

TROLLEY FOLLY

JIMMIE HORGAN'S FORETASTE OF
FORTUNE

IT was a splendid office—mahogany, plate-glass windows and all that pertains to the uninteresting side of respectability. There was a lawyer there, sitting before his desk—a crisp, gray sort of lawyer, who looked as if when you patted him gently he would snap a finger off. One Jimmie Horgan was also there.

Now, Jimmie was a careless youth, and a cheerful habit of sending people scattering, acquired by managing the controller in the employment of the Suburban Trolley Company, gave him what might be called a cynicobenevolent view of life. He had learned

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that the human body was an unreliable vessel to hold so great a thing as a soul.

One bunt from his trusty car, and the greatest alderman who ever received boodle for that same franchise promptly departed for Heaven, or its suburban districts.

He had made the proud to skip ahead; ladies, that one would not suspect of either agility or pliability, had made creditable running-long-jumps merely because Jimmie did not twist the brake. Bankers, plutocrats and plumbers instantly dropped their accustomed airs of superiority and hiked out-of-that when Jimmie's foot trod the gong. This showed him clearly that at heart all men were simple. The airs assumed were but a mask, concealing a real desire to please.

Jimmie may have belonged to one of the first families of Ireland, but his estate had fallen low—so low, in fact, that he held in his hand the incredible, and now, away from

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his platform of authority, he needs must tell the intrenched lawyer-man a strange tale.

Strong of heart was Jimmie. He rallied.

"Your name Simmonds?" he asked, with a grimy thumb indicating the signature on the letter he extended for the lawyer's inspection.

"Yes, sir," barked the lawyer with severity.

"Who gave you that name?" inquired Jimmie in a spirit of levity.

"What is that?" returned the lawyer.

Jimmie recalled himself to his position. "Oh," said he, "I want to know whether this thing is a fake or not."

The lawyer extended a hand like a rat-trap, and snapped the letter toward him.

"Certainly not," he said with decision.

"Certainly not. You have been left, through his dying intestate, by your maternal uncle, the sum of five thousand dollars, as I have acquainted you in this letter."

The lawyer coughed the cough of conse-

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quence. "This amount is in my care; in fact, it is deposited in my bank, awaiting your orders."

Jimmie leaned heavily on the office-boy to support himself.

"You don't look it," he said to the lawyer, "but are you addicted to the use and abuse of strong things of any kind?"

"Sir!" said the lawyer.

"I slipped my trolley," said Jimmie. "I didn't know I had any maternal uncle. I didn't know he had five thousand dollars. I don't know where he got it, and I don't know where I am, nor why you are here, nor anything else." He roused himself. "Say," said he, "if you ain't got me down here to enjoy my looks, produce."

"Hey?" said the lawyer.

"Yes," said Jimmie, "just that. Hay; make it while the sun shines. Clear weather to-day. I don't savvy this thing, up nor

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down. You let me have two hundred dollars, and it will look like business. All I want to do is to feel it. I have been trying to feel two hundred dollars for three years, and the nearest I have got to it is on the instalment plan."

The lawyer pushed him a book.

"Make out a check," said he.

Jimmie swallowed all the air in the room, but yet made out the check.

The lawyer looked at the check in the most detached fashion, called a man and handed him the slip of paper. The man seemed weary. He took the piece of paper, walked toward an actual safe, opened a drawer with a real key and pulled out from its secret hiding-place a bunch, or, as it seemed to Jimmie, a whole head, of that tender, crisp, succulent plant, the long green.

With a wet thumb the weary man shredded off a certain number of leaves, and, showing

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disgust of life in every feature, placed them on the lawyer's desk. The lawyer eyed them glumly, wrapped them up with a practised hand, and shoved them to Jimmie.

"There you are, sir," he said. "Anything else?"

"No," said Jimmie dreamily. "No, nothing else."

He turned away, bumped into the partition, begged its pardon most humbly; walked into a young woman who was approaching with a basketful of letters; distributed wisdom all over the office; got spoken to plainly; tried to help the young woman collect the flying sheets, and got spoken to still more sharply; slid down the first four steps outside, landed in the street in some fashion, and then galloped toward a sign indicative of a life-saving station.

