."

"Them old-timers was a different proposition entirely, Henrietta," Sam said. "If I would be talking about getting married, Henrietta, the least that happens to me is my children would put me in a lunatic asylum yet."

"Yow!" Mrs. Schrimm murmured skeptically.

"Wouldn't they?" Sam continued. "Well, you could just bet your life they would. Why, I am sick only a couple weeks or so, Henrietta, and what do them boys do? They practically throw me out of my business yet and tell me I am retired."

"And you let 'em?" Mrs. Schrimm asked.

"What could I do?" Sam said. "I'm a sick man, Henrietta. Doctor Eichendorfer says I wouldn't live a year yet."

"Doctor Eichendorfer says that!" Mrs. Schrimm rejoined. "And do you told me that you are taking Doctor Eichendorfer's word for it?"

"Doctor Eichendorfer is a Rosher, I admit," Sam answered; "but he's a pretty good doctor, Henrietta."

"For the gesund, yes," Mrs. Schrimm admitted. "But if my cat would be sick, Sam, and Doctor Eichendorfer charges two cents a call yet, I wouldn't have him in my house at all. I got too much respect for my cat, Sam. With that feller, as soon as he comes into the bedroom he says the patient is dying; because if the poor feller does die, understand me, then Eichendorfer is a good prophet, and if he gets better then Eichendorfer is a good doctor. He always fixes it so he gets the credit both ways. But you got to acknowledge one thing about that feller, Sam--he knows how to charge, Sam; and he's a good collector. Everybody says so."

Sam nodded sadly.

"I give you right about that," he said.

"And, furthermore," Mrs. Schrimm began, "he----"

Mrs. Schrimm proceeded no further, however, for the sound of a saucepan boiling over brought her suddenly to her feet and she dashed into the kitchen.

Two minutes later a delicate, familiar odour assailed Sam's nostrils, and when Mrs. Schrimm returned she found him unconsciously licking his lips.

"Yes, Sam," she declared, "them Ungarischer girls is worser as nobody in the kitchen. Pretty near ruins my whole
lunch, and I got Mrs. Krakauer coming, too. You know what a talker that woman is; and if I would give her something which it is a little burned, y'understand, the whole of New York hears about it."

"Well, Henrietta," Sam said as he rose and seized his hat, "I must be going."

"Going!" Mrs. Schrimm cried. "Why, you're only just coming. And besides, Sam, you are going to stop to lunch, too."

"Lunch!" Sam exclaimed. "Why, I don't eat lunch no more, Henrietta. All the doctor allows me is crackers and milk."

"Do you mean Doctor Eichendorfer allows you that?" Mrs. Schrimm asked, and Sam nodded.

"Then all I could say is," she continued, "that you are going to stay to lunch, because if Doctor Eichendorfer allows a man only crackers and milk, Sam, that's a sign he could eat *Wienerwurst*, dill pickles, and *Handkäse*--Aber if Doctor Eichendorfer says you could eat steaks and chops, stick to boiled eggs and milk--because steaks would kill you sure."

"But Babette would be back at one o'clock and if I didn't get home before then she would take my head off for me."

Mrs. Schrimm nodded sympathetically.

"So you wouldn't stay for lunch?" she said.

"I couldn't," Sam protested.

"Very well, then," Mrs. Schrimm cried as she hurried to the kitchen. "Sit right down again, Sam; I would be right back."

When Mrs. Schrimm appeared a few minutes later she bore a cloth-covered tray which she placed on the table in front of Sam.

"You got until half-past twelve--ain't it?" she said; "so take your time, Sam. You should chew your food good, especially something which it is already half chopped, like *gefüllte Rinderbrust*."

"Gefüllte Rinderbrust!" Sam cried. "Why"--he poked at it with his knife--"Why, this always makes me sick." He balanced a good mouthful on his fork. "But, anyhow----" he concluded, and the rest of the sentence was an incoherent mumbling as he fell to ravenously. Moreover, he finished the succulent dish, gravy and all, and washed down the whole with a cup of coffee--not Hammersmith's coffee or the dark brown fluid, with a flavour of stale tobacco pipe, that Miss Babette Gembitz had come to persuade herself was coffee, but a fragrant decoction, softened by rich, sweet cream and containing all the delicious fragrance of the best thirty-five-cent coffee, fresh-ground from the grocer's.

