

The image is a composite graphic. The background is a dark, out-of-focus photograph of a city street at night. Several Edison-style light bulbs with visible filaments are hanging from above, some glowing with a warm orange light. In the background, a car is parked or moving slowly, and a person is walking across the frame, their figure blurred. In the bottom right corner, there are several colorful, reflective tubes in shades of yellow, green, blue, and purple, also slightly out of focus.

# ***MONTAGUE GLASS***

## ***THE COMPETITIVE NEPHEW***

***MONTAGUE  
GLASS***

***THE COMPETITIVE  
NEPHEW***

**Montague Glass**

# **The Competitive Nephew**

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# THE COMPETITIVE NEPHEW

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### CHAPTER ONE

"That's the way it goes," Sam Zaretsky cried bitterly. "You raise a couple of young fellers up in your business, Max, and so soon they know all you could teach 'em they turn around and go to work and do you every time."

Max Fatkin nodded.

"I told it you when we started in as new beginners, Sam, you should got a lady bookkeeper," he said. "The worst they could do is to get married on you, and all you are out is a couple dollars cut-glass for an engagement present and half a dozen dessert spoons for the wedding. But so soon as you hire a man for a bookkeeper, Sam, he gets a line on your customers, and the first thing you know he goes as partners together with your designer, and what could you do? Ain't it?"

"Louis Sen was a good bookkeeper, Max," Sam rejoined.

"Sure, I know," Max agreed, "and Hillel Greenberg was a good designer. That sucker is such a good designer, Sam, he will take away all our trade."

"Not all our trade, Max," Sam declared. "*Gott sei dank*, we got a few good customers what them suckers couldn't steal off of us. We got, anyhow, Aaron Pinsky. I seen Aaron on the subway this morning, and he says he would be in to see us this afternoon yet."

"That's nothing new, Sam. That feller comes in here whenever he's downtown. I guess some of our customers think he's a partner here."

"Let 'em think so, Max, it don't do us no harm that people should think we got it a rich man like Pinsky for a partner."

"Sure, I know," Fatkin rejoined. "But the feller takes liberties around here, Sam. He tells us what we should do and what we shouldn't do. If it wouldn't be that Pinsky was all the time cracking up Louis Sen I would of fired him *schon* long since already. Louis was always too independent, anyhow, and if we would of got rid of him a year ago, Sam,

he wouldn't have gone as partners together with Hillel Greenberg, and we wouldn't now be bucking up against a couple of dangerous competitors."

"That's all right, Max. As I told you before, Aaron Pinsky is a good customer of ours, and if a good customer butts into your business he is only taking an interest in you; whereas, if a fellow which only buys from you goods occasionally, y'understand, butts in, then he's acting fresh and you could tell him so."

"But Pinsky butts into our business so much, Sam, that if he was the best customer a concern ever had, Sam, he would be fresh anyhow. The feller actually tells me yesterday he is going to bring us a new bookkeeper."

"A new bookkeeper!" Zaretsky exclaimed. "Why, we already got it a new bookkeeper, Max. I thought we hired it Miss Meyerson what used to be with Klinger & Klein. She's coming to work here Monday. Ain't it?"

"Sure, she is," Fatkin replied.

"Well, why didn't you tell him so?"

Fatkin shrugged.

"You tell him," he said. "I didn't got the nerve, Sam, because you know as well as I do, Sam, if I would turn him down and he gets mad, Sam, the first thing you know we are out a good customer and Greenberg & Sen would get him sure."

"Well, we got to go about this with a little diploomasher, y'understand."

"Diploomasher?" Max repeated. "What is that—diploomasher?"

"Diplomasher, that's French what you would say that a feller should watch out when you are dealing with a grouchy proposition like Aaron Pinsky."

"French, hey?" Max commented. "Well, I ain't no Frencher, Sam, and neither is Aaron Pinsky. And, furthermore, Sam, you couldn't be high-toned with an old-fashioned feller like Aaron Pinsky. Lately I don't know what come over you at all. You use such big words, like a lawyer or a doctor."

Sam was working his cigar around his mouth to assist the cerebation of a particularly cutting rejoinder, when the elevator door opened, and Pinsky himself alighted.