After safely embarking on a schooner he retired to a corner and examined the ten

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promises of our government for twenty dollars per promise, at leisure. They were so. Boldly he slapped one upon the bar. Doubtfully the barkeeper opened his cash-drawer.

"No good," thought Jimmie, thinking this an act of suspicion. But it was not.

"Say, young feller," said the barkeeper, "it's pretty early in the day to clean me out of change. Ain't you got nothing smaller than that?"

From its lonesome abiding-place at the bottom of a pocket filled with tobacco-dust, Jimmie fished out a quarter—that one piece of Mr. Bryan's philosophy which he had imagined to be all that stood between him and a joyless wait for pay-day.

"All right," said he.

This proof that it was inability and not contempt that had shown in the barkeeper's eyes burned in James' heart like a little flame. He took out one twenty-dollar bill and put it

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in a separate pocket. Twenty dollars he could understand.

He then made for the barns, wondering what man it was whose legs carried him so jauntily.

This was the beginning of the great mystery—the disappearance of Car 809.

How so large and eminently practical a thing as a trolley car—a thing so blatantly modern and, withal, so hard and heavy—could vanish from the face of the earth, and leave neither track nor rack behind, was a problem that caused silver threads to appear amid the gold and bald spots of the officers of the Suburban Trolley Company.

With it went the motorman and conductor; gone; vanished; vamoosed; dissipated into thin air.

The thing was, and then it was not. That is all they ever knew about it. The facts are these:

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When James arrived in the yard he approached his running-mate and poked him in the chest with a dramatic forefinger. The running-mate looked at the forefinger and then at James.

"Changed your spots again?" he inquired.

"Nup," said James, hitting himself mightily upon the chest. "Here is Willie Wally Astor, and that's me."

"Grounded again?" sniffed the conductor. "Where do you feel it worst?"

"There ain't any worst," said Jimmie. "You come here!"—and he seized him by the collar.

"Leggo!" said the conductor, but at the same time permitting himself to be jammed into a corner while the golden tale of sudden wealth was poured into his ears.

"Ah, g'wan!"—but the tones grew weaker and weaker, and when Jimmie produced his little pamphlet on high finance, printed in

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green—proof to any eye—the conductor fell upon his neck.

"I allus knew you was the kind of a little bird that could fly if you drew them feet off the ground," he said. "Call the turn."

"We have got fifteen minutes," said Jimmie. "Here we go fresh across the street to celebrate."

At this period the minds of both these worthy men were clear and free from any further operation than that natural to taking a drink, but after that first drink, and with the confidence, bred of another, to believe in that money, James' mind extended itself. He pounded the bar with his fist.

"I am dead sick and tired of going over the same old streets," said he. "It occurs to me at times that I'll have to turn off som'ers, or bust."

"Yep," assented the conductor; "that's right, too. All the time the same streets; all

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the time the same old dog that comes just so near getting pinched; all the time the same fat man waving his umbrell'; all the time the same Dagoes with gunnysacks filled with something, and smelling with a strong Italian accent; all the time the same war over that transfer, after that same young lady has traveled half a mile beyond where she ought to have got off. If I had another drink I could feel very bad about this."

"Let's," said Jimmie. So the conductor felt very bad about it, and Jimmie, like the good friend he was, felt worse.

"Yes, sir," said he, "I just naturally will have to turn off som'ers, or I surely *will* bust."

There gleamed a radiance from the crisp array before the mirror. Genius had hit Jimmie—hypnotic.

"Say, Tommie," said he, "we *will* turn off som'ers. If you'll go me on it we'll take the

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old ambulance clear to the end of everything in sight this morning. There is more than forty thousand switches we'd oughter took long ago, and they can't stop us. If we get our jobs excused away from us we c'n lean up against that five thousand until we are rested. Come along," said he, inspiration working. "Come on, old man!"

"Say," said the conductor, "I've got you faded. I don't care if I never work again, and as for jerking a piece of common clothes-line every time a person with a mind to shoves one small nickel into my hand, why, I am really tired of it. I have had idees of a nobler life than this, Jimmie. They usually come after the sixth round, but when I think of that five thousand—" He stopped abruptly.