"Ja, Henrietta," Sam cried as he rose to leave; "I am going to weddings and fashionable hotels, and I am eating with high-grade customers in restaurants which you would naturally take a high-grade customer to, understand me; but--would you believe me, Henrietta!--I am yet got to taste such coffee oder such *gefüllte Rinderbrust* as you are giving me now."

Mrs. Schrimm beamed her acknowledgment of the compliment.

"To-morrow you would get some chicken fricassee, Sam," she said, "if you would get here at half-past eleven sharp."

Sam shook her hand fervently.

"Believe me, I would try my best," he said; and fifteen minutes later, when Babette entered the Gembitz residence on One Hundred and Eighteenth Street, she found Sam as she had left him--fairly buried in the financial page of the morning paper.

"Well, Babette," Sam cried, "so you see I went out and I took my walk and I come back and nothing happened to me.
Ain't it?"

Babette nodded.

"I'll get you your lunch right away," she said; and without removing her hat and jacket, she brought him a glass of buttermilk and six plain crackers. Sam watched her until she had ascended the stairs to the first floor; then he stole on tiptoe to the sink in the butler's pantry and emptied the buttermilk down the wastepipe. A moment later he opened the door of a bookcase that stood near the mantelpiece and deposited five of the crackers behind six full-morocco volumes entitled "Prayers for Festivals and Holy Days." He was busily engaged in eating the remaining cracker when Babette returned; and all that afternoon he seemed so contented and even jovial that Babette determined to permit him his solitary walk on the following day.

Thus Sam not only ate the chicken fricassee but three days afterward, when he visited Mrs. Schrimm upon the representation to Babette that he would sit all the morning in Mt. Morris Park, he suggested to Henrietta that he show some return for her hospitality by taking her to luncheon at a fashionable hotel downtown.

"My restaurant days is over," Mrs. Schrimm declared.

"To oblige me," Sam pleaded. "I ain't been downtown in--excuse me--such a helluva long time I don't know what it's like at all."

"If you are so anxious to get downtown, Sam," Mrs. Schrimm rejoined, "why don't you go down and get lunch with Henry? He'd be glad to have you."

"What, alone?" Sam cried. "Why, if Babette would hear of it----"

"Who's going to tell her?" Mrs. Schrimm asked, and Sam seized his hat with trembling fingers.

"By jimminy, I would do it!" he said, and then he paused irresolutely. "But how could I get home in time if I did?"

A moment later he snapped his fingers.

"I got an idee!" he exclaimed. "You are such good friends with Mrs. Krakauer--ain't it?"

Mrs. Schrimm nodded.

"Then you should do me the favour, Henrietta, and go over to Mrs. Krakauer and tell her she should ring up Babette and tell her I am over at her house and I wouldn't be back till three o'clock."

"Couldn't you go downtown if you want to?" Mrs. Schrimm replied. "Must you got to ask Babette's permission first?"

Sam nodded slowly.

"You don't know that girl, Henrietta," he said bitterly. "She is Regina selig over again--only worser, Henrietta."

"All right. I would do as you want," Mrs. Schrimm declared.

"Only one thing I must got to tell you," Sam said as he made for the door: "don't let Mrs. Krakauer talk too much, Henrietta, because that girl is suspicious like a credit man. She don't believe nothing nobody tells her."

* * * *

When Sam entered the showroom of Henry Schrimm's place of business, half an hour later, Henry hastened to greet him. "Wie gehts, Mr. Gembitz?" he cried.

He drew forward a chair and Sam sank into it as feebly as he considered appropriate to the rôle of a convalescent.
"I'm a pretty sick man, Henry," he said, "and I feel I ain't long for this world."

He allowed his head to loll over his left shoulder in an attitude of extreme fatigue; in doing so, however, his eye rested for a moment upon a shipping clerk who was arranging Henry's sample garments on some old-fashioned racks.

"Say, lookyhere, Henry," Sam exclaimed, raising his head suddenly, "how the devil could you let a feller like that ruin your whole sample line?"

He jumped from his chair and strode across the showroom.

