

# A LOST JOB

BY

ARTHUR E. MCFARLANE

**H**IS name was, happily, William Joy. He was lean of nose and heavy of countenance. He was, at any time, the most uneven-tempered freight and elevator man in the New York loft zone; and on this particular Monday morning — after the events of the day before! Furthermore, it was in the August hot spell.

On the fifth and sixth floors of the Friedberger Building, shirt-waists, ties, and hats were constructed — above all, hats. It was evident that the young ladies who constructed those hats had had their pick, and picked the largest. When the fourteenth had been crowded in, a twenty-inch flamingo feather wiped William across the mouth.

"Sure!" he said. "Sure! If you want, I'll keep my head outside."

"Bill — the — Grouch!"

"Ev-ery Mon-day morn-ing!"

"My, girls, but wouldn't you like to have him for a man!"

"Lord! it ain't because I *want* to talk to you." And he dropped down to resume a conversation that he had already brought to a very gratifying stage with Dutch, the engineer.

"An' you couldn't give me any power, could you? I can pull her up with my hands?"

Dutch was thickly and ponderously German. His repartee came the year after. He looked impotently at "Bill the Grouch," and went on burning his cotton waste.

"That's a fine pile of castin's, too, you've left on the second. They'd ought to help a lot when the trucks come round."

Dutch's mouth kept opening and closing like the gills of an air-strangled fish.

"An' my gate — I can get it open once in a while now, so no-need to trouble no more about that."

And then, with one exploding "*Gott!*" Dutch clutched his shovel and ran for him.

"All right! All right! Let it all come on *me*."

It was perhaps fifteen minutes later that, caps back and stamping-pencils between hair and ear, two expressmen shoved into the car. And

what *they* brought with them! Before entering, they had delayed, to study the excavation work for the beautiful new twelve-story Friedberger Building which the boss was putting up next door. Covering New York's famous foundation rock of "hard blue" there is a layer of mucky clay which might with like accuracy be described as "soft red." It was some of that "soft red" — about half a pound of it — that those two expressmen brought in. They brought it in upon their boots, and, observing that they had, a natural niceness of feeling led them to kick it off against the sides of the cage.

To tell what happened next would only delay the action of this story — as, indeed, it very considerably delayed the action of the car. The essential point is that the next person to enter was Mr. Friedberger himself.

Mr. Samuel Friedberger was a good boss and a good landlord. He owned both the building and the industries on the first, fifth, and sixth, where they made (and wore) the hats. And he possessed all that good nature which comes to so many of his race with prosperity, the laying on of fat, and the increase of years. As he had once told the Y. M. H. A. (the Young Men's Hebrew Association), the one reason why he always got along so well with his employees was that he always had some pleasant words to say to them: even if he had to wait and think of them, he always had some pleasant words to say. And for six years he had been able to get along with even Bill the Grouch. He appeared, indeed, to have a strong affection for him.

Now he said a warmly pleasant "Goot mornin', William."

William made no reply.

"I see you got a liddle mud in your car, hey?"

"Yes, I got a little mud in her."

"Quite a lot, there is."

"Yes, quite a lot. Maybe it looks as if I'd fetched it in myself?"

"Himmel, no! No, no, no, no, no!"

And, when Mr. Friedberger came down, feeling that William might still misunderstand him,

"I only sboke of that mud," he said, "because, jooost w'en I'm comin' in —"

William continued to look the other way with a set expression.

This, had Mr. Friedberger been any other man, would have made him a trifle angry.

As it was, when, five minutes afterward, he had occasion to go up again, "W'en I sboke of that mud, I want to say, William, I sboke of it goot-tempered. I didn't sboke of it —"

"My Lord, boss, I been *tryin'* to find my broom. I can't —"

"I didn't say nothings *about* no broom. W'en I sboke of that mud —"

But again they were at his floor, and William threw the gate open.