They grabbed each other and made for the yard.

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"Come on, you fellers!" yelled the starter. "Get a wiggle on. Youse are due now."

"Comin', uncle!" said Jimmie, in a sharp falsetto.

"Slowly comin'!" boomed the conductor.

"Ain't you got a gayness, though?" said the starter.

The motorman elaborately placed one silver dollar in the hands of the starter and closed the latter's fingers upon it.

"Keep this," he said, from many years' experience of viewing the hero leaving the lady of his choice with a sob in the orchestra. "Keep this," he repeated waveringly, quaveringly and tenderly. "Do the same by yourself. This is a sooveniret of something you never heard of before."

The starter looked startled. "Well!" said he. It was the only word in the English language that could express his feelings.

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"Well!" he said. He looked at the dollar, and in the tone of a man bewitched he cried, "Give him the bell, Tommie! You're off!"

Tommie pulled the strap. "Adoo! Fare thee well. Good-by. Ready!" he called. "If we don't see you again, hello!"

The starter waved his hand. The starter shook his head.

Car 809 droned merrily along the track until she came to the first switch. "Give us the High Bush Line, Jerry," said James.

The melancholy man jabbed his iron into the track. High Bush, North Pole, Heaven or Hades, it was all one to him.

"Come along," he growled, and they came.

"Hey, there! Hey!" cried an excitable old gentleman, as the car shot up the side-street switch. "I thought this car went through Lethe Street."

"It used to," answered Tommie soothingly, "but it has got weary of it—plumb tired out."

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"Tired?" cried the old gentleman blankly. "Here, let me out!" he concluded with energy.

He stood on the crossing until a brewery-wagon was driven against him.

"Lunatics—not a doubt of it," he said to himself, as he hopped to the sidewalk. There he waited, but in vain, for no other car would be sent forth until 809 passed a certain turnout, which she had not the least intention of approaching this day.

And that ruptured the schedule.

A sour-faced young man with a fighting jaw approached the car a few blocks farther on.

"Say! Do youse go through Scrabble-grass Avenoo?" he asked in a voice like a curse.

"Now, that depends," answered the blithe Thomas. "If we want to, we will; if we don't, we won't. D'yer feel like making it an object to us?"

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The sour-faced young man backed up a step.

"Say, you are a pretty fresh duck, ain't you?" he sneered. He quickly put on his most ferocious look. "Now, you listen to the toot of my little naughtyobilious horn," said he; "and if you don't I'll mix you up with the machinery. I want to go to Scrabblegrass Avenoo. D'yer get that? The quicker I get there, the better. D'yer get that?" He pushed his bulldog jaw into Thomas' face.

"Shoo, fly!" said Thomas, making a light pass with his hand which caused a noisy rustle in the aftermath that grew upon the other man's extensive face.

"Sure!" he continued. "Sure. I get all these things, of course." He stopped the car. He took the fighting-jawed man by the shoulder and pointed his finger at an angle of

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thirty-five degrees to the perpendicular and at right angles to the car track.

"There is Scrabblegrass Avenoo, right over yonder," he said. "Jump!"

Sometimes a fighting jaw merely implies a fighting character: it doesn't insist upon it.

"D'yer mean I have got to walk?" asked the sour-faced man.

"Sure thing," said Tommie, "or else you'd like to have me kick you half-way there?"

"Say, what's got into you this mornin'?" gasped the stranger.

It was Tommie's turn to scoff. He reached for the strap, smiling derisively.

"You ought to read the papers," said he; "then you wouldn't act like such a lobster. Things ain't run like they used to be, my friend; me and my partner has bought this car, and we're running it around, getting custom where we can."

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"Ain't there no more railroad company?" said the lost soul confronting him.

"Nope," answered Tommie with a yawn. "The hull trolley business is in the hands of private parties like us—and we're losing money on you by the second. Skip!"

From this on, 809 developed more eccentricities of character. Sometimes she stopped for passengers like a perfectly normal trolley car, but if Jimmie did not like the looks of people as they drew near she bounded ahead like an antelope, when the foot of habit was reaching for her step. Then, at a place of pleasant greenery, refreshing to the city eye, she often moved up and down the block several times while her managers enjoyed the change of scene. This attracted some attention.

