

A Gentleman of Leisure



P. G. Wodehouse

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Jimmy Makes a Bet

The main smoking-room of the Strollers' Club had been filling for the last half-hour, and was now nearly full. In many ways the Strollers', though not the most magnificent, is the pleasantest club in New York. Its ideals are those of the Savage Club—comfort without pomp—and it is given over after eleven o'clock at night mainly to the Stage. Everybody is young, clean-shaven, and full of conversation—and the conversation strikes a purely professional note.

Everybody in the room on this July night had come from the theatre. Most of those present had been acting, but a certain number had been to the opening performance of the latest better-than-“Raffles” play. There had been something of a boom that season in dramas whose heroes appealed to the public more pleasantly across the footlights than they might have done in real life. In the play which had opened tonight Arthur Mifflin, an exemplary young man off the stage, had been warmly applauded for a series of actions which, performed anywhere except in the theatre, would certainly have debarred him from remaining a member of the Strollers' or any other club. In faultless evening dress, with a debonair smile on his face, he had broken open a safe, stolen bonds and jewellery to a large amount, and escaped without a blush of shame via the window. He had foiled a detective through four acts and held up a band of pursuers with a revolver. A large audience had intimated complete approval throughout.

“It's a hit all right,” said somebody through the smoke.

“These imitation ‘Raffles’ plays always are,” grumbled Willett, who played bluff fathers in musical comedy. “A few years ago they would have been scared to death of putting on a show with a criminal hero. Now, it seems to me, the public doesn't want anything else. Not that they know what they do want,” he concluded mournfully.

The Belle of Boulogne, in which Willett sustained the role of Cyrus K. Higgs, a Chicago millionaire, was slowly fading away on a diet of free passes, and this possibly prejudiced him.

Raikes, the character-actor, changed the subject. If Willett once got started on the wrongs of the ill-fated *Belle*, general conversation would become impossible. Willett, denouncing the stupidity of the public, was purely a monologue artiste.

"I saw Jimmy Pitt at the show," said Raikes. Everybody displayed interest.

"Jimmy Pitt? When did he come back? I thought he was in England?"

"He came on the *Mauretania*, I suppose. She docked this morning."

"Jimmy Pitt?" said Sutton, of the Majestic Theatre. "How long has he been away? Last I saw of him was at the opening of *The Outsider*, at the Astor. That's a couple of months ago."

"He's been travelling in Europe, I believe," said Raikes. "Lucky beggar to be able to. I wish I could."

Sutton knocked the ash off his cigar.

"I envy Jimmy," he said. "I don't know any one I'd rather be. He's got much more money than any man, except a professional plute, has any right to. He's as strong as an ox. I shouldn't say he'd ever had anything worse than measles in his life. He's got no relations. And he isn't married."

Sutton, who had been married three times, spoke with some feeling.

"He's a good chap, Jimmy," said Raikes. "Which considering he's an Englishman——"

"Thanks," said Mifflin.

"How's that? Oh, beg pardon, Arthur; I keep forgetting that you're one, too."

"I'll tattoo a Union Jack on my forehead tomorrow."

"It'll improve you," said Raikes. "But about Jimmy. He's a good chap, which—considering he's an Englishman—is only what you might have expected. Is that better, Arthur?"

"Much," said Mifflin. "Yes, Jimmy is a good chap—one of the best. I've known him for years. I was at school and Cambridge with him. He was about the most popular man at both. I should say he had put more deadbeats on their legs again than half the men in New York put together."

"Well," growled Willett, whom the misfortunes of *The Belle* had soured, "what's there in that? It's mighty easy to do the philanthropist act when you're next door to a millionaire."

"Yes," said Mifflin warmly; "but it's not so easy when you're getting thirty dollars a week on a newspaper. When Jimmy was a reporter on the *News* there used to be a whole crowd of fellows just living on him. Not borrowing an occasional dollar, mind you, but living on him—sleeping on his sofa and staying to breakfast. It made me mad. I used to ask him why he stood it. He said there was nowhere else for them to go, and he thought he could see them through all right. Which he did, though I don't see how he managed it on thirty dollars a week."

