

CHAPTER VIII

PAINFUL SCENE IN A CAFE

The noonday sun beat down on Park Row. Hurrying mortals, released from a thousand offices, congested the sidewalks, their thoughts busy with the vision of lunch. Up and down the canyon of Nassau Street the crowds moved more slowly. Candy-selling aliens jostled newsboys, and huge dray-horses endeavoured to the best of their ability not to grind the citizenry beneath their hooves.

Eastward, pressing on to the City Hall, surged the usual dense army of happy lovers on their way to buy marriage-licenses. Men popped in and out of the subway entrances like rabbits. It was a stirring, bustling scene, typical of this nerve-centre of New York's vast body.

Jimmy Crocker, standing in the doorway, watched the throngs enviously. There were men in that crowd who chewed gum, there were men who wore white satin ties with imitation diamond stick-pins, there were men who, having smoked seven-tenths of a cigar, were eating the remainder: but there was not one with whom he would not at that moment willingly have exchanged identities. For these men had jobs. And in his present frame of mind it seemed to him that no further ingredient was needed for the recipe of the ultimate human bliss.

The poet has said some very searching and unpleasant things about the man "whose heart has ne'er within him burned as home his footsteps he has turned from wandering on some foreign strand," but he might have excused Jimmy for feeling just then not so much a warmth of heart as a cold and clammy sensation of dismay. He would have had to admit that the words "High though his titles, proud his name, boundless his wealth as wish can claim" did not apply to Jimmy Crocker. The latter may have been "concentred all on self," but his wealth consisted of one hundred and thirty-three dollars and forty cents and his name was so far from being proud that the mere sight of it in the files of the New York Sunday Chronicle, the record-room of which he had just been visiting, had made him consider the fact that he had changed it to Bayliss the most sensible act of his career.

The reason for Jimmy's lack of enthusiasm as he surveyed the portion of his native land visible from his doorway is not far to seek. The Atlantic had docked on Saturday night, and Jimmy, having driven to an excellent hotel and engaged an expensive room therein, had left instructions at the desk that breakfast should be served to him at ten o'clock and with it the Sunday issue of the Chronicle. Five years had passed since he had seen the dear old rag for which he had reported so many fires, murders, street-accidents, and weddings: and he looked forward to its perusal as a formal taking seisin of his long-neglected country. Nothing could be more fitting and symbolic than that the first

morning of his return to America should find him propped up in bed reading the good old Chronicle. Among his final meditations as he dropped off to sleep was a gentle speculation as to who was City editor now and whether the comic supplement was still featuring the sprightly adventures of the Doughnut family.

A wave of not unmanly sentiment passed over him on the following morning as he reached out for the paper. The sky-line of New York, seen as the boat comes up the bay, has its points, and the rattle of the Elevated trains and the quaint odour of the Subway extend a kindly welcome, but the thing that really convinces the returned traveller that he is back on Manhattan Island is the first Sunday paper. Jimmy, like every one else, began by opening the comic supplement: and as he scanned it a chilly discomfort, almost a premonition of evil, came upon him. The Doughnut Family was no more. He knew that it was unreasonable of him to feel as if he had just been informed of the death of a dear friend, for Pa Doughnut and his associates had been having their adventures five years before he had left the country, and even the toughest comic supplementary hero rarely endures for a decade: but nevertheless the shadow did fall upon his morning optimism, and he derived no pleasure whatever from the artificial rollickings of a degraded creature called Old Pop Dill-Pickle who was offered as a substitute.

But this, he was to discover almost immediately, was a trifling

disaster. It distressed him, but it did not affect his material welfare. Tragedy really began when he turned to the magazine section. Scarcely had he started to glance at it when this headline struck him like a bullet:

PICCADILLY JIM AT IT AGAIN

And beneath it his own name.