"Schlemiel!" he cried. "What for you are wrinkling them garments like that?"

He seized a costume from the astonished shipping clerk and for half an hour he arranged and rearranged Henry's samples until the job was finished to his satisfaction.

"Mr. Gembitz," Henry protested, "sit down for a minute. You would make yourself worse."

"What d'ye mean, make myself worse?" Sam demanded. "I am just as much able to do this as you are, Henry. Where do you keep your piece goods, Henry?"

Henry led the way to the cutting room and Sam Gembitz inspected a dozen bolts of cloth that were piled in a heap against the wall.

"That's just what I thought, Henry," Sam cried. "You let them fellers keep the place here like a pig-sty."

"Them's only a lot of stickers, Mr. Gembitz," Henry explained.

"Stickers!" Sam repeated. "What d'ye mean stickers? That's the same mistake a whole lot of people makes. There ain't no such thing as stickers, Henry. Sometimes you get ahold of some piece goods which is out of demand for the time being, Henry; but sooner or later the fashions would change, Henry, and then the stickers ain't stickers no more. They're live propositions again."

Henry made no reply and Sam continued:

"Yes, Henry," he went on, "some people is always willing they should throw out back numbers which really ain't back numbers at all. Take them boys of mine, for instance, Henry, and see how glad they was to get rid of me on account they think I am a back number; but I ain't, Henry. And just to show you I ain't, Henry, do you happen to have on hand some made-up garments which you think is stickers?"

Henry nodded.

"Well, if I don't come downtown to-morrow morning and with all them there stickers sold for you," Sam cried, "my name ain't Sam Gembitz at all."

"Say, lookyhere, Mr. Gembitz," Henry protested, "you would make yourself sick again. Come out and have a bite of lunch with me."

"That's all right, Henry," Sam replied. "I ain't hungry for lunch--I am hungry for work; and if you would be so good and show me them stickers which you got made up, Henry, I could assort 'em in lots, and to-morrow morning I would take a look-in on some of them upper Third Avenue stores, Henry. And if I don't get rid of 'em for you, understand me, you could got right uptown and tell Babette. Otherwise you should keep your mouth shut and you and me does a whole lot of business together."

Half an hour later Sam carefully effaced the evidences of his toil with soap and water and a whisk-broom, and began his journey uptown. Under one arm he carried a bundle of sample garments that might have taxed the strength of a
much younger man.

This bundle he deposited for safekeeping with the proprietor of a cigar store on Lenox Avenue; and, after a final brush-down by the bootblack on the corner, he made straight for his residence on One Hundred and Eighteenth Street. When he entered he found Babette impatiently awaiting him.

"Why didn't you stay all night, popper?" she demanded indignantly. "Here I am all dressed and waiting to go downtown--and you keep me standing around like this."

"Another time you shouldn't wait at all," Sam retorted. "If you want to go downtown, go ahead. I could always ask the girl for something if I should happen to need it."

He watched Babette leave the house with a sigh of relief, and for the remainder of the afternoon he made intricate calculations with the stub of a lead pencil on the backs of old envelopes. Ten minutes before Babette returned he thrust the envelopes into his pocket and smiled with satisfaction, for he had computed to a nicety just how low a price he could quote on Henry Schrimm's stickers, so as to leave a margin of profit for Henry after his own commissions were paid.

The following morning Sam arrayed himself with more than ordinary care, and promptly at ten o'clock he seized his cane and started for the door.

"Where are you going?" Babette demanded.

"I guess I would take a little walk in the park," he said to his daughter in tremulous tones, and Babette eyed him somewhat suspiciously.

"Furthermore," he said boldly, "if you want to come with me you could do so. The way you are looking so yellow lately, Babette, a little walk in the park wouldn't do you no harm."

Sam well knew that his daughter was addicted to the practice of facial massage, and he felt sure that any reference to yellowness would drive Babette to her dressing-table and keep her safely engaged with mirror and cold cream until past noon.

"Don't stay out long," she said, and Sam nodded.

"I would be back when I am hungry," he replied; "and maybe I would take a look in at Mrs. Krakauer. If you get anxious about me telephone her."

Ten minutes later he called at the cigar store on Lenox Avenue and secured his samples, after which he rang up Mrs. Schrimm.