"Hallo, boys," he said, "ain't this rotten weather we are having? December is always either one thing or the other, but it is never both."

"You shouldn't ought to go out in weather like this," Max said. "To a feller which got it a cough like you, Aaron, it is positively dangerous, such a damp mees-erable weather which we are having it."

Aaron nodded and smiled at this subtle form of flattery. He possessed the worst asthmatic cough in the cloak and suit trade, and while he suffered acutely at times, he could not conceal a sense of pride in its ownership. It sounded like a combination of a patent automobile alarm and the shaking of dried peas in an inflated bladder, and when it seized Aaron in public conveyances, old ladies nearly fainted, and doctors, clergymen, and undertakers evinced a professional interest, for it seemed impossible that any human being could survive some of Aaron's paroxysms. Not only did he withstand them, however, but he appeared positively to



thrive upon them, and albeit he was close on to fifty, he might well have passed for thirty-five.

"I stood a whole lot of Decembers already," he said, "and I guess I wouldn't die just yet a while."

As if to demonstrate his endurance, he emitted a loud whoop, and started off on a fit of wheezing that bulged every vein in his forehead and left him shaken and exhausted in the chair that Max had vacated.

"Yes, boys," he gasped, "the only thing which seems to ease it is smoking. Now, you wouldn't believe that, would you?"

Max evidenced his faith by producing a large black cigar and handing it to Pinsky.

"Why don't you try another doctor, Aaron?" Sam Zaretsky asked. Pinsky raised his right hand with the palm outward and flipped his fingers.

"I've went to every professor in this country and the old country," he declared, "and they couldn't do a thing for me, y'understand. They say as I grow older, so I would get better, and certainly they are right. This is nothing what I got it now. You ought to of heard me when I was a young feller. Positively, Max, I got kicked out of four boarding-houses on account the people complained so. One feller wanted to make me arrested already, such hearts people got it."

Max Fatkin nodded sympathetically, and thus encouraged Aaron continued his reminiscences.

"Yes, boys," he said, "in them days I worked by old man Baum on Catherine Street. Six dollars a week and P.M.'s I made it, but even back in 1880 P.M.'s was nix. The one-price

system was coming in along about that time, and if oncet in a while you could soak an Italiener six twenty-five for a five dollar overcoat, you was lucky if you could get fifty cents out of old man Baum. Nowadays is different already. Instead of young fellers learning business by business men like old man Baum, they go to business colleges yet, and certainly I don't say it ain't just as good."

Sam Zaretsky exchanged significant glances with his partner, Max Fatkin, and they both puffed hard on their cigars.

"You take my nephew, Fillup, for instance," Aaron went on. "There's a boy of sixteen which just graduated from business college, and the boy writes such a hand which you wouldn't believe at all. He gets a silver medal from the college for making a bird with a pen—something remarkable. The eyes is all little dollar marks. I took it down to Shenkman's picture store, and seventy-five cents that sucker charges me for framing it."

"That's nothing, Aaron," Sam Zaretsky broke in, with a diplomatic attempt at a conversational diversion. "That's nothing at all. I could tell you myself an experience which I got with Shenkman. My wife's mother sends her a picture from the old country yet——"

"Not that I am kicking at all," Aaron interrupted, "because it was worth it. I assure you, Sam, I don't begrudge seventy-five cents for that boy, because the boy is a good boy, y'understand. The boy is a natural-born bookkeeper. Single entry and double entry, he could do it like nothing, and neat—that boy is neat like a pin."

"Huh, huh!" Max grunted.

"Yes," Aaron added, "you didn't make no mistake when you got me to bring you Fillup for a bookkeeper."

It was at this point that Max threw diplomacy to the winds.

"Got you to bring us a bookkeeper!" he exclaimed. "Why, Aaron, I ain't said a word about getting us this here—now—Fillup for a bookkeeper. We already hired it a bookkeeper."

"What?" Aaron cried. "Do you mean to say you got the nerve to sit there and tell me you ain't asked me I should bring you a bookkeeper?"