Nothing is so capable of diversity as the emotion we feel on seeing our name unexpectedly in print. We may soar to the heights or we may sink to the depths. Jimmy did the latter. A mere cursory first inspection of the article revealed the fact that it was no eulogy. With an unsparing hand the writer had muck-raked his eventful past, the text on which he hung his remarks being that ill-fated encounter with Lord Percy Whipple at the Six Hundred Club. This the scribe had recounted at a length and with a boisterous vim which outdid even Bill Blake's effort in the London Daily Sun. Bill Blake had been handicapped by consideration of space and the fact that he had turned in his copy at an advanced hour when the paper was almost made up. The present writer was shackled by no restrictions. He had plenty of room to spread himself in, and he had spread himself. So liberal had been the editor's views in the respect that, in addition to the letter-press, the pages contained an unspeakably offensive picture of a burly young man in an obviously advanced condition

of alcoholism raising his fist to strike a monocled youth in evening dress who had so little chin that Jimmy was surprised that he had ever been able to hit it. The only gleam of consolation that he could discover in this repellent drawing was the fact that the artist had treated Lord Percy even more scurvily than himself. Among other things, the second son of the Duke of Devizes was depicted as wearing a coronet--a thing which would have excited remark even in a London night-club.

Jimmy read the thing through in its entirety three times before he appreciated a nuance which his disordered mind had at first failed to grasp--to wit, that this character-sketch of himself was no mere isolated outburst but apparently one of a series. In several places the writer alluded unmistakably to other theses on the same subject.

Jimmy's breakfast congealed on its tray, untouched. That boon which the gods so seldom bestow, of seeing ourselves as others see us, had been accorded to him in full measure. By the time he had completed his third reading he was regarding himself in a purely objective fashion not unlike the attitude of a naturalist towards some strange and loathesome manifestation of insect life. So this was the sort of fellow he was! He wondered they had let him in at a reputable hotel.

The rest of the day he passed in a state of such humility that he

could have wept when the waiters were civil to him. On the Monday morning he made his way to Park Row to read the files of the Chronicle--a morbid enterprise, akin to the eccentric behaviour of those priests of Baal who gashed themselves with knives or of authors who subscribe to press-clipping agencies.

He came upon another of the articles almost at once, in an issue not a month old. Then there was a gap of several weeks, and hope revived that things might not be as bad as he had feared--only to be crushed by another trenchant screed. After that he set about his excavations methodically, resolved to know the worst. He knew it in just under two hours. There it all was--his row with the bookie, his bad behaviour at the political meeting, his breach-of-promise case. It was a complete biography.

And the name they called him. Piccadilly Jim! Ugh!

He went out into Park Row, and sought a quiet doorway where he could brood upon these matters.

It was not immediately that the practical or financial aspect of the affair came to scourge him. For an appreciable time he suffered in his self-esteem alone. It seemed to him that all these bustling persons who passed knew him, that they were casting sidelong glances at him and laughing derisively, that those who chewed gum chewed it sneeringly and that those who ate

their cigars ate them with thinly-veiled disapproval and scorn. Then, the passage of time blunting sensitiveness, he found that there were other and weightier things to consider.

As far as he had had any connected plan of action in his sudden casting-off of the flesh-pots of London, he had determined as soon as possible after landing to report at the office of his old paper and apply for his ancient position. So little thought had he given to the minutiae of his future plans that it had not occurred to him that he had anything to do but walk in, slap the gang on the back, and announce that he was ready to work. Work!-- on the staff of a paper whose chief diversion appeared to be the satirising of his escapades! Even had he possessed the moral courage--or gall--to make the application, what good would it be? He was a by-word in a world where he had once been a worthy citizen. What paper would trust Piccadilly Jim with an assignment? What paper would consider Piccadilly Jim even on space rates? A chill dismay crept over him. He seemed to hear the grave voice of Bayliss the butler speaking in his car as he had spoken so short a while before at Paddington Station.

"Is it not a little rash, Mr. James?"

Rash was the word. Here he stood, in a country that had no possible use for him, a country where competition was keen and jobs for the unskilled infrequent. What on earth was there that

he could do?

Well, he could go home. . . . No, he couldn't. His pride revolted at that solution. Prodigal Son stuff was all very well in its way, but it lost its impressiveness if you turned up again at home two weeks after you had left. A decent interval among the husks and swine was essential. Besides, there was his father to consider. He might be a poor specimen of a fellow, as witness the Sunday Chronicle passim, but he was not so poor as to come slinking back to upset things for his father just when he had done the only decent thing by removing himself. No, that was out of the question.

What remained? The air of New York is bracing and healthy, but a man cannot live on it. Obviously he must find a job. But what job?

What could he do?

A gnawing sensation in the region of the waistcoat answered the question. The solution--which it put forward was, it was true, but a temporary one, yet it appealed strongly to Jimmy. He had found it admirable at many crises. He would go and lunch, and it might be that food would bring inspiration.

