



Old Ellery tottered toward the locked door

Borrowed Money

John Carson, rich New Yorker, was amused by the queer mission that took him to the home of his eccentric old New England rival, but he little dreamed of the startling results of that trip

By ELLIS PARKER BUTLER

ONE October morning a man named John Carson got into his car at the door of his Riverside Drive apartment in New York. He had once been cashier of a small bank in the village of Middle Tucker. The car John Carson entered was a resplendent affair with huge glittering hub-caps, its color gray and blue, and its chauffeur was in blue livery. John Carson settled back against the deep cushion of the seat and the chauffeur closed the door.

"Yes, Mr. Carson?" he asked, touching his cap.

"I'll just light up first, Joe," Carson

said, and found a cigar in his pocket and lighted it. His cigar lighter was of gold. Through the open window John Carson gave his directions.

"You might go up along the river as far as Poughkeepsie, Joe," he said, "and then work over east and on up." Before Peekskill was reached Carson had finished with his paper and put it aside. He now gave some thought to the errand that was taking him to Middle Tucker.

He was going up there to persuade a man named Ellery Elliott to allow his son Stanton Elliott to marry John Carson's only daughter Grace. That

old fossil of an Ellery Elliott had put his foot down flat and had refused to let his boy marry Grace—and why do you suppose? John Carson's daughter would have too much money!

"That's the New England of it," John Carson thought; "that's the Ellery Elliott of it; they get that way, the old fossils, walking around in circles in their one-horse towns. They can't see beyond the ends of their own noses, any of them."

Stanton Elliott, old Ellery's son, wanting to do better for himself than stick in a small town bank, had come to New York, just as John Carson himself had come twenty years before, and when he was settled in his job he had telephoned to ask if he could call, and that had led to this falling in love that was making all the trouble. Grace was just out of college, and lovely enough for any one, and while Carson would have been better pleased if she had chosen a man who had more back of him, he liked young Stan and thought he would get ahead in the world sooner or later.

The trouble came when Stan went up to Middle Tucker to show Grace to his father and receive a fatherly blessing. Everything was wrong, it turned out. In the first place, Grace drove her own car, and the car, as she admitted, looked like a million dollars.

"And the next day, father," Grace said, "he said 'No!' He shouted it. He said that if he lived a million years he would not let Stan marry me. He said that if Stan married me he could get out and stay out—he would be no son of his ever again. He said he was not going to have a son of his be a rich woman's parlor pet. He said dreadful things! He shook his fist in my face, father, and said I could not come up there and buy me a husband

with my money. And, oh, father, I'm so miserable!"

She was, too. She wept all over the place, mostly on her bed in her own rooms, and would not be comforted. Carson had a serious talk with Stanton Elliott, and he hardly knew whether to hate or like the young fellow for his firm stand against Carson's suggested ways out.

"He's all I've got, sir," Stan said, "and he's sick and lonely up there since mother died, and it would kill him if I went against his wishes. I can't do that, Mr. Carson. I don't believe you understand how he feels about it."

NOW John Carson laughed aloud as an idea came to him.

Joe turned his head inquiringly.

"It's all right, Joe," Carson said. "I just thought of something funny." This new idea was amusing, and Carson turned it in his mind, considering it from various angles. Yes, he would do it.

At East Plains station he got out of the car. He was stiff from the long ride and he stretched his arms and flexed his shoulder muscles. "You'll find some place to put up at here, Joe," he said; and then, because Joe deserved some explanation of this change of plan, "I'm doing a prodigal son act, Joe, and this car won't fit in. I'm going on by train, and if I'm not back here in the morning you wait till I come."

The train came rushing to the station and stopped, and Carson clambered onto the smoker. He sat by a window, looking out at the scene; twenty minutes later he stepped down onto the Middle Tucker platform. He knew his way here and he hurried up the street to the common.

At the far side of the common Car-

son continued up Chelsea Street one block and turned to the right into Elm Street. The big house on the corner that had been brown was now colonial yellow and looked twice as bulky as before, but Carson's eyes were on the next house. This was where Ellery Elliott still lived.

The house was one of those double houses with a front porch with two sets of steps, and a rail dividing the porch into two halves, and two front doors. Ellery Elliott lived in the part nearer Chelsea Street, and for a while—after he came back from Springfield to work in the Middle Tucker Bank—Carson had lived in the other half.