"Why, Aaron," Sam interrupted with a withering glance at his partner. "I ain't saying nothing one way or the other, y'understand, but I don't think Max could of asked you because, only this morning, Aaron, Max and me was talking about this here, now—what's-his-name—and we was saying that nowadays what future was there for a young feller as a bookkeeper? Ain't it? I says to Max distinctively: 'If Aaron would bring us his nephew we would give him a job on stock. Then the first thing you know the boy gets to be a salesman and could make his five thousand dollars a year.' But what could a bookkeeper expect to be? Ain't it? At the most he makes thirty dollars a week, and there he sticks."

"Is that so?" Aaron retorted ironically. "Well, look at Louis Sen. I suppose Louis sticks at thirty a week, hey?"

"Louis Sen is something else again," Sam replied. "Louis Sen is a crook, Aaron, not a bookkeeper. That feller comes into our place two years ago, and he ain't got five cents in his clothes, and we thought we was doing him a charity when we hired him. It reminds you of the feller which picks up a frozen snake and puts it in his pants-pocket to get

warm, and the first thing you know, Aaron, the snake wakes up, and bites the feller in the leg. Well, that's the way it was with Louis Sen. Gratitude is something which the feller don't understand at all. But you take this here nephew of yours, and he comes from decent, respectable people, y'understand. There's a young feller, Aaron, what we could trust, Aaron, and so when he comes to work by us on stock, Aaron, we give him a show he should learn all about the business, and you take it from me, Aaron, if the boy ain't going out on the road to sell goods for us in less than two years he ain't as smart as his uncle is, and that's all I can say."

Aaron smiled, and Sam looked triumphantly at his partner.

"All right, Sam," Aaron commented, "I see you got the boy's interest at heart. So I would bring the boy down here on Monday morning. And now, Max, let's get to work on them misses' Norfolk suits. I want eight of them blue serges."

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There was something about Miss Miriam Meyerson that suggested many things besides ledgers and trial balances, and she would have been more "in the picture" had she been standing in front of a kitchen table with her sleeves tucked up and a rolling-pin grasped firmly in her large, plump hands.

"I don't know, Sam," Max Fatkin remarked on Monday. "That girl don't look to me an awful lot like business. Mind you, I ain't kicking that she looks too fresh, y'understand,

because she reminds me a good deal of my poor mother, *selig*."

"Ain't that the funniest thing?" Sam Zaretsky broke in. "I was just thinking to myself she is a dead ringer for my sister Fannie. You know my sister, Mrs. Brody?"

"I bet yer," Max Fatkin said fervently. "That's one fine lady, Mrs. Brody. Me and my Esther had dinner there last Sunday. And, while I got to admit my Esther is a good *cook*, y'understand, Mrs. Brody—that's a *good* cook, Sam. We had some *fleisch kugel* there, Sam, I could assure you, better as Delmonico's—the Waldorf, too."

Sam nodded.

"If she is as good a bookkeeper as Fannie is a cook, Max," he replied, "I am satisfied. Sol Klinger says that she is A Number One. Always prompt to the minute and a hard worker."

"Well, why did he fire her, Sam?" Max asked.

"He didn't fire her. She got a sister living in Bridgetown married to Harris Schevrien, and Miss Meyerson goes up there last spring right in the busy time. Of course Klinger & Klein has got to let her go because under the circumstances, Max, she is the only sister Mrs. Schevrien got, y'understand. Then when the baby is two weeks old it gets sick, y'understand, and Miss Meyerson writes 'em not to expect her back before August. Naturally they got to fill her place, but Sol Klinger tells me she is a dandy, Max, and we should be lucky we got her."

"Well, certainly she don't seem to be loafing none," Max commented, with a glance toward the office where Miss Meyerson was making out the monthly statements. "So far

what I could see she is working twicet as fast as Louis Sen, and we ain't paying her only fifteen dollars."

"Sure, I know," Sam said, "but you got to consider it we would also got to pay Fillup Pinsky five dollars a week, so we ain't in much on that."

"Why ain't we, Sam? I bet yer we would get our money's worth out of Fillup. That boy ain't going to fool away his time here, Sam, and don't you forget it."

The corners of his mouth tightened in a manner that boded ill for Philip, and his face had not resumed its normal amiability when Aaron Pinsky entered, with his nephew Philip in tow.

"Hallo, boys," he said. "This is the young man I was talking to you about. Fillup, shake hands with Mr. Zaretsky and Mr. Fatkin."