"Hello, Henrietta!" he shouted, "This is Sam--yes, Sam Gembitz. What is the matter? Nothing is the matter. Huh? Sure, I feel all right. I give you a scare? Why should I give you a scare, Henrietta? Sure, we are old friends; but that ain't the point, Henrietta. I want to ask you you should do me something as a favour. You should please be so good and ring up Mrs. Krakauer, which you should tell her, if Babette rings her up and asks for me any time between now and six o'clock to-night, she should say I was there, but I just left. Did you get that straight? All right. Good-bye."

He heaved a sigh of relief as he paid for the telephone call and pocketed a handful of cheap cigars.

"Don't you want a boy to help you carry them samples, Mr. Gembitz?" the proprietor asked.

"Do I look like I wanted a boy to help me carry samples?" Sam retorted indignantly, and a moment later he swung aboard an eastbound crosstown car.

It was past noon when Sam entered Henry Schrimm's showroom and his face bore a broad, triumphant grin.
"Well, Henry," he shouted, "what did I told you? To a feller which he is knowing how to sell goods there ain't no such things as stickers."

"Did you get rid of 'em?" Henry asked.

Sam shook his head.

"No, Henry," he said, "I didn't get rid of 'em--I sold 'em; and, furthermore, Henry, I sold four hundred dollars' worth more just like 'em to Mr. Rosett, of the Rochelle Department Store, which you should send him right away a couple sample garments of them 1040's."

"What d'ye mean, 1040's?" Henry asked. "I ain't got no such lot number in my place."

"No, I know you ain't; but I mean our style 1040--that is to say, Gembitz Brothers' style 1040."

Henry blushed.

"I don't know what you are talking about at all," he said.

"No?" Sam retorted slyly. "Well, I'll describe it to you, Henry. It's what you would call a princess dress in tailor-made effects. The waist's got lapels of the same goods, with a little braid on to it, two plaits in the middle and one on each shoulder; yoke and collar of silk net; and----"

"You mean my style number 2018?" Henry asked.

"I don't mean nothing, Henry," Sam declared, "because you shouldn't throw me no bluffs, Henry. I seen one of them garments in your cutting room only yesterday, Henry, which, if it wasn't made up in my old factory, I would eat it, Henry--and Doctor Eichendorfer says I got to be careful with my diet at that."

Henry shrugged.

"Well," he began, "there ain't no harm if----"

"Sure, there ain't no harm, Henry," Sam said, "because them garments is going like hot cakes. A big concern like Falkstatter, Fein & Company takes over three thousand dollars' worth from the boys for their stores in Sarachuse, Rochester, and Buffalo."

"Falkstatter, Fein & Company!" Henry cried. "Does them boys of yours sell Falkstatter, Fein & Company?"

"Sure," Sam answered. "Why not?"

"Why not?" Henry repeated. "Ain't you heard?"

"I ain't heard nothing."

"But I know that concern for twenty years since already, Henry, and they always pay prompt to the day."

"Sure, I know," Henry said; "but only this morning I seen Sol Klinger in the subway and Sol tells me Simon Falkstatter committed suicide last night."

"Committed suicide!" Sam gasped. "What for?"

"I don't know what for," Henry replied; "but nobody commits suicide for pleasure, Mr. Gembitz, and if a man is in business, like Falkstatter, when Marshall Field's was new beginners already, Mr. Gembitz, and he sees he is got to bust up, Mr. Gembitz, what should he do?"

Sam rose to his feet and seized his hat and cane.
"Going home so soon, Mr. Gembitz?" Henry asked.

"No, I ain't going home, Henry," Sam replied. "I'm going over to see my boys. I guess they need me."

He started for the door, but as he reached it he paused.

"By the way, Henry," he said, "on my way down I stopped in to see that new concern there on Fifth Avenue--Weldon, Jones & Company--and you should send 'em up also a couple of them princess dresses in brown and smoke. I'll see you to-morrow."

"Do you think you could get down again to-morrow?" Henry asked.

"I don't know, Henry; but if lies could get me here I guess I could," Sam replied. "Because, the way my children fixes me lately, I am beginning to be such a liar that you could really say I am an expert."