"If a man's fool enough to be an easy mark——" began Willett.

"Oh, stop it," said Raikes. "We don't want anybody knocking Jimmy here."

"All the same," said Sutton, "it seems to me that it was darned lucky that he came into that money. You can't keep open house for ever on thirty a week. By the way, Arthur, how was that? I heard it was his uncle."

"It wasn't his uncle," said Mifflin. "It was by way of being a romance of sorts, I believe. Fellow who had been in love with Jimmy's mother years ago. Went to Australia, made a fortune, and left it to Mrs. Pitt or her children. She had been dead some time when that happened. Jimmy, of course, hadn't a notion of what was coming to him, when suddenly he got a solicitor's letter, asking him to call. He rolled round, and found that there was about five hundred thousand dollars waiting for him to spend it."

Jimmy Pitt had now definitely ousted *Love, the Cracksman*, as a topic of conversation. Everybody present knew him. Most of them had known him in his newspaper days; and though every man there would have perished rather than admit it, they were grateful to Jimmy for being exactly the same to them now that he could sign a cheque for half a million as he had been on the old thirty-a-week basis. Inherited wealth, of course, does not make a young man nobler or more admirable; but the young man does not always know this.

"Jimmy's had a queer life," said Mifflin. "He's been pretty nearly everything in his time. Did you know he was on the stage before he took up newspaper work? Only in touring companies, I believe. He got tired of it, and dropped it. That's always been his trouble. He wouldn't settle down to anything. He studied Law at the 'Varsity, but he never kept it up. After he left the stage he moved all over the States without a cent, picking up any odd job he could get. He was a waiter once for a couple of days, but they sacked him for breaking plates. Then he got a job in a jeweller's shop. I believe he's a bit of an expert on jewels. And another time he made a hundred dollars by staying three rounds against Kid Brady, when the Kid was touring the country after he got the championship away from Jimmy Garwin. The Kid was offering a hundred to anyone who could last three rounds with him. Jimmy did it on his head. He was the best amateur of his weight I ever saw. The Kid wanted him to take up scrapping seriously. But Jimmy wouldn't have stuck to anything long enough in those days. He's one of the gipsies of the world.

He was never really happy unless he was on the move, and he doesn't seem to have altered since he came into his money."

"Well, he can afford to keep on the move now," said Raikes. "I wish I —"

"Did you ever hear about Jimmy and——" Mifflin was beginning, when the Odyssey of Jimmy Pitt was interrupted by the opening of the door and the entrance of Ulysses in person.

Jimmy Pitt was a young man of medium height, whose great breadth and depth of chest made him look shorter than he really was. His jaw was square and protruded slightly; and this, combined with a certain athletic jauntiness of carriage and a pair of piercing brown eyes very much like those of a bull-terrier, gave him an air of aggressiveness which belied his character. He was not aggressive. He had the good nature as well as the eyes of a bull-terrier. He also possessed, when stirred, all the bull-terrier's dogged determination.

There were shouts of welcome.

"Holloa, Jimmy!"

"When did you get back?"

"Come and sit down. Plenty of room over here."

"Where is my wandering boy to-night?"

"Waiter! What's yours, Jimmy?"

Jimmy dropped into a seat and yawned.

"Well," he said, "how goes it? Halloa, Raikes! Weren't you at *Love, the Cracksman*? I thought I saw you. Halloa, Arthur! Congratulate you. You spoke your piece nicely."

"Thanks," said Mifflin. "We were just talking about you, Jimmy. You came on the *Mauretania*, I suppose?"

"She didn't break the record this time," said Sutton.

A somewhat pensive look came into Jimmy's eyes.