After this operation was concluded, Mr. Pinsky indulged in a fit of coughing that almost broke the carbon filaments in the electric-light bulbs.

"Fillup," he gasped, as he wiped his crimson face, "make for them a couple birds with a pen."

"That's all right," Max interrupted, "we take your word for it. Birds is nix here, Aaron. We ain't in the millinery business, we are in the cloak and suit business, and instead Fillup should be making birds yet, he shouldn't lose no time, but Sam will show him our stock. Right away we will learn him the line."

"Business ahead of pleasure, Aaron," Sam broke in hurriedly, with a significant frown at his partner. "The boy will got lots of time to make birds in the dull season. Just

now we are rushed to death, Aaron. Come, Fillup, I'll show you where you should put your hat and coat."

Max forced an amiable smile as he handed Aaron Pinsky a cigar.

"I congratulate you, Aaron," he said. "You got a smart boy for a nephew, and I bet yer he would learn quick the business. For a start we will pay him three dollars a week."

Aaron stared indignantly and almost snatched the proffered cigar from Max's hand.

"Three dollars a week!" he exclaimed. "What do you take the boy for—a greenhorn? Positively you should pay the boy five dollars, otherwise he would put on his clothes and go right straight home."

"But, Aaron," Max protested, "I *oser* got three dollars a week when I started in as a new beginner. I was glad they should pay me two dollars a week so long as I learned it the business."

"I suppose you went to business college, too, Max. What? I bet yer when you first went to work you got to think hard before you could sign your name even."

Max shrugged his shoulders.

"Birds, I couldn't make it, Aaron," he admitted; "but the second week I was out of Castle Garden my mother, *selig*, sends me to night school, and they don't learn you birds in night school, Aaron. But, anyhow, Aaron, what's the use we should quarrel about it? If you want we should pay the boy five dollars a week—all right. I'm sure if he's worth three he's worth five. Ain't it? And what's more, Aaron, if the boy shows he takes an interest we would give him soon a raise of a couple of dollars. We ain't small."

"I know you ain't, Max," said Aaron, "otherwise I wouldn't bring the boy here at all."

He looked proudly toward the rear of the showroom where Philip was examining the ticketed garments under the supervision of Sam Zaretsky.

"The boy already takes an interest, Max," he said; "I bet yer he would know your style-numbers by to-night already."

For half an hour longer Sam Zaretsky explained the sample line to Philip, and at length he handed the boy a feather duster, and returned to the front of the showroom.

"The boy is all right, Aaron," he said. "A good, smart boy, Max, and he ain't afraid to open his mouth, neither."

"I bet yer he ain't," Aaron replied, as Philip approached with a sample garment in one hand and the feather duster in the other.

"Look, Mr. Zaretsky," he said, "here's one of your style twenty-twenty-two with a thirty-twenty-two ticket on to it."

Sam examined the garment and stared at his partner.

"The boy is right, Max," he said. "We got the wrong ticket on that garment."

For one brief moment Aaron glanced affectionately at his nephew, and then he voiced his pride and admiration in a paroxysm of coughing that made Miss Meyerson come running from the office.

"What's the matter?" she asked. "Couldn't I do something?"

For almost five minutes Aaron rocked and wheezed in his chair. At length, when he seemed to be at the point of suffocation, Miss Meyerson slapped him on the back, and with a final gasp he recovered his breath.



"Thanks, much obliged," he said, as he wiped his streaming eyes.

"You're sure you don't want a doctor?" Miss Meyerson said.

"Me? A doctor?" he replied. "What for?"

He picked up his cigar from the floor and struck a match. "This is all the doctor I need," he said.

Miss Meyerson returned to the office.

"Who's that?" Aaron inquired, nodding his head in the direction of Miss Meyerson.

"That's our new bookkeeper which we got it," Max replied.

"So you hired it a lady bookkeeper," Aaron commented. "What did you done that for, Max?"

"Well, why not?" Max retorted. "We got with her first class, A Number One references, Aaron, and although she only come this morning, she is working so smooth like she was with us six months already. For my part it is all the same to me if we would have a lady bookkeeper, or a bookkeeper."