He moved from his doorway and crossed to the entrance of the

subway. He caught a timely express, and a few minutes later emerged into the sunlight again at Grand Central. He made his way westward along Forty-second Street to the hotel which he thought would meet his needs. He had scarcely entered it when in a chair by the door he perceived Ann Chester, and at the sight of her all his depression vanished and he was himself again.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Bayliss? Are you lunching here?"

"Unless there is some other place that you would prefer," said Jimmy. "I hope I haven't kept you waiting."

Ann laughed. She was looking very delightful in something soft and green.

"I'm not going to lunch with you. I'm waiting for Mr. Ralstone and his sister. Do you remember him? He crossed over with us. His chair was next to mine on the promenade deck."

Jimmy was shocked. When he thought how narrowly she had escaped, poor girl, from lunching with that insufferable pill Teddy--or was it Edgar?--he felt quite weak. Recovering himself, he spoke firmly.

"When were they to have met you?"

"At one o'clock."

"It is now five past. You are certainly not going to wait any longer. Come with me, and we will whistle for cabs."

"Don't be absurd!"

"Come along. I want to talk to you about my future."

"I shall certainly do nothing of the kind," said Ann, rising. She went with him to the door. "Teddy would never forgive me." She got into the cab. "It's only because you have appealed to me to help you discuss your future," she said, as they drove off.

"Nothing else would have induced me . . ."

"I know," said Jimmy. "I felt that I could rely on your womanly sympathy. Where shall we go?"

"Where do you want to go? Oh, I forget that you have never been in New York before. By the way, what are your impressions of our glorious country?"

"Most gratifying, if only I could get a job."

"Tell him to drive to Delmonico's. It's just around the corner on Forty-fourth Street."

"There are some things round the corner, then?"

"That sounds cryptic. What do you mean."

"You've forgotten our conversation that night on the ship. You refused to admit the existence of wonderful things just round the corner. You said some very regrettable things that night. About love, if you remember."

"You can't be going to talk about love at one o'clock in the afternoon! Talk about your future."

"Love is inextricably mixed up with my future."

"Not with your immediate future. I thought you said that you were trying to get a job. Have you given up the idea of newspaper work, then?"

"Absolutely."

"Well, I'm rather glad."

The cab drew up at the restaurant door, and the conversation was interrupted. When they were seated at their table and Jimmy had given an order to the waiter of absolutely inexcusable

extravagance, Ann returned to the topic.

"Well, now the thing is to find something for you to do."

Jimmy looked round the restaurant with appreciative eyes. The summer exodus from New York was still several weeks distant, and the place was full of prosperous-looking lunchers, not one of whom appeared to have a care or an unpaid bill in the world. The atmosphere was redolent of substantial bank-balances. Solvency shone from the closely shaven faces of the men and reflected itself in the dresses of the women. Jimmy sighed.

"I suppose so," he said. "Though for choice I'd like to be one of the Idle Rich. To my mind the ideal profession is strolling into the office and touching the old dad for another thousand."

Ann was severe.

"You revolt me!" she said. "I never heard anything so thoroughly disgraceful. You need work!"

"One of these days," said Jimmy plaintively, "I shall be sitting by the roadside with my dinner-pail, and you will come by in your limousine, and I shall look up at you and say 'You hounded me into this!' How will you feel then?"

"Very proud of myself."

"In that case, there is no more to be said. I'd much rather hang about and try to get adopted by a millionaire, but if you insist on my working--Waiter!"

"What do you want?" asked Ann.

"Will you get me a Classified Telephone Directory," said Jimmy.

"What for?" asked Ann.

"To look for a profession. There is nothing like being methodical."

The waiter returned, bearing a red book. Jimmy thanked him and opened it at the A's.

"The boy, what will he become?" he said. He turned the pages.

"How about an Auditor? What do you think of that?"

"Do you think you could audit?"

"That I could not say till I had tried. I might turn out to be very good at it. How about an Adjuster?"

"An adjuster of what?"

"The book doesn't say. It just remarks broadly--in a sort of spacious way--'Adjuster.' I take it that, having decided to become an adjuster, you then sit down and decide what you wish to adjust. One might, for example, become an Asparagus Adjuster."

"A what?"