John Carson and Ellery Elliott had been boys together, and together they went to the Academy. There Ellery had rather outclassed John, standing higher in most of the studies and both boys had thought this was proper, Ellery being an Elliott and John only a Carson.

Ellery, on leaving the Academy, went into the Middle Tucker Bank, but there had been no place for John there, so he found himself a place in a bank in Springfield and married there. Later John returned to Middle Tucker, bringing his wife. By that time Ellery was teller in the bank, but it happened that John Carson had been sent for to be cashier, which put him over Ellery, and in the very beginning, in moving into the other half of the Elm Street house, he quite unconsciously did a thing that Ellery silently resented.

As time passed it became evident to Ellery Elliott that John Carson would not be in the Middle Tucker Bank long. Ellery considered that he had done pretty well and was rather nicely fixed in being teller in the bank, but he saw that John Carson considered the cashiership a poor job and good only

as a step to something bigger. When Carson resigned the cashiership and went to New York, he threw aside, as if it had been nothing, the job Elliott had not been able to step into.

The Tenter County *Clarion*, which was a weekly paper, gave John Carson quite a send-off—a full half-column with a portrait cut that cost all of four dollars—and that did not please Ellery much. No one had ever asked him for a photograph to make a cut of.

CARSON reached the Elliott house only to discover that Ellery was not there. He was ill, and was staying with his cousin, Henry Elliott, on his farm at Brentridge. After a long and weary bus ride, Carson reached the farm. The sun had set long before and the afterglow had faded and night had fallen. He saw the farmhouse lights and turned in at the gate. Carson rapped on the kitchen door, for that was where the lights were. Henry Elliott came to the door and Carson remembered him when he saw him, and Henry seemed almost to remember Carson.

"I'm John Carson," Carson said, and Henry said "Why, sure! I thought you looked familiar-like. Come on in. What brings you up here this time of night? Edna, here's John Carson. You remember my wife—she was Edna Blessing—don't you?"

"I certainly do," said Carson, although he could not quite place the woman. "I'm up here to see Ellery; I came all the way up from New York for it, and they said he was here."

"He's in bed now," Edna Elliott said. "They said he was sick, didn't they? He's got an attack of janders. I wouldn't dare wake him up."

"You can't very well get back to-night anyway," Henry said, "unless I

drive you over to Brentridge. We can put you up, easy enough."

"I don't want to go back till I see him," Carson said. "He's a sort of last chance with me. I'll stay till tomorrow if you'll let me."

"Wouldn't think of anything else," Henry said.

It pleased Carson well enough to stay overnight; it would make it seem more realistic if he did than if he had been able to see Ellery at once. It was nearly nine when Henry's wife showed him the room he was to have. Nine was their bed hour.

At ten the next morning the doctor arrived and Carson had a chat with him, but it was not until after the noon meal that Edna Elliott said that Ellery was getting up. She had told him John was there to see him and Ellery had said he would not see John Carson then or ever. He wanted nothing to do with John Carson or any other Carson.

"He locked his door when I came out," she said, "but I don't know anything that's going to stop you from talking to him through it, if you want to. It's the room at the other end of the hall from the one you had. I'm going out to the garden for awhile."

"I'm not going to hurt him," Carson said, smiling, and she laughed.

"Ellery always has been hard to get along with, ever since I've known anything about him," she said. "Having janders don't make him much better, as far as I can see."

Carson went up to Ellery's room and knocked on the locked door, but Elliott knew the steps he had heard were those of a stranger and he made no sign.

"Ellery!" Carson said. "Ellery, listen to me! I've come up here to see you and I'm going to see you. I've got to see you. Ellery, I'm in trouble. Let me in. Give me just five minutes."

"I won't talk to you," Ellery said. "I won't have anything to do with you or your daughter. I can get along without you. I'm going to."

"Oh, that!" Carson said, as if the fate of Stan and Grace meant nothing to him. "That's not what I want to talk about. Ellery, I'm up against it; I'm in a fix where I've got to ask you for money. I've got to ask you to lend me some."

He heard Ellery move in his chair. He must have turned toward the door.

"You want to borrow money from me?" Ellery asked.

"Don't I tell you so?" demanded Carson. "Open this door, won't you? I've got to get back to New York tonight, and I've got to have some money. I've got to have it from you."