* * * * *

Ten minutes later Sam Gembitz walked into the elevator of his late place of business and smiled affably at the elevator boy, who returned his greeting with a perfunctory nod.

"Well, what's new around here, Louis?" Sam asked.

"I dunno, Mr. Gembitz," the elevator boy said. "I am only just coming back from my lunch."

"I mean what happens since I am going away, Louis?" Sam continued.

"I didn't know you went away at all, Mr. Gembitz," the elevator boy replied.

"Dummer Esel!" Sam exclaimed. "Don't you know I was sick and I am going away from here schon three months ago pretty near?"

The elevator boy stopped the car at Gembitz Brothers' floor and spat deliberately.

"In the building is twenty tenants, Mr. Gembitz," he said, "and the way them fellers is sitting up all hours of the night, shikkering and gambling, if I would keep track which of 'em is sick and which ain't sick, Mr. Gembitz, I wouldn't got no time to run the elevator at all."

If the elevator boy's indifference made Sam waver in the belief that he was sorely missed downtown the appearance of his late showroom convinced him of his mistake. The yellow-pine fixtures had disappeared, and in place of his old walnut table there had been installed three rolltop desks of the latest Wall Street design.

At the largest of these sat Max, who wheeled about suddenly as his father entered.

"What are you doing down here?" he demanded savagely.

"Ain't I got no right in my own business at all?" Sam asked mildly.

"Sidney!" Max cried, and in response his youngest brother appeared.

"Put on your hat and take the old man home," he said.

"One minute, Sidney," Sam said. "In the first place, Max, before we talk about going home, I want to ask you a question: How much does Falkstatter, Fein & Company owe us?"

"Us?" Max repeated.
"Well--you?" Sam replied.

"What's that your business?" Max retorted.

"What is that my business?" Sam gasped. "A question! Did you ever hear the like, Sidney? He asks me what it is my business supposing Falkstatter, Fein & Company owes us a whole lot of money! Ain't that a fine way to talk, Sidney?"

Sidney's pasty face coloured and he bit his lips nervously.

"Max is right, popper," he said. "You ain't got no call to come down here and interfere in our affairs. I'll put on my hat and go right home with you."

It was now Sam's turn to blush, and he did so to the point of growing purple with rage.

"Don't trouble yourself," he cried; "because I ain't going home!"

"What d'ye mean, y'ain't going home?" Max said threateningly.

"I mean what I say!" Sam declared. "I mean I ain't going home never again. You are throwing me out of my business, Max, and you would soon try to throw me out of my home, too, if I couldn't protect myself. But I ain't so old and I ain't so sick but what I could take care of myself, Max."

"Why, Doctor Eichendorfer says----" Sidney began.

"Doctor Eichendorfer!" Sam roared. "Who is Doctor Eichendorfer? He is a doctor, not a lawyer, Max, and maybe he knows about kidneys, Max; but he don't know nothing about business, Max! And, so help me, Max, I would give you till Wednesday afternoon three o'clock; if you don't send me a certified check for five thousand dollars over to Henry Schrimm's place, I would go right down and see Henry D. Feldman, and I would bust your business--my business!--open from front to rear, so that there wouldn't be a penny left for nobody--except Henry D. Feldman."

Here he drew a deep breath.

"And, furthermore, Max," he concluded, as he made for the door, "don't try any monkey business with spreading reports I am gone crazy or anything, because I know that's just what you would do, Max! And if you would, Max, instead of five thousand dollars I would want ten thousand dollars. And if I wouldn't get it, Max, Henry D. Feldman would--so what is the difference?"

He paused with his hand on the elevator bell and faced his sons again.

"Solomon was right, Max," he concluded. "He was an old-timer, Max; but, just the same, he knew what he was talking about when he said that you bring up a child in the way he should go and when he gets old he bites you like a serpent's tooth yet!"

At this juncture the elevator door opened and Sam delivered his ultimatum.

"But you got a different proposition here, boys," he said; "and before you get through with me I would show you that onced in a while a father could got a serpent's tooth, too--and don't you forget it!"

"Mr. Gembitz," the elevator boy interrupted, "there is here in the building already twenty tenants; and other people as yourself wants to ride in the elevator, too, Mr. Gembitz."