"I know," Aaron continued, "but ladies in business is like salt in the cawfee. Salt is all right and cawfee also, but you don't got to hate salt exactly, y'understand, to kick when it gets in the cawfee. That's the way with me, Max; I ain't no lady-hater, y'understand, but I don't like 'em in business, except for saleswomen, models, and buyers, y'understand."

"But that Miss Meyerson," Sam broke in, "she attends strictly to business, Aaron."

"Sure, I know, Sam," Aaron replied. "Slaps me on the back yet when I am coughing."

"Well, she meant it good, Aaron," Sam said.

"Sure, that's all right," Aaron agreed. "Sure, she meant it good. But it's the *idee* of the thing, y'understand. Women in business always means good, Max, but they butt in too much."

"Other people butts in, too," Max added.

"I don't say they don't, Max. But you take it me, for instance. When something happens which it makes me feel bad, Max, I got to swear, y'understand. I couldn't help it. And, certainly, while I don't say that swearing is something which a gentleman should do, especially when there's a lady, y'understand, still, swearing a little sometimes is good for the *gesund*. Instead a feller should make another feller a couple blue eyes, Max, let him swear. It don't harm nobody, and certainly nobody could sue you in the courts because you swear at him like he could if you make for him a couple blue eyes. But you take it when there is ladies, Max, and then you couldn't swear."

"Sure, I know," Max rejoined; "and you couldn't make it a couple blue eyes on a feller when ladies would be present neither, Aaron. It wouldn't be etty-kit."

"Me, I ain't so strong on the etty-kit," Sam broke in at this juncture; "but I do know, Max, that we are fooling away our whole morning here."

Aaron Pinsky rose.

"Well, boys," he said, "I got to be going. So I wish you luck with your new boy."

Once more he looked affectionately toward the rear of the room where Philip industriously wielded the feather duster, and then made his way toward the elevator. As he

passed Miss Meyerson's desk she looked up and beamed a farewell at him. He caught it out of the corner of his eye and frowned absently.

"I wish you better," Miss Meyerson called.

"Thanks very much," Aaron replied, as the floor of the descending elevator made a dark line across the ground-glass door of the shaft. He half paused for a moment, but his shyness overcame him.

"Going down!" he yelled, and thrusting his hat more firmly on his head he disappeared into the elevator.

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Three days afterward Aaron Pinsky again visited Zaretsky & Fatkin, and as he alighted from the elevator Miss Meyerson came out of her office with a small package in her hand.

"Oh, Mr. Pinsky," she said, "I've got something for you."

"Me?" Aaron cried, stopping short in his progress toward the showroom. "All right."

"You know I couldn't get to sleep the other night thinking of the way you were coughing," she continued. "Every time I closed my eyes I could hear it."

Evidently this remark called for comment of some kind, and Aaron searched his brain for a suitable rejoinder.

"That's nice," he murmured at last.

"So I spoke to my cousin, Mrs. Doctor Goldenreich, about it," she went on, "and the doctor gave me this medicine for you. You should take a tablespoonful every four hours, and when it's all gone I'll get you some more."

She handed the bottle to Aaron, who thrust it into his overcoat-pocket.

"Thanks; much obliged," he said hoarsely.

"Don't mention it," she commented as she returned to the office.

Aaron looked after her in blank surprise. "Sure not," he muttered, starting off for the showroom in long, frightened strides.

"Say, Max," he said, "what's the matter with that girl? Is she *verrückt*?"

"*Verrückt!*" Max exclaimed. "What d'ye mean—*verrückt*? Say, lookyhere, Aaron, you should be careful what you are saying about a lady like Miss Meyerson. She already found where Louis Sen makes mistakes, which *Gott weiss wie vile* it costed us yet. You shouldn't say nothing about that girl, Aaron, because she is a cracker-jack, A Number One bookkeeper."

"Did I say she wasn't?" Aaron replied. "I am only saying she acts to me very funny, Max. She gives me this here bottle of medicine just now."

He poked the package at Max, who handled it gingerly, as though it might explode at any minute.

"What d'ye give it to me for?" he cried. "I don't want it."

"Well, I don't want it, neither," Aaron replied. "She ain't got no right to act fresh like that and give me medicine which I ain't asked for at all."