"She came much too quick for me," he said. "I don't see why they want to rip along at that pace," he went on hurriedly. "I like to have a chance of enjoying the sea air."

"I know that sea air," murmured Mifflin.

Jimmy looked up quickly.

"What are you babbling about, Arthur?"

"I said nothing," replied Mifflin suavely.

"What did you think of the show to-night, Jimmy?" asked Raikes.

"I liked it. Arthur was fine. I can't make out, though, why all this incense is being burned at the feet of the cracksman. To judge by some of the plays they produce now, you'd think that a man had only to be a successful burglar to become a national hero. One of these days we shall have Arthur playing Charles Peace to a cheering house."

"It is the tribute," said Mifflin, "that boneheadedness pays to brains. It takes brains to be a successful cracksman. Unless the grey matter is

surging about in your cerebrum, as in mine, you can't hope——”

Jimmy leaned back in his chair and spoke calmly, but with decision.

“Any man of ordinary intelligence,” he said, “could break into a house.”

Mifflin jumped up and began to gesticulate. This was heresy.

“My dear old son, what absolute——”

“I could,” said Jimmy, lighting a cigarette.

There was a roar of laughter and approval. For the past few weeks, during the rehearsals of *Love, the Cracksmen*, Arthur Mifflin had disturbed the peace at the Strollers’ with his theories on the art of burglary. This was his first really big part, and he had soaked himself in it. He had read up the literature of burglary. He had talked with detectives. He had expounded his views nightly to his brother Strollers, preaching the delicacy and difficulty of cracking a crib till his audience had rebelled. It charmed the Strollers to find Jimmy, obviously of his own initiative, and not to be suspected of having been suborned to the task by themselves, treading with a firm foot on the expert’s favourite corn within five minutes of their meeting.

“You!” said Arthur Mifflin, with scorn.

“Me—or, rather, I!”

“You! Why, you couldn’t break into an egg unless it was a poached one.”

“What’ll you bet?” said Jimmy.

The Strollers began to sit up and take notice. The magic word “bet”, when uttered in that room, had rarely failed to add a zest to life. They looked expectantly to Arthur Mifflin.

“Go to bed, Jimmy,” said the portrayer of cracksmen. “I’ll come with you and tuck you in. A nice, strong cup of tea in the morning, and you won’t know there has ever been anything the matter with you.”

A howl of disapproval rose from the company. Indignant voices accused Arthur Mifflin of having a yellow streak. Encouraging voices urged him not to be a quitter.

“See! They scorn you!” said Jimmy. “And rightly. Be a man, Arthur. What’ll you bet?”

Mr. Mifflin regarded him with pity.

“You don’t know what you’re taking on, Jimmy,” he said. “You’re half a century behind the times. You have an idea that all a burglar needs is a mask, a blue chin, and a dark lantern. I tell you he requires a highly specialised education. I’ve been talking to these detective fellows, and I know. Now, take your case, you worm. Have you a thorough knowledge of chemistry, physics, toxicology——?”

“Of course I have.”

“Electricity and microscopy?”

“You have discovered my secret.”

“Can you use an oxyacetylene blow-pipe?”

“I never travel without one.”

“What do you know about the administration of anaesthetics?”

"Practically everything. It is one of my favourite hobbies."

"Can you make soup?"

"Soup?"

"Soup," said Mr. Mifflin firmly.

Jimmy raised his eyebrows.

"Does an architect make bricks?" he said. "I leave the rough, preliminary work to my corps of assistants. They make my soup."

"You mustn't think Jimmy's one of your common cracksmen," said Sutton. "He's at the top of his profession. That's how he made his money. I never did believe that legacy story."

"Jimmy," said Mr. Mifflin, "couldn't crack a child's money-box. Jimmy couldn't open a sardine-tin." Jimmy shrugged his shoulders.

"What'll you bet?" he said again. "Come on, Arthur; you're earning a very good salary. What'll you bet?"