They always slowed the car fully to explain to the out-landers the strange, new conditions existing in the trolley world.

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The passengers made no complaint. It is so much the custom for the free American to accept almost anything in uniform as a part of Nature, and a Nature that grows violent on provocation, that the half-dozen offspring of the eagle perched mildly upon their seats without complaint.

Perhaps they liked it. One stout and jolly old gentleman enjoyed the discourse immensely, even joining in the spread of misinformation.

A pallid little woman, with a very large baby, timidly accosted Jimmie. She wanted to go to a certain place at least five miles distant, on a branch line.

Jimmie appealed to the chivalry of the passengers.

"We have got your nickels," said he, "but this here lady has been misled. We feel as if we oughter take her where she belongs. No objections?"

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The passengers looked at each other and said nothing.

"Let her fly, Jimmie. We have got to make that five miles in six minutes to keep up with our idee of things," said Tommie.

They arrived at the street, but the little woman's destination was several blocks from the trolley track. Jimmie escorted her, carrying her basket, while the stout old gentleman, saying that he would like to stretch his legs, carried the baby.

In the meantime, the car that really belonged on that track came from the opposite direction. I will not repeat what that motorman said. There is a sign on all trolley cars, "Don't speak to the motorman." It is a good piece of advice, because you might not like what the motorman would say to you in reply.

He waved his hands and told 809 to get on about its business. He wanted to know why

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she was there, in a tone that made the fourth-story windows fly open.

"What d'yer mean by sitting there like a toad in a rain-storm, holding us up when we're twenty minutes late already?" he finished.

Tommie spread his hands with a gesture of deprecation.

"Orders," he replied in explanation. "I can't help it."

"Orders?" said the motorman. "Orders? What are you tin-plated chumps doing in this part of the country, anyhow?"

Tommie shrugged his shoulders.

"It is like this," said he: "Old Man Rockefeller has come to call on an old woman that used to cook for him, and the company's give him the rights of this car—my Mote's taking him around to the house now. We've got to wait till he comes back, and you've got to wait, too; that's all."

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The other jumped in the air with astonishment and fury.

"Well, wouldn't that knock the frizzles out of your hair?" said he. "Those old devils can have anything they want, no matter what breaks, can't they?"

"That is just about the size of it, partner," said Tommie; "but here comes Jimmie. We'll spin back and turn out for you below."

"Thankee, old man," said the motorman; "much obliged; but I can tell you one thing: I am going to join the Ancient and Honorable Order of Amalgamated Anarchists this night. You bet! Call on his cook, and block the whole line! Well—"

This affair being arranged, 809 grasped the wire with her trolley, threw off her brakes and went rushing forward to her fate.

As she sped down Poolton Avenue a party of young men, with long hair, ran out of a café, yelling wildly. Tommie pulled the bell.

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"Stop her, Jimmie," he said. "They look like our kind of people."

"Where are you going?" asked the panting youth who arrived first.

"Any old place," said Tommie. The youth stopped.

"Hey?" said he.

"What's that?" said Tommie.

"Oh," said the young man, "I only wanted to know where you went to."

"Answer same as before," said Tommie. "Any old place. We have broke loose from the tediousness of this darned commercial life, and we are taking in the United States to suit ourselves."

"Do you mean that?" earnestly inquired the young man.

"Try us," said Tommie. "We're only a few."

At this juncture, all former passengers descended from the car.

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"Yours is the route we have been planning," said the long-haired young man.

All the young men boarded the car, singing loudly a song about their dear old something or other.

Thomas advanced to the front platform, and 809 gathered herself and hit the irons per record. She passed would-be passengers as the City Council passes a bill for more salaries for faithful services. She was a gallant sight.

Once when Jimmie went aft to tell a funny story he had heard the night before, 809 rammed a street-piano with such insistence and velocity that it landed on top of a load of furniture, still playing one of Sousa's marches. The Italian burned his thumb in blazing away at the departing monster with an eighty-nine-cent revolver. The young men gathered on the back platform and encouraged him to shoot with a little more art.