HE heard Ellery get out of his chair and move slowly to the door, and he heard the key turn. When he opened the door Ellery's hand was on the knob. The man did look sick; he was a ghastly color—almost lemon-green.

"Come in, John," Ellery said, moving back to his chair. "I'm a sick man. What's this you say? You need to borrow money—you, the great millionaire? The great New York millionaire wants to borrow money from me?"

"That's what I said," Carson answered. "I don't have to tell you what playing the market is. There are ups and downs. I've made a lot of money, one time and another, since I quit business and became an operator; I've spent a lot, too. But the best of us guess wrong sometimes. The best of us go broke when we don't guess right."

"You're broke, John?" Ellery asked.

"What do you think? Would I come to you if I could get money anywhere else?"

"Why do you come to me?"

"You and I were boys together, Ellery," Carson said. "We're old friends. Was there ever a time when I would not have let you have money if you needed it?"

"How much do you want?" Ellery asked.

"I want five thousand," said Carson boldly. "I've got to have five thousand."

"That's a lot of money—for me," Ellery said. "I'm none of your mighty millionaires. I haven't any eight-thousand-dollar car; I don't pay any fourteen thousand dollars a year for apartments, like I've heard you do. I had to save my money dollar by dollar. Five thousand dollars! I live in half a house. Five thousand dollars!"

"You own your house," said Carson meekly. "I'm a renter."

"Fourteen thousand dollars a year! My son has to earn his own living. What's your collateral, if you want five thousand dollars?"

"That's it—I haven't any," Carson said, and laughed. "I'm asking you to trust me, Ellery."

"No collateral! You want me to lend on nothing! I don't do business that way. Who'll indorse? I've got to have something—you can't expect me to take chances. I work hard for my money. It don't come rolling in on me. Who can you get to indorse?"

"Nobody."

"Nobody! I won't do business that way, John. Five thousand dollars! Where's that great eight-thousand-dollar car of yours? You drove up in that, didn't you?"

"I got off the train at Middle Tucker last night, if that's what you want to know," Carson said. "I came from there on the bus, and I walked up this lane. And I never owned an eight-

thousand-dollar car. I paid four thousand for that car; little enough."

"Your girl has a car; who owns that?" Ellery asked.

"She does; I won't touch that," Carson said.

"You can give me a bill of sale of your car," Ellery said. "I don't lend five thousand dollars without security of some sort. It's too much money. I'm no millionaire, I tell you."

ALL the while Carson saw that Ellery wanted to lend that money.

He could not, he saw, keep Ellery from lending it now. It was salve to Ellery's soul to have John Carson come begging a loan. It lessened John Carson and put him in his proper place. Carson knew what Ellery was thinking— "This millionaire! Puff-ball millionaire, coming on his knees to beg a loan from me!"

"I've got to do anything you say," Carson said. "I'll give you a bill of sale. But don't think you'll lose a cent, Ellery. I'll pay the note when due."

"How long do you want the money for?" Ellery asked.

"Six months."

"Three months," said Ellery. "That's long enough." He enjoyed haggling over these details with John Carson, now that the man had come begging money. "Three months; I won't make it six months."

"I'm in no position to insist," Carson said.

"Three months; move that table over here and see if you can find a pen and ink anywhere."

"I've got a fountain pen," Carson said. "You see, I came all loaded, Ellery. I wasn't going away from here till I got this money. And what's this about Stan and Grace?"

"There's a check book in my coat,

there in the closet," Ellery said. "You get it; I'm a sick man. What about my Stanton?"

"They want to get married, they tell me," Carson said, bringing the check book. "Your boy is a fine boy, Ellery; he'll make a good husband. I'd like to see Grace married to a man like Stanton; he'll always make a living, and I'm getting along in years, and a man can't tell what the market will do. I hoped I could fix Grace right when she married, but you see how it is. Here I'm begging a loan from you."

Ellery was writing. He lifted the pen while he studied what he had written—a note with a contingent bill of sale.

"You sign here," he said. "Give me the check book. I've nothing against your girl. I've been sick, under the weather, this jaundice coming on. Let them get married if they want to. I won't let them starve, job or no job, market or no market, millionaire or no millionaire. Let them get married. You can say I said so."

He handed the check to Carson, who put it in his wallet.