He looked exceedingly hurt and voiced his indignation with a tremendous whoop, the forerunner of a dozen minor whoops which shaded off into a succession of wheezes. It seemed to Max and Sam that Aaron would never succeed in catching his breath, and just when he appeared to be at his ultimate gasp Miss Meyerson ran up with a tablespoon. She

snatched the bottle from Max's grasp and, tearing off the wrapping paper, she drew the cork and poured a generous dose.

"Take this right now," she commanded, pressing the spoon to Aaron's lips. With a despairing glance at Max he swallowed the medicine, and immediately afterward made a horrible grimace.

"T'phooee!" he cried. "What the—what are you trying to do—poison me?"

"That won't poison you," Miss Meyerson declared. "It'll do you good. All he needs is about six more doses, Mr. Fatkin, and he'd be rid of that cough in no time."

Max nodded.

"Miss Meyerson is right, Aaron," he said. "You ought to take care of yourself."

Aaron wiped his eyes and his moustache with his handkerchief.

"You ain't got maybe a little *schnapps* in your desk, Max?" he said.

"*Schnapps* is the worst thing you could take, Mr. Pinsky," Miss Meyerson cried. "Don't give him any, Mr. Fatkin; it'll only make him worse."

She shook her head warningly at Aaron as she and Sam walked back to the office.

"What d'ye think for a fresh woman like that?" he said to Max as Miss Meyerson's head once more bent over her books.

"She ain't fresh, Aaron," Max replied. "She's just got a heart, y'understand."

"But——" Aaron began.

"But nothing, Aaron," Max broke in. "I will wrap up the medicine and you will take it home with you. The girl knows what she is talking about, Aaron, and the best thing for you to do is to leave off *schnapps* a little while and do what she says you should. I see on the bottle it's from Doctor Goldenreich. He's a specialist from the chest and lungs, and I bet yer if you would go to him he would soak you ten dollars yet."

No argument could have appealed so strongly to Aaron as this did, and he thrust the bottle into his breast-pocket without another word.

"And how is Fillup coming on?" he asked.

"We couldn't complain," Max replied. "The boy is a good boy, Aaron. He is learning our line like he would be with us six months already."

"That's good," Aaron commented. "I bet yer before he would be here a month yet he would know the line as good as Sam and you."

Max smiled.

"I says the boy is a good boy, Aaron," he said, "but I never says he was a miracle, y'understand."

"That ain't no miracle, Max," Aaron retorted. "That's a prophecy."

Max smiled again, but the prediction more than justified itself in less than a month, for at the end of that time Philip knew the style-number and price of every garment in Zaretsky & Fatkin's line.

"I never see nothing like it, Sam," Max said. "The boy is a human catalogue. You couldn't stump him on nothing."

"Sure, I know," Sam replied. "Sometimes I got to think we make a mistake in letting that boy know all our business."

"A mistake!" Max repeated. "What d'ye mean a mistake?"

"I mean, Max, that the first thing you know Aaron goes around blowing to our competitors how well that boy is doing here, Max, and then a concern like Sammet Brothers or Klinger & Klein would offer the boy seven dollars a week, and some fine day we'll come downtown and find that Fillup's got another job. Also the feller what hires him would have a human catalogue of our whole line, prices and style-numbers complete."

"Always you are looking for trouble, Sam," Max cried.

"Looking for it I ain't, Max. I don't got to look for it, because when a feller got it a competitor like Greenberg & Sen, Max, he could find trouble without looking for it. Them suckers was eating lunch in Wasserbauer's on Monday when Aaron goes in there with Fillup. Elenbogen, of Plotkin & Elenbogen, seen the whole thing, Max, and he told it me this morning in the subway to make me feel bad. Sometimes without meaning it at all a feller could do you a big favour when he tells you something for spite. Ain't it?"

"What did he tell you?" Max asked.

"He says that Greenberg & Sen goes over to Aaron's table and the first thing you know a box of cigars is going around and Fillup is drinking a bottle of celery tonic. Elenbogen says you would think Aaron was nobody, because them two fellers ain't paid no attentions to him at all. Everything was Fillup. They made a big holler about the boy, Max, and they asks Elenbogen to lend 'em his fountain pen so the boy could make it birds on the back of the bill-off-

fare. Elenbogen says his fountain pen was put out of business ever since. Also, Sen insists on taking the bill-off-fare away with him, and Elenbogen says Aaron feels so set up about it he thought he would spit blood yet, the way he coughs."