"Surely you know? Asparagus Adjusters are the fellows who sell those rope-and-pulley affairs by means of which the Smart Set lower asparagus into their mouths--or rather Francis the footman does it for them, of course. The diner leans back in his chair, and the menial works the apparatus in the background. It is entirely superseding the old-fashioned method of picking the vegetable up and taking a snap at it. But I suspect that to be a successful Asparagus Adjuster requires capital. We now come to Awning Crank and Spring Rollers. I don't think I should like that. Rolling awning cranks seems to me a sorry way of spending life's springtime. Let's try the B's."

"Let's try this omelette. It looks delicious." Jimmy shook his head.

"I will toy with it--but absently and in a distraught manner, as becomes a man of affairs. There's nothing in the B's. I might

devote my ardent youth to Bar-Room Glassware and Bottlers' Supplies. On the other hand, I might not. Similarly, while there is no doubt a bright future for somebody in Celluloid, Fiberloid, and Other Factitious Goods, instinct tells me that there is none for--" he pulled up on the verge of saying, "James Braithwaite Crocker," and shuddered at the nearness of the pitfall. "--for--" he hesitated again--"for Algernon Bayliss," he concluded.

Ann smiled delightedly. It was so typical that his father should have called him something like that. Time had not dimmed her regard for the old man she had seen for that brief moment at Paddington Station. He was an old dear, and she thoroughly approved of this latest manifestation of his supposed pride in his offspring.

"Is that really your name--Algernon?"

"I cannot deny it."

"I think your father is a darling," said Ann inconsequently.

Jimmy had buried himself in the directory again.

"The D's," he said. "Is it possible that posterity will know me as Bayliss the Dermatologist? Or as Bayliss the Drop Forger? I

don't quite like that last one. It may be a respectable occupation, but it sounds rather criminal to me. The sentence for forging drops is probably about twenty years with hard labour."

"I wish you would put that book away and go on with your lunch," said Ann.

"Perhaps," said Jimmy, "my grandchildren will cluster round my knee some day and say in their piping, childish voices, 'Tell us how you became the Elastic Stocking King, grandpa!' What do you think?"

"I think you ought to be ashamed of yourself. You are wasting your time, when you ought to be either talking to me or else thinking very seriously about what you mean to do."

Jimmy was turning the pages rapidly.

"I will be with you in a moment," he said. "Try to amuse yourself somehow till I am at leisure. Ask yourself a riddle. Tell yourself an anecdote. Think of life. No, it's no good. I don't see myself as a Fan Importer, a Glass Beveller, a Hotel Broker, an Insect Exterminator, a Junk Dealer, a Kalsomine Manufacturer, a Laundryman, a Mausoleum Architect, a Nurse, an Oculist, a Paper-Hanger, a Quilt Designer, a Roofer, a Ship Plumber, a Tinsmith, an Undertaker, a Veterinarian, a Wig Maker, an X-ray

apparatus manufacturer, a Yeast producer, or a Zinc Spelter." He closed the book. "There is only one thing to do. I must starve in the gutter. Tell me--you know New York better than I do--where is there a good gutter?"

At this moment there entered the restaurant an Immaculate Person. He was a young man attired in faultlessly fitting clothes, with shoes of flawless polish and a perfectly proportioned floweret in his buttonhole. He surveyed the room through a monocle. He was a pleasure to look upon, but Jimmy, catching sight of him, started violently and felt no joy at all; for he had recognised him. It was a man he knew well and who knew him well--a man whom he had last seen a bare two weeks ago at the Bachelors' Club in London. Few things are certain in this world, but one was that, if Bartling--such was the Vision's name--should see him, he would come over and address him as Crocker. He braced himself to the task of being Bayliss, the whole Bayliss, and nothing but Bayliss. It might be that stout denial would carry him through. After all, Reggie Bartling was a man of notoriously feeble intellect, who could believe in anything.

The monocle continued its sweep. It rested on Jimmy's profile.

"By Gad!" said the Vision.

Reginald Bartling had landed in New York that morning, and

already the loneliness of a strange city had begun to oppress him. He had come over on a visit of pleasure, his suit-case stuffed with letters of introduction, but these he had not yet used. There was a feeling of home-sickness upon him, and he ached for a pal. And there before him sat Jimmy Crocker, one of the best. He hastened to the table.