"I'll tell them," he said, and he held out his hand. "And I thank you for this money, Ellery. You don't know what lending it to me means. I'll never forget it. I've got to get back to New York now as quick as I can. Get well—you've got to go to a wedding before long. Good-by, Ellery."

Ellery took the proffered hand. A few minutes later he saw John Carson walking down the lane toward the road the bus traveled. He leaned back against the cushions of his rocking chair and smiled. Millionaire!

At the end of the lane John Carson caught the bus, and he, too, was smiling. The plan had worked and the thing to do now was to have Stan and

Grace marry before Ellery was well enough to attend a wedding. This jaundice was a slow business and ought to tie the old fellow down for a month or two, which would be plenty of time. Well, it took brains to plan schemes and get what one wanted. John Carson borrowing five thousand dollars of Ellery Elliott! What a joke!

THE bus stopped at Middle Tucker and John Carson got out. He looked at his watch and saw it would be two hours before there was a down train, and he saw a car with "Taxi" smeared on the windshield in white paint. He could save two hours by driving to East Plains where Joe was waiting.

"Drive me down to East Plains?" he asked. "That's fine! Wait till I see if I can get a New York paper."

"I got one here," the taxi man said. "You couldn't get one, I guess; they're all sold out on account of the big doings in Wall Street yesterday."

"Big doings?" Carson asked, but the paper was in his hands and he looked at it—to see that he was no longer even a paper millionaire.

"They got a telegram at the *Clarion*," the taxi man confided cheerfully, "that says it was worse'n that to-day; the bottom fell clean out to-day. There wasn't no bottom left. Hit you any?"

"Yes, a little," said Carson.

He was cleaned out, that was certain. He had told Ellery no lie. He was no longer even a millionaire—hardly the millionth of a millionaire. He took a dollar from his pocket and gave it to the taxi man.

"I won't need you after all," he said.

He must get in touch with his brokers as soon as possible, must know what had happened even if it was ruin.

As he entered the telegraph office he remembered the check in his pocket.

No matter what happened Ellery Elliott's check would be more than enough to pay for Grace's wedding and furnish a nice little apartment for her. He was not greatly concerned for himself; he felt in himself the strength to

make another fortune. He poised his pencil over a telegraph blank, but his first message was not to his brokers; it was to Grace:

Everything fixed. Arrange for wedding soonest possible date. Wire love and wedding invitation to Ellery Elliott. He was fine.

THE END.

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Serpents as Pets

IN countries where serpents abound, pythons and boa-constrictors frequently become household pets. Such reptiles are practically harmless unless they are extremely large, and they will rid a house of rodents more rapidly than will cats. On the west coast of Mexico reptilian mousers are plentiful, but they are apt to cause an unpleasant thrill to the stranger who encounters one unexpectedly.

Although the ancient moat which formerly surrounded the Walled City of Manila has been filled in for more than a quarter century, the pythons which once infested it have not entirely disappeared. Many of them are believed to have taken up their residence in the wall, and in the old dungeons beneath it. From time to time the creatures crawl to the top of the wall itself, thereby interrupting the evening trysts of sweethearts in a most disconcerting manner.

The Chinese of Manila greatly appreciate the flesh of the python as food, and frequently natives of the country districts will be seen entering Chinatown with a long and extremely angry serpent lashed to a bamboo pole. Chinese connoisseurs will purchase no snake that is dead.

It is the belief of the lower classes of Filipinos that the visit of a python to a house where a birth has recently occurred is a harbinger of good luck. Instead of killing the serpent they feed it, and often maintain it for years. The larger native houses have mat ceilings and the space between these and the roof makes an ideal place for serpentine promenades. Americans resident in the Philippines become hardened to the sight of undulating mat ceilings, and the squeaking of pursued rats and mice. But when the head and several feet of a python's body are thrust through an aperture, even they voice their disapproval loudly. Not long ago a wild-eyed tourist clad in pyjamas dashed downstairs in a second-class Manila hotel, to complain to the clerk that his room had been invaded by a python. "Oh, sair," placated the Filipino, "do not be afraid, plis. That is Tommy, the house cat."

The greatest drawback of having snakes as pets comes from the inherent serpentine love for fowl. And since in the hot lands fighting cocks are usually tethered somewhere about each native residence, the nocturnal perambulations of reptiles are apt to rouse sleepers from their pleasant dreams.

C. A. Freeman.