Apparently there was one place in which William hadn't looked for his broom; for, when Mr. Friedberger reëntered the car to descend, William was using it with an ostentatious particularity.

"Mein Gott!" said Mr. Friedberger, in a quiver. "W'at — w'at needs of *that*? W'en I sboke of that mud —"

"Well, when you'd spoke of it three times —"

Mr. Friedberger waved his hands. He spoke no more now — because he could not speak — until they had reached the bottom. And then, "I — I want you should know, William, I'm puttin' some resdrints on myself —"

"Why, I don't know why you need to. You're the boss. I been runnin' this car about six years now, but if I ain't runnin' it right — if I ain't keepin' it clean enough —"

"Gott in Himmel! I don't — W'en I sboke — I — I *am* the boss! That's w'at I *am*! And you — you" — he summoned up all his strength for it — "you're *fired!*"

"Hass — hass he come back yet — no?" Again Mr. Friedberger had gone down to confer with Dutch, and he asked it eagerly.

He had had Dutch go out to the employment agencies, to return with an irresponsible-looking youth with roached hair and a weak eye, who, in fact, was now running the car.

"*Nein*; he has not come back yet."

"Well, well! I don't know why he wants to act like that. Hass he anythings, maybe, that he might have to come back for?"

By William's basin there was a thin piece of soap and a wet combination of wash-rag and hand-towel. And it was precisely for that soap and towel — at any rate, so he informed Dutch — that William did come back.

Dutch at once, and according to instructions, rushed upstairs to notify his worried chief.

But, unhappily, in the meantime the returned

William had found his way back to the entrance-hall; and then he had his first meeting with the irresponsible youth of the weak eye.

"Mein Gott! neffer in all my life did I have soch a man! I — I was willin' to take you back. I might of been *glad* to. But after soch a times as *this* —"

"Sure, get a cop. It'd be no more'n I was lookin' for. Sure!" And William started out first.

They were half way to the corner when they were stopped by a shout, — a shout from above their heads, — and then a sound like the popping of a paper bag — only it would have been a very large paper bag. They gaped back and up. On the third floor of the Friedberger Building, a gray-green smoke was whiffing from every open window. The whole street was shouting now.

Mr. Friedberger ran on, choked, and — there was a box at the corner — wrenched in an alarm.

Bill the Grouch pelted back, half sliding the length of the hall in his momentum. The girls of the first were already out; and those of the second and third were fighting their way down after them. But they had not come by the elevator. It arrived now, on the drop; and, save for the youth with the weak eye, it was absolutely empty. He may have intended the heroic, but he did not look it.

"Get to —" William did not finish the phrase, but he threw the youth out after the screaming girls. His towel and soap, which he was still carrying, went into the other corner of the car. And he sent the car up hand over hand, as if he were climbing his cable.

What had caused the explosion was one of those things that come out — or are carefully concealed — in the fire inquest that follows. Enough that the third was occupied by a company that manufactured antique copper work and brasses, and packed them in salt hay and excelsior. Some of the antiquers got to the stairs around the elevator-shaft, and so down. The others, singed but otherwise unhurt, reached the fire-escape at the rear. But the open door and the open window that they left behind them drew two long, steadily belching eddies of smoke that, for every one above them, blocked both the stairs and the fire-escape. The elevator was the only way of escape.

As he passed the third floor, Bill the Grouch slowed for one half second, long enough to make plain to him the physical impossibility of getting to that chimneying door and closing it. The flames were now rapidly breaking out. Then Bill lifted his car to the fourth floor.

Hall and stairs were surging with hysterical girls. Bill had only to clash his gate open and

let them rush in. All the while, in a flow of language that was cankeredly unbroken, he dealt with the layout of the building, the manufacturers of brass and copper, the uselessness of the New York fire brigade, and the uselessness of his car. It was not big enough, by half, for its present work.

But he got his gate closed again at last. "Cripes, what's the *matter* with you? Won't I be comin' *back*?"