"I say, Crocker, old chap, I didn't know you were over here. When did you arrive?"

Jimmy was profoundly thankful that he had seen this pest in time to be prepared for him. Suddenly assailed in this fashion, he would undoubtedly have incriminated himself by recognition of his name. But, having anticipated the visitation, he was able to say a whole sentence to Ann before showing himself aware that it was he who was addressed.

"I say! Jimmy Crocker!"

Jimmy achieved one of the blankest stares of modern times. He looked at Ann. Then he looked at Bartling again.

"I think there's some mistake," he said. "My name is Bayliss."

Before his stony eye the immaculate Bartling wilted. It was a perfectly astounding likeness, but it was apparent to him when

what he had ever heard and read about doubles came to him. He was confused. He blushed. It was deuced bad form going up to a perfect stranger like this and pretending you knew him. Probably the chappie thought he was some kind of a confidence johnnie or something. It was absolutely rotten! He continued to blush till one could have fancied him scarlet to the ankles. He backed away, apologising in ragged mutters. Jimmy was not insensible to the pathos of his suffering acquaintance's position; he knew Reggie and his devotion to good form sufficiently well to enable him to appreciate the other's horror at having spoken to a fellow to whom he had never been introduced; but necessity forbade any other course. However Reggie's soul might writhe and however sleepless Reggie's nights might become as a result of this encounter, he was prepared to fight it out on those lines if it took all summer. And, anyway, it was darned good for Reggie to get a jolt like that every once in a while. Kept him bright and lively.

So thinking, he turned to Ann again, while the crimson Bartling tottered off to restore his nerve centres to their normal tone at some other hostelry. He found Ann staring amazedly at him, eyes wide and lips parted.

"Odd, that!" he observed with a light carelessness which he admired extremely and of which he would not have believed himself capable. "I suppose I must be somebody's double. What was the

name he said?"

"Jimmy Crocker!" cried Ann.

Jimmy raised his glass, sipped, and put it down.

"Oh yes, I remember. So it was. It's a curious thing, too, that it sounds familiar. I've heard the name before somewhere."

"I was talking about Jimmy Crocker on the ship. That evening on deck."

Jimmy looked at her doubtfully.

"Were you? Oh yes, of course. I've got it now. He is the man you dislike so."

Ann was still looking at him as if he had undergone a change into something new and strange.

"I hope you aren't going to let the resemblance prejudice you against me?" said Jimmy. "Some are born Jimmy Crockers, others have Jimmy Crockers thrust upon them. I hope you'll bear in mind that I belong to the latter class."

"It's such an extraordinary thing."

"Oh, I don't know. You often hear of doubles. There was a man in England a few years ago who kept getting sent to prison for things some genial stranger who happened to look like him had done."

"I don't mean that. Of course there are doubles. But it is curious that you should have come over here and that we should have met like this at just this time. You see, the reason I went over to England at all was to try to get Jimmy Crocker to come back here."

"What!"

"I don't mean that I did. I mean that I went with my uncle and aunt, who wanted to persuade him to come and live with them."

Jimmy was now feeling completely out of his depth.

"Your uncle and aunt? Why?"

"I ought to have explained that they are his uncle and aunt, too. My aunt's sister married his father."

"But--"

"It's quite simple, though it doesn't sound so. Perhaps you haven't read the Sunday Chronicle lately? It has been publishing articles about Jimmy Crocker's disgusting behaviour in London--they call him Piccadilly Jim, you know--"

In print, that name had shocked Jimmy. Spoken, and by Ann, it was loathly. Remorse for his painful past tore at him.

"There was another one printed yesterday."

"I saw it," said Jimmy, to avert description.

"Oh, did you? Well, just to show you what sort of a man Jimmy Crocker is, the Lord Percy Whipple whom he attacked in the club was his very best friend. His step-mother told my aunt so. He seems to be absolutely hopeless." She smiled. "You're looking quite sad, Mr. Bayliss. Cheer up! You may look like him, but you aren't him he?--him?--no, 'he' is right. The soul is what counts. If you've got a good, virtuous, Algernonish soul, it doesn't matter if you're so like Jimmy Crocker that his friends come up and talk to you in restaurants. In fact, it's rather an advantage, really. I'm sure that if you were to go to my aunt and pretend to be Jimmy Crocker, who had come over after all in a fit of repentance, she would be so pleased that there would be nothing she wouldn't do for you. You might realise your ambition of being adopted by a millionaire. Why don't you try it? I won't

give you away."