"Make it a dinner for all present," suggested Raikes, a canny person who believed in turning the wayside happenings of life, when possible, to his personal profit.

The suggestion was well received.

"All right," said Mifflin. "How many of us are there? One, two, three, four. Loser buys a dinner for twelve."

"A good dinner," interpolated Raikes softly.

"A good dinner," said Jimmy. "Very well. How long do you give me, Arthur?"

"How long do you want?"

"There ought to be a time limit," said Raikes. "It seems to me that an expert like Jimmy ought to be able to manage it at short notice. Why not to-night? Nice, fine night. If Jimmy doesn't crack a crib to-night, it's up to him. That suit you, Jimmy?"

"Perfectly."

Willett interposed. Willett had been endeavouring to drown his sorrows all the evening, and the fact was a little noticeable in his speech.

"See here," he said; "how's J-Jimmy going to prove he's done it?"

"Personally, I can take his word," said Mifflin.

"That be h-hanged for a tale. Wha-what's to prevent him saying he's done it, whether he has or not?"

The Strollers looked uncomfortable. However, it was Jimmy's affair.

"Why, you'd get your dinner in any case," said Jimmy. "A dinner from any host would smell as sweet."

Willett persisted with muddled obstinacy.

"Thash—thash not point. It's principle of thin. Have thish thing square and 'bove-board, I say. Thash what I say."

"And very creditable to you being able to say it," said Jimmy cordially.

"See if you can manage 'Truly rural.'"

"What I say is this. Jimmy's a fakir. And what I say is, what's prevent him saying he's done it when hasn't done it?"

"That'll be all right," said Jimmy. "I'm going to bury a brass tube with the Stars and Stripes in it under the carpet."

"Thash quite shfactory," said Willett, with dignity.

"Or, a better idea," said Jimmy, "I'll carve a big J on the inside of the front door. Well, I'm off home. Anybody coming my way?"

"Yes," said Mifflin. "We'll walk. First nights always make me as jumpy as a cat. If I don't walk my legs off I shan't get to sleep to-night at all."

"If you think I'm going to help you walk your legs off, my lad, you're mistaken. I propose to stroll gently home and go to bed."

"Every little helps," said Mifflin. "Come along."

"You want to keep an eye on that man Jimmy, Arthur," said Sutton.

"He'd sand-bag you and lift your watch as soon as look at you. I believe he's Arsène Lupin in disguise."

★ 2 ★

The New Pyramus and Thisbe

The two men turned up the street. They walked in silence. Arthur Mifflin was going over in his mind such outstanding events of the evening as he remembered—the nervousness, the relief of finding that he was gripping his audience, the growing conviction that he had made good—while Jimmy seemed to be thinking his own private thoughts. They had gone some distance before either spoke.

"Who is she, Jimmy?" asked Mifflin.

Jimmy came out of his thoughts with a start.

"What's that?"

"Who is she?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"Yes, you do! The sea air. Who is she?"

"I don't know," said Jimmy simply.

"You don't know? Well, what's her name?"

"I don't know."

"Doesn't the *Mauretania* still print a passenger list?"

"She does."

"And you couldn't find out her name in five days?"

"No."

"And that's the man who thinks he can burgle a house!" said Mifflin despairingly.

They had arrived now at the building on the second floor of which was Jimmy's flat.

"Coming in?" said Jimmy.

"Well, I was rather thinking of pushing on as far as the park. I tell you, I feel all on wires."

"Come in and smoke a cigar. You've got all night before you if you want to do Marathons. I haven't seen you for a couple of months. I want you to tell me all the news."

"There isn't any. Nothing happens in New York. The papers say things do, but they don't. However, I'll come in. It seems to me that you're the man with the news."

Jimmy fumbled with his latch-key.