He came back. But he had been in fires before, and on the way up he did the one thing that would give him any chance of getting through with it. Letting the car run itself, he caught up that dirty wet towel of his, and knotted it about his mouth and nose.

He could not *hear* himself talking now; but his monologue went on internally: "I ain't doin' this in three trips, nor yet in four. It'll take two to a floor. An'—*sure*—I'll have to *jerk* them out, at that!" He was already at the fourth again, and doing it. For by this time the heat and smoke and terror had driven the girls shriekingly back into the work-rooms.

But he swung and thrust them in, one after another, like sheep. And, in their turn, he dropped them down.

Salt hay always goes to the eyes and throat like ammonia fumes. And now the smoke was so thick that the elevator-shaft seemed as if it were filled with gray-green cotton batting. The excelsior was burning, too, and the packing-crates and shaping-tables, and the deal partitions. The shaft was beginning to grow *hot*. It was, naturally, becoming the flue of the fire. And when it had *really* heated for its business—

The first hose truck had arrived and was throwing off. Two pipemen tumbled into the lower hall, helped to clear the car, and one of them tried to shove in with Bill. "Get to —!" And again the car went up.

When Bill passed the third floor this time,—and he had to pass it slowly going up,—it was like putting his head into the stack of a locomotive.

On the fifth floor, he had to "jerk them out."

Some of the girls were screaming that they were going to faint.

"Sure — an' you stay behind!"

But he got them in, piling them up any way. And for the fourth time he dropped the car down. Even the lower hall was intolerable now with the stifling reek of half-burned gases.

The engines had begun to arrive. Bill heard, through the smoke, shouts, orders, the clanging of the gongs, the throbbing of the steamers. And more pipemen were now rushing in their writhing, kicking lines.

"That'll make it some cooler," he told him-

self — he knew that the streams always carried a current of cold air with them. "But — Gawd! as soon as they begin to hit this ironwork!"

When water at a temperature of about forty degrees hits steel elevator shafting at a temperature of some three hundred degrees, the latter is going to buckle, and, in all probability, the car is going to jam. It will hardly jam when weighted to capacity going down; but when it is light, and going up — And the jamming will, of course, take place at the point where the fire is hottest.

A second time, when they had got the girls out, the firemen tried to relieve him. A short, grizzled man pushed in, like one having authority. He was given elbow and knee hook, and all but went sprawling.

"Fer the love o' Mike, you fool! It's the Dep'ty Chief!"

"Sure," came thickly from behind the towel; "an' he'll get a shot in the eye in a minute. Get out o' my car!"

"All right, John Maynard!" they shouted after him. "Somebody's got to get them down."

There is no necessity of telling a great deal about the next trip. The last was the one that counted.

He felt the cage "choke" at the third. But he knew his car. Dutch was true — the power still held. And he got her past. By this time the flue was drawing very well indeed. The heat came in gusts and waves that seemed to crack his skin. He could no longer see. As far as he knew himself, he was blinded. And, if he still *talked* to himself, it was not rationally. "It's goin' to be smoky here pretty soon. An' after that it'll be hot. Sure! — an' why don't you wait for them hats?"

But his habit had formed itself. He had been running that car for six years, and once more he made his stop at the sixth, as if it had been daylight and the noon hour. He got those work-room doors open, and once more began to "jerk them out." And he did not stop until he had them all. It was by pure automatism, too, that he pulled his cable and brought them down in such a rush of descent that no buckling on earth could hold them.

But at the bottom it was one of the girls who had to get the gate open. And when they tried to pull him out, he still clung to his tackle and fought them off. They pulled away his towel to get him the air from the pipe nozles. "Turn me loose," he said thickly. "You don't come in an' take *my* car — you cock-eyed son of a gun! Get to — lost my job —" And then, suddenly, he went slack, and they carried him out, foot and hand.

"An' he's all right, too," said the Lieutenant.

