

From a Trolley Post.

BY MARGARET DODGE.



HE man looked discouraged. As he stood on the corner of the avenue, his hands thrust into his overcoat pockets, his slouch hat pulled down over his eyes, he seemed to be posing for an end of the century statue of Resignation. For fifteen minutes he had been facing a purely Bostonese combination of east wind and drizzling rain, while he waited for one of the electric cars billed to pass that corner every five minutes. There was no cab station within a mile, and his train left at the other end of the town in half an hour. Besides, he lived in a city where east winds never blew, and where L trains and cable cars whizzed by with clockwork regularity. Consequently, he possessed few resources for killing time on street corners. After he had read his paper, looked over his memorandum book, and worn a path into the middle of the street by continued expeditions undertaken in hope of sighting the delayed car, he had backed up against the white trolley post, and fixed his lusterless eyes upon the row of brownstone apartment houses that lined the opposite side of the street.

Suddenly a gleam of hope lighted the gloomy eyes of the man at the trolley post. Had the car, after all, taken a "spurt"? Had the wind changed? No; the track was still clear as far as the eye could see; the vane on the nearest church pointed unwaveringly to the east; but the resigned man had made a pleasing discovery, — he had found a companion in misery.

In the third-story side window of an apartment house diagonally opposite, a picturesque, black-eyed youngster stood drumming on the window-pane and scowling out into the brick-paved area on which the window opened, with a disapproval that matched that of the man at the trolley post.

Bud, too, was a stranger within the city's gates, and he, too,

was tired waiting for luck to take a turn. He had grown up in Texas, where the sun shines for three hundred and fifty days in the year, and where every day he could wander out upon the plains and kill something. And now he had come to this cold, dismal city where he had to wear shoes and a Fauntleroy suit, and stay in when the east wind blew. For two hours he had been waiting for the sun to come out, and he had almost reached the end of his resources.

Almost, but not quite. A moment later, as the resigned man watched the little Texan standing with his nose flattened against the pane, his round, bright eyes peering down into the mist, he saw him open the window and, through the iron grating of the balcony, survey the scene below. Then, with a coltish leap, Bud disappeared into the room.

A moment later his agile little body again wriggled out onto the balcony. It was a small, rounded affair, filled with potted plants, and situated on a perpendicular line with similar balconies which belonged to the suites above and below. In the one immediately under that on which the small boy stood was placed among the geranium plants and India-rubber trees a glass globe containing several large goldfish.

Hanging out over the railing, Bud fixed his round eyes on the glass globe and chuckled. Then he looked cautiously into the room behind him. Apparently no one was in sight. Producing from the pocket of his small trousers a fish-line and hook, he proceeded to lower it until the duly baited hook landed among the goldfish. There was a deft twist of the line, a splash, and a flop; something yellow and wiggling flashed through the air, and a moment later a large goldfish lay breathing its last in a big flower pot, at the roots of an India-rubber tree.

Once more Bud chuckled. So did the man at the trolley post. He had now waited half an hour, but for the moment he had forgotten the east wind, the delayed car, and the train he wanted to catch.

Without loss of time, the boy again lowered his hook. Once, twice, three times the operation was repeated, and then the boy unlooped himself from the balcony and scraped one foot meditatively upon the other. Four quarter-pound goldfish were now

in the way of enriching the soil at the base of the India-rubber tree — and the stream was fished dry.

Did the balcony offer other worlds for this youthful Alexander? Apparently not, for after chewing up several choice geranium blossoms and practising with his bean-shooter upon a draggled sparrow he turned to go.

The man at the trolley post frowned. Having seen two acts of a play, he objected to being cheated out of the third.

Just then, however, the little comedy was continued by two new actors. Around the corner appeared an Italian hand-organist leading by a string a minute monkey gorgeously costumed in a green skirt, scarlet jacket, and green and gold cap. As the melancholy Italian put down his instrument and began grinding out "Daisy Bell," his hairy attendant scampered across the pavement and began scrambling up the iron balconies of the tall apartment house in quest of pennies.

A yawning grin convulsed Bud's small features. Flinging his fish-line into a flower-pot, he climbed through the window and disappeared. He was gone only a few moments, but when he returned he bore himself with a new air. A large sombrero sat jauntily upon his black curls; from his left arm hung a coil of rope, while his brown right hand brandished above his head the loop of a lasso. As he stood there motionless, the hand holding the lasso poised in the air, he looked a perfect pocket edition of a Texas cowboy. The man at the trolley post would have wagered a large sum that among the thirty-five thousand small boys reported by the last census as living in Boston there wasn't another boy like Bud.

Meantime the organist had changed his tune from "Daisy Bell" to "Hold Your Head Up, Hogan," while the monkey had been making a triumphal progress up the iron balconies. His gorgeous uniform, acrobatic leaps, and hand-over-hand performances, together with his shrewd chatter and the graceful twirl with which he pocketed coppers, had attracted every child within a radius of four blocks. Pennies rained upon him like roses on a favorite *prima donna*, and the little fellow was put to sore straits to collect the rich shower. In Bud's absence he had traveled to the top-most balcony of the seven-story apartment house, and was now

resting on the fourth on his downward progress, when his bright eyes caught sight of another offering that was being thrust through the window upon the second-story balcony of the next house by a child more retiring than his neighbors. This house stood on the other side of a common area, barely fifteen feet wide, and the railing upon which the offering lay was directly opposite the one where the little beastie crouched, but some ten feet below.

The monkey took in the situation with twinkling eyes. Then, after a brief chattered soliloquy, he humped up his back and drew himself together ready for a spring.

By this time the man at the trolley post was breathless with excitement. To attempt to keep track of the boy and the monkey at the same time was like watching a circus with two rings. By a quick glance, however, he noted that while the monkey was gathering itself for the leap the boy was standing erect, his eyes fastened on the monkey, his fingers whirling the loop of the lasso above his head with the apparent ease that means a deadly aim. Once, twice, the noose circled in the air; the monkey quivered with the impulse to spring; but just then the accident happened. The car arrived and the man from New York missed the end of the play.