"You're a bright sort of burglar," said Mifflin disparagingly. "Why don't you use your oxyacetylene blow-pipe? Do you realise, my boy, that you've let yourself in for buying a dinner for twelve hungry men next week? In the cold light of the morning, when Reason returns to her throne, that'll come home to you."

"I haven't done anything of the sort," said Jimmy, unlocking the door.

"Don't tell me you really mean to try it."

"What else did you think I was going to do?"

"But you can't. You would get caught for a certainty. And what are you going to do then? Say it was all a joke? Suppose they fill you full of bullet-holes? Nice sort of fool you'll look appealing to some outraged householder's sense of humour, while he pumps you full of lead with a Colt!"

"These are the risks of the profession. You ought to know that, Arthur. Think what you went through to-night."

Arthur Mifflin looked at his friend with some uneasiness. He knew how entirely reckless he could be when he had set his mind on accomplishing anything. Jimmy, under the stimulus of a challenge, ceased to be a reasonable being, amenable to argument. And in the present case he knew that Willett's words had driven the challenge home. Jimmy was not the man to sit still under the charge of being a "fakir," no matter whether his accuser had been sober or drunk.

Jimmy, meanwhile, had produced whisky and cigars, and was lying on his back on the lounge, blowing smoke rings at the ceiling.

"Well?" said Arthur Mifflin at length.

"Well? What?"

"What I meant was, is this silence to be permanent, or are you going to begin shortly to amuse, elevate, and instruct? Something's happened to you, Jimmy. There was a time when you were a bright little chap, a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. Where be your gibes now, your gambols, your songs, your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table in a roar when you were paying for the dinner? You remind me more of a deaf-mute celebrating the Fourth of July with noiseless powder than anything else on earth. Wake up, or I shall go. Jimmy, we

were boys together. Tell me about this girl—the girl you loved and were idiot enough to lose.”

Jimmy drew a deep breath.

“Very well,” said Mifflin complacently; “sigh if you like—it’s better than nothing.”

Jimmy sat up.

“Yes, dozens of times,” said Mifflin.

“What do you mean?”

“You were just going to ask me if I had ever been in love, weren’t you?”

“I wasn’t, because I know you haven’t. You have no soul. You don’t know what love is.”

“Have it your own way,” said Mifflin resignedly.

Jimmy bumped back on to the sofa.

“I don’t either,” he said. “That’s the trouble.”

Mifflin looked interested.

“I know,” he said. “You’ve got that strange premonitory fluttering, when the heart seems to thrill within you like some baby bird singing its first song, when——”

“Oh, shut up!”

“When you ask yourself timidly, ‘Is it? Can it really be?’ and answer shyly, ‘No. Yes. I believe it is.’ I’ve been through it dozens of times. It is a recognised early symptom. Unless prompt measures are taken it will develop into something acute. In these matters stand on your Uncle Arthur. He knows.”

“You make me tired,” said Jimmy briefly.

“You have our ear,” said Mifflin kindly. “Tell me all.”

“There’s nothing to tell.”

“Don’t lie, James.”

“Well, practically nothing.”

“That’s better.”

“It was like this.”

“Good!”

Jimmy wriggled himself into a more comfortable position and took a sip from his glass.

“I didn’t see her till the second day out.”

“I know that second day out. Well?”

“We didn’t really meet at all.”

“Just happened to be going to the same spot, eh?”

“As a matter of fact, it was like this. Like a fool, I’d bought a second-class ticket.”

“What? Our young Rockerbilt Astergould, the boy millionaire, travelling second-class! Why?”

“I had an idea it would be better fun. Everybody’s so much more cheery in the second cabin. You get to know people so much quicker. Nine trips

out of ten I'd much rather go second."

"And this was the tenth?"

"She was in the first cabin," said Jimmy.

Mifflin clutched his forehead.

"Wait!" he cried. "This reminds me of something—something in Shakespeare. Romeo and Juliet? No. I've got it!—Pyramus and Thisbe."

"I don't see the slightest resemblance."