Thus admonished, Sam entered the car and a moment later he found himself on the sidewalk. Instinctively he walked toward the subway station, although he had intended to return to Henry Schrimm's office; but, before he again became conscious of his surroundings, he was seated in a Lenox Avenue express with an early edition of the evening paper held upside down before him.
"Nah, well," he said to himself, "what is the difference? I wouldn't try to do no more business to-day."

He straightened up the paper and at once commenced to study the financial page. Unknown to his children, he had long rented a safe-deposit box, in which reposed ten first-mortgage bonds of a trunkline railroad, together with a few shares of stock purchased by him during the Northern Pacific panic. He noted, with a satisfied grin, that the stock showed a profit of fifty points, while the bonds had advanced three eighths of a point.

"Three eighths ain't much," he muttered as he sat still while the train left One Hundred and Sixteenth Street station, "but there is a whole lot of rabonim which would marry you for less than thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents."

He threw the paper to the floor as the train stopped at One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street and, without a moment's hesitation, ascended to the street level and walked two blocks north to One Hundred and Twenty-seventh Street. There he rang the basement bell of an old-fashioned brown-stone residence and Mrs. Schrimm in person opened the door. When she observed her visitor she shook her head slowly from side to side and emitted inarticulate sounds through her nose, indicative of extreme commiseration.

"Ain't you going to get the devil when Babette sees you!" she said at last. "Mrs. Krakauer tells her six times over the 'phone already you just went home."

"Could I help it what that woman tells Babette?" Sam asked. "And, anyhow, Henrietta, what do I care what Mrs. Krakauer tells Babette or what Babette tells Mrs. Krakauer? And, furthermore, Henrietta, Babette could never give me the devil no more!"

"No?" Mrs. Schrimm said as she led the way to the dining-room. "You're talking awful big, Sam, for a feller which he never calls his soul his own in his own home yet."

"Them times is past, Henrietta," Sam answered as he sat down and removed his hat. "To-day things begin differently for me, Henrietta; because, Henrietta, you and me is old enough to know our own business, understand me--and if I would say 'black' you wouldn't say 'white.' And if you would say 'black' I would say 'black'."

Mrs. Schrimm looked hard at Sam and then she sat down on the sofa.

"What d'ye mean, black?" she gasped.

"I'm only talking in a manner of speaking, Henrietta," Sam explained. "What I mean is this."

He pulled an old envelope out of his pocket and explored his waistcoat for a stump of lead pencil.

"What I mean is," he continued, wetting the blunt point with his tongue, "ten bonds from Canadian Western, first mortgage from gold, mit a garantirt from the Michigan Midland Railroad, ten thousand dollars, interest at 6 per cent.--is six hundred dollars a year, ain't it?"

"Ye-ee-s," Mrs. Schrimm said hesitatingly. "Und?"

"Und," Sam said triumphantly, "fifty shares from Central Pacific at 154 apiece is seventy-seven hundred dollars, with dividends since thirty years they are paying it at 4 per cent. is two hundred dollars a year more, ain't it?"

Mrs. Schrimm nodded.

"What has all this got to do with me, Sam?" she asked.

Sam cleared his throat.

"A wife should know how her husband stands," he said huskily. "Ain't it so, Henrietta, leben?"
Mrs. Schrimm nodded again.

"Did you speak to Henry anything, Sam?" she asked.

"I didn't say nothing to Henry yet," Sam replied; "but if he's satisfied with the business I done for him this morning I would make him a partnership proposition."

"But, listen here to me, Sam," Mrs. Schrimm protested. "Me I am already fifty-five years old; and a man like you which you got money, understand me, if you want to get married you could find plenty girls forty years old which would only be glad they should marry you--good-looking girls, too, Sam."

"Koosh!" Sam cried, for he had noted a tear steal from the corner of Mrs. Schrimm's eye. He rose from his chair and seated himself on the sofa beside her. "You don't know what you are talking about," he said as he clasped her hand. "Good looks to some people is red cheeks and black hair, Henrietta; but with me it is different. The best-looking woman in the whole world to me, Henrietta, is got gray hair, with good brains underneath--and she is also a little fat, too, understand me; but the heart is big underneath and the hands is red, but they got red doing mitzvahs for other people, Henrietta."