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Three blocks away, speeding toward them, there came a red thing, coughing, with inhuman rapidity. There were four things in it that looked like Mr. H. G. Wells' inhabitants of the moon.

"Here's where your nice, red, hand-painted autymobile either takes to its own side of the road or to the trees!" shouted Jimmie back to the carload.

The young men swung themselves out to see the sight. The road was narrow. The approaching bedevilment, streaming dust at every pore, bestrode (or, better, bewheeled) one rail of the track.

"There is your nice little bubble," chanted the young men. "Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble! Get peevisish there, Jimmie! Hit her on the end!"

Tommie, the mild, called out, "Just one layer of varnish off will do the trick, Jimmie."

Naturally, the man at the wheel of that

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automobile expected the trolley car to stop. Had it been an ordinary trolley car, at the service of mere citizens, it must have stopped, but being an Independent State of Modern Progress, it left restraint behind, and could be seen to move toward that automobile.

"Shove, you shover!" shouted the tallest of the young men.

It was high time. The side of 809 hit the rear tire with a rubbery shriek. The red automobile went over a small knoll of loose stone and bunch-grass, to the left of the road, and disappeared from view.

"They can get her back again, all right enough," said one of the young men whose severe face suggested the mechanical engineer. "Just erect a capstan on top of the hill, and winch her right back. I don't know how far she has gone down the other side. Wish I had asked you to stop, and put in a bid for the job."

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"Too late," said Tommie. "There is a long slant ahead of us, and we're really going to run."

"I could die trolleying!" cooed the stout young man. "Hit her up in front!" He clambered over the seats toward the front of the car.

In the general joy and enthusiasm then prevailing another young man began to ring up fares.

"Hey! What yer doin'?" shouted Tommie in the grip of habit. Then he remembered. "Let her sizzle," said he. "No harm done."

The register rang. The signal bell rang. Both gongs rang. It was somewhat like a party of Swiss bell-ringers tobogganing down the Matterhorn. Untrained horses walked upon their hind legs, and the *vox populi* was hushed.

The fat young man reached the front plat-

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form. He was not only fat. He was also very strong.

"Here, let me run this old shebang?" he asked Jimmie. "I won't kill anybody."

"Well, we're in the open now," said Jimmie. "I guess you can't do much damage." So he gave him the controller and joined the vocalists.

Minutes passed by to the lilt and swing of such grand old classics as *The Bulldog and the Bullfrog*, and the rest of it, with xylophone accompaniment, accomplished by drawing a cane across the rods in the backs of the seats.

Never had happiness so untrammelled an occupancy. Number 809 spread her long wheels in the ecstasy of freedom. Her motors purred. She passed the high points with loving pats, scarcely touching them. Her inhabitants were carried away.

And then, like a handful of mud upon the

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merriment fell the roar of the man at the controller. He was grinding frantically at the brake. The huge muscles of his back had split his coat in the effort.

The party got up and saw ahead of them a sharp incline, ending in an unprotected bridge.

"Gee-rusalem!" bawled Jimmie suddenly. "Wood's Bridge—the worst in the country. I forgot it."

At that instant a crack, followed by the jingle of metal, told them that the brake-chain was broken. The car, which had slacked a little of its speed, leaped forward again.

"Turn off your power! Reverse, I mean!" yelled Jimmie.

Then came a thudding sound on the car's roof.

"Oh," he groaned, "the trolley's off!"

Near that bridge, a few feet from the side of the track, there was a long haystack.

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"Farmers to the front!" said Tommie.
"Every man to the step, and jump!"

In a twinkling twelve young men rolled along a haystack. They rolled and rolled. They gathered much hay, but, still dominant above the mischance, the souls of ten foot-ball players and two trolley men rose triumphant. They wanted to see the last of 809.

She took the rest of the grade like a bucking bronco. She hit the bridge like an avalanche. Something gave way, or held too strongly, for 809 sprang into the air, turned completely over and went down in thirty feet of dirty water, trucks up, with a tremendous splash.

Silence stared with stony faces.

"She's gone," said Tommie solemnly.

"Beyond recall," assented the mechanical engineer.

"And I am going, too," said Tommie.

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The college men said nothing, but, as the thin procession topped the hill two miles away, the fat man led by twenty yards.