"Read your *Midsummer Night's Dream*. 'Pyramus and Thisbe,' says the story, 'did talk through the chink of a wall,'" quoted Mifflin.

"We didn't."

"Don't be so literal. You talked across a railing."

"We didn't."

"Do you mean to say you didn't talk at all?"

"We didn't say a single word."

Mifflin shook his head sadly.

"I give you up," he said. "I thought you were a man of enterprise. What did you do?"

Jimmy sighed softly.

"I used to stand and smoke against the railing opposite the barber's shop, and she used to walk round the deck."

"And you used to stare at her?"

"I would look in her direction sometimes," corrected Jimmy, with dignity.

"Don't quibble! You stared at her. You behaved like a common rubber-neck, and you know it. I am no prude, James, but I feel compelled to say that I consider your conduct that of a libertine. Used she to walk alone?"

"Generally."

"And now you love her, eh? You went on board that ship happy, careless, heart-free. You came off it grave and saddened. Thenceforth for you the world could contain but one woman, and her you had lost."

He groaned in a hollow and bereaved manner, and took a sip from his glass to buoy him up.

Jimmy moved restlessly on the sofa.

"Do you believe in love at first sight?" he asked fatuously. He was in the mood when a man says things the memory of which makes him wake up hot all over for nights to come.

"I don't see what first sight's got to do with it," said Mifflin. "According to your own statement, you stood and glared at the girl for five days without stopping for a moment. I can quite imagine that you might glare yourself into love with anyone by the end of that time."

"I can't see myself settling down," said Jimmy thoughtfully. "And until you feel that you want to settle down, I suppose you can't be really in love."

"I was saying practically that about you at the club just before you came in. My somewhat neat expression was that you were one of the gipsies of the world."

"By George, you're quite right!"

"I always am."

"I suppose it's having nothing to do. When I was on the *News* I was never like this."

"You weren't on the *News* long enough to get tired of it."

"I feel now I can't stay in a place more than a week. It's having this money that does it, I suppose."

"New York," said Mifflin, "is full of obliging persons who will be delighted to relieve you of the incubus. Well, James, I shall leave you. I feel more like bed now. By the way, I suppose you lost sight of this girl when you landed?"

"Yes."

"Well, there aren't so many girls in the United States. Only twenty million. Or is it forty million? Something small. All you've got to do is to search about a bit. Good night."

"Good night."

Mr. Mifflin clattered down the stairs. A minute later the sound of his name being called loudly from the street brought Jimmy to the window. Mifflin was standing on the pavement below, looking up.

"Jimmy?"

"What's the matter now?"

"I forgot to ask. Was she a blonde?"

"What?"

"Was she a blonde?" yelled Mifflin.

"No," snapped Jimmy.

"Dark, eh?" bawled Mifflin, making night hideous.

"Yes," said Jimmy, shutting the window.

"Jimmy! I say, Jimmy!"

The window went up again.

"Well?"

"I prefer blondes myself."

"Go to bed!"

"Very well. Good night."

"Good night."

Jimmy withdrew his head, and sat down on the chair Mifflin had vacated. A moment later he rose and switched off the light. It was pleasanter to sit and think in the dark. His thoughts wandered off in many channels, but always came back to the girl on the *Mauretania*. It was absurd, of course. He didn't wonder that Arthur Mifflin had treated the thing as a joke. Good old Arthur! Glad he had made a success. But was it a joke? Who was it said that the point of a joke was like the point of a needle—so small that it is apt to disappear entirely when directed

straight at oneself? If anybody else had told him such a limping romance he would have laughed himself. Only when you are the centre of a romance, however limping, you see it from a different angle. Of course, told baldly, it was absurd. He could see that. But something right at the back of his mind told him that it was not altogether absurd. And yet—Love didn't come like that—in a flash. You might just as well expect a house to spring into being in a moment. Or a ship. Or an automobile. Or a table. Or a— He sat up with a jerk. In another instant he would have been asleep.