He paused and cleared his throat again.

"And so, Henrietta," he concluded, "if you want me to marry a good-looking girl--this afternoon yet we could go downtown and get the license."

Mrs. Schrimm sat still for two minutes and then she disengaged her hand from Sam's eager clasp.

"All I got to do is to put on a clean waist," she said, "and I would get my hat on in ten minutes."

********

"The fact of the matter is," Max Gembitz said, two days later, "we ain't got the ready money."

Sam Gembitz nodded. He sat at a desk in Henry Schrimm's office--a new desk of the latest Wall Street design; and on the third finger of his left hand a plain gold band was surmounted by a three-carat diamond ring, the gift of the bride.

"No?" he said, with a rising inflection.

"And you know as well as I do, popper, we was always a little short this time of the year in our business!" Max continued.

"Our business?" Sam repeated. "You mean your business, Max."

"What difference does it make?" Max asked.

"It makes a whole lot of difference, Max," Sam declared; "because, if I would be a partner in your business, Max, I would practically got to be one of my own competitors."

"One of your own competitors!" Max cried. "What d'ye mean?"

For answer Sam handed his son the following card:

SAMUEL GEMBITZ      HENRY SCHRIMM
GEMBITZ & SCHRIMM
CLOAKS & SUITS
Max gazed at the card for five minutes and then he placed it in his waistcoat-pocket.

"So you are out to do us--what?" Max said bitterly.

"What are you talking about--out to do you?" Sam replied. "How could an old-timer like me do three up-to-date fellers like you and Sidney and Lester? I'm a back number, Max. I ain't got gumption enough to make up a whole lot of garments, all in one style, pastel shades, and sell 'em all to a concern which is on its last legs, Max. I couldn't play this here Baytzimmer feller's pool, Max, and I couldn't sit up all hours of the night eating lobsters and oysters and ham and bacon in the Harlem Winter Garden, Max."

He paused to indulge in a malicious grin.

"Furthermore, Max," he continued, "how could a poor, sick old man compete with a lot of healthy young fellers like you boys? I've got Bright's Disease, Max, and I could drop down in the street any minute. And if you don't believe me, Max, you should ask Doctor Eichendorfer. He will tell you the same."

Max made no reply, but took up his hat from the top of Sam's desk.

"Wait a minute, Max," Sam said. "Don't be in such a hurry, Max, because, after all, you boys is my sons, anyhow; and so I got a proposition to make to you."

He pointed to a chair and Max sat down.

"First, Max," he went on, "I wouldn't ask you for cash. What I want is you should give me a note at one year for five thousand dollars, without interest."

"So far as I could see," Max interrupted, "we wouldn't be in no better condition to pay you five thousand dollars in one year as we are to-day."

"I didn't think you would be," Sam said, "but I figured that all out; and if, before the end of one year, you three boys would turn around and go to work and get a decent, respectable feller which he would marry Babette and make a home for her, understand me, I would give you back your note."

"But how could we do that?" Max exclaimed.

"I leave that to you," Sam replied; "because, anyhow, Max, there's plenty fellers which is designers oder bookkeepers which would marry Babette in a minute if they could get a partnership in an old, established concern like yours."

"But Babette don't want to get married," Max declared.

"Don't she?" Sam retorted. "Well, if a woman stands hours and hours in front of the glass and rubs her face mit cold cream and Gott weiss what else, Max, if she don't want to get married I'd like to know what she does want."

Again Max rose to his feet.

"I'll tell the boys what you say," he murmured.

"Sure," Sam said heartily, "and tell 'em also they should drop in once in a while and see mommer and me up in One Hundred and Twenty-seventh Street."

Max nodded.
"And tell Babette to come, also," Sam added; but Max shook his head.

"I'm afraid she wouldn't do it," he declared. "She says yesterday she wouldn't speak to you again so long as you live."

Sam emitted a sigh that was a trifle too emphatic in its tremulousness.

"I'm sorry she feels that way, Max," he said; "but it's an old saying and a true one, Max: you couldn't make no omelets without beating eggs."

(The end)

Montague Glass's short story: Serpents' Teeth

By Montague Glass