"Fine as silk! May be shy a little hair, but he ain't swallowed anything."

"Sure, no. An' — hell!" said the Captain. "He stayed with her, didn't he, fer fair!"

They took him across the street to Heilig and Hamburg's "Ladies' and Gents' Twenty-five Cent Restaurant." There a speedy examination showed clearly that he was no ambulance case. By the advice of the "Dep'ty Chief," — to whom he had given the elbow and knee hook, — cold tea-leaves were laid on his eyes to draw out the worst of the salt hay. Something that was not cold tea, but that looked like it, was poured down his throat. And in five minutes more he was trying to sit up.

He was also the center of a kind of Friedberger Building reception.

"Gosh, Bill," said Dutch. "Gosh — but that was a goot act you done!"

"My, William," said the girls with the hats, — only now those hats were gone forever, — "if you ain't the bravest — the most courageous! We'd just marry you to-morrow, every one of us."

Bill got one red eye open. "I guess not," he said; "I been married once already." And in that, considering the sort of man Bill was, there may have lain much of the secret of his grouchiness.

But at that moment they all backed up to let the boss get to him.

"William! An' you're loogin' as goot as that again already! Oh, *Himmel und Erde*, w'at a *thankfulness!* She's burnin' now lige there's a million on her. But I don't gare. *Led* her burn! *Led* her! An' I been loogin' for that other feller to fire him. Any man that'll leaf his car lige that! An' it ain'd as if there'd be any sdog in your wa-ages. But all that ain'd not'ings." He fairly wrung his hands over it. "Mein Gott! w'en I think how I geep it up an' geep it up at you about that tamn *mud!* I don'd know w'at gets into me somedimes — I've got sotch a *tempers* —"

"That's all right, boss, that's all right." And William turned him the other cheek. "Sometimes I feel just about like lettin' her go myself."

## IN JUSTICE TO AMERICAN MANUFACTURERS OF SERUM

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,  
United States Public Health and  
Marine-Hospital Service.

WASHINGTON, D. C., November 28, 1910.

EDITOR OF McCLURE'S MAGAZINE.

*Dear Sir:* In reading the article in the December number of McCLURE'S MAGAZINE on "Paul Ehrlich: The Man and His Work," by Marguerite Marks, the statement is found, on page 190, that "in America the government laboratory which has charge of the supervision of anti-toxins can purchase only in the open market samples of anti-toxin, after it has been sold by the factories to druggists and physicians, and possibly after injections have been given to children, so that, if the serum is impure, harm has already been done."

This statement, if allowed to go uncorrected, does an injustice to the manufacturers of serum in the United States, as it is not in accordance with the facts. According to the law regulating the manufacture and interstate traffic in viruses, serums, etc., and the regulations framed thereunder, the federal authorities in the United States have the authority to obtain samples at any time from the manufacturers of these products, in addition to the samples they may purchase on the open market.

Moreover, the law provides that inspection shall be made of the establishments manufac-

turing these products. This inspection consists of a thorough and searching inquiry into the sanitary condition of the stables, barns, laboratories, etc.; of the methods and technique employed in the manufacture and standardization of the products; and, finally, as to the fitness of those who have control of the scientific features of the manufacture of these therapeutic products.

When these inspections are made, the inspector personally takes from the stock samples of the various products for which a license is desired. In addition, samples of anti-toxin, etc., are bought on the open market in various sections of the country at frequent intervals for examination in the Hygienic Laboratory. The examination of the products so obtained shows the reliability and purity of the products as actually supplied to the physician who is to use them. When any of these samples are found to be deficient in potency or to be not sterile, the manufacturer is required to recall from the market every package bearing the same laboratory number which was not found satisfactory; and this has been done in several instances.

I shall be glad if you will give this letter the same publicity as the article referred to.

Very truly yours,

JOHN F. ANDERSON,  
*Director Hygienic Laboratory.*