He thought of bed, but bed seemed a long way off—the deuce of a way. Acres of carpet to be crawled over, and then the dickens of a climb at the end of it. Besides undressing. Nuisance—undressing. That was a nice dress that girl had worn on the fourth day out. Tailor-made. He liked tailor-mades. He liked all her dresses. He liked her. Had she liked him? So hard to tell if you don't get a chance of speaking. She was dark. Arthur liked blondes. Arthur was a fool! Good old Arthur! Glad he had made a success! Now he could marry if he liked. If he wasn't so restless. If he didn't feel that he couldn't stop more than a day in any place. But would the girl have him? If they had never spoken it made it so hard to —

At this point he fell asleep.

★ 3 ★

Mr. McEachern

At the time when Jimmy slept in his chair, previous to being aroused from his slumbers by the invasion of Spike, a certain Mr. John McEachern, Captain of Police was seated in the parlour of his up-town villa, reading. He was a man built on a large scale. Everything about him was large—his hands, his feet, his shoulders, his chest, and particularly his jaw—which even in his moments of calm was aggressive, and which stood out, when anything happened to ruffle him, like the ram of a battleship. In his patrolman days, which had been passed mainly on the East Side, this jaw of his had acquired a reputation from Park Row to Fourteenth Street. No gang-fight, however absorbing, could retain the undivided attention of the young blood of the Bowery when Mr. McEachern's jaw hove in sight, with the rest of his massive person in close attendance. He was a man who knew no fear, and he had gone through disorderly mobs like an east wind.

But there was another side to his character. In fact, that other side was so large that the rest of him, his readiness in combat and his zeal in breaking up public disturbances, might be said to have been only an

offshoot. For his ambition was as large as his fist and as aggressive as his jaw. He had entered the Force with the single idea of becoming rich, and had set about achieving his object with a strenuous vigour that was as irresistible as his mighty locust-stick. Some policemen are born grafters, some achieve graft, and some have graft thrust upon them. Mr. McEachern had begun by being the first, had risen to the second, and for some years now had been a prominent member of the small and hugely-prosperous third-class, the class which does not go out seeking graft, but sits at home and lets graft come to them.

Though neither his name nor his financial methods suggested it, Mr. McEachern was by birth an English gentleman. His complete history would take long to write. Abridged, it may be told as follows. His real name was John Forrest, and he was the only son of one Eustace Forrest, at one time a major in the Guards. His only other relative was Edward, Eustace's elder brother, a bachelor. When Mrs. Eustace died, four years after the marriage, the widower, having spent eighteen months at Monte Carlo working out an infallible system for breaking the bank, to the great contentment of M. Blanc and the management in general, proceeded to the gardens, where he shot himself in the orthodox way, leaving many liabilities, no assets, and one son.

Edward, by this time a man of substance in Lombard Street, adopted John, and sent him to a series of schools, beginning with a kindergarten and ending with Eton.

Unfortunately, Eton had demanded from John a higher standard of conduct than he was prepared to supply, and a week after his eighteenth birthday his career as an Etonian closed prematurely. Edward Forrest thereupon delivered his ultimatum. John could choose between the smallest of small posts in his uncle's business and £100 in bank-notes, coupled with the usual hand-washing and disowning. John had reached out for that money almost before the words had left his uncle's mouth. He left for Liverpool that day and for New York on the morrow.

He spent his hundred pounds, tried his hand without success at one or two odd jobs, and finally fell in with a friendly policeman, who, observing the young man's physique, which even then was impressive, suggested that he should join the Force. The policeman, whose name was O'Flaherty, having talked the matter over with two other policemen whose names were O'Rourke and Muldoon, strongly recommended that he should change his name to something Irish, the better to equip him for his new profession. Accordingly, John Forrest ceased to be and Patrolman J. McEachern was born.