"That's a couple of foxy young fellers," Max said. "You could easy get around a feller like Aaron Pinsky, Sam. He's a soft proposition."

Sam nodded and was about to voice another criticism of Aaron much less complimentary in character, when the elevator door clanged and Aaron himself entered the showroom.

"Well, boys," he said, "looks like we would get an early spring. Here it is only February already and I feel it that the winter is pretty near over. I could always tell by my throat what the weather is going to be. My cough lets up on me something wonderful, and with me that's always what you would call a sign of spring."

"Might it's a sign that Miss Meyerson's medicine done you good, maybe," Max commented.

"Well, certainly it ain't done me no harm," Aaron said. "I took six bottles already, and though it ain't the tastiest thing in the world, y'understand, it loosens up the chest something wonderful."

He slapped himself in the region of the diaphragm and sat down deliberately.

"However," he began, "I ain't come to talk to you about myself. I got something else to say."

He paused impressively, while Max and Sam exchanged mournful glances.



"I come to talk to you about Fillup," he continued. "There's a boy which he got it ability, y'understand. Five dollars a week is nothing for a boy like that."

"Ain't it?" Max retorted. "Where could you find it a boy which is only six weeks in his first job and gets more, Aaron?"

Aaron waved his hand deprecatingly.

"I don't got to go very far away from here, Max," he said, "to find a concern which would be willing to pay such a boy like Fillup ten dollars a week, and that's twicet as much as five."

"But, Aaron——" Max began, when Sam Zaretsky rose to his feet and raised his hand in the solemn gesture of a traffic policeman at a busy crossing.

"Listen here to me, Aaron," Sam declared. "Always up to now you been a good friend to us. You bought from us goods which certainly we try our best to make up A Number One, and the prices also we made right. In return you always paid us prompt to the day and you give us also a whole lot of advice, which we took it in the spirit in which it was given us. That's all right, too."

He stopped for breath and wet his dry lips before he proceeded.

"Also," he continued, "when you come to us and wanted us we should take on Fillup, Aaron, we didn't need him, y'understand, but all the same we took him because always you was a good customer of ours, and certainly, Aaron, I got to say that the boy is a good boy and he is worth to us if not five dollars a week, anyhow four dollars a week."

There was an ominous silence in the showroom as Sam gave himself another rest before continuing his ultimatum.

"But," he went on, "when you come to us and tell us that Greenberg & Sen offers the boy ten dollars a week and that we should raise him also, Aaron, all I got to say is—we wouldn't do it. Greenberg & Sen want your trade, Aaron; they don't want the boy. But if they got to pay the boy ten dollars a week, Aaron, then they would do so, and if it was necessary to pay him fifteen, they would do that, too. Then, Aaron, when you would buy goods off of them all they do is to add Fillup's wages to the price of the goods, y'understand, and practically he would work for them for nothing, because the wages comes out of your pocket, Aaron, and not theirs."

"I never said nothing at all about Greenberg & Sen," Aaron blurted out.

"No one else would make such a proposition, Aaron," Sam said, "because no one else wants business so bad as that. Ourselves we could offer the boy ten dollars, too, and although we couldn't raise prices on you, Aaron, we could make it up by skimping on the garments; but we ain't that kind, Aaron. A business man is got to be on the level with his customers, Aaron, otherwise he wouldn't be in business long; and you take it from me, Aaron, these here two young fellers, Greenberg & Sen, would got to do business differencely or it would be quick good-bye with 'em, and don't you forget it."

Aaron Pinsky rose to his feet and gazed hard at Sam Zaretsky.

"Shall I tell you something, Sam?" he said. "You are sore at them two boys because they quit you and goes into business by themselves. Ain't it?"