"Before they found me out and hauled me off to prison, I should have been near you for a time. I should have lived in the same house with you, spoken to you--!" Jimmy's voice shook.

Ann turned her head to address an imaginary companion.

"You must listen to this, my dear," she said in an undertone. "He speaks wonderfully! They used to call him the Boy Orator in his home-town. Sometimes that, and sometimes Eloquent Algernon!"

Jimmy eyed her fixedly. He disapproved of this frivolity.

"One of these days you will try me too high--!"

"Oh, you didn't hear what I was saying to my friend, did you?" she said in concern. "But I meant it, every word. I love to hear you talk. You have such feeling!"

Jimmy attuned himself to the key of the conversation.

"Have you no sentiment in you?" he demanded.

"I was just warming up, too! In another minute you would have heard something worth while. You've damped me now. Let's talk

about my lifework again."

"Have you thought of anything?"

"I'd like to be one of those fellows who sit in offices, and sign checks, and tell the office-boy to tell Mr. Rockefeller they can give him five minutes. But of course I should need a check-book, and I haven't got one. Oh well, I shall find something to do all right. Now tell me something about yourself. Let's drop the future for awhile."

* * * * *

An hour later Jimmy turned into Broadway. He walked pensively, for he had much to occupy his mind. How strange that the Petts should have come over to England to try to induce him to return to New York, and how galling that, now that he was in New York, this avenue to a prosperous future was closed by the fact that something which he had done five years ago--that he could remember nothing about it was quite maddening--had caused Ann to nurse this abiding hatred of him. He began to dream tenderly of Ann, bumping from pedestrian to pedestrian in a gentle trance.

From this trance the seventh pedestrian aroused him by uttering

his name, the name which circumstances had compelled him to abandon.

"Jimmy Crocker!"

Surprise brought Jimmy back from his dreams to the hard world --surprise and a certain exasperation. It was ridiculous to be incognito in a city which he had not visited in five years and to be instantly recognised in this way by every second man he met. He looked sourly at the man. The other was a sturdy, square-shouldered, battered young man, who wore on his homely face a grin of recognition and regard. Jimmy was not particularly good at remembering faces, but this person's was of a kind which the poorest memory might have recalled. It was, as the advertisements say, distinctively individual. The broken nose, the exiguous forehead, and the enlarged ears all clamoured for recognition. The last time Jimmy had seen Jerry Mitchell had been two years before at the National Sporting Club in London, and, placing him at once, he braced himself, as a short while ago he had braced himself to confound immaculate Reggie.

"Hello!" said the battered one.

"Hello indeed!" said Jimmy courteously. "In what way can I brighten your life?"

The grin faded from the other's face. He looked puzzled.

"You're Jimmy Crocker, ain't you?"

"No. My name chances to be Algernon Bayliss."

Jerry Mitchell reddened.

"Scuse me. My mistake."

He was moving off, but Jimmy stopped him. Parting from Ann had left a large gap in his life, and he craved human society.

"I know you now," he said. "You're Jerry Mitchell. I saw you fight Kid Burke four years ago in London."

The grin returned to the pugilist's face, wider than ever. He beamed with gratification.

"Gee! Think of that! I've quit since then. I'm working for an old guy named Pett. Funny thing, he's Jimmy Crocker's uncle that I mistook you for. Say, you're a dead ringer for that guy! I could have sworn it was him when you bumped into me. Say, are you doing anything?"

"Nothing in particular."

"Come and have a yarn. There's a place I know just round by here."

"Delighted."

They made their way to the place.

"What's yours?" said Jerry Mitchell. "I'm on the wagon myself," he said apologetically.

"So am I," said Jimmy. "It's the only way. No sense in always drinking and making a disgraceful exhibition of yourself in public!"

Jerry Mitchell received this homily in silence. It disposed definitely of the lurking doubt in his mind as to the possibility of this man really being Jimmy Crocker. Though outwardly convinced by the other's denial, he had not been able to rid himself till now of a nebulous suspicion. But this convinced him. Jimmy Crocker would never have said a thing like that nor would have refused the offer of alcohol. He fell into pleasant conversation with him. His mind eased.