"I ain't sore they goes into business, Aaron," Sam replied. "Everybody must got to make a start, Aaron, and certainly it ain't easy for a new beginner to get established, y'understand. Also competition is competition, Aaron, and we ourselves cop out a competitor's trade oncet in a while, too, Aaron, but Greenberg & Sen takes advantage, Aaron. They see that you are fond of that boy Fillup, and certainly it does you credit, because you ain't married and you ain't got no children of your own, Aaron. But it don't do them credit that they work you for business by pretending that they want the boy because he is a smart boy and that they are going to pay him ten dollars a week because he's worth it. No, Aaron; they don't want the boy in the first place, and in the second place he ain't worth ten dollars a week, and in the third place they ain't going to pay him ten dollars a week, because they will add it to the cost of their garments; and, Aaron, if you want any fourth, fifth, or sixth places I could stand here talking for an hour. But you got business to attend to, Aaron, and so you must excuse me."

He thrust his hands into his trousers-pockets and walked stolidly toward the cutting room, while Aaron blinked in default of a suitable rejoinder.

"My partner is right, Aaron," Max said. "He is right, Aaron, even if he is the kind of feller that would throw me out of the window, supposing I says half the things to you as he did. But, anyhow, Aaron, that ain't neither here nor there. You heard what Sam says, Aaron, and me, I stick to it also."



"You heard what Sam says, Aaron, and me, I stick to it also"

Aaron blinked once or twice more and then he put on his hat.

"All right," he said. "All right."

He turned toward the front of the showroom where his nephew was sorting over a pile of garments.

"Fillup!" he bellowed. "You should put on your hat and coat and come with me."

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It was during the third month of Philip Pinsky's employment with Greenberg & Sen that Blaukopf, the druggist, insisted on a new coat of white paint for the interior of his up-to-date store at the northwest corner of

Madison Avenue and One Hundred and Twenty-second Street. His landlord demurred at first, but finally, in the middle of June, a painter's wagon stopped in front of the store and Harris Shein, painter and decorator, alighted with two assistants. They conveyed into the store pots of white lead and cans of turpentine, gasoline, and other inflammable liquids used in the removal and mixing of paints. Harris Shein was smoking a paper cigarette, and one of the assistants, profiting by his employer's example, pulled a corncob pipe from his pocket. Then, after he had packed the tobacco down firmly with his finger, he drew a match across the seat of his trousers and forthwith he began a three months' period of enforced abstinence from house-painting and decorating. Simultaneously Blaukopf's plate-glass show-window fell into the street, the horse ran away with the painter's wagon, a policeman turned in a fire alarm, three thousand children came on the run from a radius of ten blocks, and Mr. Blaukopf's stock in trade punctuated the cremation of his fixtures with loud explosions at uncertain intervals. In less than half an hour the entire building was gutted, and when the firemen withdrew their apparatus Mr. Blaukopf searched in vain for his prescription books. They had resolved themselves into their original elements, and the number on the label of the bottle which Aaron carried around in his breast-pocket provided no clew to the ingredients of the medicine thus contained.

"That's a fine note," Aaron declared to Philip, as they surveyed the black ruins the next morning. "Now what

would I do? Without that medicine I will cough my face off already."

He examined the label of the bottle and sighed.

"I suppose I could go and see that Doctor Goldenreich," he said, "and right away I am out ten dollars."

"Why don't you ring up Miss Meyerson over at Zaretsky & Fatkin's?" Philip suggested.

Aaron sighed heavily. His business relations with Greenberg & Sen had proved far from satisfactory, and it was only Philip's job and his own sense of shame that prevented him from resuming his dealings with Zaretsky & Fatkin.

As for Sam and Max, they missed their old customer both financially and socially.

"Yes, Sam," Max said the day after Blaukopf's fire, "things ain't the same around here like in former times already."

"If you mean in the office, Max," Sam said, "I'm glad they ain't. That's a fine bookkeeper we got it, Max, and a fine woman, too. Ain't it a shame and a disgrace for young fellers nowadays, Max, that a fine woman like Miss Meyerson is already thirty-five and should be single? My Sarah is crazy about her. Her and Sarah goes to a matinee last Saturday afternoon together and Sarah asks her to dinner to-morrow."

Max nodded.

"With some bookkeepers, Sam," he said, "you couldn't do such things. Right away they would take advantage. Miss Meyerson, that's something else again. She takes an interest in our business, Sam. Even a grouch like Aaron Pinsky she treated good."